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**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT**

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**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
A SPECIAL ISSUE**

NORRAG NEWS 38

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EDITORIAL

VET, TVET & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND NORRAG HISTORY

It is just over ten years (December 1996) since we dedicated a whole issue of NORRAG NEWS to Skills Development. Readers of this present issue of NORRAG NEWS (NN 38) may like to look back to the Special Issue of 1996 (NN20).¹ It was on *TVET & Skills Development*. Apart from the Editor and Simon McGrath, there is no repetition of the contributors between those in 1996 and the 37 contributors in the present special issue!

NN20 reported on what was happening in skills development within agencies such as ODA (now DFID), Danida, Sida, GTZ, and SDC as well as in French Cooperation. Lots of things were changing at that time, for instance the shift from the project to the sector approach. But it is an indication of the way agency policies have changed that it was possible to say, for example, that 'Sida and ODA continue to have important portfolios of vocational education and training'.

Interestingly, NN20 reported on the formation earlier in 1996 of a new donor network called the **Working Group for International Cooperation in Vocational and Technical Skills Development**, supported by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), and with its secretariat provided by ILO, NORRAG and SDC. At that early stage in the development of the Network, it still called itself 'Vocational and Technical Skills Development' thus combining the older terminology of TVET and the newer term, Skills Development. This still seems to be a useful composite term, and it is used as such in the first article in this issue of NN38.

Also, intriguing in 1996 was that the report of the Working Group meeting suggested that 'It was recognised that to get genuinely international coverage, it would be important to have a further meeting in East Asia which might allow the participation of other agencies in East and South East Asia and Australasia, as well as to continue with a further meeting in Europe.' Well, that is happening in Hong Kong in February 2007, just over ten years later!

It is perhaps a pity that the agencies did not come to East and South East Asia in the 1990s. Skills development has played such a key role in the growth of their economies over the past 20 years and more, that it would have been important for agencies to have appreciated that.

The present issue of NORRAG NEWS covers a very wide range of different contexts in which VET and Skills Development are being analysed. It goes from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to Mexico, from China (and Hong Kong) to Nigeria, and from Vietnam to Chile. From South Africa to Latin America, and from Ghana to India. Equally, it includes a very good range of bilateral and multi-lateral agencies. Those reporting here are the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and JICA on the one hand; GTZ, DFID, and SDC, on the other; then, again, the IIEP, ILO and the European Training Foundation.

VET is on the Move

The themes of NN38 are many and varied. But, overall, there is a sense that VET and Skills Development are on the move once more. They have always been perceived by politicians to be areas where investment to counter rising unemployment is a high priority; and that is no different today. But they are also seen to be human development and investment sectors that are crucially connected to economic growth. Does this mean that, for example, technical and vocational education pays off in facilitating the transition to work? This issue of NN38 argues that the answer from rigorous evaluations is that it can under the right conditions.

¹ Readers who want to check on any of the titles of special issues, can go into www.norrag.org, and enter their password and get immediate access to all 37 previous issues of *NORRAG NEWS*. The list of all previous 37 titles is given towards the end of this special issue (pp. 81-82). There is also a search facility, so that TVET or other items can be searched across the 20 years of *NORRAG NEWS*. Soon a password will not be needed.

VET and the Right Conditions

What are these 'right conditions'? The state needs to have a vision of its own technological, agricultural and industrial development, and of how the education and training system relates to this vision. But 2020 visions on their own are insufficient. Visions need substantial financial support to be implemented. The private sector needs to be engaged with such forward planning, and employers need to be convinced that the utilisation of trained and skilled young people is actually a better investment than relying on time-honoured systems of taking on unskilled, casual labour.

For a virtuous circle to exist amongst the forward planning by government, the confidence of employers, and the responsiveness of VET systems, there cannot be a 'business as usual' approach by VET institutions. They cannot expect unchanged curricular options to appeal if there is a rapidly changing employment, industrial or service structure. But if curricula are to change and keep up to date, there needs to be substantial investment in vocational institutions. China's experience of highlighting 'key' vocational schools and making them centres of excellence has proved attractive to employers. By contrast, if employers know that the national vocational training centre in a particular country has no computers, and that the equipment dates from the early 1960s, they cannot be blamed for preferring their own systems of enterprise-based training.

New VET Frameworks and the Challenge of Policy Learning

NORRAG NEWS is particularly concerned with the role of donors (or with the role of the more politically correct term, development partners) in these processes. There is in NN38 a whole series of articles that document the changes in agency thinking about VET and skills development. Very often, donors are in the position of doing the crucial analytical work that seems poised to impact on policy. Readers will recall the stir that was caused when the World Bank published its *Vocational and Technical Education and Training* policy paper of 1991. Equally, the Bank's *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2004) confirmed the framework for thinking about VET systems that had been publicised in 1991. This comprehensive vision of VET covered school-based education systems, institution-based training systems linked to labour ministries, private training systems (both for profit and non-profit), and then also training in enterprises, both formal and informal.

This framework may be analytically persuasive, but it needs to be recognised that such a comprehensive vision of VET is a long way away from the day-to-day structures that comprise and govern vocational education and training in country contexts. If there is to be policy learning from such donor insights, then, arguably, the 'donors' need to become 'recipients'. In other words, they need to understand much better the cultures and contexts of the local systems where they are expecting to have an innovative impact. Too often, donor-led development or reform can be characterised as processes of social engineering that it is assumed will be successful if properly managed technically and with the right implementation capacities. In reality, as we know, most reform projects are short-lived because they do not fit into the local context and there is no local ownership.

The Priority of Critical, Analytical Work on VET at the International Level

Nevertheless, and with this above caveat, the role of critical, analytical work at the international level continues to be important and potentially influential. This can be seen with the *World Development Report of 2007 on Youth*, and it can be seen in the reach and influence of the EFA Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs), associated with the promotion of the Six Dakar World Forum Goals on Education for All (EFA). Vocational Education and Training badly need the international publicity and solid analytical work associated with these GMRs. This is why we argue in NN38 that the VET constituency world-wide should ensure that skills development is given its rightful place in this influential series of GMR Reports. It looks like the Working Group (mentioned above) and NORRAG can play a role in facilitating this.

Rethinking and Rebuilding the Cadre

If this is to happen, there need to be staff in development agencies who understand frameworks for skills development. The World Bank, ODA (now DFID), Sida and several other agencies may no longer recruit people called 'vocational educators' as was the case once; but their current and future staff will be the more effective if they have a secure understanding of the challenges raised by so many of the articles in NN38: for example, Training for the Informal Sector; Skills Development for

Poverty Reduction; VET for Sustainable Economic Development; VET for Youth Development; and VET for Labour Migration.

Changes in access to *NORRAG NEWS*

From February 2007, it should be possible for all readers to get access to all the issues of *NORRAG NEWS* without using their password. However if you want to get access to the most recent issue (e.g. NN38) you will still need to remember your password! By the way, just recently the 1000th person registered to get access to *NORRAG NEWS*. Readers should know that Robert Palmer has played a key role in this process.

Summaries and Keywords

This time, when we send you out an email alert to say that NN38 is on the website, the email will actually contain the short 1-2 sentence summaries, as well as the keywords for the article. This will give you a better sense of what is in the articles.

NORRAG AT THE OXFORD CONFERENCE 2007

As usual, and since 1991, NORRAG is playing a part in the Oxford International Conference on Educational Development. It is responsible for a major symposium within the overall theme of 'Going for Growth?'. We are collaborating this year with the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) of Hong Kong. See the article about the NORRAG theme by Bjorn Nordtveit (CERC) later in his issue of NN38. But make sure you send off your abstract to the address below by the deadline of 2 March 2007:

UKFIET (Oxford) Conference 2007 *Going for Growth? School, Community, Economy, Nation*, 11–13 September 2007, University of Oxford. To submit an abstract to the NORRAG/CERC-convened symposium please see the 'Education, Skills and Sustainable Growth' section at: <http://www.cfbt.com/UKFIET/>

Kenneth King
The University of Hong Kong
February 2007

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In Memoriam

DAVID N. WILSON

November 6, 1938 – December 8, 2006

David Wilson, who served two terms as President of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada from 1987 to 1989, and again from 1989 to 1991, died in Toronto, Ontario, Canada on December 8, 2006.

He was born in the United States and grew up in Syracuse, New York, graduating with his Ph.D. from the University of Syracuse. He took his family to Malawi for his fieldwork, starting a family tradition of travelling. In 1968, he took a position at the newly-founded Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto as a young assistant professor in the Department of Educational Planning and was a faculty member there until his retirement in 2003. He taught numerous courses in educational planning, research methodology, Third World Education, and comparative and international education.

He listed his research interests over his long career as follows: comparative, international, and development education; planning and evaluation of occupational training systems; technological education; post-secondary, non-degree technical colleges; human resource and education system planning; workforce education; the impact of globalisation and ICTs upon education; education in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; Inuit and Indian education in Canada; formal and non-formal education; and the role of international agencies in development.

David Wilson was an energetic and enthusiastic supporter of several academic organizations. He attended the First World Congress of Comparative Education in Ottawa in 1970 and was active in

World Congress matters until his death. He eagerly supported the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC) bid to host the World Congress in Montreal in 1989 and was President of the CIESC when it hosted that very successful event. He also put in a lot of effort into the World Council of Comparative Education Societies as the CIESC representative and as Chair of the Finance Standing Committee of the World Council. During that period, he was also elected to serve the CIES (US) as President-Elect, Vice President and President, organizing their annual meeting in Kingston, Jamaica in 1993. Then he became President of the World Council in 1996 in Sydney, Australia, a post he also held for two terms until 2001. He remained active in CIESC, CIES and WCCES affairs until his death.

[Abridged from Vandra Masemann. Ed.]

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CRITIQUING, SYNTHESISING AND REVIEWING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A BRIEFING NOTE

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Keywords

Technical and vocational skills development (TVSD), Skill modalities, Skills development, Enabling environment, Skills and poverty reduction

Summary

Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) is once again moving up the agendas of governments and of donor agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South Asia, influenced by evidence of its key, transformative role in East Asia, including China, and its continuing importance in the Americas and in Europe. This article provides a brief background note on TVSD.

The Rise, Fall and Rise again of Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) was a key sub-sector during the 1960s and early 1970s, and initiatives that had the objective of providing employable skills to ease school-leaver unemployment became popular in many countries in SSA. The 1980s saw structural adjustment and cost-sharing measures impact on the public provision of education/training. Rate of return studies undermined much external support for post-primary.

The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien) of 1990 brought UPE back on the international agenda, and UPE was adopted as an international development target in 1996 and a Millennium Development Goal in 2000. TVSD was excluded from both targets (despite being mentioned in the World Declaration at Jomtien). Many donors made MDGs central to their education development priorities.

In the 2000s TVSD is back on the International Agenda. The Commission for Africa report, Millennium Project & Summit, new World Bank policies on secondary, higher & general education, and on skills development, and the 2007 *World Development Report* all argued that a holistic, integrated, inter-sectoral approach to education is crucial, including TVSD. DFID's 2006 briefing on 'secondary, vocational and higher' makes the same point. SWAPs from the mid-nineties exemplified these new priorities of supporting the whole education sector. Increasingly, the PRSPs will need to reflect this same comprehensive approach.

The very narrow if quantitatively successful focus of the 1990s on primary education has produced enormous pressures on the still very small secondary and vocational systems of many countries.

Hence there is significant interest in TVSD among governments in Africa and S. Asia as they consider what happens after primary education. But the quality of these new generations of aspirants for post-primary education is causing very grave concern.

Technical and Vocational Skills Development in More and Less Dynamic Macro-economic Environments

The many benefits claimed for TVSD (e.g. higher productivity, readiness for technological change, openness to new forms of work organization, and the capacity to attract foreign direct investment) all depend on the quality of the skills acquired, and a dynamic environment in which they can be applied. The utilization and allocation of skills in a dynamic, expanding economy are fundamentally different from macroeconomic situations in which there is no growth, and poor governance. Among the most critical factors in such environments will clearly be the growth in opportunities for work and employment. And fair allocation of skills to work is dependent on good governance. In South Korea and China, there has been employment for TVSD graduates of almost all institutions; while in a stagnant economy like Sri Lanka, there may only be jobs for some of the very best students. *Clearly, the economy counts.*

But it is not just a question of getting the economy right and the skilled opportunities will follow; evidence from S. Korea and Hong Kong suggests that in a developmental state, future skills can be successfully planned for, even before there is a demand. This is very different from the political conviction that exposure to skills training can actually create jobs, regardless of the surrounding environment. This latter reasoning lies behind a whole series of short-term, youth training schemes, from Pakistan, to Philippines and from India to Ghana.

Skills for Poverty Reduction? – Do the Poor Gain Access to Skill?

There is mounting evidence that the poor are not to be found in the majority of the pathways to skills development, with the exception of NGO non-profit programmes. In the longer term, the expansion of fee-free junior secondary, and of vocational training centres into rural and urban slum areas will begin to take care of this problem. In the short term, much more policy attention needs to be given to bursaries and merit-based pathways to skill for youth from poor families. By contrast, the vogue for market-led, demand-driven courses will actually exclude the poor.

Arguments for and against TVSD in its different modalities

Unlike general secondary school, there are many more locations and modalities for the delivery of TVSD. We shall examine, in some detail, the advantages and disadvantages of three of the main types of TVSD: public school-based technical education; public vocational training centres; and training in the informal/unregistered sector.

1. The vocationalisation of junior and senior secondary education, and other forms of publicly-funded school-based technical education

In support of school-based TVSD:

- Offer pre-employment orientation to 'employable skills'; widespread in all OECD countries.
- some subjects, e.g. commerce, no more costly than the regular academic curriculum; this light orientation to TVSD is very different from the strong orientation.
- evidence that even the weak vocational orientation affects aspirations for different kinds of future work.
- in OECD countries - numerous attempts to change the 'dead-end' image of TVSD.

Challenges to school-based TVSD:

- Can be more expensive than general education.
- labour market effectiveness questioned by World Bank since 1980s.
- rate-of-return (ROR) studies: returns to general education higher (but methodological problems with ROR).
- assumed skill-to-work link, but little firm evidence.
- enrolment can be gender-biased.
- concerned with getting qualifications; hence skewed towards theory-based learning.
- 'vocational school fallacy'.
- problems with attempts to reduce the academic-vocational divide.

Comment

The transition of graduates to the labour market is going to be much easier when economies are growing, and job growth is sustained (e.g. South Korea, China, Mozambique). Deliberate

mixes of light and intensive orientation might be a good policy response to a political demand for wholesale vocationalisation.

2. Publicly-provided Vocational Training Centres & Industrial Training Institutes

In support of public vocational training centres (VTCs) and institutes:

- In much of Latin America, VTCs have been supported by a training levy on industry; they have been relatively independent of government, close to industry, and they have maintained good quality provision.
- provide qualifications that are recognized by industry and commerce; these are increasingly being incorporated in wider occupational standards, and can be competency-based and demand-driven.
- effective in many countries precisely because they are not seen as a substitute for secondary education

Challenges to vocational training centres (VTCs) and institutes:

- In countries with weak institutional links to industry, VTCs are seen to supply graduates with courses that are not demanded by industry.
- in such weak institutional environments, NQFs will be largely ineffective.
- curriculum often traditional and supply-driven.
- lack of financial independence or central government support – implications for updating equipment, instructors' skills etc.
- not necessarily physically or financially accessible to the poor.
- weak links to informal sector.

Comment

As with school-based technical education, VET systems are much more in demand when economies are growing, and there are enabling industry and technology policies. VET reform, therefore, is not just about VET institutions, but about the economy, and systems of accountability and responsiveness.

3. Traditional Apprenticeship Training & Training in the Informal Sector

In support of traditional apprenticeship training:

- Relevant to the real world of work (& helps develop networks for aspiring entrepreneurs).
- can, along with other inputs, contribute to enhancing the productivity of the informal sector.
- often more effective than the pre-employment training.
- ease of access (e.g. no formal entry qualifications) and more widespread than VTCs.
- lower cost than VTCs.

Challenges to traditional apprenticeship training or training in the informal sector:

- Potential benefits often dependent on a range of additional inputs.
- traditional technologies are perpetuated except in dynamic industrial environments.
- no link with formal training systems.
- difficulty of intervention.
- great variety in the quality of both training and working conditions.
- limited portability of skills.
- still screening out of applicants from poorer families.

Comment

The most positive government influence on the informal sector and traditional apprenticeship thus far has been indirect, through popular access to primary and junior secondary education, and hence more educated trainees have entered the sector. A possible policy reaction to the new demands for formalisation of the sector would be seriously to review the wider legal, credit and macroeconomic environment of the sector and the most appropriate ministerial responsibility.

The Need to Create More Effective Monitoring Mechanisms for TVSD

A great deal more is known about some of these TVSD modalities than others. Donors and national governments need increasingly to monitor, assess and disseminate their research and consultancy insights on this complex but crucial sector. The Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development is one vehicle for just such knowledge-sharing. There is a crucial need for a better statistical base for TVET.

This summary is based on a longer briefing note on Technical and Vocational Skills Development produced by the authors for DFID. The DFID Briefing Paper should be available at the end of February 2007.

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REVIEWING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Keywords

TVET, overview, economic growth, technological change, work

Summary

Worldwide, many governments are renewing efforts to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This article provides a comprehensive overview of TVET, discussing both the dominant models for organising vocational education and training and TVET policies in the context of economic growth, technological change, and the transformation of the nature of work.

The future of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is generating heated debate nearly everywhere in the world. Of course this concern is not new, but since the early nineties the collapse of planned economies and the emergence of globalization have put it at the centre of the policy debate on unemployment, modernization, competitiveness, and the struggle against poverty and exclusion. As a result, vocational education reform constitutes a vibrant area of public policy.

Worldwide, many governments are renewing efforts to promote vocational education. The belief that skill formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy has been a strong motive. The rhetoric about the knowledge economy has further reinforced this trend. As a result, today the reform process in technical and vocational education and training is in motion in many countries, regardless of development and income levels.

But government intervention is also often motivated by other factors such as providing a second chance to secondary school drop-outs, offering an alternative to university education or fighting against youth unemployment and poverty. This great diversity of objectives makes vocational education policies complex to implement and assess.

An overview of TVET systems around the world reveals that the structure of the education system remains very diversified, both regarding the relative size and the organisation of vocational education in relation to the school system. Many countries combine vocational schools with dual forms training such as apprenticeship. Amid such diversity the reforms remain very much context specific.

In the wave of public sector reforms, many governments have decided to reshape vocational education institutions in order to make them more efficient and effective. In technical and vocational education, as in other fields, governments need to become pro-active and this implies close links with social partners in order to define qualifications and how to run the system. It also calls for cultivating flexibility and opening-up new learning pathways. Hence, many countries are in the process of adopting reforms aimed at making technical and vocational education more flexible, of a higher quality and capable of responding better and more rapidly to the needs of the labour market while, at the same time, improving cost and efficiency. To some extent, the urgency to reform TVET has been related to the delivery pattern and the capacity of provision systems to successfully integrate young people into the workforce.

There are three dominant models for organising vocational education and training. Most countries have a primarily school-based model. Typically, this education is provided in specific schools or colleges with workshops for the practical training. In order to get more "real-life" experience, placements for shorter or longer periods in enterprises are often arranged through work-experience programmes. In some countries, vocational courses are offered in comprehensive schools attended both by students aiming for university entrance and those wanting a skilled worker's certificate for the world of work.

The second category includes countries with a company-based model through apprenticeship. Apprenticeship-contracts are normally signed after completion of lower secondary. Education and training alternate between theoretical education in a school context and practical training in an enterprise. Typically, about 50-70% of the time is spent in the enterprise for work and practical training. The rest of the time is spent on general education and theory related to specific vocational fields.

In a third model, delivery systems combine school-based vocational education and apprenticeship. In this formula, the first one or two years of upper secondary vocational education is/are full-time school-based. Emphasis is put on broad-based practical and theoretical education within wide vocational fields and general subjects. This period is followed by apprenticeship for another two years of practical occupation-related company-based training. This model is an attempt to combine advantages of the school-based model (to give the broad based knowledge and skills) and of the enterprise-based model (to provide skills and attitudes expected by the employers and to facilitate the school to work transition).

Of course, in reality, delivery patterns are much more diversified, and many countries offer variations of the three models. In spite of organisational differences and priorities among countries, it is possible to identify common trends and priorities based on international experience. Increasingly, TVET is placed in a lifelong learning perspective. In this framework, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning are given particular attention. The integration of vocational and general skills forms another trend followed by many countries. Whilst occupation-related content is made broader, more emphasis is placed on academic knowledge and transversal skills such as social skills, entrepreneurial skills and computer literacy. The search for greater articulation of TVET with the rest of the education system often constitutes another priority. It involves facilitating access to higher education for TVET graduates. This structural change is also meant to upgrade the social status of vocational education, not only among the youth and their parents, but also in the academic world.

When trying to understand TVET policies, economic rationale forms an immediate area of attention. In industrialised countries the emergence of a TVET system was a direct response of the growing needs for a qualified workforce in a context of economic growth and structural transformation. Today again, the rapid and deep transformation affecting the labour market constitutes the first motivation to strengthen skill provision. As a result of the large-scale dissemination of information technologies in production processes, economies tend to require more qualified labour. It is assumed that most of the jobs being lost as a result of labour market restructuring are concentrated among the low-skilled, whereas many of the new jobs require a good education and skills. The dominant rhetoric on economic development suggests that modern societies move towards a knowledge economy, where success depends increasingly on information and human capital. It is then argued that sustaining growth will require a rise in the qualification level of the workforce.

In reality, in many countries the skills gap first concerns "intermediate skills". If one accepts that better qualified workers tend to be more flexible, technological change is likely to increase the relative demand for skills during a transitional period. It is those sorts of qualifications that are produced by technical and vocational education, including company-based training.

Besides growth and technological change, the transformation of the nature of work has a deep impact on skill needs. At the root of these changes are new ways of organizing production and work. The end of Taylorism and the emergence of flexible forms of specialization have had a double effect on both the form and content of work. Employers today are expecting greater autonomy, initiative, responsibility and communication skills. In educational terms, this implies more advanced general training, including technical and vocational graduates. The demand for versatility and adaptability also argues in favour of broadening and raising the level of qualifications.

While this vision may well capture the reality of fast growing economies (e.g. East and South Asia), it does not reflect the complexity of labour market structures in less developed countries where various levels of technological development coexist. In such a context, more persuasive analysis about technology and work argues that each level of technological development favours different skills. In

many low-income countries, where most of the jobs are located in the informal economy, training policies need to recognise this reality and to come up with innovative responses, often outside the formal technical education system.

Besides the search for economic competitiveness, across the world, youth unemployment remains a sensitive issue. In a context of global education expansion, early school leavers face an increased risk of exclusion. School to work transition constitutes an active domain of public policies.

In most countries, young people still face serious difficulties in integrating into the labour market. The transition from school to work issue takes place within a context where young people are staying longer at school as a result of education expansion. The “drop-out” issue tends to be more serious today since, in many countries, secondary education has become a must in order to access a good job.

During the 1990s the international policy debate on education was predominantly focused on basic education and Education for All (EFA). Little attention was placed on vocational skills, TVET systems were often considered as obsolete, inefficient instruments. This view affected many donor agencies and guided their support away from vocational skills development. Following the ongoing debate on the contribution of skills development to EFA and to poverty reduction, the focus placed on youth transitions in the recently published *World Development Report 2007* (World Bank, 2006) may contribute to a new interest in TVET among countries, donors and young people.

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THE ROLE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRANSITION TO WORK: BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE WORLD BANK'S *WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT OF 2007*

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Keywords

World Development Report 2007, Youth, School to work transition, Skills development

Summary

This article discusses a 2007 World Development Report background paper that examines the role played by skills development in the transition from school to work. The paper explores outcomes associated with choices of general and vocational curricula in school settings, apprenticeship and other strategies for linking schooling and work, and for meeting the second-chance needs of youth who fail to acquire early education as a foundation for workplace skills.

The World Bank's World Development Report of 2007, *Development and the Next Generation*, examines the choices made by youth 15-24 years of age in education, work, health, family formation, and citizenship and how these choices shape the future well-being of individuals and nations. As part of the background preparation for this study of youth transitions, a paper was prepared examining the role played by skills development in the transition from school to work (Adams, forthcoming). The paper explores outcomes associated with choices of general and vocational curricula in school settings, apprenticeship and other strategies for linking schooling and work, and for meeting the second-chance needs of youth who fail to acquire early education as a foundation for workplace skills. Findings from rigorous programme evaluations, mostly in advanced countries and some in developing countries, are emphasized along with effective strategies for equipping youth with skills to make the transition to work.

The movement from school to work is seen from a lifecycle perspective with skills development examined as it takes place in schools, in early work experience, and later as entry-level skills are upgraded. The choices for skills development and the modalities for delivery vary as the transition progresses. Workforce development is influenced by (i) education, (ii) apprenticeship and early work experience, (iii) labour market programmes, including non-formal training, that facilitate the operation

of labour markets and address the needs of those encountering problems therein, and (iv) labour market policies that influence the investment climate and jobs creation for youth. Beyond, are other forces in the home, the community, and economy that shape the transition to work. The focus of the paper is on skills development that builds on early schooling foundations and that offers second chance opportunities for those who fail initially to develop these foundations.

Preparing for Entry to the Workforce

Historically, training for productive employment has been a private matter. Individuals acquired skills through apprenticeship or on-the-job training and financed their training through reduced wages during the learning period. Employers were actively involved in the training. The industrial revolution of the 19th century changed the structure of employment. A hierarchically organized work force, in which entry-level jobs required relatively few skills but a high level of industrial discipline, replaced the single craftsman who personally carried out all the tasks associated with a product. In the later part of the 19th century education reformers introduced vocational preparation to the curriculum of secondary education, and the vocational school was born. This pattern soon spread across Europe and North America. From these origins it was a short step to the common wisdom of the 1950s and 1960s that governments in developing countries needed to expand their investment in vocational skills.

Does technical and vocational education (TVE) in a school setting payoff in facilitating the transition to work? The answer from rigorous evaluations is that it can under the right conditions. TVE alone, however, is unlikely to solve the social problems of restructuring gender-biased patterns of employment or meeting all the needs of disadvantaged youth. Strategies that push vocational content earlier in the curriculum and vocationalise the curriculum with "light" offerings of TVE amidst general education do not show evidence of connecting youth with jobs and improving their earnings prospects, but they may lead to higher educational attainment that has to be valued for its own benefits apart from those of immediate employment. In turn, good quality TVE that is closely linked with strong employment growth and aligned with the skills in demand in labour markets can pay off for youth. The payoff is more assured for obtaining employment than for higher pay, but pursuit of advanced vocational skills can lead to both. Building TVE on a strong foundation of general education, and pushing vocational content later in the secondary and post-secondary curriculum show evidence of higher benefits in relation to costs. Ending labour market discrimination will be important to assuring equal benefits to young men and women.

Apprenticeship and Work Experience

Attention to apprenticeship and structured work experience as a means to promote the school to work transition have grown over the past several decades to join the continued emphasis on school-based vocational programmes for entry-level skills. Evidence favours these programmes, but with qualifications. Employment growth is a key ingredient to demand for apprentices and interns. Employers are unlikely to take on board large numbers of youths for training when conditions for sustained employment are not present. The strongest evidence favoring formal apprenticeships is their positive impact on employment, but largely for young men. The impact on earnings is more problematic, especially for young women. Traditional apprenticeships have proven cost-effective for delivering skills in an informal economy, but face problems of quality and transfer of new technologies in modern economies. Steps can be taken to improve traditional apprenticeships. The challenge remains to expand apprenticeship and work experience beyond the traditional craft and technical trades. Efforts to do this in the U.K. and Australia have shown some successes.

Beyond apprenticeship, work-based learning as part of the school curriculum has expanded in a number of OECD countries. In Sweden, vocational studies involve unpaid internships in structured work placements occupying 15 percent of the student's time. Recruiting employers to offer internships has proven challenging. In Australia, school-industry programmes have been introduced to provide students with structured learning in a workplace during the senior year of secondary school. This learning is assessed and accredited as part of their schoolwork. Participation in the programme was initially disappointing with only 12 percent of eligible students participating, but the outcomes have been promising. Evaluations point to enhanced student motivation, confidence, and satisfaction, along with improved personal and practical skills and time-management. National youth service programmes in a number of countries offer community service and work experience for secondary

and tertiary students, but also other youth target groups. Few national youth service programmes have been rigorously evaluated against these objectives, but anecdotal evidence is favourable, particularly where national service is voluntary.

Upgrading of Skills

The movement from schooling into the workforce for youths brings with it a new set of actors and challenges for skills development and sustained employment. Rather than focusing on the provision of entry-level skills to obtain employment, attention turns to other objectives: (i) upgrading workforce skills for the employed, (ii) meeting the skill needs of the unemployed, (iii) empowering others with skills for occupational change, and (iv), responding to the skill needs of the disadvantaged with “second-chance” options for developing qualifications. The needs of older workers facing the forces of change are merged with those of young workers. Employers, who are already engaged in apprenticeship and structured work experience for youths, emerge to play a large role in the provision and financing of training to meet these objectives. They are joined by public and private formal education institutions and technical ministries (labour, industry, agriculture, etc.) and for-profit and not-for-profit trainers that diversify programmes and modes of skills delivery to meet these diverse needs. Together, these sources add a second “T” to TVE to yield technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Training provision and financing by employers are frequently overlooked in favour of the alternative of public investments in skills development. Employers, however, are an active source of provision and financing for skills. The evidence shows this training culminates in higher productivity for the enterprise and wages for workers. It is self-regulating and financing. Contrary to expectations, employers are found to invest in general skills alongside skills specific to the enterprise. As a source of skills for youth, however, not all enterprises are going to train, nor will all workers in enterprises that do train have access to this training. Enterprise training is selective with workers in small and medium-sized enterprises and those with lower levels of formal education having less access to the training. On grounds of equity, if not efficiency, these conditions of employment provide a rationale for public interventions to broaden access and investment in education and skills for those left behind by enterprise-based training. These interventions may include public provision, but also public financing of private providers, including training by enterprises.

High levels of youth unemployment are unlikely to be reduced by training, unless the problem of unemployment for youth is structural in nature, meaning that youth possess the wrong skills for the jobs that exist. Where the unemployment problem is a lack of job creation, high labour costs, or unrealistic wage expectations on the part of youth, TVET is less likely to be successful unless coupled with other reforms. Understanding the core causes of youth unemployment is an essential first step before costly investments in TVET are made. Perhaps due to the lack of this understanding, much of the training offered the unemployed is said not to have lived up to its expectations when subjected to rigorous evaluation. This image has plagued youth training programmes in countries like the U.S. such that public funding has been cut back. This image, however, is incorrectly formed as the evidence of this review suggests that where jobs do exist and training is linked to this employment, investment in TVET can yield positive benefits. The type of training offered is important to the outcome. Training programmes with employer sponsorship and offered in enterprises tend to perform better, out-performing classroom training for the unemployed.

Efforts to help at-risk youth enter employment with TVET have proven more difficult. Early school leavers are especially at-risk in the transition. A key priority is helping these youth stay in school, or if they have left, to return to school. For helping youth stay in school, steps can be taken to provide services offsetting learning deficiencies, increase the benefits from and interest of parents and youth in schooling, and reduce household income constraints. Second-chance programmes for education and training can play an important role helping early school leavers enter employment. Non-formal education programmes, providing equivalency certificates for missed schooling, can open opportunities for further education and to training on the job. Programmes like the Job Corps in the U.S. and the *Joven* (Youth) Programmes of numerous Latin American countries have shown that training is often not sufficient by itself to help out-of-school youth make the transition. Other social services and support are needed alongside training to pay dividends. These second-chance

programmes, while costly, can pay excellent dividends and reduce the social cost of first-chance failures. With their cost, targeting is important. Their cost emphasizes the importance of promoting first-chance options for assuring youth have a solid educational foundation before entry to work.

For further information see:

Adams, Arvil V. Forthcoming 2007. "The Role of Skills Development in the Transition to Work: A Global Review." Children and Youth Discussion Papers. World Bank: Washington, D.C.

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A CRITICAL GLANCE AT THE *WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT (WDR) 2007 ON YOUTH, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL SKILLS*

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Keywords

WDR, *World Development Report*, Youth, Vocational training, Skills

Summary

What is the role of skills development or of vocational education and training in the *World Development Report (WDR)* of 2007 on Youth? This article examines this question and argues that the issue of vocational skills is somewhat neglected. Moreover, that the WDR fails to fully draw attention to the countries where there are major skills development systems that are operating effectively in the vocational training of young people.

What is the role of skills development or of vocational education and training (VET) in the *World Development Report (WDR)* of 2007 on Youth? You might expect there to be a lot, as the Report is concerned with youth transitions. And at first sight, there is actually a great deal written in the Report about skills, but much of this is not about traditional, vocational skills at all, but more about other kinds of 'softer' skills. We shall look rapidly at what is said about these various skills both at the school level, and also in the post-school work environment.

Given the poor quality of academic achievement in many developing country school systems, the WDR proposes that the priority should be a solid foundation in 'basic skills' at school level, in primary and junior secondary. This term means 'the set of minimal abilities needed for further learning, work and life, including numeracy and literacy and basic levels of behavioural skills such as perseverance, self-discipline and self-confidence' (WDR, 2006: 71). At the high school, or upper secondary level, the Report talks of the need for 'postbasic skills', by which it means 'thinking skills, higher order behavioural skills (decision-making skills, teamwork, the ability to negotiate conflict and manage risks), specific knowledge applied to real-life situations, and vocational skills' (Ibid.). So already there is a welter of skills on the WDR's agenda!

Interestingly, in the key chapter 3 on 'Learning for Work and Life', these 'behavioural skills' are mentioned no less than 25 times, 'life skills' 15 times, while 'vocational skills' and 'practical skills' are mentioned only 3 and 2 times respectively. What does this mean? In fact, the WDR sees behavioural skills as being very close to life skills. It describes one programme that operates in 25 countries as 'developing such behavioural skills as self-confidence, motivation, teamwork, and conflict management, as well as critical and creative thinking skills; *together they are often referred as 'life skills'*' (WDR, 2006: 72 emphasis added). In other words, for the primary and junior secondary levels, the key skills discussed are these behavioural and life skills.

Specialisation and tracking, the Report urges, should take place in the upper secondary school. An example is given of Chile which moved vocational specialisation to that level in its education reform. There is much discussion about the importance of flexibility, so that terminal vocational tracks can be avoided, and so that vocational graduates can qualify for higher education, as they are said to be able to do in South Africa and Tunisia.

The overall message of the WDR for the curriculum of schools is that the labour markets are demanding workers who have 'strong thinking and interpersonal skills'. Employers are said to be expressing an increasing demand for communication skills. Even entrepreneurship is said to be linked to 'thinking skills' to solve problems and such 'behavioural skills' as self-confidence and leadership. The WDR sums it up again in terms that stress life skills, but not vocational skills: 'So, in today's complex and changing environment, the challenge is to build skills that allow young people to think critically and creatively, to process information, to make decisions, to manage conflict, and to work in teams' (WDR, 2006: 75).

What is said specifically about the general versus the vocational curricula? The WDR recommends that these be more integrated. Apart from delaying vocational specialisation as mentioned above, there should be more blending of the two streams, with more vocational content being brought into the general curriculum, and more vocationally relevant academic subjects being brought into the vocational curriculum (WDR, 2006: 76).

It is difficult to get much of a sense of the scale of vocational schools, or vocational tracks in the developing world from the WDR. It is admitted that the vocational education sector is small in the developing world compared to the OECD countries, with just 22% of enrolment. This average, of course, masks a huge variation from many Sub-Saharan African countries with a very much smaller enrolment (King and Palmer, 2006), and others like South Korea and China with 40% of their upper secondary cohort in vocational schools.

In summary, this particular chapter 3, 'Learning for Work and Life', does not give much attention at all to vocational education or to vocational skills. Is the situation any better for the other key chapter 4, 'Going to Work'?

Chapter 4 is certainly positive about the role of so-called traditional apprenticeships in developing countries, and acknowledges that they are the source of 80-90% of all basic skills training, for example in Ghana. The WDR is also positive about ways of strengthening indigenous apprenticeship systems, and here it, more controversially, draws on the World Bank's informal sector voucher project in Kenya to claim success in its enhancing the access of master craftsmen to new technologies and upgrading their skills, thus improving the quality and relevance of the training they could offer their apprentices. [The reality is that there were very major problems of corruption in the project, and the voucher element proved to be entirely unsustainable.]

The WDR notes that training in the private sector by employers is often overlooked in favour of public training programmes. But evidence is adduced that the enterprises are indeed active trainers, though it is admitted that that is more the case with larger, foreign-owned, export-oriented firms. In fact, it is admitted that larger firms are ten times more likely to train than those with ten or less employees. Nevertheless, the conclusion, surprisingly, about enterprise-based training is that it is 'relevant and effective'.

By contrast, training in public sector training institutions is said to be 'open to question. Rigid, low-quality training systems disconnected from labour markets have led many countries to reform their programmes' (WDR, 2006: 113). At this point, readers with a sense of history might be wondering if this WDR was going to repeat what was thought to be the very strong endorsement of private sector training in the well-known World Bank policy paper of 1991, *Vocational and technical education and training*:

Training in the private sector – by private employers and in private training institutions – can be the most effective and efficient way to develop the skills of the work force. In the best cases employers train workers as quickly as possible for existing jobs. (World Bank, 1991: 7)

In the WDR, there is some danger of a similar conclusion, as it comments that 'Overall, training systems are moving away from a narrow focus on inputs for training, with more instructors, workshops, and equipment – to a focus on outcomes, with attention to skills standards set by employers and competency-based delivery by a mixture of public and private provision...' (WDR, 2006: 113). To a

public training provider in many countries, with a very small budget, out of date instructors and antiquated equipment, this could easily be misread as negating some of the very things that are critically needed.

One of the strongest messages of this key chapter on 'Learning for Work and for Life' is that 'skill development should respond to local demand and promote competition among providers' (Ibid.117). This is illustrated from the *Joven* (youth) programmes for disadvantaged youth in Latin America. But the reader is left wondering if there are any good quality public sector training programmes, for instance in East or South East Asia, or in the OECD countries.

For readers who only have time to read the Overview or Executive summary at the beginning of the WDR, and who are looking out for 'skills', there are, as we said above, plenty of references to skills in this WDR. It is used 58 times in 22 pages! But there is every kind of skill mentioned (behavioural, parenting, leadership, basic, higher order, cognitive, advanced, life), but there is no mention of technical, vocational or practical skills. And what are the key messages about skills to be gained from a quick glance? It is surely this: 'Inculcating life skills in schools is the surest way to enhance the capabilities of young people' (WDR. 2006: 16). And as to practical and vocational skills? Well, the most obvious message is rather negative as we have already implied above:

Practical training that combines occupational and behavioural skills can make young people more mobile. But the track record of schools and even large public national training institutions in providing such skills has, at best, been mixed. (WDR, 2006: 14)

In conclusion, there is an opportunity lost, once again, to draw attention to the countries where there are major skills development systems that are operating effectively in the training of young people.

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LEARNING ABOUT SKILLS FROM EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

MIGRATION, LABOUR AND SKILLS TRAINING IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Keywords

Migration, labour, skills development, China

Summary

This article highlights the challenges faced by the rapid rural-urban migration in China and argues that providing skills training to these rural migrant workers is essential if the country's impressive growth record is to be sustained.

As the most populous country in the world, China has never run into a labour shortage in its thousands of years of history. With rapid demographic transition and accelerated population aging, is this going to change? The projection based on the census data in 2000 suggests that the working population aged 15-59 would stop growing in less than 10 years while the annual growth of the working population has already declined dramatically. Being used to enjoying unlimited supply of labour could then be translated into a problem of labour shortage in China.

One way that China differs from other countries, especially from the developed countries, is its divide between rural and urban areas. As the majority of the population are still living in rural areas, the migration of labour from rural to urban areas can certainly compensate for the impact of population transition on labour supply. In fact China is now experiencing the most rapid process of urbanization in the world. The estimated rate of urbanization is about 1% between 1990 and 2002, and such a process seems to have accelerated after 1995. It is estimated that the rate of urbanization is near to 1.4% between 1995 and 2002. In 2006, a 1% increase of urban population suggests that about 13 million working age people will be added into urban labour force, and a 1.4% increase means a number of about 16 million urban labourers. Theoretically, such labour migration can serve as a stable source of labour supply for non-agricultural sectors over a relatively long period of time, say 20 or 30 years, in China.

But the reality is not always consistent with the presumption. As the annual growth rate of the population of working age is decreasing and rapid economic growth is creating more jobs, some fast growing coastal areas, especially the economic engines like Zhujiang River delta and Yangzi River delta, have already felt the pains in recruiting qualified labour since late 2003. As a result, the wages for migrant rural workers have increased rapidly. Thus the wages for new rural migrant workers increased from about 600 *yuan* per month in 2003 to about 1000 *yuan* per month in 2005, up by 50% within two years, as revealed by some surveys conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in early 2006. We all know that China's fast economic growth over the last nearly 30 years is to a great extent contributed to by its cheap labour, but will the rapid rise in labour costs undermine the economic competitiveness of China?

The rise of labour cost itself does not say much about the competitiveness of Chinese economy. For example, in 1991, a US manufacturing worker was 40 times more productive than a Chinese worker, but this figure decreased to 10 times in 2000, suggesting that the competitive advantage of Chinese industry seems to have been strengthened, not reduced, during this period. Economically, as long as labour productivity grows as fast as the costs of labour, the competitive advantage will remain. But the pressures on increasing productivity will definitely be translated into a great demand for quality skills apart from for the quantity of labour in China.

Is China well prepared well for providing the skills demanded? The answer is certainly not. There are about 120 million rural migrant workers in China, and this number has increased by about 4% annually since 1997. Most of the rural migrant workers are young males, lack technical and vocational training, and work in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Due to a lack of training and qualified skills, earnings differentials between migrants and urban residents are large, coupled with occupational segregation and wage discrimination. Without status in the formal sector, migrants typically do not have access to social protection instruments, nor to administrative or legal mechanisms to ensure their rights as workers.

It is calculated that there were about 17.34 million people who first entered the labour market in 2006; among these, about 7.6 million are rural graduates who have educational attainments of junior high school or less. From 2006 to 2010, there would be a total number of 34 million such rural migrants who are eager to find a job in urban areas. Without providing training opportunities for them, it can easily be envisaged that the bad situation of the rural migrant workers will remain, the difficulties in recruiting qualified workers in coastal areas will continue, and the prospect of economic growth in China will be undermined. Could we see anything that is more important than providing training opportunities for the new rural migrants in China today?

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HONG KONG**

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Keywords

TVET, Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong

Summary

This article examines developments in TVET provision in Hong Kong, noting that with the relocation of many manufacturing industries to Mainland China and the arrival of a knowledge-based economy, TVET is gaining in popularity. It goes on to describe the activities of the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the largest provider of vocational education and training in Hong Kong.

The value of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has long been recognized by the industry sectors in Hong Kong. In 1982, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) (www.vtc.edu.hk) was set up. It is the largest provider of vocational education and training in Hong Kong with over 160,000 places offered per year. While the part-time places total some 140,000, the initial in-take to the full-time programmes exceeded 16,000 last year.

TVET had, however, been considered generally a second choice by students, parents, and the community. One of the reasons was that graduates of TVET were mainly blue collar workers in the past as TVET traditionally related to the manufacturing industry. We are seeing dramatic changes in recent years.

With the relocation of many of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries to Mainland China and the arrival of a knowledge-based economy, TVET is gaining new recognition and is becoming a obvious choice for an average young person nowadays recommended by career teachers.

Knowledge creation with new and emerging industry sectors such as communication, design, environment, and health give rise to interest and recognition of the importance of associated knowledge and skills to meet the workplace and manpower demand for skill sets unknown in the past. These knowledge and skills are at times critical for an enjoyable and safe living. For example, health and occupational safety, communicative disease controls.

VTC offers pre-employment and in-service programmes to enhance the employability and lifelong learning opportunities of school leavers and adult learners from craft to higher technician levels with awards of up to higher diplomas. Many of these programmes are linked up with professional bodies and trade associations, as well as academic institutions to provide further education opportunities.

There is a growing view that TVET provides diverse career opportunities and is much more than an alternate route to general academic education. Articulation with universities has been ongoing for many years and this, together with the growing number of vocational degrees on offer to meet specific needs of different industry sectors, is providing more options for career advancement.

The range of VTC programmes provides entries for students with different profiles covering those from junior secondary schools to those who completed A level. A multi-entry multi-exit framework is being put in place and aims to provide a flexible pathway to meet the needs of those who may not be able to afford continuous full-time education due to personal circumstances.

The importance of generic and transferable skills and whole person development is recognised and embedded in study programmes. Much emphasis is on the skill of learning to learn, in order to prepare students for life long learning.

VTC enjoys close networks with different industry sectors through the set up of advisory boards and committees. Technical skills and competencies required for different workplaces provide input for curriculum development. Centres of excellence in collaboration with industries are encouraged and set up to promote technology transfer and sharing of good practice. These contacts provide excellent continuous staff development opportunities and the updating of the relevance of programme content. Graduates become more employable and in demand.

People are Hong Kong's main resource. TVET addresses the mass. With globalisation and rapid advances in technology, TVET is important to meet the demand for skilled workers and for Hong Kong to sustain her competitiveness. Adding value to her people through effective and efficient TVET delivery is a challenge and I think we are moving in the right direction.

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INVESTING IN HIGH-LEVEL SKILLS TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords

TVET, High-level skills training, China

Summary

In recent years, the Chinese government has emphasized high-level skills training, paying much more attention to TVET than in the past. This article briefly examines some of the current government TVET policies.

In recent years, the Chinese government has emphasized high-level skills training. The shortage of high-level skilled hands has become a "bottle-neck" to economic development.

In 2004, 32% of all those employed were skilled workers: of these only 4% were technicians and senior technicians, 17% high-skilled manpower, 36% middle-level skilled manpower, with the remaining 43% low-skilled workers. In China while 150 million rural workers migrated to the cities in 2005, few of them have been trained.

Some enterprises cannot hire enough high-level skills even with high pay. It is urgent to train high-level skills in China.

Nowadays China's government pays a great deal of attention to TVET. On November 15th, 2006, the Premier of the State Council, Wen Jiabao, invited some TVET experts to have an informal discussion at Zhong-Nan-Hai, the government head-quarters. During 2006-2010, the central government will make an increase of 14 billion RMB [circa £1 billion sterling] input into TVET and the provincial governments will increase this by another 16 billion RMB.

The central government also issued the document entitled *The Decision on Further Strengthening the Training for High-level skills* to regulate the institutions for high-level skills training. In that document, the following points were emphasized:

- Innovation training, based on key national projects of high-level technology and equipment input;
- New Technology and skills training based on industries' technical reform and innovation;
- Strengthening the cooperation between TVET schools and enterprises;
- Training in high-level skills by inputting foreign advanced training resources in China, or by training abroad;
- Setting up a high-level skills evaluation system which is orientated to assessing capacity and performance.

- Increasing the number of technicians;
- Strengthening the service of skilled hands; and,
- Collecting training funds from multiple sources, and encouraging different bodies to become involved in trainer's training, curriculum development, and textbook development.

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NEW ILO INITIATIVES ON SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Keywords

Skills, Employability, Asia, Pacific, ILO

Summary

Many countries in Asia-Pacific have identified skills development as a key priority. They are finding it a growing challenge to respond to the skills needs of their workforce in a time of increasing globalization, new technology and changing patterns of work. The ILO aims to provide more effective services to ILO Member States on skills issues, and this article summarizes the response of the ILO to these challenges.

Many countries in Asia-Pacific have identified skills development as a key priority. They are finding it a growing challenge to respond to the skills needs of their workforce in a time of increasing globalization, new technology and changing patterns of work. In response to these challenges, the ILO has developed a new Regional Skills and Employability Programme (SKILLS-AP) to provide more effective services to ILO Member States on skills issues.

All the relevant units in the ILO, at the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in the three sub-regional offices, at headquarters and the Turin Centre will now be coherently integrating all programmes and activities for skills development in the region into a single work-plan. This plan will form a Strategic Framework for Skills and Employability in Asia and the Pacific. It will enable the ILO, together with our key donors and strategic partners, to address skills issues in the region in a strategic and coherent way.

One of the aims of this initiative is to help countries improve their competitiveness and productivity by promoting lifelong learning to ensure that skills are constantly renewed and adapted and workers have core work skills that equip them for a wide variety of potential jobs. Another aim is to reorient policies for education and training to focus on the needs of working people, especially the poor and excluded. Countries grappling with the aftermath of disasters and conflicts have also emphasized the importance of skills development for helping people find new jobs and restore livelihoods.

SKILLS-AP builds upon the invaluable earlier work of the Asia and Pacific Skills Development Programme (APSDP), including one of its most valuable elements – the Regional Skills Network in Asia and the Pacific. Two regional meetings of the partner institutions were organized in 2005 to revitalize the network and develop a more effective basis for cooperation in light of the changed needs for skills development in the region. The first Technical Meeting of the Regional Skills Network Partner Institutions held in Incheon in November 2005 brought together, for the first time, national skills development partner institutions in all ILO Member States in the region, including those institutions operated by workers and employers organizations, to discuss skills development issues. The meeting adopted a Statement of Common Understanding in which “it is agreed that ILO constituents across the region will share their knowledge and experience in order to optimize human resources development processes and promote decent work. This will help constituents to improve the skills and well-being of people to improve the economy and facilitate development of the region as a whole”.

The partner institutions also agreed upon a Framework for Cooperation on Skills Development for Asia and the Pacific, which “comes out of a shared commitment to cooperation, recognizing that all partner organizations in the region have information and experiences to share which will be valuable to others”.

Now that ILO Member States in Asia and the Pacific have strongly supported and endorsed these initiatives, SKILLS-AP is working with its constituents to further develop cooperation and partnerships to carry this important work forward.

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ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords

ADB, China, PRC, TVET, technical assistance

Summary

China’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2006–2010) accords high strategic priority to developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to address the severe shortage of skilled workers in order to maintain high economic growth. Improved TVET will also help to address the skill and employment related issues raised by massive rural–urban migration. Technical assistance for TVET from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is discussed.

Context and Key Issues

Following nearly 3 decades of maintained rapid economic growth, as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) embarks on its Eleventh Five-Year Plan (EFYP) for Economic and Social Development (2006–2010), the nation is at a key crossroads in maintaining growth and achieving a “harmonious society”, a central objective of the EFYP. This will require addressing a range of medium and long-term economic and social development issues, including substantial gaps and imbalances. Within this context, the PRC Government accords high strategic priority to developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which can yield significant social and economic benefits.

Strengthening TVET will be critical to addressing the severe shortage of skilled workers in the PRC. Nationally, only about 33% of all urban employed are skilled labourers, with highly skilled workers/technicians accounting for less than 4%. Moving up the skills ladder from lower-end manufacturing and processing to high value-added industries is crucial for firms to achieve competitiveness, and many firms in key areas are suffering from severe shortages of skilled workers. More broadly, increasing the number of skilled workers is essential for the PRC to sustain high economic growth.

Improved TVET will help correct structural skills mismatches in the labour market. While severe skills shortages exist, it is estimated that between one quarter and one third of tertiary graduates and several million secondary school graduates cannot find jobs upon graduation each year. This indicates a serious mismatch between labour market demand and supply. Making the TVET system more sensitive and responsive to labour market needs, and strengthening links between TVET and the private sector are essential measures to mitigate this mismatch.

Improved TVET will also help to address the skill and employment related issues raised by massive rural–urban migration. Over 200 million surplus labourers have migrated from rural to urban areas, most with limited readily employable skills. Rural–urban migration is expected to continue at a rate of about 10 million a year for the EFYP period and beyond. A strengthened TVET system can play a

vital role in enabling migrant workers to find better jobs with higher and more stable income, as well as contributing to a more orderly and effective process of rural–urban migration and urbanization.

The existing TVET system in the PRC falls short of addressing these key issues and producing the significant economic and social outcomes required to meet the country's medium and long-term development needs. Key constraints include:

- Inefficient TVET system—while acute skills shortages exist, what is taught and learned in TVET institutions often does not meet labour market needs;
- Resource Gaps—existing TVET capacity is unable to meet the PRC's present and future needs for skills because of years of underinvestment. The PRC has an estimated total training capacity equivalent to only 10% of its total number of workers, against 30–40% in many advanced economies, in part due to under-funding;
- Weak Public-Private Partnerships in TVET—while the private sector is active in providing short-term skills and vocational training, its overall role in TVET needs to be expanded and qualitatively strengthened; and
- Migrant Workers' Lack of Job and Income Opportunities. The generally low level of migrant workers' skills—only about 20% of migrant workers currently receive any training and most is very basic (as short as 15 days)—is a key reason why most migrant workers remain in a few low-skilled industries with little prospect of upward mobility, and is an underlying cause of many social issues relating to migrant workers in urban areas.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Technical Assistance (TA)

Following a request from the PRC Government and project design dialogue, in November 2006, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved technical assistance TA 4868-PRC: Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development. Focused on Guangdong and Hunan provinces, as case studies, the TA links to additional recently approved TA on employment services for migrant workers (ADB, 2006) and related policy dialogue.

The targeted longer-term impact of the TA is an effective TVET system to support employment and labour markets in the PRC. The outcome targeted for achievement by TA completion will be the consideration by higher authorities of central and selected provincial governments of key policy recommendations for improving and strengthening TVET.

The TA will review TVET in two provinces: (i) Guangdong, a key industrial province heavily reliant on migrant labour, and (ii) Hunan, a less developed central province that serves as a source of migrant workers. Based on provincial case studies and broader research and analysis (including a review of relevant international experience), TA outputs will include:

- key policy recommendations formulated on measures and mechanisms for improving TVET for Guangdong and Hunan provinces, some of which will have wider applicability in the PRC; and
- a publication on key TA findings and recommendations.

Policy measures and mechanisms identified for implementation will be costed and prioritized, and key TA findings will be widely disseminated among stakeholders and the general public.

The TA is expected to be implemented during January–September 2007. The Bureau of Finance (BOF) of Guangdong Province will be the Executing Agency of the TA, responsible for the overall execution and coordination of TA activities. Hunan Province BOF will be responsible for TA activities to be carried out in Hunan, as TA Implementing Agency.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords

Skills development, in relation to growth and poverty reduction, globalization, late developers, policy options for skills development

Summary

This brief comment summarizes the sources of the recent attention to skills development and analyzes the current efforts being made by developing countries in this area.

Skills development (SD) is quietly coming back as a hot education issue in developing countries and in international education cooperation. This brief summarizes the sources of the recent attention to SD and analyzes the current efforts being made by developing countries in this area. Trying to define skills development by itself is a daunting task. It takes place at every level of the school system, in training institutions, in firms, and in formal and informal settings. In this brief, SD is taken as largely synonymous with TVET: technical and vocational education and training.

The first set of sources is domestic. In general, the education system in developing countries has been expanding remarkably over the past decade. The primary enrolment ratio (GER) in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the lowest in the world, surged from 80% to 91% in just four years from 1998 to 2002 (UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report 2006*). The expansion in the primary education is putting pressure on the second cycle level, including on TVET. Moreover, skills acquisition and application by individuals will play a major role in enhanced national efforts toward poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth.

The second set of sources is external. Various phenomena explained by the term globalization – e.g. the advancement of ICT and the global penetration of corporate activities - are influencing the government and people of developing countries. This gives unprecedented opportunities for enhancing skill levels and hence country competitiveness and individual upward mobility. But it also poses challenges which could see countries left behind. The World Bank, which advocates changing public roles in TVET from an inefficient service provider to an effective regulator, thus leaving actual provision of skills development services to the private sector, seems more active in this area than in the last couple of decades. Together with the domestic factor, this external factor is raising motivation in students for continued study at the higher education, even in countries where the secondary education system is still only moderately developed.

Needless to say, skills acquired are meaningful only when they are applied. The preceding arguments, although strongly influencing the developing countries, pose the risk of directing SD policies and implementation into being isolated from the demand on the ground or at best ineffective. Successful East Asian cases suggest that late developers have an advantage (cf. Gerschenkron) of being able to make a technological jump, and that strengthening the domestic capacity to absorb and internalize the advanced technology is the key. This has been largely done by the private sector that has basic technological capacity, entrepreneurship, and human resources. In most of the less developed countries today, however, the indigenous private sector is prevalent in the informal setting, and that is deemed inadequate as the organizational platform or foundation for rapid SD. On the other hand, competition for scarce public resources and strong policy advice from aid agencies leave limited scope for expanding or upgrading public SD institutions.

Entry points for assessing the SD environment therefore will include: (1) policy directions – whether purposes, target skills and target population are clear and consistent, based on the country's potential and comparative advantage; (2) private sector/labour market characteristics – whether a critical mass exists that can be a foundation for further and broad-based skills enhancement; and (3) scope for a

public-private partnership for SD:- effectiveness of existing public and private SD activities and room for improvement.

With this standpoint and approach, a joint-research is ongoing between a group of researchers in Japan and a counterpart research team in several developing countries – Cambodia, Ghana, Nepal and South Africa. We are in the first year of the research and hopefully will provide an update before its completion in two more years.

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SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND THE WTO IN VIETNAM: WHAT'S NEXT?

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Keywords

VietNam, Skills development, WTO

Summary

This article summarizes the findings of a recent study that examines skills development in Vietnam and briefly discusses the current strategy issues and recent government initiatives in the context of the country's membership of the WTO in January 2007.

After 11 years of negotiations, Vietnam succeeded in its attempt to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). Vietnam has ratified its membership agreement and became the WTO's 150th member in January 2007. In a recent publication based on research done by Alexandre Dormeier Freire and Vu Bich Thuy funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency, the two authors have demonstrated that the situation of skills development (SD) in Vietnam remains unclear and uncertain (Freire and Thuy, 2006). How will the government adapt the skills development strategies to the new WTO context? What are the current trends in skills development in one of the fastest growing economies in the world? This article discusses the current strategic issues and recent government initiatives.

In a nutshell, there are several gaps regarding the skills development policies and strategies and the economic challenges in Vietnam today. First, it seems that skills strategies are not clearly located at the national and provincial development goals. As a consequence, Vietnam's abundant workforce remains largely unskilled (83% of the total workforce of 40 million people) and the lack of prioritization of SD at both central and provincial level is a problem. Second, some actors such as business associations and entrepreneurship associations are left outside of the design and conception of both policies and strategies. Third, SD strategies engender tensions between a social approach to SD and a more "technical" vision. Some actors do strongly believe that SD strategies have to be linked to market and labour questions whereas others consider them as being only limited to social issues (such as working with women, maternal health training, etc.). Fourth, SD is still more supply-driven than demand driven. Many reasons could be found to explain this: two among these would be the remaining vestiges of central planning practices and the labour market segmentation across regions, gender, industries, etc. Many papers have pointed to this segmentation (e.g. ADB, 2006).

In which direction is the government heading in order to tackle the WTO access? There's no doubt that the WTO access will provoke a profound change in the country's economic structure. At a recent international conference (see references below) on Viet Nam, held at IUED last December, CIEM (Central Institute for Economic Management, Hanoi) experts pointed out that some of the major challenges would be: to conduct institutional reforms and broader integration, to secure FDI (including in service sectors) and to adapt its human resource development by some fundamental changes in the education and training system. The country has already started some profound reforms and a new education bill is under discussion. Meanwhile, the authorities have agreed to privatize parts of the education and training sector. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, the goal is to raise

the enrolment rate of universities and colleges from 250,000 students at present to 420,000 by 2010, and to 1.2 million by 2020. However, the government has said that, within these totals, it would gradually reduce the proportion of university students from 78.4% at present to 56% by 2020 while raising the ratio of college students from 21.6% to 44%, respectively (Vietnam News Brief Service, 18 July 2006). At the same time, more technical secondary schools and technical training programmes would be implemented. Therefore, in July the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has announced that it would grant licenses to individuals and organizations to run vocational schools provided certain criteria and standards are met. Vietnam counts now nearly 1,600 public vocational training centres and schools attended by 1.1 million people annually.

If privatization appears to be one of the main answers to the WTO challenges for skills development, questions immediately arise concerning accreditation, quality, access, institutional procedures for skills' policies and for provincial inequalities. In a country where education is already highly competitive and where 37% of university and colleges graduates remain unemployed, not only have SD strategies and policies to be adjusted to include raising awareness questions but also the design process of SD strategies has to be reconsidered to better reflect the changes of the modern economy. The continual shortage of technical workers and technicians will remain a problem in any industrial and economic shift that the country is hoping to make with the WTO access. The danger for the country is that the current gaps between the SD strategies and policies and the needs of a modern economy and labor market briefly described in this paper will expand.

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NEW SKILLS POLICIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PRIORITY SKILLS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

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Keywords

South Africa, Post-basic education and training, Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa

Summary

This article examines the education and training dimensions of South Africa's new development strategy, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (AsgiSA), and highlights the considerable attention given to post-basic education and training (PBET) in this document. Further, it examines some of the challenges South Africa faces in meeting the PBET goals of the AsgiSA.

In July 2005, President Mbeki announced the launch of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA), a new development strategy designed to help the South African state meet

the ANC's 2004 election pledges, namely, to:

- halve unemployment;
- halve poverty;
- accelerate employment equity; and
- improve broad-based black economic empowerment.

AsgiSA outlines a very different development path from the current orthodoxy of the Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in spite of the common commitment to halving poverty. This difference in approach encompasses the education and skills sector, where post-basic provision is given considerable attention.

AsgiSA has 6 objectives:

1. Infrastructure programmes
2. Sector investment (or industrial) strategies
3. Skills and education initiatives
4. Second economy interventions
5. Macroeconomic issues
6. Public administration issues

The summary document for AsgiSA argued the following about the centrality of education and training to growth:

For both the public infrastructure and the private investment programmes [AsgiSA priorities 1 and 2], the single greatest impediment is shortage of skills—including professional skills such as engineers and scientists; managers such as financial, personnel and project managers; and skilled technical employees such as artisans and IT technicians. (Republic of South Africa, 2006, p. 9)

The AsgiSA plan also introduced a new structure to drive this process: the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA). JIPSA brings together ministers, business leaders, trade unionists and educationalists to identify urgent skills needs and quick and effective solutions. In her speech at the launch of JIPSA, Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka identified the following as the key areas of skills shortage to be targeted:

- high level engineering and planning skills for infrastructure development;
- city, urban and regional planning and engineering skills for local and provincial governments;
- artisans and technicians, especially for infrastructure development;
- management and planning skills in the social sectors and for local government;
- teacher training for maths, science and English;
- skills for the priority sectors, especially in project management, general management and finance; and
- skills for local economic development (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2006).

JIPSA is intended to build on more than a decade of policy and institutional development in education and training. Key elements of this include:

- Curriculum reform throughout the education system, centred on a shift to an outcomes-based model and the introduction of a National Qualifications Framework.
- Higher education reorganisation featuring a “new institutional landscape” characterised by mergers and upgrading of technikons to become universities of science and technology, and also a stronger quality assurance system, managed by the Council on Higher Education.
- Further education and training transformation, also featuring institutional mergers but, more recently, focusing on curriculum reform and a recapitalisation programme.
- A new skills development system, driven by two National Skills Development Strategies and

featuring a new vocational qualification (the learnership), a levy-grant mechanism and new sector education and training authorities (SETAs).

- Adult basic education and training expansion, with new qualifications and delivery mechanisms and a commitment to the recognition of prior learning.
- An overarching human resources development strategy designed to coordinate the work of the two line departments and other national and provincial departments.

AsgiSA, is well-located in the national context. There are highly plausible, multiple reasons for the South African state's decision to follow this particular development path with its stress on the centrality of post-basic education and skills and of the state's leadership role. Without higher growth, and better economic structure and infrastructure, South Africa will not reach its stated goals for poverty and unemployment.

Nonetheless, the challenge of meeting these ambitious goals will not be easy. As far as post-basic education and training are concerned, three particular challenges stand out:

1. how to build robust institutions (including finances and staffing) that can deliver efficiently on education and skills, including public vocational providers and sectoral bodies;
2. how to ensure that provision is relevant to both economic and social needs rather than a reflection of the institutional interests of particular departments; and
3. how to build the skills and culture of the public service rapidly whilst also delivering services.

Of course, it can be argued that it is these kinds of weaknesses that JIPSA and AsgiSA are committed to addressing. However, the point here is to highlight the very serious obstacles that need to be overcome in order for these strategies to succeed.

It is unclear whether the concentration of power over development policy in the hands of the Deputy President will be sufficient to overcome such obstacles. If it is true, as she states, that failure in the human resource and skills development sphere will mean that AsgiSA fails, then the prospects are far from clear.

Whatever the outcome, there are strong reasons for other African countries and development cooperation agencies to follow the South African experiment closely as a valuable new perspective on how to support the internationally accepted goal of halving poverty through interventions in education and training.

[This is an abridged version of a paper to be published in the *International Journal of Education and Development* during 2007 and already available online from the IJED website-
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INFORMAL SECTOR TECHNICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES IN THE MAINTENANCE OF MODERN AUTOMOBILES IN NIGERIA

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Keywords

Nigeria, Informal sector, Traditional apprenticeship, Informal automobile sector

Summary

This article examines skills development in the informal automobile sector of Nigeria, describing the new challenges those working in this sector face as a result of having to deal with more sophisticated automobile technology.

The more sophisticated automobiles become in North America, Europe and Japan, the more difficult it is to service those exported to developing countries. This paradox is obvious in Nigeria where the adverse effects of the defunct Structural Adjustment Programme reduced considerably the number of formal sector automobile service companies, thus leaving the informal sector with the arduous task of servicing cutting edge technology in modern automobiles. These mechanics use three major innovative ways in servicing recent auto technology namely: reconverting to older models, manufacturing worn-out components and cannibalising components from another recent model of the same car (Ogwo, 2004). These maintenance techniques give an overview of the skills development maze of the informal sector automobile industry which could be more appreciated by having an overview of the personnel and resources available to the sector.

The auto industry is one of the largest in the Nigerian informal sector. It includes a range of tradesmen: automechanics, auto electricians, auto body mechanics, spare parts dealers, vulcanisers etc. Many of the mechanics are ex-workers of the multinational auto companies. Others are the products of the apprenticeship training programme of the informal sector. The primary modes of admission into these latter programmes are parental/guardian recommendation and oral interview; the fees charged range from less than ₦5, 000 (\$36) to ₦10, 000 (\$74) for a training period of 3 – 4 years (auto-electricians) or 5 – 6 years (auto-mechanics) and there is basically no written curriculum for training the apprentices: rather the nature of the clients' reported problems dictates what an apprentice learns (Ogwo, 2004). Other skills development problems facing the informal automobile sector include: lack of diagnostic/repair equipment, no regular or widespread retraining technical programme (except for the fairly expensive one organized by Peugeot Assembly of Nigeria in Kaduna which does not target the informal sector directly) and the non provision for the informal sub-sectors in the National Automotive Policy (NAP, 2003). Faced with these problems it is apparent the sector will find it increasingly difficult to cope with the maintenance of the modern automobiles. According to Kim (2000) when technology is mature and simple, local formal sector firms can reverse-engineer foreign products but at the emerging stage, they can establish R & D outposts in advanced countries and use strategic alliances to gain access to frontier technologies. Unfortunately, the informal sector mechanics cannot do any of such things like foreign licensing, intensifying in-house R & D nor establishing R & D outposts in advanced countries in order to respond appropriately to the maintenance of vehicles below eight years old. It is a wrong policy assumption that technological innovations will emerge automatically, in time, through learning-by-doing; a better approach would be to perceive training as an integral aspect of technological learning in any policy development.

Indeed innovative policies are needed to provide sufficient stimuli (Mani, 2001) for the formal automobile companies to invest in training and the salvaging of the skills development situation in the informal auto industry. The government needs to provide enabling policies targeted at the motor companies, foreign investors and international NGOs and agencies for retraining of the mechanics, regulating/certifying the training offered by the apprenticeship programmes. It amounts to policy inconsistency to expect citizens to buy eight year old cars without also providing for their maintenance, especially as few citizens can afford the maintenance charges of the formal sector automobile companies. Against the background of globalization, international agencies and regional bodies should establish diagnostic centres and commission the development of capacity building programmes; otherwise the mechanics will be compromising the wellbeing of the vehicles, their owners, other road users and the economy of entire country. Help is needed right now!

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CAN SKILLS TRAINING HELP BREAK THE CYCLE OF DEPRIVATION FOR THE POOR? LESSONS FROM NORTHERN GHANA

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Keywords

Skills training, Vocational training institutes, Poverty reduction, Ghana

Summary

This article presents a summary of preliminary findings from a first round of fieldwork with vocational training institutes in Northern Ghana. The research seeks to better understand the pathways from skill to work among the poor.

In line with the renewed interest in understanding the pathways from skill to work among poor youths, Associates for Change is collaborating with a group of UK researchers to undertake a three-year study in Ghana. This is part of the Research on Outcomes to Education (RECOUP) study, funded by DFID.²

This paper presents a summary of preliminary findings from a first round of fieldwork with vocational training institutes (VTIs) in Northern Ghana.

Who are enrolling for skills training?

The majority of those signing up for skills training are youth who have been unsuccessful in making the transition from junior to senior secondary school. Each year, large numbers of students fail to enter senior secondary, a situation engendered by a combination of household poverty and the very low quality of instruction in basic schools across the northern savannah.

Are training costs really anti-poor?

While fees can deter poor people from enrolling for training, they do not appear to be the primary barrier to the acquisition of skills. Most training institutions do not prevent defaulting students from completing their training. In most cases, institutions only resort to withholding the examination results of those in arrears. Thus, many poor people manage to train at very low cost.

Our findings also suggest that requiring students to contribute to training costs can actually help to foster a commitment to learning. Participants in the government's fee-free Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) were consistently adjudged as being the least committed, with dropout rates of the order of 60% at some institutions.³ However, cost-recovery/ cost-sharing policies

² The author is solely responsible for the views expressed here.

³ The STEP programme has now closed.

can also exclude the poor from training if applied mechanically and insensitively, with no provision for assessing individual needs and supporting the poorest to overcome relevant financial barriers.

What are the main factors influencing attrition?

Trainees are more likely to drop out where they perceive that they are not receiving meaningful training (e.g. if training materials are not available) or where the opportunity costs are especially high. Retention rates are highest at institutions where the supply of training materials is regular and the relevance of training is clear and they are lowest where funding for recurrent costs is a huge challenge. In one institution where street children continually have to make the tough choice between earning an income and acquiring a productive skill, the dropout rate is a relatively high 27%. The quality of trainer-trainee relationships and the availability of responsive counselling were also found to impact on the chances of poor trainees completing the training programme.

Does the post-training environment matter?

Inadequate access to start-up capital is the most consistent barrier in the transition from training to work (typically self-employment). In one NGO programme which integrates start-up support (in the form of equipment credits), an impressive 88% of graduates are in work. Low purchasing power, associated with an economy dominated by subsistence agriculture, does little to stimulate business. In spite of the very real constraints in the wider enterprise environment, however, the evidence is that -- among those who eventually manage to set themselves up in self-employment -- prospects are better for those who are highly motivated and those resolutely implementing clearly-conceived business promotion strategies.

What can we learn from NGOs?

While acknowledging exceptions, NGO programmes generally invest more attention in 'soft' processes such as graduate monitoring. Such supportive monitoring is emerging as a crucial factor in realising and sustaining positive labour market outcomes for the poor. NGOs are also more likely to engage with communities in ways designed to enhance the prospects of poor youths staying the course. In some of the poorest communities, high-quality community animation has resulted in a preparedness of poor families to share in the cost of training their wards. Overall, therefore, NGO programmes are proving to be more successful in terms of delivering pro-poor outcomes -- notwithstanding the fact that their training costs are sometimes comparable to those of other training providers.

For more information see the RECOUP website:

<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/commonwealth/index.html>

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EXCITEMENT ABOUT GROWTH, DISAPPOINTMENT ABOUT SKILLS?

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Keywords

Ghana, Skills development, Informal sector, private sector

Summary

This article examines recent developments in Ghana's skills and private sector development (PSD) strategies. It argues that while sustained growth appears to have occurred hand-in-hand with an improvement in the enabling environment for formal PSD, the same has not been the case for the informal private sector. On the skills side there are some developments to be concerned about; e.g. a proposed formalisation of traditional apprenticeships, the politicisation of training schemes and the neglect of the lowest cost public training provider, ICCES. Nonetheless, the establishment in July 2006 of a Council for TVET could help to coordinate Ghana's currently fragmented skills development system -- assuming it is not weakened through inter-ministerial wrangling.

Since the early 1980s Ghana has experienced sustained GDP growth, averaging 4.9% per year in the period 1984-2005. In 2006 the Government of Ghana (GoG) made growth a much more explicit focus in its development strategy: clearly signalled, for example, in the renaming of the 'GPRS' acronym from the 2003-2005 *Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy* (GPRS I), to the 2006-2009 *Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy* (GPRS II).

Both the GPRS I and the GPRS II see the private sector, both formal and informal, as the main "engine of growth" and poverty reduction. The theme of the 2006 National Budget - *Investing in People, Investing in Jobs* also underlines the government's focus on jobs. The *private sector development (PSD) strategy 2004-2008* outlines Ghana's plans to achieve a "golden age of business". The PSD strategy underlines the importance of investing in the enabling environment for private sector growth and outlines policies concerning the macro-economic environment, financial sector reform, infrastructure development, public sector reform, contract enforcement/debt recovery and the land system and property rights.

Indeed, according to the World Bank's *Doing Business* surveys, the business environment for formal enterprise is improving in Ghana (though Ghana is still halfway down the overall league table). The same, however, is generally not the case for informal enterprise. In practice, support to private sector growth is largely concentrated in the formal sector with informal micro-enterprises (IMEs) receiving little support from government despite the fact that the informal economy makes up some 90% of employment activities in Ghana.

Since 2001 there have been some general improvements in the enabling environment for IMEs, notably in transportation and mobile telecommunications infrastructure and in the extension of national health and social security insurance to informal sector workers (albeit only to a limited number). Politically also there appears to be more support for PSD than there was during President Rawlings' time. However, in general the IME environment remains disabling. Income tax and utility costs have increased significantly, and agencies concerned with delivering financial and non-financial business development services to IMEs have failed to make significant changes to their operation: access to formal finance, for example, remains out of reach for most. For the many thousands of youth graduating from skills training schemes, formal post-training support still remains fragmented and inaccessible. Most entrants into the IME sector, therefore, continue to rely on family and other informal networks to assist them in the process of securing resources for start-up.

Nonetheless, three developments in 2005/6 show that the GoG is starting to focus more on the informal private sector: the President's Sessional Address to Parliament in February 2005 acknowledged the critical importance of the informal sector; a decision was made to establish a unit under the Ministry of Trade Industry and Private Sector Development (MoTIPP) which has responsibility for the informal sector; and a nationwide informal sector survey was due to take place 2006-2007. The latter development, however, has stalled (as of December 2006) due to lack of funding from the GoG to the implementing body (the Private Enterprise Foundation in Accra).

2006 also witnessed the launching of the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP), which has added a third dimension to the GoG's job creation strategy. While the provision of skills and education alongside the development of an enabling environment for PSD are still foremost among policy objectives, the GoG is also intending to create formal and informal jobs for 150,000 over the next year under the NYEP.

On the skills side, since 2001 there has been a renewed government focus on skills development and its relationship with combating unemployment (whatever 'unemployment' means in the Ghanaian context). The GoG continues to pursue the assumption that there is some semi-automatic link between the provision of skills training and the reduction of unemployment. This renewed focus has been reflected in both the GPRS I and GPRS II documents and has been driven by a series of democratic, poverty-reduction and economic imperatives. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), delivered through public and private schools, vocational training institutes and traditional apprenticeships, continues to be seen as an important link to work. Between 2003-2005 the GoG funded short-duration skills training through the Skills Training and Employment Placement

Programme (STEP) – a direct response to government concerns regarding unemployment (seen in the late 2001 ‘unemployment’ registration exercise). STEP was a highly political programme and the results appear to have been largely unsatisfactory: skills programmes were delivered in a top-down fashion leading some District Assemblies to complain that STEP has delivered “useless” courses. More worryingly, the microfinance component of the STEP – one of the original three principal components of the programme - has failed to materialise for most STEP graduates. As of October 2006, loans appear to have reached only 10% of those trained. Although the GoG has put an optimistic spin on the outcomes of STEP and it has been claimed that young people trained under STEP have started their own businesses or secured employment, it is probably telling that STEP was renamed the ‘Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme’ (in 2005), as it had signally failed to connect with job opportunities the very large number of young people who registered.

The 2004 education White Paper and the TVET Policy Framework have set a challenging agenda for skills reform in Ghana. Among other things, this involves developing a National Qualifications Framework, scrapping the vocationalisation of the Junior Secondary Schools and, instead, diversifying the Senior Secondary level and formalising traditional apprenticeships. The intention to formalise traditional apprenticeship training is of particular concern, given the problems associated with similar attempts in other countries (e.g. the Open Apprenticeship Scheme in Nigeria). What is particularly unfortunate from a poverty reduction perspective is that some components of Ghana’s TVET system, such as the Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills (ICCES) - which appears to be the lowest cost public training provider of skills for poorer young people - have been the most neglected by the GoG. ICCES received a boost in 2002 when the GoG started to pay salaries of most instructors, but ICCES still remains chronically under-funded and suffers from acute managerial problems at the Directorate level.

In 2006 skills development has been a priority concern to national policy-makers. In July the Council for TVET (COTVET) Bill, which has been almost 10 years in the making, was passed by Parliament. Its function is to coordinate TVET provision across the formal, informal and non-formal arenas and to harmonize the skills strategies across multiple ministries. COTVET claims it will develop a comprehensive demand-driven skills system for Ghana. However, there remain some serious challenges to the successful functioning of COTVET; not least those related to inter-ministerial cooperation.

There is still a great deal expected of the education and training system as the solution to un-/under-employment and poverty reduction, but without the concomitant creation of a supportive pro-poor decent and productive work environment, especially for the informal economy, these expectations are unlikely to be realised. While the GoG’s attention to economic growth is important, what is equally essential, if education and skills training are to be fully utilised in the labour market, is that there are more and better job opportunities available and more supportive micro- and small-enterprise policies developed. The NYEP appears to be one step towards creating employment opportunities, but it remains to be seen how successful the scheme will be, what will follow it (i.e. a long term sustainable employment strategy) and where most of the 150,000 ‘jobs’ will actually be created: it might be that most ‘jobs’ created under the NYEP are in fact jobs in the informal sector, which brings us full circle to the need for better policies and programmes for the IME sector.

The New Patriotic Party (NPP)’s first term of office (2001-2004) did not bring about the kind of visible ‘positive change’ that much of the population expected. Now, mid-way through its second term, the NPP faces significant pressure noticeably to improve living standards and to follow-through on job creation pledges or else risk losing the 2008 elections. The effect such political pressure will have on policy formation and implementation is perhaps already being seen in STEP; and the launching of the NYEP may be another manifestation of emerging populist policies.

For a longer discussion on these issues see: Palmer (2007) *Skills Development, the Enabling Environment and Informal Micro-Enterprise in Ghana*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh. For more information or a copy email Rob.Palmer@ed.ac.uk.

RETHINKING SKILLS IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA, WITH AN INDIA FOCUS

SKILLS AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY ACROSS SOUTH ASIA

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Keywords

Education, Training, Knowledge economy, South Asia

Summary

Globalization and the knowledge economy pose numerous challenges as well as opportunities for developing countries, including those in the South Asia Region (SAR). This article argues that lifelong learning is essential as new and more complex skills are needed to respond to accelerating technological change and global flows of goods, services and know-how. It describes a recent regional conference on Education, Training and the Knowledge Economy in South Asia (New Delhi, September, 2006) organized by the World Bank to help SAR governments address these challenges.

Globalization and the knowledge economy pose numerous challenges as well as opportunities for developing countries, including those in the South Asia Region (SAR). Expanding trade and globalization of production and foreign capital make continuous learning over the work-life an imperative, as skills acquired in schools and in the workplace become obsolete more quickly and new and more complex skills are needed to respond to accelerating technological change. Global flows of goods, services and know-how also create pressures for economies to restructure, as some industries decline and new opportunities arise in others; these forces, in turn, create demand for re-skilling of those made redundant and for skills-upgrading and training in new skills for others employed in new industries.

How educational and training systems respond to these challenges will have far reaching implications for economic growth and competitiveness of countries in the SAR, and for income growth, employment, job creation, and poverty reduction. Policymakers in many SAR countries are currently grappling with the challenges of reforming their education and training systems. There is a broader debate going on whether to vocationalise secondary education to better prepare school graduates for the new skill challenges of the workplace and, given the magnitude of demands on the public education and training systems, on what the role of the private sector should be in education and training provision.

To help SAR governments address these challenges, the World Bank organized a regional conference on Education, Training and the Knowledge Economy in South Asia in New Delhi, India on September 14-15, 2006. Funded in part by a dissemination grant from DFID, the conference sought to (a) better understand the skill implications of globalization and the knowledge economy; (b) share findings of the World Bank's economic sector work in the region and good practice international experiences; (c) address the debates about how best to reform education and training systems; and (d) catalyze SAR countries to come up with integrated cross-cutting strategies for addressing the challenges of the knowledge economy.

The two-day conference brought together about 100 policy makers and stakeholders from five SAR countries and World Bank and international experts. Participants shared their country experiences in reforming secondary education, improving the linkages between education and training, making post-school technical education and vocational training more demand-driven, and introducing innovative policy interventions to address shortcomings in these areas. Some highlights:

- In a taped video, Dr. Sam Pitroda from the India Knowledge Commission set the stage for the conference by speaking about the importance of vocational training and use of technology for equipping the workforce for the knowledge economy.
- Michelle Riboud presented key findings from a World Bank background paper on the skill implications of globalization in SAR, including evidence on rising returns over time to education, and on low levels of post-school training in all SAR countries as compared to other regions.
- World Bank and SAR participants presented and discussed the key challenges and future directions of reforms in education and training systems in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as lessons learned from ongoing reform efforts.
- Experts from Mexico and Malaysia provided insights into how their governments designed and implemented small and medium enterprise training programmes and training levy schemes to promote training among firms.

Further details, papers and conference presentations can be found at:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBIPROGRAMS/ICLP/0,,contentMDK:21045341~pagePK:64156158~piPK:64152884~theSitePK:461150,00.html>

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SKILLS AS SECURITY IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

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Keywords

Skills as Security, Informal Sector, India

Summary

Globalisation and trade liberalisation in India have led to a series of changes in the Indian labour market. Skills become a necessity and a form of security to improve the employability of the workers. This article examines "skills as security" in the context of India's informal sector.

Skills as security: Globalisation and trade liberalisation in India have led to a series of changes in the Indian labour market. The direct consequences are the inflow of technology encouraged by the economic reforms and its impact on the growth of a skill based workforce. The technical change in industry is skill-biased and therefore leads to a wage premium for the skilled workers. The impact of skill-biased technological change can be seen in two ways. One view is that it has led to the exclusion of certain segments of the workforce such as women, unskilled workers, casual workers and rural workers. In all these cases it is mainly due to the lower levels of education and skill training among these segments of the workforce. The other view is that globalization and the opening up of the economy is a window of opportunity even for the small enterprises in the informal sector. We observed in a micro survey of the auto components sector that small enterprises are making every effort to take advantage of the opportunity they see in the expanding markets for motor vehicles (Unni and Rani, 2005).

In these two views lies the issue of security, both of informal workers and small enterprises. The emphasis on skills in the labour market has led to inequalities due to the wage premiums that the skilled workers attract. The process of informalisation also leads to job insecurity. For the small enterprises the issue of security is in the form of expanding, but fluctuating markets. While this is a window of opportunity and many entrepreneurs noted that they had to make the best of the markets

when they were growing, they were also aware of the possibility of collapse. The spirit of the small enterprises was to seize the opportunity when the markets were growing overcoming all hurdles in their path.

Both these issues of security, job and markets, lead us to view "skills as security" for workers in the informal sector. For the small entrepreneurs it is both "skills and technology as security". This emphasizes the need for a clear skill policy, and technology policy, for the workers and small enterprises. Skills become a necessity and a form of security to improve the employability of the workers. Skills are a method of improving human capital, which ensure income security to the workers, particularly for the poorly educated workers in developing countries as India.

Skill Training in ITI: In India, the government-run industrial training institute (ITI) has played a crucial role in providing skilled workers to the formal sector over the years. It was found that overall about 3-30 percent of the workers and 10-20 percent of the skilled workers training in the ITIs found work in the large enterprises in the formal sector (ILO, 2003). However, with economic reforms the public enterprises have either closed down or stopped recruiting and the private enterprises are using other methods such as the use of contract labour or out-sourcing to conduct their business. The employment of ITI graduates has therefore come down.

Traditional Apprenticeship Training: One of the main sources of skill training for the mass of the workforce in India is informal apprenticeship in informal enterprises. In many of the clusters of manufacturing industries, the method of recruiting workers is through engaging relatives and other known persons as a helper under a master or skilled worker. The 'trainee' at first only helps to fetch and carry for the master, then slowly begins to help the master in running the machine. In a study of automobile parts we found that the workers take two to ten years to become a semi-skilled and later a skilled worker in the enterprise.

There are various advantages of this informal training process. The advantages are that the training is flexible and involves the dynamic skills which are actually in demand. It is self-regulating and the costs are borne partly by the enterprise and mainly by the worker. There is no entry barrier of initial skill requirement or level of education as in the case of the public system. Only the willingness of the master, who is generally a relative, is required.

Obviously there are many disadvantages of such an informal system. The training is often based on traditional technology. The theoretical learning is weak and the training is limited to particular products or phases of production in the enterprise. Therefore, the trainees are unable to then apply their skill to other activities and it reduces their employability in any other industry or to operate any other type of machine.

Skill Training Models: Between these two very different forms of skill training, we suggest two models of training involving private-public partnership which would take care of the deficiencies in the supply-demand sides of the current models.

Model 1- Private-Public Partnership within an on-the-job model: As we saw in our micro-study, the major form of acquiring occupational skills in small businesses and informal enterprises is through the traditional apprenticeship model or "*ustad shagird*" [learner-master] route. How best can the government and private sector co-operate to help upgrade the existing initiatives of this model? A system by which such a model can be partly formalized and the cost borne by the worker and the enterprise can be financed by an external agency perhaps in the form of a loan to be repaid later.

Model 2 - Private-Public Partnership within "Skills Training Centres": The service providers charged with the responsibility of training will design the curricula to suit the needs that have been established either through market scans and/or that can be justified based on the established skills gaps among the potential trainees. The objective of the curriculum should be to increase the employability of trainees in the local or regional context and/or raise the ability of the trainee to absorb higher levels of skills training available locally or at other locations. These will not be 'free' courses. A cost should be attached to each course based on overall expenditure (capital expenses amortized

appropriately). Each trainee will be given a 'training loan' (without collateral) from a bank, which is to be repaid in small instalments after the trainee secures a job. The 'training loan' should include cost of the course plus the cost of commuting to the centre if the commute is long.

Two models of skill training are thus possible which take into account the skill training needs of the local economy and of the trainees. Such a training programme providing "skills security" is more likely to create a faster rate of absorption of the trainees into the workforce and growth of employment in the local economy.

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TRAINING FOR INFORMAL ECONOMY

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Keywords

Training, Informal economy, India

Summary

This article explains the focus of a new book on *Training for Informal Economy* in India. The purpose of this book is to collect, understand and crystallize the experiences and critical features of skill training in the informal economy, so that a range of strategies could be developed.

Ashoka Chandra and M. K. Khanijo have just brought out (2007) an edited volume on *Training for Informal Economy* published by Excel Books, New Delhi.

Much of the research in the informal economy in India has concentrated on conceptual issues, data systems and range and type of activities. Skill training, on the other hand, has not received due attention. The purpose of this book, which is based on the papers prepared for a seminar, is not to discuss the theoretical framework of training, nor make a comparative analysis of various options, but to collect, understand and crystallize the experiences and their critical features, so that a range of strategies for training for the informal economy could be developed.

This book lays emphasis on training as a strategy for development by improving skills, productivity and incomes of informal sector workers. To this end, the book brings out the importance of studying occupations, carrying out training needs analysis, and imparting competency-based training. Issues such as training of trainers, pedagogy of training and certification of skills, have been dealt with.

It is now generally recognized that training for the informal economy cannot be patterned after training approaches for the formal economy for a number of reasons. Among others, training for the informal economy has to be relatively more specific to the product and process; it has to be imparted largely at the place of work; pedagogical techniques have to suit the trainees who are generally semi-literate or even illiterate; and the benefits of training must be immediate. Training also has to be much more

flexible to suit specific economic and social circumstances of different groups of informal sector trainees.

With these considerations in mind, it was felt that mapping of any specific experiences of training and skill building in the informal economy could provide useful pointers to developing workable training strategies. Accordingly, a number of field level experiences have been described in the book with an eye to identifying and speculating on: what will work, what will not, and why. Some case studies highlight people's participation through NGOs in choice and delivery of training. A particularly notable approach, described in the book, is the use of formal sector institutions – the Community Polytechnics - in delivering informal sector training. Apart from offering normal training courses for the organized industrial sector, these institutions impart competency-based training to persons from the informal economy, that is entirely need- and demand-driven, with no restrictions whatsoever of age, prior educational qualification, or employment status of the training aspirant. Typically a Community Polytechnic ascertains the training needs of the community through a techno-economic and social survey of the area, as well as the employment potential of viable economic activities in the area. A Community Polytechnic works through a main centre in the polytechnic, one centre in nearby urban slums, and 4 to 6 extension centres in village clusters, each covering 10 to 12 villages. Each extension centre has a small workshop and a work-shed constructed on land provided by the village *panchayat* (council). It works as a training cum production centre and also offers technical and other support services to the local community. Commencing with a limited experiment in 36 polytechnics some three decades back, the scheme of Community Polytechnics has expanded to 675 polytechnics and is slated to cover all existing polytechnics in the coming 5 year plan. The scheme has been evaluated twice by external agencies, which have commended the particular success of Community Polytechnics in building effective linkages with the local community and in imparting skills.

Going by this successful experience of using formal sector institutions for delivering informal sector training, the book recommends developing 5000 plus existing Industrial Training Institutes/Centres, as Community ITIs on the pattern of Community Polytechnics. It also suggests that formal training institutions could be involved in a variety of systemic roles in support of informal sector training such as: planning, research, developing sound pedagogy, building competency standards, testing competencies and certification, backstopping delivery agencies, training delivery agencies, interfacing with concerned NGOs, monitoring and evaluation, policy making, analyzing labour markets, and establishing and running Labour Market Information Systems at district, state and national levels.

The book highlights that public investment on education and training currently flows largely to formal training institutions that cater mostly to the formal economy, and argues that effective advocacy is needed to ensure that adequate investment is made in training for the informal economy.

The book could well be useful to all those interested in training for the informal economy especially policy makers, implementers, trainers and researchers.

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VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN INDIA

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Keywords

Vocational training, India

Summary

This article outlines vocational training in India that takes place in both the public sector and in the informal private sector. It outlines the options for the reform of both these training modalities.

1. Largely because of the growth in factor productivity, India's economy has grown rapidly over the past decade. Continuing to raise labour productivity while at the same time generating enough jobs for a growing labour force is proving a massive challenge. This issue has come into sharp focus over the previous decade when economic growth accelerated but employment growth fell to less than half that of the 1980s, raising fears that India is witnessing jobless growth.
2. Education and skill acquisition are important determinants of firm productivity. There is evidence of growing demand for workers with secondary education but the same cannot be said of workers with technical/vocational skills. Since the early 1980s, the relative wages of workers with secondary education have been growing even as these workers have become relatively more abundant. However, the relative supply of workers with technical/vocational skills has declined throughout this period while their relative wages have also come down since the early 1990s. This may be due more to the fact that workers with technical/vocational qualifications do not have skills that meet the labour market (often because of the poor quality of training provided) than that there is little demand for skilled workers.
3. Although productivity has been increasing and education levels rising, India still needs to improve education and training quality. While significant improvements will need to be made on quantitative indicators, little is known about qualitative indicators – e.g. because India does not participate in standardized international examinations, there are no good comparative measures of quality. Providing more education and skills cannot, by itself, be enough – quality and labour market relevance is crucial. The education and skills provided must be relevant to the labour market. Acquiring skills is essential, provided those skills are up-dated or meet industry requirements

Vocational Training in the Public Sector

4. *Certificate level crafts training provide training to about 700,000 students.* It is open to 5 million or so students a year who leave school after completing Grade 10. About 80 percent of the students take admission in engineering courses, and the remaining in the non-engineering trades. In addition, there are about 150,000 apprentices in various industries.
5. Labour market outcomes for graduates of the training system are fairly poor. Even three years after graduation, over 60 percent of all graduates remained unemployed. Although a significant proportion of apprentices find employment, close to two-thirds are not employed in the trade for which they were trained – a third of these had been trained in obsolete trades. There appear to be three reasons for this: (a) limited growth and labour demand in the manufacturing sector, (b) mismatch between the skills attained and those actually in demand, and (c) mismatch between the skills taught and the graduates' own labour market objectives.
6. Employers still experienced problems finding employees with the right skills. In most cases, these shortages were in trades that were supplied by the Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) – implying that their graduates did not suit employers' needs. Most employers felt that ITI graduates did not perform well enough in the use of computers, practical use of machines, communications and team work practices. Employers also felt that graduates lack practical knowledge and need significant on-the-job training to bring their skill levels to match the needs of the industry.
7. These poor outcomes arise owing to the public training system facing many constraints. These include the following:
 - *The management of the system is fragmented.* Management of the system is shared between central and state authorities – the National and State Authorities for Vocational Training (NCVT and SCVTs). While different authorities have clearly specified functions on paper, there is little coordination between them, leading to diverse accountability. There is often a duplication of effort with different agencies often performing the same functions. Furthermore, a preoccupation with providing and financing training has resulted in the government neglecting a key role – providing information about the availability and effectiveness of training programs.

- *Institutions do not have incentives to improve their performance.* Institution managers have little freedom to fill places to capacity, replace training courses with new ones, and ensure that students receive quality training.
- *Industry involvement in the vocational training system is nascent.* Until recently there was limited participation of employers in defining training policies and developing courses. This is now changing, and industry associations and individual employers are showing considerable interest in involving themselves in developing and managing ITIs.

8. Options for reform at the policymaking and institutional levels include the following...

9. A key role NCVT and SCVT's should play is in the provision of information and facilitating the evaluation of training provided in institutions. A key function for the NCVT and the SCVTs is to provide information on the nature and quality of training available, and facilitating regular and independent evaluations on the impacts of training programs –expanding this role may be one of the most effective ways for governments to foster the development of a relevant and cost-effective VET system.

10. At the institutional level, involving the private sector in management is going to be critical if institutions are to be responsive to labour market needs. A very positive development is that Institutional Management Committees, chaired by the private sector and involving employers, are increasingly being formed. However, as yet these bodies only act with limited decision making powers and that, too, in respect of a few training programmes. Unless they are given greater control over decision making at the institution level, their efficacy will be limited.

11. Involving employers in management will only yield positive results if state governments are willing to provide institutions with greater autonomy and make them more accountable for performance. This means letting institutions administer themselves and keep the funds they raise through fees and production. Elements of autonomy that should be introduced include – letting ITIs, in consultation with employers, decide on their own training programmes; giving institution managers the freedom to hire and fire teachers, including contract teachers and non-teaching staff; allowing ITIs to generate revenues by selling goods and services; and allowing ITIs to set more realistic fees (while the government will still bear a significant portion of the financing). However, autonomy is not a panacea. It needs to be accompanied by a new accountability framework for ITIs. Indicators of internal and external efficiency should be used to measure the performance of institutions and to match performance to financing.

Training for the Informal Sector

12. Over 90 percent of employment in India is in the 'informal' sector, with employees working in relatively low productivity jobs. Provision of appropriate skills may thus be an important intervention to increasing the productivity of this workforce. However, both demand as well as supply-side constraints have inhibited skills development. On the demand-side, few employees in the informal sector see the importance of skills training. Many identify lack of access to capital, cumbersome bureaucratic bottlenecks, and lack of access to quality equipment as their main challenges.

13. On the supply-side, there has been a variety of attempts to assist with training in the informal sector. The most important are probably Community Polytechnics (training about 450,000 people a year within communities), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (offering 255 types of vocational courses to almost 1.5 million people, mostly women) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) (offering 85 courses through over 700 providers recognised by the NIOS). None of these programmes has been evaluated rigorously.

14. Public training institutions play a limited role in producing skills for the informal sector. While one of the mandates of ITIs is to train workers for the informal sector, evidence shows this is rarely the case. The share of ITI graduates who entered self-employment or became employers was not much greater than 10 per cent. The main reason is that running a small business requires much more than

simply possessing a particular occupational skill. It requires the ability to run a small business, which requires a person to be multi-skilled. This sort of training is not imparted in the ITIs.

15. The diverse training needs of informal sector operators cannot be met by simply reorienting public training institutions. Public institutions would find it difficult to make the changes and serve both the formal and informal sectors with the same skill and experience. It would require a major investment to upgrade facilities and equipment, to attract, develop, and retain new staff, and to develop new curricula and materials to be able to provide the package of skills needed by the informal sector. Locally based non-government training providers – often NGOs - may be more effective in providing services that meet the needs of the informal economy.

16. The governments can play a facilitating role in training for the informal sector. Instead of delivering training themselves, governments could focus on creating an environment to support non-public providers through: (i) establishing a policy framework (regulations and incentives); (ii) supporting curriculum development, training of trainers, and competency-based skills testing; (iii) stimulating investment through tax incentives or financial support so as to increase the capacity and the quality of training; and (iv) revising apprenticeship acts that are outdated and contain regulations that hamper enterprise-based training.

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TRADITIONS IN SKILL AND MICRO-ENTERPRISES

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Keywords

Skills training, Micro-enterprise, India

Summary

The tradition of imparting skills through micro-enterprises has had a long history in India. This article describes how the feminization of many traditional male-dominated trades is steadily becoming the norm. It also notes that while traditional skills need to be upgraded to achieve higher productivity and competitiveness, the traditional value systems in imparting these skills need to be kept alive.

India has been home to a diverse and intricate array of crafts and skills which have developed over the centuries into the form they are seen in today. Crafts and trades have flourished as artisans/craftspersons themselves have taken pride in their products and the involvement of the next generation has ensured continuity.

Traditionally, “skills” have been passed on from one generation to another through in-house training from a parent/teacher (or “guru”) to son/daughter/student (or “shishya”) - a gradual initiation into the trade starts early in life by initially just watching, leading to further steps starting with handling of tools as an on-the-job training and (if possible) eventually to managing the family or micro-enterprise. Sometimes, of course, students from the neighbourhood would also join in to learn a particular aspect of the craft (such as etching/painting on artefacts). As has been seen in the brassware industry in Moradabad in the State of Uttar Pradesh in India, children as young as five years old have been initiated into the trade by just sitting with parents and playfully turning the wheel for lighting the furnace nearby or by just hammering on the metal brass plates. It was and is still believed that the interest of the younger generation in the craft builds up through a day-to-day involvement – in other words “catching them young” to carry on the skill or enterprise.

Skills training, as is the case in most traditional trades, seemed to be the male bastion and adolescent girls/women were relegated to secondary tasks. For example, in brassware where women were confined to cleaning brass artefacts or setting/clearing the workplace, they are gradually taking to

learning specialized tasks such as etching, painting and also moulding the metal at the furnace. This aspect also comes to the fore in traditions of weaving as seen in the weaving of Kota Doria fabric in Rajasthan where women are gradually taking over as is also the case for example with “chikan work” (fine needlework usually done with white thread on white muslin) from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh where women have already taken over in large numbers. Feminization of many traditional trades is steadily becoming the norm as traditional skills, though keeping their essence, need to be upgraded at various levels for them to be lucrative in today’s competitive world.

The tradition of imparting skills through micro-enterprises has kept the communities together but winds of change are beginning to throw this off balance. True, the traditional skills need to be upgraded to achieve higher productivity and competitiveness but the traditional value systems in imparting these skills needs to be kept alive. Pride in the end-product, developing interpersonal relationships/bonding, and networking laterally and vertically succeeded in developing synergies which were all a part of skill training imparted gradually through day-to-day interactions between the teacher and the student over a period of time. These traditions kept bubbling hubs of activity and creativity alive through centuries. It would be imperative to inculcate the positive dimensions from these traditions into today’s changing scenario of imparting skills.

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THE PATTERNS OF VET REFORM IN KYRGYZSTAN

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Keywords

VET reform, Kyrgyzstan

Summary

This article describes how the VET reform in Kyrgyzstan has been influenced by multiple factors in the context of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Currently VET programmes are delivered in 112 initial and 64 secondary VET schools.

The VET reform in Kyrgyzstan started as a response to the changing development conditions, and has been influenced by often opposing factors. On the one hand, these were the factors of globalization and the market-oriented, democratic development. On the other hand there were other factors that derive from the non-market, autocratic system.

Some policy decisions responded to the objective driving factors, while others attempted to adjust reforms to the existing system that largely retained old structures, relations and norms. On the one hand, VET was recognized as a driving force for future development while, on the other hand, it in fact became a shelter for socially deprived youth.

Political and economic changes and their impact on the social area were the main factors that pushed the reforms in VET.

The loss of economic links and the collapse of production based on large enterprises caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union were some of the factors. Small and medium businesses with a new pattern of production appeared. The overall structure of the economy changed, shifting from industry to trade, agriculture to services. All these factors required a new pattern for the reproduction of personnel.

There were also social factors that had an impact on current VET, in particular the high levels of unemployment and poverty. Given the large proportion of youth in the demographic structure of the country, and the high levels of poverty and unemployment, the government had to use VET as a tool

for social security. VET was assigned a task of training and retraining the unemployed, with government funding covering salaries, student scholarships and meals. Access to training has been declared a priority in the national education policy.

There were also other factors that shaped the VET reforms in the country.

The state policy was to preserve the system and give the schools enough freedom for them to survive in the situation of scarce funding. Multi-source funding was introduced by law. It had its side-effect as well - more focus on production than on education services, perhaps inevitable in the situation of excess labour supply, and of a lack of demand for training.

While VET schools are mainly located in the regions, most are funded from the national budget. Because of such a financial arrangement and centralized administration, the schools have not become part of the regional development, and are losing regional stakeholders as a potential resource for the school development.

Several donors have been investing in VET and piloting innovations, without considerable system-wide changes. This is partly because the donor activities are often initiated only on donors' initiatives and objectives, partly due to the existing system of VET administration, and partly due to the level of available capacity.

There are two leading supervising ministries in the country; initial VET is under the Ministry of Labour, secondary VET is under the Ministry of Education, and there is no coordination and complementarity between them.

As a result, initial VET schools benefited from significant attention to labour and employment issues, and the donor funding allocated to the area of employment and training. Secondary VET schools were left without any attention and support at all, and were only surviving thanks to scarce government support and their own generated income. The reforms would have been more efficient and effective, if both sub-systems had developed under an integrated policy, had joined their resources and coordinated their activities. At present just such an initiative has started with the European Training Foundation's "Policy dialogue" activity.

Decision-making is based on the information received mainly from statistics offices and schools. There are nearly no signals from the labour market, due to the lack of the methodology, the required funding, and the capacity of both schools and employers to collect and analyse labour market information.

Even though the schools were given some freedom in decision-making, it is still rather centralised, prevents schools from flexibly responding to rapid changes, or from creating a market for their own educational services.

Still, many schools do their best to meet the labour market requirements through introducing new training programmes, modular training and interactive teaching. They get involved in projects and start delivering services to a wider clientele. And there have been quite a number of good experiences witnessed in the country. Unfortunately, these have not been described and disseminated system-wide.

As a result of such a situation, there is a gap between research, policy and practice which should be bridged. This task requires joining efforts and clear signals from the main stakeholders, the government and employers in the first place. All the above factors need to be considered and addressed to effect progress.

TOWARD COMPULSORY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: A DECADE ON

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Keywords

Vocational education, Uzbekistan, National Professional Training Programme

Summary

In 1997 Uzbekistan embarked on the globally unprecedented National Professional Training Programme that envisaged a gradual transition to compulsory universal vocational education for all. This article examines the implementation process of this unique programme.

In 1997 Uzbekistan embarked on the globally unprecedented National Professional Training Programme (NPTP) that envisaged a gradual transition to compulsory universal vocational education for all (9 years of secondary school + 3 years compulsory vocational education at college or lyceum) by 2009. In a country with a population of 26.5 million, the physical infrastructure that enabled the development of the vocational secondary education sector was built in a record-breaking time. After the NPTP was adopted, public budget resources, allocated to the education sector, began to be redistributed in favour of the secondary specialized vocational education system. Public budget spending for the secondary specialized vocational education was fairly stable with the share of some 7.5% of total budget per year. The vast majority of this spending for the system of secondary specialized vocational education was centralized investments in the construction and reconstruction of the educational establishments within this system (64% and 61% of total spending for the system of secondary specialized vocational education in 2004 and 2005 respectively). In addition to prioritized state-run financing, significant donor funds were invested in the system of secondary specialized vocational education, totaling to at least USD\$300 million. As a result, by the beginning of 2006–2007 academic year, 957 vocational colleges and 99 academic lyceums were constructed and reconstructed and a lot of work was done to change the appropriate state standards, curricula and retraining of teaching staff.

Apart from problems typical of any vocational education system (quality of training, professional-skill imbalance, etc.), the implementation process of this unique programme encountered certain specific problems:

- Scarce funding made it impossible to meet the planned student space: between 1998-2005 the programme for operationalizing new buildings for vocational education was met by not more than 55%. Nearly 550,000 school students graduate from the basic secondary school (9 forms) every year in Uzbekistan. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 56% of adolescents within the respective age group (788,000 people) were covered by the system of secondary specialized vocational education, while the rest of them either continued to obtain education in the 10th and 11th forms, or quit school education after graduating from the 9th form. Thus, to ensure 100% coverage of the school students with vocational education, the capacity of the secondary specialized vocational education system (i.e., student space) has to be doubled within the next three years (in numerical terms, 1,700 colleges and lyceums are required in total). To achieve the aforementioned value, centralized investment in comparable prices should be 5 times higher than the current level of investment.⁴
- A new concept of education effectively does not envisage training of specialists that belong to groups VII and VIII of the ISCO-88, that is, the specialists of working professions. With the 3-year vocational training, the graduates obtain higher skills than the existing jobs require. This situation is

⁴ The vast majority of the vocational education institutions established in the Soviet time have, by now, been reconstructed; thus, in the forthcoming years investment will have to be carried out in either constructing new buildings, or reconstructing the buildings of former schools which do not meet the requirements for vocational training process.

ineffective not only in terms of financial resources spent for training such specialists, but also it causes a gap between the job-related expectations of these graduates and the status that will be offered to them in the labour market. However, some vocational college graduates who have certain professions (e.g., teachers, legal professionals, health professionals, etc.) cannot find jobs because the national legislation provides for certain restrictions as regards employing professionals without higher education.

- Another major problem is the ineffective sectoral and geographical distribution of colleges. In many *rayons* (administrative districts) there are no colleges providing training in such important sectors as transport, telecommunication, and the energy industry. Whereas 27% of the total number of college graduates obtain medical and teaching qualifications. Given the low mobility of labour resources, this situation makes the imbalance, that currently exist in occupational labour markets, notably larger.
- The current system of vocational education causes contradiction between the principle of universality of education and the right to free choice of profession in consistence with one's likings and understanding of occupational demand in the labour market. At present, specialised colleges are training students in more than 300 occupational areas. Given the uneven geographic distribution of colleges, young people living in some *rayons* have access to training in 50 occupational areas. Entering colleges in other localities is usually difficult (college administrations first of all must ensure coverage of youth with training in their respective *rayons*, the number of hostels for college students is reduced every year, and high expenditures for transport and living needs also constrain the opportunity of obtaining education far from home).

As regards the timeframe for putting the planned number of colleges into operation (consequently, transition to universal vocational education), this problem will be solved, even though with certain delays. Addressing other specific problems in the Uzbekistani vocational education system, some fundamental changes are being discussed, specifically:

1. Aggregating the number of occupational areas for training from 300 to a maximum of 10-20 and developing new state standards and curricula;
2. Grouping related professions within each occupational area of training and developing training modules for professions so that students could obtain 3-4 professions, corresponding to VII-VIII groups of ISCO-88, or 1-2 professions, corresponding to III group, within 3 years;
3. Transition to the system of multi-area colleges, i.e., the system, in which every college or most of the colleges will provide vocational training in all 10-20 occupational areas.

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AGENCY RETHINKING OF TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ENGAGING WITH SKILLS AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

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Keywords

Skills, Youth, South Asia

Summary

Examining Technical Vocational and Skills Development (TVSD) in South Asia, the author asks: what is the most effective education/TVSD policy mix for these countries? The article then examines four key challenges confronting South Asia in engaging with skills and youth development in a rapidly changing world.

The World Bank's World Development Report (WDR) 2007 was launched globally at the Annual Meetings of the Bank and the IMF in Singapore in September 2006 and is focused on the youth of today, and how their development is critical for development overall. **A record 1.3 billion young**

people (12 to 24 years of age) now live in developing countries and the Report asks: what does this mean for development?

The WDR 2007 is particularly relevant for us here in Delhi as India has more young people than any other country in the world and this youth bulge will continue growing for at least another twenty years. The much-hyped demographic window of opportunity⁵ for India will close, the Report estimates, in 2035 – 10 years after the youth population in the country reaches its peak. This youth dividend presents both opportunities for and major challenges to development for India and, because of the sheer size of the country's population, for the world.

The gist of the WDR is that there are three strategic priorities that must be addressed to improve the situation of young people:

- Expanding opportunities – not just for employment, but for further education, access to healthcare, and political participation;
- Improving capabilities – informing youth of their choices so they are empowered to make their own decisions; and
- Offering second chances – targeted programmes for those who have fallen behind due to difficult circumstances or poor choices.

But an analysis of what countries in South Asia are spending on Technical Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) and on youth relative to general education provides a stark relief to these priorities – barely 3 or 4% of total education and training expenditure goes to TVSD and what you might call youth and sports investments. One result of these low levels of funding are that enrolments in TVSD are a fraction of the total enrolled in general education of similar levels. Despite this neglect, politicians and policy makers seem to always have expectations of TVSD that are infinitely greater than those they hold for general education. The belief in the power of TVSD to solve unemployment and spur economic growth seems to be boundless in even the most under-funded contexts.

Most educators would promote the importance of vocational subjects as part of a well rounded general education. So, the neglect of TVSD isn't caused by educators being against it, but this is often how it comes out in policy dialogue. What we find in almost all countries of South Asia is an unvocationalised general secondary education stream which has over 95% of the students at that level and a TVSD stream that typically has the last 5% of students - mostly those who couldn't get into general secondary and who are only following a TVSD programme in the hope that they can transfer back into general education a little higher up the system. While policy makers may promote TVSD as a stream equal in value to general secondary schooling **it is always for someone else's children**. The rich citizens don't buy this argument and neither do the poor - they all believe they know that life chances are determined by a learner's level of success in general secondary schooling.

The promotion of private provision of skills is important as are the issues related to quality assurance, market regulation etc and the issue of information. It is clear that failure to take up skills training options is often caused by lack of information about opportunities and also by the absence of careers counselling for secondary school students. The role of government generally in terms of planning, resource allocation and regulation of TVSD needs to be brought out more in the context of broad sector planning and the real demand for skills. The central question in all of this is: what is the most effective education/TVSD policy mix for South Asian countries? This is the question we are struggling with and have been struggling with for decades and if we are to be at all helpful to our partners in answering this question, or even researching it, we need to have some effective tools that we can offer to help think through the issues. The four key issues confronting South Asia in engaging with skills and youth development in a rapidly changing world appear to be:

⁵ The demographic window of opportunity is the range of years for which the dependency ratio – the number of dependents relative to people of working age – is falling.

- Firstly, South Asia's demography presents an incredible and unprecedented opportunity for the region's future growth and prosperity – its youthfulness over the next 40-50 years could give it a decisive competitive edge over East Asia and other parts of the world.
- Secondly, if South Asia is to make the most of this advantage it has to act now to significantly increase investments in education and training and health and to provide meaningful employment for its multitude of young people; – thus the youth dividend is, initially at least, also an unprecedented burden.
- Thirdly, the importance to the rest of the world of South Asia seizing and making the most of this opportunity cannot be over-emphasised; – for so many countries the demographic window of opportunity closed several years ago and the region will be a principal source of labour and welfare in these economies.
- Fourthly, if the opportunity is not seized, there is the risk of increased disillusionment and social tensions that could have massive implications for the stability of India, the South Asia region and the world in the years ahead.

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SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

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Keywords

Skills development, poverty reduction, PRSP, ILO

Summary

For the ILO, productive employment is a major route out of poverty and social exclusion. And skills development is itself a key element of a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of employment-intensive growth and decent work. This article briefly examines these issues.

Poverty is multidimensional both in its causes and its effects. Lack of education, low skills and low productivity are recognised as major causes of poverty. Poverty is associated with lack of decent work, low and insecure incomes, vulnerability, poor health, lack of social protection, lack of voice and representation. Poverty affects a majority of people in many developing countries, with a wide range of situations - landless rural workers, informal economy workers, women heads of households, youth, older workers, migrants, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, etc.

In many developing countries, poverty reduction strategies have been put in place in an effort towards an integrated approach to fight against poverty. Primary education has been assigned a high priority in these strategies. Such has generally not been the case for vocational education and training. Skills development strategies have rarely been integrated into comprehensive employment policies. In fact, up until recently, many PRSPs did not make explicit reference to employment policies.

For the ILO, productive employment is a major route out of poverty and social exclusion (ILO, 2003). And skills development is itself a key element of a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of employment-intensive growth and decent work. From an equity viewpoint, skills development may be an instrument to enhance equal opportunity to participate in the economy and contribute to women's empowerment.

A comprehensive strategy implies not only a pro-poor training policy but also mainstreaming education and training into all pro-poor development strategies, both at national and local levels. A pro-poor training policy does not mean ignoring the needs of the modern sectors of the economy but finding mechanisms, including through public-private partnerships, to combine skills development of the poor and economic growth.

At the system level, the strategy calls for the re-orientation of training systems and building their capacity to become more reactive to the needs of the economy by offering relevant training while ensuring equal access to training for the poor as well as quality training. The poor need not only conventional vocational training but also other skills essential to reducing their vulnerability such as basic skills (literacy, numeracy, learning skills, problem-solving skills, etc.), empowerment skills (negotiation, organisational skills, etc.) and entrepreneurial skills (small business management, marketing skills, etc.). In parallel, it calls for the up-grading of non-formal training offerings, including traditional apprenticeship. While mainstreaming is crucial, targeted programmes are still needed to reach out to the most vulnerable groups and ensure their faster access to skills and employment. Lastly, the strategy calls for extensive post-training support – including access to micro-finance, marketing support, assistance in organising, etc. - to ensure that the skills acquired are actually translated into jobs and the creation of sustainable businesses.

Such a comprehensive strategy has been initiated in the context of a Sida-funded technical cooperation project entitled "Operationalising pro-poor growth" in Madagascar. The strategy uses a combination of bottom up and top down approaches: i) at the policy level, the National Employment Action Plan of Madagascar has been developed by national stakeholders, including representatives of employers' and workers' organisations, with ILO support. This Action Plan includes skills development and other strategies that address the needs of the poor, in particular, employment-friendly investment policies. The Plan has been integrated into the PRSP, thus recognising the role of employment promotion and skills development in the strategy; ii) a number of employment promotion strategies are being tested in an integrated manner in two communities, in line with their local development plans. These include skills and micro-enterprise development, post-training support, value chain upgrading in selected sectors and employment-based infrastructure development.

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POLICY LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE VET REFORM

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Keywords

Ownership, Policy learning, VET reform, Country context, Transition countries

Summary

Many development agencies and their staff rely on traditional approaches to learning. They think and act as classical school teachers who have the right knowledge and know best what has to be done. New – constructivist - learning theories, instead, argue that learners are more successful in acquiring, digesting, applying and retrieving new knowledge when they have been actively engaged in these processes. Facilitating active policy learning rather than policy transfer may therefore have better chances to contribute to sustainable reformed systems.

Taking ownership and context relevance seriously

Multilateral and bilateral donor agencies increasingly issue declarations about the need to contextualise knowledge and secure ownership of development policies by involving local policymakers and other stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation. Yet, policy transfer through imposing or copying (selective knowledge about) policies and models taken from other contexts still dominates the day-to-day operational practices of the donor community. Knowledge as

provided by the donors continues to be considered the only relevant kind of knowledge (King 1993 and 2005; King & McGrath 2004; Ellerman 2005).

Accordingly, development or reform are normally seen as a process of social engineering that will be successful if properly managed technically and with the right implementation capacities. In reality, as we know, most reform projects are short-lived because they do not fit in context and there is no local ownership. Reforms hardly ever develop the way they were planned and are usually not sustainable. On the contrary, they tend to come and go with the donors and their agencies.

One reason for the gap between declaration and actual behaviour is a particular understanding, often only implicit, of why and how people learn and develop new knowledge and expertise (Hager 2004). Many development agencies and their staff rely on traditional approaches to learning. They think and act as classical school teachers who have the right knowledge and know best what has to be done. Their knowledge just needs to be transferred to partners who don't have this knowledge yet and they should implement measures that are presented to them as best practice. Local policymakers and local stakeholders are regarded as passive knowledge and instruction receivers who do not possess enough relevant prior knowledge and experience. They are in the true behaviourist tradition treated like students in old-fashioned - vocational – schools, carrots and sticks included.

New – constructivist - learning theories, instead, argue that learners are more successful in acquiring, digesting, applying and retrieving new knowledge when they have been actively engaged in these processes (Simons, van der Linden & Duffy 2000). Facilitating active policy learning rather than policy transfer may therefore have better chances to contribute to sustainable reformed systems.⁶

Facilitating policy learning

There are many similarities between the current international discussions about new learning, the new professionalisation of teachers and our own view about the role of international policy advisers. Educationalists are discussing the need for teachers and trainers to shift from being transmitters of expert knowledge and skills to students - who are largely considered to be passive receivers of information - towards becoming facilitators of learning processes of persons who want to become competent themselves. Much of the new learning debate is about how to develop abilities to cope with situations of uncertainty instead of applying standardised rules and procedures. If "ownership" is about national stakeholders having – and being willing – to learn new policies then international advisers should take proper notice of these discussions. After all, the new learning paradigm is firmly based on new insights about how people learn and about how more experienced 'experts' can help them to become competent (Schön 1983).

A policy-learning approach may therefore also be the appropriate response to some of the key challenges related to the VET reform process in transition countries.⁷ Policymakers and other key stakeholders should be enabled to learn to develop and implement their own policies. But in practice there are considerable obstacles for facilitating policy learning. These stem mainly from the many tensions between "what" and "how" in the relationship between experts and novices. Several of these obstacles are known from the search for operational approaches to make active learning work in classical education settings.⁸ However, others are particular to the field of reform policy development.

⁶ Others would argue that good governance, participation of civic society, fight against corruption and sound legal frameworks are more important. This paper will simply pay attention to the learning aspects which have been neglected so far. The black box approach to learning has become a surprising characteristic of many educational reform projects but is also apparent in other policy reform domains.

⁷ The policy learning approach has been formally endorsed by the ETF Advisory Forum (AF) conference in 2003 and reinforced by the AF conference in June 2006. See formal Statements on www.etf.europa.eu More detailed discussions and analyses can be found in the ETF Yearbooks 2004, 2005 and 2006. See Grootings 2004; Grootings and Nielsen 2005 and Grootings and Nielsen 2006.

⁸ The key issue remains how a learning situation can be established where the expert acts as a learning process facilitator and the novice can be stimulated to actively engage in learning.

Understanding of context-boundness or institutional fit is not easy and it is a challenge that both local policymakers and international advisers share. While donors usually do not have a good understanding of local context (often they even do not speak the language), it can also not simply be assumed that local policymakers understand the characteristics and challenges of their own VET system. It is difficult to question what has always been normal and the rule. Often, local knowledge production is not well developed or – as is the case in transition countries -impoverished.

Moreover, international consultants do not always understand that the advice they provide is perhaps firmly rooted in the institutional context that they come from themselves and they are often not well informed about policies and systems from other countries. How can local policymakers assess the fitness of what is sold to them as the latest international trend? How can international advisers properly assess prior knowledge and develop contextualisation of new knowledge? Policymakers are also under stress to come up quickly with solutions. Their political mandate does not leave them much time. Advisers are bound by the financial and time resources that the donors have reserved for their projects.

Also the ownership issue raises problems when this is restricted to a few cooperative national policymakers and – simply because of the design of the donor project – leaves out the vast majority of teachers and trainers in schools. We know very well that national education reforms cannot be completely developed at the central level, given the diversity of local conditions and the specific knowledge that can only be developed locally. There is a vast reform space that can only be filled by stakeholders at the community and school level. Policy learning needs to take place at all levels of the system. But who needs to learn what?

The basic assumption underlying the concept of policy learning is not so much that policies can be learned but that actual policies are always learned policies. Learning is not simply the transfer of expert knowledge or behaviour from one person to another but rather the acquisition of understanding and competence through participation in learning processes. Moreover, as mentioned before, policymakers are not only policy learners. They also have to act, and acting on the political scene, especially in environments that are undergoing radical change such as in transition countries, does not always leave a lot of space and time for careful and gradual learning.

On the other hand, policymakers engaged in systemic reforms are in need of new knowledge which very often contradicts established knowledge and routines. For policymakers, therefore, because they are under pressure to act, learning is more than merely a cognitive process: learning is practice. Their learning is situated learning as it is an integral and inseparable aspect of their social practice.⁹ How can the policy making process be organised as a policy learning process?

Policymakers in transition countries can be regarded as highly motivated novice learners and policy learning can be facilitated by letting them participate in relevant communities of practice. Such communities of practice could be created by bringing together policymakers from different countries that have gone through or are undergoing reforms of their education systems. International and local policy analysts, researchers, advisers and other practitioners could be part of such communities as well.

However, policymakers in transition countries may be seen as “novices” in terms of knowledge and expertise concerning the development of modern educational systems in market economies but they are also “experts” as far as their own country context is concerned. Similarly, international policy advisers may perhaps be the “experts” with respect to educational policymaking in developed economies but they are often “novices” in terms of knowledge about the particular context of the partner country. Neither local stakeholders nor international advisers really exactly know what “fits” with regard to modern education policy in a partner country’s context.

⁹ Lave and Wenger (1990) argue that all learning is situated learning and more particularly “legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice”. Novice learners learn best when they are engaged in a community of more expert learners; during the learning process they become more competent themselves and move from the margin to the centre. See also Wenger 1998.

The community of practice concept therefore needs to be further developed to properly take into account these differences in learning experience and high levels of uncertainty. Since old and new knowledge relate to different contexts there are different peripheries and centres and even those who are closer to the centre remain learners themselves.

Policy learning through knowledge sharing

Reforming education and training systems in transition countries implies combining old and new knowledge in changing contexts for both local stakeholders and international advisers. Policy learning is not just about learning the policies that other countries have developed but rather about learning which policies can be developed locally by reflecting on the relevance of other countries' policies for the situation at home. Policy learning in this sense can only happen when there is information and knowledge available and shared. The principal role of donors therefore would be to enable a reform policy learning process by providing access to such information and experience and by facilitating a critical reflection on their relevance. However, donors and their staff cannot do their learning facilitation role well if they don't recognise that they themselves are also learners in the same policy learning process.

VET reform policy development seen as VET policy learning would have to use knowledge sharing to enable decision makers from partner countries to learn from – and not simply about – VET reform experiences from elsewhere for the formulation and the implementation of their own reform objectives. Knowledge sharing would also enable donors and international advisers to better understand the institutional context and history of the partner country. For them, in becoming familiar with local knowledge it will also be easier to appreciate and value the expertise that partners bring into the reform process.

Thus, international donors and their policy advisers would have to take a role similar to the one a modern teacher is supposed to play: not that of the expert who knows it all and simply passes on existing knowledge but the one that recognises problems, does not know the solutions yet, organises and guides knowledge sharing and in so doing develops new knowledge for all involved in the learning process. Policy learning therefore can only happen in partnership.

Policy learning is sharing experience from the past to develop knowledge for the future. It is also about sharing knowledge from abroad and knowledge that is locally produced. It is therefore about developing new knowledge. Policy learning contributes not only to creating more coherent system-wide reforms that fit but also facilitates system-deep reforms of VET systems as it enables all stakeholders to learn new roles and develop new working routines. It will be a challenging task to develop concrete approaches that can make policy learning which is based on principles of active learning theory work in practice

Further research and practice should reflect the new paradigm of socially organised learning processes. The setting up of research projects run by external education/VET scientists will not in itself be of sufficient help in the dynamic processes of transition if based on a linear thinking about theory and practice. Participative and action-based research will need to receive more attention.

Obviously, even if policy learning takes place, this will not guarantee that new learning will lead to new policies and political action. Policy learning by policymakers is a necessary part of the policy process but by far not sufficient on its own to produce policy changes. Other, collective and institutional factors are also at stake. Policy change remains after all a political process. However there will not be any policy change, unless those who are in a position to take and realise policy decisions themselves are convinced that a particular policy issue is important and are broadly familiar with policy measures that can be taken to address them.

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EXPANDING ACCESS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (SSA)

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Keywords

Post-primary education and training, DFID, TVET expansion, 10 year plans in SSA

Summary

Evidence shows that success in getting more children into primary school leads to increased demand for post-primary education and training. This article provides a quick outline of the comprehensive sector wide education plans for 2015 for seventeen countries in SSA.

In Abuja, on 21-22nd May 2006, 22 African countries committed themselves to preparing comprehensive and costed ten year plans to meet the Millennium Development Goals for education. Ten year plans provide an opportunity to address the key issues that currently undermine progress and to think creatively about how key constraints would be addressed if long term financing were available. The plans are made on the basis of commitments made by the G8 at Gleneagles in 2005 and other pledges by the international community to increase development assistance. The UK has pledged £8.5 billion for education over the next ten years. Commitment to this long-term planning process was reaffirmed at the IMF/World Bank annual meetings in Singapore in September 2006.

Most of these plans embrace a wider programme than basic education. Evidence shows that success in getting more children into primary school leads to increased demand for secondary education. More attention is being given to diversified approaches to education which includes vocational and skills development. Seventeen countries in SSA have presented draft comprehensive sector-wide

education plans for 2015. Country examples of the expansion of vocational education and skills include:

- Ethiopia: Increase in admissions to technical and vocational education from 94,592 (2005) to 312,826 (2010) and 624,095 by 2015. New standards and programmes for technical and vocational education.
- Gambia: 50% increase in the number of technical and vocational education institutions. Revised standards and programmes for technical and vocational education.
- Ghana: 50% increase in the number of technical and vocational education institutions.
- Kenya: improving technical and vocational training, tertiary education and adult literacy.
- Malawi: Optimising private sector participation in basic education and in technical and vocational training.
- Mauritania: an offer of opportunities for skills training adapted to labour market needs.
- Mozambique: increasing participation in secondary and technical and vocational education.
- Namibia: Doubling of enrolments in technical and vocational education by 2011.
- Rwanda: 50% increase in the number of technical and vocational education institutions.
- Senegal: Second priority is vocational and technical education in order to have a qualified and skilled labour force.
- Tanzania: 30,000 full time and 35,000 part time and distance learning students in technical and higher education, by 2008.
- Uganda: New technical/vocational qualifications framework.
- Sierra Leone: more private investment in education at all levels and more direct links between education and employment.

DFID has in 2006 outlined its approach to post-primary education in a briefing paper, entitled *The importance of secondary, vocational and higher education to development* available from www.dfid.gov.uk

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WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE WORLD BANK'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REPORT?

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Keywords

World Bank, *Skills Development in sub-Saharan Africa*, Skills development policy

Summary

This article revisits the 2004 World Bank report on *Skills development in sub-Saharan Africa*. It argues that this report builds upon the earlier 1991 Bank policy paper in five main ways that complement and extend the earlier analysis rather than revise it. Some important limitations on the current, and likely future, impact of the 2004 report are also discussed.

In 2004, the World Bank published a report on *Skills development in sub-Saharan Africa* which primarily sought to review the way that the sector had developed within that region since the Bank's policy paper of 1991. Significantly, one of the two authors of the 2004 report, Adams, had been one of the three authors of the 1991 paper and the subsequent 2003 book that provided a more academically-oriented reading of the policy document's arguments.

It is difficult to fully isolate the impact of the 2004 report from its predecessor, as it builds on it in five important ways. First, it is important to remember that it is not a new policy paper and, thus, is not seeking to replace the 1991 document. Second, there was a strong desire by the authors to correct mistaken readings of the 1991 paper regarding the relative roles of the market and state in skills

development. Third, a major focus of the 2004 report was on the experience of the Bank, other agencies and partner countries in implementing the recommendations of the 1991 policy. Fourth, the report allowed the global themes of the 1991 policy to be explored in far greater depth in one regional context. Fifth, the 2004 report also developed the analysis of its predecessor further by stressing additional issues such as qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems, which had not been significant international policy issues in 1991. Thus, the 2004 report complements and extends the earlier analysis rather than revising it.

What is apparent is that the 2004 report is being used by those working on and in Africa. Relevant government officials in several countries do seem to have read the report. Whether this reading builds on an awareness of the earlier policy document or not, it is evident that many officials are well versed in the major arguments of the report and accept the power of its analysis.

From my familiarity with recent doctoral theses on African skills development it is also apparent that the report and its series of supporting papers are being used in developing new analytical work on African skills development, even where the researchers are not particularly supportive of important elements of the analysis.

However, there are some important limitations on the current, and likely future, impact of the 2004 report. First, as the authors admit, implementation of the 1991 policy has been limited in a number of cases due to power dynamics and a reluctance of partner countries to rigorously adopt and implement its ideas. From my own experiences in the region, it appears that there are officials who accept that the Bank's analysis is intellectually robust and the best model available but who still are psychologically reluctant to believe it due to ideological suspicion of the Bank and worries about losing personal and institutional power. As a primarily economic analysis, the report is relatively weak on sociological and political perspectives on the nature of policy making and implementation.

Moreover, the report is refreshingly honest about the Bank's own limitations in following its own recommendations, particularly with regard to the centrality of rigorous economic analysis to investment decision-making and impact assessment in the skills sector. As the Bank's own personnel capacity in skills development continues to weaken, there is a risk that such robust analytical work is likely to become less rather than more common. Thus, the report's important message here may not be heeded internally.

Finally, as skills development begins to return to the policy agenda of agencies and governments in Africa, there is a danger that increasing numbers of non-skills specialists are coming to the sector without a grounding in the existing literature, including the 2004 report. Without continued effort to disseminate the report's message and to develop relevant capacity within agencies, governments and research communities there is a danger that many of its evidence-based findings will be missed in the rush to rebuild Africa's skills development systems.

Reference: World Bank 2004 *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, World Bank, Washington
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TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD) IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords

Technical and Vocational Skills Development, economic development, GTZ

Summary

This article summaries the past and emerging policies and strategies pursued by GTZ in the field of Technical and Vocational Skills Development.

GTZ, the German Government-owned implementing agency for technical cooperation, acts respectively under the terms of a general agreement on behalf of the BMZ, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Therefore, GTZ has to follow Government policies and strategies. This holds true in the field of Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) too. In this context the following papers are to be mentioned in chronological order

- 1969; 1989; 1992 – all are BMZ-Sector-Concept Papers on Technical Vocational Education and Training
- 2005: BMZ-Strategy on Technical Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market (LM) in Development Cooperation. [It should be noted that this is no longer a sector-concept, but a strategy paper with the specific focus on integrated approaches for promoting employment and labour markets (as a contribution to achieving one or more of the MDGs)].

These policy-papers are an expression of the actual-historic understanding of development processes generated during intensive professional, scientific and policy discussion in society, public institutions and political fora. Due to this they reflect experiences gained in the past and give orientation for the future.

Today's development agenda is heavily influenced by the MDGs. Due to the fact that TVSD under certain circumstances contributes to a set of these goals, attention has to be given to the specific MDG-related design, implementation and monitoring of TVSD.

In recent years in the context of sustainable economic development the BMZ demonstrated a growing interest in increasing the efforts to promote employment and better jobs.

As we all know, economic growth does not automatically lead to more and better jobs; the pattern of growth also has an impact on job creation. Employment and labour market policies potentially play a critical role in reducing poverty by their impact on the income and distribution pattern, gender relations and participation in civil and political life. Therefore, within a relative pro-poor-growth perspective BMZ is giving increasing attention both to research and capacity in the field of employment strategies, skills and employability.

This is especially expressed in the BMZ-Strategy on "Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market in Development Cooperation" (2005). The highlights, specifics, and characteristics of TVSD and the labour market in the 2005 strategy include:

- Perceiving TVSD as a relevant development factor for individuals, enterprises (production factor) and the economy (location factor);
- Improving job seekers' employability;
- Facilitating the transition from school to work (employment services; vocational guidance/ vocational counselling; etc);
- Better 'matching' between supply and demand in the labour market (e.g. LMIS);
- Extending the traditional focus on wage employment and on labour market analysis in the formal economy to improving the productivity and reducing under-employment in the informal economy while gradually expanding formal employment;
- Principles of TVSD:
 - involvement of private sector institutions in coordinating, regulating, implementing and monitoring according to the socio-economic and cultural context reflecting the current very positive discussion of public-private initiatives in TVSD;
 - principle of subsidiarity within the TVSD context with consequences for decentralisation and privatisation;
 - practice and action orientation of TVSD;
 - work process orientation;
 - key capabilities;
 - labour market driven TVSD research.

This has to be followed as far as possible by integrated TVSD / labour market approaches within a multilevel intervention and consultancy set up (macro: policy level; meso: steering and organisational strengthening of the system; micro: pilot / direct implementation with the ultimate target group). The consultancy services are delivered against the backdrop of a systemic organisational development 'philosophy'. Quality management is to be arranged within the partner organisations and structures. And a result-based monitoring is to be set up.

Therefore, in the field of TVSD (topic wise as well as regards certain processes and applied methodologies) this strategy is in line with the trends of the World Bank as well as with the ILO, "the decent work agency". Furthermore, it should be of interest to link up BMZ (continuous re-thinking) with:

- the UN and its "High Level Commission on Legal empowerment of the Poor" focussing on the many poor that live and work in the "informal sector";
- the European Commission which has elaborated an EC strategy on promoting employment and decent work within the EC's Development cooperation.

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BMZ (2005) Strategy on "Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market in Development Cooperation". Currently available in German only, but an English version will be available for download in early 2007 from www.bmz.de.

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author only and do not necessarily represent the views of GTZ and / or BMZ.

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SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION, SDC NEW CHALLENGES IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords

Skills development, SDC, disadvantaged groups, life-long learning

Summary

Skills Development is a powerful instrument to reduce poverty, but it has to respond to new challenges: to broaden the access to affordable training, assuring the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and to develop relevant training offers for life-long learning. But expanding quantity and quality of training requires new funding mechanisms.

Skills Development (SD) is a crucial and multi-faceted instrument towards the reduction of poverty and therefore has been promoted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for more than three decades. Over the years, changes in the context of developing countries made it necessary to adapt the approach in order to offer opportunities to the increasing numbers of poor people working in precarious conditions in the growing informal sectors and to disadvantaged groups in rural areas. SDC therefore reoriented its support from the classical, mainly school-oriented approach of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to the larger concept of skills development, including work and life skills, which can be acquired through a combination of formal education, competency-based training, non-formal and informal learning. Today SDC's overall goal in this area is to contribute to sustainable systems for education and training, which are accessible to the poor and assure a relevant, demand-oriented training offer.

SD serves a twofold purpose: to provide the national economies with the labour force needed for competitiveness and growth and to enable young school leavers, the unemployed and other job

seekers to perform gainful economic activity for a better living. Under a poverty reduction focus, national SD systems therefore have to respond to the **following challenges**: to broaden the access to affordable training, assuring the inclusion of poor and marginalized groups of the population and to support the development of relevant, good-quality training offers which encourage life-long learning.

In order to reach the **inclusion of disadvantaged groups**, the availability and affordability of SD have to be massively increased. This implies the need to lower entry points and access barriers to SD courses, to define multiple exit and re-entry points from and into SD, to develop special facilities responding to difficult personal conditions (regarding timing, location, methodology etc.) and to include entrepreneurial skills directed at self-employed activities.

The orientation of SD systems towards **life-long learning** means that training becomes shorter, happens more frequently and its contents are more relevant, responding to the market demand (of the labour market in the case of employed work, and the market for goods and services in the case of self-employed). This implies – among other factors – that formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning coexist and are recognised; that dividing lines between general and vocational education become blurred and that National Qualifications Frameworks and open assessment become essential elements of national systems.

There are many **good practices** for either of these strategies: For example the broadening of access to short, employability-oriented training modules in Albania, which were developed by ISDO (Increase Skills Development Opportunities) development project and then expanded at national level by the Ministry of Labour. With regard to increasing relevance and demand orientation of trainings, CAPLAB in Peru (a former development project and today an NGO) has reached interesting results, creating permanent mechanisms to observe developments and demand of the labour market and involving private sector companies in the development of new occupational profiles and the assessment of trainees.

But in order to attack both challenges - to expand both quality (relevant training stretched over longer period of time) and quantity - requires the exploration of new funding mechanisms. Possible sources may be the introduction of productive modules in training or the increasing co-financing by individuals and companies themselves, who may be more willing to invest in further training in life-long learning schemes; companies may do this due to the relevance of specific training, and individuals may pursue this due to the income reached after the first modules. But in addition targeted donor support seems unavoidable, at least temporarily, until national education systems can absorb the cost.

There are certainly many other challenges for SD which would be worth discussing here: to enhance linkages and synergies with basic education, or to render SD systems more flexible, attracting more private training providers, just to name a few. But undoubtedly SD is a powerful instrument – especially if complemented by active labour market policies and business promotion measures – for contributing to pro-poor economic growth and for raising opportunities of poor – but trained and empowered – people to increase their income and to improve the livelihood of their families.

This article reflects elements of the new strategy of SDC for the promotion of Skills Development, elaborated with support by W. Schlegel and G. Kohlheyer from INBAS Belgium/Germany.

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JICA'S NEW EMPHASIS ON TVET

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Keywords

TVET, JICA, Ghana

Summary

JICA has been involved with technical cooperation projects on human resource development for industry for over ten years. Even though these projects have contributed to human resource development of developing countries, another approach, namely institutional building of TVET, is necessary to increase the impact and sustainability of cooperation. JICA has become involved with this approach in Ghana.

JICA categorizes their cooperation for the TVET sector in two approaches: developing human resources for industry, and skills development for poverty reduction. The first category aims to ensure that those who are educated and trained will enter the labour market and find employment in the workplace using the skills they have acquired.

JICA has currently implemented 36 technical cooperation projects on human resource development for industry within ten years (from 1994 to 2003) across the world. Most of the projects have focused on capacity building of public training institutes/schools with upgrading skills of instructors through in-service training. Even though those projects have contributed to human resource development of developing countries, another approach, namely institutional building of TVET, is necessary to increase the impact and sustainability of cooperation. JICA has become involved with this approach in Ghana.

In Ghana, JICA implemented research on the TVET sector from 2000 to 2001 along with the Government of Ghana. The study clearly showed that TVET in Ghana lacked consistency among TVET institutions, and did not correspond to the demand of industry. The study recommended that Ghana should introduce a competency-based approach to TVET. The Government of Ghana accepted it and finally approved the Council of TVET (COTVET) Act in July 2006. The Act established COTVET which will control the qualifications framework, the standard of training packages and the recognition of training institutes/schools.

JICA has assisted the process of discussion and establishment of the Act. In May 2004, a national forum was held among the relevant ministries, industries, and NGOs to share the purpose of reform in TVET sector. In February 2005, an educational round-table conference was established based upon the request from Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment. The conference discussed the guidelines for the introduction of a competency based approach to TVET.

JICA plans to continually implement the project to support the TVET sector reform in Ghana. The project will assist activities of COTVET, and implementation of pilot training at several training institutes/schools. The project supports not only the establishment of a qualification framework and preparation of training modules, but it promotes training institutes/schools to run courses with the modules. The COTVET and training institutes/schools will enhance the capacity of managing competency-based training as a whole through the project.

Beyond Ghana, JICA will further cooperate in the institution building of TVET and the capacity building of public training institutes/schools with a potential high impact and sustainability.

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SKILLS: A PRIORITY IN THE WORLD'S GLOBAL EFA AGENDA?

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Keywords

Skills, EFA, EFA Global Monitoring Report

Summary

'Skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal education programmes', the author notes, were part of the declaration at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien in 1990 - and yet they have not featured substantially as a core element of the global agenda of education since that time. The article goes on to argue the case that skills should be a subject of an EFA Global Monitoring Report.

A Word of History on Skills Training in the Global Education Agenda

Even though 'skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal education programmes' were seen as being a component of the expanded vision of basic education at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien in March 1990 [*Declaration* Article 5], they have not featured substantially as a core element of the global agenda of education since that time. The *Framework for Action* at Jomtien (p.3) had actually suggested the following: 'Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity.' Perhaps understandably, many donor agencies focused on the Jomtien challenge of delivering universal access to and completion of primary education as their priority, and this was re-enforced by the construction of the International Development Targets in 1996, with one target being universal primary education. And this in turn was re-emphasised by the Millennium Development Goal on this same sub-sector of education in 2000.

In fact, there had been a very powerful report by the World Bank on *Vocational and Technical Education and Training* just a year after Jomtien (in 1991). But this was widely interpreted (and also widely misinterpreted) to say that a good basic primary education was the best preparation for technical and vocational education, that school-based technical education was not a sound investment, and that publicly provided vocational training was a poor substitute for training by employers on the job. It had less influence than it deserved partly because of these various interpretations, but also because it came a year after Jomtien, and also after the Bank's Primary Education policy paper.

Making Skills the subject of an EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR)?

Goal 3 in the Dakar World Forum of 2000 had urged 'Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes'. With the benefit of hindsight, it is probably unfortunate that the 'other essential skills required by youth and adults' mentioned in Jomtien was changed into 'life skills programmes' ten years later in Dakar. Life skills has a very different feel from 'work skills'. The former, as we argued earlier, in the article on the World Development Report, can cover all kinds of capacities, from literacy and numeracy to behavioural skills or communication skills. Be that as it may, the world of skills development, or technical and vocational education and training (TVET), seems to be bouncing back into prominence. Atchoarena of IIEP (in NN38) argues that 'Worldwide, many governments are renewing efforts to promote vocational education.' In the same vein, King and Palmer (in NN38) claim that 'Technical and Vocational Skills Development is once again moving up the agendas of governments and of donor agencies'. Levesque indicates (also in NN38) just how widespread within the 10 year development plans of governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the determination substantially to expand technical and vocational education.

Yet there seem to be so many different targets for skills! Skills for productivity; skills for competitiveness; skills for poverty reduction; skills for the informal sector; skills for rural migrants; skills for disadvantaged youth. Not to mention, skills for the knowledge economy; skills for enterprise development; skills for inclusiveness; skills for local economic development; skills for priority sectors; skills as security; and skills for sustainable livelihoods.

All of these, and many more, are touched on in this special issue of NN38. But what, then, is the case for making Skills the theme of an *EFA Global Monitoring Report*? The strongest reason is that skills (whether essential skills or life skills) was one of the 6 targets of Jomtien and of Dakar. But beyond this argument for equitable treatment amongst the 6 Dakar Goals, there is a compelling case for

bringing together, as the GMRs have done so successfully for the other Goals (www.efareport.unesco.org), the evidence from across the world about the roles and potential of skills development.

Since the World Bank's policy paper in 1991, there has not been a global assessment of skills. There has been an excellent paper on Skills Development in SSA (World Bank, 2004) [See McGrath in NN38], and there are a number of country and regional studies available, such as Skills Development in India (also by the World Bank). But there is no overview of this critically important area. A number of people thought the *World Development Report 2007*, with its emphasis on the potential of youth, might make a major contribution to this theme of skills. Certainly, one or two of the background papers for the WDR are relevant to the theme of skills, such as Van Adams's (which is summarised in NN38). But the approach of the WDR to skills is not at all comprehensive (see King in NN38), though it does stress that there is a particular window of opportunity now for action, given the bulge of young people in certain regions (see Ward in NN38).

So, a volume on Skills for Young People, with the status and reach of the EFA Global Monitoring Reports, would be an enormous advantage to the field. But much more importantly, the sheer quantities of young people who have been encouraged by the commitment of their governments and the donor agencies to acquire basic education, over these last 16 years since Jomtien, have been building up enormous pressures on the existing post-primary education and training systems. Arguably, universal primary education will prove to be unsustainable without coherent pathways to further education and to skills for employment and self-employment.

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LATIN AMERICAN SKILL CONTINUITIES

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TVET IN RURAL MEXICO

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Keywords

TVET, Mexico

Summary

In some rural, particularly indigenous areas, of Mexico a range of local, usually independent, educational innovations have emerged over the past 20 years with a more holistic educational approach to TVET. This article examines some examples.

TVET is often seen as an alternative or addition to standard education. Unfortunately, it has tended to be a lower status one. This is certainly the case in Mexico where technical and vocational educational tracks reinforce the great divide between those who will pursue academic studies that will lead them to the professions and those who have to prepare themselves for earlier incorporation into the

economy as wage labourers or farmers. This is the norm at national level (see Pieck Gochicoa, 1999 and 2004). Important departures from this problematic model have emerged, one of which I will refer to at the end of this paper. But whereas these are the exception in the mainstream, they are more common on the margins, in some rural, particularly indigenous areas where a new, holistic educational approach has been emerging.

Here a range of local, usually independent, educational innovations have emerged particularly over the past 20 years, sharing a concern to affirm two fundamental principles of indigenous education. These are a) that knowledge is a social affair not just an individual acquisition, and 2) that distinct fields of knowledge, and the theoretical and practical dimensions of knowledge are connected particularly through their application to daily lives: the development of natural and human resources. Even the most advanced and abstract mathematical and astronomic knowledge of the Mayas was intimately related to agricultural production cycles. This integrated conception of education extends to the act of learning itself, through which the learner, teacher and community all play a part. Even though this view contrasts with the modern, western approach, consistent with their integral philosophy, indigenous educators seek dialogue between the two educational types, recognizing the value of both for the outward-looking and possibly out-migrating young people.

The integrated view of learning present in these projects and in its lessons for TVET is best demonstrated through examples. I give three here. In the heart of the northern highlands of Oaxaca, there is a prestigious community, boarding primary school, (one of the last of its kind) whose reputation rests on its high scholastic attainments (De Agüero and Muñoz, 2005). Analysts and community alike consider this achievement to derive from the close interaction between school and community in many aspects. This is clearly demonstrated by the school band. Brass bands are an important aspect of local tradition in the region. The school teaches musical theory and the mastery of the instruments in order for the children to learn a skill, but most importantly to employ it in the service of the community in marriages, funerals and a wide range of local festivities. What is more, many school graduates find employment in professional bands both in Mexico and the USA, where many migrate. This is one integrated educational process; the young reconnect themselves to their cultural traditions, acquire an income generating skill and enhance their broader educational formation.

The Oaxacan school is not alone in promoting a wide range of skills not just music, but horticulture, leatherwork and food science as an integral part of the curriculum. Go to any such educational innovation in an indigenous area, and the mainstream curriculum will be taught with and through practical skills. For example in Northern Puebla, a network of TV secondary schools share a mobile laboratory that teaches science through community development activities one of whose outcomes has been the propagation of medicinal herbs, reforestation and commercial garlic production – thereby regenerating local agriculture and income generation (Salom Flores, 2001). Similarly, in the Tatutsi secondary school in the remote northern mountains of Jalisco (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, 2004), a unique approach to civic education combines classroom-based studies in the everyday practice of citizenship and the field based study of local land rights issues in a school project. Tatutsi, like most of the other indigenous educational NGOs have drawn upon the ILO's 169 agreement (<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169>), protecting indigenous ways of life and work to bolster their project. This important introduction to civic and legal issues at secondary school level has stimulated some students to pursue legal careers in defence of their territorial rights. The school bakery that applies mathematical, agricultural and scientific aspects of the curriculum to bread-making has also engendered the establishment of a highly successful local commercial bakery that employs past students.

Perhaps the indigenous educational innovations of Mexico seem remote from TVET in other parts of the world and are obviously not transferable. What is a valuable wider lesson is that a close engagement between school community and local labour market can be the basis of a more integrated, holistic vision of education in which TVET is central not only in promoting employability and income generation, but also in enriching the whole view of a comprehensive education. Some urban regeneration projects – e.g. City Challenge projects in the UK - had a similar approach as does the new Mexico City University, where, on the urban/rural margins of this megalopolis, the challenges

of environmental degradation, unemployment and poverty have stimulated school based learning and production projects as a new way of educating youth for their futures in higher education or in the Mexican or US economies.

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POLICIES' AND SOCIETY'S IMPACT ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: PATTERNS OF REFORM IN CHILE IN THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY

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Keywords

Chile, vocational education, technical school, reform

Summary

This article describes the various changes that Chile's vocational education system has witnessed since the 1980s.

Vocational education in Chile experienced radical de-regulation during the 1980s, in the context of decentralizing and privatizing reforms implemented by a military government which in 1981 inaugurated, by imposition, choice-regulated models in Latin American education. These demanded each secondary technical school to reform its curriculum in close connection to local industries and businesses. With no government support for carrying out what, for a traditionally centralized and state-led system, was a major re-orientation, together with a decrease of public expenditure in education of a third in real terms between 1982 and 1990, diversification of specializations exploded (to more than 400). These were propelled more by needs of differentiation in the market and protection of teachers' employment in each school, than any real answer to skills requirements by local industries, or, much less, assessments of the national economy's needs. In addition to this, the government made key national associations of enterprises take responsibility for administering (with public resources) a small set of technical schools (70 out of more than 500 at the time); this helped produce a commitment to education among representative leaders of the productive sector that a decade later, in a quite different political context, proved highly instrumental in producing a constructive dialogue and cooperation with educators in the definition of the curriculum reform of the 1990s.

In spite of diminished resources and a probable drop in quality, technical education enrolments increased both in absolute and relative terms during the 1980s, pushed by the demand of lower income groups having access to secondary education for the first time. Enrolments expanded from close to 180,000 students in 1981, representing 29% of total secondary education, to 255,396 in 1990, (35.5% of the total). Secondary education's coverage for the 14-18 year age group increased from 77 per cent in 1990 to 93 percent in 2003. Its total enrolment going up from 719,819 in 1990 to 1,029,366

in 2005, whilst its technical modality expanded from 255,396 to 397,673 during the same period (Miranda, 2003; Cox, 2006; www.mineduc.cl).

Transition to a democratic regime in 1990, followed by three government periods of the same centre-left political alliance, meant the recuperation of a leadership role for the state (without abandoning market-based regulation mechanisms), dramatic increases in public resources, comprehensive state-led programs to improve both the quality and equity of secondary education, and an ambitious curriculum reform. At the same time expansion of enrolments continued unabated.

Without altering institutional features, i.e., the existence of two types of *liceos* [secondary schools], general and vocational, the curriculum reform in Chile (1998) moved the start of a vocational education of 2 years to high school (from grade 9 to grade 11) narrowing the difference between the two modes from four to two years and increasing the academic content of vocational education to a third of the total teaching time. Specialised courses were also added to the general curriculum for students in the academic strand to choose from, while vocational specialities were streamlined, their content and practices redesigned to give students flexible skills.

Regarding the combination and balancing of three fundamental variables of secondary education curriculum policy—selection and specialization, academic-vocational balance, and the disciplinary or non disciplinary nature of curriculum design and development—the Chilean case matches most of the features described by a recent World Bank study of world-wide trends in secondary education reform as an example of the mix that combines: *Specialization and selection deferred to the end of the lower secondary level. System of elective subjects as a device to introduce limited internal differentiation. Vocational education pushed to the upper secondary level. Some emphasis on introducing vocational elements in the common curriculum. Cross-curricular issues and interdisciplinary approaches are considered, but traditional areas continue to frame the secondary curriculum* (World Bank 2005: p. 93).

The 1990-2005 evolution of enrolments of technical education show a pattern of relative growth and decline: from 35.5 per cent of total secondary enrolment in 1990, it rose to an historic high of 45.1 per cent in 1998, to decline yearly afterwards, reaching 38.6 per cent in 2005 (www.mineduc.cl). Both education's and society's trends converge here. The former saw access to higher education ease substantially (in hand with its institutional expansion and diversification), while the latter experienced economic growth affecting lower income families' expectations regarding the employment versus higher education choice of their offspring. Thus, in spite of the fact that by 2005 more than a third of technical education leavers made it into higher education, showing that the modality is less than ever a dead-end, it is apparent that many lower income families' evaluation of the paths facilitated by the two modalities of secondary education is changing in favour of general or academic secondary education, in contrast to what this same evaluation was 8 years ago.

A strategic and unsolved issue for Chilean vocational education nowadays is the vertical integration of its secondary and tertiary level technical education. The latter more often than not repeats contents of the former in the weakest of three tiers of higher education institutions (*Centros de Formación Técnica*), directly impeding a much needed social valuing of tertiary level technical education and a coherent training system of higher level technicians.

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TRAINING DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN LATIN AMERICA: MANY PROGRAMMES, WEAK SYSTEMS

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Keywords

Training, youth, Latin America

Summary

Since the nineties there has been a surge of education or vocational training programmes in Latin America, especially focused on disadvantaged youth as part of the struggle against poverty and inequality. This article examines the general achievements and limitations of the strategies adopted.

Latin American countries are confronted with serious difficulties in the area of social integration and in particular the insertion of young people in the labour markets. Since the nineties, there has been a surge of programmes especially focused on disadvantaged youth as part of the struggle against poverty and inequality. Most of the interventions are aimed at providing either alternative means to finish secondary education or vocational training targeted at poorly educated youth who seldom have access to conventional training. The limited results of such interventions and their approaches have been discussed in technical and political debates and the models of training programmes have been revised with every change in government. However, the strategy of developing public policies on temporary programmes still persists.

Summing up, the general achievements and limitations of the strategies could be noted as follows:

- The adoption of more flexible ways of training - the implementation of courses and projects began by subcontracting public and private agencies offering various types of training, instead of using traditional vocational training institutions. Whereas a certain consensus can be observed about the need to start modifying the state's inclination to organise social policies (i.e. its institutions, human resources, equipment and infrastructure) from the supply side, the adopted mechanisms - both the "open market" model and the subsidised programmes - did not yield a high performing vocational training. Instead, they resulted in fragmentary action with more or less quality and efficacy, according to individual cases.
- In spite of its diversification and flexibility, the training organizations experienced difficulties with the design and implementation of the learning. First, they must confront new duties related to curricular design, institutional management, interaction with other institutions and with the labour market, and they do not necessarily know how to respond to these challenges. Secondly, many organizations revealed weaknesses in administrative and economic management. They also showed deficiencies of knowledge about strategies for institutional planning and internal communication.
- One weakness was that almost none of the actions taken promoted links with formal education. The certificates awarded did not, in general, imply any recognition or equivalencies in formal education or regulated vocational training, even though the majority of the enrolled young people did not possess a secondary qualification, and one of the results of enrolling was that nearly 30% of these young people returned to formal education.

Generally speaking, these measures reveal an attempt to provide greater opportunities to young people confronting increasingly exclusive social contexts and more complex labour markets. Its most relevant aspects are precisely the fact that they express the urgent need for a programme and the permanent improvement of its strategies, increasingly emphasizing the use of concrete job opportunities.

Many of the initiatives, however, proved to simplify the problem of integrating young people into the labour market, particularly those belonging to the most impoverished groups. They emphasize the question of low skills level without sufficiently taking into account the role that formal educational levels play in the job market integration, as well as the exclusive tendencies of the labour market itself. In addition, the basic view on young people tends to be short-sighted and does not recognise the diverse nature of the young people targeted: from very marginal and isolated groups (indigenous

people, homeless children, etc.), to urban poverty sectors or rural young people. Finally, we should not lose sight of the fact that these initiatives cover only a small fraction of the potential population composed by all the young people who drop out of school without any qualification.

Some recent programmes are now trying new models as a response to some of the limitations or weaknesses in these approaches. We differentiate in this field among the following strategies: a) initiatives promoting completion of primary and secondary schooling for young people and adults through alternative paths to the regular educational, often articulated with vocational training; b) experiences linking training with job integration, c) programmes using “positive discrimination” mechanisms to help poor youth transition to work (for example, “sheltered” job opportunities in the public sector or in enterprises).

The central question remains to what extent and by what means these initiatives can contribute to generate a valuable “second opportunity” for young people from low-income backgrounds, helping them to find better jobs and promoting their social inclusion.

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NORRAG NEWS

NEW DEVELOPMENTS FOR NORRAG.ORG

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It has now been about three years since the launching of the norrag.org website in 2003. Going online and going (almost) paperless has led to a large increase in NORRAG members worldwide, from 170 in 2003 to 1000 by the beginning of 2007. While the NORRAG secretariat blows a small trumpet for its 1000th member (our 1000th member was from Bangladesh), we also have our sights on ways to improve norrag.org and to make it more responsive and effective as a platform to reach current and future members. As a result of a NORRAG secretariat meeting in Geneva in September 2006 the following are the main suggested changes that you will notice in early 2007.

Policy briefs

Each edition of NORRAG NEWS (NN) is usually made up of 60-80 pages, but the NORRAG secretariat recognizes that many people simply don't have the time to go through a whole edition of NN. For this reason we have introduced short (2 page) policy briefs as another way to draw the lessons from a particular issue of NN to the notice of people who are short of time. Policy briefs already exist for NN36 and NN37 and will shortly be uploaded to the new site and will remain a regular feature for all future editions of NN.

Website development and improving access to NORRAG NEWS

NORRAG's website is currently being updated to make it more user-friendly and the information more widely available and accessible. For example, at present all issues of NN are password-protected – meaning that search engines like Google do not pick up the articles written by and for NORRAG members. In order to disseminate to a wider audience, therefore, our intention is to open access to all back issues of NN so that search engines can allow researchers and other interested individuals to find NN more easily. But in order to maintain a sense of community, and to allow us to provide relevant up to date information to interested individuals, we will retain the requirement to register in order to access the latest edition of NN.

Another aspect regards improving the dissemination of NN. This relates to the question of whether those that find the norrag.org pages are actually able to easily download the article or edition of NN they want to read! To improve access to NN for those members with limited or weak internet connectivity there will be three download options on the new website. The first is the usual full download of NN which the current site already has; the second is the ability to easily download

individual articles in future editions of NN; the third will be a download of a 2 page policy brief/executive summary of that edition of NN.

In addition to improved download options on the norrags.org site, the email you usually receive from us informing you about a new edition of NN will in future include options for you to immediately open in a new window an article you find of interest.

When will these changes occur?

These developments are currently underway and the new site should be live by mid- February 2007. There will also be some changes that make it quicker and easier for members to login to the new site. We will inform you of this by email as soon as these changes are live on the site. Existing members will NOT need to re-register.

If you have any suggestions about ways to improve the norrags.org site or about the way we disseminate NORRAG NEWS please contact Rob.Palmer@ed.ac.uk

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THE IDEOLOGY OF GROWTH

NORRAG AND CERC RUN SPECIAL SYMPOSIUM IN THE OXFORD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION, SKILLS AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, 2007

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Keywords

Education, Skills, Sustainable growth, 2007 UKFIET Oxford education conference

Summary

There are a series of theoretical and policy challenges presented by education-growth relations, starting from the challenging notion of growth itself, and leading to the exploration of which type of education and training interacts with which type of growth. The NORRAG-CERC-convened symposium at the 2007 UKFIET Oxford education conference will explore the interactions amongst education, skills and sustainable growth with a special focus on developing countries. This article begins the process of thinking through these issues by examining briefly the ideology of growth.

The NORRAG-CERC-convened symposium at the 2007 UKFIET Oxford education conference will explore the interactions amongst education, skills and sustainable growth with a special focus on developing countries. This symposium is open to presentations on the theoretical and policy challenges presented by education-growth-development relations, starting from the notions of growth and development themselves.

Growth and development are often taken as synonymous, uncomplicated concepts that are repeated like a *mantra* by the world-developers. In his famous inauguration speech President Harry Truman defined most of the world as underdeveloped, and proposed the notion that that all nations move along the same path as the United States, and aspire to the same goals. From the very beginning, the vision of development was built on an American ideology of economic growth. At the time, development efforts concentrated on increasing levels of agricultural and industrial production as well as the exploitation of natural resources (mining, forestry, etc.), which, it was believed, would lead to economic growth. It was not before the early 1970s that leading donor agencies began focusing on rural development, and then, in rapid succession during the 1970s and 1980s, began developing specific programmes to address poverty, basic needs, education, and gender issues (Sachs, 1999).

The purpose of most funding agencies' programmes, however, never shifted from the overreaching goal of economic growth.

In 1987 the term "sustainable" was introduced into the development discourse by the Brundtland report. The work on this report started in 1983, when the United Nations appointed an international commission to propose strategies to improve human well-being in the short term without threatening the local and global environment in the long term. Sustainable development especially favoured ecologically sound growth: "transition towards greater sustainability would require a more holistic approach to development, entailing inter-generational equity as well as harmonization of economic growth with other human needs and aspirations" (Mehmet, 1999, p. 133). In the 1990s, the notion of sustainability was adopted by most international development agencies, and was largely incorporated into the neoliberal discourse. The ultimate goal of development, of course, was still seen as economic growth. However, it was increasingly recognized that growth may incorporate negative externalities – and that the survival of the human race might prove to be nearly as important as economic growth!

Critical theory has questioned the basic assumptions of the postwar development ideology, including the assertions that some countries are developed whilst some are underdeveloped; that development is a series of stages towards a society which mirrors Western societies; and that the advancement through these stages of development is based on economic growth. Most critical views argue that the development vision must shift from the question of how to obtain economic growth, towards questioning how to obtain a more just society. A core issue for the critical schools is the question of power and wealth distribution. The growth-based ideologies recognize, implicitly, that power relations in the society are "just" and that the poor will become less poor by the development of the economy as a whole (Todaro & Smith, 2002). The critique of the growth-based paradigm is based on several points, including that the ideology of growth is based on an erroneous assumption that economic growth is the core instrument of development; that the ideology of growth is based on a further erroneous assumption that economic growth is contributing to reducing poverty through the improvement of the economy as a whole; that the ideology of growth puts the economy as a supra-structure above human needs and the environment (despite the fashionable-word "sustainable"); and that the ideology of growth precludes policy choice (since the policy choices are already made; they are based on market demands and growth imperatives).

Critical theory proposes to address poverty through different measures to correct the distribution of wealth and adjust the power balance to give equal voice to the vulnerable in society. Hence, policy choices, including education policies, should respond to the power and distribution criteria, not to the criteria of economic growth. Herman Daly, a former economist at the World Bank, challenges the ideology of growth by pointing out that (i) economic growth cannot continue without limits because there is an ecological boundary for growth; (ii) economic growth is not distributed equitably in society; (iii) therefore, instead of promoting (un)sustainable economic growth, development should be striving to promote a qualitative change towards an improved and more equitable society (Daly & Farley, 2004). In keeping with this view, development can no longer be understood as a theory of stages in which countries progress towards a Western-inspired "civilization." On the contrary, development must be understood as a redistribution of existing wealth within the society and improvement of production processes, to create a more just society, in which the equity and justice concerns are of an inter-generational nature. Consequently, education, skills and sustainable growth must be rethought as three separate entities. Education and skills development should seek redistribution and social change, and not just be seen as a tool for the economy.

We hope that the presenters at the NORRAG/CERC-convened symposium at the UKFIET Oxford Conference will critically explore the concepts of development, education, skills and sustainable growth and challenge the vision of education as a sub-sector of the economy. **For more details on the symposium see below.**

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Education, Skills and Sustainable Growth (symposium at the 2007 UKFIET Oxford Conference)

Convenors:

Kenneth King (kenneth.king@ed.ac.uk) and Robert Palmer (rob.palmer@ed.ac.uk) University of Edinburgh; Bjorn Harald Nordtveit (bjorn@hkucc.hku.hk), Comparative Education Research Centre [CERC], University of Hong Kong; Michel Carton (Michel.Carton@iued.unige.ch), NORRAG & IUED, Geneva.

This symposium will explore the interactions amongst education, skills and sustainable growth. There are a series of theoretical and policy challenges presented by education-growth relations, starting from the challenging notion of growth itself, and leading to the exploration of which type of education and training interacts with which type of growth. A review of the complex relations amongst education, skills and growth (which seem relevant to formal, non-formal, and on-the job learning) includes the following possible sub-themes:

- Economic growth, education & skills development, and globalization.
- The education MDGs and a growth-based vision of development: partners or misfits?
- How does education and training, of different types and at different levels, address the notion of growth?
- Student-centred or economy-centred education and skills development?
- National policies and practices for education, skills and sustainable growth.
- Breaking the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy and poverty: the role of education and skill initiatives.
- What are the enabling economic and labour market environments for education and skills development to be sustainable?

The symposium also seeks to investigate country-specific situations where there has been, allegedly, sustained economic growth, along with a sustained commitment to better education and skills outcomes for an increasing number of young people. It will be important to interrogate situations, equally, where there has only been growth on one side of the education-economy equation.

UKFIET Conference 2007

Going for Growth? School, Community, Economy, Nation, 11–13 September 2007, University of Oxford. To submit an abstract to NORRAG/CERC-convened symposium please see the 'Education, Skills and Sustainable Growth' section at: <http://www.cfbt.com/UKFIET/>

NORRAG (Network for Policy Research Review and Advice on Education and Training) is a network of persons based in universities, research centres, development agencies and NGOs committed to building capacity for development amongst research, policy and practice in education and training. It is free to join NORRAG. Please visit www.norrag.org

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LINKS TO PAST EDITIONS OF NORRAG NEWS (1-37)

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Year of publication in parentheses

Note: to access a past edition of NN hold the ctrl key down and click on the hyperlink

- NN37:** (2006) [Special Theme on Education and Training out of Poverty? A Status Report.](#)
- NN36:** (2005) [Special Theme on 2005 –The Development Year?](#) Millennium Project & World Summit & the Commission for Africa and G8 Implications for Education, Training & Partnership.
- NN35:** (2005) [Critical Perspectives on Gender, Education and Skills in Western and Central Africa at Basic and Post-Basic Levels.](#) Also available in [French](#).
- NN34:** (2004) [Language Politics and the Politics of Language \(in Education\).](#)
- NN33:** (2004) [Targets in Education & Training. Off-Centre?](#)
- NN32:** (2003) [Critical Perspectives on Education and Skills in Eastern Africa on Basic and Post-Basic Levels.](#) Also available in [French](#).
- NN31:** (2003) [A Status Report on New Thinking & Rethinking on the Different Dimensions of Education and Training.](#) Also available in [French](#).
- NN30:** (2002) [NORRAG & The Web. The Harsh Realities of Going Virtual?](#)
- NN29:** (2001) [The Globalisation of Development Knowledge.](#)
- NN28:** (2001) [Knowledge, Research & International Co-operation.](#)
- NN27:** (2000) [The Brave New World of International Education & Training.](#)
- NN26:** (2000) [The World Education Forum in Dakar.](#)
- NN25:** (1999) [Swapping Partners, The New Politics of Partnership and Sector Wide Approaches.](#)
- NN24:** (1999) [A last round of aid policies for education, training and research this century.](#)
- NN23:** (1998) [Knowledge generation in higher education - New challenges for North-South international cooperation.](#)
- NN22:** (1998) [International development cooperation.](#)
- NN21:** (1997) [The fifth international conference on adult education.](#)
- NN20:** (1996) [TVET & skills development - Researcher and agency perspectives.](#)
- NN19:** (1996) [Education for all – For whom ? - An issue related to the mid-term review of EFA in Amman, Jordan.](#) Also available in [French](#).
- NN18:** (1995) [Consulting and advising in international education and training.](#)
- NN17:** (1995) [European Union - Aid guidelines on education and training.](#) Also available in [French](#).
- NN16:** (1994) [Higher education: The lessons from experience, comments from around the world on the World Bank's higher education paper.](#)
- NN15:** (1993) [Rough guide to the literature on education and training in selected countries.](#)
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- NN13:** (1992) [Networking education and training.](#)
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- NN8:** (1990) [What happened at the World Conference in Jomtien?](#)
- NN7:** (1990) [World conference on education for all and international literacy year.](#)
- NN6:** (1989) [Section on NGOs as donors.](#)
- NN5:** (1988) [Sections on multilateral and bilateral agencies.](#)
- NN4:** (1988) [Special section on UK and USA.](#)
- NN3:** (1987) [Special section on the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany.](#)
- NN2:** (1987) [Special sections on Canada and Scandinavia. News from the south and north.](#)
- NN1:** (1986) [Norrage News first edition.](#)

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MEETINGS OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS

If there is a meeting you are holding or think would be of interest to Norrag members send details to: P.King@ed.ac.uk It is helpful if each announcement carries details that follow the headings below.

If you want to follow-up information on meetings you should be able to do so through the email addresses provided in the table.

O = Open; I = By invitation

Date	Title of Meeting	Venue	Sponsor	Contact	O or I
2007 JAN 8-10	The Biennial Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA) and The Annual Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) Conference <i>Learning from Each Other in an Asian Century</i> Sponsor/Host organisation(s):	Hong Kong	Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) and Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC), The University of Hong Kong	Comparative Education Research Centre hkce@hku.hk website: www.hku.hk/hkce	O
FEB	International Association of Universities (IAU) on: Institutional Experts	Maputo Mozambique	International Association of Universities (IAU)	www.unesco.org/iau	I

	Seminar: Higher Education and Education for All: the case of two solitudes		in collaboration with UNESCO Harare Cluster/WGHE?AA U		
6-9	Workshop on non formal education	Ouagadougou Burkina Faso	Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Non Formal Education (WGNFE)	For more information please contact: m.bolly@unesco.org	I
12-13	UNESCO-GTZ National Conference on Skills for Sustainable Development for the Informal Sector in India	New Delhi India	UNESCO/GTZ	Akemi Yonemura Education Program Specialist for India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives UNESCO HOUSE B-5/29, Safdarjung Enclave N Delhi - 110 029 India TEL: 91-11-2671 3000 Ext. 307 FAX: 91-11-2671 3001, 3002 a.yonemura@unesco.org	I
MAR	Asia Pacific Renaissance in Higher Education	Singapore	Asia Pacific Association of International Education (APAIE)	www.apaie.org	
MAY 20-23	Association of Commonwealth Studies (ACS). Conference <i>Commonwealth studies: educating the Commonwealth about the Commonwealth</i>	Windsor UK	Association of Commonwealth Studies	<i>email:</i> island16@sympatico.ca	I
JULY 8-12	ICASE (Commonwealth Association of Science, Mathematics & Technology Teachers (CASTME) World Conference on Science Education	Perth Australia		www.castme.org	O
AUG 17-22	Association of Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies (ACLALS) Triennial conference	Vancouver Canada	Association of Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies	Details at www.aclals.org	O
28-1 Sept	12th EARLI Biennial Conference <i>Developing Potentials for Learning</i>	Budapest Hungary	European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI)	http://www.edu.u-szeged.hu/earli2007	O
SEPT 3-7	Living together, Education and Intercultural Dialogue	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	XIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies	wcces@uow.edu.au	O

11-13	Going for Growth? School, Community, Economy, Nation	Oxford, UK	(WCCES) UKFIET, UK Forum for International Education and Training	http://www.cfbt.com/UKFIET/	O
12-15	19 Annual Conference of the European Association of International Education (EAIE). Reaching for new shores	Trondheim Norway	European Association of International Education	See: www.eaie.org	O
28-30	British Educational Leadership and Management and Administration Society (member of CCEAM) International Conference	Reading UK	British Educational Leadership and Management and Administration Society		O

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OTHER NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

The Education Policy and Data Centre

The Education Policy and Data Centre (EPDC) (www.epdc.org) maintains a comprehensive data base of education and related statistics for developing and transitioning countries. It provides presentation and analytic tools and analysis to better use and understand education data policy and tools in developing countries. The tools include an interactive tool to extract the data in graphs and country profiles and several education projection tools that are available for downloading. The EPDC has written several policy reports based on the data system. The database contains more than 1.3 million entries from 85 different sources, including:

- sub-national data for 82 countries;
- household survey data for 89 countries;
- administrative sources for 46 countries;
- national data up to 2005 for 209 countries

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CERC STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION 18

School Knowledge in Comparative and Historical Perspective: Changing Curricular in Primary and Secondary Education

Edited by Aaron Benavot & Cecilia Braslavsky

School curricula are established not only to prepare young people for a real world, but also to beckon an imagined one anchored in individual rights and collective progress. Both worlds—the real and the imagined—increasingly reflect influential trans-national forces.

In this special edited volume, scholars with diverse backgrounds and conceptual frameworks explore how economic, political, social and ideological forces impact on school curricula over time and place. In providing regional and global perspectives on curricular policies, practices and reforms, the authors move beyond the conventional notion that school contents reflect principally national priorities and subject-based interests. Some authors emphasize a convergence to standardized global curricular structures and discourses. Others suggest that changes regarding the intended contents of primary and secondary school curricula reveal regional or trans-cultural influences. Overall, these comparative

and historical studies demonstrate that the dynamics of curriculum-making and curricular reform are increasingly forged within wider regional, cross-regional and global contexts.

Aaron Benavot is a senior policy analyst at UNESCO (Paris) working on the Global Monitoring Report on Education For All, and a senior lecturer (on leave) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel. His research focuses on the effects of education on development and democratization, the expansion of mass education, and worldwide patterns of official school curricula. *Cecilia Braslavsky* was Director of UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE) from July 2000 until her untimely passing on 1 June 2005. A remarkable educationalist in the realms of both theory and practice, she made significant contributions to the field of curriculum development and change. She was formerly Educational Coordinator of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), and Director-General of Educational Research in the Argentine Ministry of Education.

Publisher:

Comparative Education Research Centre and Springer

ISBN 962-8093-52-5

June 2006; 315 pages

HK\$200/US\$32

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Website: www.hku.hk/cerc/Publications/publications.htm

CERC STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION 19

Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods

Edited by Mark Bray, Bob Adamson and Mark Mason

Approaches and methods in comparative education research are of obvious importance, but do not always receive adequate attention. This book contributes new insights within the longstanding traditions of the field.

A particular feature is the focus on different units of analysis. Individual chapters compare places, systems, times, cultures, values, policies, curricula and other units. These chapters are contextualised within broader analytical frameworks which identify the purposes and strengths of the field. The book includes a focus on intra-national as well as cross-national comparisons, and highlights the value of approaching themes from different angles. The book will be of great value not only to producers of comparative education research but also to consumers who wish to understand more thoroughly the parameters and value of the field.

The editors: *Mark Bray* is Director of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, in Paris; *Bob Adamson* is Associate Professor in the Hong Kong Institute of Education; and *Mark Mason* is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. They have all been Presidents of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), and Directors of the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong. They have also written extensively in the field of comparative education with reference to multiple domains and cultures.

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Provided by Emily Mang, Comparative Education Research Centre, Faculty of Education, HKU

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EDUCATING AND TRAINING OUT OF POVERTY?

Robert Palmer, Ruth Wedgwood, Rachel Hayman, Kenneth King and Neil Thin,
Edinburgh University¹⁰

Keywords

Education, Training, Poverty Reduction, Ghana, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa

Summary

Basic education in a world of more sophisticated technologies is not sufficient to prepare people for jobs. More education or training are required. The importance of basic education has shifted from preparing people for work to preparing people for higher levels of education, training and employment. This article summarises a recent research project examining post-basic education and training and poverty reduction in six countries; Ghana, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and South Africa.

Post-Basic Education and Training and Poverty Reduction

A DFID-funded research project (2004-2006), coordinated by Edinburgh University's Centre of African Studies, has explored the ways in which both the achievement and the developmental impact of the goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) rely on strengthening of systems for post-basic education and training (PBET). Reviewing the relevant policies, institutions, and experience in six countries (India, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania), this project has sought policy-relevant lessons concerning the ways in which the poverty-reducing benefits of basic education depend on PBET's contributions to an enabling environment in two broad ways:

- a *delivery context* in which basic education can flourish (essentially a question of the quality and sustainability of educational provision across the whole education sector);
- a *transformative context* which facilitates translation from basic and post-basic education into developmental outcomes (essentially a question of the developmental value of education for individuals and for society in general).

Obvious though these interdependencies may seem, the project's starting-point is the problematic lack of reference to PBET in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the related trends among some international donors and country strategies towards an under-emphasis on PBET in development policy and even in budgetary provision, and towards an over-emphasis on the importance of rapid progress towards achieving UPE regardless of its sustainability and outcomes. The project also identifies as a critical problem the naïve use of research knowledge to support unwarranted assumptions about simple translations from primary educational inputs to developmental outcomes. A project aim, therefore, is to promote more sophisticated and holistic use of research in developing and implementing policies for education and poverty reduction.

Linking education, skills and context

The research framework for the analysis of the links between education, skills training and poverty reduction highlights the indirect role that PBET may have in ensuring that the potential benefits of

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basic education are realised, through supporting the delivery context and the transformative context. The importance and the nature of the transformative context are explored using the example of the 'farmer education fallacy'. The link between farmer education and productivity is widely accepted, but less attention is given to the fact that this link only works when people can apply knowledge and skills to improve agricultural systems in flexible ways. The slogan that 'four years of education increases agricultural productivity' hides the complexity of this relationship and implicitly denies the importance of the transformative context. In reality, education makes little difference to agricultural productivity in contexts that are not favourable to agricultural innovation.

More broadly, the project explores the multiple meanings of poverty and poverty reduction in order to help clarify what might be understood by educational contributions to poverty reduction. Since poverty is multidimensional, the assessment of education/training impacts on income alone will not be satisfactory. Further, since educational impacts are achieved via complex social processes and not just through the 'human development' improvements in individuals' skills, claims that educational policies and systems are targeting the poor or are 'pro-poor' tell us little about their comparative value in combating poverty. Long-term poverty reduction strategies require a mix of targeted pro-poor educational provision plus general improvements in education for all.

Poverty, skills and development

The research project delves further into the definitions and interpretations of poverty, and related concepts such as vulnerability and inequality, that are actually deployed in practice in the six study countries. It explores the ways in which national and international policies and strategies interact to produce theories of how education and training might contribute to poverty reduction and development in specific contexts. In some countries, notably Rwanda and Ghana, there are clear signs of tension between the competing views of international donors and national governments on optimal approaches to education and poverty reduction.

The project reviews the common patterns in the incidence of poverty in the countries studied, as well as the diversity of the historical factors that have caused it. A key picture emerging is the necessity of trade-offs between strategies for trying to reduce poverty relatively directly by targeting poor people in poor areas, and trying to reduce it via more complex indirect mechanisms involving 'pro-poor' economic growth or more inclusive economic growth strategies. India, Kenya, and Tanzania are shown to have long histories of close policy attention to education and poverty reduction in national development strategies, without any clear evidence of consequent achievements in poverty reduction.

Despite a growing global consensus on the multidimensionality of poverty and on the complexities of poverty reduction, in policy and practice there is a tendency to categorise poverty simplistically in terms of the minimum income required to satisfy basic needs, and consequently to see poverty reduction largely in terms of enabling poor people to improve their income. We also note the gulf between theoretical poverty concepts current among international and national-level policy-makers, and the ways in which ordinary people think about poverty.

Research evidence from the six countries

The project also examines the quantitative and qualitative research evidence from six country studies and compares this with the international literature.

Regarding educational access and quality in the provision of PBET, there are clear signs in the country studies of strong bias towards children from wealthier families and urban areas. The rural poor need to be assisted through targeted sponsorships and provision of hostels but the allocation of these benefits needs to be corruption free. The quality of primary education in poor rural areas needs addressing. State-run and state-supported technical and vocational education and training (TVET) often does not serve the training needs of the poorer sections of society. What countries officially term as 'basic' education may no longer be sufficient for employment and further training is generally needed, even for entry into the informal labour market.

In light of this evidence on access and quality, and in light of analysis of economic development at national and sub-national levels, it becomes clear that the findings of the global and regional 'economic rates of return' literature must be interpreted with great caution. The underlying assumption that the economic benefits to education can be estimated from wages overlooks a vast range of indirect economic benefits to the wider society, which may far outweigh wages. Changes and complexities in the labour market, especially in contexts where regular waged jobs are an exception rather than the rule, make the validity of data sets used to estimate rates of return highly dubious. This may partly help to explain the lack of consistency between the findings of different studies.

There is some evidence that secondary education is associated with the capacity to establish enterprises that create new employment opportunities. In several of the countries studied there are shortages of high-level skills at the same time as saturation of the labour market at other levels. This may be indicative of problems with the quality and relevance of the education currently being delivered and poor links with the labour market. The influence that education levels have on agriculture is highly context-dependent, and in general more educated individuals tend to be less likely to farm. Evidence of links between education and biophysical data (fertility, mortality rates etc) implies that the relationship tends to be more pronounced after primary level. International and interstate studies show correlations between post-basic education levels and economic growth, poverty levels (negative) and equality.

Education, training and enabling environments

The project team argues that the politically attractive claims that schooling directly 'makes a difference' to productivity need to be qualified in two ways. First, these allegedly developmental effects of schooling are almost certainly dependent on other facilitating conditions being present – in the social, cultural, economic and political environments. And, second, these powerful impacts claimed of education are unlikely to be present – even in environmentally promising conditions – if the quality of the schooling or of the skills training is of a very low quality. Commonsense would suggest that a school affected by massive teacher absenteeism and low morale can have little impact on other developmental outcomes. Furthermore, that it is essential to question the capacity of developing economies, and especially their informal economies, straightforwardly to realise the positive outcomes which are often claimed to be associated with skills development through education and training. Education and training outcomes are obviously determined by many other things such as the quality of the education and training and the state of the enabling environment surrounding schools and skill centres.

Conclusions

The collected research from this six country study points to the flaws in common, oversimplified theories concerning the relationship between education and poverty reduction and identifies 5 common fallacies:

- the Causal fallacy: that increased primary education itself causes poverty reduction;
- the Human Development fallacy: that educational contributions to poverty reduction are best understood within the 'human development' paradigm which focuses on individuals' knowledge and skills;
- the Insular fallacy: that primary education systems are relatively self-contained;
- the Pro-poor fallacy: that 'pro-poor' educational provisioning means focusing on primary education, and that 'pro-poor' is synonymous with 'anti-poverty';
- the Sprint-to-the finish fallacy: that rapid progress towards UPE is necessarily a good thing.

Primary education can lead to poverty reduction but only if the delivery context and transformative context is supportive. The development of these contexts is dependent, among other factors, on their being a sufficient level of *post-basic* education and training in the country. Equitable access to PBET can benefit poor communities even if it is not universal but currently many barriers exist that prevent certain communities from accessing it.

For the full report, see: Palmer, R., Wedgwood, R., Hayman, R., with King, K. and Thin, N. (2007) *Educating Out of Poverty? A Synthesis Report on Ghana, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and South Africa*, DFID Researching the Issues Series No.70. DFID: London. Available shortly through the DFID website.

The background papers to this study are available online at:
<http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/research/projects.html>

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