



## Technical Skills Development in Africa

**OECD Development Centre/AfDB/AFD - Experts' Meeting  
Paris, 10 December 2007 - OECD Headquarters**

### Summary Minutes

1. The OECD Development Centre/AfDB/AFD experts' meeting on *Technical Skills Development in Africa* brought together 52 experts, representatives of government and the private sector, both from Africa (Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal and South Africa), OECD countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Japan, Portugal and Turkey), as well as representatives of multilateral organisations (European Training Foundation, European Commission, FAO, ILO, UNEP, UNESCO-IIEP, UNESCO-UNEVOC/UIS, UNIDO and World Bank).
2. The objectives of the meeting were to: (i) exchange views on the key issues and challenges facing African countries in promoting technical skills development; (ii) identify policy experiences in developing, implementing and sustaining successful technical and vocational education and training programmes; (iii) help the AEO secretariat identify issues to be covered in the forthcoming edition of the *African Economic Outlook* (AEO), which will document TVET trends, discuss current approaches to skills development, and identify priorities for further policy-oriented research.
3. The meeting was structured in two parts, each of which with two sessions (agenda attached). The first two sessions were about "Access to TVET", "Institutional and Strategic Framework", "TVET and Labour Market", "Policy Implications", "Lessons from Recent TVET reforms discussing the following issues: Vision; Governance, Partnership and Qualification", with some presentations from experts and open discussion.
4. During the last two sessions, panellists discussed "key issues and actors pertaining to the Financing of Vocational Training" and "the Challenges ahead for the provision of TVET with a focus on Youth Unemployment", "Rural sector training" and "Migration with references to an at times fragile States context". Each session was followed by a lively debate between panellists and participants.



## Session I - Technical Skills Development in Africa: Stock-taking and Institutional & Strategic Framework

5. Reports on current trends and issues in vocational training in Africa were provided, illustrating the rise, fall, and rise again of **technical and vocational skills development (TVSD)** on the agenda of governments and of donor agencies in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).<sup>1</sup> Regrets were expressed about the few paragraphs dedicated to TVET in the recently released *UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?*<sup>2</sup> The report finds that of the more than 512 million students enrolled in secondary schools worldwide in 2005, only one out of ten was enrolled in secondary-level TVET programmes.
6. A global snapshot of technical and vocational education in Africa was provided based on the report entitled "*Participation in Formal and Vocational Education and Training Programmes Worldwide – An Initial Study*". This report presents a panorama of available data and highlights guidelines for future investigation. Two **ISCED97**-based indicators were used for its statistical overview of TVET participation and outcomes, namely **Vocational Gross Enrolment Ratio (VGER)** and **Percentage of Technical/Vocational Enrolment (PTVE)**. It was underscored that **TVET programmes and enrolments** are considerably more prominent at the upper secondary level than lower secondary (UNESCO-UNEVOC/UIS, 2006). Nonetheless, out of all African countries, only Rwanda and Cameroun have half of upper-secondary students in TVET programmes.
7. The enormous **measurement problems** in looking at TVET from a statistical perspective were also brought to the attention of participants. The way of classifying education programmes comes from orientation. It was noted that there is a tendency to push programmes into **general programmes of education**, because international policies consider TVET too expensive. UNESCO does not have a consistent taxonomy for international or regional comparability, especially ISCED Level 4 programmes, which are intermediary/transitional and can be **difficult to classify**.
8. The crucial importance of vocational training for the informal sector was also raised by many participants. The current situation of African economies (where between 40 and 95 per cent of the employment is in the informal sector) requires an approach towards the development of competences which takes into account both the nature of the economic actors (the majority of which is represented by self-employed and micro and small entrepreneurs) and the specificity of the trainers – a great share of competencies is offered by informal operators. In Benin there are 240 000 apprentices versus 20 000 students enrolled in formal TVET.
9. TVSD was excluded from both the International Development Target in 1996 and as a Millennium Development Goal (MDG2) since 2000. Now **TVSD is back on the international agenda**. Recent development reports have all argued that **a holistic, integrated and inter-sectorial approach** to education is crucial, including TVSD. Increasingly, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) will need to reflect this same comprehensive approach. It was also argued that **getting the macroeconomic context right** remains the essential first step in focusing on TVSD, since training alone does not create jobs.
10. TVET has been introduced in developing countries to promote **skills for industrialization** and, where this has not occurred, it has not responded efficiently to the different **skill needs of the formal and informal economy**. It was recommended that **strategic considerations** be important in profiling skills in developing countries. Although, PRSP and Decent Work country programmes (DWCP)

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<sup>1</sup> Technical and vocational skills Development, DFID policy briefing paper, April 2007, see <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/technical-vocational.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001547/154743e.pdf>

contain elements of skills and education development, strategy papers do not have a methodological link between TVET and economic development objectives. An ILO/FAO study found that governments giving incentives to growing certain labour intensive crops may tremendously increase job creation.

11. A massive training of public and private institutions involved in TVSD was recommended due to missing implementation capabilities. Many participants raised the issue that there is no reliable and recognized Africa-wide **teacher qualification standard**. Such a qualification would prove a much more cost effective exercise. It was also recommended to link TVET to industry sectors, which show good growth prospects due to dynamic comparative advantages.
12. A **conceptual challenge** was raised on how to assess what the terms used by agencies to refer to skills, post-primary, TVET or post-basic, actually cover. This diversity of concepts, which basically reflects the shifts in the discourse of development agencies,<sup>3</sup> only brings to confusion the way of understanding the approach.

## Session II - Lessons from Recent TVET reforms

13. **The TVET reform in Senegal** has tried to take into account the traditional ways of learning/apprenticeship of the country and could be considered as a good example for other countries. **The governments of both Kenya and Uganda** put forward their **vision** of offering free education at the secondary level, which raises the issue of **quality**.
14. The importance of **coordinating** TVSD concepts and activities amongst donors was stressed. Employment is considered one of the most important key route out of poverty (cf. ILO's Decent Work Agenda), due to the employment link between economic growth and poverty reduction. As a guiding principle for all human resources, there is a need to understand the labour market dynamics in Africa. Since **the economic growth** seems to be driven by the natural resource sectors, the industries in that sector require certain skills.
15. Commenting on how youth can integrate into the labour market, the need to **postpone specialization** as long as possible was expressed. Access to a dual system and labour market orientation at the end of the school cycle was recommended. Training in entrepreneurship and business skills could be taught towards the end of the cycle, as these are targeted skills best transferrable over a short, focused period. Specialized skills for specific jobs are best suited to a business setting. The dual system seems to work better with better equipments and more qualified managers/trainers.
16. One of the main accomplishments of the **TVET reform in Ethiopia** is a new governance structure to be defined in a new TVET law (decentralization, public-private partnership). Key challenges to the ambitious Ethiopian TVET programme were identified as resistance to change and availability of human and material resources. TVET reforms in Ethiopia aim to **increase cooperation and partnership with the private sector** in governance, planning and financing (e.g. **Occupational Standard -OS-** development), and in training implementation. An accomplishment of the TVET reform in Ethiopia is a qualifications framework developed as a transparent basis for all TVET pathways to general/higher education. OS in different trades has also been developed; preliminary assessment methods are

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief review of the place of skills, life skills, TVET and skills development in the most current education policies of some 13 agencies, see "What Room for Skills Development in Post-Primary Education? A View from the Development Agencies," a background paper produced for the Paris meeting of the Working Group for International Co-operation in Skills Development, 13-15 November 2007 by Kenneth King.

being developed; guidelines & checklists for development & preparation OS have also been developed.

17. **Senegal**, currently suffering from a **skills gap**, is currently using both a **system of TVET certification** and a dual system. The TVET Ministry in Senegal has **certification level goals**. Professional training must be based on certain best practices in keeping with the code of conducts of certain professions as well as environmental concerns.
18. There is a **problem of understanding** at the level of skills, in terms of how to actually undertake TVET reform, how to implement decentralization, and how to open TVET centres up to entrepreneurship. It was agreed that understanding of **TVET actors**, resistance to change and implementation capability is incomplete.

### **Session III - Financing Vocational Training: Issues and Actors**

19. The **Republic of South Africa (RSA)** has developed its first industrial framework, linked to national industrial policies. The Government is said to be taking the skills agenda seriously. It has been referred to as a revolution in addressing skills shortages.
20. A **recent AFD study** analysed aims and means of financing vocational training systems in the widest sense of the term. Another **AFD study** contains four country case studies concerning the organisation and financing modalities in four South countries: Algeria, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia.
21. Concerning **modalities and financing mechanisms**, the *comparable or divergent financing mechanisms* are analysed in the AFD study using the following structure: Who is the ultimate payer? Who is the intermediate payer? Who collects the funds? What are the various financing mechanisms? The following points were addressed in the "Financing Vocational Training: A Europe-Africa Comparison" study: Exclusively public or private financing; Different co-financing processes; Vocational training funds; Mechanisms for collecting funds; and Individual support measures (training vouchers, various forms of bank loans, etc.). Several reference works on this subject have been produced by the main international organisations, but few of them have well-founded results on the real impact of these different financing mechanisms. The No.13 AFD study tries to provide up-to-date information on some analyses, whether completed or ongoing.
22. The problems of collection, as well as the issue of actual transfer of resources from government's budgets to the funds, were raised by the participants. It was noted that caution should be shown in collecting a **levy from employers**, because it increases the cost of labour (up to 4 percent). Before such schemes are implemented, the issue of what are the effects on their training behaviour should be deeply examined. It was also mentioned that if one wants TVET to have effects on agricultural production, one must think that a professionalization of the agricultural sector is a necessity. This should be done by training young people, who are starting to work on farms. But all measures until now have brought no results.
23. **The 3<sup>rd</sup> session** concluded that the role of state remains crucial and cannot be compensated by the existing funds. The setting up of effective institutional financing mechanisms requires adopting a competency based approach with an integrated/objective funding formula.

### **Session IV – Challenges Ahead for the Provision of TVET**

24. **The 4<sup>th</sup> Session** identified some of the many **linkages between TVET and many other development issues** such as youth employment, and migration.

Africa is not an important source of immigrants in the OECD, with respect to other parts of the developing world. For Africa, about a third of high skilled and two thirds of low skilled workers come from the North African countries. Africans make up similar shares of high skill and low skill workers, slightly more of the latter, and the difference is made up by more low skilled movement from the Maghreb.

It is important to look at migration within the African continent. Circular migration might encourage more legal movement, more remittances, and more brain circulation. In this respect, regional co-operation has a role to play in setting qualification framework which is compatible across countries, facilitating therefore workers' mobility.

On overall challenges, it was raised the concern of the private sector in terms of the fragmentation of the different institutions in charge of TVET while there is need for a one stop shop in finding the skills needed. The problem of little awareness-raising among parents and firms about TVET is also considered a major obstacle to its expansion. Increased attention should be put on the evaluation of existing TVET programs as well to the identification of the most relevant trades.

### **Wrap Up and Closure**

25. **Mr. Tom Hurley**, *AfDB's Director Human Development Department*, reiterated that the AfDB will significantly increase investment in TVET provision in Africa over the next 3 years.