

**FACILITATING ACQUISITION OF LIFE SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY WITH REFERENCE
TO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:
Some UNESCO-UNEVOC Practices**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Individuals need a variety of skills for work and productive fulfilling lives, paraphrasing John White (1997) in his book "Education and the End of Work". Among the skills are life skills, a term that has been popularized by the Education for All (EFA) movement. What are life skills? Do they refer to, or include, vocational and technical skills – work specific occupational skills? In a fast changing world in which work and its organisation; where it is found and can be performed in both formal and informal sectors; where multiple skills are needed for employment; and technologies alter rapidly: what help can education and training leaders and practitioners get in order to respond efficiently and effectively to challenges to have suitable policies, systems, training programmes, assessment and certification tools? What form does the assistance take and how can it be provided? This paper focuses on practices of UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre (UNESCO-UNEVOC) to facilitate the acquisition of aspects of life skills relating to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The practices of other organisations are equally interesting and instructive practice, but these will not be treated in this paper. Facilitation and promotion of the upgrading of TVET as a whole are essential actions to fulfil the mandate, mission, goals and programmes of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre.

2 TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS AS PART OF LIFE SKILLS IN EFA AGENDA

Two of the six goals of the Dakar Framework for Action Education for All (EFA) are about life skills.

These are goals 3 and 6. Goal 3 reads as follows:

"Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes".

(UNESCO, Education for All, 2000 p.16)

Goal 6 states:

"Improving all aspects of quality education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills" (UNESCO, Education for All, 2000, p. 17).

While what the term life skills encompasses has been the subject of debate, the commentary on the EFA goals indicates that the term includes technical and vocational skills as well as generic skills needed for livelihoods and lifelong learning. The term generic skills, also known in some countries as key competencies, covers skills such as literacy, numeracy, linguistic, problem-solving and team work. With respect to goal 3 the relevant part of the commentary is as follows:

"All young people and adults must be given the opportunity to gain the knowledge and develop the values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to develop their capacities to work, to participate fully in their society, to take control of their own lives and to continue learning. ... Such opportunities should ... help them become active agents in shaping their future and develop useful work-related skills" (UNESCO, 2000, p.16).

And the relevant part of the commentary on goal six states:

"Governments and all other EFA partners must work together to ensure basic education of quality for all...Successful education programmes require...a

clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values ..." (UNESCO, 2000, p.17).

3 TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Technical and Vocational education and training (TVET) is the branch of education directly linked to the preparation of learners for the world of work. It is found in both developed and developing countries. TVET is concerned with the acquisition of occupation specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes. The occupation specific skills are obtained in full-time technical and vocational education programmes, and part-time courses that may be offered in educational and training institutions or in work-places. Also, apprenticeships are another route taken to acquire occupation specific skills. In a number of African countries the apprenticeships could be indigenous or modern in kind.

TVET can be formal and non-formal courses, whose durations range from a few weeks to a couple of years. Such education and training could be done in secondary education programmes, technical colleges, polytechnics, community college, and further education institutions. Various public, private and not for profit organisations are involved in providing TVET. In developing countries, the public providers tend to dominate the TVET scene. Increasingly international discourse on TVET shows the tendency to call this branch of education "skills development" (Working Group for International Cooperation for Skills Development, 2007; Jon Lauglo. Comment on Kenneth King's Paper entitled "What room for skills development in post-primary education? A view from the development agencies", 2007).

TVET can be pre-employment vocational education and training and continuing vocational training courses undertaken whilst in employment. Pre-employment education and training offers initial training. With the shift away from the 'front-end model' of TVET characterised by learning once for life time jobs, nowadays the initial training is the beginning of a lifelong process alternating between learning and work (Paul Hager and Terry Hyland, 2003). This is so because the rapid changes in technology and world of work lead, among other things, to quick obsolescence of skills and knowledge, changes in skill boundaries, and emergence of new occupations, compelling re-training of individuals in order to stay employable. Moreover, individuals may need the re-training to follow new careers.

4 SITUATION OF TVET AND EMPLOYMENT

Changes taking place in the world of work, pressures of unemployment, the need to be competitive regionally and globally compel public, private and not-for-profit providers of TVET to

look for ways to improve the quality and relevance of TVET, and to ensure the availability of suitably qualified workers. Also as a result of the changes jobs can be found and performed in all kinds of places. So, job-seekers, particularly in developing countries, have to look beyond the formal and modern economies to find jobs.

Located mainly at secondary and tertiary education levels, the formal education and training programmes receive varying attention as reflected in the resources allocated to TVET by governments. An examination of the provision of TVET or skills development around the world gives a variegated picture. This relates to the whole spectrum of TVET from admission requirements, providers, coordination, curriculum, assessment and certification to teachers. For instance, semi-autonomous bodies have been established to coordinate TVET in some countries. TVET in some countries is well-resourced while the same is not true in others. Compared to other subjects offered at secondary and tertiary levels the teaching of technical and vocational subjects tends to be dominated by unqualified teachers. Also, enjoying a low status, it tends to be unattractive to both learners and communities. Often governments and business leaders are frustrated by the inability to compete favourably in regional and global markets and by the huge unemployment put the blame on education and training. Sometimes aggravating this unfavourable unemployment situation is the fact that such a situation occurs in countries where employers are recruiting foreigners to address shortages of suitably qualified workers. The familiar charge is about mismatch between the needs of the labour market and competencies imparted from education and training programmes. Complicating the whole situation is the emergence of new skills, which are needed for both leisure and work:

"Some new skills...are beginning to be important for a significant number of employees and private citizens even in rural areas of less-developed countries...In the face of the new realities, benchmarks are being set in many countries for levels of education and training thought necessary to function in the modern world" (UNESCO, 2006, pp.24-25).

The issues and concerns about the unfavourable situation of TVET and the changing nature of jobs need some rather instant solutions: for the authorities and business leaders are in hurry to catch up with the competition. Moreover, both governments and communities, especially the poor communities in developing countries, expect better outcomes for learners in the labour market, both in the modern sector and traditional sector.

There are various practices, some successful and others not successful, that are aimed to

cater to the changes and to promote and enhance the quality of TVET. The practices, if not providing the complete solution, give any one pondering to improve education and training a leg up. They cover the whole range of education and training provision, i.e. admission requirements; system; curriculum; management; vocational teachers and to related and concerns and issues about quality, relevance, equity, access, and lifelong learning. UNESCO as a whole and UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) in particular have contributed to the availability of exemplars, expertise and points of reference.

Year in and year out UNESCO-UNEVOC is engaged in various efforts to upgrade the quality and to facilitate learning in the area of TVET. Towards this end it employs various strategies. These boil down to the following practices: UNEVOC Networks; training; human resource development; dialogue; research, publication, and diffusion of materials; advocacy and promotion of exchange of experiences and good practices; development of TVET systems; and curricular innovation. Underlying the practices is the intention to help TVET leaders and practitioners to respond efficiently and effectively to the imperatives for TVET that satisfies the needs of learners and employers, and contributes to the competitiveness of countries.

5 UNEVOC NETWORKS

The UNEVOC Network is a world-wide learning network. It is made up of UNEVOC Centres that are established in institutions involved in TVET in UNESCO Member States. The UNEVOC Centres are, among other things, focal points for receiving and disseminating UNESCO messages, and fostering networking. They are created on the advice of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre. Currently there are over 270 UNEVOC Centres in 166 countries. Among the institutions making up the UNEVOC Networks are government departments, quasi-public authorities responsible for TVET, public vocational education and training institutions, quasi-public institutions, tertiary institutions and skills development centres in universities. Possibly foremost the UNEVOC Network is at once a framework and strategy for mutual learning and networking. It provides a framework for collaboration and cooperation in the development and improvement of TVET (UNESCO, International Programme for TVET, 2000). Team leaders of UNEVOC Centres and practitioners associated with the UNEVOC Centres have in the UNEVOC Network a coherent framework through which practitioners sharing common membership can exchange examples, good practices and innovations on a range of issues in TVET. Because of the enormous variation in the type and functions of the UNEVOC Centres, the UNEVOC Network can in fact be viewed as not one but as several

networks. It has great diversity. However, to concentrate focus and to cater to special interests, UNESCO-UNEVOC has introduced clustering in the UNEVOC Network. This allows UNEVOC Centres with similar interests to focus their actions around the common interests. There is also an E-Forum Network; which is a network of individual TVET practitioners. Through these networks, opportunities are created for networking, mutual learning, vicarious learning, interaction and search for knowledge and information on any aspect of TVET. Thus, some relatively rapid solutions can be got through the networks, thereby saving educational leaders time, energy and money. Below are emails illustrating some of the benefits and utility of the UNEVOC Networks.

Box 1

"Sent: 29 August 2006 07:58
Subject: Re: Standardisation of Vocational Education

Dear Members of E-Forum,

I am also asking for technical guidance on the design of standardised modules and workshops, which must constitute a curriculum for vocational education on Environmental Management, Environmental Education, and Sustainable Development. I need this urgently to start and institute of Environmental Education in Botswana. I am also asking for development partners with expertise, resources, interest in running this type of institution as a private entity".

Box 2

"Sent: 29 August 2006 11:31
Subject: Re: Standardisation of Vocational Education

Dear ...

At the Department of Vocational Education and Training we can give some guidance on the design and development of modules and workshops for vocational Education and Training, but not necessarily on Environmental Vocational Training. We are ready to share with you our Blue Prints and guidelines for developing modules for our vocational programmes. You can also contact the Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF) who has been and continue to offer competency based modularized training, but specifically for the construction industry. I hope materials you get from the two organisations will provide you with the necessary guidance. Thank you".

Box 3

"Sent: 23 August 2006 15:55
Subject: RE: Vocational Education and Training Institute
in Paris

"Dear Members of E-forum,

I'm writing from Chile and I need to know if somebody has worked in the standardization of workshops for the Vocational Education. It means, how to establish the ideal work area, kind of instrument, machines, others, such as, environment, security, norms.

If somebody has a methodologic document about this theme, I appreciate a lot your support"

Box 4

"-----Original Message-----"

From: Maiser@unevoc.unesco.org
[mailto:Maiser@unevoc.unesco.org] On Behalf Of
UNESCO-UNEVOC E-Forum Moderator

Sent: 08 September, 2006 16:05
To: UNESCO-UNEVOC E-Forum
<forum@unevoc.unesco.org>
Subject: Re Technical Education, Vocational &
Entrepreneurship Training Policy Review

"Sent: 08 September 2006 15:33
Subject: Fw: Technical Education, Vocational &
Entrepreneurship Training Policy Review

Dear ...

You may be interested in the development of the SADC regional qualifications framework. The Technical Committee met in Livingstone last week. I can put you in touch with the contact person in Zambia. Regards"

Box 5

"-----Original Message-----"

"Sent: 08 September 2006 08:35

Subject: Technical Education, Vocational &
Entrepreneurship Training Policy Review

Dear All,

Zambia, is in the process of reviewing its Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Policy. As such we'd like to draw experiences from how other nations/UNEVOC centres have undertaken their policy reviews. Any information by way of reports, minutes indicating the process of reviewing the Policy will be most appreciated" UNESCO-UNEVOC E-Forum, 2006).

Box 6

"-----Original Message-----"

From: Maiser@local.unevoc.org
[mailto:Maiser@local.unevoc.org] On Behalf Of UNESCO-
UNEVOC E-Forum
Sent: 04 January, 2008 14:24

To: UNESCO-UNEVOC E-Forum
Subject: TVET and private sector participation
From:
Sent: 2008-01-03 18:13:55
Subject: TVET and private sector participation

Dear Colleagues,

We are currently investigating relationships between private sector and vocational training. Is there any typology or taxonomy of the various mechanisms and roles performed by the private sector in regard to vocational training?

I should be most grateful if you could share with me some best practices and examples of such mechanisms and roles in current use"(UNESCO-UNEVOC E-Forum, 2008).

6 TRAINING AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Training is essential to realise the UNESCO-UNEVOC mission relating to developing capacity of TVET leaders and practitioners. It engenders learning. Through training insights, new knowledge and skills are gained, thereby broadening the capacity to attend to questions of innovation, and reform of TVET. To effect training UNESCO-UNEVOC conducts seminars and workshops and organises conferences for various kinds of TVET practitioners, in particular those who are associated with the UNEVOC Networks. Also, the seminars and conferences offer possibilities for face to face interaction among TVET leaders and practitioners, which creates opportunities to exchange tacit knowledge about innovations, reforms, exemplars and so on.

Qualified TVET teachers and instructors are needed in order to have quality TVET that give learners good prospects for employment. However, frequently one reads reports about shortages of teachers in general. For example the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 tells of "serious teacher shortages in some countries, shortages of trained teachers that are even more acute" (UNESCO, p. 77). This bane of education in developing countries is most acute in the area of TVET. And yet it is known that "teacher certification and training certification will improve training in the long term, first by ensuring the progressive development of a competent staff and second by establishing higher standards" (Hershbach, 1997, p.97). But the training of technical and vocational instructors and teachers is fraught with problems, especially in poor and small countries. Describing the problems, Jon Lauglo (2007) wrote:

"Small countries frequently have problems designing provisions for instructor training in the many vocational specialities in such a way that the avoid underutilization of training capacity. Large and small systems have problems ensuring that the pedagogy part of such training will be sufficiently relevant for the practicalities of skills teaching in the concerned

specialty. There is also the problem of ensuring recruitment of prospective instructors...If industry is booming; there is the problem of retaining good TVET staff who are tempted by frequently higher pay in the occupations they are preparing others for. Throughout the world there is a shortage of in-service staff development opportunity for TVET instructors, so as to keep abreast of technological change"(p.7).

UNESCO-UNEVOC has experience in providing assistance in human resource development. In collaboration with the Section for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, it is engaged in finding ways to integrate TVET and ESD in teacher training programmes. Through its partnership and support to the United TVET Network on Innovation and professional development (UNIP) based at University of Bremen in Germany, assistance to the development of vocational teacher education is underway (www.unip-net.org). Several countries in Asia are already participating in the initiative. Some of the conferences and seminars organised by UNESCO-UNEVOC have been devoted to the question of the preparation of technical and vocational teachers. Also, UNESCO-UNEVOC makes use of Mobile Training Teams and attachments to facilitate learning.

The former involves study visits to successful countries and dissemination of lessons learnt and expertise gained to others at regional and national levels. Through the latter the selected educators have opportunities of learning from experienced and innovative persons to whom they would be attached.

7 ADVOCACY PROMOTION OF EXCHANGES OF EXPERIENCES AND GOOD PRACTICES

In line with its standard-setting mandate, UNESCO has adopted normative instruments in the area of TVET in the form of conventions and recommendations, e.g. UNESCO, Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education, 2001; Convention concerning Technical and Vocational Education, 1989. Similar normative norms exist covering other areas of education. Other norms are derived from UN conventions, e.g. the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1962). Also, there are other messages and norms, and declarations of international import on various issues that have implications on education and training. UNESCO-UNEVOC gives advocacy to the standard-setting instruments and related ethical messages. It facilitates learning and the dissemination of normative statements. It fosters dialogue, and promotes the sharing of expertise and the exchange of experiences as well. To these ends it uses various means including conferences, meetings of experts, seminars and UNEVOC website. Between 2004 and 2006 UNESCO-UNEVOC organised 48 activities. Prevalent activities (57 per cent) had regional focuses. Through the regional activities neighbouring

countries have opportunities for TVET leaders to forge regional relationships: as often issues and solutions of interest to one country are relevant to neighbouring countries. Sixteen percent of the activities were global leadership meetings on topical issues, with a broad international spread of participants. The rest of the activities focused on strengthening TVET at national level. The meetings and conferences may result in the re-definition of a stage or vision of education and the adoption of guidelines. These are outcomes that at once can stimulate and facilitate the acquisition of technical and vocational skills and knowledge. Examples of the re-definition are the Kigali Declaration at the end of a UNESCO Conference on basic education in Africa held in Kigali, Rwanda in September 2007 (UNESCO, 2007), and the Lisbon Declaration on new basic skills (Kamarainen, 2002). The former expanded the curriculum of basic education to include work-related skills and knowledge. The latter referred to the definition of "new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning... ", which relate to skills and knowledge and attitudes needed in the world of work. (Kamarainen, 2002). Wherever possible, UNESCO-UNEVOC undertook the various activities in conjunction with partners, such as the Colombo Plan Staff College, ILO, and bilateral agencies. Moreover, UNESCO-UNEVOC collaborates and has partnerships with other UNESCO entities at UNESCO Headquarters and in the Field and regional bodies. Such collaboration and partnerships provide UNESCO-UNEVOC with other channels to give advocacy to UNESCO messages, norms and standards. Also, advocacy is done through the distribution of flyers at seminars, conferences, and meetings. Additionally, the flyers are distributed to UNEVOC Centres, National Commissions and UNESCO Offices around the world.

8 PUBLICATIONS AND DIFFUSION OF MATERIALS

Research and publications in the area of TVET are an important part of what is done at UNESCO-UNEVOC. Research results are published and disseminated at meetings of various kinds. There a number of publications such as books; case studies; flyers; newsletter; papers on topical issues; profiles of TVET; and reports of conferences and seminars. The publications are sources of information, knowledge, and frameworks on a range of issues and topics; e.g. reforms of TVET systems; policy reforms; improving access, equity, and quality in TVET; national qualification frameworks; national training authorities; training funds; changing role of government in TVET provision; competency-based education and training; modularised curriculum; industrial experience; public-private partnerships in TVET; and improving the attractiveness of TVET. Diffusion of the publications occurs through distribution to UNEVOC Centres, National

Commissions for UNESCO, Ministries of Education, and UNESCO Field Offices. Also, the E-Forum and the UNEVOC website are used to diffuse information on publications and how TVET practitioners may obtain copies.

9 SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The rapid changes taking place in workplaces and the tendencies to globalise compel TVET providers to improve the quality and relevance of TVET. Better outcomes in the labour market for learners completing their education and training programmes can be got where relevant and quality programmes are delivered by qualified teachers and instructors. Also, needing attention are questions of access and equity in TVET if the goal of TVET for all is to be reached. Improving access of marginalised groups to TVET can create the chances to empower them, and, as well, to increase the possibilities for taking part in the well-being of their societies. Learners, youths and adults equipped with technical and vocational skills and generic skills can lead productive lives and can contribute to the well-being of their societies.

The measures to improve the various dimensions of TVET are needed in order to have better employment and life outcomes. Rapid attention to the implement any measures is necessary, given the speed at which change occurs in the world and in workplaces. Efficiency and effectiveness in doing so depends on easy access to examples, and good practices, lessons learnt, and success stories, among other tools. UNESCO-UNEVOC practices described in this paper would be one source for the examples, good practices, etc, and those of other organisations would be another. Rather than re-invent the wheel, the use of existing practices of facilitating the acquisition of technical and vocational skills is recommended for use by TVET leaders and practitioners as they strive to develop and improve the quality of TVET, and to better the employment prospects of learners.

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Dr. Munjanganja organized and conducted numerous seminars and workshops in the area of Education and TVET in Africa, Asia-Pacific Region and Eastern Europe. He participated as a speaker, moderator, rapporteur and chairperson at various international forums in particular the ILO African Region Conference, ILO Conferences, SADC Regional Training Council meetings, UNESCO General Conferences, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Conferences, UNESCO Second International Congress on TVE and UNESCO International Experts Meeting: Follow-up to the Second International Congress on TVE. He contributed several articles, journals and books and written synthesis reports in the area TVET.

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