

## Foreword

### TVET for the Sustainability of Human Kind

The New Economy is creating new opportunities as well as new challenges and uncertainties. Although the right to well-being is entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, millions of people today are living in conditions of extreme poverty, which deny them the opportunity to exercise these fundamental rights. I would like to draw from the reflection made by the Family Care Foundation regarding what the world would look like if it were reduced to the size of a village of 100 people. According to their analysis: 80 people would live in sub-standard housing; 67 would be unable to read; 50 would be among the malnourished and one dying of starvation; 33 would be without access to a safe water supply; 39 would lack access to improved sanitation—and five would control 32% of the entire wealth. This unequal distribution of education and wealth is the root cause of many of the problems facing the world today. It is our business to remedy this situation before we come to regret not having remedied it. Education and training have a key role to play in this regard.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, repeatedly reminded us that education is the key to unlocking the cage of human misery; the key to delivering the potential of every human being; the key to opening up a future of freedom and hope. There is a general consensus that education can pave the way to freedom from poverty and hunger. Even primary education by itself has a number of positive effects on development: an increase in productivity in the formal and informal sectors of the economy; a positive effect on innovation in agriculture; a decrease in birth rates; and an improvement in health and nutrition—educated people are healthier because they are more likely to eat a properly balanced diet.

The Bonn Declaration on Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability, resulting from the UNESCO Conference ‘Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability’ in October 2004, states that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help to achieve sustainable development.

Work is a major feature in most people’s lives. Not only does it provide them with the means of survival in terms of food, clothing and shelter, but the type of

work undertaken by individuals and groups also has a major impact on their self-identity, social status, standard of living and quality of life. TVET is currently faced with major implications posed by the displacement of the traditionally strong focus upon so-called manual work in favour of mental work—the shift from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. The meaning and practice of work are also changing as globalized networks of production and trade spread across the globe. The boundaries between manual and mental work are fading away and becoming problematic, as many traditional forms of work, and preparation processes for learning to work, undergo change.

TVET is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work to increase opportunities for productive work, sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment and socio-economic development in knowledge economies. To increase their chances for employability, young people and adults need skills that are adaptable and relevant to the demands of today's societies, which require individuals to possess a combination of knowledge, practical and social skills and positive attitudes and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing work environments.

There is a timely need to re-examine important matters relating to the changing world of work, such as educational and training institutions, learning processes, necessary competencies and effects upon labour markets, school-to-work transition, the role of gender, matters of equality and equity, the respective roles of government, business, industry and trade unions, the dominant didactics for learning a profession, the assessment of competencies, declining birth rates and the ageing workforce, amongst many others. This is merely a brief listing of aspects that are examined and documented in this *Handbook*.

There are great expectations that TVET can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals relating to Education for All by overcoming the long-existing disparity between North and South, reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion. However, its widespread implementation requires considerable investments. Consequently, when planning for TVET, policy-makers and decision-makers must be able to make informed decisions that are supported by evidence-based information. There is, unfortunately, a paucity of evidence-based information about TVET. This *Handbook*, therefore, will start to fill that critical information gap by re-examining the world of work and its diverse aspects and documenting them in order to provide the best answers and best practices to improve TVET. It should assist those involved in TVET at any level in making informed decisions.

For the first time in the history of TVET an important reference tool has been produced that provides a very comprehensive coverage of research, policy and practice within a single source. Through this seminal contribution, the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre has been successful in capturing much of the knowledge of the world's leading experts in the field for the benefit of future generations. As the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, I am very encouraged by this collaborative scholarly effort. It is through initiatives such as these that the status of TVET will be enhanced so that it can fully play its role as an enabling instrument for economic prosperity and social development. I commend Rupert Maclean, Director of

the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, for spearheading this project which also assists UNESCO in contributing to critical reflection in education and training and to capture, preserve and share knowledge for the betterment of humankind.

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