



**NETWORK FOR POLICY RESEARCH REVIEW AND  
ADVICE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**April 2013**

**N O R R A G N E W S 48**

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**2012: The Year of Global Reports on  
TVET, Skills & Jobs**

**Consensus or Diversity?**

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## What is NORRAG?

NORRAG (Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training) is a focus and a forum for the analysis of international cooperation in the education and training field.

The objectives of NORRAG are:

1. Collection, critical analysis, and synthesis of research on education and training policies and strategies, and on international cooperation;
2. Dissemination of just-in-time information and knowledge on education and training policies and strategies, and on international cooperation;
3. Advocacy of critical analysis on education and training policies and strategies to governments, NGOs and other organizations;
4. Cooperation with other networks in order to share information, carry out joint programmes, joint efforts in advocacy and strengthen networks.

The main instruments of NORRAG are its publications (*NORRAG NEWS* and Policy Briefs), its website and the organization of/and participation in meetings.

For more information, please visit: [www.norrag.org](http://www.norrag.org)

## What is *NORRAG NEWS*?

*NORRAG NEWS* is a digital newsletter that is produced twice a year. Each issue has a large number of short, sharp articles, focusing on policy implications of research findings and/or on the practical implications of new policies on international education and training formulated by development agencies, foundations and NGOs. The niche of NORRAG has been to identify a number of 'red threads' running through the complexity of the debates and the current aid and cooperation discourse, and to dedicate special issues of *NORRAG NEWS* to the critical analysis of these themes.

A full list of *NORRAG NEWS* is available at the end of this issue.

### Other Ways to Engage with NORRAG

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**NORRAG NEWS 48**  
**A SPECIAL ISSUE**  
**2012: The Year of Global Reports on TVET, Skills & Jobs**  
**Consensus or Diversity?**

Ten years after the start of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report process in 2002, we finally had a Skills GMR entitled: *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*. The other five EFA Dakar Goals were analysed as individual GMRs from 2002 to 2007. The first GMR explained the difficulty of treating Goal 3 (on skills) of the Dakar World Forum as follows: 'The monitoring of this Dakar goal presents major conceptual and methodological challenges which this Report is in no position to address.' How different the situation seems today as the new Report was launched in 50 different cities in just two months, from 16<sup>th</sup> October to 16<sup>th</sup> December 2012!

After the dearth of global skills analysis for many years, there is now suddenly a glut. 2012 has certainly been a busy year for those interested in the links amongst Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), skills and jobs, and there have been launches of a number of global reports on these topics. January 2012 saw the ILO's *Global Employment Trends 2012*. In May, came the ILO's *World of Work Report 2012*, UNESCO's *Transforming TVET: Building Skills for Work and Life* and the *Shanghai Consensus* from UNESCO's Third International Congress on TVET, and the new OECD skills strategy, *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives*. In June, the McKinsey Global Institute's (MGI) *The World at Work: Jobs, Pay and Skills for 3.5 Billion People*, arrived, and October saw three more: the World Bank's *World Development Report 2013: Jobs*, the long-awaited EFA GMR 2012 on Youth and Skills, already mentioned, and *Skills for Employability in Africa and Asia* by Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement (ISESE). In addition, throughout much of 2012, there has been the development of UNESCO's *World TVET Report* (WTR), which is expected to be published in May 2013.

This issue of NORRAG News looks at the many different meanings of skill in these reports: high, medium, low, foundation, transferable, technical and vocational skills, as well as life-skills. It looks also at the state of skills in both urban and rural areas, and considers skills-for-poverty-reduction as well as skills-for-growth. The reports cover skills in the informal economy, as well as work-based skills and on-the-job training. Some of the reports also consider the emerging meanings and frontiers of TVET. These reports seem to use 'skills' and TVET in very different ways. Even though they are, by no means, a series of coordinated approaches to TVET, skills development and jobs, they do cover a good deal of the global landscape, and not just the developing world.

We should perhaps beware of the danger of regarding some reports as being of 'international' or 'global'; there have been other 'regional' publications which may also have a global reach e.g. *Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific* (2012;2013).

The timing of the GMR 2012 and of these other global reports on skills and jobs coincides with an explosion of interest, particularly in the North, about future development agendas post-2015, including the future of the EFA Goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after that date. Now that the last of the six Goals has been reported on in the skills GMR, it may prove useful to consider to what extent the GMR 2012 and these other global

reports have raised any very specific implications for the role of skills and jobs in post-2015 agendas.

In total these reports amount to some 2000 pages of text, and though most of them have some form of executive summary, the policy community concerned with TVET and skills may still find these very lengthy. The role of *NORRAG News* is not to summarise these kinds of international reports, but to offer a wide diversity of short, sharp different reactions from our main constituencies, - policy makers, think tanks, academics, consultants and NGOs.

As NORRAG has played a role, since 2006, in arguing for there to be a Skills GMR, we shall give this key report more attention than some of the others. Also, more than 658 NORRAG members have professional interests in TVET or Skills Development; hence they may well be very interested to read and contribute to the debate on the GMR.

## Contents

FOREWORD.....	1
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>Edinburgh University and NORRAG</i>	
OBITUARY IN CELEBRATION OF INGEMAR GUSTAFSSON .....	3
<i>Pravina King, Saltoun Hall, Pencaitland, UK</i> <i>Lennart Wohlgemuth, University of Gothenburg, formerly Sida</i> <i>Christine McNab, Institute of International Education at Stockholm University</i>	
EDITORIAL.....	5
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>University of Edinburgh &amp; NORRAG</i>	
<b>OVERVIEW COMMENTS ON GLOBAL REPORTS &amp; TVET IN GENERAL.....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE MEANING OF SKILLS IN GLOBAL REPORTS.....	11
<i>Peliwe Lolwana</i> <i>University of Witswatersrand</i>	
IF DATA IS NOT WISDOM, THEN NON-DATA <i>CERTAINLY</i> IS NOT.....	13
<i>Karina Veal</i> <i>Asian Development Bank, Manila</i>	
MAKING TVET MORE ATTRACTIVE .....	15
<i>Christopher Winch</i> <i>University College, London</i>	
GLOBAL INSIGHTS TOWARDS VET REFORM.....	16
<i>Peter Greenwood</i> <i>European Training Foundation, Turin</i>	
BEYOND “SKILLS-FOR-POVERTY-REDUCTION AS WELL AS SKILLS-FOR-GROWTH” - NEW PERSPECTIVES IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA .....	19
<i>Claudia Jacinto</i> <i>Institute for Economic and Social Development, Buenos Aires</i>	
<b>EFA GMR 2012 - YOUTH AND SKILLS: PUTTING EDUCATION TO WORK (UNESCO, 2012).....</b>	<b>21</b>
DON'T GET LOST – FOCUS ON QUALITY .....	22
<i>Eric A. Hanushek</i> <i>Stanford University</i>	
THE 2012 GMR'S PATHWAY TOWARDS A TAXONOMY FOR SKILLS.....	23
<i>Joe Shamash</i> <i>City &amp; Guilds Centre for Skills Development, London</i>	
SKILLS, TRAINING AND THE 200 MILLION: LET'S MAKE SURE WE LAY THE FOUNDATIONS.....	26
<i>Pauline Rose</i> <i>Education for All Global Monitoring Report, at UNESCO, Paris</i>	
BUILDING ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS: THE 2012 GMR AND BEYOND .....	28
<i>Simon McGrath and Lesley Powell</i> <i>University of Nottingham</i>	
PRIVATE SECTOR AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATION FOR ALL GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT (GMR) 2012 IDENTIFIES KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES.....	30
<i>Martin Johnston</i> <i>Private Sector Department, Department for International Development (DFID), London</i>	
THE GMR EFA VIEW ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ISN'T THERE MORE TO DO FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR?.....	32

TVE(T?) AND THE GMR: COUNTING AND COMPARING APPLES AND ORANGES.....	35
<i>Robert Palmer</i> <i>NORRAG, Amman</i>	
WHAT SKILLS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? COMPARING THE GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT 2012 AND SOUTH AFRICAN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.....	39
<i>Lesley Powell</i> <i>University of Nottingham, Nottingham</i>	
AN ASIAN LENS ON THE GMR.....	41
<i>Chang, Gwang-Chol</i> <i>UNESCO, Bangkok</i>	
CONSIDERATION OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR TVET IN KOREA.....	43
<i>Kyu Cheol Eo</i> <i>KOICA, Mongolia</i>	
A GENDER LENS ON SKILLS AND YOUTH IN THE GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT 2012.....	45
<i>Anne Sørensen</i> <i>Danish NGO Education Network, Copenhagen</i>	
OH, EDUCATION IS EDUCATION, AND TRAINING IS TRAINING, AND NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET .....	47
<i>Mike Douse</i> <i>consultant, County Clare, Ireland</i>	
A WORLD CRISIS IN THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONGST EDUCATION, SKILLS, WORK AND THE ECONOMY? .....	48
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>NORRAG, Edinburgh</i>	
<b>TRANSFORMING TVET. THE MAIN WORKING DOCUMENT FOR SHANGHAI &amp; THE WORLD TVET REPORT (WTR) (UNESCO, 2012, 2013).....</b>	<b>49</b>
IT IS TIME TO TRANSFORM TVET.....	50
<i>Borhene Chakroun</i> <i>UNESCO, Paris</i>	
THE UNESCO WORLD TVET REPORT.....	52
<i>Simon McGrath</i> <i>University of Nottingham</i>	
RECONCEPTUALISING TVET AND IDENTIFYING KEY POINTS IN THE POLICY DEBATE .....	53
<i>Tom Leney</i> <i>Danish Technological Institute &amp; University of Warwick</i>	
THE TRANSFORMATION OF TVET'S MEANINGS AND CONSTITUENCIES .....	54
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>NORRAG, Edinburgh</i>	
QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN TVET.....	55
<i>Jeanne Gamble</i> <i>UCT, Cape Town</i>	
TRANSFORMING TVET AND BUILDING SKILLS FOR WORK & LIFE: A VIEW FROM BELOW .....	57
<i>Salim Akoojee</i> <i>Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA, Johannesburg</i>	
<b>BETTER SKILLS, BETTER JOBS, BETTER LIVES (OECD, 2012) .....</b>	<b>60</b>
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION INTO BETTER JOBS AND BETTER LIVES.....	61
<i>Andreas Schleicher</i> <i>OECD, Paris</i>	
MEASURING SKILLS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY.....	63
<i>Cristina Martinez-Fernandez</i> <i>OECD, Paris</i>	

THE SKILLS DISCOURSE OF <i>BETTER SKILLS</i> .....	65
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>University of Edinburgh and NORRAG</i>	
DEBUNKING THE DISABILITY MYTH WITH SKILLS: TAPPING A WORKFORCE EMPLOYERS URGENTLY NEED IN BANGLADESH .....	66
<i>Mikhail Islam</i> <i>Chittagong Skills Development Centre, Bangladesh</i>	
FROM LEARNING FOR JOBS TO SKILLS BEYOND SCHOOL .....	69
<i>Simon Field</i> <i>OECD, Paris</i>	
<b>WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT (WDR) 2013: JOBS (WORLD BANK, 2012).....</b>	<b>70</b>
SKILLS OR JOBS: WHICH COMES FIRST? .....	71
<i>Richard Curtain</i> <i>Curtain Consulting, Melbourne</i>	
MICROSOFT CITIZENSHIP MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA .....	72
<i>Jeffrey Avina</i> <i>Microsoft (Middle East and Africa), Istanbul</i>	
WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2013: JOBS. THE JOBS-SKILLS NEXUS .....	75
<i>Shanti Jagannathan</i> <i>Asian Development Bank, Manila</i>	
RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT: JOBS, MIGRANTS AND HUMAN CAPITAL .....	76
<i>Svetlana Sigova and Maria Pitukhina</i> <i>Petrozavodsk State University, Petrozavodsk, Russia</i>	
<b>THE WORLD AT WORK: JOBS, PAY AND SKILLS FOR 3.5 BILLION PEOPLE (MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE).....</b>	<b>79</b>
NEED FOR A GLOBAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION.....	80
<i>Anu Madgavkar</i> <i>McKinsey Global Institute, Bombay</i>	
IS GLOBAL MIGRATION NATION-SPECIFIC OR SKILLS SPECIFIC?.....	82
<i>Sue Parker</i> <i>GEMS Education, Dubai</i>	
PUTTING SKILLS TO WORK: THE CHALLENGE TO TVET IN A DEVELOPING ECONOMY.....	84
<i>Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed</i> <i>Ministry of Education, Bangladesh</i>	
DEFINITION MATTERS.....	85
<i>Kenneth King</i> <i>University of Edinburgh and NORRAG</i>	
EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN THE ASIAN CENTURY .....	86
<i>Halima Begum</i> <i>British Council, Jakarta</i>	
<b>G20 TRAINING STRATEGY &amp; TREE (ILO).....</b>	<b>88</b>
A SKILLED WORKFORCE FOR STRONG, SUSTAINABLE AND BALANCED GROWTH: A G20 TRAINING STRATEGY .....	89
<i>Michael Axmann</i> <i>Skills and Employability Department, ILO</i>	
TRAINING FOR RURAL ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT .....	90
<i>James Windell</i> <i>ILO, Geneva</i>	



<b>EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION - SKILLS, JOBS, FOOD AND GREEN FUTURE TO COMBAT POVERTY (UNESCO-INRULED, 2012) .....</b>	<b>92</b>
SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES IN RELATION TO THE INFORMAL ECONOMY AND POVERTY .....	93
<i>Manzoor Ahmed</i> <i>BRAC University Institute of Educational Development, Dhaka</i>	
<b>INNOVATIVE SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR SKILLS ENHANCEMENT (ISESE, 2012) .....</b>	<b>95</b>
WHAT ARE THE SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT? .....	96
<i>Shubha Jayaram and Michelle Engmann</i> <i>Results for Development, Washington, DC</i>	
<b>SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN DEVELOPING ASIA-PACIFIC, MACLEAN, RUPERT ET AL (EDS.), ADB, 2012 .....</b>	<b>98</b>
RESPONSE TO 'SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN DEVELOPING ASIA-PACIFIC', MACLEAN, RUPERT ET AL (EDS.), ADB, 2012 .....	99
<i>Anna Gibert</i> <i>Consultant, TVET Sector Strengthening Program (AusAID), Vanuatu</i>	
SKILLS AND SKILLING IN ASIA .....	100
<i>Jouko Sarvi</i> <i>Asian Development Bank, Manila</i>	
<b>AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. A REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN AFRICA (MARCH 2013) &amp; WORLD BANK. SKILLS FOR THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN AFRICA (WASHINGTON, 2013) .....</b>	<b>103</b>
A REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN AFRICA .....	104
<i>Roland Linzatti</i> <i>African Development Bank, Tunis</i>	
A STUDY OF SKILLS FOR THE INFORMAL SECTOR USING HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DATA .....	105
<i>Arvil V. Adams, Sara Johansson de Silva, and Setareh Razmara</i>	
<b>EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN THE POST-2015 MDG AND EFA AGENDAS .....</b>	<b>108</b>
FUTURE EDUCATION – GLOBAL MEGA-TRENDS AND THE POST-2015 AGENDA FOR EDUCATION ..	109
<i>Desmond Bermingham</i> <i>Save the Children, London</i>	
POST-2015 DISCOURSE IN BANGLADESH: CAN HUMAN CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT BE A PART OF THE EDUCATION OBJECTIVES IN THE NEXT MDGs? .....	112
<i>Manzoor Ahmed</i> <i>BRAC University Institute of Educational Development, Dhaka</i>	
TVET, SKILLS AND POST 2015 AGENDAS .....	114
<i>Steve Packer</i> <i>UKFIET, London</i>	
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION .....	115
<i>Jonathan Penson</i> <i>Commonwealth Secretariat, London</i>	
RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT .....	118

## Foreword

**Kenneth King**  
**Edinburgh University and NORRAG**

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This special issue is coming a few months later than we had planned. One reason is that a month after our last issue, NN47, on *Value for Money (VFM) in International Education*, NORRAG launched its own Blog - NORRAG NEWSBite ([www.norrag.wordpress.com](http://www.norrag.wordpress.com)), and thanks to Robert Palmer, there have been almost 60 blog posts since the end of May 2012. They have drawn on a wide range of analysts, academics and policy makers, and they have been very popular with over 23,000 page views to date. We have sought to focus the on just three themes initially: Value For Money; Skills Development; and Education & Skills in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

A second major reason for NN48 arriving now is that NORRAG has been doing a great deal more since April 2012. This is directly related to Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC's) substantially increased support to the network. Thanks to this, we have been able to develop an entirely new website, which I'm sure has been appreciated (please send any comments to [laetitia.houlmann@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:laetitia.houlmann@graduateinstitute.ch)). We have also been able to initiate a Programme of Work on International Education and Training Policies. One key dimension of that has been a critical look at the 'tsunami' of activity around the post-2015 development agenda.

Two exploratory meetings around Education and Skills Post-2015 were held in Geneva in June and September 2012, with an evolving group of international and UN agencies based in the city. A further key meeting on this topic was jointly held with UNESCO in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress on TVET in Shanghai in May 2012; and as recently as March 2013, NORRAG supported a well-attended CIES panel discussion on 'Education Post-2015: Reinvigorating the Agenda or Reshuffling the Lobbies?'

Another key dimension of the work programme on post-2015 has been the encouragement of country case studies of post-2015, initially in Bangladesh and Burkina Faso (For the former, see Manzoor Ahmed in NN48). NORRAG has also carried out its own critical analyses of the post-2015 education and skills scenarios. Three of these are now readily accessible in a new series of Occasional Papers on [www.norrag.org](http://www.norrag.org).

A further result of SDC support is that we can welcome a new face in our management committee, Joost Monks. See a brief word on his background below this foreword.

### **The Skills Year and Post-2015**

Would the very much higher visibility for skills right through 2012 – which we seek to capture in this special issue – lead to skills having a place in the rapidly emerging post-2015 agenda? This is a key moment to pose the question. The Global Thematic Consultation on Education has just taken place in Dakar, the High Level Panel (HLP) has just met in Bali, and both will be finalising their reports in the next few weeks.

'Skills for Work' was given visibility in the main background paper for the Dakar Meeting, and it re-appeared in the two page Summary Outcomes in the form of 'the skills needed for life and work' and also as 'the skills, knowledge and values to obtain decent work'. Hopefully, as the two-pager turns into a ten-pager by the end of April, the emphasis on skills for a job or skills for work will be retained. Equally, we must hope that a similar target will be affirmed in the deliberations of the HLP. The publication of UNESCO's *World TVET Report* in May 2013 will be very helpful.

### **Multiple Reports and a Diversity of Comments**

With such a range of Global Skills Reports, it is appropriate that we have a range of academic and policy comments. The policy comments come from more than ten agencies, including the ADB, DFID, ETF, GMR, IAMR, ILO, KOICA, OECD, QCA, UNESCO and WB, while the academics stretch from Stanford to Wits, from London to Buenos Aires, and from Zurich to Nottingham, to mention just a few. Think tanks such as R4D, and consultancies such as McKinsey are also represented.

Does a consensus emerge? Surely not! But there are some really first-rate critical analyses of this important segment of international education and development literature.

### **Dissemination and Further Debates**

We hope that outputs from NORRAG's expanding programme will not just sit quietly on our site. Some of the most provocative of the NN48 articles will be changed into blogs. But we hope that the debates engendered by NN48 will be used in different fora, including ones organised by agencies as well as by NORRAG itself. Write to Michel Carton, Joost Monks or me if you have ideas. And be sure, Robert Palmer will be in touch with several of you who have contributed to this special issue!

### **A NORRAG sub-theme at the UKFIET Oxford Conference 10-12 September '13**

If you have not had your fill of post-2015 by September, there is a whole conference dedicated to analysing 'Education and Development Post-2015'. This is the biennial UKFIET Oxford Conference, and as usual NORRAG is responsible for a sub-theme on the future of development assistance and of the development goals. We hope to see many of you there.

Kenneth King  
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14<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

### **New NORRAG Management Group member – Joost Mönks**

Joost Mönks studied international relations and development and has a PhD in economics from Geneva University. He has served as management consultant and project director in a wide range of non-profit and public organisations including UNESCO, WIPO and ILO and he has worked extensively in the field of quality assurance and organizational development in Higher Education Institutions. He has

been involved in the setting up of the International Accreditation Committee for Development Studies of EADI and serves as its secretary. Joost joined NORRAG's management group in 2013.

## **Obituary in celebration of Ingemar Gustafsson Stockholm 18th May 2012**

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I am here in Stockholm with you all as a friend of Ingemar and Hallgerd but also representing my husband, Kenneth, as well as Michel Carton, and so many others from the Network called NORRAG which, away back in 1985, Ingemar and Lennart were brave enough to decide to support. From those very small beginnings, the NORRAG Network has flourished. It was just one more activity Ingemar backed which has tried to promote some of the things he valued.

But Ingemar was never so much a funder as a member of NORRAG, and from the very first issue of NORRAG News in November 1986, he was involved as a contributor and a loyal supporter.

Friendships are built on common interests. A love and regard for history. Ingemar shared with Kenneth a keen professional interest in history. This was not just in his PhD on Zimbabwe, but in his concern as a member of a national aid agency that, in the constantly changing agendas of international aid, we should constantly recall our earlier priorities and commitments. Thus he would often remind us of the generous spirit of the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990 and the Dakar World Forum of 2000 against the narrowness of the education Millennium Development Goals announced later that same year. The priorities of Jomtien and Dakar with their emphasis on the rights to primary education, adult education, literacy and skills were very much closer to Sida's own priorities, and to Ingemar's.

A love and regard for learning and evolving. Ingemar was always keen that Sida should be a learning organisation; so Lennart and he ensured that Sida's education and training staff studied for their doctorates. But more importantly, Ingemar sought to make sure that Sida itself was a learning organisation. Unlike some donor agencies which could be called 'preaching or telling-the-South' organisations, Sida sought to be a genuine partner, responding to national education priorities in its priorities countries. We all learnt from seeing these ideas in practice.

A 'critical modesty' or 'critical humility' typified Ingemar's relations with colleagues in Sida, with NORRAG, and with huge numbers of colleagues in the South. They were not merely 'recipients' and he was not a 'donor'. But he retained a critical awareness of the fact that greater resources lay in the North, and therefore that genuine partnership had to deal with the financial asymmetry between North and South. Ingemar managed this contradiction in partnership better than anyone Kenneth and I know.

But we are here to honour and remember a friend rather than a partner in development. So I end with a few more words on this. Friendship, at its best, introduces us to the person, his friends and his intellectual passions. Ingemar exemplified all of these, with a gentle presence and that shining smile.

More than that he has left us with Hallgerd, and with those who are here today to continue in friendship following in his quiet way.

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**Lennart Wohlgemuth, University of Gothenburg, formerly Sida**

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Ingemar was born in 1942 and spent his professional life as a student and practitioner of development education. His studies of education with production gave him the right insights to participate in the international dialogue on education within the discourse of lifelong learning, education for all, UNESCO, IIEP and as member and chairman of ADEA. He was also one of the founding fathers of NORRAG giving support to Kenneth King and others who wanted to develop a forum for dissemination of important information and research that had been collected and developed over the years.

But he was much more than a professional educationalist. He was also a very good pedagogue with the ability to make complex matters easily understandable for his colleagues, his peers and the public at large. He was clever and constructive. We will remember his low key but sharp analyses, his humility and genuine respect for his fellow men, be it in the academic community, among his colleagues or with his dialogue partners in the many countries in the world. He was also a great musician and many of us have with great attention listened to him playing his piano classics as well as jazz. We miss him very much.

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**Christine McNab, Institute of International Education at Stockholm University**

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I first met Ingemar Gustafsson in 1983 at the Institute of International Education (IIE) at Stockholm University. He was already well on his way to completing his PhD on schools and the transformation of work, and I was a new student just starting my research training. While at the IIE we did some research together, on Swedish mission education in central and southern Africa, and we were both actively involved in NORRAG. Ingemar was on leave from the Education Division at Sida, and he returned there in 1987, soon afterwards becoming the Head of the Education Division, a position he retained for many years. As I also later joined Sida's Education Division, Ingemar became my boss, but he was also a mentor and a good friend.

Ingemar was a very thoughtful person and totally committed to supporting local ownership of education programmes. In this capacity he became involved directly in supporting the groundswell in the 1990s of African ownership of its own education and development programmes. Later in his career with Sida, Ingemar headed the Methods Development Unit at Sida headquarters. Upon his retirement, Ingemar returned to the IIE as a research associate to pursue his research into education and development and he also acted as a mentor for some of the PhD students. His own research became focused on education for rural transformation and this was Ingemar's most active research interest up to his far too early death in 2012.

We all miss Ingemar very much: his generosity, his music (Ingemar was an accomplished classical and jazz pianist), his quiet humour and his deep compassion for those who lived in poverty made him a unique individual.

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### **Editorial**

## **TVET and Skills Development: Some Reflections on Concepts and Discourse**

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This special issue of NORRAG News (NN) is particularly concerned with the global process of so many reports touching on 'Skills' in the same year, 2012. But there has been another global process going on during 2012 and gathering speed in 2013, and that has been the mushrooming of proposals for new goals and targets for the post-2015 development agenda. There has not been much connection yet between these two processes, since of the 160 or so proposals generated by April 14<sup>th</sup>), when I am writing this, (see ODI Goal Tracker), only eleven are concerned with 'education and skills', and of these, very few indeed are concerned with technical and vocational skills.

This is just one of our concerns as we review the global reports on skills – do they seek to make the case for what may be called 'a skills goal' in the global development agenda? On the whole, they don't, except for the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) which argues that 'universal lower secondary education' could be a relevant goal. But as readers will appreciate, lower secondary education is usually more concerned with gaining foundation and soft skills rather than technical and vocational skills development. So our first concern is with the issue of defining skills itself.

### **The challenge of defining global 'skills'**

'Skills' is a massively more slippery concept than 'technical and vocational education and training' (TVET). So we start by a few examples of what 'education and skills' really mean in practice, taken from these global reports on skills.

First, in the very influential *GMR 2012* on skills, arguably foundation and transferable skills get more attention than technical and vocational skills. And even with technical and vocational skills, technical and vocational **education** (TVE) gets more attention than technical and vocational education and **training** (TVET) – TVE is mentioned 109 times, TVET 37 times, and foundation skills 181 times.

Second, in the McKinsey report on the *World at Work*, ‘education’ is quite explicitly said to be a proxy for ‘skill’; so that low, medium and high skill workers are respectively those with primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. But there is a complication: that low skill in advanced economies means no-post secondary education whilst it means only primary education in developing economies. It can be anticipated that that leads to difficulties in generalising about low-skilled workers. The same approach of education as a proxy for skill is taken by the OECD’s *Better skills* report, even though there is innovative work going on in the OECD with their *Survey of Adult Skills* and over the last few years there has been fascinating work done by the OECD on technical and vocational skills through their programme of work on *Learning for Jobs*.

By contrast, UNESCO’s *World TVET Report* (previewed in the Shanghai 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress on TVET) prefers to use ‘TVET’ in contrast to ‘Skills Development’, and emphasises unashamedly the human dimension of TVET rather than the usual more economic approach. The *World Development Report: Jobs* (WDR) has only a short, sharp few pages on ‘Skills’, but the language of ‘routine’ ‘manual and workplace skills’ versus ‘complex capabilities, such as problem-solving’ suggests some critical assumptions about the character of technical and vocational skills.

### **Sequencing skills acquisition**

The GMR assumes that technical and vocational skills are sequenced after the acquisition of foundation skills, and can be acquired either in the workplace or in higher levels of formal education. The reality, surely, in both developed and developing societies, is that ‘learning to do’ often starts in the home or the family enterprise long before formal school is completed and often before it is started. The WDR argues appropriately that ‘Because all jobs require a **combination of skills** that are formed in multiple ways and in diverse circumstances, policy makers face complex challenges in forging the best path for skills development’. This is a crucially important point which could be restated as follows: that foundation, transferable and TVET skills are not trade-offs or alternatives. The first two are crucial to TVET, but equally TVET can make foundation and transferable skills come alive. In other words, problem-solving skills are not learnt in a vacuum or a silo. Similarly with critical thinking or with creativity; they are not acquired in a void. The ILO’s *World of Work 2012* (WoW): on *Better Jobs* surprisingly pays very little attention to skills, whether TVET or other, except to say that many skills (what kind?) have been lost in the recent economic crisis.

### **Which comes first: skills or jobs?**

There is a widespread assumption, especially amongst politicians, that the supply of skills creates jobs. This ‘supply-side’ approach to skills development is commonplace, but it has little evidence to support it, though it is obvious that the supply of skilled people is a necessary but not sufficient condition for investment, greater productivity, and economic growth. The WDR puts it succinctly in arguing that ‘jobs need, pull and build skills’, but of course so do work, networks and family businesses.

It is interesting to note in passing that these global reports use 'work' and 'jobs' very differently, with the WDR and McKinsey using 'jobs' very much more frequently than 'work', and the GMR referring to 'work' very much more often than 'jobs'. This is probably the result of the GMR paying much more attention to the informal economy and informal apprenticeship than the WDR [or McKinsey] with its focus on 'good jobs'. In the case of the ILO, despite its historic sponsorship of 'decent work', the focus of the WoW report is very much more sharply on 'better jobs'.

### **Skills, TVET and an enabling environment**

The crucial role of the enabling environment is critical in thinking about the sequencing of skills. It is worth recalling the famously misquoted research axiom that 'four years of education makes a difference to farmer productivity'. The reality was that education made almost no difference in a stagnant agricultural environment, but a huge difference when there was agricultural extension, market access etc etc. Similarly with skills. Foundation skills will founder if there is not a surrounding literate environment, as the GMR shows. And the WDR makes the case that it is not just an economic investment environment that is vital but also a 'nurturing environment' from the womb thru the early years, as well as a social, institutional and political environment.

### **Skills-and-growth**

Following what we have just discussed, it would be anticipated that the global reports would not argue that investing in skills = economic growth. And indeed the GMR argues that there is a 'two-way street' between skills and growth. Nevertheless, it is hard for the reports (e.g. GMR) not to discuss 'investing in skills for prosperity' or to claim that 'investing in skills pays dividends', as does the WoW with its assertion of the link between high skill workers and economic growth. The iconic claim (by the OECD) that half a year of additional schooling, over 20 years, could result in \$US 115 trillion also gets picked up by other global reports. By contrast, the most balanced approach to the topic comes from the ADB with its *Good practice in TVET*: that skills are a necessary but not sufficient condition for economic growth and greater productivity.

### **Measuring skills & TVET outcomes**

With the preoccupation about 'learning' and with 'educational outcomes' that is sweeping through the proposed goals and targets for post-2015, it should not be surprising that there is a concern with measuring the achievement of skills; but there is not much yet to report. There is pilot work underway on the *Survey of Adult Skills* (OECD), but the results will not be available till later this year. The GMR has shown that there is very detailed work on the outcomes of school-based foundation skills, but there is much less detail on transferable skills or on TVET. Equally, there is work underway by an agency working group of the G20 on internationally comparable indicators, including on participation of youth in apprenticeships, but this too is not complete. Nor is the World Bank's measurement survey of Skills towards Employment and Productivity (STEP) complete yet, though several countries have been tested. All in all, it does not look as if there will be robust and comparable measures of skills in place before 2015 (GMR).

### **The danger of 'killer headlines'?**



Even though these global reports are very detailed, they do contain what may be called 'killer headlines' which are sometimes in danger of over-simplifying the relations amongst key concepts. This can be seen, for example, even in the titles of one or two of these global reports: *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives* suggests implicitly that there is a logical connection amongst these three key items. Even *Jobs, Pay and Skills for 3.5 Billion People* may suggest that there is some formula for delivering these to half the world's population. There are many other phrases, such as 'the war for talent', 'demographic dividend' or 'skills have become the global currency' which give strong indications for action in relation to skills.

### **Policy borrowing and policy learning**

It is a widespread feature of global reports that they refer to illustrative 'good' or 'best' practice in the field of TVET or skills development. This is entirely understandable. The challenge, however, is to be clear what is the evidence base for the illustrative boxes of best practice. Sometimes, 'success' is linked to external funding which may or may not be sustained. Sometimes, the figures of those reached in the 'successful' pilot are very small. The draft text of the World TVET Report puts the matter succinctly: 'However, given the diversity of country contexts, there is no simple menu of best practices or a tool kit of reforms that will transform TVET internationally.'

### **Global, international, regional and national TVET or skills development**

Given this diversity of contexts, we should be alert to the very notion of a global or international report being more important as compared with a regional or national report. There are of course particular insights e.g. about migration or labour shortages worldwide which are appropriately discussed at the international level. But it may well be that analysis at a continental level in Sub-Saharan Africa, or in the Asia-Pacific region, or even in China or India alone, can be suggestive for other contexts. In other words, a national or regional report may have international implications. We have therefore included in the references here below, and in the last section of this issue of NN48 a few key examples of 'learning about skills' in specific contexts.

Thus there is the ADB's *Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training* (2009). Although this derives from a guide drafted by Richard Johanson for the region, it contains a number of valuable insights that policy makers elsewhere may wish to consult. The same may be true of the study by Rupert Maclean and colleagues on *Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific* (Springer, 2013). Similarly, the study by Van Adams and colleagues *Skills for the Informal Sector Using Household Survey Data* actually derives from five countries in Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Tanzania which have several very different variants of informal apprenticeship. A last example of possible interest beyond South Asia is the study by Santosh Mehrotra and colleagues on *Joblessness and informalisation: challenges to inclusive growth in India* (IAMR, New Delhi).

### **TVET and Skills Development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

It may be surprising when so many global reports have focused on Skills, TVET, Employment and Jobs in 2012 that this does not seem to have translated into proposals for goals or targets on TVET or skills for the next development agenda. The reality is that they haven't, or rather that the proposals for education and skills goals and targets have been mostly about

foundation or transferable skills, and not work skills. There is still scope for goal proposals to develop which link a defined role for skills to wider concerns about employment, work and an enabling macroeconomic environment for growth. Indeed it is very timely that the main background document for the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in Dakar 18-19 March 2013 underlined the crucial importance of 'Skills for Work'. Furthermore, the recent communiqué from the High Level Panel (HLP, 2013) in Monrovia talked about 'the potential presented by a larger more educated and better skilled workforce'. Hopefully, by the time the HLP has produced its final report at the end of May it will have retained this emphasis on an educated and better skilled workforce, as well as supporting a more general goal on 'universal learning' (HLP, 2013) and universal skills for work

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# **OVERVIEW COMMENTS ON GLOBAL REPORTS & TVET IN GENERAL**

## The Meaning of Skills in Global Reports

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**Keywords:** skills; foundational skills; hard and soft skills; low and high skills; economies

**Summary:** This article provides a quick review of three recent and important global reports on skills, namely (1) the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report on Skills; (2) OECD *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives* report; and, (3) the McKinsey *World at Work* report. This article focuses on the meanings given to the notion of skills in these reports.

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The sudden interest in skills development by global and large research agencies is contributing to a very active debate on the relationship of education to the labour market. Central to this debate is the notion that skills have become the 'global currency of the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. There is currently an explosion of literature produced focusing on skills. But is there a common point of reference in the different reports, research, comments and opinion pieces when talking about 'skills'? Obviously not, and this piece wants to illustrate just this diversity of concepts and definitions of skills.

Taking, the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report on Skills (UNESCO, 2012), the OECD *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives* report (OECD, 2012) as well as the McKinsey *World at Work* report (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012), one can easily see that there is no unanimity in the way the term 'skills' is used in these three documents. The Global Monitoring Report (GMR) of 2012, for example, pays a lot of attention on the matter of skills – development and acquisition. In its report on 'Youth and Skills', the GMR considers general education skills as the primary skills needed by young people to succeed in the labour market. The GMR puts forward the case of how poor acquisition of foundational skills which are obtained in formal education further discriminates the disadvantaged students. The GMR notes that foundational skills obtained in formal and general education are not only crucial by themselves, but are also needed to build other skills in demand in the workplace, such as communication skills, problem-solving and critical thinking. This report emphasises the need for individuals to acquire foundational skills in order to stand a chance of getting jobs that pay decent wages. In the report, these points are illustrated by analysing the level of schooling of young people in the different economies and as it can be expected, low income countries have large numbers of individuals who have not acquired the foundational skills. Further, disparities in the acquisition of these skills, within the same countries can be found according to gender differences, family wealth and localities.

The second report reviewed here is the OECD (2012) *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives*. This report underscores the fact that benefits of skills go beyond just the labour market, but affect the individual's health, civic and social behaviour of individuals as well as democratic engagement and business relationships, tackling of inequality and their appropriateness in employment. However, it is clear that in this report the term 'skills' is used for post-foundational skills. In other words, the type of skills used to make a case for better jobs and lives are those acquired after the foundational skills of general and often primary education.

The report makes a strong case on how countries must invest, build and acquire these skills in order to have better jobs and societies. This report points to the limitation of past studies on skills that focused on formal education skills. In this report the emphasis is on adult skills, which include literacy, numeracy, problem-solving in technology-rich environments and skills used in workplaces. This brings together skills from general education and the 'soft and hard' skills in this broad definition.

The last report reviewed is the McKinsey Global Institute (2012) *World at Work*. In this report, the notion of skills is tied very closely to jobs and the economy. In fact this report presents a strong case on trends in different economies resulting in patterns on the type of skills that support different economies. The report suggests a stratification of skills from low to high, by education levels and economy levels. In other words, the lower the education levels acquired, the lower the skills and the lower the income levels of the country. In the report, qualifications are used as a proxy for skills instead and presenting patterns that show the qualification levels of different income countries, with high income countries boasting larger quantities of higher qualifications than the low income countries. Also, there is an interesting tracking of the movement of skills from simple and physical work like subsistence farming to higher skills in manufacturing, construction and services in different countries that goes with more investments in the general education, hard technical skills as well as soft skills. In this report, it is clear that high income countries are pushing at the top in their investments in skills for productivity, with the emphasis not only in higher education, but in Science, Technology and Mathematics. Finally, the point that is made here is that different sets of skills are directly related to different sets of industries and different income levels for a country.

In conclusion, there seems to have been really strong attention paid to the skills lately. This is good as this is an education area that has been neglected for a long time by these global agencies that hold so much influence on the education trajectories of different countries. But the reader of these reports must be discerning in reading this literature as the notion of skills still carries many and very differing meanings.

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## If Data is Not Wisdom, then Non-Data *Certainly* is Not

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**Keywords:** Global reports on skills, TVET research, key issues of concern in TVET

**Summary:** The recent swathe of global reports on skill, though useful in many respects, does not provide the 'wisdom' often sought by policy makers in developing countries on key issues of concern. Lack of a solid body of TVET research, at both basic and applied levels, impedes the development of wise and useful reports.

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Where hide the wise answers to questions vexing TVET policy makers and practitioners in developing countries today? They ask, for example: will benefits outweigh costs of building a National Qualifications Framework. What works best to engage the most marginalized youth in skills training? How can one measure learning outcomes from skills? Plus the perennial, plaintive query, can anyone *really* say (beyond that it is a nice idea) more about how to actually, practically, efficiently introduce a broad based system of recognition of skill for the informal sector?

If your curiosity is restricted to the development of national frameworks for TVET qualifications you are in luck, thanks to the ILO's 16 country study (ILO, 2010) of their establishment and effectiveness published in 2010 (1). It is a good study, but a lonely study. Where are the reports to help provide answers to other common issues of interest? An authoritative international comparative study on approaches to recognition of skill, or a meta-analysis on successful strategies for inclusive TVET, perhaps?

One may have hoped for some answers from the suite of major reports on skills released in 2012. Certainly there is some very useful teasing out of terminology (2), some good overall conceptualization and some comprehensive understanding of the prevalence of particular types of skills across the globe. But a focus on the issues and, importantly, on perspectives from the developing world is slender, and there is insufficient transformation of knowledge into wisdom, stemming from an insufficient base of data and information.

Yet wisdom is urgently needed. For example the shift in interest towards quality learning outcomes in TVET will be notoriously difficult to measure. Does one take employment (or wage) outcomes as the proxy for relevance and quality? Does one measure (somehow) quality of teaching and curriculum inputs and make assumptions on quality learning outcomes? Is there even any definitive research on the factors that lead to learning achievement in TVET? For learning achievement in schools there is John Hattie's meta-analysis of over 800 meta-analyses of student learning (Hattie, 2009). He finds that two-way student teacher feedback repeatedly emerges as the top influencer of learner achievement in schools. How similar might be the findings in the context of the type of learning undertaken by young adults in vocational courses? The idea of doing a similar meta- meta-analyses in TVET, with its dearth of basic research studies, would not be possible. A simpler meta-analysis on the topic, anyone?

Taking 'easier' questions of access to, and participation in TVET, do we have a sufficient base of analysis (beyond straight numbers) even there? Remember the fantastically useful 'Education Inequality Tree' in the 2010 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR)? It took school participation data and showed that the average 8 years of education in Turkey comprised nearly 10 years for rich boys and only 3 years for poor Kurdish girls. For Nigeria the range was 10.3 years for rich rural boys down to a startling 0.3 years (i.e., one term of school) for a poor Hausa girl. This kind of information can be extremely valuable for government policy makers and the development partners who give them support. Do we have a similar 'TVET Inequality Tree' in the 2012 UNESCO EFA GMR with its focus on skills? No, we don't. Not, presumably because the authors didn't care but because sufficient base data for that level of analysis is not available.

Taken together, the reports reflect the still emerging maturity of TVET research. There are still many gaps in the foundations of good basic research (e.g. lack of theoretical agreement on even core terms, lack of solid base of international data) and large gaps in applied research (e.g. large scale studies to find answers to pressing problems).

If you had hoped, like me, that the swathe of new global reports on skills released in 2012 might provide well researched knowledge on key issues of strong interest to developing countries (e.g. in Asia – see King, 2012), you will remain disappointed.

I will finish by referring to the beginning of this short reflection. It's surely difficult to write wise, and useful, reports without a foundation of adequate evidence based data, information or knowledge.

#### **End notes**

[1] The answer is: perhaps, but you may find other aspects make a bigger positive impact first.

[2] World Bank's terrific trio of 'jobs need skills, jobs pull skills, and jobs build skills' for example and ILOs 'how skills are developed, activated and utilized

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## Making TVET More Attractive

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**Keywords:** TVET; attractiveness; education; progression; qualification; apprenticeship; World TVET report

**Summary:** This contribution sets out the main priorities for government and international action in making TVET more attractive to its potential and actual users.

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At a time of growing worldwide interest in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) a key issue in improving its quantity and quality is to make it more attractive, to employers, employees and the state. This point will be addressed in some detail in the forthcoming UNESCO World TVET report (May 2013). What are the priorities for increasing the attractiveness of TVET?

Here follow some key points for government action and international action, not necessarily in order of importance.

- Make TVET a national priority for the society so that it is understood by all that personal and economic well-being are bound up with high quality TVET. The economy as a whole benefits, so do returns for individuals and individual enterprises.
- The 'e' of education is emphasised alongside the 't' of training. TVET needs to be more than contingent on-the-job training, but preparation for wider occupational roles and for progression in the labour market, thus enhancing both equity and the transformative power of TVET.
- State, Employers, Unions and Civil Society are fully engaged in well-understood structures and practices which include provision for research, dissemination and advice for employers, employees and potential employees. Structures and practices need to be stable, respected and well understood by all interested parties. The state should resist unnecessary reforms or quick fixes for electoral reasons.
- TVET should enjoy an excellent reputation for quality through the provision of well-qualified teachers, quality assurance and improvement arrangements. The state needs to stand behind TVET, even if it is privately run, as it is a public good and needs to have its reputation protected and enhanced.
- Apprenticeship with a strong technical and educational element is a major option throughout all sectors of the economy for all 16-24 year olds. Excessive reliance on higher education or the unskilled labour market should be avoided and good options and advice should be provided for students from age 14 onwards.
- There are clear and well-understood routes of qualification progression from initial TVET, through to continuing TVET leading to career progression. TVET qualifications



should allow for progression, both in career terms within an occupation but also into other forms of education, including higher education.

- TVET is developed and of equal standing in rural as well as urban areas. Uneven development should always be avoided and ensuring the participation of rural areas in modernisation through enhanced TVET is one way of doing this.
- TVET is supported through publicity campaigns, artisanal competition, and informational transparency. TVET needs to be 'bigged up' to create a sense of excitement about it for employers, parents and young people.
- No sections of the population are excluded from TVET. As far as possible, qualifications or at least educational and training for well-defined occupations should be available to everyone, including marginal groups.

These are challenges, but the potential rewards for societies are great if they are taken up. Governments have a key role to play in setting expectations, a good regulatory framework and an appropriate set of incentives for all parties. Governments also have a key role to play in providing advice to firms in promoting TVET as a core element of their business strategy.

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## Global Insights towards VET Reform

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**Keywords:** vision; multilevel governance; capacity development; evidence

**Summary:** Real change starts with a clear, nationally owned vision for the role of skills in development and supported by adequate capacity and participatory governance.

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The year 2012 was memorable for VET stakeholders across the world. Never has there been such attention to the field brought about by a combination of threat from the global crisis, climate change and concerns about the link between VET and jobs while at the same time meeting the opportunities from new technologies, knowledge societies and demands for higher order skill sets. How then to change VET in all its beautiful complexity to address the challenges and meet the opportunities? Leading multilateral organisations engaged in a dialogue with governments, social partners and civil society to adapt - or transform - VET to the changing expectations. A defining moment of the dialogue was the 3rd World TVET Congress in Shanghai which identified seven action areas to address the challenges covering relevance, access, qualifications, governance and partnership, diversification of financing, evidence, and advocacy.

While each of the seven action areas, and the corresponding suggested policy measures that emerged in the Congress, has value for the policy-making community, the real value of the Consensus derives from the integration of the action areas. Genuine transformation of the VET landscape - system change- requires sustained, focused and coordinated effort from horizon to horizon involving all the different sub-sectors. This integrated and system wide approach is echoed in many of the other reports which are currently on the table of the VET community. It manifests itself with different nuances at strategy, policy and action level. The Shanghai Consensus refers to national VET policies and coordinated approaches between TVET and lifelong learning. The OECD Skills Strategy emphasises the need for strategies which systematically integrate a range of policy fields to cope with the complexity of the task. The ILO World of Work Report refers to 'coordinated strategies'. The McKinsey report refers to the need for 'system integrators' active at sector and/or regional levels. The EC in its Communication on Rethinking Education promotes a collaborative effort 'across all levels of education'. It represents a key principle in the work of ETF, which, through the Torino process, advocates 'holistic approaches' to policy analysis and policy making and the development of integrated VET visions,

Where then to start? What is the lever, or entry point which can provoke such a scale of change, especially in low or low to middle income countries? Well of course, this surely depends on the context. Many approaches are being explored: modernisation of curricula, qualifications, teacher and trainer training, skills needs and shortages, pilot schools, dual system approaches, pumping funds. But perhaps from the recent experience from ETF partner countries there is a growing realisation that in many cases the starting point for a substantial transformation in the system lies in the area of governance and partnership at national, local and sectoral levels. Effective involvement of a broad range of stakeholders is still limited in the ETF partner countries and the vast majority of countries continue to operate centralised, state-driven vocational education and training systems. In these contexts, policy making is characterised by individuals/individual institution agendas, high degree of donor domination, limited participation, low reliance on evidence and high volatility in strategic objectives. Drawing on recent experiences in ETF in the field of multilevel governance, the key to change this may involve tackling some of the following challenges:

- **Supporting countries to develop a commonly shared, self-owned vision** on the role of VET systems in supporting social and economic development among different stakeholders is lacking. Such a vision should outline human capital development in their countries and the nature of the vocational education and training system needed for such development.
- **Improving institutional and functional set-ups. The institutional framework for the governance of VET in partner countries is often unfit for purpose.** It excludes meaningful partnership with external stakeholders from government, social partners and civil society. Although new institutions and new ways of interaction among actors are emerging, their introduction has generally been patchy. This confuses the division of responsibilities among different actors. Despite the difficulties, central governments should be encouraged to move towards more participatory and inclusive approaches in decision making and towards engaging stakeholders in the different phases of the policy cycle.

- **Capacity.** A crucial challenge for many of ETF's partner countries is that many stakeholders and institutions simply lack the capacity (authority, technical knowledge and/or resources) to engage meaningfully in the different phases of the policy cycle. Often this is due to lacking empowerment of stakeholders outside the central government, such as local authorities, schools and even social partners; in other cases it is typically a consequence of central government delegating responsibilities without sufficient support (capacity building actions and/or financial means) to deliver their functions. A further dimension of this challenge relates to the capacity for effective donor coordination to align with the national vision.
- **Evidence-based policy making.** Although the information basis on trends in the field of employment and vocational education and training is getting richer through time, the systematic reference to evidence as an input to decision making is still in its early phases. Communication channels between those who have this information (e.g. Statistical Offices or employers) and those who could use them for making decisions in vocational education and training are still weak; while a culture of policy evaluation is still lacking.
- **Tools, technologies and networks.** In information collection and analysis for policy making, physical limitations such as the available technology, methodologies and networks can severely hamper the development of new governance models. But employed correctly, technology is a powerful aid in evidence gathering and analysis. Some partner countries are currently looking at the role of technology and social media in governance.

To tackle these challenges and stimulate more systematic approach to VET reform areas, ETF considers the current global dialogue on VET reform, and especially the Shanghai Consensus a good basis for policy dialogue with partner countries in order to:

- Enhance VET leadership at national level focusing on exploring decentralised, deconcentrated and delegated processes for more effective VET policy making that can ensure more efficiency and quality of VET public policy delivery.
- Support sustainable partnerships that ensure that the final beneficiaries of public policy in VET (economic actors –employers and workers- and learners) contribute to policy development and delivery. In this context, empowering representatives of social partners and civil society in ETF partner countries is importance.
- Address the regional (subnational) dimension of VET policies by ensuring that regional/local public and private actors, who know best their needs and potential for development, are empowered to play an active role in the formulation and delivery of regional skill policies.
- Attribute training providers a proper role towards the development of a flexible and responsive vocational education and training provision.
- Support evidence-based policy development in VET in countries; this is crucial to enhance information basis of trends and future skill developments as well as to

develop mechanisms through which this information is properly communicated to the relevant decision makers and is transformed into action. Further development and use of evaluations and monitoring tools (e.g. indicator systems) are important actions within these processes.

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### **Beyond “Skills-for-Poverty-Reduction as well as Skills-for-Growth” - New Perspectives in Skills Development in Latin America**

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**Keywords:** Skills development as a right; solidarity economy; social inclusion; Latin America

**Summary:** Recent Latin-American policies enrich the meaning of skills development considering it as a right. Support and training for solidarity economy is one of the contributions.

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The appearance of a series of international reports on skills development (SD) shows a re-birth of interest in these issues as well as the depletion of conceptual paradigms to tackle them. The already traditional dilemma “skills-for-poverty-reduction as well as skills-for-growth” belongs to a dual conception of the socio-economic development, which failed to achieve a decrease in inequality, neither the setting up of more including societies.

A series of recent policies in Latin America shows restructuring of the above mentioned dilemma in the framework of a conception of education and vocational training as rights. In this conception, the relationship between SD and theories of human capital and human resources appears to be restricted when faced with human development theory. The pertinence of SD for the people and their communities is emphasized, training experience is valuable as far as the enrichment of quality of life is concerned, in a sense wider than work insertion, income and productivity. This conception also falls within a framework of recognition of the diversity of the world of work (and not mere opposition between formal employment and informal work) and of the importance of accompanying different alternatives of social, personal and collective development.

All these fit in with macro-economic choices that intend to consider full employment as an explicit target.

At least two contributions can be identified in recent Latin-American policies that enrich the meaning of SD in the senses mentioned above.

It can be seen in some cross-sectoral policies that the meaning of “work” and training are revalued according to their significance for the people in different regional and local contexts. This is why learning is considered relevant based on its relation to everyday life with their felt needs, productive activities, their life strategies and their ability to reinvent them, creating new jobs which allow a dignified way of life.

Furthermore, SD is addressed according to its contribution to models of economic development whose goals are to create employment, decent work and to promote productive capacities. In this way, alternative economic initiatives are supported, based on social movements and other collective actors who redefine ways of social inclusion. For example, in recent years the concept of "Solidarity Economy" has had a particular impetus in the debate on development models with the support of many social organizations, unions and cooperatives. The approach of Solidarity Economy has reached various countries in the region. It involves both rural and city workers and is based on the structuring of solidarity economic enterprises in which self-developed popular cooperatives stand out. This alternative economy has brought with it new challenges, among them the need for ongoing technical, administrative and citizenship education as fundamental elements in the search for equilibrium between social and economic issues while strengthening the sustainability of the experiences by creating cooperatives and networks. Besides, in this conception SD includes a cultural dimension, related to responsible consumption, gender equal relations and democratization related to the use of free software.

Do these perspectives mean abandoning the perspectives which link SD to employability and to its contribution to economic growth? Not at all. But they do imply widening the meanings of training, the search for alternatives which redefine economic development models thus proposing new forms of social inclusion where the voices of individual and collective subjects gain strength and prominence.

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**EFA GMR 2012 - Youth  
and Skills: Putting  
Education to Work  
(UNESCO, 2012)**

## Don't Get Lost – Focus on Quality

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**Keywords:** school quality; teacher quality; cognitive skills; growth-skills link

**Summary:** Countries have a choice of focusing on educational quality improvements and reaping the benefits of future growth improvements or of letting the future be stuck with today's economic outcomes. Student outcomes flow directly from teacher quality.

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UNESCO has done both a service and a disservice to those concerned about global development. GMR 2012, *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*, brings its analytical attention to bear on the relationship between skills and economic development. The power of the idea of Education for All has been to underscore that improved education and skill represents the clearest, if not the only, path to economic progress in developing countries. But GMR 2012, like the underlying idea of Education for All, provides a breath-taking journey through most of the improvement ideas and exhortations of the past two decades – resulting in a distinct lack of priorities. The real path to development is an intense focus on quality and on broad cognitive skills.

To me, the evidence is very clear that economic growth is closely related to the cognitive skills of the work force (Hanushek and Woessmann (2008)). Skills in mathematics and science, as measured by the TIMSS or PISA assessments, track international differences in long run growth and are a good metric for judging the labour force of a country. Thus, for example, the disappointing development histories of Latin America or of Sub-Saharan Africa can be accurately related to the fact that improvements in school attainment have not translated into achievement of students as measured by international standards.

The importance of quality has of course been recognized in Education for All and is part of the running commentary in GMR 2012. The problem is not one of omission. Instead it is burying the quality issue within a very wide array of alternative potential goals, of varying measures of educational processes, of data and comparisons about side issues, and of strong statements about what to do that lack credible support. What is left is an ability to pick and choose different portions that can leave a country or a development agency too satisfied with progress. Virtually every country in the world is progressing well on one or another of the items highlighted in GMR 2012, providing some solace even as economic development is stalled.

The first goal should be simply bringing the skills of the current students up to international levels. This statement implies measuring performance on international scales. It implies having a priority on schools and what is being learned.

A part of GMR 2012 is also devoted to issues of how to improve quality. The emphasis is on the old bromides – increase funding, reduce class sizes, improve the training of teachers, and more. It is remarkable how few of these standard solutions hold up to close scrutiny and evaluation (Hanushek (2003)).

Again, it is not omission but burying the evidence in chaff. The one consistent story is that teacher quality is overwhelmingly important. The problem is that teacher quality measured by effectiveness in the classroom is not consistently related to the training and backgrounds of teachers. Further, typical salary policies insure that salaries are quite unrelated to the effectiveness of teachers. Simply pursuing the standard policies offers little hope.

My reaction to GMR 2012 is completely summarized by one overall message: **FOCUS!** The future development of the low-income countries of the world depends crucially on developing a skilled labour force – one that is internationally competitive. This is a tall order for many developing countries, because currently available measures suggest a huge gap between the skills of those in developed countries and those in developing countries. Getting there will require a strong commitment to improving the quality of schools and teachers – something that many countries find to involve difficult policy changes. But the choice is simple: Improve quality and reap the benefits of future growth improvements, or let the future get stuck with today's outcomes.

This message is contained in GMR 2012. It is simply not possible to substitute “easier” policy changes and to expect the same outcomes.

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## The 2012 GMR's Pathway Towards a Taxonomy for Skills

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**Keywords:** Skills; informal; literacy; numeracy

**Summary:** The GMR provides a valuable foundation for progress towards a fit for purpose international goal on skills. Greater consideration is needed, however, for the diverse ways in which skills are developed, in particular outside formal school settings.

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The 2012 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) devotes a considerable amount of attention to defining 'skills development', its purpose, and how it happens. This is the first step towards creating a meaningful international goal for skills, and the struggle with this step to date has, as the GMR acknowledges, led to an attempt to both measure



and achieve progress on EFA Goal 3: 'Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults'.

In response to this problem, the GMR proposes a simple taxonomy, underlying a framework of the 'Pathways to Skills', set in three categories:

1. Foundation skills including literacy and numeracy - discussed predominantly in terms of the outcomes of formal basic education, and 'a prerequisite for continuing in education and training, and for acquiring transferable and technical and vocational skills' (UNESCO 2012, p14).
2. Transferable skills such as communication and problem solving - which are needed to adapt to different life and employment contexts.
3. Technical and vocational skills - which encompass the specific technical know-how to do jobs, for example using a sewing machine or computer, bricklaying or growing vegetables.

The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development drew up a similar set of categories in *Towards a Taxonomy for Skills* (Shoesmith, 2011), with a couple of important differences. Like the GMR, our paper acknowledged that literacy and numeracy are an important foundation for skills development; however it also made clear that the boundaries between each category of skill are permeable, and that skills development is not always a linear process that starts with literacy and numeracy.

This is something we have focused on more explicitly in recent research on the Recognition of Prior Learning (Sims, Shamash & Freccero, 2012). People do not always need to read and write to be able to develop the technical skills needed to become cooks, or mechanics, or beauticians, for example. Literacy and numeracy are of course important enablers for skills development, but technical and transferable skills can be learnt in a number of different ways, many of which are not wholly dependent on having these foundation skills. Learning through observation, imitation, practice, trial and error, coaching and direct instruction are just some examples (Lucas, Spencer & Claxton, 2012). As a result, there are plenty of people who have technical or transferable skills without having the foundation literacy or numeracy skills associated with formal basic education. Such skills profiles are more widespread in informal economies (Sims, Shamash & Freccero 2012). In practice many people in these circumstances develop literacy and numeracy skills from a foundation of vocational or transferable skills – a construction worker, for example, developing the ability to estimate the quantity of cement required for a given area, or learning over time the specific terms, labels and languages of the building site.

It is important to acknowledge these diverse skills profiles and diverse ways of learning in efforts to support skills development, whether these efforts originate in classrooms or in cabinet meetings. Not all learners come to education and training from the same starting point, nor learn things in the same order, nor through the same learning methods. Approaches that assume otherwise are unlikely to provide learners with exactly what they need to develop skills for improved livelihoods.

While the GMR's Pathways to Skills framework acknowledges both the presence of informal labour markets and the absence of formal schooling in many people's lives, it does relatively little by way of exploring skills development in informal contexts. This is not to say the wider GMR does not consider skills development outside formal schooling - it does. The discussion

of traditional apprenticeships and recognition of prior learning policies, for example, provides insights that will help haul any future EFA goal on skills closer to something fit for purpose. However, the Pathways to Skills framework, which is something of a centrepiece of the GMR, and the surrounding discussion, have a strong emphasis on expanding formal schooling and on building foundation skills above all else.

The taxonomy put forward in the GMR lies at the heart of this. Skills development cannot happen – it implies – without a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy, this foundation is best built through school, and therefore this must be the focus for international skills policy. The result is progress towards a fit for purpose global goal on skills, but progress that leans towards an expansion of formal, general schooling, with insufficient space for what happens outside of school, and what comes afterwards.

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## Skills, Training and the 200 Million: Let's Make Sure we Lay the Foundations

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**Keywords:** skills; youth; work

**Summary:** Good-quality primary and lower secondary education lays the groundwork for job skills. But what about the 200 million young people who haven't completed primary school, many of whom are confined to working in poverty? The 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report underlines the urgent need to expand programmes that provide these young people with a second chance to gain foundation skills combined with specific skills for work, especially for the urban poor, those in rural areas, and young women.

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When we sat down to research and write an Education for All Global Monitoring Report about the third EFA goal, we were all too conscious of the challenge this posed. As worded, the goal is a vague aspiration, with no way of measuring progress: “ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.”

One consequence of this vagueness is that the third EFA goal has suffered from relative neglect. Meanwhile, the attention it has received has largely been confined to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), offered in formal contexts.

This may be understandable in developed countries, where TVET needs to be improved through better integration with general education and with the labour market: we address those problems in the 2012 GMR. In many developing countries, however, those who reach formal secondary schooling are often the lucky few. Globally, a large proportion of young people still leave school without even basic literacy and numeracy skills – which means they don't stand a chance of obtaining further skills. We calculated that in 123 low and middle income countries, about 200 million of those aged 15 to 24 have not even completed primary school.

If we take the “learning needs of all young people and adults” as meaning, first of all, the skills they need to get decent jobs that lift them out of poverty, then we need to take a hard look at how to help those 200 million. And “equitable access” means making special efforts to reach those who face the worst forms of disadvantage in society, in education and in the labour market, especially the urban poor, those in rural areas and young women. Skills development initiatives need to cast a much wider net – making up for deficits of foundation skills, ensuring that more young people enter and complete at least lower secondary school, increasing opportunities for training for the urban informal sector, and focusing on the specific needs of rural youth involved in farm and non-farm work.

To provide a concrete framework for discussing skills development for decent jobs, we identified three categories of skills and the contexts in which they may be acquired: **foundation skills**, associated with literacy and numeracy; **transferable skills**, including

problem-solving and the ability to transform and adapt knowledge and skills in varying work contexts; and **technical and vocational skills**, associated with specific occupations.

We focused on the two main pathways for acquiring skills for work: improving access to primary and lower secondary education and beyond, and expanding second-chance programmes for those who have missed out.

Where the main skills gap is the result of low participation in secondary education, increasing access to that level, along with improving its relevance, and providing career guidance together with work-based training, is an appropriate policy and investment response.

We also examine ways to bridge the skills gap for young people who have already left school and are working in the urban informal sector. Our focus on the informal sector acknowledges its huge role in the countries where many young people haven't had a chance to acquire basic skills. While long-term unemployment is a major consequence worldwide of the skills gap, many young people do not have the relative luxury of remaining unemployed and are obliged to take poor quality jobs that are insecure, low paid, and often require long hours. Globally, more than 1 in 4 young workers (28%) are paid less than \$1.25 a day. Yet of 46 countries whose skills strategies were reviewed for the 2012 GMR, fewer than half addressed skills development among young people in the informal sector.

Training outside the formal sector requires giving young people a second chance to gain foundation skills in combination with skills for particular trades. In the urban informal sector, traditional apprenticeships can provide a route to skills development. Farm-based and entrepreneurship training allows those living in remote rural areas to make the most of available resources, and to benefit from opportunities off the farm.

So when we talk about EFA Goal 3, let's talk about equitable access to skills for all – which means giving priority to the 200 million young people who haven't completed primary school.

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## Building on Strong Foundations: the 2012 GMR and Beyond

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**Keywords:** UNESCO; Global Monitoring Report; skills; data

**Summary:** This piece summarises the discussions of the UK launch of the 2012 GMR arguing that there is a need for the skills community to push further on definitions and data.

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One of the core metaphors of the 2012 GMR is the need to build on strong foundations: of quality and equitable education and of appropriate data and planning. There is also a somewhat more implicit sense that through “putting education to work”, better foundations can be built for broader human development based on a sound footing of economic development. This, and much else in the Report, is to be lauded. However, in this short response we want to draw on the discussions of the UK launch event, held at the University of Nottingham in November, to consider how strong are the foundations of the Report itself and the process on which it builds, and how they could be made to better support the construction of a more equitable world where human development and well-being are enhanced.

### *The importance of education and training*

The Report makes a strong case for the role that education and training play in development. However, there is a real danger (cf. Burnett 2012) that the education message is not getting through.

Part of this relates to the way that educationalists tell their story, and the authors of the GMR faced the unenviable task of trying to balance an account of both relative success and relative failure in achieving the EFA goals. Too positive an account and they ran the risk of being seen as over-celebratory by peers and increased the danger that the message would be read externally as one in which education was “sorted” and, thus, not a post-2015 priority. Too negative an account and they could be criticised for undermining momentum towards positive change with so much still at stake regarding EFA, MDGs and the post-2015 agenda.

Almost inevitably, the approach taken did lead to concerns amongst the UK launch audience. In part, these were about the oversimplification of certain messages, for instance on rates of return to education. There were also concerns that the Report played down the structural and cultural contexts in which education and development interacted, with the complexities of gender relations in education, work and society being particularly noted as undertheorised.

### *The definition of skills*

As NORRAG NEWS has noted previously, the slowness of the GMR team in tackling the issue of skills relates back to the inadequacy of its operationalisation in EFA goal 3. Yet, there

remains considerable concern that the 2012 GMR does not do enough to address this problem. It remains caught between a work-oriented notion of skill and a notion of life skills. Moreover, by choosing to focus attention on skills developed in schools, it lacks a strong work-infused account of skills; by focusing on skills for youth, it underemphasises the role that experiential learning plays in skills acquisition; by emphasising equity and equality, it underplays innovation and the skills of professionals and technologists.

#### *The challenge of data*

A GMR is by nature a heroic endeavour in bringing together a huge array of data from a variety of sources globally and presenting it in an intelligible way. As ever, the GMR team should be congratulated for their work in this regard. However, their success in producing a report replete with numbers and eye-catching graphical representations of them is itself problematic in that it hides the huge problems that exist with much of the data collected and the meaninglessness of many of the comparisons based on data captured subject to different definitions and with widely varying degrees of accuracy.

One of the biggest hopes for this GMR was that it would force a radical improvement of data capture and analysis on skills. In retrospect, this was probably very naive. In reality, the team have largely done an excellent job in finding meaning in existing forms of data. Nonetheless, the limitations of the Report point to urgent needs regarding data. These include the importance of building national capacities both to generate and use data. However, these issues cannot be separated from the urgent need for greater clarity regarding the definitions and purposes of skills development.

#### *The way forward*

In thinking about the last push towards EFA; and the place of skills on the post-2015 agenda, the 2012 GMR offers valuable food for thought. What can we learn from the weaknesses of goal 3? What would a meaningful skills goal look like, or is one an impossibility? Which partnerships would be important for developing a broader but workable definition of skills? What are the policy implications and challenges of trying to link education, skills and work together as part of a wider development vision? Finally, what are the implications for data collection and use, for information systems and for research?

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## Private Sector and Skills Development: Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012 identifies key issues and challenges

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**Keywords:** private sector; bilateral donors; market needs; comprehensive approach

**Summary:** Jobs and youth employment are increasing priorities of the international community. To improve market relevance and sustainability of skills training, donors are looking at what more they can do to support the effective integration of the private sector into education for employment strategies in low income countries.

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Current discussions on the successors to the Millennium Development Goals has provided an opportunity for the international community to reflect on whether more concerted action needs to be taken around jobs and equipping young people for employment. The EFA GMR 2012 Report on Youth and Skills provides a welcome contribution to that debate. This article briefly looks at some of the evolving plans to support deeper and more effective integration of the private sector in education for employment strategies and programmes.

The GMR Report highlights the vital role of skills as a stepping stone to employment. However, the text is not so explicit on the equally crucial link between skills development and the private sector. It is precisely this connection that a number of multilateral and bilateral donors are currently trying to reinforce in their development programmes.

Access to primary school education is the principal focus of many donors, but a discernible shift is taking place. Increasingly, attention is being focussed on secondary education, skills development / technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. The GMR Report identifies the main reason for this transition: around the world, youth unemployment is unacceptably high and threatening to rise further. Jobs are not being created fast enough in either the public or formal private sector. As the Report states about 1.53 billion people are working in the informal sector and many of these are on wages below the poverty line. The 2012 African Economic Outlook Report focuses on this challenge in the African context. In response to the lack of demand for labour it recommends that governments empower young people to create their own jobs and enterprises.

### Some success stories and lessons learned

While the challenges are stark, the GMR Report does identify a number of examples of sustainable and effective skills development programmes. The successful approaches include:

- Combining skills with microfinance programmes;
- Dual model of training which is part-time in a company and part-time in a classroom;

- Classroom training combined with work experience in basic and specific trades and in life skills;
- Entrepreneurial skills training that leads to self-employment; and
- Matching skills training with labour market needs.

The common factor in these initiatives is the coupling of skills training with directly relevant market needs and/or commercial opportunities.

To ensure sustainability, skills development programmes must endeavour to respond to demand from learners and labour markets. This, in turn, means maintaining strong ties with employers and regular updating of course curricula and appropriate technologies to reflect moving trends in industry and commerce. Teach a Man to Fish (undated) describes this concept as the Market Feedback Loop. The GMR Report would have been enriched if it had captured the role of the private sector in a separate chapter and with a set of recommendations.

### **Addressing challenges with what we have learned**

The past year has seen a significant surge of publications on jobs and skills development/TVET with reports and evaluations from the World Bank Group, UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation, the G20, McKinsey and others. This richness of information and knowledge sharing reflects the new impetus from the international community to do more on skills development and job creation. DFID is contributing to the evidence base with a new paper on Private Sector Engagement in Skills Development (see: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Key-Issues/Economic-growth-and-the-private-sector/Private-sector/>).

One of the most promising TVET initiatives is the Torino Process (see: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/TORINO\\_PROCESS\\_2012](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/TORINO_PROCESS_2012)) developed by the European Training Foundation. Similar to the “comprehensive approach” recommended by the International Finance Corporation, the Torino Process is a systematic, participative approach that helps countries conduct an evidence-based analysis of their TVET systems with a view to recommending improvements in policy and strategy. The Torino Process brings together diverse stakeholders including government, providers, civil society and the private sector and has resulted in tangible improvements to TVET systems in many of the countries neighbouring the European Union.

DFID is currently working with a group of bilateral donors to identify the best way to improve the access of poor people, women and the disabled to quality, modern skills development opportunities in the world’s poorest countries. Though still early days, the proposed programme would contribute to: formalising the skills of those working in the informal sector; ensuring national skills strategies and programmes are more responsive to market and labour needs; supporting the replication of promising innovations and technology; and increasing the availability of finance for learners to take up training opportunities and for providers and governments to expand the provision of skills and vocational training. The programme would complement the “systematic or comprehensive approach” advocated by skills development / TVET experts and the principles and recommendations outlined in the Shanghai Consensus from the Third International TVET Congress in May 2012 (See <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/tvet/>).



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## The GMR EFA View on Vocational Education and Training: Isn't there more to do for the Private Sector?

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**Keywords:** EFA; GMR; private sector role in VET; dual approach

**Summary:** This article offers a brief critique on how the 2012 EFA-GMR discusses the role of the private sector in VET system development. It then shows what functions the private sector can fulfil in a VET system and provides examples where private companies have been successfully involved in reforms of vocational education and training.

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The 2012 edition of the Education for All – Global Monitoring Report (EFA-GMR) examines how skills of young people can be improved in order to enhance their opportunities for decent jobs and better lives. In this article we take a closer look at the role which the authors of the monitoring report assign to the private sector in skills development, and how the report assesses current private sector involvement. We feel that the EFA-GMR underestimates the potential which lies in the involvement of private companies and their associations. Therefore, we will show what functions the private sector can fulfil in a Vocational Education and Training (VET) system where private companies are given a pivotal role, and we provide examples where private companies have been successfully involved in reforms of vocational education and training.

The report showcases selected examples of private sector philanthropy, such as the Open Society Foundation or the MasterCard Foundation. While it praises some of these efforts as “genuinely successful and often innovative”, it criticises them as being insufficient in three aspects: scale, alignment with public efforts and transparency. Arguing that the private sector is the ultimate beneficiary of a better-trained workforce, the report repeatedly calls

for a more proactive role as a source of funding and for extension of its financial contribution in this sector, which is estimated to be equivalent to 5 % of education aid from OECD-DAC donors in 2010. The report consequently employs clear language referring to the need for “drastically” increased, “much larger scale” and longer-term funding. This does not come as a surprise against the economic downturn and the apparent stagnating donor commitment to education. The authors of the EFA-GMR suggest that more alignment to national needs and priorities and pooling contributions would increase the efficiency of private sector involvement. Closely related to this is the call for more transparency of private sector interventions, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of these interventions. In this context the report suggests that the private sector open up for scrutiny and that the results of independent reviews be published.

To the EFA-GMR authors, transparency is primarily a means to ensure that collective goals are not compromised by private ones. Such concerns might be warranted in individual cases. But the frequency of these cautious notes in the report appears to indicate a certain private sector discomfort on the side of the authors of the report. Even more problematic seems the reduction of the role of the private sector to the one as a donor, and portraying the private sector as acting in this field only based on philanthropic or CSR motivations.

We thus argue that a broader perspective is necessary if the private sector is to increase its involvement into VET. Firstly, it seems important that domestic private sector actors play a more central role in VET – rather than the philanthropic branches of companies from economically developed countries, the role of which could be to capacitate domestic private sector actors in this regard. Secondly, we are of the strong view that the private sector needs to be involved not only as donor but in a number of different domains of VET. Forms of such broader involvement can be found in many cooperative training models around the world. One of these models is the so-called dual approach apprenticeship system that is strongly rooted in a number of Central European countries. The domains in which private sector actors are assuming greater responsibilities in more cooperative training models are basically the following:

- System governance and financing (e.g. participation in overall decision making, prioritising VET requirements and funding of training both inside and outside companies)
- Definition of training contents (e.g. participation in defining occupational profiles, participation in curriculum development and development of working aids and teaching materials)
- Execution of training (e.g. experts from the world of work teaching at VET schools, training at the workplace through apprenticeships or internships, training of trainers)
- Assessment and certification (e.g. private sector representatives as members of testing and assessment panels, issuing and/or endorsement of certifications)
- Diverse other functions (e.g. participation in applied research, promotion of innovations in VET, participation in labour market research and in professional guidance)

In VET systems that follow the dual model, the private sector is generally involved in all of these domains. However, for this to happen, an organised private sector as well as mutual trust between private and public sector actors is required. Certainly, both of these elements don't exist in VET systems of many economically less developed countries. This point is also being made by the authors of the monitoring report and it thus comes as no surprise that

they are pessimistic with regard to the chances to successfully employ this model in other contexts. Yet, only if the private sector plays a key role in VET is training more likely to become relevant for employers as well as for those who are participating in skills development programmes. In fact, the private sector can also play an important role even if it is not involved in *all* these domains and even if it does, these responsibilities neither need to be assumed all at once nor in the same depth and intensity.

In development cooperation, there is a long history of involving private sector representatives in some of these domains. Most importantly, projects have aimed at involving the private sector in defining occupational standards and curricula for many decades. More recent examples, such as the Employment Fund in Nepal (supported, by the Department for International Development, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the World Bank), show that it is also possible to make the private sector participate in labour market analysis, and in a programme funded by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) in north-eastern Albania, the private sector is strongly represented in VET boards that are overseeing the entire range of training programmes catering to their respective economic sectors. In SDC-funded programmes in Burkina Faso and Mali, artisans have trained apprentices who, at the end of their training, receive certificates that are recognised by the trade associations of the artisans. Many projects in the past and today are developing capacities of local and regional private sector actors for enabling them to organise and play a more active role in VET, assuming different (key) roles in the VET system. Perhaps even more noteworthy are initiatives developed outside the realm of development cooperation in thriving economic sectors in developing countries. In Bangladesh's fast-growing garment sector, for instance, garment entrepreneurs and their associations have launched programmes to train operators and supervisors for their industry. These training programmes often operate in underutilised government training centres but run with equipment, curricula and staff that mainly come from the industry. Not surprisingly, these initiatives have also inspired donors in this South Asian country.

Clearly, there is no easy fix to the problem of lacking private sector participation in VET. It would thus be naïve to assume that the initiatives mentioned here can resolve all key problems of the respective VET systems. At the same time, any VET programme or system that aims at equipping students with skills that cater to labour market needs will need to sustainably involve actors from the private sector in as many of the domains mentioned above as possible.

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## TVE(T?) and the GMR: Counting and Comparing Apples and Oranges

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### Low-hanging fruits in the GMR's TVE indicators

Two years ago, in an article in NORRAG News (King and Palmer, 2010), I noted (with Kenneth King) that the data on school- and college-based technical and vocational education (TVE) as reported and analysed in the EFA Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs) could certainly be improved on in the GMR 2012 (UNESCO, 2012). (Of course, while the GMR reports, it is the function of UNESCO UIS to define and collect data and indicators...).

Two years later, let's see if any of these low-hanging fruits were plucked from the branches...

The earlier piece made a number of observations and suggestions for three low-hanging fruits that might be picked. Let's quickly summarize these again here:

**Low-hanging fruit #1: Information on the proportion of TVE taking place at the lower- and upper-secondary levels.** Traditionally the GMR data on TVE refers to enrolment in TVE at the secondary level, without disaggregating for lower- and upper-secondary levels.

**Low-hanging fruit #2: Disaggregated data on light versus heavy TVE emphasis.** Traditionally, the GMRs simply report on enrolment in TVE without telling us anything about what proportion are separate TVE school systems versus TVE streams or tracks within general secondary schools. Which lead to general secondary qualification?

**Low-hanging fruit #3: Information on enrolment in post-secondary technical colleges or polytechnics.** Traditionally, regarding the tertiary level, the GMRs contain no information on post-secondary technical colleges or polytechnics, but only information on students' field of study (e.g. 'engineering, manufacturing and construction' and 'agriculture').

### So, which fruits are still on their branches?

**The TVET data presented in the GMR 2012 report certainly mirrors earlier GMRs:** it provides enrolment data on students in secondary level TVE, and the percentage of females of that number. But the data tables in the report go no further.

**However, to its credit** (and of course to UIS's credit) the GMR 2012 does provide more statistical data on its web-pages; and, buried in here, we can find:

- data on TVE at lower and upper secondary levels (see table 8) (low-hanging fruit #1 - tick)
- data on enrolment in TVE in 'post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)' (see table 8) (is this low-hanging fruit #3? – tick?).

This disaggregated TVE data did not appear in the online statistical tables from the GMR 2011. So some positive steps forward then in GMR 2012, even if low-hanging fruit #2 (light v heavy TVE) has not been touched (perhaps this is not such a low-hanging fruit after all? One might ask if this is even possible to disaggregate when a general qualification is attained).

### **Seen (but not counted)**

It is known that the domain of TVET is broad and covers the whole gamut from formal, informal to non-formal provision, is delivered in schools, institutions, colleges and universities, and enterprises, and is both public and private (for and not for profit). Even the public provision in most countries spans more ministries than can be counted with one hand. It is out there – fragmented yes – but we can all see it. But we are awful at counting it.

While celebrating the (small) positive steps regarding TVE and the GMR, noted above, as McGrath notes: ‘what this GMR has not done is to generate significantly improved data on vocational education and training or offer new methodological insights into how to measure either VET or progress against EFA Goal 3’ (McGrath, 2012). McGrath continues, noting that the GMR’s continued focus on school-based TVE, rather than on the wider domain of TVET ‘is a terribly school-centric view of a far more complex reality’ (ibid).

My earlier co-authored piece in NORRAG News (King and Palmer, 2010) argued that we need to continue to prepare for better monitoring outside the Ministries of Education. In other words, we need to do more to count this wider domain of TVET.

What’s been the progress? The quick answer is: **some!** More on this in a minute.

### **We (still) need more data on technical and vocation skills**

This is one of the bottom line messages of the GMR.

For example, regarding fruit #1 (disaggregating lower v upper secondary TVE data), the GMR 2012 comments that ‘better information on lower and upper secondary education is needed... including details on academic as well as technical and vocational areas’ (p.302).

And, regarding fruit #2 (disaggregating light versus heavy TVE), the GMR 2012 comments that this kind of information is ‘notoriously difficult to obtain’ (p.237).

And, regarding the wider domain of TVET, the GMR notes that we need: ‘Better data... [on] programmes beyond the formal school system, such as second-chance programmes and traditional apprenticeships’ (GMR 2012, p.302). The GMR then goes on to reinforce the education/ “the others” split by saying that ‘the ILO could take on the responsibility for gathering and disseminating such data from national governments’ (GMR 2012, p.302).

When we talk of measuring this wider domain of TVET, we are talking about measuring fruit which is still far out of reach because of the diversity of content (duration, qualification) and provision (as noted above), and because the ladder (the conceptual framework) and someone to hold the ladder (a consensus... a champion?) are still missing.

The GMR spells out this data need clearly in one of its ten concluding concerns: ‘More and better quality data are needed to enable national governments and the international community to monitor access to skills development programmes, and so plan more

effectively' (p.302).

This is exactly the concern that was raised in the 2010 NORRAG News piece I co-wrote (King and Palmer, 2010), and exactly the same concern raised in a 2008 report for the British Council and UK National Commission for UNESCO that I co-wrote on *Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Monitoring and Analysis of Skills* (King and Palmer, 2008).

Five years on we are still calling for more data. It is slightly disappointing that the GMR 2012 was not able to take us further than this, or even to propose 'a research agenda towards filling in these gaps' (McGrath, 2012) [see also King, 2012]. The GMR could have helped to call the global TVET constituency to account –and emphasise the need for a research agenda, even if it could not be outlined in the GMR itself.

### **Promising progress towards measuring skills development**

So what progress has been made?

The G20 Multi-Year Action Plan on Development (November 2010) called on the ILO, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank to create internationally comparable skills indicators for low-income countries by 2012. These organizations have subsequently been working on this area; see for example the work of the OECD (Keese, 2012); UNESCO UIS (Motivans, 2012) and the World Bank (e.g. Tan et al. 2011).

The organizations above have proposed a set of indicators, but it is not known if agreement has yet been reached. With regard to technical and vocational skills, these indicators were somewhat limited, but did include, for example 'Participation of Youth in Apprenticeships'.

### **EFA Goal 3 has been an impossibly tricky fruit even to see, let alone to pluck**

EFA Goal 3 ("life skills") is a notoriously vague term (King and Palmer, 2008) that has never been able to be monitored and tracked partly because the international community never really agreed what it is. The GMR openly acknowledges that in spite of the progress towards better monitoring of (a range of) skills, these 'recent developments will not produce sufficient data in time to measure goal 3 adequately before the deadline has passed' (UNESCO, 2012: 82).

There is now a great deal of noise associated with the education post-2015 process; in thinking about education post-2015, let's make sure that:

- a) *technical and vocational* skills gets a mention in the new framework and associated goals (both the post-MDGs/SDGs and the post-EFA goals);
- b) when it comes to selecting targets and indicators, we make effective use of the new developments with regard to the monitoring of skills;
- c) above all, 'any post-2015 international goals for skills development need to be more precisely defined' (UNESCO, 2012: 83) so that we don't come out with another vague goal that will be another totally inaccessible and unrecognizable fruit.

*The author would like to acknowledge the very useful comments received from Kenneth King (NORRAG) and Albert Motivans (UNESCO UIS). The views expressed here remain those of the*

author.

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## What Skills are we Talking About? Comparing the Global Monitoring Report 2012 and South African Skills Development

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**Keywords:** Global Monitoring Report 2012; Further Education and Training colleges; South Africa; Skills Development.

**Summary:** This paper compares the conception of skills applied in the GMR 2012 with that adopted by South Africa's skills development strategy. It finds marked areas of differences particularly with regard to the integration of academic/ vocational skills.

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The release of the UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012, *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*, puts firmly on the international agenda the skills needs of young people. The report argues the importance of broadening and widening access to "skills that can offer all young people, including the disadvantaged, a chance of better jobs" (UNESCO, 2012).

In this regard GMR 2012 aligns closely with the purposes of South Africa's Further Education and Training (FET) college sector which is to expand and broaden participation in skills development. This is particularly so in light of large-scale poverty and increasing levels of youth unemployment with close to 75% of South African youth not in education, employment or training. Unemployment and underemployment continue to imitate the contours of apartheid's unequal configuration with the highest percentages of unemployed and underemployed being young black South Africans, and particularly young black women who live in rural areas.

The GMR 2012 has, however, conceptualised skills in a way that differs from the conceptualisation of skills applied in South Africa's post-apartheid skills development strategy and also to that applied by the South African FET college sector. The GMR 2012 distinguishes between *foundation, transferable, technical and vocational* and *life skills*. *Foundation skills* are described as "the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary for getting work" (UNESCO, 2012: 14). *Transferable skills* to the soft skills required in the work environment such as the ability to communicate effectively, problem solve and work together with others and *technical and vocational* to the specific "technical know-how" required for specific occupations (UNESCO, 2012: 14). According to GMR 2012, these skills are to be provided at different institutional levels: foundation skills at primary and lower secondary schools, transferable skills at higher secondary schools and technical and vocational skills thereafter.

In contrast to this, the South African skills development has adopted a notion of skills which is in opposition to the vocational-education divide provided by the GMR 2012. Rather, the South African approach has aimed, and to various degrees of success and failure and in principle if not always in practice, at achieving an integrated approach to education and training. For post-apartheid South Africa, this 'integration' implied, as provided by the 1995 White Paper on Education, "a view of learning which rejects a rigid division between



'academic' and 'applied', 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowledge' and 'skills', 'head' and 'hand'. Such divisions ... have grown out of, and helped to reproduce, very old occupational and social class distinctions. (Republic of South Africa, 1995)

This principle has been applied to the development of the National Curriculum Vocational NC(V) presented in South Africa's FET colleges. Provided across fourteen fields of study, the NC(V) is equivalent to a matriculation and combines generic skills with a job specific skills in three years of full time study. The curriculum consists of vocational subjects dedicated to the occupational area and three compulsory fundamental subjects (languages, mathematics or mathematics literacy and life orientation). The curriculum promotes simulation and practical work experience and learners are required on completion of their NC(V) to complete 'prescribed work experience' before undertaking their trade test.

The NC(V) serves three roles. The first is to address the weaknesses inherent in the basic education system in numeracy and literacy, what the GMR 2012 has termed '*foundation skills*'. The second is to provide learners with the basic skills required to live a fulfilled life as productive citizens, this includes, but is not limited to, aspects contained in the notion of *transferable skills* provided by the GMR 2012 such as the ability to communicate effectively, use a computer and work with other people. The third is to provide the specific technical skills required for the specific occupational area.

The development and implementation of the NC(V) is not without its problems and the jury is out as to the effectiveness of the curriculum. Central concerns are the integration of theory and practice and the limited time and space available for practical work. Compounding this is the limited capacity available in many of the FET colleges and the ability of college lecturers to implement the NC(V). A critical concern is the interface between the NC(V) and the needs of the labour market.

Initial analysis of the data gathered during my PhD research suggests that the integration of job specific skills with generic and life skills has made a significant difference to the social and economic well-being of FET college graduates who have secured permanent employment. Graduates report the ability to communicate and work within a team as key to accessing and maintaining permanent employment and the capacity to read, write and be computer literate as prerequisites for their employability.

The problem with the conceptualisation of skills applied by the GMR 2012, and the conception of technical and vocational skills contained therein, is partly about the realities of learning and knowledge acquisition, but also – as suggested in the quote above - about the implication that distinguishing between academic and vocational learning has for the reproduction of social divisions. It serves to exacerbate the parity of esteem of vocational education and suggests a narrow view of technical and vocational education which belies the realities of the technical and vocational work and leads to a disregard for what Rose (2005) describes as "the thought it takes to do physical [or craft] work" (2005: p.11). Importantly, and ironically, a narrow technicist approach to technical and vocational training has shown to provide neither the workers required by employers or the capability for human flourishing.

The GMR adopts a global discourse on the benefits of skills development which includes the contribution to economic development, to unemployment reduction (particularly youth unemployment) and to the creation of social and community cohesion. However, when confronted with the problem of the variety of social, political, economic and cultural settings

in which skills are to be interpreted and applied, the report reduces skills development to that provided at primary and lower secondary schooling. The report's argument that "foundation skills provided at primary and lower secondary schooling" deliver the skills that can offer young people a chance of a better job (UNESCO, 2012) has proven untrue in the South African context. While access to schooling exists as a basic human right, improving human well-being and providing the foundation for further, higher and life-long learning, it has proved insufficient for employability. The reality is that in South Africa, as in many countries of the world, millions of young people who have completed both their primary and secondary schooling are facing a future of poverty and destitution should employment and education and training opportunities not be provided.

The task of "providing skills for work", while the heart of the GMR 2012, is a complex one. It involves different conceptions of what constitutes skills and different social, economic and cultural challenges in providing equal access to skills development opportunities. Any resolution to the millions of unemployed young people must address the different socio-economic and cultural contexts in which skills are to be provided while simultaneously addressing international and national policies that limit employment opportunities for young people.

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### **An Asian Lens on the GMR**

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**Keywords:** Asia-Pacific; GMR; EFA Global Monitoring Report

**Summary:** This article provides a few thoughts on the findings from the 2012 edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report from the perspective of a UNESCO regional office and their implications for the Asia-Pacific region, which according to UNESCO's regional groupings comprises close to 50 countries from New Zealand in the east to Iran in the west.

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The region of Asia and the Pacific is vast and by far the most populous. It is incredibly diverse not only across its constituent sub-regions but also within each of many countries. One of

the best known among so many other examples is the language diversity in Papua New Guinea (more than 800!). The region also houses those among the most advanced economies as well as the poorest ones in the world; and the top performing education systems as well as those far behind at the very bottom of PISA or TIMSS learning tests.

From this perspective, one cannot say there is one Asian way of analysing education development and reading the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), but many other lenses through which various interpretations can be made. Notwithstanding such diversity, we can identify a few sets of converging understandings as emerging from this region, when it comes to EFA and GMR.

First, although the EFA goal 3 is considered vague and may have been overlooked in the past decade, we converge to see that this is perhaps the most important and overarching EFA goal. If we added the word 'children' somewhere in this goal (i.e. *Ensuring that the learning needs of all [children,] young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes*), it would not only summarize the full essence of EFA, but also capture well the emerging focus of international debates on the future education.

Second, we still feel that despite the size and diversity of this region, no sufficient consideration is given in GMR on the issues and challenges facing education development in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region. Given the traditional focus of GMR often discussing educational issues in low-enrolment countries, there was tendency in the past to consider EFA is for low-income countries. However, there has been an emerging trend to read anew the EFA goals in some high-performing education systems (e.g. the Republic of Korea) which started to realize that EFA is also a concern in their own countries.

Third, GMR 2012 devoted to "youth and skills" has the potential to serve as a useful leverage for policy dialogue on education in all countries, regardless of their level of development. The report defines three sets of skills (foundation, transferable, and technical and vocational) and encourages governments to give more attention to providing young people with better learning, be they in formal or non-formal settings, so that they can enter the world of work with confidence and enjoy a better life. However, the report gives the impression that the transferable skills can be acquired through secondary schooling and work-based programmes only, while these skills are acquired from the early ages of life and onwards.

Fourth, financial aid is important to achieve EFA goals in developing countries. However, there is an increasing recognition that government commitment and sustainable and inclusive policies are key and more important, as the case of high-performing economics and education systems illustrates. Eventually, we can say that development is less an issue of money, but more of the governance; thence the need for GMR to discuss more about international cooperation rather than financial aid.

Fifth, drawing from the conclusions of the report as well as the findings of the research conducted by UNESCO at the regional level, there are several policy implications that countries of the region will need to further consider, including the need for education systems to adopt a whole-system approach to skills development considering the fact that:

- Basic education will include secondary education (at least, lower secondary) for young people to build solid foundation skills and to be better prepared to acquire transferable and technical and vocational skills later on.

- As economies become increasingly knowledge-based and considering the need to ensure flexible pathways to learning, vocational students will require a general academic grounding to accompany their specific vocational education, while general secondary and higher education can be further “vocationalised” in this region. One will observe some trend towards the "vocationalisation" of general education and the "generalisation" of vocational education, with the dividing line between these “distinctive” programmes becoming increasingly blurred.

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## Consideration of the Enabling Environment for TVET in Korea

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**Keywords:** TVET; Korea; economic growth and skills training

**Summary:** Investments in education and skills are widely regarded as being key factors in Korea’s economic growth. This piece explores the importance of having in place a supportive enabling environment in order for TVET to contribute efficiently to growth.

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The EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012 compared Ghana and Korea with regard to their different policies and strategies for TVET (UNESCO, 2012: 207). This piece provides further analysis of Korea’s experience; in particular the critical role that the enabling environment played in enabling TVET to contribute to growth.

Korea’s enabling environment for TVET comprises of strong leadership, good policies, an efficient mobilization of human resources, and the existence of friendly international markets.

For economic growth to occur, policies – including economic and industrial policies – need to be linked, or coupled, together to ensure maximum synergies. If agricultural, financial, urban, labor, education and other policies had not been comprehensively harmonized with the economic policy, Korea’s economic growth would not have been realized. Korea achieved economic growth through an export-oriented strategy. Skills training was only one of tools adopted to encourage economic growth.

Korea’s economic growth was successively driven through a series of economic plans. It started with labor-intensive industrialization centered on light industries in the 1960s; passed through selective fostering phases of capital-intensive heavy and chemical industries in the 1970s; and pursued technology, knowledge and information-intensive industrialization after the 1980s. Strategies and policies for skills development were established and advanced in the same context as socio-economic development strategies. Korea’s economic development was formed within such as framework. As a result of this enabling (harmonized) policy environment, Korea had the appropriately skilled workers

available for each development stage the country went through. I wonder what the demand is in Ghanaian industry for skilled workers. The supply of skilled workers does not in itself, always lead to the creation of employment and economic growth.

One of the characteristics of Korea's economic growth has been that its expansion has occurred concurrently with an unprecedented expansion of its education system. Primary education was universalized in 1957, lower-secondary education in 1980, and upper-secondary education in 1995 while the higher education enrolment rate reaching more than 80% as of today. The educational expansion established sequentially school levels from primary to secondary and higher education; this was an inevitable choice of the government as a response to the explosive increase of requests for upper school education more than the results of an intended educational policy. Quick universalization of primary education must have contributed to expansion of TVET in Korea. However, this is not the mandatory requirement for economic growth. For example, even though India has not achieved universal primary education yet, India's economy grows quickly.

Lastly, I would like to go into one of hidden factors that contribute to the expansion of skills development in Korea. The Korean government made a strong effort to improve awareness of TVET in students and parents in 1960s-90s by providing many incentives such as scholarships and high salaries for teachers. In addition, skills competitions took place regularly to encourage skills training and promote reputation of skilled workers. A champion of the World Skills Competition was compared with an Olympic gold medalist by providing many incentives to schools and individual.

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## A Gender Lens on Skills and Youth in the Global Monitoring Report 2012

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**Keywords:** skills development; demand; gender; qualitative and gender sensitive indicators.

**Summary:** Engendering and broadening the concepts of skills development could help ensure that TVET delivers benefits for both women and men. Focusing too much on the supply side in the skills-employment complex is insufficient; Gender disaggregated data can help inform skills policy design, but more effort should be given to develop qualitative indicators.

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The main theme of the Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring GMR 2012 is Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work (UNESCO, 2012). This means that the thematic focus is on Youth and Adult Learning needs (EFA Goal 3). So why bother about gender? Is this not taken care of in the general part of the report, which includes an updating on all the 6 EFA Goals including the one on Gender parity and Equality in Education? There are several good reasons for applying a gender lens on the Youth and Skills theme and why failing to do so may lead to increased inequalities in skills development and employment patterns for youth.

My first point is that the GMR 2012 report by defining and linking skills 'adapting to different work environments' and to specialist skills ignores the broader skills and capabilities, which young people also need for active participation in decision-making processes concerning their own lives and their communities. It also ignores existing gender specific aspects, conditions and requirements related to the acquirement of such skills. Whereas some skills needs are common to both young women and young men, others are different reflecting their respective gendered positions and economic and socio-cultural background. Some young women may, qua being women and for example living in a society where women are secluded, be especially disadvantaged. They might have special needs for skills training that can enhance their knowledge, confidence and capabilities in order for them to be able to obtain the life skills needed for participating fully in the development of their own family and in society at large. Young men may also have gender-based skills needs attached to their role in society and position in the family. My main argument is here that the dynamics of gender relations and gender-based differences need to be taken into consideration in developing the conceptual and methodological framework for skills development and the post-2015 framework on education. This is not done in the conceptualization and definition of the skills framework used in the Education for All Global Monitoring GMR 2012 report: *foundation skills, transferable skills and technical and vocational skills*. The latter two categories are furthermore linked too narrowly to employment, entrepreneurial capabilities and specialist skills.

My second point is that the report focuses almost entirely on the supply side of skills development and the demand side is hardly touched upon. Despite the fact that the GMR 2012 report emphasizes growth and employability as the main purpose of skills development the report says very little about what types of jobs are desirable, and for

whom. This is of course a general weakness of the report and qualifying this is also relevant from the perspective of poverty reduction. It thus becomes up to the market, or the reader, to define what type of jobs skills development for youth is aimed at and how these jobs should be created. From the gender perspective the implication of leaving out the demand side is that gender specific needs are neither made visible, nor integrated in the overall analysis of the education/skills-jobs complex.

The growth model advocated for in the GMR report focuses on economic growth. Recent research from Plan International and ODI on the impact of the Economic Crisis on girls and young women' (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013) clearly shows that relying on market forces and the market's demand for job creation solely may have negative impact on especially vulnerable groups, including young women. The report examines the continuing and deepening impact of the economic crisis on girls and young women worldwide and demonstrates that long standing economic trends, entrenched gender inequality and austerity budgets have all left girls, young women and their families bearing the brunt of fewer resources and reduced access to services. Furthermore, the report's findings show that the economic crisis has led to an increase in women's involvement in vulnerable and riskier employment. A key factor in explaining the negative impacts is that "few responses to the impacts of the crisis have been informed by gender and age sensitive analysis. Neither have there been any serious attempts to engage women's organisations in decision-making about appropriate mitigating interventions." If we leave out gender analysis and gender in the conceptual framework for skills development we risk ending up with the same kind of findings, also in times of economic growth. The least we can do in trying to avoid enhancing or escalating pre-existing education and employment trends with negative implications for women is to acknowledge that skills, jobs and economic growth are not gender neutral, just as the economic crisis has not been either.

My final comment on the GMR 2012 report is related to the monitoring and evaluation framework for measuring gender impacts in education. The recent establishment of the World Inequality Data base (WIDE) ([www.education-inequalities.org](http://www.education-inequalities.org)) is a huge step forward in this direction. It stresses the great influence of circumstances, such as wealth, gender, ethnicity and location, which play an important role in shaping their opportunities for education and wider life chances. It, furthermore, draws attention to unacceptable levels of education inequality across countries and between groups within countries. The major aim of WIDE is to help to inform policy design and public debate and the many quantitative indicators listed in the data base are very suitable for such purposes. However, the 'rediscovering' of the need to measure quality indicators in addition to access to education and skills development should give us food for thought and should call for developing gender sensitive *qualitative indicators*, which can contribute to foreseeing and avoiding gender-based negative impact of skills development. In this regard we still have a long way to go and this work should be speeded up in order to build a better case for skills development and education – also beyond 2015.

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## Oh, Education is Education, and Training is Training, and Never the Twain Shall Meet

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**Keywords:** Education; Training; TVET; EFA; MDG

**Summary:** Let us resist the intrusion of training into education. Educational objectives, when put together by those who see children merely as future workers, will fail. The post-2015 Development Goal should be: 'Children Are Loving Learning'

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The ILO (employment trends), UNESCO (transforming TVET), McKinsey (global labor market) and the several 'regional' publications all make interesting reading. Excellent ideas and (on balance, in some skills areas but not in others, depending upon who is making the judgments, fairly) good practices are evolving in TVET. [Although PTVT (Professional, Technical and Vocational Training) is the apposite entity. For the sector will never achieve total lift-off until the stigma of its being targeted at academic failures is finally shaken off.]

But those EFA goals, along with that second Millennium Development one, stubbornly refuse to become substantially achieved. UPE will be 'missed by a large margin'. In the words of just about everyone who has ever compared original LogFrame Indicators for virtually any intervention with the actual end-of-project accomplishments: 'These were the wrong targets'. Simplistic slogans commencing with 'Universal...' or 'All Children...' are never intended to be met in practice, merely to be bellowed abroad in the knowledge that those who set them will have safely moved on long before the objectively verifiable hens come home to roost.

Moreover, 'completing the primary cycle' is a very limited goal. It is as if we were to judge the success of a medical and surgery programme on the basis of how long the patients spend in hospital. What happens during those long years of schooling is what really matters. Some desiccated number crunchers may be fascinated by apparent correlations between person-years of schooling and social rates of return. For we have been misled for far too long by World Bank macroeconomists. Judging the efficacy of education by the subsequent earnings of its victims is not just bad statistics; it is the workplace colonialism of classroom integrity.

This intrusion of training into education is epitomised by the Global Monitoring Report which purports to be about 'Education for All' but focusses upon the very different matter of 'Youth and Skills'. Three 'young men' and three 'young women' are quoted on its back cover: all six bleat on about schooling preparing them for jobs. But in my experience since the 1950s, this is not what real pupils talk about – from Port Moresby to Port Louis to Port of Spain they see themselves, not as embryonic engineers or foetal physicists, but as 'students'.

In the GMR's introduction we are told that:



This *Global Monitoring Report* reminds us that education is not only about making sure all children can attend school. It is about setting young people up for life, by giving them opportunities to find decent work, earn a living, contribute to their communities and societies, and fulfil their potential. At the wider level, it is about helping countries nurture the workforce they need to grow in the global economy.

No. This misses the central point. Education is about Education. [To be fair, 'fulfil their potential' is getting there. But there's an implication that even that is about climbing the non-existent ladder rather than composing Petrarchan sonnets or being fascinated by prime numbers or bowling the perfect ball at cricket.] Educational objectives are, when put together by those who see children merely as future workers, doomed dismally to fail. So, if we're looking for a post-2015 Development Goal, how about '**Children Love Learning**'?

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## **A World Crisis in the Relationships amongst Education, Skills, Work and the Economy?**

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The GMR portrays a growing crisis for the young, where many millions are currently unemployed despite having much more than foundation skills, and where many millions more are working at subsistence levels in the developing countries both with and without adequate foundation skills. There is a special political appeal of technical and vocational skills in these critical times, and India is just one of several countries which has made dramatic forecasts of the numbers that they plan will be skilled in the next decade (King, 2012b). But in the face of the aspirations to provide foundation skills for all, or even technical and vocational skills for half the nation (as in India), there is the question of the labour market, and of the wider macro-economic factors impacting on the very nature of work itself. Arguably, these factors are given insufficient attention in the GMR 2012, and it is perhaps no accident that the term 'demand-led' does not appear in the Report. An outstanding policy research question must be what the pursuit of foundation or technical & vocational skills development can secure for both poorer and richer countries when there is a very fragile labour market demand for young people even when they have more or less full basic education, as in Greece, Italy and Spain.

### **Reference**

King, K. 2012b. The Geopolitics and Meanings of India's Massive Skills Development Ambitions., *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32, 665-673.

**Transforming TVET. The  
Main Working Document  
for Shanghai & The World  
TVET Report (WTR)  
(UNESCO, 2012, 2013)**

## It is Time to Transform TVET

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**Keywords:** learning; work; TVET transformation; policy process.

**Summary:** This paper explores the key shifts in TVET focus that the Third International Congress on TVET outcomes document, the "Shanghai Consensus", is suggesting. Four key dimensions for TVET transformation are considered - strategic, people, learning, and policy process.

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In May 2012, UNESCO organized the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Shanghai, China. The Main Outcomes Document of the Congress was entitled *The Shanghai Consensus: Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Building Skills for Work and Life*.

The real importance of Shanghai Consensus was to have reached an agreement regarding key challenges facing TVET and the main directions and priorities for TVET policies transformation which emphasizes the necessity of rethinking TVET learning for broader human development needs, and not just to respond to the demand for immediate skills.

Drawing on the key themes of the forthcoming (May 2013) UNESCO report on international trends and issues in TVET, the strategy of 'transformation' presented in the Congress proposes shifts in TVET focus on four key dimensions, - *strategic, people, learning and policy process*. This covers a vast terrain, but is centred on the challenge of making TVET available to all.

The **Strategic focus**, in particular, goes beyond expanding the present formal TVET in secondary schools and colleges in order to encompass a wider range of settings including non-formal and informal learning for the world of work. However, the proposed conceptualization of work goes beyond the traditional perspective of jobs and wage-employment to cover, on an equal and equitable basis, all forms of work and productive activities.

TVET transformation also implies a diversity of target populations. While it points to the importance of making TVET available to unreached or excluded populations such as urban and rural youth, its emphasis is on a wider **people focus** where **TVET for all** is also achieved through expanding to new communities of learners including virtual communities and to new occupations such as those related to sustainable development and green societies. Once the extent of existing TVET learning is understood. TVET can prospectively become more transformative towards TVET for all.

Transformation also has a major **lifelong learning focus**. It shifts the focus from the acknowledged importance of initial formal TVET learning to the recognition that most learning is produced while working and that successful learning to learn will need to be implemented throughout life. It also puts an emphasis on the fact that the formation of skills

is a life-cycle process that exhibits self-productivity and dynamic complementarity. This points both to the importance for TVET of foundation skills and to learning to learn skills. It is also in the success or failure of the attempts to make work-based learning visible, for example through recognition and validation of prior learning, that the real measure of TVET for all will lie.

Finally, from a broad policy perspective, TVET transformation makes the point that its ultimate goal is to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development and that whatever the lessons learned in reviewing international developments, there is no exclusive toolkit that can be used in all cases. Transforming TVET and addressing the lifelong learning needs for all do not have readymade policy solutions. This suggests a **policy process focus** where TVET policies should be examined and developed going beyond the traditional dichotomy between economic and equity lenses. A third transformative lens is required in order to support deeper and stronger linkages between different policy areas such as youth policies, rural development, industry development, poverty reduction, etc.

The forthcoming UNESCO report on TVET and the Shanghai Consensus both note that successful implementation of TVET policy transformation requires that approaches to reform are development-oriented and context-relevant and drive towards policy learning. In this context, policy learning works through a broad national partnership, often over a long period, to include effective learning from national and international experiences and to push TVET policy development away from the narrowness of policy borrowing and lending.

In conclusion, it is worth repeating that the Third International Congress on TVET produced a policy consensus and the beginnings of a strategy that serves as a foundation for the 'what next': implementation at national level– with its necessary priorities, institutions and finance.

## References

*The Shanghai Consensus: Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Building Skills for Work and Life.*

<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/concensus-en.pdf>

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## The UNESCO World TVET Report

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**Keywords:** skills; human development; work; UNESCO

**Summary:** The UNESCO World TVET Report offers a radical reimagining of the broader possibilities and purposes of TVET that, at the same time, is deeply rooted in UNESCO's tradition of valuing the wider human purposes of learning.

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Amidst the current wave of international reports on skills, the most striking aspect of the Shanghai preview of the UNESCO WTR is the emphasis on a human development perspective on skills that stands in clear contrast to the economic rationale of most of the reports.

It must be acknowledged that the skills GMR does attempt to marry the economic and a human rights perspective. Like the GMR, the WTR has a strong emphasis on equity, and here the influence of Tomasevski's work as UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education is very apparent (see my piece in NORRAG NEWS 46 for more on this).

However, the WTR goes further by explicitly looking backwards to a longstanding UNESCO tradition of thinking about learning, best represented in the Delors and Faure Reports, and about broad human development. At the same time, it is also influenced by the human development and capability approach and by more radical notions of work. Whilst these threads are also important to the thinking of other UN specialised agencies such as UNDP (human development) and ILO (work), the WTR is unique in its combination of such positions.

The WTR is an early example of attempts to draw on the capabilities approach in skills development (see IJED 32/5 and Norrag News 46 for early examples of this work) and it is likely to generate further interest in this approach. This offers the possibility of focusing skills systems more on the expressed needs and goals of learners and communities.

It is also quite radical in its approach to work and jobs, in an implicit but highly critical response to the employability orthodoxy. The WTR continues recent arguments (Standing 2011; McGrath 2012) that work and jobs are not the same thing: "Work must be rescued from jobs and labour. All forms of work should be treated with equal respect ..." (Standing 2011: 160). It is sympathetic to our arguments that economists' understanding of work are too narrowly focused on what counts in national statistics and ignores much work that is reproductive of society. Thus, it is standing against a dominant position that is both economic and highly gendered.

Of course, economic perspectives and priorities remain of great importance, and the WTR reiterates this. Nonetheless, the three lenses (economic, equity and transformative) at the centre of the Shanghai summary of the WTR point to an attempt to transform the skills debate and to push it away from the narrowness of employability, productivity and

competitiveness. It is in the success or failure of this attempt that the real measure of the Report's significance will lie.

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## Reconceptualising TVET and Identifying Key Points in the Policy Debate

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**Keywords:** TVET; diverse contexts; distinctive purposes; comprehensive policy mix; future challenges

**Summary:** UNESCO's forthcoming TVET report covers three interlinked sets of innovative arguments, but also casts light on a series of current and future policy challenges

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While it is a long march from the preparation of the report for UNESCO's world TVET Congress in Shanghai in 2012 to its final publication anticipated in 2013, the report attempts to open up new ground in TVET analysis and policy.

The report links at least three main themes and arguments, all innovative in the context. The first is to understand TVET learning as taking place in a wide range of contexts, in which the relationship between working activity and learning activity is changing. The second is to insist, as the report does through a metaphor of lenses, that TVET has distinctive but linked purposes – economic, social and innovative. TVET policy debates have historically attended mainly to economic and equity concerns and these have their limits. Adding the transformative or innovative lens helps to formulate a more coherent analytical tool to bring into focus the variety of TVET policy options.

The third main argument of the report is to avoid the temptation of finding an attractive 'single solution' in terms of a policy orientation, in favour of a more complex but comprehensive mix of policies that can combine to create successful outcomes in the longer term. In this respect the report uses international evidence and cases from a wide range of countries in the different global regions to provide an up-to-the minute analysis of current trends and approaches to about ten key policy areas. These include modernising governance, a shift towards more demand-led systems, identifying the social goals and measures for making systems more inclusive, empowering learners and improving the

management of TVET schools and training centres, and improving policies and provision for continuing training as well as linking up better with training in the informal economy. The education and professionalism of teachers and trainers, the optimal use of ICT in TVET and the harnessing of finance and funding are followed through as important areas of activity that play a vital role in helping to modernise TVET provision.

These themes cast some clear light on current and future policy challenges. As most keen participants in TVET policy, practice and research will recognise, many of the questions that have dominated debate over the past decade or so will continue to require serious attention over the next decade. At the same time some new issues call for closer attention. These include:

- Revising the scope and concept of TVET;
- Addressing the lifelong and life-wide possibilities of TVET;
- Building TVET's responsiveness to new approaches to development;
- Engaging with informality of work and learning;
- Creating institutionally-neutral TVET systems;
- Revisiting public TVET policy;
- Enhancing the role of stakeholders; and
- Strengthening the TVET knowledge base.

UNESCO will be hoping that this report contributes to mapping out the new territory for TVET, and that it can help actors to identify and support solutions that work in their context.

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## The Transformation of TVET's Meanings and Constituencies

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The *World TVET Report* has taken seriously the UNESCO TVET Strategy (2009) that states 'UNESCO is uniquely placed to reconceptualise the changing domain of skills and TVET and to propose interpretations of these concepts' and that 'it will prepare a state-of-the-art publication on world trends and issues in TVET.' This reconceptualisation has gone beyond the dry debates about re-definitions of skill, and instead has engaged directly with how TVET should not just be an illustration of learning to do and of learning to know, but also of learning to be and to live. This is the major challenge for the wider TVET community.

Moving TVET out of a traditional concern only with school-to-work transitions and with the politics of youth unemployment has therefore been the ambition of the *World Report*. Hence its aim has been to re-theorise TVET so that it is not judged only by its success in preparing young people for paid work, or for higher technical education. Not for life skills or work skills but for life and for work. The idea that TVET could be about more than employability and productivity but could encompass the centrality of work itself, paid or

unpaid, in human well-being, and the realm of vocation, whether skilfully to care for children and the community or to minister to the elderly, is worth serious consideration. The idea too that there could be vocational capabilities as there are professional capabilities, cutting across many attitudes and values, is highly suggestive.

The three lenses proposed for rethinking TVET in the *World Report*, - transformative, equity, and economic – cover a vast terrain, but at their core is the challenge of TVET transformation. However, a central question in the remaking of the reach of TVET is not just with illustrating the pursuit of excellence in all the now acknowledged TVET constituencies, whether formal, non-formal or informal, but with whether TVET can claim new ground, in new vocations, and in new communities with potential for training. In other words, is the transformation within the recognised TVET communities or is its potential to go far beyond these? Are the drivers of TVET's transformation expanding the skill needs of established congregations to meet new demands, for example from information technology or from more sustainably green economies? Or are these and other global trends creating many quite new vocations and new TVET populations?

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## Quality Teaching and Learning in TVET

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**Keywords:** knowledge-based practice; innovation; formal teaching

**Summary:** Formal teaching and learning are increasingly important in TVET systems that prepare young people for worlds of work where generalisable innovation is the key to survival in both formal and informal sectors of an economy.

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The notion of quality teaching and learning in TVET is almost a contradiction in terms. Quality learning, yes, but few would think that that 'teaching' is the appropriate term to describe quality in TVET where terms such as trainer, instructor, facilitator, coach, assessor, moderator and even the term 'lecturer' are more commonly used. One encounters a 'teacher' in a school and not in TVET where the true hall mark of quality is taken to be proximity to the workplace and the ideal TVET instructor is one with an impressive record of actual workplace experience.

So why put forward an argument that quality teaching is an essential ingredient of TVET? An important rationale is that the so-called knowledge society has a seemingly insatiable demand for innovation in design, production and services. Generalisable innovation relies on conceptual knowledge and so each occupation now needs to build a knowledge base that is



not only practical but also conceptual. Even though the tendency has been to reduce all types of knowledge to 'skill sets' and to talk about the need for young people to develop higher-order *skills* of reasoning, conceptual problem-solving and communication, universal trends towards higher education indicate that *knowledge-based practices* are a more appropriate way of describing the worlds of work towards which these young people aspire.

What form knowledge takes is of course the crucial issue as there is simply no easy fit between formal systematic, scientific knowledge and practical activity. TVET experts tend to argue that the best way to teach knowledge is to do so in a context of practical problem-solving. However, for students to decide whether knowledge is relevant in a particular context, they need to be able to climb up and down what can be called 'ladders of conceptuality' to recognise what is most appropriate for the purpose at hand. Solving problems through systematic and disciplined 'virtual' reasoning that employs concepts and principles in flexible ways may well be the most practical thing they can learn.

Recognition of knowledge differentiation means that TVET teachers cannot rely only on notions of 'underpinning' knowledge or 'embedded' knowledge or 'skills'. Decentering the role of the teacher, which has become so popular in progressivist pedagogies, may provide us with a semblance of democratic, learner-centred, experientially-driven, outcomes-based pedagogies but such a positioning of the teacher usually evades the knowledge question. The degree to which TVET attains its technical and vocational purposes is determined, to a significant extent, by the degree to which it attains its educational purpose. Placing young people on a road to higher-order innovation and excellence requires knowledge-based teaching and not only workplace experience. This is why formal teaching and learning are important in TVET.

#### **Follow-up Resources:**

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## Transforming TVET and Building Skills for Work & Life: A View from Below

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**Keywords:** TVET; Shanghai World TVET Congress 2012

**Summary:** This short piece provides comment on the main working document presented at the Third International Congress on TVET, held in Shanghai 13-16<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

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This short piece provides comment on the main working document, “Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Building Skills for Work and Life” (UNESCO, 2012), presented at the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, held in Shanghai 13-16<sup>th</sup> May 2012. The congress provided an important space for TVET to be placed on the international agenda. Attended by more than 500 participants internationally, it has potential to set the agenda for the forthcoming decade.

### Overall Comment

The document represents a refreshing perspective on the nature and current location of TVET internationally. As broad-based policy analysis, designed to understand current imperatives to which TVET is placed and its crucial importance to international, regional and national development, the interrogation of key policy development areas is clearly relevant and timely, but likely to be less useful for individual countries if not supported by a co-ordinated implementation and monitoring and evaluation framework. Importantly, the document has been able to capture key themes relevant to the current debate and identify critical bottlenecks to successful implementation of effective TVET systems internationally. The difficulty of the task undertaken cannot, therefore, be underestimated. These comments are made within this perspective.

In its current form, the report is remarkable for its originality and ‘out of the box’ thinking about both transforming TVET and building skills for work and life, and represents an important contribution to current debates globally. In its current form, it should be able to provide considerable guidance to researchers and policymakers about the current nature, form and context of TVET and is likely to serve as a valuable resource document to craft national policy on the basis of a co-ordinated internationally relevant and appropriate TVET strategy and place on the agenda the importance of TVET to national development, understood more widely as more than simply driven by economic imperatives.

### Three considerations

#### *The Transformative Lens*

The use of various ‘lenses’ is a particularly powerful methodological device in thinking about TVET reform internationally and is a refreshing innovation. It allows analysis of national TVET

systems not done before. The notion allows much room for advancing and giving meaning to the human development dimension within a perspective of lifelong learning to which successful TVET systems are associated.

Of course, there is an ever present danger of the 'economic lens' dominating the space. This is perhaps done by placing the economic as primary (positioned as it is first in the structure), at the expense of social (referred to as equity) and transformative notions. Perhaps the primacy of the economic lens is being unconsciously advanced.

In this regard the reference to the 'transformative lens' is particularly powerful, but might well need some clarity as regards both form and content for it to be relevant and implemented. In this respect, the report has great potential in being able to chart the way forward for the sector. The document can, therefore be utilised as a powerful instrument for charting a course for TVET in the period demarcated. It is anticipated that if the document is to respond to both developed and developing contexts, the powerful notion of policy transfer (rather than the notion of policy borrowing) represents a key means by which the national context can be transformed and the importance of context can be made relevant. The document's value in terms of the importance of contextual determinants is, therefore, particularly useful. Clearly this would enable a multitude of regional nuances to be legitimated and very different forms of TVET to be legitimated.

#### *Funding a Demand-Driven System*

The inclusion of external funding (via ODA) to complement other forms of funding is an important suggestion. However, it needs to be pointed out that ODA should not be the only mechanism for innovation in a developing context. There should be a perspective that nudges states to take active responsibility for TVET, as they would for other forms. As currently elaborated, this might have the unforeseen result of relegating TVET to the bottom of government agendas in developing countries. The need for governments to lead the way in terms of funding represents an effective and essential component of the national development context and should not be underestimated.

The relationship between demand-driven provisioning and funding has long been considered to be inexorably linked. The experience of countries expecting their TVET systems to be responsive to industry in the context of a robust formal economy might well have led to the perception that funding of TVET needs to be left to the market, which, by implication will ensure its responsiveness. The reality has been far from this. It has resulted in an abrogation of responsibility by governments and thus the neglect of TVET in developing contexts. While this document deliberately nudges cognisance of contextual factors (a long awaited development), there is still a need to delink funding from economic purposes to which TVET is expected to be responsive. There might be a real case for a discussion that dispels the link between notions of demand-driven provisioning and TVET funding.

While it is important that there is the move towards demand-driven TVET, as opposed to supply-led TVET forms which have dominated the discourse, the debate has also by implication inserted the primacy of the formal, as opposed to a 'lifelong learning' perspective. While it is to be expected that the formal economy dominates the discourse, is it not perhaps more judicious to expand this notion to legitimise other 'less formal economies', especially in a context of 'jobless' growth?

*Implementation and Evaluation/Review*

The document is strong on re-visioning TVET for the next period, but would need to examine some critical areas that could be used as a means by which the impact of this document could be assessed and the sector 'revised'. Perhaps the authors might explore the terms of a set of recommendations which provide the means by which member states could be nudged to strengthen their TVET data capacity, and which might assist in sharpening the structure for the next TVET congress. Perhaps this might well be premature given that this is unlikely to be necessary in the next decade. It would, of course, not be untoward to suggest a mid-term review of developments which attempt to examine the commitment of participants, and progress to this congress.

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# **Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives (OECD, 2012)**

## Transforming Education into Better Jobs and Better Lives

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**Keywords:** OECD; Skills

**Summary:** More education does not automatically translate into better economic and social outcomes. Countries need to ensure that they are building the right skills in the first place, making better use of their talent pool, and that skills are used at work effectively. Governments should not only be responding to the demand for skills, but should also have an active role in shaping this demand.

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Everywhere skills transform lives and drive economies; and without the right skills, people are kept on the margins of society, technological progress does not translate into economic growth, and countries can't compete in today's economies. But the toxic co-existence of unemployed graduates on the street, while employers tell us that they cannot find the people with the skills they need, shows that more education does not automatically translate into better economic and social outcomes.

It all starts with building the right skills. Anticipating the evolution of labour-demand is the essential starting point for that. We then need to improve the quality of learning outcomes, by putting the premium on skills-oriented learning throughout life instead of qualifications-focused education upfront. That's about fostering demand-sensitive and relevant learning. Skills development is far more effective if the world of learning and the world of work are linked. Compared to purely government-designed curricula taught exclusively in schools, learning in the workplace allows young people to develop "hard" skills on modern equipment, and "soft" skills, such as teamwork, communication and negotiation, through real-world experience. Hands-on workplace training can also help to motivate disengaged youth to stay in or re-engage with education and smoothen the transition to work. The social partners can make a big contribution to developing curricula that include broader, transferable skills and to ensure that good-quality training is available to all. Preliminary data from OECD's new Adult Skills Survey (PIAAC) provide powerful evidence on that. You learn something when you are in education between the ages of 16 and 25, but the learning curve is even steeper if individuals combine education with work. All this is everybody's business and we need to deal with the tough question of who should pay for what, when and how, particularly for learning beyond school. Employers can do a lot more to create a climate that supports learning, and invest in learning. Some individuals can shoulder more of the financial burden. And governments can do a lot to design rigorous standards, provide financial incentives and create a safety net so that all people have access to high quality learning.

But even the best skills simply evaporate if they aren't maintained and upgraded to meet the changing needs of societies. There are people who are highly skilled who have decided not to work. Why? They may be too busy caring for children or elderly parents; they may have health problems; or they may have calculated that it just doesn't pay to work. The answer is that we need to make better use of our talent pool.

And equally important, we need to ensure that skills are used at work effectively. OECD data show that this is mirrored in the earnings prospects of people and therefore productivity. If you have great skills and have a demanding job, you're fine, and you continue to improve your earnings. If you don't yet have the skills but your job is demanding, you see progress too. But if your employer does not use your skills, your life earnings tend to deteriorate.

So, again, what can we do about this? Quality career guidance is essential: people who have the latest labour-market information can help steer individuals to the education or training that would best prepare them for their prospective careers. Helping young people to gain a foothold in the labour market is fundamental too. Vocational training is a very effective way to achieve this. Coherent and easy-to-understand qualifications are important to help employers identify potential employees who are suitable for the jobs they offer. And reducing the costs of moving within a country can help employees to find the jobs that match their skills and help employers to find the skills that match their jobs.

There may be young people just starting out, who are well educated but have trouble finding jobs that put their education and training to good use. Here we can shape the demand for skills. Often we think this is all a zero-sum game, that is the demand for skills is as it is and we just need to educate people to meet existing demand. That is a big mistake. There is much that governments and employers can do to promote knowledge-intensive industries and jobs that require high-skilled workers. Adding these kinds of high value-added jobs to a labour market helps to get more people working—and for better pay.

Last but not least, education that fosters entrepreneurship can help create jobs. Indeed, education is where entrepreneurship is often born.

In short, there is a lot more that we can do to develop the right skills and turn them into better jobs and better lives.

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## Measuring Skills for the Knowledge Economy

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**Keywords:** skills; knowledge workers; Asia-Pacific

**Summary:** This brief note discusses measuring the demand of skills for the knowledge economy by examining the shares of high-medium-and low skilled occupations in total employment.

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### Introduction

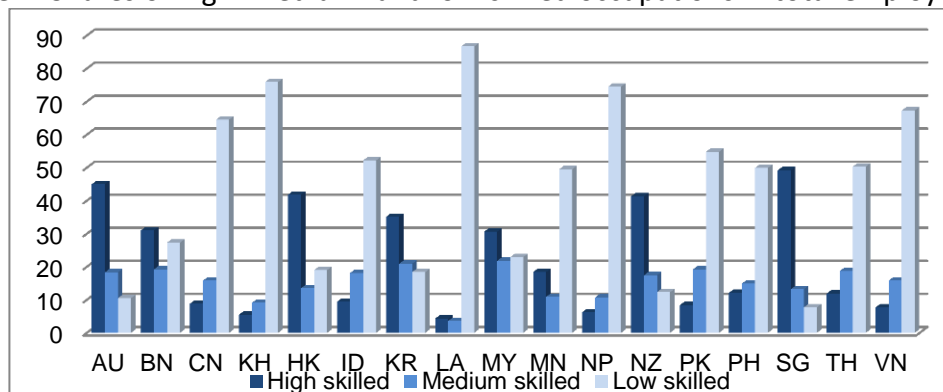
Measuring skills needs for the knowledge-based economy encounters different obstacles from the scarcity of data to the lack of standardised direct measures. However proxies such as the demand of skills by occupation provide interesting results that allow for measuring the transition to the knowledge economy in countries. For this briefing note we take the example of Asia-Pacific countries.

### Skills demand by occupation

Examining occupational structures by skills levels shows that, generally, the more developed the country is, the more highly skilled occupations are available, compared to developing countries which seem to rely on lower skilled occupations. Higher skilled occupations such as professionals, technicians, associate professionals and clerks are significantly advanced in the developed countries of Australia, Hong Kong, China, New Zealand and Singapore, while other countries such as Cambodia, Pakistan and Viet Nam are struggling to supply these types of skills (see Figure 1 below on latest available data). Figure 1 labels craft/related trades, and plant/machine operators and assemblers as “medium-skilled”. In this category, operators and assemblers are generally in the manufacturing sector and industrialised countries have more of these jobs. But the craft and trades category consists of diverse skill level workers, and a high share is found not only in Australia but in low-skilled countries as well, such as Pakistan and Viet Nam. Figure 1 also shows the share of low-skilled agricultural and elementary occupations. As classification into occupations is not always compatible across countries, the shares are given as the sum of the two occupations. Several countries in the region are in a state of low-skill equilibrium. There is a high share of low-skilled workers in Cambodia, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam. These countries are faced with skills development demands for upskilling.



Figure 1. Shares of high- medium- and low-skilled occupations in total employment



Note: Australia (AU); Brunei Darussalam (BN); China (CH); Cambodia (KH); Hong Kong, China (HK); Indonesia (ID); Japan (JP); Korea (KR); Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LA); Malaysia (MY); Mongolia (MN); Nepal (NP); New Zealand (NZ); Pakistan (PK); Philippines (PH); Singapore (SG); Thailand (TH); and Viet Nam (VN).

Data for Brunei Darussalam and Nepal is for 2001; China for 2005; Lao People’s Democratic Republic for 1995; Malaysia for 2009; and Viet Nam for 2004. For ISCO 88: higher skilled (professionals, technicians and associate professionals, clerks); medium skilled (craft and related trade workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers); low skilled (agriculture and elementary occupations).

Source: Based on ILO (2011), Key Indicators of the Labour Markets (KILM), 7<sup>th</sup> edition, ILO, Geneva.

Occupational structures show the level of skills a country has. The demand for skills training is derived from the need to align skills supply with demand. The change in shares of occupation shows the direction and the magnitude of the shifts in skills demand. For example, Nepal and Viet Nam have growing demands for craft/trade and production workers. In Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam and Nepal demand for production workers has increased. On the other hand, demands for agricultural workers and elementary occupations have declined. This shift in demand means that these countries need to train unskilled workers from rural areas to become production workers. In the more industrialised parts of Asia, demands for the medium-skilled occupations (craft/trades and operator/assembler workers) have declined fast in countries including: Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. In these countries, the demands for more highly skilled jobs such as professionals and associate professionals have increased instead. Countries in which the shares of professional and technician / associate professional workers have risen include the Hong Kong Region, China, S. Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, in varying degrees. However, decline in production jobs is not entirely matched by growth of higher skilled jobs. In all countries, the shares of elementary occupations have increased. Mongolia and the Philippines have experienced a reduction of craft / trades and production jobs and an increase of elementary occupations. These countries are faced with upskilling demands for a wide range of their unskilled workforce.

Among the medium skilled occupations of service and sales workers, the patterns are very diverse. Some countries experienced growth in these occupations while in other countries the shares have diminished, which reflects diverse economic conditions of the countries.

*This note draws on the OECD report on ‘Skills development pathways in Asia’ (Martinez-Fernandez, C. and K. Choi, 2012); report contributing to the OECD Skills Strategy studies.*

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## The Skills discourse of *Better Skills*

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The OECD Skills Strategy moves away 'from traditional proxies of skills, such as years of formal education and training or qualifications/diplomas attained, to a much broader perspective that includes the skills people acquire, use and maintain – and also lose – over a whole lifetime' (p.12). The concepts of 'skill' and 'competence', which the OECD report uses interchangeably, 'are defined as the bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learned and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning' (p.12). 'Skills' is used by the OECD refer to a wide range of skills acquired 'from early childhood education through formal schooling to formal and informal learning throughout a lifetime' (p.13); this includes both 'foundation skills' (problem solving, literacy, numeracy, reading), and 'higher-order skills ("21st-Century Skills"), such as the "4 C's" of Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration' (p.27). It also covers 'learning-to-learn' skills (p.26), 'vocational' skills (p.27) and 'skills for entrepreneurship' (p.99).

Given that the concept of skills is very broad in the OECD report, the report is not a report specifically about technical and vocational skills, though these types of skills are obviously covered as part of the wider skills domain.

A critical issue must be whether the measurement of high and low skills through the Survey of Adult Skills and the use of 'high-skilled' and 'low-skilled' throughout the report are concerned exclusively with the foundation skills that are defined here in a footnote (footnote 2. P.10) [1]. Unusually, foundation skills include an element of 'problem-solving'. It is also intriguing to note that the OECD's influential series of 17 country policy reviews of Vocational Education and Training (VET), *Learning for Jobs*, are nowhere drawn upon in the main text of the Skills Strategy, and only referred to in a box of suggestions for 'selected further reading and policy examples' (OECD, 2012: 55). Yet three of the country studies refer to Asia: Australia, China and the Republic of Korea.

[1] 'Foundation skills are defined as problem solving in technology-rich environments (the ability to use technology to solve problems and accomplish complex tasks); literacy (the ability to understand and use information from written texts in a variety of contexts to achieve goals and further develop knowledge); numeracy (the ability to use, apply, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas); and reading components (including word recognition, decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge and fluency).' (p.10 footnote 2.)

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## **Debunking the Disability Myth with Skills: Tapping a Workforce Employers Urgently Need in Bangladesh**

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**Keywords:** Bangladesh; People with Disabilities (PWDs); Disability Myth; social exclusion; Skills Development; this-ability; Industry-Demand driven; Public-Private Partnership; Employable skills; Skills mismatch

**Summary:** This piece contrasts the severe social realities affecting People with Disabilities (PWDs) worldwide and within Bangladesh, against their superior work performance when employed. It considers PWDs' prospective value proposition to Bangladesh's employers and explores practical, immediate ways to begin engaging PWDs in the workforce.

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The OECD's *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives* 2012 Report reveals that skills "have become the global currency of the 21st century" and that the most promising solution to the present global economic challenges is "investing effectively in skills throughout a lifetime: from early childhood, through compulsory education, and during the working life." Yet such critical linkages between employable skills and better jobs raise an unsettling question. How

do people secure a better life if from childhood their families, communities and future prospective employers deem them incapable of skill?

Over 1 billion people with disabilities, or roughly 15% of our world's population (WHO/World Bank, 2011), face such stigma, precluding them from ever undertaking skills development. According to the NGO ADD International, PWDs live "on the very outskirts of life.....face an almost overwhelming lack of access to an education, health care, employment, political participation, social and family life. This makes [them] the poorest, most excluded and neglected people in the developing world today." More than 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school (UNESCO) while only 1% of women with disabilities are literate (UNDP). The UN estimates that 80 - 90% of PWDs in developing countries do not have a job.

In Bangladesh, there are an estimated 15 million PWDs. Its largely unskilled 57 million workforce, adds 2 million new youth every year, while 2.6 million people remain chronically unemployed (BBS). A staggering 81% (46m) of this total labor force works in the informal rural economy (Swisscontact), beyond the purview of official or formal economic activity. While such figures do not account for disabled workforce statistics, they underlie severe economic, demographic and social barriers with devastating consequences to PWDs. People systemically barred from economic opportunity, due essentially to a pervasive disability myth.

Contrary to widely-held stereotypes, the majority of problems PWDs experience daily have absolutely nothing to do with their physical or mental conditions but everything to do with the debilitating attitudes and negligent social environments surrounding them. In this disturbing instance of nurture over nature, it is incalculable how disabled ways of thinking by the 'able', substantially *disable* people. People are therefore not disabled as much as ***prevented from being able*** to work, or rather dis-abled from living.

The truth behind the disability myth is radically different. Study after study shows dis-abled people outperforming their 'able' counterparts when given an equitable opportunity. Jorge Perez of Manpower, one of the largest global job placement-service firms, observed that dis-abled people frequently have unusually high productivity.

A recent Economist article featured a Danish firm that places autistic people in high-tech jobs, because they can focus on repetitive tasks that might be boring to other workers. Britain's electronic-espionage centre, GCHQ, eagerly recruits people with autism & Asperger's syndrome, due to their ability to spot patterns as code-crackers. The general employer consensus worldwide is that dis-abled people have comparatively better professional attitudes and work ethics; and consistently exhibit greater dedication and loyalty to their employers.

Another firm analyzing companies in the S&P 500 index has devised a "Return on Disability" Index, which tracks the shares of the 100 firms that deal best with dis-abled people. Over the past five years it has outperformed the broader stockmarket, with Bloomberg now including this on its financial-information terminals. If dis-abled people in fact *ably* outperform their colleagues in regular and high-tech jobs, then who exactly are the more disabled here?

With the world realizing that skills development is a sine qua non for employment generation, job creation and sustainable human development, employable skills can become

the very equalizer of opportunity for all people. To start off, the present NGO-Government partnerships for dis-abled people can immediately engage Industry and SME employers in tri-partite Public-Private Partnerships, to match employer job skill demands with available dis-abled people skill sets. Although overall national unemployment runs high, the bitter irony is that critical sectors perpetually face acute skilled workforce shortages.

At present, Garment factories are short a staggering 900,000 sewing operators with an annual demand for 200,000 new workers. Shipbuilders require 100,000 technicians within the next year, including 40,000 welders; and two new footwear factories in Chittagong alone need 60,000 fresh workers in the next two years. In lieu of such massive workforces remaining untrained, NGOs working with dis-abled people can begin capitalizing on this prevailing skills mismatch, by approaching Industry Associations, Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) and the National Skills Development Council (NSDC).

Vitally important to begin is crafting a more genuine message to prospective employers. The existing misnomer 'disabled' should be carefully examined, since employers hire people who possess ability rather than those who lack it, which the term automatically though inaccurately insinuates. Furthermore, the demeaning charity-case plea often made on behalf of dis-abled people should be recalibrated to a more accurate skilled, high-productivity proposition. Like any other workers, the dis-abled workers must demonstrate the specific value-added skills they can perform, which is the critical determinant for employment. Thus altering the employer's misconstrued perception from disability to this-ability.

Instead of trying to convince a slew of companies or sectors to undertake this, it is more practical to find that one committed employer with whom to develop a small-scale pilot and build a successful model for replication. With regard to costs, rarely do requisite facilities have to be high-tech, as basic support and significant improvements are often achieved with a little creativity and nominal resources.

The lost value and costs of not employing dis-abled people are far more substantial. UN studies have shown that the exclusion of PWDs from the labour market alone causes countries to lose 1-7% of GDP. In Bangladesh the cost of disability due to forgone income from a lack of schooling and employment, both of dis-abled people and their caregivers, is estimated at US\$ 1.2 billion annually, or 1.7% of GDP (ADD International).

Let there be no illusions that these facts will convince companies to begin employing dis-abled people, since that is not the intent. Only an exceptional employer need assess a few this-abled employees for herself to realize their performance value to her company. She will unknowingly become the very success-story and leader which, as human nature would have it, the rest inevitably follow. For the antidote to such grave social ills will always be one inspired example.

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## From Learning for Jobs to Skills beyond School

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**Keywords:** OECD; Learning for Jobs; Skills beyond School

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In two major cycles of country reviews the OECD has examined vocational education and training programmes and policies throughout the world. The Learning for Jobs cycle yielded 17 published country reviews in 2007-10, culminating in the Learning for Jobs publication in 2010. Currently under the successor Skills beyond School exercise a further 18 country studies are being pursued - looking at the rapidly developing programmes at postsecondary level. While the two cycles have mainly covered OECD countries, they have also included other major countries such as China and Egypt, and covered every inhabited continent. Although the two cycles are distinct, the issues emerging have had much in common - the need to engage employers in provision, the importance of workplace training, how best to determine the mix of provision, and the balance of pedagogical skills with practical experience in the trainer workforce. At postsecondary level, somewhat different issues are particularly salient, including transitions between programmes and institutions and challenges of funding and finance.

Looking ahead, a dozen or more further country studies in the Skills beyond School country studies are in the pipeline, culminating in the publication of a synthesis report in 2014. The country reviews will continue in the future, while further analysis may focus on work-based learning, among other issues.

22 published country studies and other material are available at:  
[www.oecd.org/education/vet](http://www.oecd.org/education/vet)

**World Development  
Report (WDR) 2013: Jobs  
(World Bank, 2012)**

## Skills or Jobs: Which comes First?

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**Keywords:** Skills or jobs; low-wage; low-skills trap; national skills strategy; national jobs strategy

**Summary:** The *2013 World Development Report* on jobs has a small but significant discussion on Jobs or Skills: which comes first? The report is critical of a skills-first approach used on a major scale in Turkey and India. But the World Bank's criticisms do not address the main issue - how to promote high-quality skills formation in developing countries when most enterprises only want to pay low wages, use low-level skills and accept that this means high labour turnover.

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The *2013 World Development Report* is about jobs - now seen belatedly by the World Bank as more than a mere by-product of economic growth. What focus does the report have on skills? The short answer is not much. The main discussion is in a special section of five pages entitled Skills or Jobs - which comes first? Skills are broadly defined as cognitive or thinking abilities, social skills which are seen as based on personality traits and technical skills. The latter are defined narrowly as skills to perform specific tasks. The importance of the first two sets of skills to employment are highlighted.

The mismatch between available skills and what employers want is claimed to be greater now than in the recent past, based on evidence from the World Bank's Enterprise surveys. The report notes that in countries at all development levels, more employers now say the lack of skills is an obstacle to growing their business than previously. This applies especially to the fast-growing, export-focused enterprises. So what is the answer?

First, the report has a lot to say about the limitations of current approaches. Criticism is levelled at the national skills building strategies of Turkey and India which aim for huge increases in workforce skills - in Turkey's case tenfold since 2007. India has a target of skills training for 500 million people by 2022.

The World Bank report argues that supplying more skills may not solve the problem. Other important factors may be to do with the wage levels employers are willing to pay. School leavers' expectations about wage rates may be distorted by the high wages offered by government jobs, as in many countries in the Middle East. Workers also may not be able to take up available jobs because they do not have low-cost housing or the transport to get to work.

Still more damaging to the skills formation process is an all too-common situation in many economies. This refers to the situation in which employers and a range of other stakeholders are caught in a cycle of low productivity and low skills. Reference is made to this major structural problem at the end of the discussion on skills: such low-skills traps arise when the demand for higher paid skills is too low to encourage people to invest in their acquisition.



However, the report offers a glib and contradictory response to this problem: more relevant schooling and skills building at secondary, technical and higher levels are needed as a prerequisite for the creation of 'good jobs for development'. The argument comes back to a skills-led strategy but this has been already noted as difficult for countries to do well.

Traditional skills building strategies may have placed too great a reliance on formal TVET providers and not enough on learning skills in workplaces. However, if employers are locked into a low-wage, low-skills trap, how do policy makers shift training to enterprises? How can government as funders of skills training provide the incentives for providers to deliver high-quality skills training when employers are not seeking it?

In the case of Pacific island countries, the way out of the low-wage, low skills trap may be for governments and donors to provide incentives to training providers to adopt a high quality, high-skills approach aimed at high-wage jobs in the region. This requires giving their trainees the skills needed to access employment opportunities through the skilled migration into their high-income neighbours: Australia and New Zealand.

One vehicle to do this is for Pacific governments to make better use of large infrastructure projects to transfer high-quality skills to domestic workers. Acquiring skills in international enterprises offers young people in the Pacific a solid pathway to internationally recognised skills and work in high-income labour markets.

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## Microsoft Citizenship Middle East & Africa

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**Keywords:** Employment; entrepreneurship; workforce skills; YouthSpark; Microsoft

**Summary:** Around the world, new skills and experiences are needed for new economies, but the approach to training young people for this new world is not keeping pace. Through the YouthSpark initiative, Microsoft aims to bridge the opportunity divide, providing the youths with the skills, education, experiences and connections to employment that are required in the job market. In particular, Microsoft Middle East and Africa is launching an innovative employability platform and a curriculum for small and medium entrepreneurs.

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### The challenge: Opportunity divide

- We have identified a complex issue that extends beyond technology access and cuts across economic, geographic and social boundaries. No longer just a digital divide, this issue is the "opportunity divide" for youth.

- Nearly 75 million young people were unemployed worldwide in 2011. This equates to an unemployment rate of 12.7%, which is more than double the rate for people over the age of 25.
- Less than 50% of youth worldwide have a secondary education.
- And for those youth who are working, a large number do not have safe conditions or proper pay: youth make up 25% of the working poor across the world.
- Around the world, new skills and experiences are needed for new economies, but the approach to educating and training young people for this new world isn't keeping pace. While some young people are prospering, those on the other side of the opportunity divide lack the skills, education, experiences and connections to employment that are required to survive and thrive.
- And the situation for young people around the world has only worsened with the global economic crisis, and many see fewer prospects and higher unemployment.
- Addressing these challenges is critical for the future of young people and the future of all countries and regions around the world.

### **Microsoft's response: YouthSpark**

Microsoft YouthSpark is a companywide initiative designed to create opportunities for hundreds of millions of youth around the world. Through partnerships with governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses, we aim to empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential by connecting them with greater opportunities for education, employment, and entrepreneurship. In short, we want to empower youth to change their world.

This marks a completely new focus for our philanthropy efforts. We have introduced new youth-focused initiatives and are committing the majority of our corporate cash giving to support nonprofit organizations that serve youth by providing them with enhanced technology and business training to help them pursue additional education, obtain employment or start a new business or social venture.

### **The employability portal**

The employability portal is an online platform to support workforce development across the Middle East and Africa for job research and professional skill enhancement.

**Personalized experience.** A full-inclusive experience which provides career planning resources for visitors to identify their career path and the training gap compared to the requirements. It offers extensive training options (languages, IT, entrepreneurship and soft skills) for different skills customized to specific target groups and jobs, directing visitors to online and physical locations where they can identify the jobs available, and helping them prepare their applications.

**A localized tool.** Implemented by local partners in each country, the portal will speak the users' own language, being available in English, French and Arabic.

**A partnership of best in class.** A platform that draws on best practice training content and approaches developed in partnership with *Silatech*, *Education For Employment*, *World Bank* and *Middle East Partnership Initiative*.

**MasrWorks.** Under *www.masrworks.com*, the employability portal was already successfully piloted in Egypt last year.

**Broad outreach.** The regional portal aspires to empower over 5 million youths across the Middle East and Africa.

### The Build Your Business curriculum

The Build Your Business (BYB) is a curriculum for micro and small entrepreneurs across the Middle East and Africa to help them promote **skills training** and **create new businesses**. BYB will help them leverage productivity and technology tools to grow their own company.

**A 360 degree training.** BYB will enable users to startup a venture thanks to a comprehensive preparation on market research, business planning, marketing, accounting, life skills and governance and ethical business practices.

**A blended learning experience.** The course includes facilitator-led classes as well as practical sessions at a personalized pace. BYB consists of DVD tutorials, video case studies, interactive practice exercises and educational games, business document templates, **Microsoft Digital Literacy Curricula** and lesson plans.

**A partnership of best practice.** BYB draws on best practice training content and approaches developed with the *International Youth Foundation*, a youth development charity; the *University of Stellenbosch Business School* in South Africa; *Enablis*, a Canadian-based not-for-profit organization; and *Manpower*, a workforce solutions and services provider.

**A localized tool.** Besides engaging local trainers, the BYB maximizes its potential at the local level by speaking users' own language. The curriculum is available in **English, French** and **Arabic**.

**Part of a bigger picture.** Upon the completion of BYB, people will get a certificate, and become eligible for more Microsoft initiatives, including hardware and/or IT training discounts, platforms such as **BizSpark** and **S2B**, donor-driven microfinance/industry grant programs, and access to online entrepreneurship network.

#### Links

YouthSpark - <http://www.microsoft.com/about/corporatecitizenship/en-us/youthspark/>

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## World Development Report 2013: Jobs. The Jobs-Skills Nexus

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**Keywords:** jobs; skills; skill mismatches

**Summary:** In the jobs-skills nexus, one could ask whether jobs come first or skills; the reality is that it is a continuous cycle and even those who are skilled would need re-training or up-skilling to remain in the labor market. Similarly, existence of good jobs will accelerate skills development

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The great concern in recent times to assure more jobs in both developed and developing economies has been accompanied by a pre-occupation with skills-jobs mismatches. The conventional wisdom is that investing in skills will lead to job creation and to higher productivity and labor income. Unemployment, which currently stands at about 200 m worldwide, is a serious development challenge with no simple solution. The problem of skill mismatches and skill shortages has exacerbated the situation. Usually, high unemployment and skill mismatches are attributed to shortcomings in education and training systems. The *World Development Report 2013* argues that, although the importance of skills cannot be overstated, the root cause of skill shortages or mismatches might not lie with the education and training system alone.

While that indeed rings true, it should not detract from the need for education and training systems to become a lot more responsive to be in step with the transformation of the economic landscape, particularly in developing Asia. Skill obstacles have become more acute now than in the first years of the 2000s and appear to be especially problematic for young and entrepreneurial firms, export-oriented and globally integrated firms and firms adopting technology more rapidly. These trends point to the need for more dynamic and adaptable systems of training and skills development.

In answering the question 'Skills or jobs – which come first?' the report argues that jobs need skills, pull skills and build skills. A strong case is made for the role of the private sector for on-the-job training, the development of soft skills and improved market signals on what sort of skills ought to be acquired by aspiring job seekers. On-the-job training is consistently found to go hand-in-hand with higher labor earnings and productivity increases, even more so in developing than in industrial countries. However, not many workers have access to on-the-job training.

Clearly more needs to be done both at the institutional and firm levels for skill development and equally importantly for skill up gradation or skill updating. With changing labor markets, workers need to re-invent themselves and update their competencies to be in line with current demand. In the United States, for example, about 30 per cent of jobs in construction were lost between 2007 and 2012, and employment in durable goods manufacturing is 15 per cent below pre-crisis levels. In contrast, employment in education and health services is estimated to have risen 20 per cent. These skills mismatches mean that unemployed people are taking much longer to find a new job, which in turn could drive up long-term

unemployment, according to the ILO. This could also lead to paradoxes of under-qualified and over-qualified workers. According to WDR 2013, up to one-third of the employed in countries as diverse as Brazil, Costa Rica, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania are either under- or over-qualified for the work they do.

Delivery of skills training thus needs to consider a combination of institutional and non-institutional (work place based) settings. Particularly important in the context of fast-paced transformation in emerging economies is the need to amplify provision of modular skills development and skills updating options for workers looking to make lateral moves to more dynamic sectors and industries. The need of the hour could well be to strengthen mid-career refresher courses, given the manifest demand for social skills and soft skills, and using skills development as a lever for possible career switching competencies.

The WDR 2013 finds that the jobs with the greatest development payoffs are those that make cities function better, connect the economy to global markets, protect the environment, foster trust and civic engagement, or reduce poverty. These can be found in both the formal and informal sectors. If jobs need to be transformational for development, education and training need to help lead that change by being more capable of anticipating emerging trends.

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## **Russian Perspective of the World Development Report: Jobs, Migrants and Human Capital**

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**Keywords:** jobs; migrants; the World Development Report; human capital

**Summary:** Nowadays Russia is experiencing all the labour challenges mentioned in the WDR in great detail. At the same time there are some peculiar traits in Russian social-economic development which are not common for other countries, in particular, migration issues. From the WDR point of view, measures taken in Russia might be considered as effective.

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The *World Development Report* (WDR) 2013 produced by the World Bank deals with development that happens through jobs (World Bank, 2012). It also reveals global challenges tightly linked to both labour and development (population ageing, migration flows growth, youth unemployment) as well as new traits (changing distribution of earnings in society, women transformational labour, diverse jobs agendas).

The dual function of work should be emphasized. On one hand, the level of productivity in a workforce affects a nation's living standard and level of economic development. On the

other hand, having a job is a real basis for individual self-improvement, self-determination and life satisfaction.

Undoubtedly, nowadays Russia is facing all the labour challenges and problems mentioned in the WDR. Some problems are being resolved via state policies related to the labour market and employment.

At the same time there are some peculiar traits in Russian social-economic development which are not common for other countries, - in particular, migration issues.

Russia, as is mentioned in the WDR (World Bank, 2012), is the second largest recipient of migrants (12.3 million) after the USA (42.8 million). But as shown in Table 1 below, foreign labour migration in Russia is characterized by a low-qualified labour force.

**Table 1. Redistribution of native workers and labour migrants in Russia in vocational education (%), 2011**

Level of vocational education	Native workers in Russia	Labour migrants in Russia
Tertiary	55%	16%
Secondary	24%	27%
Elementary	21%	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Huge numbers of labour migrants come from the Commonwealth of Independent States – Uzbekistan (41%), Tajikistan (21.5%), Ukraine (13.4%), and Kirgizstan (9.4%). The majority (86%) of these foreign immigrants to Russia are male. In fact, the majority of these migrants in Russia are also low-skilled (Statistics Russia, 2010).

Such a situation seriously contradicts many global trends mentioned in the WDR (p.234), that “skilled workers represent a growing share of international migration” (World Bank, 2012). However, there is one explanation. For the last two decades Russia has been involved in an overall **tertiary** vocational education revolution. In Russia in the 1980s there used to be only 40% graduates from tertiary vocational education institutions, at the end of 1990s this number rocketed and accounted for 75% (Statistics Russia, 2010). This seriously challenged the occupational-qualification structure of the Russian labour market. In 1980s USSR, there used to be one manager for every three workers; nowadays there is one worker for every three managers (The President’s address to the Federal Assembly 5/11/2008)! Thus, our country has done a lot to contribute to the labour force shortage which is trying to be resolved via foreign worker immigration nowadays. Such a situation might cause serious negative outcomes, such as increasing social tensions in Russian society and human capital degradation.

Nowadays, Russia is facing two challenges: a labour force shortage and human capital downshifting. There are, however, a number of recently adopted policy documents to overcome this, for example: the “Concept on state migration policy till 2025” 13.06.2012, and the “Strategy-2020: new growth model – new social policy” 14.03.2012. Thus, Russia is currently transforming its migration policy by human capital upgrading.

Reflecting on the perspective trends for global leadership, the WDR allows us to consider measures taken by the Russian government to be effective. However, in parallel with

upgrading Russian migration policy, the Russian government will have to take measures both on the development that happens through jobs as well as labour matching to contemporary human needs.

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**The World at Work: Jobs,  
Pay and Skills for 3.5  
Billion People (McKinsey  
Global Institute)**



## Need for a Global Education Revolution

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**Keywords:** Education; employment; labor demand and supply

**Summary:** The McKinsey Global Institute's report, *The World at Work: Jobs, Pay, and Skills for 3.5 Billion People*, provides a forward looking perspective on the potential future consequences of current models of education and job creation. The report concludes that nothing short of an "education revolution" will be required to help match supply and demand of labour across different levels of educational attainment.

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The McKinsey Global Institute's report, *The World at Work: Jobs, Pay, and Skills for 3.5 Billion People*, provides a forward looking perspective on the potential future consequences of current models of education and job creation. It identifies forces of demand and supply shaping the global labor force and causing mismatches between the skills that workers can offer and what employers need. The report looks forward one to two decades to point out that if these trends persist—and without a massive global effort to improve worker skills, they are likely to do so—significant imbalances between labor supply and demand are likely to appear. It concludes that nothing short of an "education revolution" will be required. In the report, educational attainment is used as a proxy for skills because education data are available across most nations, though the authors acknowledge that this is a rough measure—the quality of formal education varies across countries, and training through apprenticeship can be more important than formal education in many occupations.

These potential imbalances in labor demand and supply are estimated based on a "momentum" case, which uses current patterns in demographics, education and employment to project likely outcomes in the next two decades. The most significant imbalances that are likely to arise in the "momentum case" by 2020 are:

- A potential shortage of about 38 million to 40 million high-skill workers (those with a college education) in the advanced economies and China, despite a dramatic rise in educational attainment.
- A potential surplus of 90 million to 95 million workers, comprising 32 to 35 million more workers without college education than employers will need in advanced economies, and 58 million more low-skill workers (those without a high school education) in India and younger developing countries.
- A potential shortage of 45 million medium-skill workers (those with a high school education) in developing economies—India could have 13 million too few such workers and younger developing economies could have 31 million too few.

To avoid the worst consequences of labor mismatches, the model for secondary and tertiary education will need to be transformed in both advanced and developing economies.

Innovation in delivery is required to raise the productivity of the education sector and maximize scarce resources. Key areas that will need new solutions include:

**Raising secondary school capacity and attainment in developing countries:** In line with their successes in achieving near universal primary education, developing countries in South Asia and Africa must raise the number of students who enroll in secondary schools and improve secondary school graduation rates, while not compromising quality. To produce secondary school graduates with job-ready skills, schools could offer an optional vocational track that would also leave paths to higher education open.

**Aligning education with employment demand:** Employers will need not just more workers with college degrees, but graduates with training in specific specialties where employment demand is growing. Enrollment and graduation rates in science, math, and engineering must improve. Certification or associate degrees will become increasingly important in technical occupations, such as nursing aides, dental assistants, and medical technicians.

**Collaboration between hiring industries and training institutions:** As a related McKinsey & Company report *Education to Employment: designing a system that works* points out, employers, education providers, and youth live in parallel universes. For instance, most surveyed education providers believe new graduates are ready for jobs, but fewer than half of youth and employers agree. 39 percent of education providers believe students drop out because course study is too difficult, but only 9 percent of youth say this is the case (they are more apt to blame affordability). The three major stakeholders do not see the same thing, in large part, because they are not engaged with each other. Successful education-to-employment programs are those where education providers and employers actively step into one another's worlds. Employers help design curricula and offer their employees as faculty, for example, while education providers have students spend half their time on a job site and secure them hiring guarantees.

**A "new technology" of education:** By adopting innovative technologies, educational institutions can reach millions of students at low cost. With more remote delivery of content, the role of the classroom can be transformed from a place where lectures are delivered to one where teachers interact with students face-to-face to guide them individually. Traditional bricks-and-mortar educational institutions already are adopting digital delivery methods to supplement their core classroom models. Emerging models could be funded through a combination of corporate social responsibility grants, government grants, research grants, and at a later stage by private investors.

**For full report:**

[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/mgi/research/labor\\_markets/the\\_world\\_at\\_work](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/mgi/research/labor_markets/the_world_at_work)

## Is Global Migration Nation-Specific or Skills Specific?

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**Keywords:** TVET; labour and skills mobility; human capital development; skills recognition

**Summary:** The McKinsey Global Institute, in its World of Work report, fails to recognize the intrinsic worth of all forms of TVET as a major contributor to address skills shortages, preferring to focus on higher education and corporate training. This paper analyses the policy implications of this failure for skills acquisition, mobility and recognition, competitiveness and human capital development within, in particular, rapidly developing nations.

'Business as usual' is not an option. The McKinsey Global Institute World of Work report (June 2012) uses a plethora of statistics to suggest 'business as usual' will lead to an imbalance in skills availability, giving rise to what the report describes as 'adverse conditions' for millions of workers. The report contends that advanced economies may avoid a shortage of high skills workers if they double the rate of tertiary education, especially focusing on science, engineering and technology graduates. However, by 2020, developing nations could have as many as a billion workers with low skills – defined as lacking secondary education - with a potential global surplus of these workers of c95 million. The McKinsey report is confusing since it uses levels of education as a proxy for 'skills'. 'High skilled' refers to anybody with tertiary education, and 'low skilled' to those without secondary education in developing countries OR with no post-secondary education in developed countries. Yet the latter group plays an important role in many economies and in particular, in medium-skill jobs.

The statistics produced by the McKinsey report are very quotable. Simplistically, the imbalance between nations - the central thesis of the report- could be addressed by targeting low skilled in one nation to re-skill and then move to another nation, within enabling legal frameworks. However, increasingly visa or residence restrictions prevent this and international politics may render some nationalities 'unacceptable'. It is also impossible for current education systems to train large numbers in one nation matched to jobs in their own nation let alone in another: structurally it is difficult and it just takes too long. There is, therefore, a large time-lag between recognizing skills shortages and 'educating' people to fill them, by which time in this game of 'catch-up', another gap will inevitably have opened.

At a generic level, the McKinsey report promotes filling skills shortages through either education or corporate training. Like its definitions, this approach is fundamentally flawed. It ignores TVET completely as a means to address what it calls '*recasting the global labour force to align with future demand will require deep and wide innovations to improve the capacity, reach and delivery of educational and company training systems*'. Secondary education is promoted as the means to deliver vocational learning. Although the report emphasizes 'a new technology of education', it omits to recognize that successful implementation of digital technologies requires highly trained facilitators. It seems to offer as a 'new idea' that employers should contribute to developing curricula and that industry

skills bodies should train people. It skirts around the development of new models of private sector delivery of TVET, or partnerships between private-public organizations. It implies that youth unemployment can be marginalized as the focus of employer CSR initiatives rather than focusing on how youth can be mainstreamed into employer productivity initiatives. In other words, it fails to address its own central thesis – *‘deep and wide transformation’* in learning systems.

The report also fails to recognize national specificities. Not all economies neatly fall into the report’s generic definitions of ‘advancement’. It suggests that young advanced nations need tertiary level workers. But what about the young advanced economies of, for example, the Middle East, that are developing so rapidly that they need large numbers of high skilled workers to fill economically productive jobs *and* low skill workers to build basic infrastructure? Their economies are imbalanced as their nationals aspire merely to higher education, sometimes of questionable quality, and there is little or no medium-skill or low skill development through TVET. Even where there are sufficient nationals to fill high level jobs, in supply-driven education systems, many do not take the ‘right’ majors for economic development purposes and end up in non-productive public sector jobs. The only way in which these nations can maintain rapid economic development is to fill the private sector with vast numbers of imported high skilled and very low skilled labour.

There are serious implications for human capital development. Political instability (or another ‘force majeure’), could lead to the rapid loss of skilled migrants at every level. Nations may quickly become economically uncompetitive especially if there is little input from employers to drive demand for skills among locals – it is cheaper and easier to get them from outside. Furthermore, what prospects do the low skilled migrants, building infrastructures in destination countries have on their return home, if their skills are not developed and recognized in their destination countries? Are they consigned to the skills scrap-heap, especially if their own home economies require the medium skilled and high skilled – such as in India? Do destination countries have a moral obligation to skill migrants, not least as that skilling will improve productivity of those migrants?

In young countries with a reasonable education infrastructure, migration may well be the economically most advantageous option regardless of the skill level of an individual. Most of the Filipino housemaids employed in the Middle East are at least high school graduates, falling into ‘medium skilled’ category but taking guaranteed jobs at skills levels well below their competence. The opportunity to send back remittances beyond what they can attract in a medium-skill level job at home is overwhelming, even if the lack of job-matching means they become de-skilled. However, some may acquire new skills of household management or childcare which they can put to good use on their return. If these skills were recognized or accredited, it would serve to support re-skilling rather than de-skilling.

Until major organizations such as the McKinsey Global Institute recognize the intrinsic worth TVET as a major contributor to address skills shortages, governments will persist in developing systems that focus on accentuating imbalances in skills availability and human capital development will be piecemeal.

## Putting Skills to Work: The Challenge to TVET in a Developing Economy

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**Keywords:** Educational attainment; internal efficiency; job-focused skills; holistic view of skill development

**Summary:** The comprehensive development of education from primary to tertiary is a pre-condition for sound skill development. A holistic view of skills development beyond formal TVET, and the development of a recognized assessment and certification system are crucial.

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Every year an estimated 2.5 million young people join the labour force in Bangladesh. Industrial development cannot keep pace with the growth of the labour force; industries employ only 24% of the labour force. Meanwhile, the informal sector makes up about 80% of the economy.

Because of the lack of a developed skill market, the education system is not tuned to respond to the needs of the job market. Even the formal TVET institutes are circling around an orbit of theory-oriented courses based on rigid curricula and lacking job relevance. Therefore, considering educational attainment a proxy for skills, as in some of the global skills reports, would cause confusion and blur the real situation.

Bangladesh is a big labour exporting country. Most migrants are semi-skilled or less skilled workers. However, the remittance received from these migrant workers amounts to 11% of GDP. For jobs in labour intensive industries abroad, secondary graduates are required to have specific job-focused skills. The formal TVET system cannot respond to the needs of the potential migrant workers because of its inflexibility.

Over the past few decades Bangladesh has made significant improvements with respect to educational access. But the drop-out rate is still high and the quality of education is still elusive. Their educational attainment being irrelevant for any skilled job, young secondary drop-outs and graduates usually end up in low-skill or wage jobs in the huge informal sector of the country.

As Bangladesh moves up in the value chain in the coming decades, producing secondary educated and job-ready workers would be quite challenging. A total overhaul of the education system from basic education to tertiary education would be essential. Effective second chance education for drop-outs, increased internal efficiency of the education system, introduction of flexible and demand responsive curricula, efficient teacher training, revamping TVET system etc. should be on the reform agenda. Significant increase of public spending for education is a *sine qua non* for all these to happen.

Taking into account the huge share of the informal sector in the economy and the potential role of different actors, appropriate policy measures would be essential to develop a holistic view of skill development and to look beyond formal TVET system. Putting in place a flexible, innovative and less bureaucratic, but essentially sound, system of assessment and

certification—recognized by employers at home and abroad—will encourage various actors, including private sector, NGOs, local communities and workplaces, to play a much bigger role in the country’s gigantic effort of skilling the youth for the coming decades.

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## Definition Matters

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In the case of McKinsey’s *Jobs, Pay and Skills*, it turns out that Skills mostly just means Education. More precisely, ‘High-skill refers to workers with a tertiary education or more, medium-skill refers to workers with only a secondary education, and low-skill refers to workers with no more than a primary education’ (McKinsey, 2012: 13, footnote 5). In other words, the Report uses educational levels of achievement as a ‘rough proxy’ for skill level (13). There is, however, an added complication which is tucked away in a footnote: ‘Low-skill [is] defined in advanced economies as no post-secondary education; in developing, low-skill is primary education’ (3, fn.1 to Exhibit E1). This explanation doesn’t completely sort out the different categories since it would appear in compulsory secondary school regimes, e.g. in OECD countries, that there is really therefore no difference between low-skill defined as having no post-secondary and medium-skill as only having a secondary education. It would seem, therefore, that low- and medium-skill are practically synonymous in developed economies.

With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been helpful to have included these crucial definitional matters in the main text on the first page or so of both the Executive Summary and of the Report itself. Otherwise, the very valuable discussion, for instance, about ‘a potential shortage of 90 million to 95 million low-skill workers around the world’ (2), and many other such estimates, may not be understood to include two very different levels of education. Arguably, it would have been preferable in fact to have avoided using the low-, medium- and high-skill terminology altogether and just to have used the categories of primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Given what we have said about the principal meaning of ‘skills’ being ‘education’, it might be expected that the term, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), would not appear at all. This is in fact the case. On the other hand, vocational school and vocational training are used a number of times, including with reference to countries in Asia, such as Korea, China, Australia and India.

## Education and Skills in the Asian Century

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**Keywords:** Skills; ASEAN; education; Southeast Asia

**Summary:** This piece explores why flexible skills are needed in Southeast Asia to meet the needs of one of the world's fastest-growing regions as it prepares to take a step closer towards integration.

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### Introduction

Southeast Asia is growing rapidly and ASEAN will take a big step towards closer integration when it declares itself an “economic community” in 2015. This will put colossal pressures on political leaders to harmonise education systems. After closer integration, ASEAN will see a greater mobility of students between member states. This opens up tremendous opportunities for education providers. But is ASEAN ready for this? The British Council’s assessment is that ASEAN is far from ready. Universities will have a key role to play in paving the way forward. Global partnerships between universities in Asia and Europe, and within Asia to Asia, will provide a pathway to sustained growth and economic transformation in Asia.

### Importance of innovation-led economic growth

Investments in education, particularly higher education, are a crucial part of East Asia’s drive toward greater productivity. Education has the potential to lift productivity and competitiveness by providing the high-level skills demanded by the international labour market. This should excite economic observers. But there is one snag. The skill levels of this burgeoning youth population are woefully low. The lack of skilled workers in this region will act as a constraint to growth, and national plans to up-skill are not happening fast enough. There are plenty of jobs going, but employers complain about the large numbers of young people who lack the skills to fill these jobs.

So, what needs to change? To deliver labour market skills, education institutions should show a closer fit with what employers and employees need, and they must be well connected among themselves and other skills providers. Institutions that have a strong role in research and development, and have strong links with firms and other research providers best support research that can spur innovation and productivity. In my view, this also suggests a disruption of current models of skills development, which concentrate in further education (FE) colleges, and a scaling up and across of skills into both FE sector and university levels with strong partnerships with industry. It suggests a need for universities and businesses to work together.

### De-bottling Indonesia’s development

Indonesia is a prime example of the challenges the region faces in fixing the enormous skills deficit. De-bottling Indonesia’s development has traditionally focused on excessive red tape, rule of law and infrastructure. A McKinsey report (2012) recently picked up on the clear disconnect between Indonesia’s economic aspiration and its skills capabilities, and recommends Indonesia “must address its impending skills gap; the country could, for example, develop a private-education market that might quadruple, to \$40 billion, by 2030’.

If at the same time Indonesia took action in the three key sectors (consumer services, agriculture and fisheries and energy), it could create a \$1.8 trillion private-sector business opportunity by 2030.

The education numbers do not add up for Indonesia's take-off. There are over 50 million students in Indonesia and Indonesia's education system is the largest in S. E. Asia and fourth largest in the world after China, India and the US. Relative to other middle-income countries, Indonesian students show lower performance in standardized international exams such as PISA and TIMSS. So significant improvements in access have not led to an improvement in the quality of education in Indonesia.

Then there is the complicated question of knowing what skills to nurture. Across wider East Asia the demands for skills from industry are changing fast. The default response of Ministries of Education and international agencies in the past has been, and is still today, to provide more technical and vocational skills. According to the Global Monitoring Report (2012), there are three types of skills to scale up: foundation skills (literacy and numeracy); transferable or 'soft' skills (the ability to problem solve, communicate ideas, be creative, show leadership and consciousness and demonstrate entrepreneurial capabilities young people need to adapt in the world of work); and technical and vocational skills (such as using machines, growing vegetables, or using a computer).

In East Asia, the types of skills required are no longer just about traditional TVET skills, but also about cognitive and behavioral; and these will have some equivalence with the OECD's PIAAC. The key messages emerging from new World Bank analysis in East Asia and new measurement surveys, are that employers highly value cognitive and behavioral skills, and not just job-relevant technical skills. Not that dissimilar from what industry is calling for in OECD countries. Christian Bodewig, from the World Bank, is right to say that countries in ASEAN have no time to lose in investing in these skills – they are in high demand already, despite comparatively lower and uneven levels of economic development, and will remain skills for life beyond the working life of professionals. This presents challenges for colleges and universities today in East Asia as they grapple with whether to deliver not just job-relevant technical skills but also cognitive and behavioral skills, or 'soft' or transferable skills.

Finally, although putting education to work makes good sense with the discourses on economic transformation and growth, this overall push contrasts with the value of developing and fostering the mind. We need to bear in mind the danger that education, in schools, FE colleges and universities does not become excessively instrumental. Or, that the need to nurture cognitive and behavioral skills, or more broadly creative imagination, may pose huge challenges for education systems, as well as for some of the region's more conservative political and legal systems.

#### Link

<http://ihe.britishcouncil.org/going-global/sessions/81-asean-economic-integration-education-asian-century>



# **G20 Training Strategy & TREE (ILO)**

## A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: A G20 Training Strategy

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**Keywords:** G20 Training Strategy; social dialogue; G20 pilot countries

**Summary:** This piece describes the G20 Training Strategy as developed by the ILO in partnership with other organizations and elaborates on the nine building blocks of the strategy for a skilled workforce for strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

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### G20 Training Strategy, International Labour Office, 2010

G20 Leaders gathered in Pittsburgh in 2009 and called for putting quality jobs at the heart of the recovery. They asked the ILO, in partnership with other organizations, and with employers and workers, to develop a training strategy for their consideration.

After wide consultations the G20 Training Strategy Report, *A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth* (ILO, 2010), was produced. The report explains how a strong partnership between government, employers and workers is an essential feature of an effective and enduring bond between the world of learning and the world of work. It also involves the participation of employers' and workers' representatives in the design, implementation and evaluation of skills policies.

As is explained in the report, social dialogue at the enterprise, sector and/or national levels is highly effective in creating incentives for investment in skills and knowledge. These processes can create a broad commitment to education and training and a learning culture, strengthen support for the reform of training systems, and provide channels for the continuous exchange of information between employers, workers and governments.

The importance of social dialogue in skills development is also reflected in the nine building blocks of strong training and skills development strategies, in which the "participation of social partners" is one of these; the others are "anticipating future skills needs", "taking sectoral approaches in developing skills systems", "providing labour market information and employment services", "ensuring training quality and relevance", "gender equality", "providing broad access to training", "financing training systems" and "assessing policy performance".

In Seoul in November 2010 the regional development banks, ILO, OECD and UNESCO were asked to work as a unified team with the aim of supporting a pilot group of self-selected low-income countries (LICs ) to enhance their national strategies to develop skills, improve productivity in existing jobs, and promote investment in new jobs.

It was decided that pilot countries would be identified in each region according to specified criteria. The governments of Bangladesh, Benin, Malawi and Haiti have agreed to be pilot countries for the first phase. In the work in these pilot countries for the implementation of

the G20 Training Strategy, particular emphasis has been put on the participation of social partners and the development of Action Plans for each of these countries.

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## Training for Rural Economic Empowerment

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**Keywords:** TREE; community-based; rural; skills; training

**Summary:** Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) is a community-based approach to assist rural communities in improving livelihoods and incomes through training for self and wage employment.

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The Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) is a programme developed by the Skills and Employability Department of the ILO based on long-standing technical cooperation interventions in community-based training. It promotes income generation and local development, emphasizing the role of skills and knowledge for creating new economic and employment opportunities for the poor, the underemployed, the unemployed, informal economy workers and the otherwise disadvantaged towards sustainable economic activities.

The TREE methodology consists of a set of processes, which are distinct but coherently linked, to guide the articulation of local development initiatives and identification and implementation of income generation opportunities. Starting with institutional arrangements and planning among partner organizations at the national and local levels, these processes aim to systematically identify employment and income generating opportunities at the community/local level; design and deliver appropriate training programmes; and provide the necessary post-training support, for instance, access to markets.

TREE is a development approach that ensures poor women and men gain a resource they will never lose: skills and knowledge that they can apply to improving their incomes and taking a more active role in shaping their communities. The approach differs from conventional vocational training programmes in three main ways: by identifying potential income generating activities and related training needs before designing the content and modalities of specific training programmes; by involving the local community and social partners directly in each phase of the identification, design and delivery process; and by facilitating the necessary post-training support, including guidance in the use of production technologies, facilitation of access to credit, assistance in group formation, etc. to ensure

that individuals or groups can initiate and sustain income generating activities, and also raise productivity in trade areas for which training was provided.

A typical TREE programme has five processes that represent the main phases of TREE:

**Process 1: Institutional organization and planning**

**Process 2: Identification of economic opportunities and training needs assessment**

**Process 3: Training design, organization and delivery of training**

**Process 4: Post-training support for micro-enterprise development and wage employment**

**Process 5: Monitoring, evaluation and documentation**

TREE has been implemented in a number of countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, Madagascar, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. As referred to in the “Youth and Skills” 2012 Education For All Global Monitoring Report; “Whether in agriculture or not, it is essential for training to be adapted to each local context, filling clear gaps in the skills base in the local area. Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE), designed by the ILO, takes this approach, helping match supply with labour market demand, resulting in strong successes in very varied contexts on different continents. In Bangladesh, it has helped women enter non-traditional trades such as appliance and computer repair. The approach combines technical and business training with training in gender issues and gender sensitization sessions for trainees’ families, communities and partner organizations.”

For further information, see:

[http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2009/109B09\\_302\\_engl](http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2009/109B09_302_engl)

**Education and Training for  
Rural Transformation -  
Skills, jobs, food and green  
future to combat poverty  
(UNESCO-INRULED, 2012)**

## Skills and capabilities in relation to the informal economy and poverty

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**Keywords:** Rural transformation; informal economy; skills and jobs to combat rural poverty

**Summary:** With 70 percent of the world's poor still in rural areas, mostly engaged in livelihoods in the informal economy, the UNESCO-INRULED study argues for specific attention in analyses, policy and strategies to skills and capacity building for rural transformation in the context of national and global changes.

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Is there a problem of education, training and skills development for rural populations and rural areas of developing countries that deserves special attention in respect of policy, strategy and investments? With the rapid pace of urbanisation and visible and growing problems of poverty and squalor in urban slums, there is a tendency to shy away from the question of rural poverty and skills and capacity building and related issues for rural populations.

The UNESCO-INRULED report makes the case that there is a general problem of rural transformation – absence of a pro-active process of change and development of rural communities in the context of national and global changes. The question of skills and capacity building of the rural poor, who are 70 percent of the poor in developing countries, must be addressed as part of this much needed larger transformation. The focus needs to be on recognising the stake of the rural people in the dynamic changes affecting economy, livelihoods, and wellbeing of all the people in a country.

While half of the world's population now is urban, in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the proportions of rural people range from 55 to 70 percent. By 2050, these will still be 45 percent in India and the 50 least developed countries and a full one-third in the developing regions as a whole. And as noted, 70 percent of the world's poor today are rural.

Persistent and growing gaps between supply and demand for jobs and employment for young people, growing vulnerabilities and risks for poor people, threats to food security, and the urgency of building a sustainable green future are general problems that are receiving increasing attention. In this effort, the specific needs and conditions of the rural poor, mostly operating in the informal economy, are likely to be bypassed unless analyses and strategies take these into account specifically. Otherwise, the total effort is likely to be undermined, because of the magnitude and specificities of rural-urban interaction and mutuality of interest. Education in a broad sense is seen as a key instrument for shaping and fulfilling the goal of rural transformation. The rapidly changing rural and urban scenes and the dynamics of rural-urban interaction require flexibility and creativity in education and training programmes.

The report focuses on the links between education and rural transformation, seeking to underscore the inexorable forces of change that rural communities face in the context of urbanization. It also emphasizes how education and training, by equipping rural people with

appropriate knowledge and skills and fostering values of “decent jobs” and human dignity, can expand people’s choices and capabilities to exercise these choices.

The report paints in broad brush-strokes the critical concerns about skills development, turning skills into jobs as well as skills and jobs in relation to food security, sustainable development and combating poverty in rural and urbanizing communities.

The report argues that programmes and strategies for skills development can be effective when they are nested in a supportive environment of broader development goals and policies that are consistent with the aims of rural transformation and poverty reduction.

A priority area of action is improving quality of primary level education followed by expanding secondary education of acceptable quality to equip rural youth with generic and transferrable skills and competencies essential for taking advantage of job-specific vocational training and on-the-job learning in a changing and globalizing market.

Multipurpose community learning centers with community ownership brought together into networks of technical support are suggested as a vehicle for learning with impact on skills development, which also can be building blocks for lifelong learning and the learning society.

The generic problems of linking and matching skills and jobs are more complex in the rural areas and the informal job market. Experience shows some helpful measures including decentralized local labour market information and matching service, expanding coverage of workers’ social protection, and skills certification frameworks to recognize competencies and skills equivalencies.

The transforming society – rural, peri-urban and urban – creates demands for new kinds of jobs, and old jobs with new profiles. This dynamic perspective of changing jobs, labour markets and skills requirements must frame interventions to match skills and jobs.

To serve rural transformation, flexible and autonomous structures at local levels adapting to local circumstances, encouraging participatory practices, and promoting transparency in governance are particularly important.

Stakeholders of rural development are many and diverse. Mobilising the poor to create and participate in their own organisations and institutions needs to be nurtured.

Climate change funds, given the synergy in objectives of enhancing skills and capacities of people and coping with climate change vulnerabilities, could be designed and utilized for education, training and capacity building. This source of external assistance is likely to grow in volume in the future.

The sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) for skills development and job creation can be the bridge in bringing the diverse assets – human, financial, social, and physical/ecological – together to make a difference in the life of rural people.

# **Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement (ISESE, 2012)**



## What are the Skills for Employment?

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**Keywords:** skills for employability; non-cognitive skills; education; innovative models.

**Summary:** Results for Development Institute has found that while technical and basic cognitive skills are still important in the workplace, transferrable and non-cognitive skills such as communication are increasingly important, particularly for the informal economy. Key features of models that successfully deliver these critical skills include an emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships, updated pedagogy, and innovative financing mechanisms to improve access, quality and relevance of skills at the secondary level.

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Globally, there is a missing link between secondary education and the skills needed to enter the workforce. As economies grow and youth populations increase in developing countries, there is a critical need to deliver relevant skills to youth for employment. This is especially significant given that secondary education is now the level from which most youth enter the workforce (the exception being in Africa). However, what skills are most important for employability and how are they best delivered? Supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and in collaboration with a network of five regional partners, the Results for Development Institute (R4D) set out to answer these questions through the Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement (ISESE) project. Over the course of 2012, R4D drew on the experience of 12 focus countries in Asia and Africa to explore what skills are most needed for employability, the nature of the persisting skills gap, and the most effective models for delivering the necessary skills for employability.

Our research reveals three particularly interesting findings. First, three main categories of 'skills' are seen to be important: cognitive, non-cognitive, and technical skills. Cognitive or analytical skills include numeracy and literacy; they encompass the thinking or problem-solving skills. Non-cognitive skills are variously called 'people skills', 'soft skills', or 'behavioral skills'. These skills are also known as the '21<sup>st</sup> century skills' and are widely seen as crucial to securing employment in today's globalised economy. They include communication, teamwork, leadership and entrepreneurialism. Lastly, technical skills are those that are context-specific and are geared towards a particular occupation (for instance, electrical wiring or plumbing).

Second, through interviews with employer focus groups, we found that broadly speaking, non-cognitive skills are as important in the workplace as cognitive and technical skills. In addition to examining the demand side, our research partners also explored the supply side, investigating the skills that are being taught under the current curricula. Worryingly, skill gaps are seen most often in non-cognitive skills: employers want self-reliant workers with the right 'people-skills', and yet, these skills are often not included in the curricula. When they are included, teachers are often not equipped with sufficient training or information on how to teach these new skills.

Non-cognitive skills may also be much more important for the informal sector. Workers in this sector tend to be self-employed, and so need to have skills needed to work along the entire value chain. This requires skills such as discipline, confidence, negotiation, communication and decision-making. It also requires entrepreneurial and business skills, such as financial management, market research, and marketing.

Lastly, given these skill needs, what are innovative and effective delivery mechanisms? Through both our field research and conducting an online competition, we saw that key features of successful models include an emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships, updated pedagogy, and innovative financing mechanisms to improve access, quality and relevance of skills. Partnerships between employers, educators / training programs, and the government are seen as instrumental in ensuring that youth are taught skills that are relevant to today's job market. Some of the most interesting programs combine academic and vocational training, as well as emphasize the development of non-cognitive skills. For instance, Lend-a-Hand India's Multi-skill Vocational and Entrepreneurship Development in rural government-aided schools blends traditional academic work with hands-on projects. Not only are youth taught courses by entrepreneurs in the community, but they also gain transferable business skills such as accounting, marketing, and customer-service.

It is clear that effective skills development programs and policies can play a pivotal role in equipping youth with the skills and competencies needed to find and maintain employment in today's dynamic labor environment. However, important questions remain on how to scale-up or replicate some of the most promising models to create the greatest impact on youth employability.

Note: Over the next six months, R4D will be conducting an in-depth analysis of promising innovative models to better understand both the opportunities and constraints of scaling up programs that can effectively deliver relevant 21st century skills. All our research will be publically available on: <http://www.resultsfordevelopment.org/knowledge-center/global-education>

**Skills Development for  
Inclusive and Sustainable  
Growth in Developing  
Asia-Pacific, Maclean,  
Rupert et al (Eds.), ADB,  
2012**

## Response to 'Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific', Maclean, Rupert et al (Eds.), ADB, 2012

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**Keywords:** Pacific Island Countries; TVET; Skills Development

**Summary:** The ADB's recently released report, 'Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific', provides a useful discussion of broad themes and case studies related to TVET development. The regional focus is, however, limited almost exclusively to Asia with no reference to new approaches underway in Pacific Island countries. Current innovations in the TVET system in Vanuatu are outlined in reference to the some of the report's identified key issues.

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*'Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific', a regional collaboration facilitated by the ADB, identifies in its introduction a number of broad thematic issues relevant to the development of TVET in the Asia-Pacific, which it then, through a range of contributors, explores in more detail, with a selection of country-specific case studies.*

While this publication provides a diversity of information and lessons learned as to the challenges and possible solutions relevant to policy-makers and practitioners in the sector, it is somewhat disappointing that in a document of over 300 pages dedicated to the Asia-Pacific region, there is negligible reference to any Pacific Island Country (PIC). Perhaps its Asia focus is a reflection of the ADB's geographic priorities, which is understandable. However, with the current innovative developments taking place in TVET systems in PICs, which illustrate in many instances the key overarching themes identified by the report's editors, a more comprehensive approach would have been welcome.

A case in point is the TVET system in Vanuatu which is currently being supported by the AusAID-funded TVET Sector Strengthening Program. Through the establishment of provincial 'TVET Centres', the Program is working with local systems to implement a model for improving access to, and quality of, skills development services within a national training system. Tangible economic results have been achieved and validated by independent reviews, and the Program is now being used as an exemplar for other TVET interventions across the Pacific region.

As identified by Maclean et al, "skills development for the informal sector presents specific challenges to governments" (p.5) and in a country with a rural population of 80% engaged in the informal subsistence sector, this is indeed the case for the Government of Vanuatu and its donor partners.

In very brief summary, the TVET Centre model enables formal TVET provision to take place in non-formal settings, in response to the specific economic demands of the provincial rural context. Acting as a 'broker' between provincial skill demand and formal training institutions, the Centres are facilitating for the first time the modular off-campus delivery of

nationally accredited units in the non-formal 'work-place'. This has resulted in both re-entry into further formal education and training through articulated and recognised pathways, as well as the achievement of measurable employment and income-generation outcomes. This provides an interesting variation to the analysis of Maclean et al that "in many developing countries, most TVET skills development for employability occurs through informal and non-formal means, rather than in formal TVET institutions" (p.6). In the Vanuatu case, the latter are now being encouraged through the incentive mechanisms of the TVET Centres to deliver training flexibly in ways that meet the needs of the bulk of its rural-based population.

Trainee transition from the informal to formal economy has been supported by this approach. Within a predominantly subsistence economy context, formal mechanisms have been established such as provincial skills plans and provincial training boards comprised of key productive sector agencies to identify economic development priorities and guide training delivery accordingly. Again, on a small scale, this is an example of a strategy to address the overarching need identified by Maclean et al for progress to be made in "aligning skills development strategies with socio-economic goals" (p.5). This practice has fostered the development of small businesses in tourism, agriculture, forestry and fisheries with many trainees now operating for the first time in the cash economy. Business growth has been further supported by business development support services coordinated through the Centres such as coaching, mentoring and IT support.

Targeted interventions by the Centres, using an integrated combination of formal training, ongoing-business development assistance and literacy and numeracy support, are also achieving demonstrable economic outcomes for people with disabilities in rural areas. According to Maclean et al, "the next steps in TVET development should be framed by the recognition of the specific needs of different groups" (p.23), and given the growing international focus from governments and donors alike on effective inclusive education strategies, progress in this area may also provide valuable lessons for broader regional application.

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## Skills and Skilling in Asia

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**Keywords:** Asia; Skills

**Summary:** This piece looks at the challenges for skills development reform in Asia, including aspects related to improving the quality, relevance and inclusiveness. It also notes that Asia is home to a wealth of good practice experience which should be drawn upon.

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The fast evolving Asia region creates multiple challenges for skills development. Many Asian economies have rapidly progressed from agriculture to industry and services. Asia also is home to a group of transition countries which are shifting from centrally planned economies to market economies. Many countries in the region have significant informal economies.

Rapid urbanization and the recent trends of developing green economies also are some examples of characteristics of the region resulting to shifts in demand for skills. As more countries in the region achieve middle income status, they face the risk of a 'middle-income trap' unless they strengthen their human resource base, particularly for knowledge and technology-intensive sectors to help economies move up the value chain. Concerns are increasing among stakeholders in the region about the inadequate response of education and skills development to the growing demand for appropriately skilled human resources so essential for higher and inclusive growth, and regional integration efforts.

Global surveys consistently indicate that a shortage of talent is most acute in Asia in comparison to other developing regions in the world. The shortage in Asia is especially evident in professional groups, such as accountants, business managers, engineers, scientists, software specialists and technicians, and also among some skilled worker groups. In addition to unemployment of graduates, the trend of underemployment is a serious concern in the region. Addressing skills mismatches require not only upgrading skills, but also aligning skills with labor market needs, including giving much more attention to non-cognitive ('soft') skills, and skills demand arising from the informal sector. If the low employability of graduates is not effectively addressed, economic development in many Asian countries may stall.

Education and TVET institutions are not eager to take the responsibility for graduates' employability. Many Asian businesses continue the practice of training their employees to ensure skills match with the needs within their particular organization. However, evidence is increasing about businesses becoming less motivated to provide extensive skills training, as employees' loyalty cannot be taken granted in a rapidly changing society. Furthermore, in Asia available jobs and demand for skills in certain sectors fluctuate rapidly as industries and technologies change. Given these complexities, stakeholders do not find it easy to reach consensus on who has the major responsibility for employability of graduates, nor are there clear models of shared responsibility between e.g. those who provide pre-employment skills training and those who provide on-the-job training. Yet, the issue of employability is increasingly in the spotlight as households pay more for education and skills training, governments expend more on expanding and improving education and skills training systems, and employers expect more from graduates.

While it is important to pursue reforms which improve the quality and relevance of skills, it is equally important to strengthen inclusiveness of skills training services in Asia, particularly as the phenomenal economic growth in the region is far from being inclusive. Inequality in access to education and skills training is a key factor in the region contributing to income inequality and widening disparities, and can result to social and economic instability. Educating and skilling excluded groups is not only highly necessary for establishing a broad human resource base for advancing inclusive economic growth but also for achieving other equally important development goals in societies and the region as a whole. However, in many Asian countries reaching the excluded calls for strategies quite different from the practice of simply increasing enrollments in education and training programs. Providing scholarships for disadvantaged students is important but not sufficient. Skills programs and their delivery must adapt to the circumstances and needs of the excluded. This requires an in-depth analysis of exclusion patterns, mapping the scope of exclusion and identification of exclusion factors related to various marginalized groups; particularly those who face disadvantage due to poverty, gender, social exclusion, and geographic isolation.

The diversity of Asia also can provide opportunities. Several Asian countries have a history of partnerships between skills training institutions and the private sector and industry, increasingly also at tertiary education level. Building on the experience and expanding public-private partnerships in the region will not only help share costs of skills training with the private sector and industry, but will help improve the relevance of skills, including for the expanding regional labor markets in the region. The momentum of regional cooperation and south-south cooperation is building up in the region. ASEAN countries, particularly, are spearheading cross-border development and harmonization of skills competencies. Asia is home for some G20 and OECD countries, and BRICS, which have successful experiences to share in linking education and skills development with labor market evolution. Some top performing basic education systems in the world are in Asia. Several Asian tertiary education institutions and universities are distinguished hubs and climbing steadily higher in global rankings. Concurrently with strengthening the role of national and regional centers of excellence, it will be important to further diversify networks of TVET institutions, polytechnics and universities to effectively respond to human resource needs of diversifying labor markets. Asia will need to utilize its experience and potential in education and skills development, and accelerate regional collaboration for this effort.

**Related recent publications of ADB**

Skills Development for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Asia-Pacific

Improving Transitions From School to University to Workplace

Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century

Asian Development Outlook; Confronting Rising Inequality in Asia

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**African Development  
Bank. A Review and  
Assessment of Technical  
and Vocational Skills  
Development Policies and  
Practices in Africa (March  
2013) & World Bank. Skills  
for the Informal sector in  
Africa (Washington, 2013)**



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## A Review and Assessment of Technical and Vocational Skills Development Policies and Practices in Africa

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**The African Development Bank commissioned a study aiming to generate reliable evidence-based knowledge of the current policies, best practices and dynamics of technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) in Africa** (see African Development Bank, 2013). This is done to support the development of national and regional strategy frameworks for revitalizing TVSD and making it more responsive to the social and economic challenges facing the continent.

**TVSD has assumed some prominence on the development agenda in the fight against youth unemployment.** Annually, between 7 and 10 million young Africans with inadequate skills enter labor markets characterized by high unemployment, low productivity and poverty-level incomes. Furthermore, African economies suffer from “jobless growth” as the high GDP growth rates have been driven largely by the mining and oil sectors, which are capital-intensive and require little labor.

**Traditional apprenticeship training remains the dominant avenue for skills acquisition by young people who are mostly illiterate or have left school early.** In many countries TVSD is still considered a second option to general education by both parents and learners. The reasons for the low attractiveness of TVSD include its poor image, the lack of perceived career advantages and lower economic returns

**Female participation in formal and informal TVSD is low.** The traditional fields of commerce, tailoring and catering have the highest concentration of women and girls. Very few girls enroll in the engineering and technology disciplines. This is often due to their poor preparation in science and mathematics at the lower levels, coupled with cultural practices and prejudices as well as geographical and economic inequities.

**An important trend in TVSD enrollment rates is the growing importance of private training institutions.** The dominance of private providers has implications for training quality assurance and the appropriate placement of graduates in the world of work, since employers may have difficulties correctly assessing the value of “in-house” awards issued by private training providers.

**The geographical distribution of training institutions is a factor in inequity and unequal access to TVSD, especially for vulnerable groups.** Better-endowed formal TVSD institutions are located in towns, making it difficult for rural dwellers to get access. NGOs, CSOs and faith-based organizations have been more responsive to the skills needs of vulnerable groups. They have the advantage of securing funding from their external partners and other international donors.

**Financing is the weakest link in all current reforms.** Diversified and sustainable funding sources are needed. It is equally important to improve the efficiency of service delivery as, in

terms of public resources, formal TVSD delivery is around five times as expensive as the delivery of general secondary education.

**Several recommendations are made in the report.** In particular, the policy and management environment has to be improved, the curriculum has to be aligned to market needs, and sustainable financing mechanisms have to be crafted.

#### Reference

African Development Bank (2013) *A Review and Assessment of Technical and Vocational Skills Development Policies and Practices in Africa* (March 2013)

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## A Study of Skills for the Informal Sector Using Household Survey Data

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**Keywords:** Informal sector; Africa

**Summary:** A new World Bank study will soon be released that looks at skills development in the informal sector in five countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania) using household survey data. The study identifies constraints to training in small enterprises, as well as interventions that address some, but not all of these constraints.

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The informal sector first entered the economic development literature in the early 1970s through the International Labour Organization and its World Employment Program. Identified in Kenya and earlier in Ghana, the sector was described as including small household enterprises that operated largely outside the purview of government regulatory and tax authorities. The sector was thought to provide a pool of surplus labor for developing countries that industrialization would in time absorb into the modern wage sector. However, it has since become clear that the informal sector is not diminishing in size with industrialization. Indeed it is holding its own and is even growing as a share of employment in countries throughout the world.

A new World Bank study will soon be released (Adams et al., forthcoming) that looks at the informal sector in five countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania) using household survey data; these countries account for one-third of the approximately 900 million living in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study provides a profile of those working in the sector and compares them with those working in the formal sector. While recognizing the merits of expanding the formal sector, the study observes the persistence of employment in the informal sector and the importance of improving productivity and incomes in the sector as part of a poverty reduction strategy. The study examines the

importance of education and training in different forms to labor mobility off the farm and the type of non-farm employment and earnings attained. The study identifies constraints to improving skills in the informal sector and reviews programmes that address these constraints.

Defining the informal sector has proven to be challenging, combining characteristics of the enterprise with those of the type of employment. Building on work of the ILO, this study uses household survey data on employment in the non-farm sector of the five countries to define the informal sector. Different definitions are compared and found to have a modest impact on the scale and profile of sector employment. The informal sector definition used by the study includes: (i) the self-employed (own account and with workers), (ii) contributing family members, and (iii) wage workers in small and household enterprises. The study highlights the need for more attention to survey measures of the informal sector allowing comparative analysis.

Agriculture remains the largest employer in Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 65 percent of total employment. The share is diminishing with time, however, as labor moves into the non-farm sector, often moving first to the informal sector. In the five countries studied, two of every three working off the farm are working in the informal sector. The informal sector is a major source of employment for new labor force entrants. The average earnings in the informal sector are higher than earnings in agriculture, but lower than those in the formal sector. The overlapping distribution of earnings reveals many in the informal sector match or exceed the earnings of those in the formal sector. Household poverty rates in the informal sector are higher than those of the formal sector, but lower than those in agricultural households.

Multivariate analysis points to the importance of education and training in moving labour off the farm. Those working off the farm in the informal sectors exhibit higher levels of education than those remaining on the farm and those working in the formal sector have more education and different forms of training than those in the informal sector. The informal sector's workforce is characterized by primary education or less and experience as an apprentice, while those in the formal sector are more likely to have a secondary education or more and some vocational training. Evidence of market segmentation is found with the returns to education being lower in the informal sector than formal sector. Returns to traditional apprenticeships are unexpectedly low.

The incidence of training and skills development in the small and household enterprises of the informal sector is lower than that in the formal sector. The study identifies seven constraints to training in these small enterprises that underlie this pattern. They include: (i) a higher opportunity cost of training in small firms; (ii) limited cash flow for financing training; (iii) limited availability of multi-skilling that is needed; (iv) lack of internal firm capacity for training needs analysis and design; (v) information market failures on the benefits of training; (vi) absence of economies of scale for training by small firms; and (vii) limited supply of training capacity serving the special needs of the informal sector.

The study identifies training interventions that address some, but not all of these constraints pointing to the need for a comprehensive strategy for upgrading skills in the informal sector. Traditional apprenticeships address many of these constraints, but suffer from weaknesses in quality. The study examines programs intended to improve skills in the informal sector of the five countries and also looks at international experience. A number of promising options are offered. The study stresses the importance of more rigorous evaluation of programs for

improving skills in the informal sector. It identifies roles that can be played by the private sector, governments, and aid agencies in improving skills and earnings for those employed in the informal sector.

**Reference**

Arvil V. Adams, Sara Johannson de Silva, Setareh Razmara. *Improving Skills Development in the Informal Sector: Strategies for Sub-Saharan Africa*. Directions in Development. World Bank. Washington, DC.

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# **Education and Skills in the Post-2015 MDG and EFA Agendas**

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## Future Education – Global Mega-Trends and the Post-2015 Agenda for Education

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**Keywords:** Post-2015; education and climate change; education and economic growth; education and population growth; education and mobile technology.

**Summary:** Slowing population growth and an ageing population; the continuing and growing threats resulting from climate change; the eastwards shift in the economic centre of gravity; and the exponential growth in access to mobile communications technology are changing the world we live in. This piece considers what impact these global 'mega-trends' will have on education and argues for a much deeper reflection on the implications of these trends for the post-2015 agenda in education.

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At the December UKFIET-DFID Dialogue Day on Education and Development to 2015 and Beyond, I described how the global environment for the post-2015 frameworks is significantly different from 2000 when commitments were made to the MDGs and EFA goals. Global 'mega-trends' are shaping the social, political, economic and physical landscapes in important ways which will have profound implications for the future of education. Save the Children will publish a paper later this year on the critical steps needed to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised children are not left behind. In this briefing note for NORRAG NEWS, I have selected four of what I consider to be the most important trends and their possible implications for future education.

1. The world's **population** profiles are changing. Population growth is continuing but at a slower rate in most regions of the world with the notable exception of sub Saharan Africa. Demographers estimate that global population will peak between eight and ten billion in 2050 (UN DESA, 2013). Older populations (50+) will increase from 1.6 billion to 3.1 billion by 2050 and will make up 25% of Asia's population and nearly 30% of Europe's by 2025. The youth bulge (14 – 24) is flattening in most parts of the world: after rising from 700 million in 1970 to 1.2 billion in 2010, the projected total for 2050 is 1.25 billion. More people now live in cities and towns – and this trend will accelerate to reach 6.3 billion by 2050. These trends provide both opportunities and challenges for future education. Providing secondary education to girls is the single most effective intervention to reduce population growth (Cohen & Malin, 2009). Slowing growth in child and youth populations will allow education systems in low income countries to consolidate access gains and focus more on improving quality. Providing good quality education to denser populations in towns and cities should be less costly and more efficient. However, the decline in working populations and the increasing dependency ratios in many middle income and high income countries will place additional burdens on government finances.

2. Global warming continues to grow and the impacts of **climate change** are intensifying. Falling crop yields, rising sea levels, loss of eco-diversity, and extreme weather events are increasingly disruptive of secure and stable lives and livelihoods (IPCC). This will place increased pressure on already scarce natural resources, especially fresh water. It will also

lead to increased migration both within and across countries as well as larger numbers of people affected by flooding and other natural disasters. Education has a critical role to play in teaching young people about the science of climate change; changing behaviour to secure a more sustainable future; and providing the skills and knowledge young people will need to survive in an increasingly fragile world (UNESCO, 2010).

3. The **global economic centre of gravity** has shifted. Growth rates of over 5% per annum are now characteristic of China, India, Sub-Saharan Africa and Indonesia. Official foreign exchange reserves in emerging economies are almost double those of the “rich world” (Economist, 2012). It is projected that China will pass the US to become the largest economy in the world by 2020, if not before. If current growth rates continue, five out of the top ten economies will be countries that are currently considered to be ‘emerging’. This is a reversion to patterns of the pre-colonial period (See table below).

**The world's top-10 economies (% of world GDP)**

Country	Today	Country	2050	Country	1820
US	26.7	China	18.5	China	28.7
Japan	8.4	US	16.5	India	16.0
Germany	6.0	India	12.0	France	5.4
China	5.9	Brazil	4.8	England	5.2
UK	5.2	Indonesia	3.5	Prussia	4.9
France	4.7	Japan	3.1	Japan	3.1
Italy	3.9	Mexico	3.0	Austria	1.9
Spain	2.6	Russia	2.7	Spain	1.9
Canada	2.5	UK	2.3	US	1.8
Brazil	2.3	Germany	2.3	Russia	1.7

Source: World Bank/Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: Historical Statistics* OECD/PricewaterhouseCoopers/Milken Institute/Goldman Sachs

Many of these countries have built their economic growth on education. China and India have been responsible for the majority of the decline of out of school children over the past two decades. Countries like Indonesia, South Korea and Singapore have led the world in education innovation. Mexico has implemented wide-scale financing programmes to reduce education inequities and raise achievement among the poor. There will be many lessons to share across these new economies.

4. **Technology is transforming our lives** – and making learning possible in new ways and new places. In 2002, only 2 countries had 100% mobile penetration – in 2010 this had risen to 92 countries (ITU, 2012). Total mobile-cellular subscriptions reached almost 6 billion by end 2011, corresponding to a global penetration of 86%. Growth was driven by developing countries, which accounted for more than 80% of the 660 million new mobile-cellular subscriptions added in 2011. By end 2011, there were more than 1 billion mobile - broadband subscriptions worldwide although developing countries are lagging behind with less than 5 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. We are just beginning to see the transformative effect on education systems of this increased access to technology and

information. The recent emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) has led to hundreds of thousands of students accessing courses from elite universities for free. Open schooling has led to the creation of mega secondary schools in India which have enrolled over 1 million students (Daniel, 2011). New technologies and access to open education resources could provide learning opportunities for millions of young people in developing countries over the next decade.

This is just a selection of the trends and possible implications for future education. It is likely that other trends will emerge that we cannot predict. What is clear is that we must take account of the massive global shifts in our thinking about the post 2015 education agenda if we are going to create an education system which is able to meet the needs of future generations of young people.

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### Other links

UKFIET-DFID Dialogue Day on Education and Development to 2015 and Beyond  
<http://www.ukfiet.org/cop/2013/post-2015-global-environment/#comments>

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## Post-2015 Discourse in Bangladesh: Can Human Capabilities Development be a Part of the Education Objectives in the Next MDGs?

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**Keywords:** Human capabilities approach; Post-2015; Government and civil society perspectives.

**Summary:** Despite good progress in primary education access and reducing gender disparity, EFA goals and the education MDGs will not be reached by 2015 in Bangladesh. A nascent national discussion has begun about a possible overarching vision of human capabilities development for the post-2015 agenda, with some divergence in perspectives of government and civil society.

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There is a national discussion going on about where Bangladesh is in respect of EFA and the education MDGs, and what may be the shape and character of the global post-2015 agenda. A government position paper is under preparation and the concerned civil society organizations under the umbrella of People's Forum for MDG (PFM) are also engaged in discussion of various themes suggested by the UN. A consolidated paper drawing on the thematic discussion is likely to be prepared by PFM.

There is no consensus on a Bangladesh position yet and there may not be one that captures or reconciles official and civil society positions. Only a flavor of the discourse and issues being raised can be presented at this time.

There is a recognition that, despite good progress made in expanding primary education access and overcoming gender disparity in participation at primary and secondary level, the EFA goals and education MDGs will not be achieved by 2015. It will not be disputed that the unfinished business will have to be completed. What else or how the post-2015 agenda incorporates education and human capabilities objectives is the question.

A question that has been asked, not with rousing enthusiasm yet: Should an overarching vision for development – the World We Want – put human capability enhancement at the centre? Can human capability - empowerment and agency of people to achieve human rights and human dignity for all - be the touchstone and the rationale for post-MDG sectoral/thematic goals in poverty reduction, building a sustainable world, healthy individuals and communities, and people equipped with productive skills and capacities for gainful livelihood and rewarding lives?

The overarching vision adopting the human capability approach to development (as advocated by Amartya Sen and others) does not undermine the sectoral/thematic goals being discussed, but provides a justification for their choice and prioritization and can help in considering targets and indicators for the different goals as well as national adaptation of the global goals and indicators.

Such an overarching vision of human capability and agency, human rights and human dignity places education, learning, and skills development at the center of development agenda rather than being only a sector.

Another question is – should the goals and indicators be defined in terms of outcomes only? Along with what students should learn and how it is measured, we need to be concerned about equitable participation in services of acceptable quality and that the resources and governance provisions for this are in place. These could be formulated as targets and linked with appropriate indicators. Participation itself, in safe, joyful and socially rewarding learning environments of children from birth to the end of compulsory education, say up to age 14, should be taken as a legitimate educational goal. This is especially relevant for protecting children from unacceptable child labour (generally up to age 14 by international convention) by keeping them engaged in an educational setting.

The categories of primary and post-primary education and the way they are still separated, is a legacy of past EFA thinking that is encouraged by bureaucratic exigencies. (This is how the organizational structure is set up in most countries; in Bangladesh schooling up to grade five and beyond grade five falls under two Ministries.) Primary education of five or six-year duration is no longer adequate basic education and most countries have extended or recognize the need to extend basic compulsory education to at least age 14 or 15, corresponding to about 10 years of schooling or its equivalent. Shouldn't the national and global goals be recast as compulsory basic education embracing primary and post-primary education up to a minimum of 14 years (which may be set at a higher level at the national level)?

How should adult and lifelong learning be included in the post 2015 agenda? Although EFA goal 3 (promote learning and life skills for youth and adults) and goal 4 (increase literacy rate by 50 percent) did not receive due attention and the literacy goal and target were set in a mechanistic and meaninglessly reductionist way, this should not be a reason to ignore these now in post-EFA and post MDG agenda. With at least a quarter of the world's population functionally illiterate and lifelong learning opportunities for all needed more than ever in the era of the knowledge economy, adaptability of skills and communications technology, lifelong learning with functional literacy skills as the base has to be a core element of the basic education agenda. Admittedly, the goal, targets and indicators have to be defined in a way that makes sense in relation to the overarching human capability agenda.

Given all the scientific evidence about early and rapid brain growth, early cognitive development and early deficits that cannot be overcome later, the phase of birth to school entry cannot be neglected and early childhood development (ECD) cannot be equated with only preschool education and school readiness. Appropriate goals and indicators should reflect this priority.

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## TVET, Skills and Post 2015 Agendas

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**Keywords:** TVET; Post-2015

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As this issue of NORRAG News makes clear, the development of skills and the creation of jobs have received considerable scrutiny in 2010. In addition, their place in the framing of development strategies is receiving increasing international attention. This is fuelled by the immediate concerns of high income countries battling recession and by the forecast that over 600 million new jobs will be needed over the next 15 years in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia as working age populations grow (WDR 2013).

However, the degree to which TVET and skills development – however defined – are finding strong footholds in the drafting of specific post-2015 global development frameworks is much less clear.

Unsurprisingly, much 2015 negotiation centres on a Mark 2 version of the MDGs. For many, especially in UN systems, the MDGs represent unfinished business. Some bilateral agencies too, have invested heavily in the MDGs, politically and technically. DFID is a prominent member of this group.

The MDG Goal 1 Target of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people retains force, as does women's share of paid employment, one of the targets under Goal 4. The education related MDGs - conceived entirely in terms of formal schooling - are seen as indicative of building essential foundation skills for adult life, albeit with insufficient attention to the quality of learning in their current formulations.

In the Education for All "movement", more broadly based than the education MDGs, there remains the determination (especially in UNESCO and International NGOs) to continue to stress the right to a basic education, while accepting the need for greater exactitude in the language of the six goals. It remains to be seen whether TVET and skills development finds a distinctive place in any new EFA construction. The 2000 EFA goals embraced the notion of life skills, but this continues to be contentious territory. It is a concept that has had limited traction in what many see should be harder edged connections between skills development, job creation and sustainable levels of employment.

The extent to which the review, updating and reformulation of existing frameworks is sufficient and appropriate in a world which will be geo-politically and economically very different in 2015 and beyond is being challenged, especially across parts of the research community. Some are seeking a more fundamental re-think of global compacts; their worth, their nature, and their focus. Arguments are being made for sustainable development, human development, human security, economic growth and poverty reduction as primary drivers, singly or in combination for post- 2015 frameworks.

The arguments in favour of one or more of these paradigms do appear to recognise that the MDGs pay insufficient attention to the creation of employment and to its contribution to economic growth and social welfare. Much less clear is how and whether global political commitments can truly make a difference in creating jobs and fostering equitable economic growth; and what aspects of skills and jobs can be addressed through coordinated global action and captured in specific targets ?

In finding ways to contribute to the many post 2015 processes (at a high strategic level or in particular education and training forums) it will be important to recognise that the worth of education, TVET and skills development cannot be taken for granted. The case still has to be made with some rigour; with a much stronger, clearly contextualised evidential base for the place of skills development in contributing to employment and job creation. If, as the World Development Report 2013 argues, development happens through jobs, then making the case for TVET and skills development would appear to require responsive, flexible and context-attuned approaches that may be difficult to capture in a one-liner global goal.

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## **Recommendations of the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Framework for Education**

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**Keywords:** Post-2015; EFA; MDG; Access; Quality; Equity

**Summary:** Commonwealth Ministers of education recently outlined their vision for education in the new global goals for development, emphasising education's catalytic power and stressing the need for equity and quality in addition to access.

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Commonwealth Ministers of Education met in London in December 2012 and developed recommendations for post-2015 which are now feeding into the UN discussions and wider debates. They discussed the need to re-focus on learning without compromising efforts to secure 100% access; to align the EFA and education MDG frameworks; and to pay more attention to equity. Commonwealth ministers correspondingly recommended that three core concerns – **access, quality** and **equity** – should run through all education goals, and that EFA and MDGs should be harmonised to avoid overlaps or gaps.

Ministers proposed that **three principal goals for education** should be contained in the post-2015 development framework. These would be positioned in the framework in a similar place to the current education MDGs. The principal goals would be supplemented by six more detailed, **subordinate goals**. These would have a similar function to the current EFA goals. Targets and deadlines would focus on 2025, but options would be available for individual countries, depending on starting point, ambition and capacity.

## Access

The original MDGs and EFA goals are unfinished business. For many countries, they will remain unfulfilled by 2015, even with a ‘final push’ to achieve them. Access – with learning – remains a major concern, and is encapsulated in **Principal Goal 1: *Every child completes a full cycle of a minimum of 9 years of continuous, free basic education and demonstrates learning achievement consistent with national standards.***

## Quality

Learning is rightfully being focussed on in the debates about the post-2015 framework. This is partly because of the problem of children being in school but failing to become proficient in basic skills, and partly due to access having previously been prioritised due to the phrasing of the current MDGs.

Of course, learning – learning that is locally relevant but globally useable; attainable but ambitious; based on tried and tested methodologies but flexible enough to respond to twenty-first century challenges – is at the heart of education. But quality learning depends on quality in other domains, such as education management, participation of the community, quality assurance mechanisms, policy and strategy, and support from development partners. Hence ministers chose ‘quality’ as a core principle. The relevance aspect of quality, education’s role in individual and economic development, and the wish to set ambitious targets for all countries, is reflected in **Principal Goal 2: *Post-basic education expanded strategically to meet needs for knowledge and skills related to employment and livelihoods.***

## Equity

Ministers were keen that development goals are not seen as relevant only to developing countries. There is no country, developed or developing, which does not need to attend to issues with access, quality, and – particularly – equity. The connections between disadvantage and lack of fulfilment of individual potential – and therefore a nation’s potential – are clear. **Principal Goal 3** sets a clear target to address this: ***Reduce and seek to eliminate differences in educational outcomes among learners associated with household wealth, gender, special needs, location, age and social group.***

The **six Sub-Goals** support increased access, quality and equity:

- i. *Reduce and seek to eliminate early childhood under-nutrition and avoidable childhood disease, and universalise access to community based ECE/D and pre-school below age 6 years*
- ii. *Universalise an ‘expanded vision of access’ to a full cycle of a minimum of 9 years of continuous basic education  
Successful achievement of national learning outcomes in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains for both primary and lower secondary cycles at age appropriate levels up to the age of 15 years*
- iii. *Invest strategically in expanded and equitable access to post-basic and tertiary level education and training linked to wellbeing, livelihoods and employment and the transition to responsible adult citizenship*
- iv. *Eliminate illiteracy and innumeracy amongst those under 50 years old*

*Provide education opportunities for young people and adults who have not successfully completed 9 years of basic education*

- v. Reduce and seek to eliminate disparities in participation in education at school level linked to wealth, location, special needs, age, gender and social group and ensure all children have equal educational opportunities and reduce gaps in measured outcomes*
- vi. Provide adequate infrastructure for learning according to national norms for buildings, basic services, safety, learning materials, and learning infrastructure within appropriate distances of households.*

### **Cross-cutting themes**

In order to focus efforts on the hardest to reach children – and to ensure that the challenges of environmental change are addressed by education – Commonwealth Ministers propose **four cross-cutting themes** to be addressed by all education goals:

- a) Education in Emergencies – Conflict and disaster risk reduction integrated into national education sector plans;*
- b) Migration – All migrants of school-age or who are education professionals recorded in monitoring of education goals by the host country to inform policy formulation;*
- c) Gender – All reporting and evaluation of the development goals disaggregated by sex and analysed through a gender lens; and*
- d) Education for Sustainable Development – Education for sustainable development mainstreamed in all education policies, teacher and school leader preparation, and curricula.*

In their meeting [statement](#), Commonwealth Ministers of Education reaffirmed the centrality of education to all development objectives. This [webpage](#) provides more details on the meeting and the [Ministers' recommendations](#). The rationale for the recommendations can be found in this [Background Paper](#), while this [Issues Paper](#) identifies education priority areas in the Commonwealth. We would welcome your engagement in the continuing discussions on education in the Commonwealth; send an email to [education@commonwealth.int](mailto:education@commonwealth.int) and we will sign you up to our online workspace in *Commonwealth Connects*.

*The Commonwealth Secretariat acknowledges the contribution of Professor Keith Lewin to the Working Group.*

This article first appeared on the UKFIET Community of Practice Blog (<http://www.ukfiet.org/cop/>) on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

## Recent publications on education and skills development

***Post-2015 Agendas: Northern tsunami and Southern ripple? The case of education and skills*** – King, K. and Palmer, R. Occasional Paper No 4, NORRAG, April 2013.

***Youth, skills development and work in the GMR 2012: A research agenda*** - King, K. Occasional Paper No 3. NORRAG, January 2013.

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***A new study of skills for the informal sector using household survey data*** - Adams, A. V., Johansson de Silva, S. and Razmara, S. World Bank, (2013 )

***China's aid and soft power in Africa: The case of education*** - King. K., James Currey/ Boydell and Brewer, May 2013

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**KENNETH KING** is Professor Emeritus, University of Edinburgh, where he was Director of the Centre of African Studies for 20 years. Since 2007, he has been international advisor for China's largest Institute of African Studies.

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