

*PAPER 6*

DEBATES IN  
SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT

***LINKING WORK,  
SKILLS AND  
KNOWLEDGE***

**Interlaken, Switzerland  
September 2001**



**WORKING GROUP  
FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION  
IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

**Secretariat:**

International Labour Organisation, NORRAG, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

**Co-ordination:**

c/o Northern policy research review and advisory network on education and training (NORRAG)

IUED, P.O.B. 136, CH - 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland

Phone: +41 22 906 59 00

Fax: +41 22 906 59 94

E-mail: [michel.carton@iued.unige.ch](mailto:michel.carton@iued.unige.ch)

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# **INTERLAKEN 2001**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Interlaken meeting of the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development represented a new stage of evolution in the activities of the Group and set the stage for further such developments. Arising out of discussions at previous meetings, it was associated with the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation's hosting of a major international conference on work, skills and knowledge, bringing together some 180 participants, half from the developing and transition countries, which took place on the three days immediately preceding the Working Group's meeting. In anticipation of the very rich discussion of the conference and its production of an "Interlaken Declaration" ([www.workandskills.ch](http://www.workandskills.ch)), it was decided to organise the Working Group meeting around the same main theme as the conference. However, this theme was then adapted to the concerns of the Group in three ways. First, it was associated to the specific issues surrounding the work of development cooperation agencies in linking work, skills and knowledge. Second, following on from the Latin American focus of the last meeting, the discussion also centred on lessons emerging from skills development activities in Africa, an issue that will be returned to in a special session of the Group next year. Third, as the Interlaken Declaration acknowledged, wide-ranging changes in the contexts in which development cooperation in skills development take place raise the importance of the Group considering a move from an emphasis on knowledge sharing to a position that also includes knowledge production.

These themes will be developed further in this discussion paper, alongside a reflection on the Interlaken Conference. In the first section, we shall see how Germany, Switzerland, the ILO and UNESCO are shifting their thinking about how to tackle issues of skills and work through development cooperation. Part of what is interesting here is that much of the debate goes beyond the technical issues of how to provide training most effectively. Thus, there is a focus on making connections across traditional sectoral boundaries, as exemplified by the concerns of SDC's new Employment and Income Division, and by the move towards closer collaboration between ILO and UNESCO. There is also a concern with the location of skills development within the overall goals of development cooperation and in relation to new ways of organising development cooperation. This is clearly shown by the example of Germany, but is true for many other countries also.

The World Bank is currently engaged in a major review of its skills-related activities in Africa in the past decade and the implications for its future policy. Reporting on the first phase of this research provided a focus for a rich discussion of a number of major issues, such as the modalities of supporting skills development in the informal sector, and the relative roles of the public and private sector in training. These issues proved so pertinent that they will form the focus of the Working Group's next two planned activities. These discussions were also enriched by the discussion of a large DFID-funded research project on education, training and enterprise in Africa and the perspectives emerging from a joint Ministry of Education, Botswana – UNESCO-UNEVOC workshop for SADC countries in Gaborone (December 2000). Thanks are owed to Malte Lipczinsky in SDC for suggesting the "marketplace" within the Working Group meeting that led to the illuminating discussion of these projects.

Finally, the need for further analysis of trends and issues in skills development and the importance of translating this into capacity development for the range of development partners were also stressed throughout the meeting. This was reflected in the presentation of a research project arising out of the Botswana workshop and in the discussion of the Working Group's own concept for a multi-agency research and training project on skills development.

The Working Group meeting was made possible by the continued support of SDC to its secretariat. Moreover, the major SDC investment in the Interlaken Conference benefited the Working Group meeting in a number of ways. As well as providing intellectual stimulation for the Working Group discussions, the Working Group was also able to take advantage of the highly efficient conference secretariat. Most valuably, SDC also supported the active participation in the Working Group of three Southern colleagues.

In addition to the presentation of agency positions in this paper, a series of further documents from these and other agencies are available on the Working Group's website: [www.vetnet.ch/wg](http://www.vetnet.ch/wg).

The Secretariat was led by Michel Carton and the meeting chaired by Kenneth King. This paper is edited by Simon McGrath.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERLAKEN CONFERENCE

The Interlaken Conference on “Linking Work, Skills and Knowledge” took place between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001. The Working Group warmly congratulates SDC for bringing together such a large and diverse group of participants. In particular, their sponsorship of the participation of more than 80 developing and transition country delegates needs praise. Too often, “international” conferences are severely biased in terms of concerns and participation towards OECD countries. Importantly also, the conference provided an impressive amount of time for detailed and contextualised discussions in working groups.

As a development cooperation agency, SDC was concerned with the importance of looking beyond discussion towards action. For this reason, it was decided to use the conference to develop an Interlaken Declaration on skills development. Two points are particularly noteworthy here. First, this was designed to send a signal to all stakeholders that skills development was an important development issue, in spite of its absence from the International Development Targets. Second, although the Declaration was to be discussed in a plenary session of the Conference, it would be drafted by a group of delegates from developing and transition countries. Unlike many declarations emerging from conferences, there was no draft statement already in the “back pocket” of the organisers.

It was the intention of SDC that this declaration should be a tool for further discussion and action rather than the conclusion of a process. This concern was reflected in the commitment of many delegates from around the world to take the Declaration home to share with colleagues.

Given the SDC decision to make the discussion of the Declaration text widely available as part of the CD-ROM of Conference Proceedings, it is inappropriate to provide a detailed textual critique here. Instead, a few comments will be made on the contribution that the Declaration can make to further debate on skills development.

The theme of the Conference and Declaration was “Linking Work, Skills and Knowledge”. This reinforces the concerns of the Working Group, and others, that skills development has entered into a new environment. This issue will be returned to through the rest of this discussion paper. However, three points are worth stressing here. First, this awareness requires those involved in skills development to understand better the theoretical and practical linkages between skills development and other aspects of development and cooperation. Second, such an improved understanding requires new analyses. Agencies have recently discovered knowledge sharing as an important part of their activities. However, the challenge for skills development is arguably at least as much about knowledge production, as we shall outline later in the proposal for a Multi-Agency Research Study. Third, for new knowledge to be acquired and acted upon by practitioners and policymakers, a renewed emphasis on capacity building within agencies and their partners is required. From the agency side, the conventional role of the technical advisor is very much brought into question by the new contexts and demands of cooperation in skills development.

The Declaration placed the bulk of its emphasis on the needs of the informal sector. This inevitably left unanswered a number of questions that will continue to be important to the Working Group. Indeed, the gaps and problems raised by the Declaration also helped shape the current and future agenda of the Working Group. Four issues can be highlighted. First, a focus on the informal sector reinforces the importance of better cooperation between skills development and enterprise development work. Second, the challenge of working with both

survivalists and those with strong growth potential remains, and raises particular issues for skills development interventions. Third, the emphasis on skills development for the informal sector indirectly points to unresolved issues about the future of public sector support to skills development for the formal sector. Fourth, the formal sector and higher education will continue to be important elements of any national strategy to generate knowledge and skills, and need to be included in the analysis alongside the informal sector.

A considerable part of the plenary discussion of the Declaration focused on the respective roles of states and markets in skills development. There is no agreement on this issue, or on the related issues of regulation and finance. Moreover, the discussion later in this paper of research on World Bank projects on skills in Africa shows the difficulty of putting theoretical positions into practice. This will be a major focus of the Working Group in the immediate future. In this, the Working Group is particularly mindful of the position already developed by the Committee of Donors for Small Enterprise Development through their Business Development Services approach (see our earlier Discussion Papers 2 and 5).

The Interlaken Conference was encouraged by SDC to focus strongly on the needs of those traditionally excluded from training. This has been answered in part in the Declaration's emphasis on skills for the informal sector. However, it also points to a continued need to understand better the ways that globalisation and other forces impact differently on particular individuals and groups and the possibilities and limits of skills development interventions in a response to these impacts.

The Declaration also serves as a reconfirmation of the need to improve linkages between education and training; knowledge and skills. The Jomtien commitment to basic education helped to divert donor attention from technical and vocational education and training (TVET). More than a decade on, both the successes and failures of the emphasis on basic education point to the need to link it to skills development and the world of work. Moreover, processes of globalisation and rapid technological change point to the emergence of more knowledge-intensive work. This also highlights the need to link education and training better. It raises particular questions about the nature and scope of interventions in the informal sector.

# **LINKING SKILLS, WORK AND KNOWLEDGE: FILLING IN THE GAPS?**

## **1. LINKING WORK AND SKILLS**

### **1.1. The redefining of quality in relevance**

It is now widely accepted that training must have relevance to the existing world of work and that quality must be determined in outcomes. No matter the cost or rigour of training, it cannot be considered high quality if it does not enhance the work and income opportunities of the trainee. However, there is a need to be clear about what outcomes and objectives are intended. This includes being clear where there is a social function or equity dimension to skills development.

### **1.2. Changes in work**

Linking work and skills requires a detailed understanding of the major changes in the world of work in recent years. This must take account of the nature of changes at the global, national and local levels and the opportunities that exist at each level for skills interventions that can support successful economic activities. This includes the challenge of doing skills development in a context in which service work is growing at the expense of production.

It is evident that the impact of globalisation is felt in the informal sector. The sector is not neatly delineated from the formal sector. The health of both is interconnected. Liberalisation is leading to new product and service availability in ways that make certain informal sector offerings no longer competitive. On the other hand, it also offers some new export opportunities and cheaper or more available raw materials, capital goods and intermediate products. Globalisation also brings new information and knowledge for producers, service providers and retailers, which can enhance their output. However, it can equally encourage new tastes that reduce the demand for traditional goods and services.

Liberalisation can lead to the dumping of goods from outside the country. This has been particularly prevalent in the textiles and clothing sectors of Africa. Both second hand and slightly defective items of clothing have contributed to the lack of competitiveness of both formal and informal sector garment producers across much of Africa. At the same time, the collapse of export markets for local formal sector firms is also leading to flooding of national markets as they seek a new survival strategy.

### **1.3. Changes in skills**

Globalisation brings about rapid changes in technology and competitive environments. This promotes lifelong learning over once-and-for-all training. It encourages more integration of education and training. It introduces a focus on knowledge value-added as a major challenge of skills development. The last decade has seen the spread of a new notion of skills. There



has been a relative decline in the emphasis given to traditional craft skills and those of the industrial artisan. A new set of skills related to information and communications technology has emerged. Equally, there has been concern with the promotion of generic skills, such as problem-solving. The latter set of skills have also been closely linked to a shift towards thinking in terms of competences. This brings with it a concern to measure the discrete abilities that students and workers possess rather than thinking in terms of whole trade test certificates.

Several challenges emerge from these trends:

- The new skills and the competence focus place new demands on conventional skills providers. Moreover, in Africa in particular, these providers have very questionable capacity to make the necessary transition.
- Many of these skills are supposed to be delivered in formal schooling. Again, the capacity for delivery in many countries is doubtful. The success or failure of such efforts in the school system clearly impacts on the role of training providers in this area.
- These notions have emerged almost exclusively in the context of developed and newly industrialised economies. Their relevance to other regions is too often assumed rather than demonstrated. Issues of both relevance and capacity are pertinent in cases such as that of the proposed Regional Qualifications Framework for Southern Africa. Indeed, it is important to note the curious case of advice on such a system being provided by organisations from developed countries with their own major implementation problems.
- The issue of relevance is particularly questionable when the focus on skill development in developing countries is shifting to the informal sector. Whether these skills are relevant to informal sector activities needs further exploration.
- Even if relevance is demonstrated, then there remain questions about the appropriate mechanisms to be used. Both non-formal education and traditional apprenticeship are important to skills transmission for the informal sector. There is still little evidence on how best, if at all, such skills can be enhanced through these pathways.

## **2. NOT EITHER OR, BUT BOTH AND**

There is a danger in development thinking of dealing in dualities. Instead, it is important to be aware that it is often more useful to think in terms of continua and the balancing of opposing tendencies. The danger of dualities appeared at a number of points in the Interlaken discussions.

### **2.1. Informal sector versus formal sector**

The emphasis on the informal sector brings with it a number of challenges. Indeed, many analysts dislike the concept because of the ways that it hinders understanding of work in micro and small enterprises. Nonetheless, the concept continues to be used widely.

It is important to avoid overstressing the division between the informal sector and the formal sector. Internationally, there are very many individuals whose work straddles the two sectors. For instance, there are few teachers in Africa who do not have a secondary source of income in the informal sector. This is even more the case at the household level. Thus, the notion of individuals, families or communities living in an informal sector “ghetto” is rarely correct.

The classic definition of the informal sector as untaxed and unregulated also is often wrong. In cases such as Ghana even income tax may be paid by enterprises that are otherwise considered informal. In many other cases, payments to police and other officials often constitute an informalisation of taxation but a real cost for producers and service providers. Equally, registration may exist, for instance, in order to access state procurement tenders. Regulation also is a widespread experience in the sense of actual restriction on places of business, and in other ways.

The notion of the informal sector also runs the danger of ignoring the economic relationships that take place across the notional divide. Where the formal sector is still functioning, sub-contracting and outsourcing to the informal sector is common. Many micro-scale traders buy their goods from formal sector wholesalers and may be supported by them through credit arrangements. Often such relationships are exploitative and a way to avoid the requirements of decent work. However, where such vertical business linkages are working at their best, there are mutual benefits to be gained from the relationship.

The informal – formal divide is often conceptualised in terms of other polarities. The former is seen as locally focused and the latter as more often globally focused. However, liberalisation has shown very clearly the inability of much of the African formal sector to survive under globalisation. Equally, it has shown, to a limited extent, the ability of micro and small enterprises to take advantage of global economic changes both in home and export markets. The traditional – modern divide also is in danger of being overstated. Much of the African formal sector is a museum of outmoded techniques and equipment. Recent studies on production in the African informal sector, however, have pointed to the spread of innovation. Of course, this reversed view of tradition and modernity; dynamism and stagnation, is itself an overstatement of the evidence. Nonetheless, it makes the point of the need for caution in assumptions about informality.

## **2.2. Growth versus survival**

The vast majority of those working within the informal sector are very poor. It is difficult to see how their activities could ever be upgraded to decent, well paying work. However, there is a danger in simply reducing our image of the sector to survival activities and the need for direct poverty alleviation. Rather, research suggests that there is a continuum of experiences within the sector. Indeed, for a small but significant proportion of the informal sector, one can earn more than in formal employment and have greater autonomy. This is important as it questions the belief that the informal sector is solely the sector of last resort.

There is danger also in the current donor emphasis on poverty. It can lead to an exclusive focus on direct intervention in what are seen as the activities of the poorest. However, this would fail to see the role that the more successful micro and small enterprises can play in providing employment, goods and services to the poorest segments of society and in providing a useful link with the formal sector. In any attempt to deliver such a vision of pro-

poor growth, it seems logical that the upper reaches of the informal sector have a valuable role to play.

### **2.3. Public versus private**

The 1990s saw a massive shift in the language of training and development away from the role of the public sector and to the private sector. At its most general, the argument now appears to be one of finding an appropriate balance and complementarity between the two. Yet, when one looks beneath the surface with regard to policies and practices in skills development, contradictions are apparent. The Business Development Services (BDS) approach of the Committee of Donors for Small Enterprise Development is far stronger on the role of the private sector than is the case for many skills development sections of development cooperation agencies. On the one hand, the BDS position has been accused of ideological fundamentalism and a simplistic application of the perceived lessons of microcredit to the context of training. On the other, skills development approaches seem to start from the position that public training providers exist and cannot easily be closed down. Moreover, it appears that the merits of both positions depend on the target group for the skills intervention, as we shall discuss below.

The presentation of the World Bank research in this paper illustrates the very great challenges that remain even where an agency apparently does have a clear position on the role of the public and private. A decade on, the TVET reforms that the Bank has actively supported in Africa have had questionable success in promoting or regulating the private provision of training.

## **3. THE SHIFT TOWARDS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE INFORMAL SECTOR**

There is a need to examine the apparent shift of many agencies towards focusing their skills development work on the informal sector. Issues arise both in terms of the challenges of achieving new objectives and in terms of what may be lost in this shift of focus.

### **3.1. The role of public providers**

So far skills development policies and projects have been largely reluctant to abandon support to public training institutions. However, this raises the question of whether these institutions can be successfully reoriented to self-employment support. Whilst there is evidence of some successful reorientations, there is also evidence of a number of failures in this respect. There are a number of other issues linked to this overall question. Public providers have traditionally focused on clients prior to employment. However, the evidence on what is successful in skills development for the informal sector suggests that interventions are more effective for those who are already working in the informal sector. Success also seems to be more likely if public providers can work together with the associations, enterprises and individuals in the informal sector. However, the World Bank research reported in this paper points to the failure of this approach in a large project in Ghana. Although only one example, it can serve as a health warning against presuming that such a reorientation is easy to achieve.

One of the key gaps in the Interlaken Declaration, and in a number of agency strategies, is what becomes of public skills development for the formal sector. A shift in emphasis towards skills development for the informal sector may be useful. However, it is difficult to conceive of a skills development or economic development strategy that does not also have a formal sector focus. In Africa in particular, there is evidence to suggest that the formal sector's own skills development work is in a severe crisis. Equally, in our Washington meeting we discussed evidence that suggested that the decline in public training for the formal sector in Latin America has had negative impacts on skills and competitiveness (Discussion Paper 5).

### **3.2. The role of private providers**

The BDS argument in favour of private providers has already been mentioned. However, there are serious questions here too about performance. It is far from clear that private skills development through formal programmes is capable of covering the whole range of skills needed. Instead, there is evidence that private providers are most efficient and effective in areas such as information and communications technologies and commercial skills but less successful in capital intensive areas of technical training. Moreover, as the World Bank research notes, private training provision in Africa is often concentrated in a few major urban centres. This is less the case in Asia, however, leading to interesting issues about context.

Concerns about the quality of private skills development are undoubtedly partly driven by public sector self-interest. Public sector training is often poor quality itself. Nonetheless, quality does remain a concern with large amounts of private provision. Our Latin American discussion in 2001 pointed to the decline in staff, curriculum and materials development that had accompanied the growth of private provision. Equally, the growth of private sector training highlights the need for adequate systems of accreditation, certification and quality assurance. It cannot simply be assumed that training markets are efficient. We need to understand more about the limits of private provision and the factors that inhibit and support its development. The World Bank research suggests that Kenya is an example of where a market for private training has been successfully helped to emerge. However, there remain questions about the sustainability of this market without external intervention.

### **3.3. The role of traditional apprenticeship**

Some of the research presented to the meeting, as well as the experiences of a number of agencies, suggests that the traditional apprenticeship systems of many African countries may be a very useful point of intervention for enhancing skills and incomes in the informal sector. Moreover, the experience of the German-supported Informal Sector Training and Resources Network project in Zimbabwe suggests that the potential of such systems can extend to countries that have conventionally been seen as having little in the way of an indigenous system of skills development.

Nonetheless, questions remain about the effectiveness of both traditional apprenticeships and interventions in these systems. Such systems are closely attuned to the skills used in the sector. Importantly, they are well inserted into the societies and cultures in which they are found. However, there are doubts regarding their ability to respond to the rapid change in the

work and skills environment linked to globalisation. They are conventionally viewed as being theory poor. There is research that suggests that skills levels are declining over time.

On the other hand, the current interest in the importance of tacit knowledge could be linked to an argument that suggests their real comparative advantage in knowledge and skills transmission over more formal models. Moreover, the extent of dynamism within the informal economy should not be overlooked. It is also important not to see the system as entirely self-contained. In many countries, new skills are also brought into the informal sector by those who straddle formal sector employment or who move into the sector from either formal training or employment.

Interventions in the traditional apprenticeship system are typically linked to attempts to strengthen informal sector associations. There is some good evidence for the success of this approach, particularly in Swiss support to associations in Mali. However, two points emerge from the evidence taken as a whole. First, this success has been based on a long-term and careful approach. Second, a number of failures have been linked to the distortion of the work of such associations by donor interventions. This is very likely when large amounts of donor money are channelled to or through such associations. Self-help has been at the core of successful associational development and there is a great risk that aid can undermine this key quality.

### **3.4. The BDS approach**

There is a strong case for a better understanding of the BDS approach within skills development circles. It is particularly important to be clear on the conditions that encourage both success and failure. It is also valuable to see the characteristics of enterprises that can be assisted effectively through this approach and those that need alternative or additional interventions.

### **3.5. The limits to skills development for the informal sector**

It is vital that skills development for the informal sector should not simply become a new orthodoxy that is safe from criticism. It is important to ask what else is needed. Also, there is uncertainty as to what skills development can do for petty traders. More needs to be known about what can prevent skills development from being utilised. There is insufficient evidence about the sustainability and scale of skills development programmes for the informal sector.

Skills development needs to be for all; like education. There is a danger of ignoring the formal sector and higher levels of technology. A notion of skills development for the informal sector would be dangerous if it served to blind those involved in skills development to the value of the micro and small enterprise concept and the role of small enterprises in pro-poor growth.

It is important that the focus on the informal sector does not divert attention from several challenges facing skills development, such as funding mechanisms; national training agencies; regulatory frameworks; and qualifications frameworks. The informal sector focus

also heightens further issues of more effectively linking policy, planning, implementation and evaluation.

#### **4. BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

##### **4.1. Skills development and enterprise development**

It is clear that a greater coordination of development cooperation in skills and enterprise development is taking place. However, parts of the discussion above make clear the need for further development of cross-sectoral understandings and capacity in this area. Considerable attention must also be paid to parallel capacity development in partner countries. This is likely to be even more of a challenge.

##### **4.2. Skills development and education**

In many cases skills development is supposed to be incorporated within sector programmes for education. Often responsibility for skills development lies, at least in part, with Ministries of Education. Also, technological change has encouraged analysts to point to the closing of the historical gap between education and training. However, a gap still remains. Educationalists often are sceptical about skills development and understand little about its debates. After the Decade of Education for All there is an urgent need for better understanding and cooperation between education and skills development. It is important for this to be at all levels of the education system. The focus on skills development for the informal sector has particular resonance with elements of the donor approach to non-formal education. The articulation of skills development and non-formal education activities is an important challenge for the immediate future.

##### **4.3. Skills development and economic development**

The encouragement to link skills and work more closely is an invitation to think more deeply about the relationships between skills development and economic development. There are a number of aspects to this. A better understanding of the links between skills development and globalisation, competitiveness and the knowledge economy is crucial. Links to technology policy, to thinking about clusters and to local economic development are important if such a debate is to focus on local contexts.

##### **4.4. Skills development and other sectoral and thematic priorities**

Skills development has interconnections with debates on gender, child labour, disability, and the particular challenges faced by youths and refugees. Renewed connections with agriculture and natural resources management need to be made.

#### **4.5. Skills development and poverty alleviation**

The position of skills development in future agency portfolios crucially depends on the ability of skills development professionals to make explicit the linkages between their work and the issue of poverty alleviation. For many agencies this is now the central focus of their work. As such, it is a powerful filter for funding decisions. Issues of skills development are not implicit in the International Development Targets, which form the core of the cooperation strategies of agencies such as DFID and JICA. However, a more sophisticated reading of these targets can be made that sees skills development as crucial directly to the education and economic targets and indirectly to all of them through capacity development issues.

Equally, skills development has not been a major emphasis of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) so far. Here too, it is easy to see how a case could be made. However, a number of agency representatives at the Interlaken meeting argued that this would require new skills amongst agency staff, as there has been little premium placed on cross-sectoral thinking historically. Given their cross-sectoral focus, it is possible that PRSPs could be a vehicle for improved agency and partner capacity in this regard.

#### **4.6. Skills development and other overall development cooperation objectives**

A number of countries, such as Germany and Denmark, have a series of other overall development cooperation objectives in addition to the primary focus on poverty alleviation. These typically include human rights and good governance, environmental sustainability and gender. It is also important for skills development to be connected to these cross-cutting themes. There are the beginnings of an attempt to do this in some agencies. However, capacity here is still weak.

### **5. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND NEW MODES OF COOPERATION**

The way that development cooperation is pursued has also experienced major changes in recent years. This is true even where the rhetoric of change goes further than the reality.

#### **5.1. National ownership**

National ownership is now supposed to be at the heart of development cooperation. It is important to note that this is supposed to go beyond the traditional bilateral relationship. Instead, there should be widespread stakeholder participation. This will inevitably impact on skills development. This is another challenge for the traditional approach. Instead of an emphasis on technical cooperation, issues become more analytical and political.

#### **5.2. PRSPs and SWAPs**

PRSPs and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) also shift the attention of development cooperation away from the technical level. SWAPs also have one other important impact on

skills development. The shift to SWAPs has seen a concentration on only two to four sectors in a smaller number of countries in the cases of Germany or Denmark. In association with the poverty focus, this is a threat to the scale of skills development cooperation. Skills development is only part of one out of 10 possible sectors that can be supported by Germany. It seems likely that there will be only five SWAPs for skills development in Danish development assistance in the near future. Skills development may appear in education SWAPs but even then it is likely to get small emphasis in implementation.

There is also a challenge in dealing with skills development in other SWAPs. Inevitably, it will be present in sectors such as health and agriculture. This offers another point of influence for skills development professionals. However, the challenge of influencing other sectoral teams will be large.

### **5.3. Knowledge management; knowledge sharing and skills development**

Another of the current trends in development cooperation is the discovery of the importance of knowledge. This appears as knowledge management as agencies seek to “know better what they already know”. It can be termed knowledge sharing where the effort is focused on making this available to others. The latter is the approach of this Working Group. There are positive opportunities to facilitate better sharing within and between agencies, between bilateral partners (including civil society) and between “Southern” countries. However, with this comes the danger of greater agency certainty and focus on quantitative data and over synthesised information rather than contextualised and embedded knowledge

Agency decentralisation adds to the knowledge sharing and capacity building challenges. The new focus on knowledge also highlights the weakness of knowledge production and analytical capabilities globally in development issues generally. This is a significant problem in the area of skills development. The challenge is made greater by the growing need to be able to locate skills development within its broader contexts. Thus, new capacity in knowledge production and analysis is urgently required if skills development is to respond to the challenges outlined in this discussion.



## **TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **Germany: Recommendations Regarding the Concentration of Activities in the Context of Selecting Focal Areas as part of BMZ<sup>1</sup> Country Programming**

#### **1. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **1.1. Purpose of selecting focal areas of development cooperation**

The purpose of selecting focal areas is to improve the significance, efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation by concentrating collaboration with each cooperation country on just a few focal areas. In view of scarce human resources, it is also intended to make better use of available capacities for managing and coordinating bilateral cooperation. The selection of focal areas complements the concentration on fewer countries and the intended improved integration of bilateral and European/multilateral cooperation, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of development cooperation. Bilateral development cooperation is embedded in the global structural policy approach of German development policy. The selection of focal areas should reflect that fact.

##### **1.2. Recommendations for the selection of focal areas in the guidelines for drafting country strategies**

On the basis of dialogue with the partner, the focal areas of development cooperation with the country in question are identified in the country strategy. The following elements should be used as guidance: strategic development goals; core problems and potential; the political, legal, ecological, socioeconomic and sociocultural environment; German experience to date as well as that of other donors; and the development policy priorities and comparative advantages of German development cooperation.

The country strategies are intended to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of German development cooperation by

- concentrating on just a few focal areas of collaboration with the cooperation country in question,
- formulating, for these focal areas, support methods/strategies that transcend the project level (“Key Cooperation Sector Strategies”), and
- making reference to the objectives of global structural policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Ministry for Cooperation.

### **1.3. Definition of focal areas**

Focal areas are topics, sectors or subsectors in which German development cooperation, by making concerted use of its instruments through projects and programmes that are linked together by an overarching strategy or policy, contributes significantly towards solving structural core problems existing in the cooperation country.

### **1.4. Criteria for focal areas and for key cooperation sector strategies**

The following criteria must be taken into account in order to arrive at sufficiently concrete focal areas:

- A core problem can be clearly identified to the solution of which a contribution is to be made.
- The issue in question is suitable for the formulation of an overarching strategy or policy (single overall goal, target group relevance, criteria for becoming active, openings for interlinkages, etc.). Activities within one focal area may address different levels.
- The German contribution must have an obvious qualitative significance for attaining the cooperation country's development goals. The appropriate level on which such significance can be reached, e.g. on the basis of the activity's character as a model (on an appropriate scale), need not necessarily be the national or sector level; it can also be the regional or subsector level.
- Account must be taken of the differing potential and roles of the state, the private sector, and society. Advantage should be taken of opportunities for making more effective, efficient and sustainable use of German development cooperation in collaboration with the EU and other bilateral and multilateral donors. The comparative advantages of German development cooperation and its opportunities for bringing its influence to bear must be taken into account in comparison with activities of other donors and in the context of a coordinated support policy on the part of the major donors.
- It is desirable to concentrate activities on reform-oriented partner institutions and on players that have the necessary decision-making powers or potential for change and influence in the focal area in question.

### **1.5. Concentration as a process**

Concentration on fewer focal areas can only be achieved in the medium term and on the basis of agreement with the cooperation countries and taking into consideration the focal areas of other donors. So concentration will be the result of a process. A schedule should be agreed with the partner for phasing out support to activities that are not incorporated in the focal areas.

## **1.6. Leeway when making commitments**

In “Priority Partner Countries”, the entire set of development policy instruments can be used in selected focal areas (if possible, only three); in “Partner Countries”, efforts concentrate, if possible, on a single focal area only. With a view to partnership-based collaboration with cooperation countries and Germany’s own development policy aspirations, there should be some leeway within country programs. This must not be to the detriment of sufficiently concrete definition of focal areas and strategy formulation.

However, such leeway is only acceptable in cases where it is not possible or where it does not make sense to allocate funds to the focal areas (“subsidiary” activities). A special justification must be given for the deviation. The leeway is to be used, above all, for the implementation of other important development policy activities such as “positive measures” (specific action to promote good governance) along the lines of the German government’s five development policy criteria; innovative activities (such as public-private partnerships or new financing instruments); thematic programs; solution of individual specific problems; or development of a future focal area.

## **1.7. Validity for all instruments of bilateral development cooperation**

A holistic approach to development cooperation requires that country-specific focal areas be equally valid for all instruments of bilateral development cooperation used in a given cooperation country. In addition to Financial Cooperation (FC) and Technical Cooperation (TC) in the strict sense, this also includes the agencies that execute official TC in the broader sense (CDG, DSE, CIM, DED).<sup>2</sup>

Non-governmental sponsors of TC in the broader sense should consider the focal areas selected as guidance for their own activities; so should DEG.<sup>3</sup>

## **1.8. Monitoring the success of concentration on focal areas**

The quality and development success of the concentration on focal areas shall be supported by accompanying monitoring by BMZ.

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Duisburg Agency; German Foundation for International Development; Centre for International Migration; German Development Service.

<sup>3</sup> German Development Agency.

## **2. SELECTION OF FOCAL AREAS**

Focal areas are selected together with the partner.

### **2.1. The four objectives of German development policy**

The selection of focal areas must be linked to the four dimensions of objectives pursued by German development policy:

- the creation of living conditions enabling a life in dignity, and poverty reduction,
- the promotion of human rights and fundamental democratic principles, peaceful conflict management and gender equality,
- fostering balanced global ecological conditions, and
- economic development and cooperation in, and with, partner countries.

When selecting focal areas, the general environment for successful cooperation must be assessed. Openings for improving the environment, especially with regard to the five criteria (respect for human rights, popular participation in political decision-making, the rule of law and a reliable legal system, a social market economy, and development-oriented state action), should be given special attention as the focal areas are chosen.

In formulating an overarching strategy or policy for the focal areas, the four dimensions of sustainable development objectives (political, social, ecological, economic dimension) must be taken into account.

### **2.2. Current focal areas**

The following overview forms a framework for the selection of focal areas, with a view to concentrating German development cooperation, but it does not make a claim to being exhaustive. Focal areas that are not part of this list must be derived from the specific situation in a given country and backed by convincing justifications.

- Democracy, civil society and public administration (human rights including their special dimensions of women's and children's rights, reform of the judicial system, decentralisation, municipal development)
- Development of peace, crisis prevention (including the strengthening of the potential for peace, reconciliation, demobilisation)
- Education
- Health, family planning, HIV/AIDS
- Drinking water, water management, sanitation/waste management
- Food security, agriculture (including fishery)

- Environmental policy, protection and sustainable use of natural resources (including desertification control, preservation of soil fertility, sustainable use of forests, biodiversity)
- Economic reform and development of the market system (including financial system, trade policy and promotion of the private sector, employment, vocational training, informal sector, SME, industrial environmental protection)
- Energy (including energy efficiency, regenerative energy)
- Transport and communication

### **2.3. Integrated rural / urban development**

The selection of focal areas can also be achieved by regional concentration within the framework of integrated efforts for rural or urban development. In such a case, activities in each of the areas in question must be closely linked, in terms of their substance, to a consistent and significant support strategy.

# Switzerland: Reorientation of Vocational Education and Training

## 1. CONTEXT

Global influences cause quick changes in the world of work, and they have an impact on vocational education and training (VET<sup>4</sup>) concepts. Skills, knowledge and the access to information are key factors for individuals, families and small scale enterprises in order not to get lost in a dramatically changing environment. Flexible training systems are required to qualify people for these challenges.

The Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) has elaborated the *Strategy 2010* as a mid-term orientation framework. Poverty alleviation and sustainable development are its core issues and overall goals. Within that strategy, employment and income was identified as one out of five thematic priority areas, and VET / skills development as a key instrument in combination with micro and small enterprises promotion. SDC is active both in urban and rural areas. At the organisational level, the *Employment and Income Division* is part of the newly created *Thematic and Technical Resources Department*.

## 2. LESSONS LEARNT

During the first twenty years of its existence, SDC favoured the establishment of *Centres of Excellence* in VET. They brought excellent results at comparatively high qualification levels. However, due to their high costs in particular, they had a limited outreach. Effective VET systems have to face the realities of the present world of work in developing and transition countries, even if this is sometimes difficult and painful.

The reality in developing and transition countries is that many young people have limited access to education and training or, because of economic reasons, are forced to move out of schools and long term training. They have to start a money earning activity or to get an - often badly paid and unstable - job. Moreover, between 50 and 80% of all employment in developing and transition countries is generated by the informal economy. Therefore vocational training systems have to get prepared to adapt the training they offer and deliver so that an increasing majority of young people do have access to basic education and training.

## 3. SOME STRATEGIC GUIDELINES OF SDC IN VET AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The following remarks are based on seven years' working experience with the SDC VET policy of 1994. At the same time we take the overall orientation of SDC's strategy 2010 into consideration and apply it at the level of VET and skills development.

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<sup>4</sup> SDC uses the term vocational education and training (VET) in its systemic sense; as a development agency, SDC increasingly supports skills development (SD) activities stressing thus the developmental and dynamic character of training within a changing environment.

The key question for SDC is, how do projects and programmes have to be designed and organised if they are to provide a substantial contribution to employment and income of less favoured groups, youths and women? Such considerations lead to the following guiding strategic elements of SDC in VET and skills development.

### **3.1. World of work and delivery**

VET has to be organised in a way that allows flexible and specific training delivery, meeting the demand of local labour markets, be it as part of the informal or formal economy. Both the identification of training contents and the organisation of training delivery are results of participatory processes and build upon local realities and practices. This is preferably done in cooperation with associations and like-minded groups, comprising individuals and micro and small enterprises. Therefore, cooperative training modes link the world of work with the world of training and help for burden sharing.

### **3.2. Competencies**

Training contents feature a mixture of occupational, managerial, basic and social competencies, varying according to local conditions. Linking these different competencies helps to bridge work and life contexts.

### **3.3. Poverty alleviation and outreach**

In order to pursue the overall goal of poverty alleviation consistently, SDC has to ensure that its projects and programmes reach the appropriate target groups (less favoured, youth), take gender aspects systematically into consideration and have a substantial outreach. This has to be monitored carefully.

### **3.4. Costs and financing**

The issue of costs and financing of VET is closely linked with the outreach. Training has to be affordable for the target group, and costs have to be shared between different actors. This requires three things: Firstly, costs must be known. Secondly, they must be minimised and distributed over time, e.g., through modularised delivery mechanisms. Thirdly, cofinancing mechanisms, with public, entrepreneurial and private participation, are to be developed. The development and introduction of adapted and flexible financing instruments is equally important, be it at the institutional and system level or, for example, through training vouchers.

### **3.5. Levels of intervention**

SDC focuses mainly on the *meso* level, supporting the work of predominantly local public and private institutions, which have for their part a strong impact at *micro* level. Where its impact or concepts are particularly promising, specific policy dialogue at *macro* level is pursued or initiatives of groups and associations are supported.

### **3.6. Organisational development**

The need for skills development is multifaceted. The number of actors is increasing, and the VET environment is generally getting more complex. Organisational and institutional development of training providers is of increasing importance. They are challenged by questions of how to get organised, and how to communicate and cooperate with others in providing the most appropriate services.

### **3.7. Complementing skills development**

Global changes call for lifelong learning, and therefore skills development needs the access to relevant knowledge. Linking training with the world of work means to know it first. That is why training needs assessments and information services help to develop and update realistic and relevant training modules. Particularly if complemented by occupational counselling and placement services, they add value to acquired skills by increasing the chances of applying skills and finding employment after training.

### **3.8. Linking skills development with basic education**

In the struggle for survival and growth people need both basic skills (literacy, numeracy and social skills) and knowledge as well as specific ones related to a concrete world of work and jobs. Therefore, SDC supports linkages between basic education and training activities, be it in or between distinct programmes.

### **3.9. Linking skills development with small enterprise development**

Skills development and small enterprise development are closely related. Trained people want to apply their skills, and enterprises cannot develop without evolving skills. Therefore, SDC links skills development concepts and programmes with small enterprise promotion, comprising financial and non-financial services. This may happen within single programmes or between them.



### **3.10. Geographic focus**

According to the *Strategy 2010*, the thematic divisions of SDC support cooperation with developing and transition countries as well as relations with multilateral organisations. Given the many new programmes in transition countries, this causes a considerably increased demand for the services of the SDC's Employment and Income Division and its skills development unit.

### **3.11. Funds**

The overall funds which SDC orients towards skills development are supposed to increase because of three main reasons: an increase of the overall development budget of SDC; growth as an integrated component in a majority of programmes; and the particular importance of VET in cooperation with transition countries.

### **3.12. Cooperation and networking**

Cooperation and networking is of mutual benefit. Therefore it is important to capitalise on the experiences of bilateral cooperation, and to feed them into multilateral discussions. On the other hand, SDC concepts and processes have to reflect the *State of the Art* of the international debate. This urges for a consistent exchange, e.g. in the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development, with organisations like ILO, GTZ, UNESCO, European Training Foundation, Swiss centres of competence, and for participation in local and regional networks.

### **3.13. Skills development as a transversal issue**

SDC's development co-operation in whichever areas almost always includes educational and training aspects. Thus, the exchange of experience and lessons learnt going across the traditional sectoral demarcations, is of utmost importance, and contributes to institutional learning.

### **3.14. Learning**

Vocational education and training is always also about learning. Therefore SDC supports initiatives for self learning. And at institutional level, be it within partner organisations or within SDC, the capitalisation of experiences is of particular importance for future action. This includes the communication of good practices and lessons learnt, the facilitation of regional exchange, and the training of cadres and intermediaries.

#### **4. TOWARDS A NEW FOCUS**

There will be a lot of continuity with regard to the existing sectoral policy, but with some stronger focus on:

- Poverty alleviation and outreach;
- Bringing and linking SD as close as possible with the world of work and employment, be it in rural or urban self-employment, in small scale enterprises of both the informal and formal economies;
- Adding value by linking skills development promotion with small enterprise development and basic education.

Together, these contribute to both survival and growth.

## **The International Labour Office**

### **1. TOWARDS A NEW HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATION**

#### **1.1. The current Recommendation**

The present ILO Human Resources Development Recommendation (no 150) has been overtaken by economic and social developments since it was adopted in 1975. It reflects the economic planning approach of the period. It places little emphasis on demand and labour market considerations in learning and training. It makes little reference to the roles and responsibilities of “stakeholders” other than governments in training provision. It offers no guidance on many issues that are central to training policy and systems reforms at present.

#### **1.2. The process of developing a new Recommendation**

The preparation of a new recommendation will be on the agenda of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2003, as proposed by the ILO’s constituents in a “general discussion” on human resources development at ILC 2000. A “Law and Practice” report which reviews contemporary training legislation, policies and practices has been sent out to member States. It includes a questionnaire asking member states about the content of the proposed new Recommendation. Their answers will be compiled into a report which together with “draft conclusions” will be submitted to a “first discussion” by the ILO’s constituents at ILC 2003. A “second discussion”, scheduled for ILC 2004, is expected to adopt the new Recommendation. The ILO will then have the task of developing a practical database that will help countries implement the new recommendation.

### **2. ILO’S OTHER SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

#### **2.1. The decent employment focus**

Standard setting is only one part of the ILO’s work. It continues to be active in research, advice and training activities. In the area of skills development, the major focus is on linking skills with decent employment. This includes concerns with:

- Skills and knowledge related to labour market needs;
- Skills that are broad, portable, and industry-based;
- Skills that enable a person to cope with a rapidly changing workplace and new technology;
- Skills to aid transition from informal economy to decent work;
- Lifelong learning skills to maintain employability.

## 2.2. Supporting decent employment

The ILO seeks to support decent employment through a two-pronged strategy. First, this is done through training policies, programmes and institutions. The ILO provides advice and assistance in developing national training policies and programmes. It also assists in strengthening institutions to promote greater investment in knowledge, skills and employability. Second, it focuses attention on equity of opportunity and access. Here it supports activities that can reduce obstacles and advocates support services to persons so that they can acquire skills and decent employment.

ILO's decent employment agenda provides the framework for its human resources and skills development activities. Major policy statements that guide the ILO's work in the foreseeable future include: *Conclusions concerning human resources training and development* (adopted at the International Labour Conference 2000); *Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace*, which is expected to be approved by the ILO's Governing Body in November 2001 and various international labour conventions on, for example, human resources development (C.142), employment services (C.88 and C. 181) and vocational rehabilitation and employment (C.159).

The objective of the ILO skills development activities is to encourage ILO's tripartite constituents (governments, employers' organisations and workers' organisations) to "invest more in training and skills development to provide women and men improved and equal access to decent employment". There are two prongs to the strategy: *firstly*, providing countries assistance in developing national training policies and programmes and strengthening institutions to promote greater investment in knowledge, skills and employability. *Secondly*, promote equity of opportunity and access to skills development for all groups of society, and mitigate obstacles and advocate support services so that individuals can gain access to decent work.

As part of its activities to promote investment in training the ILO has launched a large programme to develop a database on training expenditures that will be differentiated by regions, size of companies, and their sector or industry affiliation. One outcome of this work will be the development of a series of benchmarks on good investment practices as a point of orientation for countries, sectors and enterprises. National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) is another major area of present and future ILO work. The intent is to develop a database on good practices in developing such frameworks; prepare a study comparing various NQF approaches; and undertake research into recognition of prior learning. Recent developments, for example the growth of so-called high performance work organisations (HPWOs) and the ICT revolution has made learning in the workplace increasingly important. ILO has consequently stepped up its work in this area. A series of case studies have been completed and regional meetings conducted on the topic, activities which will be followed up by development of guidelines, provision of advisory services and concrete training activities. Among other areas of work can be mentioned the ILO's participation in the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Youth Employment, and integrating the lifelong learning perspective into activities of training policy development, advocacy and service provision. A major event was the ILO Global Employment Forum, 1-3 November 2001. This large conference gave ILO constituents and private sector representatives an opportunity to put employment promotion at the centre of economic and social policy making. It gave a boost to the formation of global alliances between the ILO and other major international actors, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, UN and UNESCO in the pursuit of these objectives.

## **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation**

### **1. THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

#### **1.1. The establishment of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre**

Hosted by the Federal Republic of Germany, the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre became operational in Bonn in September 2000. Through the Centre, UNESCO seeks to provide a platform for inter-agency cooperation within and beyond the United Nations system. In particular, the Centre will play an important role in cooperation with the ILO in the area of technical and vocational education and training.

#### **1.2. The activities of the UNESCO Centre**

The Centre's first major activity has been to support a process of regional cooperation in skills development in Southern Africa (see separate report below). Similar initiatives in other regions will follow. The UNESCO Centre will also focus on:

- assisting developing countries in strengthening and upgrading their TVET systems, and their articulation between skills and work;
- Providing a clearing house to facilitate the sharing of information and materials on TVET-related matters amongst all those active in this field, including a website ([www.unevoc.de](http://www.unevoc.de)) and electronic mail services (UNESCO-UNEVOC Electronic Mail Forum);
- Publishing materials promoting best practices in TVET;
- Strengthening the UNEVOC network through support to its national centres and by enhancing their capacities for international cooperation.

### **2. THE UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION (UIE)**

The UIE is a specialised centre for adult and lifelong learning, literacy, post-literacy, non-formal education and continuing education. Its main programme concerns the follow up of Objectives 3 and 4 of the Dakar World Education Forum, namely ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met; and achieving a 50% improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015. Through the alignment of its work on implementing the Dakar framework alongside those of the 1997 International Conference on Adult Education, UIE has a particular concern with adult learning and the world of work. This, and other UIE work, proceeds through research, advocacy and capacity building.

### **3. THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING**

In recent years, the programme on technical and vocational education and training focussed on the following policy issues: How can secondary education be made more relevant to the labour market? What links between schools and employers must be established to facilitate the transition from school to work, and what role can technical and vocational education play in this respect? What strategies can be developed for young people at risk?

Research and exchange activities have been implemented in the area of financing and management of technical and vocational education systems. IIEP has conducted several training programmes for policy-makers and practitioners on issues such as: education and employment policies, the financing of technical and vocational education, and the evaluation of technical and vocational education policies and systems. Furthermore, within its Annual Training Programme, IIEP offers various modules related to education and the labour market as well as TVET management and policies. IIEP also provided direct technical support services to countries and agencies in various areas.

Two studies are being conducted for the World Bank on TVET in SSA, one reviewing current trends in public sector TVET systems and policies, the other looking at private TVET provision in Mali and Senegal. A study on support programmes for improving traditional apprenticeship in four countries of West Africa has also been initiated (Benin, Mali, Senegal, Togo). This work will review innovative experiences to introduce dual training in informal sector apprenticeship.

### **4. THE DIVISION FOR SECONDARY, TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

The Section for Technical and Vocational Education at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris is part of the Division for Division for Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education (STV). The Section is responsible, inter alia, for UNESCO's normative (standard setting) instruments in TVET, such as the "Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education", and for the follow-up of the Seoul Congress recommendations.

### **5. COLLABORATION WITH THE ILO**

Following meetings of a working group in March and in July 2001, UNESCO and ILO have agreed to collaborate in the following areas:

- Joint activities, e.g. on the development of Regional Qualification Frameworks in Southern Africa;
- The creation of a working group to meet at least twice yearly to take forward collaboration;
- The possibility will be explored of producing a joint policy framework on TVET and education for the world of work;

- The UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre is intended to be a point of collaboration between the two agencies and the ways of providing this service will be examined through concrete collaborative activities

# **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: LESSONS FROM RESEARCH**

## **Research on how the World Bank's TVET Projects in Africa Reflect the Bank's Overall TVET Policy**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This review covers 24 projects started or completed in the 1990s in SSA that include assistance for technical-vocational education and training (TVET). The review of Bank experience with TVET projects forms part of a larger review of TVET in SSA. Regional support for TVET over the last decade is compared with recommendations in the Bank's 1991 Policy Paper on TVET. The review is based on a desk study of Bank documents, complemented by staff interviews. The study addresses the following questions:

1. How have Bank-financed projects in SSA responded to the new policy on TVET?
2. What have been the results?
3. What lessons can be learned for the future from project experience over the past decade?
4. What recommendations can be made to improve Bank practices?

### **2. RESPONSIVENESS OF TVET PROJECTS TO THE 1991 POLICY**

The Bank Policy Paper of 1991 recommended five areas in which Bank projects could support skills development, namely: improving economic analysis for training; strengthening primary and secondary education; encouraging private sector training; improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public training; and using training as a complement to equity strategies. How well did the education projects in the 1990s respond to this message? The answer varies by recommendation, generally negative for project analysis and generally positive for investment innovations.

#### **2.1. Analysis of economic context**

With some notable exceptions, the finding of this review is that the 1991 Bank observation about analysis of economic context is still valid: "... the analytical basis of vocational lending has remained comparatively weak."



## **2.2. Strengthening primary and secondary education**

The Bank Policy Paper argued that a good basic education is often the best vocational preparation. In the 1990s Bank investments have given overwhelming priority to basic education. Primary education accounted for \$940 million of direct lending, and general secondary education \$240 million. TVET absorbed \$125 million of direct lending, (5% of the total for education and training), a sharp decline from the 1970s and 1980s when TVET accounted for 22% and 19%, respectively, of total lending for education and training. One consequence of the Policy was to invest less in expensive modes of delivery (lengthy pre-service training), invest less in expensive infrastructure (bricks & mortar), and devote greater attention to policy development. Reforms often did not require large investments.

## **2.3. Encouraging private sector training**

It is helpful to divide this topic into two parts: private training providers, and employer training. In terms of private training provision, none of the eleven cases reviewed analysed the regulatory and other constraints on private training providers. Without the analysis of constraints on the regulatory framework of private training providers it is not clear how needed policy changes could be proposed to create a favourable economic climate in which private training could flourish. The case for enterprise-based training was much stronger. Several projects analysed constraints on investment in training by employers. In many countries over-regulation of the private sector may not be a problem, or – if it is – not the main issue. The challenge instead may be to get the private sector to provide better quality training. The main regulatory issue may be insufficient quality assurance by public authorities, i.e., ensuring that minimum quality standards are met at the lower end of private provision.

## **2.4. Improving public training**

In general, Bank TVET projects strongly supported efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public training. A variety of means was employed, including adopting a market orientation, improving institutional responsiveness (which itself involves an array of interventions), building policy implementation capacity, using resources efficiently and diversifying funding mechanisms. Each is presented in sequence below.

### **2.4.1. Links with employers.**

Half the projects under review included mechanisms to link training better with employers via their participation in governance of training systems. In some cases, the problem was not getting agreement for employer participation in training boards, but putting it into operation in the face of government opposition. In general, the most successful cases involved incentives for employers to become closely involved – in terms of employer control over funds or system management. The least successful cases were councils or advisory bodies in which employers had little real authority.

## **2.4.2. Better institutional responsiveness.**

Better institutional responsiveness to market forces was sought in four areas: a shift away from formal technical-vocational schools, establishment of new financing mechanisms to stimulate supply responses, development of labour market information systems (LMIS) and decentralisation of responsibilities. Each area is explained below.

### **2.4.2.1. Pre-service TVET versus in-service training**

In comparison with the past, Bank projects deemphasised support for lengthy, formal pre-service training in favour of short, focused in-service training.

### **2.4.2.2. Financing mechanisms**

New financing mechanisms were also introduced in projects to change incentives and prompt more flexible supply responses. These included the financing of training funds in nine projects and use of training vouchers in two projects. The experience with training funds was generally positive for training in both the formal and informal sector. Vouchers proved to be an effective instrument to simulate demand-driven training in Kenya. However, replication of the Kenya voucher successes elsewhere cannot be presumed. It would require, *inter alia*, a culture of informal apprenticeships and associations for microbusinesses. In Ghana, the plan to use “intake vouchers” for trainees in the informal sector was never implemented. Among other things, it was found to be unworkable because of inadequate concentration of training providers within a region from which voucher holders could choose. Vouchers are not a simple, straightforward intervention.

### **2.4.2.3. Labour market information systems (LMIS)**

Methods to gather labour market information efficiently were attempted in virtually all projects under implementation. Results have been disappointing for the most part: implementation has been problematic. The difficulty in establishing an effective LMIS is perhaps easy to underestimate. Observatories depend on others for information and this requires cooperation across bureaucratic boundaries. Quality research and researchers tend to be costly and in demand elsewhere. Dynamic leadership is required to keep information up to date. However, in the final analysis observatories may not have much value in informal markets that do not appear to suffer from market failure of information.

### **2.4.2.4. Making training institutions autonomous and accountable**

Enhancing the autonomy and accountability of training institutions was sought in only three projects although this has been found elsewhere to have a powerful effect on market responsiveness.

#### **2.4.2.5. Developing capacity for policy implementation through management structures**

Most of the projects in the review group provided assistance to strengthen national agencies in support of TVET. However, except for two projects, the Bank's experience was not very successful in the early 1990s with establishment of training boards and councils. No new boards appear among recent projects still under implementation compared with their predecessors. The finding here underscores a well-known lesson, namely, the difficulty of achieving lasting institutional development. Careful planning, continuous high level government commitment and patient nurturing are essential for long term success.

#### **2.5. Use resources efficiently**

As the Policy Paper pointed out, good training costs more than good education. Consequently, it is important to manage costs efficiently. None of the projects sought consolidation of training institutions or privatisation of ownership of public assets.

#### **2.6. Diversify sources of financing for TVET**

The Policy Paper cited the importance of securing stable sources of financing to improve training results. Constraints on public funding mean that contributions from employers and trainees have to be increased. Several projects sought to study the feasibility of applying levies on employers for training purposes. Other projects tried to implement such levies, but usually without complete success. The levies often were collected, but were never used for vocational training: the funds were re-directed to other pressing needs by the central financial authorities. Direct transfers from treasury to the training fund, bypassing the government finance ministry, worked best. Some cases were successful in increasing cost recovery from trainees, although the scope for such financing is generally limited owing to the inability of trainees to afford such payments in the informal sector. The failure of cost sharing in several projects suggests the need to rethink ways of accomplishing the objective for poorer clients. Financing arrangements need to be tailored to what the target groups can afford.

#### **2.7. Training as a complement to equity strategies**

Most projects provided some targeted assistance for women, but only one explicitly provided targeted training in non-traditional skills to channel women into higher paying occupations. However, Bank projects responded in a major way to support informal sector training as recommended by the Policy Paper. One major finding of the review is that the projects appear to be relatively successful in providing training services to the informal sector, e.g. self-employed persons, micro and small enterprises, master craftspeople and apprentices. However, the costs of the interventions have not been related systematically to the effects. Moreover, sustainability of training for the informal sector also seems to be an open question. Serving poorer clientele in the informal sector requires adequate efforts at outreach, including appropriate dissemination of information, NGO involvement and field presence.

## **2.8. Monitoring and evaluation**

Projects generally performed poorly in establishing effective systems of monitoring and evaluation, but currently active projects do better than the completed projects. No evidence was found in this review of attempts at relating costs to outputs and impact using information produced from the projects. Similarly, none of the projects reviewed seems to pay sufficient attention to quality assurance of training outcomes. Inadequate evaluation systems are the single biggest gap in the projects observed.

## **2.9. Other points**

This review also reinforces lessons previously identified in Bank literature, namely: the need for modest, appropriate objectives; the need for appropriate project management arrangements; the importance of other factors than training (e.g. credit, markets) for good outcomes when dealing with small scale entrepreneurs; the challenge of maintaining commitment to reforms under rapidly changing political circumstances; the difficulty of achieving institutional change compared with procurement of goods, yet attention in supervision tends to be reversed; and the importance of designing strategies in advance to counter inevitable changes in project personnel.

## **3. MAIN CONCLUSIONS**

TVET projects in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s were highly responsive to the prescriptions of the 1991 Bank Policy. Projects shifted towards in-service training and the informal sector, used non-public delivery systems in many cases, and employed financial incentives to stimulate greater responsiveness in the public sector. The main weaknesses were (a) weak analysis of the economic context, (b) neglect of regulatory constraints on private education, (c) unsuccessful efforts at diversifying financing for TVET, (d) failure of most observatories and labor market information systems, and (e) inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research suggest that the Bank should:

- Develop guidelines for the analysis of the economic context of TVET programmes, identify examples of good practice and monitor compliance in project analysis;
- Base the case for assistance to private training by analysing broadly the incentives and constraints on the development of private training markets. The analysis of incentives should include regulatory and other constraints on the development of private sector training providers with a view to inclusion of appropriate policy reforms in its project assistance;
- Continue and expand the use of financial incentives (e.g. competitive training funds) to induce flexible supply responses from both the public and private providers;

- Conduct a separate study to (a) determine whether labour market observatories should be included in future project assistance, particularly in countries with sizeable informal sectors, and, if so (b) prepare guidelines on the design of LMIS components that take into account their complexity, and identify models for good practice;
- Recognise the organisational and administrative difficulties (particularly, financial controls) in operating a voucher scheme effectively;
- Explore different ways to mobilise resources for TVET in view of the frequent misappropriation of training levies and the limited ability of trainees to pay in the informal sector;
- Encourage future projects to include impact surveys on outcomes and benefits of training, but extend the scope to include the costs and sustainability of such training; and
- Greatly strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to provide information systematically on the cost effectiveness of alternative training interventions.

# **Learning to Compete: DFID-Supported Research on Education, Training and Enterprise in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The findings have recently been produced from a three-year research project supported by the UK Department for International Development ([www.ed.ac.uk/centas/lte](http://www.ed.ac.uk/centas/lte)). It was coordinated by the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh but was conducted in partnership with researchers from the Universities of the Witwatersrand and the Western Cape (South Africa), as well as K-REP (Kenya) and KEADS Development Services (Ghana). The research examined what challenges globalisation poses for education, training and enterprise development in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. Findings confirmed the potential negative impact of globalisation for African development, but also showed the potential opportunities for positive responses in policy and practice.

Emphasising the importance of national contexts, the research design in each of the three countries was tailored to areas highlighted by national researchers as important. Under a broad framework the design focused on points of intersection between sectors.

## **2. PRINCIPAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Research findings included:

- Policy, research and practice have underplayed the interconnectedness of sectors which has resulted in weak analysis.
- Enhancing individual, societal and enterprise learning is crucial to Africa responding to globalisation in a way that benefits the mass of its population.
- Education policies of donors and African governments are inadequately grounded in a consideration of how economic growth is to be generated, and what knowledge and skills are required to support it.
- Skills development has been marginalised in international development strategies but remains important to national and individual development strategies.
- Progress among Africa's micro and informal economies remains fragile in the face of broader economic and political trends, and weaknesses in knowledge, skills and infrastructure.

### **3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Policy implications include:

- “Learning enterprises” in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa are important to a strategy that promotes both poverty reduction and competitiveness, but they need to be facilitated through an enabling environment.
- Education policies need to avoid an excessive focus on the primary sector and address the challenge of education's broader contribution to development.
- Training reforms should seek to build relationships between public providers and firms of all sizes, and degrees of formality.
- Micro and small enterprises need more than microcredit and an enabling environment but any other interventions must be sensitive to their possible impact on the self-reliance of the sector.
- Donor agencies and governments need to develop their capacity to think and act across sectoral and departmental boundaries.

The final report is available free from DFID as Afenyadu, D. et al. 2001 “Learning to Compete”, ED42, Education Department, DFID. Contact Education Department, DFID, 94 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5JL, UK for a copy.

# **Revisiting Technical and Vocational Education in sub-Saharan Africa (A Research Conducted by IIEP on Behalf of the World Bank)**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This study documents TVE policy trends in sub-Saharan Africa and the reconstruction of training systems. A focus is made on innovations in an effort to identify promising initiatives likely to contribute to the establishment of consistent TVE systems, closely related to the world of work and involving labour market stakeholders.

Today, emerging common trends can be identified. In addition to the specific crisis affecting most TVE systems in sub-Saharan Africa, globalisation associated with the rise of a market-oriented paradigm in education shaped the reform process along similar lines. Shifting the policy focus from inputs to outputs, through new financing and certification mechanisms, involving social partners in governance, granting more autonomy to institutions, promoting private providers and company-based training are part of this new approach. In addition, the specific socio-economic conditions of African economies are reflected in an increasing concern for the informal sector and skill development for poverty reduction.

## **2. CHANGES IN FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA (CÔTE D'IVOIRE, MADAGASCAR, MALI, SENEGAL)**

The profile of TVE in the four French-speaking countries studied reveals contrasting situations regarding the place of TVE in the education system, as well as its relations with the world of work. Above and beyond national specificity, the four countries often encounter difficulties of the same nature, especially when trying to balance supply and demand.

The origins of these difficulties reside probably, at least in part, in the common mould constituted by the French model of the 1960s. Today, whilst it has mostly disappeared in France, this birthmark is still highly visible in French-speaking Africa, and has generated a great deal of rigidity in the institutions, slowing down their capacity to meet the challenges inherent in their social and economic development.

The efforts which are undertaken, or are necessary, to make these systems evolve to strengthen linkages between training and employment, need highly targeted support, particularly at the local level, where the relationships between schools/enterprises are easier to promote. This readjustment can only come about if there is greater institutional flexibility so that it stimulates local initiative. As the support measures do not always reach the establishments, they run the risk of reinforcing the rigid structures or of creating new bureaucracies that are little able to infuse the TVE systems with dynamism.



### **3. TRANSFORMATION OF TVE IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING AND PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES (BOTSWANA, ERITREA, GHANA, KENYA, MOZAMBIQUE, SOUTH AFRICA)**

The review of TVE in English-speaking and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese-speaking Africa shows that there is an increasing policy attention for TVE. The reform of TVE constitute an important component of the education reform agenda. This renewed interest reflects both a concern for employment problems and a strategy to improve economic competitiveness. For Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, the TVE reform agenda contributes to a broader development project towards increased regional integration, including the movement of qualified labour.

Compared to French-speaking countries, the reform process has adopted more “radical” lines of intervention, including greater attention for skill development and employment in the informal sector, promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment training and opting for a new outcome-based system based on the establishment of a national qualification framework. In the area of financing too, some countries, although a small minority, have chosen to introduce a levy to support initial vocational training, following the experience of many Latin American countries. This transformation movement suggests that TVE in these countries has been more innovative and better able to move away from the school-based system although it is still very present. In so doing, the concerned countries have been able to take advantage of – or have been more exposed to – a diversity of donors with their respective models. This wider exposure to international TVE trends, compared to French-speaking countries, may have contributed to deeper changes. Four areas of policy intervention are determinant for the transformation of the sector namely: organisation and management, delivery, national qualification frameworks and financing. Although performance, in each area, differs according to country, the study analyses potentially productive transformations.

# **BUILDING NEW KNOWLEDGE ON SKILLS AND WORK**

## **Learning for Life, Work and the Future: SADC Workshop and Research Plan**

### **1. REGIONAL WORKSHOP**

In December 2000, the Ministry of Education, Republic of Botswana jointly hosted a workshop with the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre. This brought together experts and policymakers in TVET from all SADC member countries. The discussion led to the formulation of a set of proposals for collaborative research activities on TVET in Southern Africa.

### **2. PROPOSED RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

Eight themes for research collaboration have been identified ([www.unevoc.de/botswana/index.htm](http://www.unevoc.de/botswana/index.htm)):

1. Enhancing Access to Effective Technical and Vocational Education and Training:
2. The Development of a Quality Assurance Programme
3. Professional Staff Development Programme for TVET
4. The Development of an Information and Communication Technologies Programme
5. The Development of a Training Programme for the Unemployed and for the Informal Sector
6. The Development of a Regional Qualifications Framework
7. HIV/AIDS in TVET Staff Development
8. Information, Knowledge Management and Networking

## **Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development: An Outline for a Multi-Agency Research Study**

### **1. A DECLINING FOCUS ON SKILLS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

The 1990s saw a declining interest across most agencies in the role that formal skills training played in development. Although some agencies retained considerable expertise at the project and policy levels, this was unusual across agencies as a whole. Even where expertise has remained, questions can be raised about its appropriateness for new challenges, as we shall argue below.

Why did the decline take place? This is complex and has not yet been adequately analysed. Nonetheless, a series of important factors can be identified. First, the necessary emphasis placed on basic education at Jomtien in 1990 shifted the emphasis of much of development cooperation in education towards the primary school. This was reinforced by the subsequent emergence of the International Development Targets (IDTs), containing a powerful emphasis on universal primary education. Second, in 1991 the World Bank's powerful sub-sector report on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) provided a strong critique of the performance of public training in developing countries. Although it never explicitly called for the abandonment of support to public training, the report was influential in encouraging other agencies to reduce their involvement in this area. Third, the IDT-led focus on poverty appeared to lead to a further decline in the importance given to skills development in official development assistance (ODA). As this has now developed into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, so the importance of being part of the poverty agenda has increased. Fourth, the shift to the sector wide approach (SWAP) in preference to projects also brings difficulties for skills development, which does not fit neatly into a single sector. Moreover, SWAPs have been accompanied by a reduction in the number of countries and sectors that agencies are remaining involved in. Given this set of factors that reduce the agency interest in skills development, it is not surprising that by 2001 several agencies no longer have any dedicated staff working in TVET sections, whilst others have fewer than in the 1980s.

### **2. BUT A GROWING IMPORTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION?**

Although skills development has "fallen from grace" within their development cooperation agencies' agendas, it is of increasing importance for OECD governments when they consider their own national economic strategies. Concerns about global competitiveness, about the knowledge economy and about social exclusion have all led to major efforts to improve skills development. These arguments appear to be equally valid in the rest of the world. Less developed countries face even greater challenges from globalisation if they lack the skills to develop their own industries or to attract foreign direct investment. The achievement of sustainable livelihoods for poor individuals, families and communities will depend in large part on the skills they can access and develop.

### **3. FROM TVET TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, AND A NEW APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

Thus, there appears to be a major role for skills development in development cooperation. This, however, is a changed role from that of the 1980s and early 1990s. The understanding of skill has shifted and broadened from earlier technical conceptualisations. The historical focus on large, formal sector enterprises can no longer be divorced from a growing realisation of the role of micro and informal enterprises in economic development and poverty reduction. The critique of public provision of training and the remaining concerns about much of private provision bring a challenge of how to promote both in a coherent manner.

The shift from project to policy requires new skills within agencies and their partners. The need to place skills development within broader agency objectives, such as poverty, human rights, gender and environmental sustainability requires another new set of capacities.

### **4. THE FOCUS OF THIS PROJECT**

These trends are recent, on-going and poorly understood. The first focus of the project, therefore, will be on exploring the shifts in agency thinking about, and experiences of, skills development activities. This will include the necessary task of charting how and why agency strategies have shifted since c1990. It will also encompass an analysis of the lessons of embarking on new activities/approaches and, where appropriate, of abandoning others.

This focus will require an analysis both of agencies' overall policies (for skills development and those impacting upon approaches to skills development) and on their experiences in a series of particular countries. This is made more crucial by the radical decentralisation processes that have taken place in a number of agencies. In some cases, the policy of the agency in a particular country is more significant than any overall statement. Thus, the second theme of the research will be on exploring trends in skills development policy in a small number of case study countries in the South. In this, there will be a concern to focus not just on the work of individual agencies in the countries identified but, rather, to look at the interplay of national and agency strategies in the evolution and performance of national skills development systems.

As we have already argued, skills development faces major new challenges. Therefore, the third area of focus will be on providing a conceptual framework for understanding these challenges that will be of use to policymakers, practitioners and researchers.

These challenges to collate and develop knowledge about skills development and development cooperation point to the fourth major focus of this research. This is concerned with knowledge sharing and capacity building. Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development discussions point both to the value that agencies place on knowledge sharing and the need to develop agency and partner capacities. The modality for supporting these will be addressed below.

## **5. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The details of the research will be finalised in a collaborative process involving researchers from Southern partner institutions and agency/partner officials. However, a number of overall research themes can be identified:

- What are the current policies of agencies for skills development?
- What are the current policies of Southern governments for skills development?
- How has each of these developed historically since 1990?
- What lessons can be learned from existing research regarding the desirability of these policy changes?
- What implications do the new economic and aid environments have for skills development?
- How can skills development better contribute to poverty reduction strategies; to supporting growth; and to promoting equity and redress?
- How can skills development link to and provide a bridge between basic education and self-/wage-employment?

In addition, the project will address the following:

- The need to make the knowledge generated in the project available in a timely and useful manner for relevant users.
- The need to build support for Southern knowledge development capacity into the processes and outcomes of the project.
- The need to address directly the need for capacity building of skills development professionals, North and South as an integral part of the research.

## **6. CASE STUDY COUNTRIES**

Case study countries have not been specified. The intention is to develop a set of 4-5 countries as the result of conversations with researchers in developing countries, as well as with agencies and national ministries. The choice of countries will be designed to balance the interest of potential partners; issues of research design; and the priorities of agencies.

## **7. KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

There is an important role for long-term research. The field of skills development has been particularly poorly researched and this forms a central rationale for this project. However, given the relevance of the project for practical and policy work, it is essential that the dissemination of findings should be done in a manner that shares usable knowledge as quickly as possible. A major emphasis will be placed in producing work in progress in the form of

briefing notes, project papers and an interactive web site designed to meet the needs of end users. Moreover, attention will be paid to linking into the existing knowledge sharing activities of the agencies involved in the project, both through the Working Group and through their other programmes. It is also crucial that the knowledge shared does not simply travel North but that it be part of a multi-directional flow.

## **8. COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE GENERATION**

It is intended that the research should generate knowledge and analytical capacity within all those involved in the process. Southern academic partners will be central to the development, delivery and management of the project. There will be significant periods of attachment available for Southern-based researchers to work in Edinburgh and Geneva, and it is intended that this should be linked to visits to and research on agencies at their headquarters.

## **9. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The project will seek to develop capacity for work in skills development through its range of knowledge generation and sharing activities. In addition, there will be an explicit focus on developing a training programme and materials for practitioners and policymakers North and South. This will be linked to the development of a European Masters' in European Development Cooperation currently being developed by the Universities of Edinburgh and Geneva. The skills development course will be piloted in Geneva, but with the intention of its future modification and adaptation for delivery in developing countries.

## **10. A NORRAG RESEARCH PROJECT**

This will be a NORRAG research project. This is reflected in a number of features of the research. First, that involvement of researchers, practitioners and policymakers, North and South, is an essential feature of the project. Second, that it will build on NORRAG's role in providing the Secretariat of the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development. Indeed, the project can be seen as a research project of the Working Group, reflecting Working Group concerns to move beyond knowledge sharing to encompass knowledge production as well. The three named researchers in this proposal are the core of that Secretariat and collectively have more than 70 years' worth of professional experience in the field of skills development. Third, that the project will be jointly coordinated from the Universities of Edinburgh and Geneva, the two existing locations for NORRAG's core functions.

## **INTERLAKEN AND BEYOND: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE WORKING GROUP**

The Interlaken meeting was the seventh meeting of the Working Group. The Group is now in its sixth year. The meeting represented the beginning of a new phase of activities in a number of ways. First, this discussion paper reflects a revisiting of some national and agency policy positions presented previously. In these presentations it was noticeable that the focus had broadened since earlier meetings. This has been reflected in the Working Group's own shift in language away from TVET and towards skills development. It is also seen in the importance placed on linking skills development to education, enterprise development and employment. Most striking is the German presentation. Germany does not have a new position on skills development. Rather, what was discussed was a new approach to development cooperation as a whole. This highlighted the growing importance of understanding and demonstrating how skills development contributes to wider development goals and adapts to changing development cooperation practices.

Second, these and other position papers are available on the Working Group's website ([www.vetnet.ch/wg](http://www.vetnet.ch/wg)). This illustrates the way in which the Working Group is developing in parallel to other trends in development cooperation. There is a growing sense of the Working Group as a "community of practice", which combines the importance of face-to-face meetings with virtual means of sharing. 6 000 hits in the three months prior to the Working Group meeting illustrates the value that the website can provide both to regular participants in the meetings and others. This development requires the Working Group to continue to think about its role, membership and activities.

Third, this is the first time that the Working Group meeting has explicitly been linked to another event. Such a linkage brings opportunities and challenges and the Working Group will need to think carefully about its future activities and the ways in which they articulate with those of others.

Fourth, as the discussions in this paper have shown, there is a growing concern within the Working Group with moving beyond knowledge sharing to knowledge production and capacity development. This is reflected particularly in the proposed Multi-Agency Research Study, but also in a linked concern to develop a summer school at the University of Geneva for agency and partner organisation staff. Such activities appear to be important to the health of the Working Group and to skills development activities more generally given the major new challenges faced by the field in recent years.

Fifth, the tradition of using the Working Group as a forum for discussing agencies' own research led on this occasion to a request for the Working Group to convene a special meeting to discuss research findings from the second phase of the World Bank research project reported in this paper. This will be part of a larger consultation exercise that will include discussions in Africa. It will provide the Working Group with an opportunity to use the discussion of the research to address important issues in what remains a priority region for many agencies.

Such a meeting will be valuable for its potential to further the Africa-specific discussions of the Working Group, which formed part of the focus of the Interlaken meeting. A proposal was also discussed and welcomed for a meeting on Asia, probably in Bangkok during 2003. Before then, it is planned that the new UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre in Bonn will host a

meeting that will discuss some of the unresolved issues from Interlaken on the respective roles of public and private training, and associated issues of regulation and finance.

These further meetings, along with the developments regarding the website, research activities and training activities, point to an evolution of the Working Group and its role in international cooperation in skills development. This evolution will be challenging but the experience of the past six years suggests that it will also be rewarding.



## **APPENDICES**

### **List of Participants**

Girma AGUNE

ILO - International Labour Office  
ILO - International Labour Office  
4, rte des Morillons  
1211 GENEVA 22  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22-799 80 27  
Fax: 41 22-799 63 10  
E-mail: agune@ilo.org

Nahas ANGULA

Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation, Namibia  
Ministry of Higher Education  
P.O. Box 24386  
WINDHOEK  
NAMIBIA  
Tel: 264 61 - 27 06 307  
Fax: 264 61 - 25 36 72  
E-mail: nangula@mec.gov.na

Torkel ALFTHAN

ILO - International Labour Office  
ILO - International Labour Office  
4, rte des Morillons  
1211 GENEVA 22  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22-799 70 91  
Fax: 41 22-799 76 50  
E-mail: alfthan@ilo.org

David ATCHOARENA

IIEP/UNESCO - International Institute for Educational Planning  
UNESCO - IIEP - International Institute for Educational Planning  
7-9, rue Eugène Delacroix  
75116 PARIS  
FRANCE  
Tel: +33-1 45 03 77 49  
Fax: +33-1 40 72 83 66  
E-mail: d.atchoarena@iiep.unesco.org

Ahlin BYLL-CATARIA

SDC/ADEA - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
ADEA-WG on Non Formal Education c/o SDC Switzerland  
Freiburgstrasse 130  
3003 BERN  
SWITZERLAND

Tel: 41 31 - 322 34 28  
Fax: 41 31 - 323 08 49  
E-mail: ahlin.byll@deza.admin.ch

Michel CARTON

IUED - Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement, Switzerland  
NORRAG c/o Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement  
C.P. 136  
1211 GENEVA 21  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22 - 906 59 01  
Fax: 41 22 - 906 59 94  
E-mail: michel.carton@iued.unige.ch

Alexandre DORMEIER FREIRE

NORRAG-IUED - Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement, Switzerland  
NORRAG c/o Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement  
C.P. 136  
1211 GENEVA 21  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22 - 906 59 00  
Fax: 41 22 - 906 59 94  
E-mail: alexandre.freire@iued.unige.ch

Jean-Christophe FAVRE

SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
Freiburgstrasse 130  
3003 BERN  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 31-322 36 74  
Fax: 41 31-323 08 49  
E-mail: Jean-Christophe.Favre@deza.admin.ch

Egils L. FROYLAND

Akerhus University College, Norway  
Akershus college/Yrkespedagogisk Institute  
Ringstadbekkveien 105  
1356 BEKKESTUA  
NORWAY  
Tel: 47 67 - 11 70 00  
Fax: 47 67 - 11 70 08  
E-mail: Egil.Froyland@hiak.no

Jeremy GREENLAND

Aga Khan Foundation  
Aga Khan Foundation  
P.O. Box 2369  
1211 GENEVA 2  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22 - 909 72 00  
Fax: 41 22 - 909 72 91  
E-mail: jeremy.greenland@akdn.ch

John GRIERSON

FTP International, Finland  
FTP International  
P.O. Box 484  
00101 HELSINKI  
FINLAND  
Tel: 358 40 50 55 107  
Fax: 358 9 - 770 134 98/99  
E-mail: john.grierson@ftpinter.fi

Brigit HAGMANN

SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
Freiburgstrasse 130  
3003 BERN  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 31-322 33 43  
Fax: 41 31-323 08 49  
E-mail: Brigit.Hagmann@deza.admin.ch

Friedrich HAMMERSCHMIDT

GTZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit  
GTZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit  
German Technical Cooperation  
Postfach 5180  
65726 ESCHBORN  
GERMANY  
Tel: 49 6196 - 79 12 37  
Fax: 49 6196 - 79 71 81  
E-mail: friedrich.hammerschmidt@gtz.de

Muhammad IBRAHIM

CMES - Centre for Mass Education in Science, Bangladesh  
CMES - Centre for Mass Education in Science  
828, Road 19 (old)  
Dhanmondi R/A  
1209 DHAKA  
BANGLADESH  
Tel : +88 (02) 8111898  
Fax : +88 (02) 8013559  
E-mail : ibrahim@citecho.net,cmes@citechco.net

Mogens JENSEN

DANIDA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
DANIDA  
TSA.3 - 2, Asiatisk Plads  
1448 COPENHAGEN K  
DENMARK  
Tel: 45-33 33 92 00  
Fax: 45-33 92 07 90  
E-mail: mojens@um.dk

Matthias JÄGER

Kodis Consult, Switzerland  
KODIS Consult GmbH  
Universitätsstrasse, 69  
8006 ZURICH  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 1 - 368 58 10  
Fax: 41 1 - 368 58 00  
E-mail: jaeger@kodis.ch

Richard JOHANSON

World Bank  
The World Bank  
P.O. Box 208  
FLINT HILL, VA 22627  
USA  
E-mail: Rjohanson@worldbank.org

Sunita KAPILA

IDRC - International Development Research Centre, Kenya  
IDRC - International Development Research Centre  
PO Box 620084  
NAIROBI  
KENYA  
Tel : +254 (2) 22 329  
Fax : +254 (2) 711 063  
E-mail : kapilasunita@hotmail.com

Kenneth KING

NORRAG-Centre of African Studies, Scotland  
NORRAG c/o Centre of African Studies  
University of Edinburgh  
7, Buccleuch Place  
EDINBURGH EH8 9LW  
UNITED KINGDOM  
Tel: 44 131 - 650 38 79  
Fax: 44 131 - 650 65 35  
E-mail: kenneth.king@ed.ac.uk

Hans KRÖNNER

UNESCO-UNEVOC - International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training  
Hermann-Ehlers-Strasse 10  
53113 BONN  
GERMANY  
Tel: 49 228-2 43 37 0  
Fax: 49 228-2 43 37 77  
E-mail: hk@unevoc.de

Malte LIPCZINSKY

SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
Freiburgstrasse 130  
3003 BERN  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 31-322 33 43  
Fax: 41 31-323 08 49  
E-mail: malte.lipczynsky@deza.admin.ch

Dominique MAROGER

Ministere des Affaires Etrangères, France  
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères  
Direction gén. de la coopération internat. et du développement  
20, rue Monsieur  
75007 PARIS 07 SP  
FRANCE  
Tel: 33 1-53 69 31 40  
Fax: 33 1-53 69 41 32  
E-mail: dominique.maroger@diplomatie.gouv.fr

Simon McGRATH

NORRAG - Centre of African Studies, Scotland  
NORRAG c/o Centre of African Studies  
University of Edinburgh  
7, Buccleuch Place  
EDINBURGH EH8 9LW  
UNITED KINGDOM  
Tel: 44 131 - 650 43 21  
Fax: 44 131 - 650 65 35  
E-mail: s.mcgrath@ed.ac.uk

Marion MITSCHKE

UNESCO-UNEVOC - International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training  
Hermann-Ehlers-Strasse 10  
53113 BONN  
GERMANY  
Tel: 49 228-2 43 37 0  
Fax: 49 228-2 43 37 77  
E-mail: mm@unevoc.de

Marianne NGANUNU

Ministry of Education, Botswana  
Ministry of Education  
P/Bag  
Gaborone  
BOTSWANA  
Tel : +267 3655002/1  
Fax : +267 580941  
E-mail : mnganunu@gov.bw

Susan RAWLINSON

British Council  
The British Council  
58 Whitworth Street  
Manchester M1 6BB  
Tel ++ 44 (0) 161 957 7210  
Fax ++ 44 (0) 161 957 7013  
E-mail: Susan.Rawlinson@britishcouncil.org

Trevor RIORDAN

ILO - International Labour Office  
ILO - International Labour Office  
4, rte des Morillons  
1211 GENEVA 22  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 22-799 80 27  
Fax: 41 22-799 63 10  
E-mail: riordan@ilo.org

Madhu SINGH

UNESCO/UIE - Institute for Education  
UNESCO Institute for Education  
Feldbrunnenstr. 58  
20148 HAMBURG  
GERMANY  
Tel: 49 40 - 44 80 41 26  
Fax: 49 40 - 410 77 23  
E-mail: m.singh@unesco.org

Urs SOLLERBERGER

Swisscontact  
Swisscontact  
Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation  
Doeltschiweg 39, P.O.Box, 8055 Zürich  
Tel. ++41 (0)1 454 17 17  
Fax ++41(0)1 454 17 97  
E-mail: urs.sollerberger@swisscontact.ch

Alexandra STRICKNER

Austrian Foundation for Development Research  
ÖFSE-Austrian Foundation for Development Research  
Berggasse 7  
1090 VIENNA  
AUSTRIA  
Tel: +43 1 - 317 40 10 (202)  
Fax: +43 1 - 317 40 18  
E-mail: a.strickner@oefse.at

Kenth WICKMANN

SIDA - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Sida-Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

BA/Addis Abeba

103 35 STOCKHOLM

SWEDEN

Tel: + 46 8 - 698 55 75

Fax: + 46 8 - 698 56 51

E-mail: [kenth.wickmann@sida.se](mailto:kenth.wickmann@sida.se)