

Paper 7

DEBATES IN
SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT

*World Bank Study on:
Vocational Skills Development
in Sub-Saharan Africa
- a Working Group Review*

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WORKING GROUP
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□ **2003 Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development, Edinburgh**

Foreword

The invitation to the Working Group from the World Bank to review the September 2002 draft of their Synthesis Report at a special meeting in Edinburgh was an opportunity for the Group to play a policy advisory role. This was the first occasion, outside the Bank, for this draft document to receive systematic comment. Such a review role has been a tradition of NORRAG on many previous occasions in respect of draft agency policies. The Bank's document has subsequently been published in a new version of February 2003. This present Paper remains a report of an important meeting, which, arguably, made a valuable contribution to the final shape of the Bank's Skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Working Group would like to acknowledge the Bank's readiness to engage very openly in this debate about skills development policy, as the following pages of detailed commentary make abundantly clear.

Michel Carton and Kenneth King, Edinburgh, February 2003.

EDINBURGH 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Martha Caddell and Keith Holmes

The Edinburgh Meeting of the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development marked a significant development in the activities of the Group. Rather than a discussion of a specific theme or series of initiatives, participants were asked to comment on one particular document, Vocational Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A World Bank Review (hereafter ‘the Synthesis Report’). This focus and the opportunities it offered to share experiences and shape the text’s main messages resulted in thorough and, at times, heated discussions. This gathering was a ‘working’ meeting in the very practical sense of the term as participants sought to offer constructive feedback on the important conceptual and policy issues at stake, and on how best to reframe and revise the text of the Synthesis Report.

The draft Synthesis Report is of particular significance and interest to Working Group members as it reviews how debates related to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development have changed and developed since 1991. It illustrates the conceptual shift from an input-oriented model of TVET-provision to the broader, process-orientated perspective of skills development. It revisits previous documents on this sector – specifically the 1991 World Bank Policy Paper on TVET and the subsequent book *Skills for Productivity*¹ – in order to examine their relevance in the context of contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. The Edinburgh Meeting of the Working Group brought together some of the authors of these previous documents. This opened up possibilities to reflect upon the changes in approach and emphasis which have emerged over the decade.

Background to the Synthesis Report

The process of developing the Synthesis Report requires a brief introduction, as this shaped how the Working Group meeting itself was organised. In 2000-1 the Bank commissioned a series of 16 background papers to inform policy discussions in this field. Each study focused on particular themes within the broad area of skills development and TVET provision and drew on case studies of a range of specific countries and contexts. The Synthesis Report was derived from the huge volume of data and analysis presented in these studies. The Executive Summary of the Synthesis Report was acknowledged by its authors to be unorthodox in so far as it sought to present the “main messages” of the document rather than mapping the arguments and architecture of the text. The Executive Summary became a particular focus of the Working Group’s discussions as participants sought to influence the main messages and the tone of the discussions presented in the Report. (The list of documents drawn on and referenced in the Synthesis Report is available on the World Bank website and is presented in Appendix Two of this booklet.)

The Working Group’s Involvement in the Process

The Working Group has itself, as World Bank colleagues emphasised, been a valuable partner in the process of developing the text of the Synthesis Review. In the Group’s Washington meeting in 2000 the studies were introduced and discussed and, in Interlaken in 2001, the intermediate findings of the study were presented to the Working Group.

¹ Middleton, J., A. Zideman & A.V. Adams (1993) *Skills for Productivity: Vocational Education and Training in Developing Countries* New York: Oxford University Press.

Three specific aims were proposed by the World Bank for the Edinburgh Meeting:

- i) to share the individual and collective experiences of agencies interested in skills development;
- ii) to shape the messages of the paper, with special reference to the balance of the material and interpretations of the evidence presented;
- iii) to consider how the World Bank can work most effectively with the various partners present towards skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus, in Edinburgh the Working Group focused specifically on the Synthesis Report in order to offer comment, to critique, to identify gaps and to make suggestions about how the document could be improved.

The meeting brought together, for the first time, the authors of the key background papers to discuss the Synthesis Report. It also provided an opportunity for representatives from a range of multi and bi-lateral agencies to reflect on their own expertise and experience in this sector and use this to offer a critique of the content and architecture of the World Bank document. Attention focused on how to make the Synthesis Report more readable, more credible and more useful as a document to inform skills development policies and their implementation. At a broader level, however, the meeting also offered an interesting model of inter-agency co-operation and learning, and provided creative space for a joint effort to develop an inter-agency knowledge base of the 'state of the art' in skills development.

The Structure of the Edinburgh Meeting

To facilitate this process of learning and discussion the meeting was structured around a series of plenary debates and smaller workshop sessions. This allowed the various layers of the World Bank study to be explored: in addition to the Synthesis Report itself, participants were offered inputs from the authors of the research reports which fed into the Synthesis Report and a range of additional documentary evidence from the Bank and other agencies. It was notable, however, that none of the African researchers who had contributed to the research process addressed the meeting.

Discussion ranged across the whole body of documentation provided – the Synthesis Report itself, the background research-based documents and the Executive Summary. Comments therefore focused both on the internal coherence of each piece and the continuity and consistency of the discussion across the set of documents. Different modalities of skills development were considered, the roles of the public and private sector discussed and the context of reform in Sub-Saharan Africa was highlighted. Participants then focused on developing a thorough critique of the Synthesis Report. Most, but not all, of the participants identified weaknesses in the storyline, the evidence presented and the main messages of the Executive Summary. This critical commentary was then fed back to colleagues from the Bank to aid their revision of the document, the final version of which was published in February 2003.

The Outline of this Booklet

Through this booklet we seek to capture the flavour of the discussions which took place and to document the critique offered by those who commented on Vocational Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A World Bank Review. This booklet begins with a synopsis of the key

issues of concern raised by participants. This focuses in particular on debates related to the main messages of the text and the content and structure of the Executive Summary. It portrays the range and detail of this discussion with illustrations from the series of seven theme-specific discussions which took place. This synopsis is followed by overviews of the presentations made by the authors of the key background papers used in the production of the Synthesis Report. In these the authors give a sense of the scope and the richness of their research and findings, aspects of which were incorporated into the Synthesis Report. The booklet concludes with a personal commentary on the Synthesis Report provided by Claudio de Moura Castro at the invitation of the Working Group. The Executive Summary from the September 2002 draft of the Synthesis Report is provided as an Appendix.

This special meeting of the Working Group was made possible by the support of the Africa Region of the World Bank.

The planning and the development of the Working Group between meetings has been provided by Michel Carton (IUED / Norrag Coordination). The animation, management and organization of this meeting has been by Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh / Norrag News Editor) and by Pravina King (University of Edinburgh). Keith Holmes and Martha Caddell together with Michel Carton and Kenneth King have edited this paper.

ASSESSING THE SYNTHESIS REPORT: THE RESPONSE OF THE WORKING GROUP

Martha Caddell & Keith Holmes

Introduction

Throughout the Edinburgh meeting attention focused on the content and presentation of Vocational Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A World Bank Review ('the Synthesis Report') and, in particular, on the Executive Summary of the document. Participants were encouraged to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the Synthesis Report and to focus in especially on the main messages for agencies and partner governments. The richness of the material provided in the background studies was commended by participants. However, the gap in quality between these case studies and the discussion presented in the Synthesis Report was also a focus of the meeting's deliberations.

The Working Group paid specific attention to the Executive Summary and a comprehensive set of concerns and possible revisions was developed and presented to colleagues from the World Bank. Participants identified weaknesses in the storyline, the evidence presented and the main messages of the Executive Summary. Through the discussion that follows, we collate and present the key areas of concern raised by participants. In doing so, we provide both a critique of the Executive Summary's structure and content and raise a series of issues which the Working Group, as policymakers and researchers in the field of skills development, may find pertinent to consider as it moves forward from this meeting.

The Synthesis Report as a Guide for Action?

The Edinburgh participants acknowledged the rich range and variety of background material that had been drawn together for this World Bank Review. But one of the significant concerns arising from an initial reading of the Synthesis Report itself is the limited indication of its purposes and audiences. The Report fluctuates between being a descriptive account of practice in the field of TVET over the past decade to a more sharply focused prescription for practice; from discussions accessible to a general audience to the assumption of a shared 'in-group' understanding of the issues; and between providing a general pool of knowledge and being a document which presents the strategic choices open to policy-makers and practitioners.

There was no general consensus among the Working Group concerning the precise purposes of the Synthesis Report, although there was agreement that there should be an explicit statement of the chosen aims and scope of the document in the opening paragraphs of the text. The dominant view, however, was that the document should be less prescriptive, with stronger emphasis given to the need for strategic decision-making on the basis of negotiation and dialogue. There is a danger of the Synthesis Report aspiring for a single policy solution or direction for very diverse skills development needs. The document should therefore not be seen as a 'guide' in any fixed or uni-directional sense, but rather considered as having a more catalytic role, offering a framework for dialogue and action. In this regard the tone of the document deserves further consideration, to reduce the sense of prescription and increase the space for negotiation and more genuine partnership between funding agencies and national governments.

Related to this, the context in which the document will be received requires consideration. While the Synthesis Report is not formally a policy document, it is likely to be seen as an indicator of

World Bank thinking and priorities by planners and policy-makers in African countries. It would thus be expedient for the authors to acknowledge this and to orient the text in a way that ensures such groups will be encouraged to read and use it in the spirit of partnership and dialogue in which the Bank claims to wish it to be viewed. In this regard it would be important for the Bank's own thinking on the issues to be clearly foregrounded in a way that provides opportunities for debate and negotiation, not blueprints for action.

Further, the Executive Summary has a key role to play in orienting the reader to the central issues raised in the report as a whole. Yet, as it currently stands, it does little to orient the reader to the detailed arguments in the main text. The Executive Summary appears to be a rather fragmented document that does little to familiarise the reader with the content, structure and direction of the discussion presented in the main body of the Synthesis Report.

Understanding Context and Diversity

A concern which was raised repeatedly throughout the Edinburgh meeting related to the need for further disaggregation and elaboration of the diversity of African contexts and experiences. Throughout the documents there is a marked tendency to refer to and treat 'Africa' as a unified, homogenous entity, with the diversity of countries and contexts given limited recognition. The complexity and multiplicity of contexts and experiences of reform, as well as the range of factors that may hinder or support such processes, need to be further highlighted.

Further elaboration of the specificities of the multiple African experiences is also required in order to enhance understanding of the contexts within which reform initiatives are being developed. Specifically, the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS and the implications of the loss of large numbers of people from the labour market deserve greater recognition within the documents. In addition there could be more explicit discussion of war and the displacement of people on local economies, labour markets and training needs. As a document which explicitly focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa, the Synthesis Report would benefit from a more comprehensive analysis not only of the 'problems' facing the region but also how they directly influence the forms of intervention which will be most effective and appropriate in specific given contexts. Greater consideration must be given to how specific national and local contexts require particular responses and forms of intervention, rather than the present simplistic presentation of 'cultural' and 'contextual' factors which hinder the implementation of more generic reform initiatives.

Throughout the document contextual factors are depoliticised and presented as issues separate from the reform process. They are generally regarded as 'problems' rather than factors which should themselves be considered integral features of the process of intervention. The challenge is perhaps to think about issues from the opposite angle, that is, starting from a greater recognition of the complexity of the situation and moving forward from there, as opposed to starting from a given 'ideal type' model or vision which may be inappropriate and unachievable.

Recognising context cannot, therefore, simply remain within the confines of 'issues which could hinder implementation'. Rather, contextual issues should be explored and acknowledged in a way which places them at the heart of the reform agenda. The issue of national politics and how the complexity of the daily processes and interactions between institutions impact on reform processes are key examples of this. The issues of power, conflict and the politics of governance and policy reform tend to be hidden in the Synthesis Report. This may limit the extent to which

the everyday ‘reality’ of negotiation, consensus building and, indeed, disagreement, is acknowledged and incorporated into planning processes and timeframes.

Participants felt that due consideration should be given to the diversity of African contexts and cultures and the consequent heterogeneity of policies and reform. Data from a select number of countries is often presented as though it is directly applicable throughout the continent, with little regard for the specificities of the countries, regions or enterprises selected for study. In one section of the Synthesis Report, the chapter on enterprise-based training, data from five Anglophone countries is extrapolated from and used to make recommendations for the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. The different historical and cultural contexts of the different regions and cultures of Africa are given little consideration. Similarly, the diversity of political contexts and of the socio-economic conditions in which reform programmes are being initiated needs more consideration. Not all countries have the same capacity effectively to manage change. Since there is a diverse array of political and economic development trajectories throughout the continent, the broader context of reform in each country requires consideration. Indeed, this may also usefully involve a deeper historical understanding of change, as earlier experiences of policy prescription and implementation will clearly impact on the reception of new ideas at the national and sub-national area.

It would, therefore, be appropriate for the Synthesis Report to incorporate some sense of this complexity and of the possible choices and decisions which countries will have to consider in order to adopt appropriate interventions. Throughout the series of discussions held at the meeting, participants continually reiterated the need for some form of typology or matrix of countries and contexts to guide this process of negotiation and assessment. Such an analytical framework would help policy-makers and practitioners highlight the key issues which may require most consideration by particular countries, depending on, for example, the type of state, the level of social organisation, the extent of trade union activism, the pattern of economic growth, cultural traditions and so on. A matrix modelled around such interests would introduce a degree of disaggregation and open up some space for negotiation and debate on a country-by-country basis. Yet, such a model cannot be seen as a substitute for detailed country (and sub-national) level analysis to ensure that an understanding of the pertinent issues relevant to a particular socio-economic context is highlighted. This view was, refreshingly, shared and reinforced by representatives from the World Bank who participated in the Workshop.

Consequently, sweeping statements such as “Africa’s future economic growth depends less on its natural resources than on its labor skills” (Executive Summary: viii) should be avoided as they leave little space to recognise the diversity of contexts. Specifically, in this case, the importance of natural resources on the buoyancy of national and local economies is ignored. Angola, for example, is currently the fastest growing economy in the region due to the post-conflict recovery of the diamond trade. Mali’s economy and the livelihoods of many of the country’s population are entwined with the global fluctuations in cotton prices. Not only does the relative importance of human and natural resources vary from place to place, but the development prospects of African countries invariably depend on a combination of both. To treat natural resources as separate from human resources is overly simplistic.

Thus, the relative significance of agriculture and the implications for skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa require greater acknowledgement. Within the Synthesis Report discussion of agriculture and of the training needs of this sector has been consciously omitted on the grounds that this area requires a dedicated discussion paper of its own. This omission is critical, as it leads to an assumption of industrial and predominantly urban-based development being the

desired trajectory of change in Sub-Saharan Africa. This, participants felt, ignores wider issues such as the sustainability of the change agenda, specifically in relation to environmental impacts and in terms of the capacity of the economy to accommodate an expanding urban-focused workforce.

Concepts, Language and Terminology

The Synthesis Report marks a significant development in the Bank's approach to the area of technical and vocational training. Its very title signifies the shift away from a focus on service provision to a broader recognition of what and how people learn – and with what effect on their future prospects. 'Skills development' appears to be a far broader concept than TVET. It also marks a move towards a broader, process-orientated approach, a point which deserves to be further highlighted in the introduction to the text. Yet the shift in terminology which is flagged-up in the title is not fully matched by a change in the language and meanings of the document as a whole. There still appears to be a tendency in policy circles towards "providing skills development" through developing courses, apprenticeships and other activities. Yet, transformation of practice is best supported if the concept of skills development is clearly and consistently used.

Similarly, throughout the Synthesis Report greater attention could be paid to the consistent use of terms and the clarity of their definition. Given the complexity of the issues under discussion and the use that policy-makers and practitioners will make of the Synthesis Report, it is important that the document encourage the development of shared understandings. The Synthesis Report would, therefore, benefit from a careful review of the use of terminology to ensure a consistent use of terms across the various chapters. Indeed, as the background papers that informed this Report used terms in differing ways, it is essential that care is taken to ensure the uniform application of terms throughout the Synthesis Report. However, the difficulty of clearly defining concepts and distinguishing between terms such as 'skills development', 'vocational skills development', and 'life skills', or 'formal' and 'informal' sector and so on should not be underestimated. Indeed, such issues continue to be vigorously debated amongst policymakers and researchers in the field. Careful use of language would enable a more nuanced view of the diversity of approaches and practices within the area of skills development to develop. Consistent use of terms would serve to integrate the various sections of the paper and allow a clearer storyline to develop through the Report. It would also allow greater recognition of the diverse range of practices encompassed by the various concepts that could open fruitful areas for negotiation and discussion between partners in skills development policies and processes.

Challenging the Public - Private Dichotomy

The need for more consistent use of language and the recognition of the diversity of skills development opportunities are highlighted with reference to the presentations of 'public sector' and 'private sector' training provision in the Synthesis Report (Chapters Three and Four). The treatment of 'public' and 'private' assumes that they are distinct categories that can be usefully compared and contrasted. A possible interpretation of this document would be that the Bank is advocating, again, support for private sector training provision over assistance to public providers. Indeed, much of the Executive Summary focuses on the positive roles played by the private sector in this area, with public provision given only very limited and critical discussion towards the end of the Summary. This sets up a dichotomous view of these two, apparently discrete, forms of training provision. Such a perspective oversimplifies the relationship between these sectors and allows limited space for the diversity within each to be acknowledged.

The dualistic categorising of the public and private sectors in the Executive Summary oversimplifies the distinctions and multiple sub-components of these broad categories. While these complexities are more fully explored in the main body of the Report and the background documents, the main message as presented in the Executive Summary retreats into the simplicity - and dangers - of the dichotomous model. Recognising the diversity of provision is, however, key. It would allow a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of skills development provision to emerge and could, in turn, open up opportunities for more integrated reform initiatives. For example, the use of the aggregated term 'private' does little to convey the array of service providers with various motives and approaches that exist in the non-governmental arena. Within the broad term 'private', as used in Chapter Four, an array of institutions are encompassed. These include formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, private-for-profit providers and even non-profit NGO providers. It would perhaps be more appropriate, in the field of training provision, to refer to 'non-government' provision in preference to the term 'private'. Such distinctions are crucially important because of their policy implications.

This dichotomous characterisation also fails to provide space for understanding the overlap and inter-relationship between 'private' and 'public' enterprises and training providers. The daily operations and practices of many institutions will involve components which draw primarily on one aspect rather than the other; – it may, therefore, be misleading to place them wholly in one category. Due to the importance of their contribution to skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa, the classification of NGOs as 'public' or 'private' has potentially significant implications for the main messages of the Synthesis Report. Training providers who are ostensibly NGOs may well receive financial support from public bodies, be those agencies of the national government or external, bi-lateral funders of NGOs. In addition, the regulation of training and the environment in which institutions are operating are broadly defined and strongly influenced by state actions and policies.

Despite setting out to frame the skills development debate in terms of the relative roles of 'public' and 'private' sectors, the Executive Summary fails to do this in a sufficiently balanced way. This discussion overlooks examples of successful provision by public sector institutions – given in the background documents and the body of the Synthesis Report – where the public training may be of as good quality as that delivered by 'private' providers and where these institutions can openly compete for funding and participants. There is a need, then, to acknowledge such examples and avoid casting the debate in terms of a stark dichotomy. The public sector as a whole should not be presented – as it is in the Executive Summary – as a provider of 'last resort', tasked with the need to complement the private sector by providing opportunities to 'neglected groups' and geographically difficult areas.

Recognising the Roles of the State

In reality the role of public institutions in skills development extends far beyond training provision. The broader roles of the state must also be considered, as these clearly encompass more than the activities of a service deliverer. The Executive Summary appears to confuse training provision with the other key roles that the state plays in the policy environment at the national and regional level. The dichotomous model (and the explicit valuation that the private is preferable) which informs the main messages presented in the Executive Summary provides an inaccurate characterisation of the interrelations between public and private. It also limits discussion of the possibilities for constructive partnerships between groups from both

governmental and non-governmental organisations. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to take the statement that “governments should not do less” (Executive Summary: xi) as a starting point rather than a conclusion to a discussion. This would open up greater space for debate and negotiation about the appropriate roles for the state and other players to take.

Indeed, “the principal finding” “that the private sectors contribute far more than governments” (Executive Summary: ix) represents an under-recognition of the role of the state as a provider of services. Also, and more crucially, it fails to acknowledge the breadth of the state’s steering roles as an enabler and facilitator in the skills development arena. The narrow characterisation of the public sector limits the possibility for engagement in critical negotiation and exchange with partner governments around the content of the Synthesis Report. The wider enabling environment which ensures such training can be delivered, and any qualifications gained recognised, is – to a significant extent – the result of the state’s policies and intervention.

The broader – and crucial – role of the state as regulator and facilitator as well as provider of services is downplayed in the Executive Summary. The confusion between the broader roles of the state and the specifics of service provision requires further clarification in the document in order to ensure that appropriate recognition is given to the importance of regulation, governance and financing provided through state mechanisms for both governmental and non-governmental training providers. Three key areas were recognised in particular by workshop participants as requiring further acknowledgement in the discussion: (i) establishing a coherent framework for reform, (ii) providing information about provisions and processes, and (iii) managing broader changes in patterns of governance.

The Synthesis Report gives too limited recognition to the roles that states play or might play in creating and maintaining a reform environment, especially if time, means and human resources were made available. Developing appropriate policies and policy frameworks is a critical dimension of the change process which is primarily the responsibility of the state. Ensuring the coordination of various partners and coherence across policy statements requires a cross-sectoral focus and the authority to manage and mediate the demands of national and donor interest groups. Such a holistic view of the reform process and a strong directing role is only likely to be assumed by state institutions. Similarly, the state plays a central role in ensuring the promotion of good governance and clear and well functioning lines of communication between the multiple institutions involved in policy development and implementation. This may include, for example, facilitating decentralisation processes, streamlining bureaucratic structures and procedures or promoting collaboration between government departments and non-governmental institutions.

The state also has a key role to play in the collection and dissemination of information that could influence the pace and qualitative nature of reform of skills development. The collating of details of training provision, both from government and non-government providers, would provide a useful resource for consumers seeking training. It would also help improve the data available to planners and policy makers, both at the national and international level, and thus ensure reform agendas are more clearly linked to current country-level realities. The issue of research requirements is discussed further below. Monitoring and mapping may lead, in some cases, to the state taking a more active role in regulating institutions that provide training services. This could take the form of the introduction of a national qualification framework to standardise the measurement of trainee attainment. It may, in other instances, involve the grading, registration and certification of the institutions themselves. The extent of the state’s involvement will vary in different contexts, depending, for instance on the existing level of self-

regulation of training provision and the current role of trade associations and unions in monitoring performance and certification.

Clearly the roles of the state are multifarious and variable across the contexts and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. No single vision can be prescribed for the part that should be played by state institutions in facilitating reform of skills development. Rather, there is a need to recognise the variety of levels of capacity which exist among the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and thus the diverse forms of support which may be required to ensure that an enabling environment can be established to facilitate reform. Such discussions therefore need to be addressed in tandem with debates about the relative role of governmental and non-governmental training providers in various contexts. The importance of the state in all these domains cannot be ignored on the basis of the perceived inadequacy of the public sector as a training provider.

Skills Development and the Context of Reform

A key omission in the Synthesis Report is the lack of linkages made between the Skills Development agenda and the broader context of public sector reform, both in relation to the efforts of national governments and to the wider World Bank and donor agendas. Specifically, there have been a number of key shifts in approach to policy reform in recent years and new modalities for development assistance have been introduced – trends which are given little acknowledgement within the current version of the Synthesis Report. This wider context of reform has a significant impact on the planning and implementation of skills development-oriented initiatives. Specifically the current focus on poverty alleviation and the interest in coordinating interventions through the framework of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) will necessarily impact on how changes in the field of skills development are understood and operationalised. Similarly, the Synthesis Report does not acknowledge the recent articulation of policy priorities as presented through NEPAD nor the implications of the sustainability agenda reinforced at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. Skills development is intrinsically linked into wider issues relating to economic and social reforms. A direct recognition of this, and an acknowledgement of existing policies and interests in particular pathways of change would ensure that the Report was more strategically relevant to the needs of national governments and more coherent in relation to other sector and cross-sector commitments.

The omission of any discussion of the relationship between the skills development agenda and national and international priorities and policies in the arena of education more broadly is particularly noticeable and potentially problematic. Given the current focus on the development of Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs) to reform, this seems to go against the grain of both the Bank's own approach and that adopted more widely by national governments and the donor community. The Synthesis Report would be of greater relevance and import to policy makers and practitioners if it was more directly tied in to the broader education priorities as previously identified and agreed to by national governments. For example, the Education - for - All agenda, as agreed to in the Jomtien Declaration (1990) and confirmed in Dakar (2000), incorporates discussion of skills development related themes. Yet the links between such discussions and the Synthesis Report are overlooked. The document would be more politically expedient and have a clearer connection with existing initiatives if it was more firmly situated in relation to the Bank's existing education priorities and if clearer links were made to existing strategies, policies and programmes being pursued by national governments.

Related to this, the role of donor agencies in the reform process requires more comprehensive consideration within the document as their position is currently presented as somewhat

peripheral to the discussion. Given the current focus on building partnerships as an effective mechanism for developing and implementing policy and encouraging capacity building, the relationship between donors and governments is a factor which can significantly influence the pace and nature of change. In addition, financial support from donors is likely to be a key enabling factor in the reform process and, as such, requires more direct incorporation into consideration of skills development in a more integrated perspective.

Similarly, the multiple layers of partnerships and the broader context of national and international governance require greater acknowledgement. In particular, processes of decentralisation and deconcentration of resources and decision-making powers clearly impact on policy development and programme implementation. The complexity of such processes and the various levels of negotiation that will influence the reform process need to be acknowledged. Not all groups and actors will be working to the same agenda nor share the same interests in promoting change along the lines presented in the Synthesis Report. If the spirit of partnership and participation is to truly inform skills development policies then these multiple layers of dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration need to form a central part of World Bank, donor and national skills development strategies.

A cross-cutting theme which would help integrate and frame such discussions, and indeed the wider ‘story’ of skills development is the issue of financing reform. Within the Synthesis Report such discussions take place in isolation from the debates about specific forms of training provision, presented separately in two chapters at the end of the Report. In the context of the ‘main messages’ in the Executive Summary this issue is further marginalised, given only one paragraph of discussion. Yet the issue of financing, and more broadly the issue of incentives for trainees, employers or governments to contribute and participate in skills development, are clearly significant factors that demand a more central focus within this debate. Indeed, this could usefully become the overall framework within which other issues are explored. The multiple models of training and financing options available are integrated concerns which governments will need to assess in tandem. To conceptually separate them and discuss them as distinct and unrelated decisions distorts the picture of reform processes. The relative and possibly complementary roles of different groups and service providers must be considered in relation to the incentives available to them and, indeed, to any disincentives that exist. This will require both the meso- and macro-economic contexts to be given consideration and for these to be related and integrated into discussions of policy development and training provision options.

The Research Challenge

A final, but crucial, area of concern with the Report’s content and findings is the research base which informs it. The data presented in the component chapters is in many areas limited, outdated or missing, which raises serious questions about the applicability and certainly the generalisability of the recommendations presented. This limitation is acknowledged in the Synthesis Report where it states that the “weaknesses in the underlying data prevent authoritative conclusions” (Executive Summary: viii). Yet this recognition is not fully reflected in the Executive Summary or the main text which continue to assert a sense of authority and assurance about the wide scope and validity and applicability of the findings. Clearly a real dilemma exists where attempts are made to conduct applied, policy-oriented research: the need to acknowledge the specificity of particular contexts and cases has to be weighed up against the benefits of general guidelines and clear policy statements to facilitate action. In the case of the Synthesis Report, many Working Group participants felt that this balance was not effectively achieved,

with the specifics and richness of the background studies being diluted and generalised in such a way that neither objective is fulfilled.

Introducing a matrix or typology of cases and contexts and being clearer about the scope of the recommendations being made would, perhaps, have been a more helpful way of framing the discussion of the research material. In doing so the scope for negotiation and policy dialogue would have been extended as practitioners and policy-makers would have been able to highlight similarities and differences between the context within which they are working and the cases presented in the Synthesis Report.

The need for further research about skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa is not disputed. It is therefore worth reflecting briefly on the issues that could usefully be explored to enhance decision-making capacity in this field. Firstly, it would appear imperative that the assumptions behind the skills development agenda are explored. To what extent can it be assumed that increasing the skills level of the workforce will lead to economic growth and poverty reduction? These are widely linked patterns of change, but the research base to support it remains thin. The data drawn on in the Report takes little account of new approaches to development assistance and the changed social, economic and political context in a number of countries. Consequently new studies focusing on these shifts – including the impact of decentralisation, for example, – would enhance the research base. However, in doing so care should be taken not to replicate the input – output focus and the search for causal linkages which characterises much of the work in this field. Attention should be given to the historical experience and the actual processes of TVET / skills development reform in specific contexts, with political and social factors influencing participation and decision-making processes at all levels given due attention.

As the Synthesis Report acknowledges, and the Edinburgh Meeting of the Working Group reaffirmed, there is much that is still not known in relation to skills development. It is therefore essential that policy-makers, donors and researchers (including researchers from ‘Southern’ institutions) work together to identify where the knowledge base is weak and to ensure that these knowledge gaps are filled. The picture of labour market needs and skills development is rapidly changing and ongoing research should be considered a necessary component of an ongoing process of negotiation and reformulation of priorities and policies.

A More Politically Expedient Approach

As the above discussion has highlighted, discussions of skills development cannot be separated from wider processes of reform: the policy environment and training provision must be seen as two sides of the same coin, not as distinct and disparate concerns. Decisions made about this sector cannot be condensed down to simple technical choices between service providers or between models of training delivery. The broader context of policy development and political decision-making are critical dimensions of the process which should be given more attention in discussions such as those presented in the Executive Summary and Synthesis Report. A more integrated approach to this issue would not only paint a more accurate picture of reform processes but would also be more politically expedient, offering greater scope for policy dialogue and negotiation between donors and national governments.

As the Executive Summary currently stands, it presents a rather technicist view of skills development, with issues couched in fairly unequivocal terms – for example, the private sector is characterised as the most appropriate provider of services in this field. Yet the research findings in the main body of the report convey more complex messages. While a more nuanced view of

the relationship between the state and non-government institutions is developed within the Synthesis Report as a whole, it is vital that policy-makers and practitioners are encouraged to read on beyond the Executive Summary in order to engage with those debates. To ensure this, it is important that the complexity and contested nature of reform is fully acknowledged in the Executive Summary, to engage national governments and donors more fully as partners in the processes of decision-making and the management of change. Recognition that skills development initiatives take place within existing policy frameworks and reform agendas, such as PRSPs, SWAPs or NEPAD, would open up points of engagement and opportunities for wider dialogue and negotiation. Decisions relating to skills development should not be taken in isolation either from broader cross-sectoral issues, human development policies, contextual issues or financial considerations. Skills development should thus be presented in a more integrated fashion in Bank, donor-level and national and community level discussions.

There is, therefore, a need to ensure that the process of partnership-building and critical discussion of policy and practice which the World Bank has initiated through participation in the Edinburgh Meeting continues into the planning and implementation of skills development initiatives at country and regional levels. Such a transformation in inter-donor and donor-government relations (from ‘partnership as façade’ to ‘partnership as negotiated practice’) would truly mark a positive step, both in terms of the Bank’s own practice and more broadly in terms of ensuring coordinated, integrated and relevant opportunities for skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

PUBLIC TRAINING

David Atchoarena

Context

The situation of technical and vocational education (TVE) varies widely across Sub-Saharan countries. Delivery systems are quite diverse, combining school-based provision with other non-formal training arrangements. This diversity in provision patterns is associated with great disparities regarding the current state of public TVE systems. Differences in historical, political, educational, cultural and economic contexts largely account for such variations in structures, operating conditions and outcomes.

The economic and financial crisis that has struck the countries of sub-Saharan Africa since the mid-1980s has brought deep changes in the structure of the production system and in the labour market. The end of guaranteed access to public-sector employment has contributed to graduates' increasing unemployment and a deteriorating rate of return of investments in post-basic education.

In this context, TVE systems, originally shaped on the model of the former colonial powers, gradually became unable to train young people with the qualifications demanded by businesses. In addition, TVE became too expensive in the context of structural adjustment programmes and related public spending cuts. In turn, inadequate investment in TVE contributed to its deterioration and further aggravated issues of effectiveness and efficiency. The need to break this vicious circle eventually led to the reconsidering of policy options and delivery patterns.

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.

Overall conclusions

Despite the progress made during the 1990s in re-engineering delivery systems, TVE remains a problematic area of public policies for sub-Saharan countries. Hence, the review produces an image of unfinished business.

To a large extent, the reform agenda implemented in sub-Saharan countries concentrated on establishing new forms and new structures of regulation focussing on outcomes and providing incentives to employers and individuals for increasing investment in training, and to providers to better match skill needs. There is sufficient evidence that, in most countries, this recommended policy shift, in spite of its potential merits, did not produce full results. This was partly due to deficient implementation of the reform but also to disappointing responses from stakeholders. In particular, subsidies or incentives offered to employers, through levy-based mechanisms, have not produced the desired effect on increased partnership. The existence of a depressed labour market and the impact of growth uncertainties contribute to shorten the strategic horizon of most

employers. Hence, developing a practice of partnership and a culture of training seems to take more time than initially anticipated.

Similarly, the emerging focus on learners' motivation and incentives seems to lack relevance in educational environments where the main issues remain the ones of access and provision. Poor and – in some countries – decreasing quality of training represent major challenges. Addressing them constitute a prerequisite for gaining employers' confidence and introducing competition among providers (e.g. Mauritius).

Although important, strengthening training capacities for the informal sector does not represent a sufficient perspective to contribute to the transition of sub-Saharan Africa from cheap labour to skill-based competitiveness. More attention and support is required at the institution level to change public providers' attitudes while improving quality of provision.

In some areas, the reform process did not seem to pay sufficient attention to international experience. The introduction of a levy represents one of the most controversial measures. Yet, experience has shown that such a system can hardly be effective if most employers oppose it. Such a basic lesson does not seem to be fully understood.

Even more of a paradox is that many micro-level innovations, concerning the management and operation of TVE institutions, are overlooked by governments and therefore never go beyond experimental stage. This lack of institutional memory and scaling-up capacity is partly due to relatively frequent changes in the organisation and management of the TVE sector.

Finally, the issues of contextual environments and policy complexity need to be re-emphasised. TVE policies and donor support in the least developed economies of the sub-region must be dissociated from the situation in countries benefiting from a larger and more diversified economic basis. Furthermore, the transfer in weak institutional contexts of complex policy innovations can be harmful. Obviously the balance between policy complexity and institutional capacity is not sufficiently taken into account by countries and donors.

PRIVATE TRAINING

David Atchoarena

Context

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is undergoing deep restructuring. One significant dimension of this process of change concerns the role of private provision in improving and expanding the overall quantum of vocational training in the economy. Such a conceptual shift is very much supported by advocates of a deregulated system, for whom the adoption of market principles in the area of TVE will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

While this debate was taking place, in a large number of countries of the region, the deterioration of state-run TVE systems has, de facto, created a market niche for private providers. Gradually, private providers have emerged in an unco-ordinated and unmonitored fashion. In the absence of proper regulation, in most countries very little is known about the nature and operation of these entities.

Yet, it is assumed that, in many SSA countries, the private providers already make a significant contribution to training provision. It is also hoped that, in addition to relieving public finances, private-sector growth can promote useful competition, within the private sector but also with public institutions, eventually leading to cost reduction and better labour market responsiveness.

Key findings and policy issues

Private-sector provision of TVE represents a growing component of the overall training system in most of the countries for which information was collected. In some of them, most of the TVE students are already enrolled in private institutions.

Private TVE institutions represent a very heterogeneous sector, difficult to identify with precision. Key elements to differentiate private providers include legal status, ownership, objectives and financing.

A large number of private TVE institutions operate illegally. There are indications that, in some countries, most of them are not registered.

Although it is true to say that private provision concentrates on the service and commercial trades, the share of private institutions' students enrolled in technical areas, mainly light industrial skills, is often not marginal.

Not surprisingly, tuition fees usually represent a major source of income for private institutions. However, a few countries also benefit from government subsidies and tax incentives. Church-related providers and other NGOs might benefit from substantial donations, including from abroad.

In some cases, the private sector seems to operate with lower costs and is more responsive to labour market demand, but this cannot be generalized.

However, this study also indicates that, to a large extent, private providers benefit from the investment and experience accumulated by the public sector through the use of curricula, training materials and, not least, instructors from the public sector.

There is no evidence that the performance of private providers is better. Quality varies greatly from one institution to the other and it is likely that variations in standards are much wider within the private sector than for public institutions, which are all subject to the same rules.

Although essential to facilitate the growth of the private sector, simplifying the legal environment in which private institutions are established and operate is not sufficient for promoting a vibrant market for training. In a context where the social demand is strong, too much bureaucracy and regulation may result in increasing the number of illegal institutions.

In SSA, where poverty remains a major reality in most countries, supporting private provision requires that the financing issue be addressed. Provided that mechanisms can be established to monitor standards, there is justification to ask whether, for certain skill areas, training provision can be done in a cost-effective way by the private sector. This is particularly the case to ensure the viability of non-profit-oriented private providers catering for the poor. Efforts are required to define criteria to allocate subsidies to private training on the grounds of equity and performance.

In countries where the training levy is becoming a strategic source of job-related training, efforts are required to ensure that such financing can also benefit institutions providing pre-employment TVE.

Within the framework of decentralization policies, local governments should be given more responsibilities in supporting private training provision. In particular they could play a key role in granting financial support to low-income students, through bursaries, and in facilitating the access to land for promoters wishing to establish a new centre or to expand an existing facility.

It is very doubtful that quality control can be enforced through market mechanisms. High social demand for training and absence of information about cost and performance are among the factors explaining why pure market mechanism cannot operate in SSA. Today, little or poor regulation results in a high proportion of private providers being of sub-standard quality. Registration and accreditation are essential functions. At present, in most SSA countries, there is no real capacity to perform those tasks; establishing this capacity is critical for a genuine expansion of the private sector.

In a context where public funding for TVE is rare, financial assistance cannot and should not be the only form of state support to private providers. Providing tax incentives, performing inspection visits on a regular basis, disseminating information to the public about offerings, tuition fees and results, providing staff development programmes for both instructors and managers are among the measures that governments could implement to support a proper development of the private sector.

ENTERPRISE-BASED TRAINING IN FORMAL SECTOR MEDIUM AND LARGE-SCALE AFRICAN ENTERPRISES

John Grierson

This summary, and the presentation on which it is based, is principally concerned with formal sector medium and large-scale African enterprises. Enterprise-based Training (EBT) subsumes employer-sponsored training during employment, including formal and informal on-the-job training and off-the-job training (but not training by employees at their own expense). EBT is important because it is: a) directed at the current active labour force; b) market responsive, and c) a viable complement to existing public and private sector provision.

The findings reported reflect two key data sources: the World Bank's RPED studies of 600 small, medium and large-scale enterprises in five Anglophone African countries (data collected in the early 1990s); and 13 case studies of medium and large-scale enterprises in Kenya and Zambia, carried out in 2001.

Sub-Saharan Africa EBT Characteristics - the current situation

The formal sector is "limited" and contracting in virtually all Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries). SSA's small formal sector (particularly manufacturers) is similar in structure to enterprises in other global regions, but markedly less efficient. In response EBT is widespread and substantial - it is the most common form of skills training, with in-firm informal training predominant. EBT is used to address both firm-specific and general skills needs, with general training relatively common and widespread. Large enterprises train more than small enterprises, foreign-owned enterprises train more than domestic enterprises and exporters train more than non-exporters. More training is provided to those in high-skill occupations and to those with more education (i.e. "key" employees). Liberalisation and growing competition (i.e. globalisation) are creating a growing demand for increasingly sophisticated EBT.

EBT Trends - the direction of change

Modern management practices and rapidly changing technologies demand high levels of both skill and adaptability. Despite contracting formal sector employment, training is increasing in intensity, sophistication and "structure" in response to globalisation and foreign direct investment (FDI). Though labour is abundant in SSA, the education and skill level of Africa's workforce is low. There is little expectation of hiring employees who are already qualified. Hence most employers are seeking employees who are "trainable". Entry-level qualifications are steadily rising.

Employers are increasingly dependent upon in-house EBT. Training is increasingly firm-specific and competency-based, with a corresponding decline in interest in certification (i.e. trade testing). Inter-firm co-operation is modest; most inter-firm co-operation is within company groups. There is no apparent tendency for "associations" or other forms of collective action emerging to address broader (e.g. industry-wide or geographic) enterprise skills training needs. There is clear evidence of limited and declining interaction with the public sector, including, for example, declining off-the-job sponsorships, and the virtual disappearance of formal (i.e. statutory) apprenticeship.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has extensive training implications in terms of the costs and complexities of multi-skilling and higher staff turnover and in terms of training for HIV/AIDS awareness and amelioration.

Analysis and policy implications

All learning mechanisms have a positive impact on productivity, with EBT amongst the most efficient mechanisms, even in very small enterprises. There are clear limits to "internal learning", particularly in light of the very limited degree of collective action to address broader training needs.

Enterprises, particularly large-scale exporters with strong "company group" linkages, can be expected to continue to invest in substantial EBT without government support. Much of this training will be general training as enterprises strive to overcome the handicap of the low overall quality of labour. They have no choice; neither adequately qualified labour nor adequate skills training facilities are readily available. With few exceptions (e.g. South Africa, Mauritius) public sector capacity is too weak to have much to offer enterprises.

No blanket justification exists for general subsidies for EBT. Investments in general education should have a high priority, along with "carefully targeted" skills training interventions to inter alia:

- direct training to smaller enterprises and workers with low education;
- build capacity for collective action (at all levels);
- and develop public sector capacity to formulate policy, structure training incentives to ensure that training addresses broader national needs, interact effectively with the private sector (including the small and informal private sector), and set and supervise quality standards in "partnership" with the private sector.

INFORMAL SECTOR TRAINING

Fred Fluitman and Hans Haan

The informal sector of African economies absorbs the vast majority of new entrants to the labour market. Many men and women in search of work and income find that there are not enough jobs to go around and, eventually, create their own employment. That is, they start a micro-enterprise, usually in an urban area, in which they will work alone, or with one or two others, possibly apprentices. The multitude and diversity of unincorporated, household-based, small ventures, that are typically unregistered, and, at least initially, overlooked by public authorities, such as statisticians and tax people, are hard to miss in the teeming cities of Sub-Saharan Africa. Unsophisticated perhaps, they are producers and traders providing essential goods and services to large numbers of customers, in markets, along major boulevards, and wherever their peers have their homes. They sell whatever sells. They dress the nation and they keep the cars on the road. They make pots and pans. They paint signs and they dye cloth. They run mobile restaurants, open-air barber shops, and, increasingly, cyber cafés. They produce and distribute medicine. And so on, and so forth. They are the working poor in what is now widely known as the urban informal sector, or informal economy.

Both technical and management skills appear badly needed in the informal sector to raise productivity and incomes, and hence help in reducing poverty. Moreover, training might improve product quality, contribute to diversification, and enhance occupational safety and health. Particularly women, large numbers of whom work in micro enterprises, would benefit from acquiring additional skills.

Overall, the review reached a positive conclusion, namely that the application of new skills can enhance growth, innovation and productivity in informal sector enterprises.

However, most training as currently provided under government auspices is inappropriate for work in the informal sector. Without detracting from ensuring such high-quality training as actually needed for modern sector growth and competitiveness, the countries concerned may, therefore, want to review and broaden their national training objectives and target training elsewhere.

African training systems would be far more relevant than they are today if they were to shift some or most of their attention and resources towards the people who are forced to make ends meet in the informal sector.

An important role for government could be to facilitate the development of training markets for the informal sector. One way of doing this would be to reorient existing, conventional training institutions so that they meet new purposes and new clients. This would require that these institutions do things differently, and that they do different things. For example, they should get acquainted with what goes on in local labour markets; involved in training beyond the usual trades, if only to avoid market saturation; include business skills training; favour short-duration, competency-based training, and adapt training materials for the uneducated; provide for certification based on skills acquired rather than on length of training and so on. In practice, such reorientation has proven difficult to bring about, as most of the existing institutions lack flexibility and incentives for change.

Another approach could be to stimulate a supply response by private sector providers and independent trainers, such as carefully selected skilled crafts-people. Networking and collaboration among small training providers appears a promising means to raise quality.

In spite of shortcomings, traditional apprenticeship brings important skills to huge numbers of young people, particularly in West African countries. A strategy to improve traditional apprenticeship training might have to involve the following elements: (a) improving the image of traditional apprenticeship, (b) starting with market surveys, (c) assisting the poor to finance apprenticeships; (d) improving basic education, (e) upgrading the skills of masters; (f) providing supplementary training for apprentices; (g) evaluating and certifying the skills obtained and (h) post-training support.

The emergence of independent, self-sustained training markets for the informal sector seems a long way off, however. Subsidies are likely to be necessary, except for certain services to existing businesses. Efforts therefore should focus on keeping unit costs to a minimum.

Donor-assisted projects have demonstrated that informal sector enterprises can be upgraded through carefully targeted skill development efforts. However, sustainability and large-scale growth have rarely been achieved, so far. Future project work should concentrate on resolving these twin issues--financial sustainability and going to scale.

Training is a necessary but insufficient condition for improved productivity, incomes, and livelihoods in the informal sector. Training enables other inputs, such as credit or land, to be used effectively. Follow-up services such as providing business advice, and measures to facilitate access to markets and technology, are often critical in helping micro-enterprises survive and prosper.

Training interventions tend to be more effective if beneficiaries participate in their planning. Informal sector associations have shown that they can be instrumental in addressing common problems of skill shortages, for example by organizing supplementary training and common examinations for workshop trainees among their membership.

Finally, basic education, of decent quality, and for all, is and remains utterly important. Literacy, numeracy and livelihood skills must be improved for micro-entrepreneurs to be trainable and to have a better chance of success in their business. Combining literacy with livelihood skills training during childhood should be considered as part of strategies for improving conditions in the informal economy.

VOCATIONALIZED SECONDARY EDUCATION REVISITED, WITH CASE STUDIES FROM BOTSWANA, GHANA AND KENYA

Jon Lauglo, Albert K. Akyeampong, Kilemi Mwiria and Sheldon G. Weeks

Introducing subjects of a vocational or practical kind in a secondary school curriculum which remains dominated by general education subjects is referred to as 'vocationalization'. Such subjects have their uses in private lives (e.g. agriculture, handicrafts and clearly domestic science), and can otherwise be seen as part of well-rounded general education (this has received considerably emphasis in Botswana), but their main rationale in Sub-Saharan countries has been the hope that they would ease the students' transition to the world of work. The key policy issue has been to find an educational response to the very great difficulty which school leavers have in finding work.

To be workable, such a response must be rooted in what schools are able to achieve rather than what one would like them to achieve under ideal circumstances. It must also be rooted in assessment of resource requirements – not just the financing, but also the human and organizational resources needed to mount subjects which usually have especially complex logistics requirements.

Key findings

A review of empirical studies combined with commissioned case studies in Botswana, Ghana and Kenya suggests these main observations:

No study has shown that the kind of secondary school vocationalization which affects a minor proportion of the students total curriculum – e.g. five class periods a week, or even one third of the time table, gives an advantage in finding work (let alone self employment) within the first year or first few years after leaving school – under severely depressed labour markets for youth. Exposure to vocational subjects may enhance interest in the types of work for which these subjects are broadly preparatory. But tracer studies have failed to show a positive impact on actual access to work after students leave school. Nor have they found any strong effect on access to relevant further technical training.

The majority of vocationalization variants are much more costly per student class-period than mainstream general education subjects, mainly because of smaller classes and greater expense on facilities, equipment and consumables. Unless a course can be taught to a full class of students (few can), running costs will be more than twice that of non-laboratory academic subjects.

Enrolments in vocational courses are often strongly gender biased

Recommendations

Given that secondary education in Sub-Saharan African countries typically is in urgent need of quality improvement in core general education subjects (language, maths, science), and given the high cost of vocationalization and the complexity of inputs required, vocationalization of mainstream secondary education should not be a high priority under the conditions of resource availability which characterize nearly all countries in Africa. It is especially important to recognize that such policies are not an expedient means to alleviate school leaver unemployment.

For vocational skills development it is better to look to training centres specialized for such

purposes, set up to respond to the labour market, and with stronger institutional links to that market than secondary schools will have. Minor portions of a predominantly academic secondary-school education will not suffice.

The capacities which are most generally valuable for the world of work are also valuable for life in general, and thus key objectives for general education. Examples are initiative, drive, responsibility and creativity as well as more concrete generic skills of being able to communicate clearly, work collaboratively in teams and solve problems. These capacities and skills are developed by ways of working across subjects, rather than by the taught contents of any particular subject – academic or practical. Improved economic relevance is also likely to be achieved by enhanced learning of oral and written communication skills and of practical arithmetic. The task of quality improvement in African secondary education and the task of improved economic relevance of that education thus coincide.

Computer applications should be encouraged – whether in the form of examinable computer studies or non-examinable computer awareness or use of computer applications in other subjects. Because of its wider range of application than any particular cluster of occupations (it is also useful within the education system), computer applications merit support on wider grounds than 'vocationalization' rationales alone. Also, the portion of the labour market for secondary school leavers, in which such skills are applied may be quite limited today but is bound to increase rapidly. As in other world regions, the question in African secondary education is not whether computing skills need to be taught, but how soon it will be affordable and practicable to introduce such teaching, and in what precise ways ICT can be most helpful in a school setting. The case studies on Kenya, Ghana and Botswana could give scant guidance on this because ICT technology in the schools is rare and/or recent.

There are well known constraints which may make the introduction of computer applications a seemingly remote objective in the secondary schools of most African countries: lack of electricity and high costs when it is provided, high costs of software, problems with maintenance of equipment, lack of qualified staff, use of internet access being barred by lack of access to adequate telephone connections and high telephone charges. A long-term view is therefore needed in providing secondary schools with ICT technology. The cost of equipment itself may not be the major barrier.

Because ICT is new and because it has not been covered in any depth in the materials used in this study, the present report cannot offer any guidance on the specifics of how to proceed. Feedback from countries, especially developing countries, that have taken a lead in this respect will be essential in order to learn from the early mistakes which inevitably will be made. Botswana illustrates strong commitment by an African state which has at its disposal the necessary finance. By 2003, the plan is that all junior and senior secondary schools will have operational computer laboratories. Botswana distinguishes between computer awareness (non-examinable) and computer studies (examinable). Whether these subjects are treated as part of mathematics and science in terms of curriculum grouping, or as practical subjects, varies from school to school. For other African countries, it will be important to stay closely informed of experience from Botswana. The teaching of computer applications is also very much a specialty of private proprietary computer schools – something which provides opportunity for private-public collaboration.

Regarding other vocational/practical subjects than computer applications, it is difficult to combine advice with strong encouragement, given the doubts about the cost-effectiveness of many subjects. But the main criteria used in assessing subject possibilities could be:

- Relatively low cost
- That what is learned will be useful in large occupational segments that secondary school leavers have a high likelihood of entering
- Usefulness in one's private life
- Good prospects for reasonably balanced enrolment of women and men

In the case studies from Botswana, Kenya and Ghana, agriculture and business studies stand out as relatively affordable options that also lack the sharp gender biases that many other vocational subjects have. Both are also examples of skills which in most countries are useful for broad occupational segments and they have their private use as well (growing crops, rearing animals, keeping accounts). It is not accidental that these are subjects which are commonly offered in these countries. But the extent of usage of agricultural skills among secondary school leavers remains to be mapped.

In implementing any practical subjects, it will be important to:

- Implement systematically (as in Botswana) rather than precipitously
- Work towards a shift in pedagogy which emphasizes problem solving
- Give substantial emphasis to continuous assessment
- Avoid gender biases
- Analyze and weigh cost implications before going to scale
- Evaluate learning outcomes and impact

INTEGRATED ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA, UGANDA AND KENYA

Halfdan Farstad

Facing increasing unemployment and economic decline, some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have introduced entrepreneurship education delivered as part of the curriculum in general secondary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at secondary and post-secondary levels. Integrated entrepreneurship education (IEE) here covers the teaching of knowledge and skills that will enable the individual student to plan, start and run his or her own business in the formal or informal sector, delivered to regular, full-time students within the national education system. Entrepreneurship training for other groups, delivered outside mainstream education, is not included.

The study was assigned as a review where available documents were supposed to be the prime source of information. Data were gathered in the period 10 April – 15 August 2002 and comprised general literature review, targeted literature search in each country, interviews with key informants and visits to 2 – 4 relevant education institutions in each country.

Provisions

IEE is currently being provided as part of national education and training curricula in all three countries. Elements of IEE are found in both Junior Secondary (JS) and Senior Secondary (SS) general education, embedded in other subjects, such as Business Studies, Commerce and Key Skills. However, the emphasis on IEE is much stronger within TVET than in general education. In Kenya, IEE has been a compulsory and examinable subject at all levels of school-based TVET since the early 1990s, whereas Botswana currently is in the process of successively introducing IEE with a similar status at all technical colleges. In Uganda, IEE has been provided to all students in Industrial Training since the 1970s, and final decisions will be taken shortly as to whether, and to which extent, IEE based on comprehensive new curricula will be introduced in general education and in school-based TVET programmes. In Botswana and Kenya, IEE is not compulsory in the industrial training programmes.

The objectives of the curricula are (a) attitude formation; and (b) to equip the students with relevant knowledge and skills for starting and running their own business. Accordingly, the content is partly motivational and partly pragmatic, focusing on formal and practical issues like laws, existing credit systems, bookkeeping and marketing. In both Kenya and Botswana, IEE is examinable in some programmes.

In all three countries, preparations of the provisions were based on needs assessment surveys, and involved stakeholders and experts from the private sector. The private involvement was particularly strong in Botswana. In Kenya, the IEE curricula emerged from an ILO / UNDP project which involved central private sector actors.

Inputs

In all three countries, it has proved difficult to establish the precise costs related to the integrated provision of entrepreneurship education. This is due to a general reluctance to disclose financial information. Furthermore, costs of IEE development and delivery are often embedded in broader cost figures. Cost-sharing between public authorities and donors is an additional complicating factor. However, IEE is mainly delivered through traditional classroom teaching, and recurrent

costs are allegedly at the same level as those of theoretical subjects such as Social Studies and Mathematics. Development costs vary significantly with the design and ambitions of the planning and preparation process.

The advance preparation of management and teachers in the relevant education and training institutions has been particularly thorough in Botswana. Continuous cooperation on organisational development, tutoring and training of staff, as well as financial support for a significant physical update, characterise the process.

In the school-based programmes, most IEE teachers hold a Diploma or Degree in Business Management, Economics or Entrepreneurship. In Kenya, entrepreneurship education was included in teacher training already in 1991. Higher Diploma and Masters Degree programmes in Entrepreneurship Development are offered at some universities and colleges. Teachers who enrol in these programmes receive financial support from the government.

In all three countries, many teachers have personal work experience from the small and medium enterprise sector, either through involvement in some family business or from running their own business.

The Kenyan experiences from establishing a core of specialised teachers are not only positive. Those holding Higher Diploma or a Masters Degree are highly marketable and often leave school for more attractive wage employment or self-employment.

In Uganda and Kenya, TVET institutions suffer from financial constraints, as government funding has been declining for several years. Needs of fund-raising activities, through income-generating production and higher student fees, have taken focus away from training and induced lower enrolment figures, poor maintenance and no replacement of outdated training equipment and, eventually, reduced the quality of training.

Delivery

The volume of IEE varies between the different programmes, but never exceeds an average of 2 hours / periods per week. The organisation of classes at institutional level in general seems quite rigid in all three countries, leaving little room for practical, time-consuming work, unless swapping of classes is arranged directly between colleagues. Traditional classroom teaching, comprising group work, role-play, discussions and problem solving as theoretical exercises, are commonly used methods of instruction. Site visits to local markets and the conduct of a market study are recommended in most of the curricula.

All IEE programmes include periods of work placement. These give students new and useful insights as to how enterprises are organised and function in a real market. Whether the placements give insights concerning the establishment and management of the host enterprise, will depend on the type of work and how close the student is to the daily decision-making and information flow pertaining to market performance, government regulations and so on.

Preparation of a business plan is always a compulsory exercise that might be of great potential importance. The planning of a specified production, market assessment and stipulation of costs, prices, financing needs etc., contains high potential learning yields. Provided qualified supervision, the students through this exercise experience major entrepreneurial challenges and problems in a realistic manner. In Kenya, what was intended an exercise for effective learning

does not always appear as such, however. In cases where the motivation and follow-up of the teacher is weak, replication of business plans is said to be widespread.

In Botswana, the establishment, operation and liquidation of a student enterprise is compulsory for all learners in Business studies, which is an optional subject in junior secondary school. Student enterprises are often established with support from the Junior Achievement Foundation. The exercise ensures exposure to relevant information flows and direct involvement in questions related to economy, organisation of personnel and production, government regulations and market conditions, and allegedly has a clearly positive effect on students' skills and motivation for self-employment.

Outcomes of training

Reliable and adequate data on the significance - outcomes and impact - of IEE are not readily detectable. It is especially surprising and disappointing that more hard evidence is not available in the Kenyan case. Research conducted over the last decade, seems to have brought little beyond new indicative information.

The study shows no unambiguously positive impact of this particular training in terms of higher self-employment frequency, as compared with other groups. Skills training and work exposure might explain the observed self-employment frequency among the graduates. The self-employment rate, especially in the informal sector, is relatively high in all three countries, and the bulk of new entrants to the workforce who find employment, find it in the informal sector. But baseline surveys show that few of the responding entrepreneurs have received IEE.

Despite the fact that attitude formation is one expressed objective of the IEE programmes, a general scepticism to self-employment prevails in all three countries, even among TVET students.

Conclusions and recommendations

Our findings do not give strong support to a replication of the current IEE provisions. Neither do they suffice to the general conclusion that IEE is worthless and a waste of resources. There are indications that the efficiency and effectiveness of IEE vary with the processes of planning, implementation and mode of delivery. However, our strongest recommendation is that more empirical research be conducted in order to establish the relevant facts.

Entrepreneurial motivation and competencies are necessary, but not sufficient to ensure successful business ventures. Socio-cultural factors such as informal norms and traditions influence business establishment and operation, as do conditions related to credit, networks and markets. A favourable policy environment and access to various business support services are of critical importance to successful entrepreneurship.

Potential pitfalls are a) to undermine the IEE intervention by stripping the delivery institutions of necessary instructional resources, and b) to make the IEE too theoretical and classroom-oriented. A general conclusion would be not to have too high expectations as regards the promotion of entrepreneurship through an isolated intervention like IEE.

Given the dominant and fast growing importance of the informal sector in SSA and the high number of early school-leavers, one could argue that preparation of students for self-employment

and work in the informal sector should start as early as possible. This could imply that elements of IEE be given to all students at all levels, but with different scope for the various levels and students. Provisions should be carefully adapted to each specific target group and to the particular social context of implementation. Relevant teaching methods must be chosen so as to support the effective learning of each topic, meaning that time, organisation and access to relevant instructional resources must allow for practical and realistic training.

FINANCING TRAINING

Adrian Ziderman

The two Synthesis Review chapters on training finance focus on four main issues in training finance: resource mobilization, the role of national training funds, transfer mechanisms for institutional funding, and enhancing enterprise training.

Resource mobilization

Against the backcloth of increased parsimony in public resources, four methods of resource diversification are identified: raising revenues, system-wide (emphasis on payroll levies); revenue enhancement by the training institution, via greater cost sharing or other types of income generation; and encouraging the development of private training institutions (discussed in an earlier section):

Payroll levies

The efficacy of introducing a system of national payroll levies is contingent on a number of factors. Attention needs to be given to the following issues:

- is there a sufficiently broad enterprise base to justify introducing a payroll levy system?
- how can levies be collected effectively (self-collection vs. agency collection)?
- are levies acceptable to stakeholders (does cross-subsidization compromise their role as "benefit taxation")?
- can levy proceeds be secured for training (rather than other uses)?

Cost sharing

Cost sharing policies in education and training provision are justified by the recognition that these investments create human capital, leading to enhanced earnings. The beneficiaries should, and are able, to share in these costs through fees. But the scope for substantial tuition fees is limited, particularly by equity considerations, as they may deny access to disadvantaged groups; targeted subsidies, scholarships (and loans?) have a role to play here.

Income generation

These policies, whether by combining training with production or by the sale of services, are likely to have a supplementary role only, in most cases. But they may lead to a neglect of the training function; resources may be diverted from training into production. Cost sharing and income generation policies will be most effective within a framework of sufficient institutional autonomy, when fees are established at the institutional level rather than centrally, and if fee and other income proceeds remain with the institution.

Training funds

National training funds represent a unique, institutional framework for unifying and augmenting public sources of funding for training and for allocating funds in line with national policies and priorities. There are at least six conditions for their successful operation:

- Adequate, sustainable and stable volume of training fund income must be assured
- Must secure decision-making autonomy of management board and control over budget allocation
- Foster ownership by substantial representation of stakeholders on management board

- Activities and disbursements should be directed to national training needs only
- Not to assume the role of training provider, to avoid preferential treatment to the fund's training institutions
- Decision making should be open and transparent

Transfer mechanisms for institutional funding

Direct allocation of funding to training institutions are based on arbitrary, ad hoc procedures, unrelated to performance; this encourages inefficient, static, supply-driven training, unrelated to market needs. Moves towards normative (formula) funding are recommended, based on inputs, outputs, outcomes. Contract funding for the training needs of special groups (such as the unemployed, rural women) should be used more widely, as should competitive tendering (by private as well as public training providers), leading to more competitive, unified training markets. While there have been some useful experimentation, indirect institutional financing (trainee-based funding, using vouchers) is unlikely to have a wide application in African countries at the present time.

Enhancing enterprise training

Financial incentives may be necessary to increase the quality and quantity of enterprise training, where firms under-train. The Synthesis notes three financing mechanisms for encouraging enterprise training: by direct training subsidies (but the costs fall on public budgets), company tax concessions (which generally have not worked well in Africa or elsewhere) and grants received within the context of a levy-grant scheme. Levy-grant schemes (with a partial reimbursement of training costs) can work well where institutional capacities are present and no public funding is required. But key issues need to be discussed:

- Do companies under-train, thus justifying public intervention?
- Do/can incentives lead to more, better training?
- Support for training on or off-the-job?
- Systems approach vs. piecemeal reimbursement

Training finance system

The efficacy of mechanisms for training financing should be examined in terms of a total system (rather than piecemeal), with a central, integrating role of transforming fragmented, inefficient training systems (with supply-driven public provision), into a non-fragmented, competitive, demand-oriented training market. This role includes:

- encouraging moves towards cost-effective training provision
- facilitating the development of competitive training markets
- encouraging market-responsive (demand-driven) training
- leading to integration of public and private training markets

These are pivotal roles that a modern, sound training finance system should fill, in addition to the traditional ones of augmenting training resources, funding training institutions and improving the quality and quantity of enterprise training.

COMMENTARY: A BROAD VIEW OF THE PAPER

Claudio Moura de Castro

The paper is a big step ahead, compared to its predecessors. There is less ideology and less prejudice. It is more evidence-driven. Gone is the World Bank fundamentalism of the 90s and the "now you see, now you don't see" style, required to reconcile the common sense of the authors with the evangelical impositions of management. To sum up, it is a breath of fresh air.

Yet, it is still a bit too negative on the public sector. It should be more assertive and positive in tone, stressing good results - wherever they might be - and giving a better sense of direction to policies. Another major shortcoming is to treat training in isolation from a broader social and economic context.

For the record, the absence of a solid focus on training for agriculture is probably a kiss of death to this area. Development banks are dismantling their agriculture departments.

On matters of style and presentation, there are a few possibilities of improvement. At it stands, it is not clear to whom it is addressed. Is it meant to be an agenda for the WB own use? A donor's agenda? An agenda being proposed to the countries?

Also, a greater integration between the chapters is needed. In addition, it seems that major surgery in the structure could make the paper more suitable to its diverse clienteles. The executive summary could grow somewhat and become the main paper. The big paper could become a background source for professionals, since it is too research-oriented and too large to be of interest to policy makers.

Training has no life of its own

The strengths and limitations of training should be stated clearly, due to the frequent misunderstandings concerning its roles. Stronger words on what training can achieve in improving productivity and/or equity goals are expected. At the same time, it should warn the readers not to ask from training what it cannot do. The inevitable result of overselling training is to devalue and demoralize it, as unrealistic promises are not fulfilled.

Unless we consider a macro-economic and macro-social broader framework, what training can do will remain hazy and often misunderstood. Unless the economy knows how to use training, it does no good and not much will happen to productivity.

Above all, training is not a magic potion against unemployment. Wishful thinking is not permitted, because it has led too often to expensive and ineffective programmes. A case in point is the role of schools to help in the transition to work. Tracer studies do not show vocationalization to ease transition to market. If the jobs are not there, education and training are not the way to create them.

The dynamics of reform

It may be an overgeneralization, but it seems that bad WB loans are elegant projects that did not understand what could and what could not be done in that particular moment, country and ministry. Donors need to understand well the intricacies of the ministry with which they are working. They need intimate knowledge of local power and politics and know how to deal with them.

Donors must understand what can be done, when and what is feasible in dealing with politics, power and bureaucracy. They must consider timing and the time it takes to do things. By the way, do the countries want to do what is being proposed?

Policy making means negotiating what is possible and expedite, not the perfect solution and, above all, not what the donor or bank thinks is right. For instance, can the government fund private providers instead of having its own schools? Technically, yes, it works and there are many examples. Politically, if the funding comes from the already established training institutions, the answer is a painful no, in most cases.

Training policies

A policy paper deals with training policies, unfortunately, an elusive concept. And often the difficulties start by asking the wrong questions.

It has been observed that there is no way to integrate or coordinate training, if it belongs to more than one ministry or agency. But why do we need integrated training? Is fragmentation really a problem? Policy is only needed when there are concrete problems to fix. And often, it is sufficient to patch up what is missing or wrong, rather than have an overall framework - which often is hopelessly impotent to solve any problem.

In the real world, one needs different solutions, often unrelated and lacking intellectual elegance. If there is no single system, we need training policies for fragmented systems.

But in all cases of countries that are minimally democratic, the solution is not technical. Policies always need to consider stakeholders, power and politics.

Public training

To be very candid, most public training in Africa seems to be in serious trouble. And the paper is very forthcoming in showing its limitations. But it has to go beyond that. Not all training is that bad and there is no compelling evidence that it is useless. The question is what to do about each of the different issues that face public training.

It was noted that public training is small and weak. In addition, it is shrinking further. This is not to be rejoiced, it is a serious concern, when we consider the range of training needs that cannot be met by other alternatives. What to do about it?

The suggestion to redirect training to the informal sector is as old as the failures to implement this conversion. Trainers dislike the informal sector and the entire administrative structures are not suitable to operate in this environment.

The paper ought to come forth more positive on public training, stating new priorities and roles (if nothing else, for political reasons). It is too nihilistic.

One obvious direction is to focus public training on critical skills not supplied by other alternatives, such as key occupations in strategic sectors. A most important area is the maintenance of expensive equipment and machinery - a most egregious source of waste in developing countries.

In addition, training workers for small enterprises is critical, since they cannot pay for training, do not know enough about it and cannot afford the opportunity costs of sending their key workers to be trained.

In contrast to the harsh words on training, the paper is too romantic about general education. There is some reminiscence of the old Bank saying that "All you need is a good academic education". But are such rosy views warranted? Maybe, but what is actually taught in academic education is not what is needed in real life. Often enough, whatever was taught was not really learned. Basic education is often very bad indeed. Why badmouth training and forgive education?

Vocationalization of secondary education

The paper seems to be correct in saying that vocationalization of secondary schools is bad. There is enough evidence showing that it worries to do too much and ends up either doing too little or doing the wrong thing.

It is often ineffective in preparing for jobs. Modalities, often known as Technical Education, become a path to higher education, distorting its original role.

In too many cases, there is a dynasty of trainers who have not mastered the profession they teach, because they learned it from teachers who also did not master it. The set of trainers with experience and diplomas may be an empty set. Administrators – who are often teachers – create regulations biased in favour of diplomas and against experience. This is an area where good policies are sorely needed.

But perhaps some of the results aggregate too much when they analyze data. In the manufacturing trades, results tend to be hopeless. But as shown by American data, they are better in those subjects that are close to what schools are normally doing – meaning, paper and pencil activities. After all, are computer skills academic or vocational? And business? And office skills?

When we go back to the original reasons to vocationalize secondary education, we may see some light. Perhaps we can detect a confusion between the need for practical education and the wrong response that results from confusing it with vocational education. The solution is not to prepare for jobs (which has been shown to be a hopeless project) but to make the learning of theory more concrete. The purpose is pedagogical not direct job preparation. Existing academic schools are too abstract. They need better models, such as simple shops and projects that use the mind as much as the hands.

Private training

Private training comes out with flying colours in the reviews. While this is very positive, we cannot gloss over some difficulties. Despite the efforts in data gathering, we still don't know the private training sector. There is a danger of misinterpreting older, murky and motley data. In addition, we need a taxonomy of private training and need to map the diversity of existing institutions. Incidentally, the distinction of for profit or not-for-profit is increasingly useless.

There are analytical riddles. Is the private demand for diplomas a good indicator of the skills that lead to jobs? How far apart the two can get? Do regulations hurt or help initiative and flexibility?

Are they only gimmicks to create market reserves? Would it be fair to say that "truth in advertising" is the only safe rule?

The sector is so important that policies must recognize and support it. But we seem to be still a long ways from being able to formulate reliable policies to foster private training, despite some promising experiments.

Enterprise-based training

The paper shows very interesting and promising results. But it seems to fall prey of Byzantine analytical models that unnecessarily duplicate matters. In so many words, it is the correct analysis, with the wrong model.

Firm-specific training – in G. Becker's formulation – is not a useful concept in empirical work. For all practical purposes, all training that is half decent is general. And when facts do not conform to theory, we cannot say that there must be a "market failure", and the theory is forgiven. Not even in Chicago workers borrow money for training.

There is a simpler model: Firms consider costs, what they gain by training and the probability of losing the trained worker. Applying this plain vanilla model, we find why location is critical, why richer firms do not have to worry about poaching (they pay more), loyalty prevents poaching, firms that change technology have to train more, firms train on short courses but not on long ones. And clearly, small firms cannot replace those undergoing training because of high opportunity costs.

On a more practical tone, the fact that firms train does not mean that they train enough. So, maybe there is need for subsidies, after all. A lot of training in big private firms says nothing about the needs of smaller firms. Last but not least, firms may claim they do not like public training, but they still hire the best trained available.

Apprenticeships of all flavours

The data showed very positive results for what has been called "traditional apprenticeship". In many countries, it constitutes the bulk of training. To a very large extent, it is doing very well, thank you. But there is potential for intervention in traditional apprenticeships. One of the main reasons is to avoid the predicament of reproducing the bad working habits that may often prevail in small industry and the informal sector. But interventions need to be very careful. There is a risk of spoiling a system that is working.

The greatest danger is to create something too heavy and complicated. Despite the good results of some small experiments of exporting the German Dual System, there is wide agreement that it is not scalable, due to its intrinsic complexity and ambition.

It would be better to create an "un-German dual system". It has to wait until the worker gets a job. Then, it offers a small complement of basic skills and technology. It should interfere in job content as much or as little as feasible, in order not to discourage employers. But above all, it should not over-protect apprentices, because adult labour is cheap.

Levy schemes: From solution to problem in Latin America

Latin America has had several decades of experience with training systems, funded out of levies on the payroll. Therefore, it can be a source of many lessons to Africa. It may oversimplify, but distinguishing two phases may be a way of understanding the strengths and limitations of levies.

First phase: It has been observed that stable funding has led to long run planning and real autonomy of institutions. This has led to the creation of solid schools for blue-collar workers, endowed with generous resources. All in all, a great success.

Second phase: As time elapsed, institutions became fat, lazy and somewhat disconnected from markets. With very few exceptions, not a dramatic level of dysfunctionality, but they became a lot less alert and efficient than before. And when administrators tried to fix them, they discovered that secure funding and autonomy protected them from reform initiatives imposed from the outside.

The lesson is not that levies on payroll are bad. This conclusion is too harsh. But with hindsight, additional precautions would have to be taken; to prevent this inertia and resistance to needed change. In particular, the shortcoming is not on the levies, but on the monopoly given to a single public institution to use them.

APPENDIX ONE

VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA - A WORLD BANK REVIEW

Executive Summary

Over the past two years the Human Resources Department of the Africa Region has conducted a review of vocational skills development in the region. This Review updates and puts into an African context the Bank's 1991 work on technical-vocational education and training (TVET),² explores issues and recent developments, and distils lessons as a guide to future skills development in the region. The purpose of the Review is to inform clients on best practices, build consensus among donors on these practices, and create staff capacity within the World Bank to assist TVET. The main target audiences are experts and policymakers in the region and donor personnel as well as Bank staff members. The review has been conducted in stages. The first phase (2000-2001) included a literature survey and nine separate studies.³ The second phase (2002) expanded the work in five areas.⁴

The findings will be discussed with clients and stakeholders in the second half of 2002, followed by dissemination in 2003. These findings and conclusions should be considered tentative. Literature surveys and field visits were conducted in each of the areas covered, and 63 case studies were prepared, but the evidence is still thin. Weaknesses in the underlying data prevent authoritative conclusions. These results should therefore be treated as conditional.

Background

Africa's future economic growth depends less on its natural resources than on its labor skills. Technological change and the increased competition flowing from trade liberalization require higher skills and productivity among workers, both in modern sector firms and in micro and small enterprises. Workers displaced by structural adjustment frequently need retraining for new occupations. Most important, investing in the productivity and skills of people is essential to raise the incomes of economically vulnerable groups and reduce poverty. Finally, skills development has become more important and difficult as a result of HIV/AIDS. AIDS depletes scarce human capital and increases the need for training to replace skills lost across a wide range of occupations. The labor markets in Sub-Saharan Africa can hardly be expected to function properly, and skills acquired as planned, in circumstances that prevail in the region. An array of "environmental" issues constrains the proper functioning of African labor markets. These include health issues (such as HIV/AIDS and malaria), labor displacement as a result of wars and conflicts, weak institutions, and cultural and structural impediments against the full absorption of labor in the market. Previous investments in education and training largely determine the quality

² TVET means the supply of "technical-vocational education and training." Preparation for technicians is called *technical education*. Preparation of crafts people is called *vocational training*. *Skills development* means the acquisition of the practical competencies, know-how, and attitudes necessary to perform a trade or occupation in the labor market.

³ Including: labor market trends, World Bank assistance for TVET in the 1990s, training finance, trends in public training, private training markets, enterprise-based training, training for the informal sector, literacy and livelihood skills, and distance teaching in TVET. These documents can be found at the following website: <http://www.worldbank.org/labormarkets> under "vocational education and training."

⁴ Additional studies have been conducted on private training, enterprise-based training, and informal sector training. The second phase also includes new studies on vocationalization of secondary education and entrepreneurship education and training.

of the labor force. Sub-Saharan Africa's stock of human capital is exceedingly low—as evidenced by low enrollment ratios, literacy rates, and educational attainment. The principal challenge for African economies over the next decade is to find productive work for the 7 million to 10 million new entrants annually to the labor market. Wage employment accounts, on average, for less than 20 percent of the total labor force. Formal economies have been stagnating due to slow growth in the private sector and contraction in the public sector. Most entrants to the labor market have no alternative but to seek work in the informal sector.

Who should pay for training and who should provide it have been issues that dominated discussion about skills development. In other words, what should be the respective roles of government and the private sector? Debate of this issue remains lively today. This executive summary is framed around the role of the state and the private sector in skills development.⁵

Findings

The principal finding of this review is that the private sectors contribute far more than governments to develop labor skills in most Sub-Saharan African countries. Skills development by the private sector comes from three sources: enterprises; private training providers; and private informal sector apprenticeships. Each is discussed in sequence below.

· *Enterprises in SSA usually provide their own training without government support.*

Based on the training literature for industrial countries, one would expect that widespread that many factors would reduce incentives for company-based training, including capital market failures, the prevalence of small enterprises, and the high population of unskilled workers. Most workers require training, but providing training could prove too costly for African enterprises. Market failures in company-based training could therefore be greater in Africa than in other parts of the world.

Contrary to expectations, African enterprises tend to provide their own training without government support. Trade liberalization has resulted in growing competition throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa. Increased competition has caused firms to shed labor in an effort to become more efficient, but also to focus more on the knowledge and skills needed by the remaining workers to operate the enterprises efficiently. New investments, new technologies, and competitive pressures have intensified the need for employee training after downsizing.

Surveys of African enterprises have demonstrated that enterprises do, in fact, provide substantial training to their workers.⁶ This includes training for both firm-specific and general skills. Firms in SSA appear willing to invest in general skills of their workers because they, in non-competitive markets, reap most of the benefits in productivity increases. Survival and adaptation to market changes require worker training. The pattern and determinants of enterprise training in Sub-Saharan Africa turned out to be much the same there as in other parts of the world: virtually every enterprise puts shop floor employees through some kind of training; large companies do more training than small companies; foreign-owned enterprises train more than domestic

⁵ This summary presents the most important findings according to this theme. It is not a literal summary of each chapter. Each chapter of the main text starts with a brief overview of its main contents and ends with a summary of main findings and conclusions.

⁶ Based on an in-depth survey of five Anglophone countries over three years - the World Bank Regional Program on Enterprise Development (RPED).

enterprises; exporters train more than non-exporters; and more training is given to skilled personnel than to unskilled workers.

This does not mean that African enterprises necessarily do enough training. Market failures still occur. In non-competitive markets compressed wage structures mean that workers do not have full incentives to invest in their own training. Similarly, employers tend not to provide sufficient training because of potential worker mobility, i.e. concerns that the training will benefit another employer.

African enterprises did not come off badly in comparison to middle-income developing countries in terms of in-plant training, but undertook much less formal training compared to international averages. African companies were characterized by isolation. They are forced to rely almost exclusively on internal learning. However, internal learning alone cannot go far toward upgrading standards to internationally competitive levels. Another problem noted was weak and contracting linkages between companies and public training providers. Nor was evidence found of interenterprise cooperation in training through trade or sectoral associations. In sum, African enterprises provided workers with substantial training—both firm-specific and general—most entirely without government support.

· Private training providers are a vital and growing resource for skills development.

Private training providers form a diverse but significant group of growing importance, especially in view of declining public support for training. In many cases non-government trainers (NGOs, religious and for-profit providers) outnumber public providers. Private training probably generates more financial resources for skills development than are spent by the public sector in many countries. The evidence of the cost-effectiveness of private training vis à vis public training is thin, but positive: costs may be lower; and performance on terminal examinations may be better in many cases. Demand responsiveness is greater: private training is better at identifying and filling market niches than public training. (However, private training has proven no better in relationships with employers—both private and public training are poor on this score: they both overwhelmingly train for examinations and certificates.) These highly tentative findings need corroboration on a wider scale. Lack of financing was the most important constraint for private training providers. Inadequate consumer information may also be an important constraint on expansion. Excessive government regulation was not found to be a major constraint in the two in-depth cases (Mali, Senegal). In fact, the trend was toward less regulation, and the public sector appeared ill-equipped to enforce existing regulations. Quality is seen to be an overriding issue in private training: quality varies more widely than in the public sector. So far, for-profit training providers have entered the market only to a limited degree. As institutions charge gradually higher and more realistic fees, more opportunities may open for them to enter the market.

· Traditional apprenticeship training is the most important form of structured training in the informal sector.

Traditional apprenticeships probably contribute far more to skills development than all offerings by other training providers combined.

Traditional apprenticeship training is less well developed in Eastern and Southern Africa than in West Africa. Still, in all these countries, it is probably the most important source of technical and business skills for informal sector workers. In Ghana, for example, about 90 percent of all basic skill training comes from traditional/informal apprenticeships. Traditional apprenticeship training is workbased, practical, self regulated, self financed and cost-effective. It also caters to

trainees who lack the educational requirements for formal training and serves rural populations and the rural poor. However, it perpetuates traditional technologies and lacks standards and quality assurances.

In sum, these three types of private sector training—outside government and with little or no public support—probably supply by far most of the vocational skills in the region. This finding has profound implications for the role of the public sector in training.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Five broad recommendations emerge from this study. The public sector should:

1. complement, not duplicate the private sector, by providing what the private sector does not, or cannot, do;
2. help build the training capacity of the private sector;
3. use public financing for neglected groups: basic education, informal sector training, and training for women, on equity and productivity grounds;
4. reform public training by changing financial and management incentives; and
5. strengthen the analytical base for policies on training.

1. Government's role as complement.

In view of the private sector's preponderant role in training, does the public sector really have any role to play there? Can we simply do without it? The government indeed does have a vital function to play in enhancing skills development, but it cannot do everything. Its role needs sharper definition and focus. Governments may be trying to do too many different things in skills development. Public resources for skills development are constrained by slow growth of government revenues and stretched thin by competing priorities. In a constrained financial context, government cannot possibly do everything. In view of the major contribution being made by private

training, government should be a facilitator, concentrating its limited resources on the things that the private sector does not, or cannot, do. Government should not do less, but should concentrate its resources for skills development more on the following key functions:

Providing the public with information about (a) labor market requirements, and (b) the training system:

- the performance of the public system, and the scope, quality, outcomes, and cost of private provision;⁷
- Providing services to training providers, in collaboration with other partners, by developing policies, standards, instructional programs and materials; training instructors; and providing quality assurance;
- Regulating private provision sparingly to ensure minimum quality through standards and outputs, where possible, instead of by controlling inputs;

⁷ Government should proceed with caution on observatories. The review found little success in implementing labor market observatories, in more than a dozen projects financed by the World Bank (Chapter 2).

- Financing skills training for economically and socially disadvantaged groups, and for key occupations not (yet) covered by the private sector;⁸ and
- Providing skills training where private solutions cannot be found, for example, in certain geographical areas or in strategic skills too costly for private providers. To the extent they are available and more efficient, however, the government can maximize the production of skills by financing its training through private providers.

2. Government indirect support and quality control for private training.

The government should provide active, mainly indirect, support for private training and quality assurance for the training offered.

· Stimulating enterprise training should not have a priority claim on public finance, but support is needed in a few clearly defined areas

Since many enterprises provide their own training without government support, direct public subsidies for enterprise training would not seem to have a priority claim on government resources. However, government has a positive role to play in supporting enterprise training. It should (i) advocate training as a means to increase productivity and profits within enterprises; (ii) raise the basic skill levels of entrants to the labor market; (iii) stimulate training for low educated workers and workers in small enterprises who have little access to training; and (iv) build the capacity of trade and sector associations to provide training services to their members⁹.

· The government should help provide quality assurance for private training.

First, government should eliminate or reduce barriers to entry for private training providers where they exist. Second, the government should build quality assurance for private training. Quality, an overriding issue, varies more widely in private training than in the public sector. Government intervention is needed to counter the market failure of information by providing better statistics on the size and scope of private training, its costs, and, especially, its results. A quality assurance system has to be built for tracking and publicizing the performance of schools. In these efforts, the right balance must be struck between regulation and control. Too much control can stifle initiative. Government should also avoid entering areas already served adequately by private training programs so as to avoid crowding them out of the market.

Direct assistance should also be considered. Government can help raise quality by setting standards and assisting private, for-profit training providers to meet them by developing associations of such providers and by giving direct assistance for development of instructional programs and materials, instructor and managerial training, and provision of equipment on a competitive basis. Subsidies to private training could be justified if they finance efficient institutions, "save" public funds that otherwise would have had to be spent, serve priority low-

⁸ One of the most important points in the 1991 Bank policy on skills development was to differentiate between financing and provision of training. Government *financing* could be justified on economic grounds in cases of externalities, market failure, and equity. However, government *provision* of training could be justified only where suitable private providers were not available (Middleton, Ziderman, and Van Adams (1993, 115–18).

⁹ Firms may underinvest in general types of training because worker mobility may prevent them from reaping the benefits of such training. For this reason, basic types of training should be organized on an industry-wide basis where firms are induced to cooperate in the effort via membership in industry associations, with a good deal of firm involvement in running the training schemes. (RPED, 6,7)

income target groups, meet quality standards and provide employable skills. However, extensive subsidies should be avoided which stifle initiative and innovation (e.g., Mali).

3. Government financing for neglected groups.

On equity and productivity grounds, the government should increase its support in three priority areas that have received insufficient attention: basic education, informal sector training, and training for women.

·Basic education provides the most important skills for productivity and economic growth.

Literacy, numeracy, and livelihood skills are the "empowering skills." This is why basic education is so important in the development of occupational skills. Employers most want basic academic skills, taught in general education at the primary and secondary levels, so that their employees can communicate orally and in writing, calculate, follow directions, solve problems, learn on the job, and work in teams. General education should make people "trainable" and therefore flexible in the labor market. It enables them to be learners throughout their lives. Functional illiteracy and low educational achievement severely restrict labor market flexibility and constrain productivity in both the formal and informal sectors. Poorly educated workers need more training, but their training costs more and accomplishes less. Basic education is important even in the informal sector. The better educated are more successful entrepreneurs than the poorly educated. Consequently, the most cost-effective use of public resources is to improve the productivity and flexibility of the labor force by investing in general education at the primary and secondary levels. Governments should therefore (continue to) give priority to building a sound base of basic education. What about adults already in the labor market who have not finished basic education? The review found that combining basic literacy with vocational and livelihood skills is an effective strategy for (young) adults. Many of Sub-Saharan Africa's leaders in education are concerned about the many young people who complete basic education at primary and secondary levels without acquiring any marketable skills. Their lack of occupational skills is thought by some to explain high youth unemployment. Consequently, policymakers often seek to expand the curriculum of general education by adding vocational skills, such as in metal working or construction. This policy should be resisted. Experience has shown that diversification or "vocationalization" of general education is expensive and difficult to implement, does not make graduates more employable, and takes valuable time away from basic academic skills.

· High priority should be given to filling the huge present gap in training for the informal sector.

The informal sector will continue to absorb the vast majority of the new entrants to the workforce. Skills are essential in the informal sector to raise productivity and incomes. Training for the informal sector is different from training for wage employment and must include business skills such as market analysis, pricing, and sales. Most skills training at present is oriented toward wage employment and is therefore not appropriate for the informal sector. A major shift is needed in training supply for the informal sector. Training, however, is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to improve productivity, incomes, and livelihoods in the informal sector. Training enables other inputs such as micro-finance to be used effectively. An important role for government is to facilitate the development of training markets for the informal sector. One way to expand skills development for the informal sector would be to reorient existing training institutions. This means: targeting different clientele; analysing the local labor markets thoroughly; adding new occupational content in fields that would avoid market saturation; adding business skills; using short, modular training convenient to the new clientele; developing

easy-to-follow training materials for people with low levels of education; and issuing certificates on the basis of competencies achieved instead of length of training undergone. Such basic reengineering has proved difficult in the past because institutional staff members have had little incentive to change. Another approach could be to stimulate a supply response by independent trainers, for example, mastercrafts people, as has been done in a few recent projects.

Donor-assisted projects have demonstrated that informal sector enterprises can be upgraded by targeting skills development to increase growth, innovation, and productivity. But a question remains about how such skills can be provided on a large scale and in a financially sustainable way. Future project work should concentrate on resolving these twin issues. In particular, more insight is needed into ways to support traditional apprenticeship training without damaging the system.¹⁰

· *Women are an important but overlooked target group for skills development*

Labor force participation rates for women are relatively high (42 percent) in Africa. These working women need skills for income and productivity, but few have equal access to skills development. Young women make up only a small part of enrollments in formal training programs, between 15 percent and 35 percent. Traditional apprenticeship training offers few opportunities for women. Without access to skills development women become stuck in low-paying jobs. Government has an important role to play in ensuring equal access to formal skills training for women. In addition, attention should be given to the productive sectors where women are active, for example, as traders in the informal economy. Literacy and livelihood programs are strongly targeted on women. However, training alone is not likely to prepare them to compete on an equal footing with men. Deeply rooted cultural biases in the labor market must also be addressed. The main focus should be on gainful employment. Assistance will be largely wasted where there are no jobs or income-generating possibilities.

4. Reforming public training systems.

Financing and management should be used as instruments to make public training responsive to labor market demand. Public training provision tends to be weak, irrelevant, ineffective, and inefficient. Formal TVET systems focus almost exclusively on the wage economy and often provide the wrong skills for the available employment. Outdated, centrally driven examinations reinforce the isolation from labor market requirements. Budget cuts have led to severe decapitalization in public training systems, which have had disastrous consequences on quality. High cost structures in TVET contribute to widespread inefficiencies. Management often pays no attention to costs and markets. Is the solution to privatize public training? That is not advocated here. Public training has a vital role to play in areas where the state has a comparative advantage (see above). Some public training is also needed in strategic skills to provide a model for private training as well as a venue for experimentation and reform.

Still, inefficient public training systems cannot be allowed to continue wasting money on expensive training for obsolete, unmarketable, or useless skills. Public training should be made to respond to market incentives.

¹⁰ Except for high-end manufacturing and maintenance services in the informal sector, strengthening training capacities for the informal sector would not ensure the transition of Sub-Saharan Africa from cheap labor to skill-based competitiveness. A reasonable amount of high quality training must still be developed for the modern sector.

Can public training be reformed? Examples abound of failed reforms, including some attempts in World Bank-supported projects over the past decade. However, some good examples exist that demonstrate the feasibility of reforms. Reforms can be achieved especially through changes in financing and management.

· Financing mechanisms should be used to stimulate demand responsiveness

Money is now allocated to public institutions on ad hoc, historical bases regardless of performance. This reinforces waste. Financial mechanisms can be powerful instruments for improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Specifically: (i) training funds have demonstrated wide success in Sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) competition for funds has proven effective in creating training markets and reducing unit costs; (iii) training vouchers have been successful in stimulating supply responses in limited cases, (iv) payment by results has potential for increasing effectiveness in spending; and (v) use of normative financing could focus efforts on outputs and results. Application of these financing mechanisms seems within the capability of most African governments.

· Changes in management systems can also stimulate demand responsiveness

System management. Divided accountabilities make training delivery complex, lead to duplication of efforts, and segment training supply. A clear trend exists toward the establishment of national coordination and consultative bodies (in Anglophone countries).

These are based on principles of partnership that can foster accountability and consensus. Two lessons are important: Training authorities must be vested with real power in decision making and control over resources. Balanced representation is critical to success, especially to give employers' views appropriate weight.

Institutional management. Centralized systems suffer from lengthy decision-making processes, remoteness from clients, and rigidity to change. Devolution of authority to training institutions can go a long way toward making training demand responsive. At the local level, it may be possible to mobilize resources better. Relationships to the employment market can be much closer. Full-scale autonomy compels the institutions to find their own markets and resources. Partial autonomy may be more realistic in most cases: training institutions could be free to offer new training programs directed at particular market niches and could retain the revenue generated. However, decentralization is no panacea. It takes time and has to be carefully planned and monitored.

· Reforms in trade testing and examinations can exert powerful and beneficial influence on the system to the extent they are rooted in occupational analysis

Many systems of vocational training focus rigidly on preparation for terminal examinations or trade tests. Too often the tests have become obsolete and disconnected from labor market requirements. Ironically, some employers may pay little attention to the formal qualifications in their hiring practices. Still, testing can be used as a powerful means to reform the content of vocational training. The key is to root the tests in the competencies required on the job, as determined by occupational and job analysis, and to keep the tests up to date. Reforms in southern Africa are moving in this direction through the establishment of a national qualifications framework. However, as conceived, these standards may be too complex for present capacities.

5. Strengthening the analytical basis for policy decisions.

The dearth of primary data on training costs and outcomes hampered this Review at virtually every step. This criticism applied not only to public statistical systems, but also to expensive donor-assisted projects. Inadequate evaluation systems were the single biggest gap in the projects observed, including those financed by the World Bank. Here a litany of failure occurs. Projects often have inadequate or even no systems installed for evaluating the outcomes of training. The almost universal lack of graduate tracer studies is egregious. Some recent projects¹¹ do better on tracer studies, but even these have failed to relate benefits achieved to the costs of producing them. No evidence was found in this review of attempts at cost/benefit or cost/effectiveness analysis using information produced from the projects. Similarly, none of the projects reviewed paid sufficient attention to quality of training outcomes, such as through competency-based testing of skill and learning achievements of the trainees. This leads to the final recommendation:

· As a rule all training programs should carefully analyze outcomes, impacts and costs as a basis for ensuring effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Sustainability is a prime issue, for example with training funds and informal sector training programs. Much better cost-effectiveness analysis is needed to prove sustainability. Future projects should include impact surveys on outcomes and benefits of training, but also on the costs and sustainability of such training in comparison with alternative training interventions.

¹¹ World Bank Projects in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Kenya (Johanson 2002, Part II).

APPENDIX TWO

PRINCIPAL SOURCES

The following reports were commissioned for the Review of Vocational Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa:

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APPENDIX THREE

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