

Forum: Advisory Panel Question (APQ)

Issue: Ensuring access to and quality of technical and vocational training

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## Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education refers to the instructional programs focusing on the skills required for a particular occupation, such as culinary school or healthcare schools. In order to achieve sustainable development goal (SDG) 4, the assurance of quality access to education, TVET programs are crucial. Through the proper implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs, unemployment and poverty can severely decline, achieving SDG 1.

Vocational learning opportunities play a critical role in skill development and employability. Vocational Education and Training (VET) ensures skills development in a wide range of occupational fields through school-based and work-based learning. It plays a crucial role in ensuring lower school dropout rates and facilitates the school-to-work transition.

Education and training are crucial to making people employable, allowing them to access decent work and escape poverty. Countries with TVET at the core of their curricula, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, have successfully maintained low youth unemployment rates. However, few governments allocate adequate funding to this in less economically developed countries.

TVET is focused on building knowledge and skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship to help promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. UNESCO-UNEVOC helps promote increased opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment, and socio-economic development. While TVET programs can boost a country's economy, fight poverty and unemployment, and ensure access to education for all, implementing these systems into developing countries has been challenging. One of the primary reforms for TVET in developing countries includes quality assurance. The lack of proper funding and adequate resources has prohibited TVET systems from reaching their full potential in these countries.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Vocational Training

Vocational training refers to the instructional programs focusing on the skills required for a particular occupation. In vocational training, traditional and unrelated academic subjects are disregarded. Business schools, Culinary schools, art and design schools, healthcare schools are all examples of vocational schools. Technical and vocational training is essential for promoting economic development, improving the quality of employment, and expanding employment size. Many nations are significantly lacking in the number of skilled workers, and vocational training provides a solution to the shortage of skilled laborers.

### Unemployment

Unemployment refers to the people above 18 not being in paid employment but available for work. The unemployment rate of a country is measured by the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force. Unemployment can lead to illness, mental stress, and homelessness. It has costs to a society that are more than just financial. Unemployed individuals face a loss of income and challenges to their physical and mental health. Societal costs of high unemployment include reduced volunteerism and a higher crime rate. A country's unemployment rate provides insights into the economy's unused resources and spare capacity and can often be used to measure the standard of living in a country. Due to a shortage in skilled labor, countries have seen an increase in unemployment rates.

### Skill shortages

A skill shortage refers to the recruitment difficulties and skill deficiencies of the existing workforce. There are many causes for skill shortages, including a general lack of investment in technical and vocational training and weaknesses in the training system. The consequences of skill shortages can be long-lasting. Enterprises may suffer from a lack of available workers leading to reduced productivity and constraints on business development. Skill shortages are one of the leading causes of unemployment. Vocational and technical training offers a solution to skill shortages to further lower unemployment rates and boost the standard of living within a nation.

### Labor market

The labor market, also known as the job market, refers to supply and demand of labor. The current issue, in most countries, is not a lack of a labor market rather a lack of supply of skilled workers. The US Census Bureau estimates that nearly one-fourth of the manufacturing workforce is 55 or older. This is the perfect example of why nations face employment shortages in specific industries. With more

than 25% of a specific industry beginning to retire, there is a lack of young people starting careers in the trades to fill in the positions. As such, where there was a surplus of labor, the previous lack of demand for labor has led to the current lack of skills.

## Poverty

To be in poverty is financially below the standard or acceptable standard of income or wealth. This issue works to bring workers and those out of poverty and into better living conditions. With fewer people in poverty, nations can focus on the majority in the working class, focusing on developing and progressing as a nation. One of the leading factors that contribute to poverty is unemployment. Many people live in poverty because they cannot find a job that pays a living wage or find a job.

## Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system

The TVET, technical and vocational education and training, is education and training which provides knowledge and skills for employment. The TVET is part of the educational system that provides courses and programs related to employment to supply the labor market with competent laborers. It is a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion, and sustainable development.

## Background

### History of TVET

An important area of work and employment consists of those occupations that center around the application of technical and vocational skills to the world of work. It has been estimated that more than 80% of all professions require technical and vocational education. The field of technical and vocational education and training has continued to change throughout history, usually in response to societies' demands. Over time, various terms have been used to describe elements of the field that are now considered comprising TVET. These include apprenticeship training, industrial arts, technical education, etc. At the second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education, held in the Republic of Korea in 1999, UNESCO and ILO jointly agreed to use the term technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to unite the field.

### Founding of the International Labor Organization (ILO)

The purpose of the ILO is to promote social justice and internationally recognize human and labor rights.

The ILO looks to:

- Promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work
- Create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income
- Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

Through the:

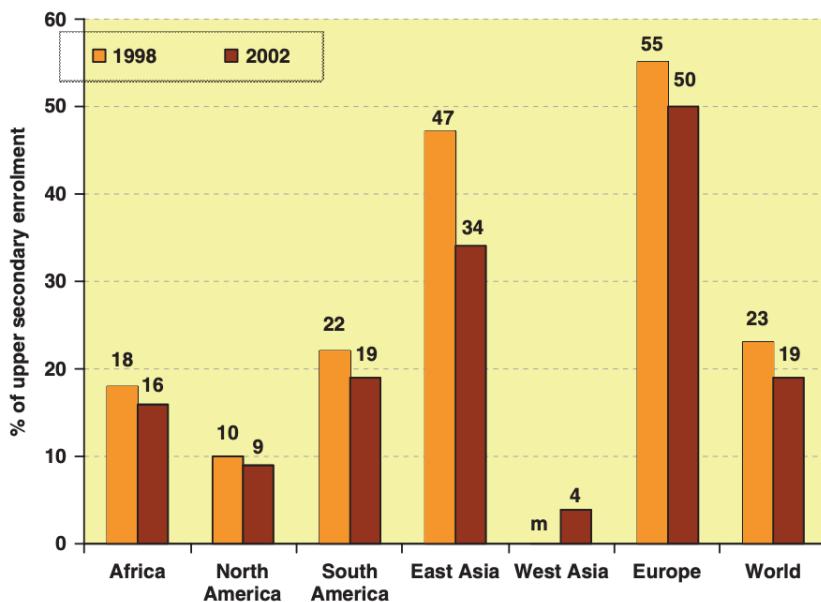
- Formulation of international policies and programs to improve working and living conditions, promote fundamental human rights, and enhance employment opportunities
- Creation of international labor standards backed by a unique system to supervise their application
- An extensive international technical cooperation program to be implemented to help countries effectively put these policies into practice.
- Training, education, and research activities to help advance all of these efforts

### **Importance of the UN SDGs**

Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a common goal for peace and prosperity. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an urgent call for action by all countries, recognizing that ending poverty must include strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth. Technical and vocational training is essential for promoting economic development, improving the quality of employment, and expanding employment size. Many developed member nations see vocational education as an investment. Countries with TVET systems have successfully tackled youth unemployment and have seen an increase in productivity and global competitiveness. To achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 4 (No Poverty and Quality Education), access to TVET programs is crucial. However, lack of funding and appropriate resources continues to undermine these programs. TVET has been neglected compared to other parts of the education system. Although strong vocational programs can increase economic competitiveness, many programs currently fail to adequately prepare young people for work due to improper training and lack of resources. To decrease poverty and unemployment, a country must strive towards providing access and quality education systems to all.

### **Global Trends in Technical and Vocational Education**

In 2002, almost 50 million students were enrolled in technical and vocational education globally. On average, one in five upper secondary students is enrolled in technical and vocational programs. However, the enrolment rates vary widely by region. In East Asia and Europe, such programs account for 50 and 33% of upper secondary enrolment. However, in the other regions, TVET enrolment is far less common. In South American and African countries, the share is less than 20%, and in North American and West Asian countries, less than 10 and 4%, which can be seen by the graph below.



Percentage of Upper Secondary Enrolment in TVET programs in 1998 and 2002

## Key Issues

Education and training are crucial to making people employable, allowing them to access decent work and escape poverty. Employers and workers need to be well trained in communication technologies, new forms of business organization, and the workings of international markets to compete in today's global economy. Therefore, societies aiming to attain full employment and sustained economic growth need to invest in education and human resources development. Countries can help to ensure workers can maintain and improve their employability by providing primary education, core work skills, and lifelong working opportunities to their working population. Nevertheless, significant gaps in education and access to information persist within countries.

One reason for high youth unemployment worldwide—particularly in developing countries—is a growing mismatch between the supply and demand for skills. For example, there is an oversupply of business and social science graduates in most African countries, but an undersupply of scientists, engineers, and technicians. A significant problem with these domestic skills shortages is that these countries must rely on foreign labor to fill the high demand for technically-skilled personnel.

By placing a greater emphasis on TVET, developing countries could minimize skills mismatches. Technical and vocational education results in a faster transition into the workplace. Countries with TVET at the core of their curricula, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, have

successfully maintained low youth unemployment rates. However, few governments allocate adequate funding to this in less economically developed countries.

In addition, in many developing countries, TVET programs are often regarded as a "second-choice" education option, meaning that the vocational track attracts fewer students. Its low status is also linked to quality concerns. Many people associate vocational track programs with poor academic performance, poor provision of quality, and blocked future pathways. Their concerns are often justified:

- In most African countries, vocational tracks do not lead to higher education.
- The teachers are low-paid and under-qualified.
- The learning environments are outdated.

Radical reforms to the education system and sustained campaigns to change social perceptions are needed to unlock the potential of vocational education.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### **UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

UNESCO-UNEVOC is UNESCO's designated center for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). UNESCO-UNEVOC supports member states in their efforts to strengthen their TVET systems. TVET is focused on building knowledge and skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship to help promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. UNESCO-UNEVOC helps promote increased opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment, and socio-economic development. Through their collaborative activities, innovation projects, and capacity-building programs, UNESCO-UNEVOC is ensuring access to quality skills training and development for all.

### **China**

According to officials and experts, China's latest push to promote the high-quality development of vocational will help meet surging demand for upgrading its industries. China has set out targets, including establishing modern vocational education systems nationwide by 2025 and being ranked the most competitive globally, in terms of the vocational education system, by 2035. Chinese experts say these guidelines were released in response to China's desperate need to increase its pool of professionals. A significant highlight of this initiative is that it seeks to coordinate general education with vocational education to promote the integrated development of different types of education. According to

the Ministry of Education, China has already developed the world's most extensive vocational education system, with vocational schools offering 1,200 different professions training 10 million professionals each year.

## **Finland**

TVET supports lifelong learning and student development as members of society. It provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills required for further studies and promotes employment. In Finland, almost half of the students completing their primary education in Finland continue to TVET programs instead of upper secondary education. Finland takes the top spot in terms of its educational systems due to the quality of its primary schools and overall education system. Today more than half of Finnish youth apply for the programs, and it is now more competitive than general education.

## **Japan**

The Japanese labor market is characterized by low unemployment and high employment rates. However, structural changes, such as technological progress and population aging, are transforming the supply and demand for skills. Japan faces a labor shortage due to a rapidly aging society. This is likely to make it increasingly difficult for employers to find workers with the right skills and for adults to find jobs that match their skills. Considering the current circumstances, Japan's education and training systems must respond to ensure that adults and the new working-age generation can develop and adapt to respond to changing skills needed. Unless these changes are made, it is likely to have a detrimental impact on the Japanese labor market, both in job quantity and inclusiveness and on productivity and growth.

## **The International Labor Organization (ILO)**

Founded in 1919, International Labor Organization promotes social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights. It pursues its founding mission that labor peace is essential to prosperity. The ILO is focused on advancing the creation of economic and working conditions for working people and helps to advance the creation of decent work. The purpose is to give workers, employers, and governments an equal voice and provide a unique platform for promoting decent work for all. The ILO has four main objectives, including promoting standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, creating more significant opportunities for decent employment and income, enhancing the effectiveness of social protection for all, and strengthening tripartism and social dialogue.

## **Niger**

At the bottom of U.N.'s Education Index is Niger, the country with the worst education system in Africa and globally. The introduction of TVET in Niger can help train quality technical labor to support the

emerging industrial sectors and the country's economic growth. In addition, it would respond to Niger's new socio-economic opportunities, namely relating to the exploitation of uranium and oil, and help support government projects to improve infrastructure, particularly the building of dams and railroads. In Niger, for example, TVET would focus on the training of civil engineers, mechanical engineers, and petrochemical engineers. Furthermore, qualified and competent human resources from TVET will help to improve the business climate, enhance the country's attractiveness to foreign investors, and promote economic growth and poverty reduction.

## Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of Event
October 1919	ILO, International Labor Organization, was established to advance social and economic justice through setting international labour standards.
1989	The UN adopts the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, which recognizes that the development of technical and vocational education would help to contribute to the safeguarding of peace.
1992	An international project on technical and vocational education was initiated and the UNEVOC Network was officially launched.
1999	Member states pass a resolution to set up an international center for TVET at the UNESCO General Conference.
April 2002	The center is located in Bonn after the government of Germany generously offered to host it.
2002	More than 50 million students globally had been enrolled in TVET programs.
2008	UNESCO establishes an Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) to promote a common understanding of key matters on TVET. As well as to ensure effective coordination of activities by international organizations.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention on Technical and Vocational Education adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 10 November 1989
- Promoting full employment and decent work for all, ECOSOC (Resolution 2008/18)
- Promoting Youth Employment, 2006/15 (Ref. E/2006/26)
- World Programme for Human Rights Education, 28 September 2017, (A/HRC/RES/36/12)
- Human rights education and training, 24 March 2016(A/HRC/RES/31/21)

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

As previously discussed, the development of UNEVOC was to support member states in their efforts to strengthen their TVET systems and to help promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. UNESCO-UNEVOC is ensuring access to quality skills training and development for all.

The significance of TVET is not being felt in developing countries due to the limitations this sector faces. It is crucial for the success of TVET that governments and the private sector in different developing countries recognize that TVET programs are an investment, with significant returns including the well-being of workers, enhanced productivity, international competitiveness, and economic growth in the long run.

One of the significant issues that TVET faces is the lack of consideration of women in these systems. Traditionally, TVET was regarded as a sector reserved for men in developing countries. This belief has resulted in the omission of women in national government development plans. As such, women are discouraged from enrolling for vocational career training opportunities, which results in increased unemployment of women.

In addition, there are many limitations that UNESCO faces. A significant role of many member states is to enhance the role, status, and attractiveness of technical and vocational education within their education systems. It is within the mandate of UNEVOC to strengthen national research and development capabilities through the dissemination of information and transfer of know-how as well as popularization of new methodologies in such fields as curriculum development, application of new training technologies, training, and upgrading of teaching staff, etc. However, it is not necessarily the mandate of UNEVOC to carry out research, develop training technologies, train teaching staff, or even offer technical and vocational education programs at a large scale. This poses an issue since there is no current system to help member states ensure the quality and access of TVET systems within their countries. While UNEVOC serves as a preliminary system helping with development recommendations, many nations still lack the proper funding, prohibiting TVET systems from reaching their full potential in these countries.

## Possible Solutions.

In order to develop a nation's economy and society in developing countries, it is essential to note that an average of 2/3 of the population generally work in jobs that require a skill level that is usually associated with vocational education and training. However, one of the major obstacles that TVET programs face is the parental mindset and societal views on these systems. It has always posed a challenge to change the mindsets of parents, the communities, and stakeholders about vocational education being a second choice to academic education. It is believed by most in Developing Countries that academic education provides better job opportunities for individuals than TVET systems would. Changing the mentality about TVET systems and improving the social status of TVET is vital to the development of TVET. Therefore, **creating vocational programs in developing countries that deliver professionally successful graduates** is crucial to its success. If students who received vocational education were to earn better incomes than those who chose academic routes, then views of TVET might be effectively changed.

There are many challenges for TVET in developing countries in terms of systemic professional development of instructors, trainers, teachers. These educators are faced with problems on how to use new technology and keep up with various vocational training methods. This topic is one of the significant issues when assessing the quality of TVET in developing countries. **Quality assurance of TVET is one of the primary objectives for TVET reform in developing countries.** There are many challenges for establishing appropriate infrastructure, upgrading existing material, and training resources available. There is a need for proper tools and equipment being used in vocational training and the need for instructors to keep up with the skills with changing times.

Another major constraint that TVET faces in developing countries is the limited budget. The limited budget becomes the core issue as to why TVET cannot employ trained educators, support in updating their skills, purchase appropriate training facilities and other issues that threaten the quality of TVET. **TVET institutions have been neglected, and in order for these programs to effectively serve their purpose, adequate funding is needed.**

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