

10th Anniversary of the Establishment of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre

2012 International Forum

The role of UNEVOC Network in Transforming TVET for a Sustainable Future

Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development

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Chair, Dr Charanjib Baku; Head of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Network, Shyamal Majumdar; Heads of the UN Offices in Bonn, Distinguished Guests from Germany; Colleagues from UNESCO Headquarters and UNEVOC Centres around the world; UNESCO Chairs; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introduction

I am honoured and very touched that you have asked me to speak at this celebration of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of this UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre here in Bonn.

I am sorry that I was not able to join you at the beginning of this event, but I was doing duty at another outpost of UNESCO, the Institute for Information Technology in Education in Moscow, where I had a very full schedule of talks and Ministerial Round Tables.

My main qualification for being here with you is that I was UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education when the Centre was set up and I have good memories of speaking at the inaugural ceremony that was held here on April 7, 2002.

On that occasion I gave my remarks the title *Education and Training in an Age of Globalisation: What's New?*

The theme of this anniversary meeting is *The Role of the UNEVOC Network in Transforming TVET for a Sustainable Future*.

This session is entitled *Importance of Networking and Partnerships in Empowering TVET Teachers as Agents of Changes for a Sustainable Future*.

In that spirit I have taken as my title today *Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development*. I shall begin by reflecting on how the world has changed in the ten years since UNESCO-UNEVOC was created and then focus on what I see as the key challenges for teachers and institutions involved in Technical and Vocational Education, TVET. I shall describe one of the approaches that was developed at the Commonwealth of Learning in response to these challenges, which has created a powerful network for change among African TVET institutions and teachers.

The world has changed in many ways since 2002 but let me identify just three. First, there was a prevalent mood of economic optimism in those days. Although the bubbly days of the dotcom frenzy of the turn of the millennium had been followed by the hangover of the dotcom bust, the western economies corrected themselves quickly.

One symbol of the optimism of those days was the launch of the Euro in 2002. Given the travails of the Euro today it is hard to remember the excitement generated by the launch of the single currency.

I mentioned it in my speech at UNEVOC's inauguration and I cannot resist quoting those remarks. I said that the UNEVOC centre, working with UNESCO Headquarters, will focus its efforts on helping countries to provide appropriate learning and life skills that prepare people for work and for citizenship.

I added that the new Euro notes provided a nice analogy for these purposes. On one side of each note there is an arch or a window looking out onto the world. I take that to stand for challenge of educating and training each individual to look out onto the world around them, to learn about it, and to develop the skills to be active within that external world.

On the other side of each Euro banknote there is a bridge. That stands for connecting each individual with the rest of humankind and linking human communities across the world.

My second observation about how the world has changed is that today, in much of the world, there is much less optimism about globalisation. In my remarks ten years ago I talked about the age of globalisation. Despite the stark reminder of global terrorism we had been given only a few months earlier on the September 11, 2001, globalisation was still thought of as a broadly positive force. The rapid growth of means and networks of communication and the rapid diffusion of new technologies was seen by many as helpful.

Today globalisation is seen as the cause of financial contagion that quickly affects countries and people far away from the root causes of a particular economic problem.

This is directly relevant to our concerns here at UNEVOC. In times of economic difficulty it is more important than ever that people be equipped with the skills to earn a living, either in employment or self-employment. Let me return to that after noting another important change that has occurred since 2002.

During my time as ADG for Education in the first half of the last decade the global campaign for Education for All was at the centre of my work and preoccupations.

In my remarks back in 2002 I noted the pioneering role of Germany in bringing education to the people. I recalled that in 1798 that King Frederick William III of Prussia ordered the creation of a state system of schools for everyone. He gave an annual grant of 6,000 thalers from his own purse for this ambitious project.

In view of the location of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre here in Germany, I found it interesting that two centuries ago the King directed that 1,000 thalers of his grant be spent on building industrial schools for the peasantry and 500 thalers on schools for girls. He let the Minister of Education, von Massow, decide how the remaining 4,500 thalers should be spent.

I make three points about the campaign for Education for All - EFA. First, the term EFA included, in principle, all six of the goals set at the 2000 Dakar Forum, including, of course, Goal 3: *Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.*

However, under the leadership of the World Bank the term EFA soon came to be applied almost solely, as did the funds that governments were ready to spend on EFA, to the goal of Universal Primary Education or UPE. Note that I am not criticizing that emphasis on UPE. To get things done we needed focus.

Which brings me to the second point. With the exception of some large countries like Nigeria and Pakistan the campaign for Universal Primary Education has been remarkably successful. Some developing countries have achieved a decade what took today's developed countries almost a century to achieve.

But the third point is that development agencies continue to have a narrow focus on UPE and had made no preparations for the success of the UPE campaign. The result is that a tidal wave of youngsters is coming out of primary school with no provision for secondary education to follow.

This was the subject of the first part of the book that I published in 2010, *Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All*. The data I had then suggested that there were 400 million children between the ages of 12 and 17 who were not getting any secondary schooling.

The book argues that all possible means must be used to expand secondary schooling and stresses particularly the need to multiply and expand open schools, which are secondary schools based on the use of open and distance learning at scale.

Open schools can help to blur the unhelpful distinction between formal and non-formal education. They build bridges between knowledge acquisition and skills development, and they help to reduce inequalities.

A very good example of an open school doing all these things is India's National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS). It has 1.5 million pupils and is a world leader.

I also argued, and this brings us to your own work, that secondary education, both in classrooms and in open schools, should have a much stronger emphasis on TVET. India's NIOS is a model in this regard and is doing some wonderful work to bring TVET to young people who would never have been able to experience it otherwise.

The Changing TVET Scene

Which brings me to my main theme, namely how the needs for TVET are changing. I shall focus on two related challenges: how to adapt TVET to the needs of the informal economy, which is where many of today's young people will find work, and reaching those young – and older – people who do not have ready access to conventional TVET.

To begin with the first point, it is vital to support the expansion of skills training opportunities for people working in the informal economy. That's because 80% of employment is in the informal sector in many developing countries yet, on aggregate, this activity contributes only 18% to GDP.

There is huge opportunity to add value and increase productivity. Furthermore, in addition to this economic justification for the need for skills training for employment in the informal economy, there is a strong social justification.

In some of these countries 60% of the population is aged less than 25 years and there will be huge civil and social problems if these young people cannot find a way to a livelihood that gives them a purpose in life.

Another way of putting this is to note that much of TVET is still based on the assumption, explicit or implicit, that it is preparing people for an industrial society. Yet few people, either in richer or in poorer countries work within traditional industrial structures.

Although we tend to over-hype the idea that we are living in a knowledge society it does have meaning. Compared to their parents, whose livelihoods had predictable frameworks, today's young people must live by their wits in an era of rapid change.

This is one very important aspect of the wider challenge, which was expressed by the Association for Educational Development in Africa (ADEA) as follows:

“Huge numbers of poorly educated, frustrated and unemployed youth who are ‘locked out’ of the formal skills training system and unequal training opportunities fostered by inequities based on geographical location, gender and socio-economic factors”.

As I stated earlier in the case of secondary education generally, the challenge is so enormous that every possible legitimate means must be used to tackle it.

Here I shall describe an approach that was developed at the Commonwealth of Learning under the guidance of my colleague Alison Mead Richardson and her predecessor Joshua Mallet. I am particularly indebted to Alison for help with this presentation.

Flexible Skills Development

COL calls the approach Flexible Skills Development and the project is called INVEST. The principle is that the key to increasing access to skills training for people working in the *informal* sector so that they can improve their livelihoods is to work with the *formal*

sector. The aim is to impact on provision of training for the *informal* sector through flexible approaches in the *formal* TVET system.

The elements of the model are new organisational structures; less focus on full-time face-to-face contact; open, distance and flexible learning courses; more resource-based, individual and group learning; media components that can be used in the classroom or at a distance; and elements of online programme delivery and formative assessment

COL, the Commonwealth of Learning, has been working within this approach for several years with 11 member institutions of the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, CAPA. These institutions are based in East, Central and West Africa.

The first point to stress – and it must be the common experience of all UNEVOC centres trying to effect change, is that it is not enough simply to communicate a good idea and assume that it will be taken up.

The impact of technology can be extremely beneficial, but introducing it is not easy. I said that I have just come from Moscow where I was taking part in a conference on IT in Education organized by UNESCO's Institute for Information Technology in Education. The experts on IT in Education who attended all seemed to agree that the potential of IT in education and training was very far ahead of our capacity to use it well. That applies equally to TVET institutions.

For this reason, to choose its partners COL began by doing an assessment of each institution's readiness to innovate and change. A key factor is the attitude, credibility, vision and commitment of the head of the institution. Indeed, in the one case where the Flexible Skills Development programme failed to make headway it was because a committed head left and was replaced by someone who did not promote the programme.

Flexible skills development starts from the fundamental observation that the demand for TVET, whether in volume or diversity, will never be met by creating more buildings, what you might call 'bricks and mortar' approaches. We must use the increasingly abundant opportunities provided by technology to increase access, to increase quality, to increase diversity and to make the whole process more efficient.

So before COL even got to introducing technology-based methods to take skills development training outside the institution it went through careful processes of policy development, organizational development and management of the ICT infrastructure before turning to course design and delivery and working with teachers to improve teaching and learning.

At the institutional level this meant developing departmental and institutional targets for the introduction of new courses; staff development in the use of educational media and ICT for teaching and learning; market research and feasibility studies in local communities; strengthening the technical infrastructure; developing new short courses

and engaging with national policy makers.

The COL team found that although national authorities were very supportive of new approaches to TVET they could give little guidance about how to do it. So the participating institutions found themselves developing national policy as they proceeded.

Change is a multi-year process but COL is very satisfied with the progress that has already been made.

To pick up the title of this session COL has been gratified by the extent to which the participating institutions and teachers have used IT networks for capacity building and sharing good practice.

The social networking platform has 450 members and has sub-groups focusing on particular issues like Gender and Equity and the use of the Moodle platform. Indeed as you will hear from one of the institutional heads in a minute, the project has done much to make participants aware of gender issues in TVET.

For more about that I direct you to COL's brochure on this INVEST project, which picks up on a declaration made at UNEVOC in 2006 that "if the general picture is grim, it is even grimmer for girls".

Let me finish by summarizing some achievements and then letting you hear about it in the words of the participants themselves.

The teachers have better curriculum development capacity. Media-enhanced curriculum components have been created to improve the quality of teaching. Moodle platforms are being installed. Encouragingly, participants find that being able to use ICT represents an opportunity in terms of personal promotion. The goal of creating some new courses for the informal sector has been achieved and access to TVET has been increased.

To give you some highlights from various parts of the project. In Kenya unskilled construction workers increased their income by 400% and, perhaps more importantly, made the connection between upgrading their skills and gaining better livelihoods.

The course duration for a Human Resources Diploma was reduced by 75%. An outreach centre is now offering part time courses for 200 students. Smaller TVET institutions are earning additional income through flexible course offerings.

One institution has 'adopted' eight others in their country who are paying for ODL consultancy services. One institution has pioneered business and skills training for slum dwellers through drama. And student enrolments have increased in 7 institutions between 5% and 30%

Let me end by assessing the project in the words of the participants themselves. First the conclusions of a policy maker:

Cleophas Takiza, Director Training Standards, **TEVETA**, Zambia had this to say:

“So far the flexible skills concept promises a lot of benefit especially for countries like Zambia which is challenged with limited access to TVET. We have a national strategy to develop TVET by ODFL and look forward to our partnership with COL.”

Turning to the attitude of teachers here are comments from three participants:

Linnet Sekento from the **Masaai TTI** in Kenya observed:

“I can clearly see how changing from the traditional ways of teaching to flexible and blended learning is achievable. In the near future we will use these skills in our institution to develop online courses for our learners. I am a better teacher now than before, more enlightened and more knowledgeable. My thoughts have completely changed and now I can see a better tomorrow.”

Eshioho Sam Shola from **Auchi Polytechnic** in Nigeria was very enthusiastic”

“What a wonderful experience with FSD in updating knowledge and skills. It has added value to me and the quality of my lecture delivery, which is visibly acknowledged by both colleagues that have watched me teach and the students that I teach. I am inspired to learn more and contribute to the network discussions.”

While for Mathews Nkonde from **ZIBSIP** in Zambia, the end of face-to-face instruction is nigh. He said:

“For now learners are accepting face to face due to lack of awareness but as the importance of ICTs seizes the teaching sector, face to face will be a closed chapter. It will be unsustainable competition for face-to-face training providers to compete with those using ICTs. I now fail to understand the benefits of f-2-f over ICTs, if at all there are.”

Finally, what do those managing the institutions say?

According to Pascal Chewe, Principal of the **TVTC** in Zambia.

“We now meet the needs of working people who can’t study full-time and we earn income to contribute to improved learning resources. INVEST is a lifeline for us; we receive a grant from government which is less than 10% of our operating costs. ODL courses help us to balance our institutional budget.”

While for Dr Sunny Eshiotse, Deputy Rector of the **Auchi Polytechnic**, Nigeria

“INVEST has catalysed a growing awareness in my institution of the imperative of creating new opportunities for students to develop and nurture ‘small, small’ skills that can be offered easily for quick cash on demand. We are also more conscious of the gender factor in the distribution of opportunities among both staff and students.”

Conclusion

In concluding I must emphasise that although I present this project proudly, I left my position at COL nearly six months ago. I have been travelling almost continuously since

then and am not up to date with the most recent developments. For those I invite you to contact Alison Mead Richardson at COL directly.

However, it has been a pleasure to address you. I am proud that the UNEVOC Centre here was launched during my time as ADG for Education and I am touched that you should have thought of me to come and share my thoughts on this tenth anniversary.

The UNEVOC network has done great work over the last decade and now it is clear that your time has come. Much more than in 2002, when many Ministers were preoccupied with getting children into primary school, governments are now giving a very high priority to EFA Goal Three in general and TVET in particular. The parlous state of economies in many parts of the world has only reinforced that priority.

You are in the right area at the right time and I wish you well.