

International Conference
Skills on the move: Global trends, local resonances
Follow-up to the Third International Congress on TVET
Tangshan, China, 4 - 6 July 2017

Introduction

In 2012, the global Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) community met in Shanghai to debate current trends and future drivers of TVET development. This global dialogue resulted in the Shanghai Consensus¹. The Shanghai Consensus, provides a vision to connect the analysis of TVET systems with intended development outcomes, and recommendations for TVET systems' reform as well as policy development. The key message was that TVET systems need significant transformation and revitalization if TVET were to realize its enormous potential as a contributor to employment and sustainable development.

A progress review is an excellent and timely opportunity to analyze how TVET has developed and changed since the Shanghai Congress and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On this basis, such review could point to the main challenges and opportunities that the sector faces today. The review will be conducted from several perspectives and will link TVET with SDGs and changes in the labour markets:

- SDG4 on Education emphasises equity and quality. How is the TVET sector contributing to SDG4, including in its contribution to lifelong learning opportunities for all? What is its position within national education policies and plans?
- SDG8 calls for inclusive economic growth, employment and decent work. To what extent does TVET contribute to employment and entrepreneurship, in particular for youth? How can TVET effectively contribute to women's employment and empowerment?
- Beyond SDG4 and SDG8, TVET can contribute to many other priority areas, notably SDG13 on combatting climate change. How is the Paris Agreement, adopted at the COP21, impacting TVET? What initiatives have been launched and what has their impact been?
- Digital technologies are spreading rapidly and transforming the way people live and work. SDG9 seeks to foster innovation, in which the digital sector may play an important role in the future. What are the implications of the digitization of the economy on skills, qualifications and TVET offerings and delivery?

Progress in TVET since the Shanghai Congress

Since the Shanghai Congress of 2012, TVET has been gathering momentum and global attention. Education 2030 devotes considerable attention to technical and vocational skills development, with three of the seven targets of its Framework for Action directly referring to TVET (covering questions such as the access to affordable quality TVET; the acquisition of technical and vocational skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship; and the elimination of gender disparity as well as the effort to ensure access to TVET for the vulnerable).

¹ See: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002176/217683e.pdf>

In this context, TVET is expected to address multiple demands of an economic, social and environmental nature by helping youth and adults develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, promoting equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and supporting transitions to green economies and environmental sustainability.

TVET is also featuring highly in the Development Strategies adopted within the framework of regional communities. An illustration thereof is the adoption by the African Union Heads of States of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025) as the framework for the development of a transformative education and training system in Africa. This framework further reinforces the importance of TVET.

The Shanghai Consensus informed the mid-term review of UNESCO's Strategy for TVET (2010-2015). In response to the invitation made by the Shanghai Consensus to the Director-General of UNESCO, the Organization developed a new Strategy for TVET (2016-2021), and the vision and policy areas of the Shanghai Consensus also helped to inspire the revision and drafting of the Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2015). The Recommendation acts as a reference point for the implementation of Education 2030. .

Factors shaping the TVET landscape

Several contextual factors are critical in driving the development of TVET, including a shift in the development paradigm towards sustainable development, demography, economic trends, labour market changes and migration patterns. The future of work features highly in the agenda of governments, international and regional organisations (including ILO², OECD³ and the European Commission⁴).

For TVET, the stakes are high. TVET systems are valued for their links with the fast-changing demands of the labour market and world of work. A set of new skills is emerging including digital, entrepreneurial, green and innovation skills. Real time data and data analytics have the potential to complement traditional labour market information systems with a timely monitoring of changing demands for skills and jobs. New forms of certification including digital credentials and open and online badges now recognize and validate learning outcomes, including non-formal and informal learning. The timeliness with which TVET systems transform and respond to the above-mentioned trends, will result in these systems either being highly appreciated by individuals, enterprises and society at large or, will contribute to deepening the negative perception of TVET, compared to general secondary education and academic tertiary education programmes.

At the same time, the boundaries of TVET are increasingly framed within a lifelong learning perspective. More than 120 countries are reforming their qualifications systems, developing overarching qualifications frameworks, supporting the use of learning outcomes, building learning pathways and setting up 'validation of prior learning' schemes. The increasing importance of TVET in tertiary education and the important role played by on-line, in-service and professional development, adds to this complexity and makes international cooperation a necessity for monitoring the SDGs and COP21 agendas and promoting policy learning and experience sharing among all Member States.

Objectives of the Conference

² See: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/lang--en/index.htm>

³ See: <http://www.oecd.org/employment/future-of-work.htm>

⁴ See: https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/strategic_note_issue_13.pdf

The Conference is designed *to take stock of progress and challenges since the Third International Congress on TVET in Shanghai in 2012 and identify promising policies and practices to enhance TVET's contribution to SDG 4 and more broadly to sustainable development.*

Areas of discussion

The Conference will focus on a number of areas linked to global trends and UNESCO's Strategy for TVET, including:

- Youth employment and entrepreneurship;
- The role of skills in combatting inequity and gender inequality;
- Skills' needs in increasingly digitized and green economies and societies;
- Anticipation of skills demands and addressing mismatch between supply and demand;
- Learner and worker mobility and the role of skills and qualifications recognition;
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of TVET strategies and programmes.

Structure of the Conference

The Conference will feature plenary and parallel sessions. The plenaries will bring together TVET stakeholders to review progress since the Shanghai Conference and identify challenges and areas for future initiatives around key policy areas (Sustainable Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Equity and Gender Equality and Mobility issues). The parallel sessions will allow participants to deepen the discussion by exploring major TVET reforms, mapping the skills landscape with an emphasis on digital, entrepreneurial, green, and creativity and innovation skills and examining questions of governance, financing, and relevance. A session will be dedicated to discovering specific aspects of the TVET system in the host country, China. This exposure will be further enriched with visits to TVET institutions as part of the post-conference programme.

Partner mobilisation

The Conference will be co-organized by UNESCO, the Government of the People's Republic of China and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). UNESCO will mobilise its Member States and partners, including the Inter-Agency Group on TVET members and its networks (UNEVOC Network, UNESCO Chairs and UNITWINs, etc.).