

Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Building Skills for Work and Life Shanghai, 13-16 May 2012

Draft Concept Note

Objectives

“Building Skills for Work and Life” is the focus of the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This Congress is being organized by UNESCO and hosted by the Government of the People’s Republic of China in Shanghai from 13 to 16 May 2012.

The central focus of the Congress is on *how to transform and expand TVET to ensure that all young people and adults can develop the skills needed for work and life*.

The Congress will provide a unique global platform for knowledge sharing, reflection, debate and charting new directions on the changing landscape of TVET and wider skills development systems in a lifelong learning perspective.

In the context of demographic shifts, rapid labour market changes and high youth unemployment in many countries, there is strong demand for upgrading skills, acquiring new ones, and improving linkages between learning and work. Moreover, TVET can provide some of the new knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the transition to green economies and societies. Protracted economic uncertainties have further heightened the need to rethink and even transform TVET systems to make them more resilient and responsive.

The Congress will therefore focus on the following key objectives:

1. Identify and discuss present and future challenges facing TVET and explore appropriate responses
2. Build better understandings of and share knowledge on improving the contributions of TVET to sustainable development
3. Inform perspectives for international cooperation in the field, and define strategic directions for joint future work and support to TVET at the national, regional and international levels

Congress Themes

The Congress is organised around eight themes through plenary, parallel and roundtable sessions. There will also be special sessions on enhancing support to Least Developed Countries as well as a session on China’s TVET system. Special sessions will be organized according to partner organizations’ proposals and in line with the Congress focus. The eight themes are:

- 1. Skills development for youth employment:** Youth unemployment can be traced back to a number of economic, political and social factors. It is now commonly accepted that youth unemployment is a structural concern that requires long-term solutions. In the skills development field, a mismatch between demand for skills and the lack of appropriately skilled young workers has often been a root problem.

2. **Building the responsiveness of TVET systems:** It is generally accepted that quality TVET must be responsive to changes in the demand for skills, whether these are economically, socially or politically generated. Growing attention is given to responsiveness to employers. There are also questions regarding the extent to which TVET responds to the needs of individuals and communities, as well as for self-employment, complex livelihoods and non-wage work.
3. **Revisiting TVET funding and enhancing efficiency:** TVET is under heightened pressure to demonstrate value for money. Recent years have seen increasing use of a diverse range of funding mechanisms and diversification of sources of financing for TVET, as well as a growing emphasis on relating payment for provision more closely to learning and outcomes in the world of work.
4. **Tackling social inequities and exclusion:** TVET should promote the skills of all learners, irrespective of gender, class, ethnicity, age or other social characteristics. While TVET can empower excluded individuals and groups both economically and socially, skills are only one aspect in promoting social inclusion, so TVET policies need to be located within wider public policies.
5. **Changing governance and widening stakeholders' engagement in TVET:** Many TVET reforms have resulted in the development of new national organizations and new coordination and oversight structures. Attention is often given to the involvement of employers, while at the same time there is growing emphasis on the importance of making TVET more accountable to other stakeholders such as learners, parents, unions, communities and elected representatives.
6. **Promoting innovation and sustainable development through TVET:** TVET has a valuable role in contributing to economic and social innovation. The rise of the sustainable development agenda suggests that TVET must engage more systemically with social, cultural and environmental issues, in terms of its own ways of working, its contribution to sustainable development, and in response to new skills needs.
7. **Achieving better quality teaching and learning:** The multiplicity of learning sites and modes in TVET brings policy challenges for achieving better outcomes of teaching and learning. There are very wide differences in TVET learning opportunities across sectors and occupations. In the formal TVET sector, there is a growing awareness of the changing role of teachers and trainers and the need for a systemic view of staff development needs, qualifications, career paths and remuneration.
8. **Qualifications systems for connecting skills development and lifelong learning:** There is a growing realization that learning takes place in multiple settings that go far beyond formal TVET. This requires establishing flexible and open learning and qualifications systems able to reduce the barriers between education, training and work, and to increase access and progression in initial and continuing TVET.

The Congress is inviting Ministers responsible for TVET in UNESCO's 195 Member States and 8 Associate Members to nominate delegations of up to three participants. Congress participants will be drawn from a wide range of stakeholders, including ministries of education and training, labour, finance and health; the formal and informal private sector; employees' organizations, youth and civil society.

To ensure rich and high quality reflection and debates, UNESCO is convening the Congress with key international organizations active in the field, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Training Foundation (ETF).