



United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization



The Newsletter
of UNESCO's
Education Sector

Education TODAY

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: THE COME-BACK?

Education specialists tend to prescribe technical and vocational education and training as a recipe for jobs for young people. But experiences around the world tend to show that this is not always the case. Focus, a four-page dossier, reports.

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EDITO

Ethiopia's new Vice-minister for Education Mr Wondwossen Kiflu told a recent UNESCO mission to his country that technical and vocational education and training was the only way forward if his country was to develop infrastructures such as village electrification and road construction.

Ethiopia is just one example of countries' renewed interest in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Often considered as a second-class education compared to the mainstream academic branch, TVET is increasingly seen as the master key to poverty alleviation and social cohesion and a chance for countries to jump on the bandwagon of development and globalization.

The shift in blue-collar employment from the United States and Europe to India and China, described in this issue of *Education Today*, reveals the high returns on investment that a proficient labour force provides. In China, for example, where skilled labourers represent the backbone of the current economic expansion, one third of all secondary students are enrolled in vocational schools.

But at the other end of the spectrum, many nations are still struggling to create those indispensable bridges between education and the world of work. UNESCO is assisting them to breathe new life into their technical and vocational education programmes and entrepreneurship training.

For many countries, TVET is not an option. It's a necessity. With primary school leavers on the rise throughout the world, the need to expand further learning opportunities is urgent. Yet, many secondary school systems are unable to absorb these large numbers and jobs are even harder to come by. And ultimately, young people with new expectations but few opportunities are the ingredients of a social time-bomb.

We need to respond to these demands. The urgent need of the hour is the development of policies that will lead to new TVET strategies. Young people need skills that are flexible and relevant to the demands of a constantly evolving, globalized labour market.

Aïcha Bah Diallo
Acting Assistant Director-General for Education

Mending the social fabric

Grassroots organizations in Guatemala reach out to vulnerable groups



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Learning to take pride in the Mayan heritage

Now that they work with a grassroots organization, Jennifer and Laurena, both teenagers, are called “quetzalitas”, after the beautiful, multi-coloured tropical bird, Guatemala’s emblem. “It’s a symbol of liberty as it can’t survive in a cage,” says Jennifer. Both work with Mojoca, a UNESCO-supported NGO. On a typical day, they go out to find a group of boys sprawled out on the pavement, inhaling industrial solvent. Laurena urges them to come to Mojoca headquarters to bathe and wash their clothes. She is optimistic that some will decide to take advantage of Mojoca’s resources to start new lives.

Overstretched education system

Until recently Laurena and Jennifer were among the thousands of children living on the streets in Guatemala City. Now they are reaching out to other lost adolescents whose only prospects are *maras* (gangs), prostitution, drugs and death. The aim of Mojoca – *Movimiento de Jovens de la Calle* – is to give them the tools to survive and create their own projects.

In the wake of thirty-six years of vicious civil war, Guatemala’s damaged institutions

still cannot cope with the needs of the most vulnerable. Non-governmental organizations like Mojoca have stepped in to help mend the social fabric, still tattered after nine years of peace. The government is grappling with the long-standing problems that led to the conflict: corruption, poverty and the social exclusion of indigenous Mayan populations.

The education system desperately needs repair. “School in Guatemala is thirty or forty years behind,” recently lamented Education Minister Maria del Carmen Acena. “The secondary level has not had any reform for twenty-two years, and 20 per cent of teachers were hired because they had friends in power.”

To help find solutions, UNESCO Guatemala is working with the government on such projects as standardizing bilingual school curricula. It is also acting at community level, supporting Mojoca and four other dynamic NGOs. “The goals are to reduce exclusion, promote rights and fight poverty using a ‘can-do’ approach,” explains Luis Manuel Tiburcio, head of UNESCO Guatemala. “Some of the organizations are supporting and expanding opportunities for excluded children, others are promoting intercultural education, culture and craft. They often do what the government can’t do.”

The NGO Caja Ludica, for instance, whose members also include former street children, proposes artistic expression as an alternative to violence through activities like street theatre. In a private school in Quetzal, 20 km outside the capital, it runs a weekly group in which parents, teachers and

students discuss problems that affect them all, like racism and discrimination.

Creative expression is also the medium of Cuarto Mundo. Its members work with the poorest people living around the capital’s gigantic *basurero*, public dump. By holding art classes on the street or teaching out-of-school children to read, the group aims to facilitate access to culture. As for the youth group Mojomaya, it focuses on the crucial issue of cultural identity, encouraging young people of Mayan ancestry to take pride in their unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

Tackling exclusion

The cooperative Fior del Campo, a shining example of sustainable development, was founded by a group of war widows. They built up a weaving business, then diversified into candles and natural beauty products to sell to tourists. UNESCO has helped them expand their activities to include crafts, bread-making, traditional medicine and agricultural products. “That way they can double or triple their income and finance their own education costs,” says Tiburcio. “So here we are, in a fantastic adventure. We have learned great respect for these women, their struggle for a better life, talent in craft, capacity to organize, consult and decide democratically.”

The organizations began working with UNESCO in 2004 with \$100,000 from UNESCO’s “Education for Children-in-Need” programme and an additional \$50,000 from Japan, to finance the craft centre of Flor del Campo. The partnership is thriving. “We are getting very good results,” says Tiburcio. “The money – there is never enough – but they do miracles with it.”

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Based on an article in *Le Monde de l’Education*, December 2004

Storytelling revived

A soap opera in Central Asia promotes key messages while entertaining

Valijon and Maydagul were childhood sweethearts. They had finally overcome family pressure to become engaged, but their dreams were dashed when Valijon fell victim to drug addiction. Will love finally prevail despite this setback? The story had listeners to the Silk-Road Radio Soap gripped for weeks on end.

It was the impact of the “Tales from the Silk Road”, a collection of books produced by UNESCO Tashkent to highlight the age-old tradition of storytelling, that sparked off the Silk-Road Radio. Rather than retell old stories, Silk-Road Radio would construct new ones to address contemporary issues.

“Soap opera has the capacity to openly use fiction and romance to deal frankly with intimate family matters,” says John Butt, head and founder of the Silk Road Radio. “It’s a convenient forum for educating about HIV/AIDS prevention, drug abuse and other everyday matters. Silk Road Radio is modelled on the successful BBC Afghan soap “New Home, New Life” launched in 1993 and still running.

Enter education

The Silk-Road Radio was first broadcast in Tajikistan in 1998 and in Uzbekistan in 1999. It was a question of finding the right mix between entertainment and education, explains Sherzod Khodjaev of UNESCO Tashkent. “In Central Asia, there was more tolerance for romance and mention of family matters, than in more conservative Afghanistan,” says John Butt. “Take the example of condom-use to prevent HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases. In southern Africa you have to be direct and say: ‘Wear a condom or you’ll get AIDS;’” But, in Central Asia, you have to be more careful. “People might interpret such brazen promotion of condom-use as encouragement of promiscuity.” As a result, Silk-Road Radio stresses condom-use between married couples, to protect both partners in the case of infidelity.

Comedy also plays a big part. “Condom-use will never cease to be taboo until people learn to laugh about it,” says one UN agency head in Tajikistan. The suggestion became a storyline in the Silk-Road Soap: two grandchildren found a condom belonging to their parents. They had great fun making a balloon out of it, much to the anger of their grandfather, who was horrified that his son, the children’s father, was using a condom. He thought it must be for reasons related to infidelity, while in fact his son was using a condom to protect his own wife from the HIV/AIDS that he had contracted.

Rural to urban

Silk Road Radio consists of two radio soap operas. The Silk Road Soap targets a mature, rural audience and goes out twice a week, and City Soap, which targets urban youth, goes out three times a week. Silk Road Radio Broadcasts in Uzbek and Tajik, and plans are afoot to launch it in Kyrgyz and Russian.

Fiction has been complemented by factual reporting – known as storyline reporting. “We are reinforcing the educational messages of the soap opera, by dealing with

them from a different – more factual – angle,” says Aziza Ataeva, chief storyline reporter.

Apart from HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, the soap has tackled such issues as domestic violence, legal and human rights, restrictions on travel between neighbouring countries, making profit from farming and much more.

Training is a major component of the project, which brings together a team of scriptwriters, producers, reporters and actors. “We have had to train good drama writers to become writers of educational soap opera – a new discipline,” says Butt. Both Uzbek and Tajik writers have taken to the particular skill required in writing soap opera, he adds. But then this is only natural. Telling and listening to stories with an educational message comes naturally to those who straddle the old Silk Road in Central Asia.

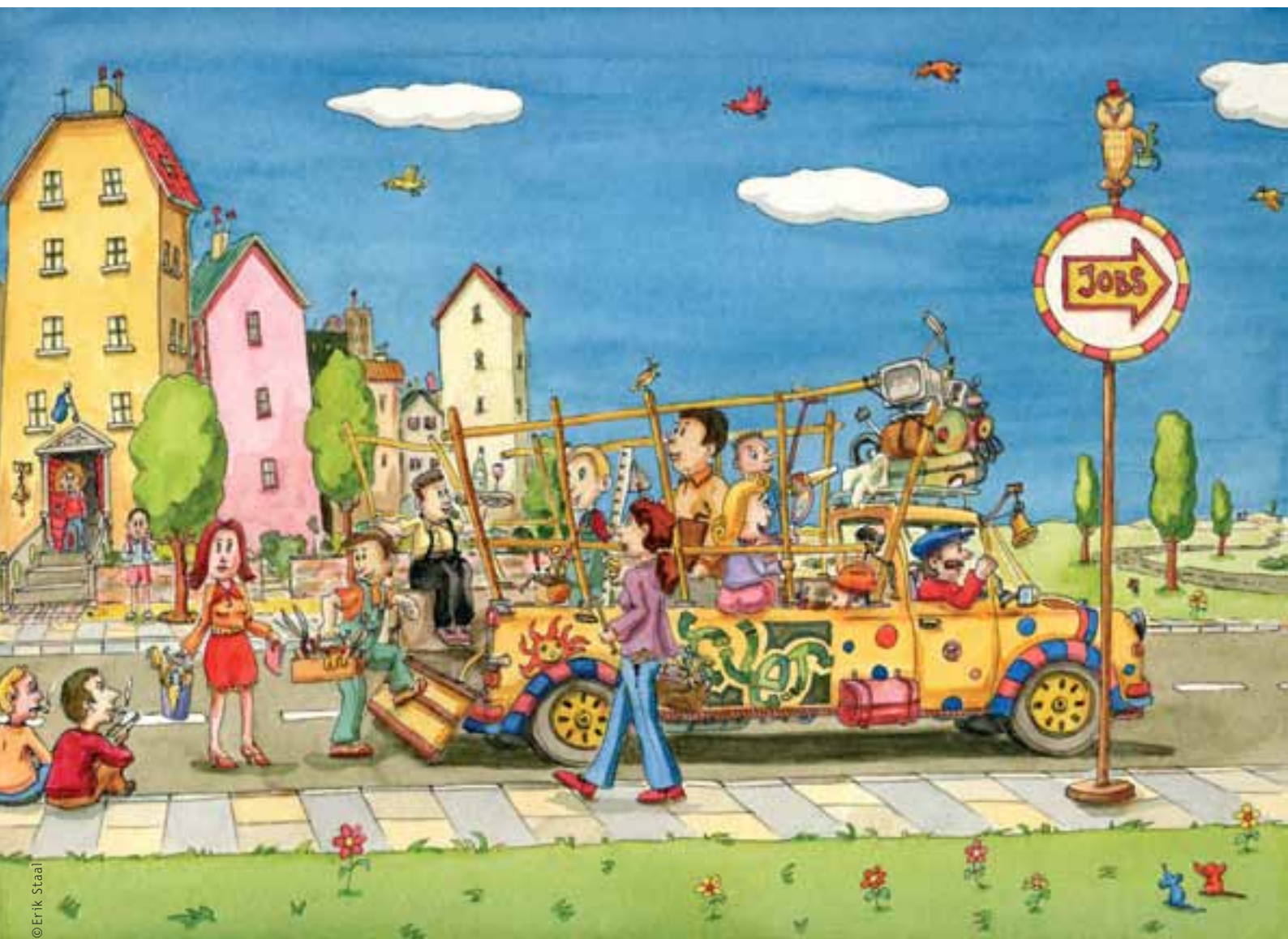
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Silk Road Radio reporters gather material for new storylines

Vocational education:

Technical and vocational education and training has fueled phenomenal economic growth in some countries and fallen short of expectations in others. Globalization is prompting governments to take renewed interest in this branch, still perceived as second-class.



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It is every politician's nightmare: unemployed youths, hanging out in the streets, with little chance of finding a job or going to university. While the parents of those youths may digest their own dashed hopes for a better life, frustration can reach revolt when that bleak horizon confronts the next generation.

For governments, rich or poor, the solution seems straightforward. Catch those kids before they fall into the cracks by teaching them skills in secondary school to carve their niche in the labour market. Of course, reality is never so simple, which partly explains why technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can be a dirty

word. Principals and teachers point to the heavy expenses required to develop curricula, train staff and equip classrooms for these specialized subjects, which generally cost three times more than academic courses. For most parents and students, it remains a 'second-class' education. The truth is TVET provides training but no guarantee

the come-back?

for jobs. Even the world's most sophisticated and expensive programme is doomed to fail if the labour market cannot absorb the students, despite their skills and expectations.

This backdrop has led many experts and policy-makers to conclude that training is best left to the workplace, especially after the radical policy shift in the World Bank, which was once considered TVET's staunchest supporters. The very first Bank loan for education, granted in 1963, was for TVET, which accounted for about 40 per cent of all educational loans in sub-Saharan Africa until the early 80s. But in 1991, the Bank reversed gears, thanks to a policy paper, co-authored by Arvil Van Adams. Widely respected, Adams retired from the Bank in January with a single regret: "people took us – the policy – too much at face value."

"The easy message of our policy was that TVET is not a good investment but that ignores the nuance of what we said," insists Adams. "We argued for a shift away from heavy investment in workshops, instructor training and curriculum in order to invest resources into policy development. The point was not to do away with TVET but to reform the policy process."

A time-bomb

But few appreciated the nuance of Adam's analysis and TVET virtually disappeared from the international aid agenda. The Bank began investing heavily in primary education at the expense of TVET, which now accounts for just 8 to 9 per cent of educational spending. International strategies intended to reduce poverty completely ignored the need to develop skills, according to Trevor Riordan, of the International Labour Office (ILO).

"We are now seeing a skills-divide emerging," says Riordan, "with the least developed countries falling further and further

Vocationalizing secondary education

Vocationalisation of Secondary Education Revisited, a new publication by the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), takes a concise look at the pros and cons of educational innovations to prepare young people for the world of work. By focusing specifically on reforms underway in sub-Saharan Africa, the book provides valuable insight and hard data for policy-makers, educational planners, teachers and administrators.

Released in March, the book is edited by Jon Lauglo and Rupert Maclean and published by Springer.

Based in Bonn (Germany), UNEVOC has four main functions: to develop an international network of centres promoting TVET; to disseminate best practices and innovations through publications, databases and an electronic clearinghouse; to develop the human resources of TVET specialists at the sub-regional level and to encourage inter-agency cooperation.

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behind, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia."

Add to this "a time-bomb waiting to happen as hundreds of thousands more kids finish primary school and look for secondary education or work opportunities which do not always exist," says Wataru Iwamoto, Director of UNESCO's Division of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education. In many of the least developed countries, pupils have little chance of either pursuing their schooling or finding a job. "So we advocate a new vision of vocational education that focuses on practical or 'life skills' integrated at the primary or secondary levels, depending upon the country's resources," says Iwamoto.

A growing interest

In countries rich and poor, Mohan Perera, Head of UNESCO's Section for Technical and Vocational Education, sees a growing interest in TVET. Countries realize that it's a means to jumping on the bandwagon of globalization. "Look at the tremendous shift of employment from the United States and

Europe to India and China, where you have such highly skilled work forces," comments Perera. "By substantially investing in TVET, these countries laid a major plank in their economic foundations."

For UNESCO, TVET goes beyond the narrow confines of economic planning. It is part of a larger vision of promoting sustainable development. Since its founding, UNESCO has been developing recommendations and organizing policy debates, while serving as a policy-advisor for governments trying to reform or create vocational education systems.

"In the past, there was a supply-side vision, which created serious problems for developing countries," says Perera. "Either they invested heavily in trying to import foreign models of higher education, which produced a surplus of white collar expectations. Or they tried to set up highly specialized training schools, which didn't correspond to labour needs." Today, the goal is to teach students to adapt to changing working conditions, instead of locking them into specific jobs and skills.



Vocational education: the come-back?

→ Unfortunately, these new directions don't come with any road maps. As Fred Fluitman of the ILO explains, "secondary education systems are pretty much the same. But every TVET programme is different and just about every government is constantly trying to tinker with it." In short, constant innovation is a key ingredient in the reform process. If done properly, the results can be spectacular.

The Republic of Korea is a shining example of how TVET can fuel stellar economic growth. While no model should be emulated, the South Korean experience offers key lessons. First, the government took a sequenced approach to education. Money didn't start flowing into TVET until the country nearly achieved universal primary education. By design or accident, major investing began in the early 1980s, just as labour shortages started to pinch the economy. To make the "big push" into export-oriented manufacturing, construction and service-oriented sectors, the country needed a new stream of skilled workers.

At the same time, policy-makers in the Republic of Korea were beginning to be

alarmed by a growing appetite for higher education. People would become "over-educated", expecting white collar jobs in an economy thirsting for new sources of skilled labour. By expanding TVET, the government planned to satisfy its forecasted labour needs while reducing pressure on universities to enrol more students.

Today, about 40 per cent of secondary students are enrolled in TVET. Yet it is still perceived as a second-class education. So the government is trying to open pathways to higher education. First, TVET students are now getting a healthy dose of academic subjects so that they can apply to university. In some schools, academic and vocational students share as much as 75 per cent of a common curriculum. The government is also channelling public and private investment into new post-secondary training institutes to kill the myth that TVET is an academic 'dead-end'.

The ultimate challenge lies in keeping abreast with technological change. To keep curricula relevant, the plan is to tighten links to the private sector. For example, the Republic of Korea is now experimenting with their own version of Germany's famous "dual system", which traces its roots back to post-war reconstruction. It is opting for a "2+1" programme, combining two years of classroom studies with a year of apprenticeship.

Promoting partnerships

Similar reforms are taking place in China, where a third of all secondary students are enrolled in vocational schools, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (see box p. 7). However, it is difficult to draw parallels between the two countries. Whereas a labour shortage shaped the Republic of Korea's policy reform, China is grappling with a labour surplus, with job creation lagging behind the growing economy. And while the Republic of Korea had the luxury of tailoring a new system to forecasted needs, China must overhaul an antiquated machine.

To do so, China has found an ally in the private sector, according to Dingyong Hou, Senior Education Officer for the World Bank. Private companies are providing financing, materials, apprenticeships and guidance as representatives sit on school advisory boards. For Hou, these partnerships reflect a key element of the Chinese vision of life-long learning: schools will develop and broaden students' capacities and the workplace will provide training.

Open-door policy

Ironically, the great bastion of communism may be increasingly lured to the private sector, while countries of the former Soviet Union are not so keen to relinquish state control of their TVET systems. Here, the Czech Republic gets the highest marks.

This is one of the few countries where vocational education enjoys a prestigious reputation. About 75 per cent of secondary students are enrolled in TVET, estimates Vaclav Klenha, a specialist of the European Training Foundation (ETF), compared to 25 per cent who attend purely academic schools. Instead of abandoning the system to market forces, the government has given greater freedom to principals and teachers to update curricula and introduce new occupational fields as opposed to the specific skills associated with a particular job.

Another major selling point is the 'open-door' policy to higher education. All secondary students can take the Maturita examination, which is a pre-requisite for taking university entrance exams. In addition, some of the new post-secondary training institutes (set up over the past ten years) allow students to transfer directly into universities.

The Russian Federation is also planning to decentralize its TVET system, permitting regional governments to administer their own programmes. But it is not an easy task. Most of the schools can barely be called educational institutions, according to Peter Grootings of the ETF. "But they do keep kids off the street and provide at least one member of a family with a hot meal everyday. The state's TVET schools are one of the few

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Rebuilding in the Arab States

UNESCO is preparing plans to rebuild the vocational education system in Iraq once the security situation has stabilized. Close to 3 million dollars in extra-budgetary funds have been earmarked for this purpose and additional funds promised.

UNESCO is also increasingly active with TVET projects in other Arab states, which are trying to reduce their reliance on expatriate workers. For example, over the past five years, UNESCO is assisting Libya to vocationalize its entire secondary education system and revise the curricula of post-secondary training institutes. In Bahrain, where 65 to 70 per cent of secondary students are enrolled in TVET, the government has financed a UNESCO project to create a Centre for Excellence, providing specialized teacher-training services and life-long learning programmes for adults.

→ remaining welfare institutions for young people and poor families.”

Previously two-thirds of Russian workers were trained in elementary vocational schools and 22 per cent of the population have a secondary vocational education, which is 1.5 times higher than those with a college education.

Finding funds

Experts like Grootings are discussing ways to enable TVET students to pursue higher education or training. New internship programmes might also dynamize the system. The problem lies in finding the money. The private sector is too disorganized for any serious partnership, says Grootings, who argues “that the state must invest in this generation and the country’s future.”

Governments far poorer than the Russian Federation are doing just that. Botswana, Ghana and Kenya have been shouldering the burden since World Bank loans dried up in the 1990s. Instead of setting up a separate stream of specialized schools, these countries have “vocationized secondary education.” While the curriculum remains academic in nature, between 15 and 30 per cent of courses focus on practical subjects like agriculture, management and entrepreneurialism.

“The aim is to redress the imbalance between the aims of a purely academic secondary education and the needs of society,” says Rupert Maclean, Director of the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC).

Investing in future generations

UNEVOC has just published a series of reports evaluating the impact of vocation-ization in sub-Saharan Africa (see box p. 5). There has been tremendous political support for these courses in Kenya, Ghana and Botswana, says the report’s co-editor, Jon Lauglo, a former World Bank expert on TVET. Botswana, in particular, has made huge investments to introduce information processing and computer skills at the secondary level.

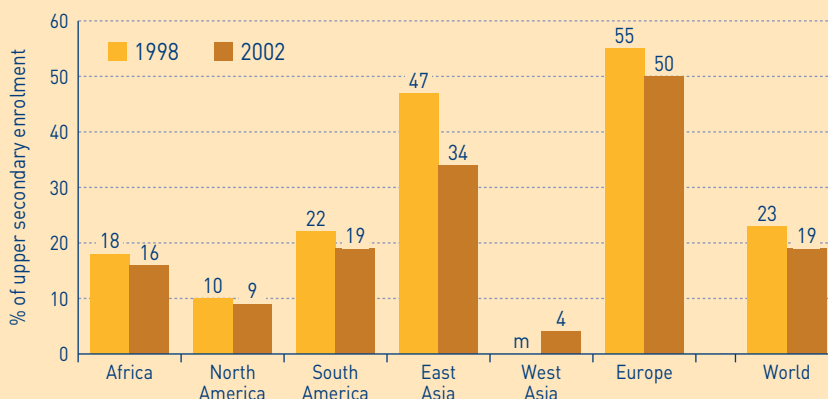
Global trends in technical and vocational education

Globally, almost 50 million students were enrolled in technical and vocational education in 2002. Nine out of ten were enrolled at the upper secondary level, typically designed to serve youth aged 15 to 20 years.

The global average is that one in five upper secondary students are enrolled in technical and vocational programmes. However, the enrolment rates vary widely by regions. In Europe and East Asia, including China, such programmes account for 50 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively, of upper secondary enrolment. In the other regions, technical and vocational enrolment is far less common. In Africa and South America, the share is less than 20 per cent, and in North America and West Asia less than 10 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

In the last decade, secondary enrolments have skyrocketed world-wide. From 1998 to 2002 alone, the number of secondary students grew by 15 per cent. However, this growth is largely due to increases in general secondary students. As a result, the share of technical and vocational students has declined since 1998 by 4 percentage points, from 23 per cent down to 19 per cent. This downward trend is observed in all regions, especially in East Asia.

Technical and vocational students as a share of total upper secondary enrolments, 1998 and 2002



Note: m = missing
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Global Education Digest 2005.
www.uis.unesco.org

Ironically, the problem may lie with the high hopes and expectations raised by these courses. Parents are rushing to enrol their children in classes that are supposed to lead to jobs. Demand is so high that it is politically impossible to contain the new curriculum to a few regions where it might be tested and refined. As a result, says Lauglo, precious resources might have been spread too thin.

The bottom line is that about 80 per cent of jobs in poorer countries require some form of vocational skills. The urgent challenge is

therefore to bridge the demand for jobs with the actual needs of society. Politically, governments cannot afford not to invest in the skills of future generations, says Perera of UNESCO.

Countries fail girls

Seventy-five countries will miss the gender parity deadline

More than seventy-five countries will fail to achieve the first Education for All and Millennium Development Goal target of equal enrolment of boys and girls at primary and secondary level by 2005.

Some 58 million girls are still being denied primary schooling and gender disparities become more extreme at the secondary level. One-third of the countries that will miss the target are in sub-Saharan Africa and more than 40 per cent of all countries will not reach the target even by 2015, according to the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005*.

What might have been

Yet, the world could have looked differently if all countries had reached the 2005 target. More than a million annual childhood deaths could have been averted concludes "Girls' Education: Towards a Better Future for All", a report from the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID). Another report, by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), a coalition of NGOs, claims that "every year of schooling lost represents a 10 to 20 per cent reduction in girls' future incomes. It adds that countries could raise per capita economic growth by about 3 percentage points in the next decade if they simply attained parity in girls' and boys' enrolments. "Unacceptably slow progress on girls' education is perpetuating hunger, poverty and ill health," charges the GCE.

The arguments are familiar: there is a strong link between girls' and women's education and their ability to claim their other rights, raise healthy families and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Many countries have made remarkable progress towards the gender parity goal. Examples such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Mali and Mauritania are regularly cited. The greatest strides have been made in countries that have removed barriers like school fees, and made schools available, affordable and safe for girls.

Missing the target is being interpreted as a wake-up call in many quarters. "The gender

parity deadline served a purpose," says Lene Buchert, Chief of UNESCO's Section for Primary Education. "Without it the situation would probably have been even worse seen in light of the tremendous cultural barriers that have to be overcome in many instances."

Favouring girls

Developing countries have to realize the huge benefits of policy reform in favour of girls' education, and rich nations have to back them with sufficient resources and capacity development, she adds. Setting the example, the United Kingdom has pledged 1.4 billion pounds (\$2.7 billion)

to countries that have the largest number of girls out of school.

The failure to meet this target will be at the centre of two major United Nations reviews in 2005: the Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in Beijing in 1995 (known as Beijing + 10), and the Millennium Summit + 5. These events "are the last chance before 2015 to mobilize genuine political will and resources behind a robust plan and timetable to get every girl in school and learning," says the GCE.

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3 questions to Cream Wright

Chief of Education at UNICEF, the coordinating agency of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)

1 What lessons has UNGEI learned from the drive for gender parity in education?

We have learned that genuine partnership is essential to bring together the political will of countries with the expertise and resources of external partners and civil society. We have also learned that dramatic gains in education can be achieved even in the most difficult situations. Look at the examples of Afghanistan, Angola and most recently Liberia. Increasingly, we are learning how to apply the lessons from these emergency situations to other circumstances. If you can get 5 million children into school in 3 years in a country like Afghanistan, then it should be possible in most countries with low enrolment.

2 Is there any good news to report on the gender parity target?

The good news is that even though the goal has not been reached, we can see progress. This is particularly true of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as South and West Asia, and even for sub-Saharan Africa. Countries in these regions have registered the highest

growth rate in enrolment over the past 20 years. Unfortunately they were starting from such a low base and population growth has been such that these gains have not been enough to make the breakthrough needed. But beyond the numbers, we should question gender parity that does not provide a basis for gender equality. What good is gender parity if girls continue to have negative experiences of the education process, compared to boys; or if women are still in an inferior and exploited position?

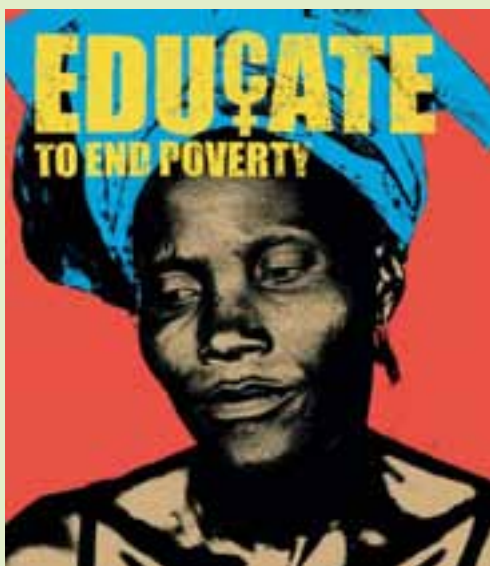
3 Where does UNGEI go from here?

We are currently working on a review of Gender Achievements and Prospects (GAP Review) for a large number of countries. This will give us GAP Profiles of countries and regions to form the basis of bold interventions. Then the task is to make progress on the transition from parity to the more challenging concern with gender equality in and through education. UNGEI partners hope to work more closely with the EFA movement as well as the Fast-Track funding Initiative, in order to achieve these goals.

Send my Friend to School campaign about to take off

EFA Week 2005 will be celebrated in 110 countries from 24 to 30 April. Its message is strong: education is key to end poverty. As in the past, UNESCO is supporting the Global Campaign for Education's *Send my Friend to School* campaign. Children and adult learners will be making life-size cut-outs ("friends") from cardboard or fabric to symbolize the 104 million out-of-school children and 800 million illiterate adults. They will be decorating these "friends" with slogans such as "Educate to stop AIDS", or "Educate to end child labour". At national gatherings, children will speak out on behalf their friends to politicians, asking them to do more so that all children have a chance to go to school. In the same spirit, children will write letters to their President. Finally, Education Ministers and Members of Parliament will visit schools and sign pledges on the cut-outs to take action in 2005.

Twenty-four artists have responded to UNESCO's invitation to participate in this campaign. They will also paint and decorate cut-outs with education slogans and join with the children in



saying *Send my Friend to School*. Their works of art will be exhibited in UNESCO during EFA Week.

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Linking education and poverty

How are poverty reduction strategies impacting on education? A study by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the U.K. Department of International Development (DFID) reveals an unconvincing picture. These strategies usually target the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) rather than the full Education for All agenda.

Introduced in 1999 by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) were a new approach to reduce world poverty. Countries that adopted an explicit and credible poverty reduction strategy would have access to substantial debt relief and loans.

Of the eighteen PRSPs reviewed, few countries relate education investment to poverty reduction; fewer still specify how the different

measures target the poor and none of them emphasize the changes that need to be made to improve learning. Non-formal education and adult illiteracy are given short shrift.

Nevertheless, the study concludes that the existence of poverty reduction strategies have benefited countries. "They have been a determining factor for the Fast-Track funding Initiative and are powerful, for not only reducing poverty, but for promoting democracy and increasing development assistance," says Françoise Caillods, Deputy Director of IIEP and co-author of the study.

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Education and PRSPs: A Review of Experience can be downloaded at: www.unesco.org/iiep

World tour

→ An international EFA conference (Johannesburg, 6-10 February) brought together EFA Coordinators, NGOs and education experts from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The gathering was co-hosted by World Education, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa and UNESCO.

→ The Third National Conference on Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Windhoek (9 February) addressed the issue of education for OVCs. The OVC Policy in Namibia, first of its kind, was launched at the Conference.

→ Swaziland officially launched its National EFA Plan on 23 February in the presence of Prime Minister Absalom Themba Dlamini.

→ Latin American experts from fourteen countries meeting in Managua, Nicaragua (8-11 March) discussed the practical aspects of the Second International Comparative Study by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education at UNESCO Santiago. This study to start in 2006 will test pupils in Grades 3 and 6 of primary school in language, mathematics and science.

→ Participants meeting at the 15th Thematic Working Group on Education for All in Bangkok (9 March) reviewed a number of EFA flagship programmes and discussed the findings of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005.

→ The Fifth Latin American Regional Workshop on Educational Statistics (Bogota, 13-17 March) brought together statisticians from some nineteen Latin American countries. It was organized by UNESCO Santiago and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

→ Education specialists and intellectuals met at the *Universidad de Chile* in Santiago on 16 March to discuss the broader significance of education beyond the classroom, in the construction of personal identity and for a more just and participatory society. Organized by UNESCO Santiago and the National Council of Culture and Art of the Ministry of Education.

New prize for special needs education

UNESCO and the Emir of Kuwait are launching a new biannual prize to recognize achievement in improving special needs education for children with mental retardation, based on an agreement reached in 2002. The prize, to be presented for the first time in October 2005, rewards individuals, groups, organizations or specialized centres that have contributed outstanding research or training in this field. This year, two laureates, one from an Arab and one from a non-Arab country, will each receive a certificate and \$20,000.

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Revitalizing higher education in Iraq

“Dramatic” is how UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura recently described the situation of Iraq’s universities and technical institutes. Twenty-four years of conflict has caused intellectuals to flee the country and isolate those that stayed.

To generate solutions, UNESCO organized a Round Table on the Revitalization of Higher Education in Iraq, on 22 and 23 February at Paris headquarters. “In the perspective of sustained peace, democracy and development in Iraq, higher education is not a luxury but a necessity,” stated Mr. Matsuura at its opening. The Round Table, he said, would help bring Iraq back into the global academic and scientific network, and also “stimulate the release of the financial resources that are needed in order to make a real difference.”

The Round Table, attended by officials from Ministry of Higher Education Iraq’s and from universities in Iraq and other countries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies, assessed needs and priorities and prepared a blueprint for short-term action.

To kick-start the process, UNESCO, in partnership with the International Fund for Higher Education in Iraq, has so far provided \$3 million of laboratory equipment and \$200,000 of textbooks and reference books to institutions in Baghdad and important

regional centres. Fellowships are also being awarded to allow 500 Iraqi researchers and professors to go abroad for three months to update their knowledge and reconnect with the international academic community.

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Decade for sustainable development

“This event marks the beginning of an initiative of great importance to all who care about education, human development, the natural environment, and the well-being of future generations,” said Professor Steven Rockefeller at the launch of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) on 1 March at the United Nations in New York.

The main goal of the Decade is to encourage governments to integrate the concept of sustainable development into education policies and practices, promoting behavioural changes that will make societies more viable and just. As the lead Agency for the Decade, UNESCO is committed to coordinating the efforts of the whole United Nations system in particular towards four basic education goals: improving basic education, reorienting existing educational programmes, developing awareness of sustainability, and training.

Education for sustainable development is a complex issue focusing on quality learning education and learning for all. It encompasses environmental priorities – water, climate change, biodiversity, disaster prevention, sustainable production and consumption – but also economic ones such as fighting poverty and managing social transformations, and socio-cultural ones ranging from promoting cultural diversity and gender equality to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

As part of UNESCO’s efforts to clarify and communicate the key concepts and messages of Education for Sustainable Development, a collection of information briefs has been prepared for educators and decision-makers.

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International school campaign

UNESCO has launched an international schools campaign entitled “All Equal in Diversity: Mobilizing Schools Against Racism, Discrimination and Exclusion”. The campaign started on 21 March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

UNESCO Associated Schools in countries participating in the Organization’s “Breaking the Silence” Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project are encouraged to sign up.

“Schools will make a commitment to undertake a minimum of three activities annually over three years,” says Jean O’Sullivan of UNESCO.

A campaign kit includes a poster, stickers and a booklet which proposes guidelines, background documents and a variety of activities. The deadline for registration is 15 June 2005.

The “Breaking the Silence” Project has been carried out with the support of Norwegian funds since 1998 in some 100 UNESCO Associated Schools in Africa, the Americas/ Caribbean and Europe, to bring about greater knowledge of the slave trade and its consequences, including all forms of discrimination.

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Registration form and campaign kit:
www.unesco.org/education/asp

Boom in secondary education

Secondary education enrolment is booming in certain parts of the world, according to the new *Global Education Digest 2005*. Globally, the number of pupils in secondary education reached 492 million in 2002, and since 1990 this number has grown more than 3 per cent each year – a pace which is three times higher than growth in primary enrolments.

The trend towards expansion of secondary enrolment is most marked in Latin America and Asia, and predictably much slower in Africa. The good news for Africa, however, is that between 1998 and 2002, primary gross enrolment ratios were boosted, with pupil numbers finally outpacing population growth.

These figures and others can be found in the new *Global Education Digest 2005* released in April by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Third in an annual series, it compares education statistics across the world and presents the latest cross-national data from pre-primary to tertiary levels.

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APRIL

24-30

Education for All Week

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25-26

UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge; the Third Scientific Committee Meeting for Asia and the Pacific

Organized by UNESCO • Seoul, Republic of Korea
Contact: Min-Chul Shim, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: mc.shim@unesco.org

27-29

Regional Seminar on the Implications of the WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific • Organized by UNESCO and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO • Seoul, Republic of Korea

Contact: Min-Chul Shim, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: mc.shim@unesco.org

29

Second Round Table on the Effectiveness of Public-Private Partnerships in Education: Practitioners’ Solutions • Organized by UNESCO and the World Economic Forum • Paris, France • Contact: Philipp Müller-Wirth, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: p.muller-wirth@unesco.org

MAY

12-13

UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge; the Third Scientific Committee Meeting for Africa • Organized by UNESCO Paris • Maputo, Mozambique • Contact: Isabelle Devylder, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: i.devylder@unesco.org

30 May - 3 June

3rd African International Conference on Early Childhood Development Organized by the Working Group on Early Childhood Development of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa • Accra, Ghana
Contact: Yoshie Kaga, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: y.kaga@unesco.org

30 May - 3 June

HIV/AIDS Prevention for Street Children: Sub-regional Seminar for Trainers • Organized by UNESCO and PAU Education • Niamey, Niger
Contact: Florence Migeon, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: f.migeon@unesco.org

30 May - 3 June

Jury Meeting of the International Literacy Prizes • Organized by UNESCO • Paris, France • Contact: Namtip Aksornkool, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: n.aksornkool@unesco.org

JUNE

7-8

Regional Seminar on the Implications of the WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean • Organized by UNESCO Paris • Mexico City, Mexico • Contact: Lamy El Amrani, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: l.el-amrani@unesco.org

JULY

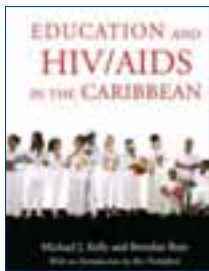
19-21

Sixth Meeting of the Working Group on Education for All Organized by UNESCO Paris • Paris, France

Contact: Abhimanyu Singh, UNESCO Paris • E-mail: abh.singh@unesco.org

● **Skills-Based Health Education: Content and Quality in Primary Schools** by H.W.R. Hawes. This study, using examples from India, Uganda and Zambia, examines the key role of health education in promoting quality in primary education. It describes the context in which health education programmes are planned, and assesses implementation. It is published by the FRESH (Focusing Resources on School Health) initiative. E-mail: sdi@unesco.org

● **Partnerships for Relevant Science and Technology Education.** Prepared by Andrew Clegg, this document reports on a sub-regional workshop on private sector partnerships in science and technology education in southern Africa, held in Windhoek, Namibia, July 28-30, 2003. E-mail: sdi@unesco.org



● **Education and HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean** by Michael J. Kelly and Brendan Bain. This book describes the impact of HIV/AIDS on education in both global and Caribbean contexts and highlights the role and response of education in prevention. It includes illustrations on the socioeconomic, health and gender aspects of the disease. Published by Ian Randle Publishers, UNESCO Office for the Caribbean and IIEP. Price: 19,82€. E-mail: information@iiep.unesco.org

● **Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education, No. 131. Open File: Instructional Time.** This issue focuses on instructional time, a key issue in quality education. It includes articles on instructional time in African primary schools and the German and Swedish school systems. Published by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. E-mail: doc-center@ibe.unesco.org

● **Transparency in Education. Report Card in Bangladesh. Quality Schools Programme in Mexico** by Shahnaz Karim, Claudia A. Santizo Rodall and Enrique Cabrero Mendoza. Concerned with ethics and corruption in education, the book comprises two studies on successful experiences in improving transparency and accountability in the use of educational resources. Published by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). Price: 10€ E-mail: information@iiep.unesco.org

● **Reforming Higher Education in the Nordic Countries. Studies of Change in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.** Edited by Ingemar Fägerlind and Görel Strömqvist. This book is concerned with how higher education systems have changed in Nordic countries over the past two decades in response to such demands as expansion, diversification, accountability, quality control and globalization. It studies, among other issues, the role of the market and the state in the five countries. Published by IIEP. Price: 10€. E-mail: information@iiep.unesco.org

● **The UNESCO Higher Education Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Knowledge Base.**

This brochure describes the cross-regional project, targeting Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic states. It aims to support decision makers and practitioners with access to information and tools to assist them in policy planning, development and management of ODL in higher education programmes. E-mail: sdi@unesco.org



● **Universal Primary Completion in Latin America: Are We Really so Near the Goal? Regional Report on Education-Related Millennium Development Goals.** In spite of progress, universal completion of primary education is not yet a reality in Latin America. This report identifies existing gaps in eighteen countries and discusses how to limit social disparities in primary school completion. Published by UNESCO Santiago. E-mail: santiago@unesco.org

● **Studies in Comparative Education. Developing Key Competencies in Education: Some Lessons from International and National Experience** by D.S. Rychen and A.Tiana. In the face of modern challenges such as globalization, technological change, conflicts and ecological dangers, what competencies contribute to sustainable development, social welfare, cohesion and justice? This booklet presents a series of working papers on the topic. Published by UNESCO International Bureau of Education. E-mail: doc-center@ibe.unesco.org

● **Fundamentals of Educational Planning (78). Social Inequality at School and Educational Policies** by Marie Duru-Bellat. This study looks at the links between school and social inequalities, both the way in which school may cultivate such inequalities and the policies that can help limit them. It provides one of the few summaries of the plentiful literature devoted to the subject. Published by IIEP. Price: 12,20€. E-mail: information@iiep.unesco.org

● **ICT and Education in Asia-Pacific Schools.**

Two new UNESCO studies, published by the UNESCO Bangkok, explore the modernization of education systems in Asia and the Pacific through the use of ICT. "School Networking: Lessons Learned" (Volume 2) presents case studies of five Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand). "Infoshare: Sources and Resources Bulletin" (Volume 6) focuses on ICT capacity-building for teachers and other education professionals. E-mail: schoolnet@unesco.org



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