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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON A DRAFT STRATEGY FOR TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

SUMMARY

In accordance with 179 EX/Decision 49, the Director-General submits to the Executive Board a draft strategy to support technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the Member States in the next three biennia (2010-2015).

This document has financial and administrative implications for document 35 C/5 (see paragraphs 19-21). The financial and administrative implications of the activities proposed for 2009 fall within the parameters of the current C/5 document.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 22.

1. During the 34th session of the General Conference of UNESCO and at the 179th session of the Executive Board (179 EX/Decision 49), Member States expressed the need to scale up access to quality technical and vocational education and training (TVET), in particular for the increasing number of primary school graduates. In a globalized world, education and training, as part of a process of lifelong learning, are central to reducing poverty and significantly increase the likelihood of finding decent work or of generating income through self-employment. In the current macroeconomic and financial environment, investment in TVET is therefore an instrument to accelerate and sustain economic recovery. As TVET is generally very expensive, however, in terms of cost per student, it will be important to ensure that it is used cost-effectively in line with labour market needs.
2. Within this context and with the overarching objective of working towards “attaining quality education for all and lifelong learning” (34 C/4), UNESCO will strengthen its assistance to Member States to improve their TVET systems and practices, in line with Education for All (EFA) goal 3 relating to “ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes”. It will do so by promoting long-term solutions based on an inclusive and rights-based approach. In order to achieve this goal, UNESCO’s work in the next three biennia (2010-2015) will be divided into three core areas:

1. provision of upstream policy advice and related capacity development;
2. conceptual clarification of skills development and improvement of monitoring; and
3. acting as a clearing house and informing the global TVET debate.

CORE AREA 1: Provide upstream policy advice and develop capacity at the country level

Develop and review comprehensive national TVET policies

3. Within core area 1, UNESCO will provide upstream policy advice focusing on the development of TVET policies according to national needs and priorities. Building the capacity of national decision-makers and personnel of relevant institutions to draft and review these policies will be an integral part of this action. Issues of particular concern include: the articulation between general and technical and vocational secondary education; curricular reform; entrepreneurship; qualifications frameworks for formal and non-formal education; links to the labour market; financing and cost effectiveness; gender equality; and new approaches to improving access to and the status of TVET.

4. UNESCO's assistance will focus primarily on building national capacities to undertake sub-sector diagnosis and policy analysis, and to prepare comprehensive national TVET plans aligned with other parts of the national education system. UNESCO's comparative advantage lies with skills development falling under the ministry of education. Its programmatic interventions will therefore focus primarily on secondary and post-secondary TVET, as well as on non-formal TVET.

5. TVET must be an integrated part of a more comprehensive post-primary education sub-system. This requires the development of standards related to various types and levels of training, certification, and quality assurance based on systematic monitoring and assessment. Private sector involvement is of great importance to ensure that there are appropriate linkages with the labour market and that training is relevant. TVET policy should provide for the targeting of vulnerable groups and pay adequate attention to the informal sector. Furthermore, TVET curricula should include basic entrepreneurship education in support of self-employment. UNESCO will promote TVET strategies that include arrangements for recruitment and retention, training, and certification of teachers and trainers.

6. In 2010-2011, UNESCO's policy review and advice on TVET will be provided to some 15 to 20 countries. These countries will be selected based on need and following an express request for assistance. Some are likely to be among the 20 "target countries" of Major Programme I that will benefit from increased regular programme and extrabudgetary funding in 2010 and 2011. In future biennia, these interventions will be scaled up to include a greater number of countries.

Establish coherent and cooperative multilateral approaches

7. Many national TVET strategies are fragmented, with responsibilities being scattered among various ministries and other actors. Promoting a holistic approach to TVET will require harmonized interventions with key partners in countries, in line with the Paris Declaration and United Nations reform efforts. As a vital part of its strategy, UNESCO will therefore aim to establish systematic cooperation and improved coordination with agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank (WB), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). As a first step, UNESCO will host a consultation between these agencies to discuss cooperation in TVET during the first semester of 2009.

8. UNESCO will also assist Member States to coordinate all in-country partners, including civil society and in particular the private sector, unions, and teacher and trainer organizations.

9. Regional cooperation as well as bi- and trilateral institutional cooperation between national education ministries, including South-South, South-North and South-South-North cooperation, will be facilitated as a means of maximizing impact.

CORE AREA 2: Facilitate conceptual clarification and improve the monitoring of TVET

Towards a joint definition of “skills”

10. There is an urgent need to improve national capacities and systems for monitoring and assessing progress in skills development in order to inform policy analysis and review. Addressing this challenge is a priority.

11. At the international level, further conceptual clarification is needed to produce comparative data and indicators. Terms such as “competency”, “skill”, “life skills”, “TVET”, “technical and vocational education” (TVE) and “technical and vocational skills development” (TVSD) are used differently across the world and in different languages and contexts. The complex landscape of skills development, with its diverse learning environments (school- or work-based, formal or non-formal) and widely varying national systems, has rendered virtually impossible the monitoring of TVET for international comparison.

12. As an intergovernmental knowledge organization, UNESCO is uniquely placed to re-conceptualize the changing domain of skills and TVET and to propose interpretations of these concepts. UNESCO, including through its UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), will therefore establish a technical advisory mechanism to define different categories of skills, as a starting point for identifying indicators for measuring process. This mechanism will involve experts from the different regions as well as key partners such as ILO, OECD, ETF and the World Bank. The process will focus on defining a shared conceptual framework, which could lead to a joint position paper among key partners. This task should be completed in the short term (2010-2011).

Identify TVET indicators

13. Key indicators will be identified and national statistical capacities developed in close cooperation with UIS and other main partners. In a first phase, UNESCO will undertake the work on conceptual clarification outlined above and review existing indicators. This will build on ongoing cooperation in this area between the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre and UIS. The planned review of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) makes this reflection particularly timely. Furthermore, the Organization will draw on the expertise it has already acquired in developing a framework of indicators to monitor non-formal education and the Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFE-MIS). Building on this work, UNESCO will subsequently step up its technical assistance to Member States and develop their capacity to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data on skills.

Assess and monitor the normative instruments

14. UNESCO is responsible for two normative instruments in the field of TVET: the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989), and the Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education (2001), which aim to provide policy-makers with advice on improving their national TVET policies and systems. In order to ensure that these instruments remain useful tools for Member States, the Organization will carry out a number of activities.

15. In accordance with 34 C/Resolution 87 and 177 EX/Decision 35, UNESCO will formally monitor the implementation of the two normative instruments on TVET in 2012. As a preliminary step, the Education Sector will commission an independent study on the impact of the instruments, examining in particular why only 17 Member States have ratified the Convention. Based on this study, the Organization may choose to update the Recommendation, decide on the future of the

Convention, or prepare a new normative instrument on skills and competencies across the education and training sector.

CORE AREA 3: act as a clearing house and inform the global TVET debate

16. UNESCO will continue to serve as a clearing house for TVET. In particular, it will revamp the global UNEVOC networks, which are composed of government ministries and research and training institutions, to serve as a useful platform for cooperation and information-sharing to improve TVET across the world. UNESCO's Regional Education Bureaux will collect and disseminate standardized information on different national TVET systems. This will enable decision-makers undertaking policy reviews to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of different models, while also facilitating the scaling up of South-South cooperation between countries faced with similar challenges. Moreover, the information collected could later become a world databank on TVET systems as part of UNESCO's knowledge management system. In cooperation with other partners such as ILO, OECD and the World Bank, a web portal for information and tools covering the various aspects of TVET will also be envisaged.

17. Moving beyond its clearing-house function, UNESCO will support the generation of knowledge by stimulating and commissioning thematic reviews on specific TVET issues of high interest, such as TVET and gender or TVET and sustainable development. Furthermore, if extrabudgetary resources are mobilized, UNESCO will prepare a major state-of-the-art TVET publication on world trends and issues.

18. UNESCO will use its convening power to promote global awareness of the importance of TVET. To mobilize stakeholders and explore the possibility of introducing regular mid-term progress reviews on the global development of TVET, it will seek to organize, with key partners, the Third International Congress on TVET. This will be undertaken towards the end of the period covered by this strategy.

Administrative and financial implications

19. The financial and administrative implications of the activities planned for 2009 in this strategy fall within the parameters of the current C/5 document (34 C/5).

20. Implementing this strategy will require strengthening UNESCO's capacity in the area of TVET and adjusting the division of labour within the Organization. Currently, some 10 staff have full or partial TVET portfolios. However, they serve in different locations (field offices, Headquarters and the institutes) and there is a lack of coherence in their programmatic approach. Several steps will therefore be taken to build up stronger internal capacity in TVET. In particular, the expertise in this field of the four Regional Bureaux for Education, which backstop capacity development at the national level, must be reinforced. In addition, the hierarchical attachment of the UNEVOC International Centre to the Headquarters unit in charge of TVET, secondary and science education will be reviewed to improve synergies between the Centre and all Headquarters Divisions. The TVET Unit at Headquarters will be strengthened to lead the implementation of this strategy, with UNEVOC functioning as a resource centre. While awaiting the implementation of these adjustments, the current lack of a critical mass of experts will lead UNESCO to seek assistance from external experts, possibly via extrabudgetary funding and secondments, and to strengthen partnerships and networking.

21. The successful implementation of UNESCO's TVET strategy will rely on the zero real growth (ZRG) scenario proposed by the Director-General. TVET (or "skills for the world of work") is one of four top priorities for Major Programme I in document 35 C/5, with the total budget for these four top priorities constituting over 50% of the total funding allocated to regular programme activities under Major Programme I. In addition, increased extrabudgetary funding will be sought for TVET in the next biennium.

Action expected of the Executive Board

22. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 179 EX/Decision 49,
2. Having examined document 181 EX/8,
3. Approves the proposed strategy in document 181 EX/8;
4. Requests the Director-General to include information on progress registered and results achieved in implementing the strategy in his reports to the Executive Board on the execution of the programme adopted by the General Conference (EX/4).