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Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice



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Foreword

The essays presented in this publication are complementary to the UNESCO forthcoming volume on global TVET trends and issues in UNESCO's new Education on the Move series. Just like the latter, they cover a wide, although certainly not exhaustive, range of current practices, ideas and debates in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). They come at a time when the importance and value of TVET is being increasingly recognized in the context of lifelong learning in a globalized world, by UNESCO and other national, regional and global stakeholders in education and international development.

Through its TVET Strategy (2010–2015) UNESCO explicitly recognizes the value of TVET in addressing a host of issues, such as youth unemployment and socio-economic inequalities. Specifically, the TVET Strategy aims to 'strengthen its assistance to Member States to improve their TVET systems and practices' (...) by promoting long-term solutions based on an inclusive and rights-based approach'. The Strategy explicitly recognizes the importance of research, knowledge generation and debate as one way of achieving this aim; indeed one of its three core areas is to 'act as a clearinghouse and inform the global TVET debate'. Through work in this core area, UNESCO aims to foster the development of evidence-based policies in TVET globally and to promote South–South and North–South–South cooperation.

The Third International Congress on TVET that took place in Shanghai in May 2012 played an important role in further enhancing the debate on the role of TVET in the 21st century, providing a forum for discussion on the challenges faced by the TVET systems and the appropriate responses to them. One of its important outcomes was the production of a set of key recommendations to governments and other TVET stakeholders in UNESCO Member States, presented under seven strands (known as the Shanghai Consensus, UNESCO 2012). It is perhaps useful to remind ourselves of them now as they certainly relate to many of the ideas that are discussed in the chapters of this volume. Indeed, one of the aims of this volume is to provide some assistance in the implementation of these recommendations, through the fostering

of reflection and sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience. We believe that readers will find in the papers of this volume material that is of relevance to all of the recommendation strands below:

1. Enhance the relevance of TVET
2. Expand access and improve quality and equity
3. Adapt qualifications and develop pathways
4. Improve the evidence base
5. Strengthen governance and expand partnerships
6. Increase investment in TVET and diversify financing
7. Advocate for TVET

The papers in this volume cover a wide range of topics relevant to current developments in TVET. Although by no means an exhaustive list, we believe that the issues covered will enable interested readers to form a picture of current thinking in the field, both theoretical and practice-related.

The volume opens with Leon Tikly's contribution (Chapter 1), which examines the relevance of the human capability and social justice approaches, as developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, for understanding the role of TVET in development, and contrasts them to other approaches, such as the human capital and sustainable development ones. In Chapter 2, Rupert Maclean and Margarita Pavlova discuss the vocationalization of secondary and higher education within the human resource development agenda. Christopher Winch, in Chapter 3, considers the factors that make TVET an unattractive option, as well as approaches that may be taken to make it more attractive. Looking at two related concepts, Stephen Billet (in Chapter 4) and Richard Sweet (Chapter 5) reconsider the importance for TVET of learning through practice and work-based learning respectively. In Chapter 6, Jean Gamble considers the idea of vocational pedagogy and argues for the strengthening of formal teaching and learning in TVET institutions. The topic of Chapter 7 by Anthony Watts is the relationship of career guidance and orientation to TVET. Chapter 8, by Aboubakr Abdeen Badawi, looks at the role of entrepreneurship skills in TVET.

Finally, Darol Cavanagh, Greg Shaw and Li Wang investigate the concept of rural transformation and the role that TVET and skills development play in it (Chapter 9).

The volume was edited by Katerina Ananiadou, Programme Specialist at UNESCO-UNEVOC, under my supervision. Alix Wurdak and Aldrich Mejia provided valuable support and assistance in the final stages of this publication. I wish to thank them, as well as the rest of our colleagues at UNESCO-UNEVOC, UNESCO Headquarters and beyond for their help with producing this volume. Last but not least I would like to thank the authors, all leading experts in their field, for sharing with us their expertise, reflections and insights. I hope that the ideas contained in this volume will provide interesting 'food for thought' and material for reflection in all our readers.

Shyamal Majumdar
Head of UNESCO-UNEVOC

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