

SHANGHAI UPDATE

Follow-up to the UNESCO Third International TVET Congress

Editorial

Developing a new narrative for TVET



In an increasingly complex world, where change comes thick and fast, it is sometimes hard to see where we want to go.

Advances in digital communication, biotechnology and artificial intelligence are opening up exciting opportunities, but also raise tricky questions of ethics and governance. Accelerating climate change is revealing the fragility of our planet, while social division, continuing inequality and political extremism are placing societies under severe stress.

At times such as these, UNESCO's ability to act as a global observatory of social change comes to the fore.

Under the leadership of Ethiopian president Sahle-Work Zewd, UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative is steering a global conversation to reimagine how education can contribute to the common good. This is based on the premise that knowledge and learning are some of the best resources humanity has for responding to challenges, solving problems and inventing alternatives.

Many experts working on the future of education today are focusing on skills development and how it interacts with technological change and the future of work. Some are concerned that education is failing to keep up and is not equipping learners with the skills and competences they need to succeed in the 21st century workplace. Others highlight the need for more social and emotional learning as a counter balance to the primacy of the skills development discourse. Still more point to the limited pathways for lifelong learning which can make it hard for people to make a change of direction.

UNESCO is contributing to the debate together with the other members of the Inter-Agency Group on TVET. Increasing digitization and a growing use of artificial intelligence are not only disrupting the way we work and do business, they are also having a big impact on education and training systems, including teaching and learning and the role of teachers themselves. UNESCO and the International Labour Organization have produced a report on the digitization of TVET and are continuing to examine the challenges for skills development systems. UNESCO is also looking at how to shift the focus of TVET from the specific requirements of early-stage work to offering lifelong learning and systems with learning entitlements.

The work has only just begun. No doubt we will find ourselves discussing how education and, more narrowly, TVET systems should produce the skills, competences and personal qualities people need to respond to a changing world for many years to come – far beyond the SDG deadline of 2030.

In the meantime, on a more personal note, I should like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Shyamal Majumdar, who has so ably steered the debate during his nine years as head of UNESCO-UNEVOC, and who will be leaving at the end of the year.

Stefania Giannini
Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Member States make progress putting TVET Recommendation into practice

As UNESCO's General Conference meets in Paris, Member States have been taking stock of their efforts to implement UNESCO's [2015 Recommendation on TVET](#) over the past four years.

Most of the 89 countries who participated in UNESCO's first [consultation](#) since the recommendation was updated reported changes in the way they think about TVET during 2015–2019, especially in terms of governance (73%), learning sites (63%), the level of education (60%) and lifelong learning (58%). The revised recommendation sets out a broader vision of TVET as a force which can make a significant contribution to lifelong learning, employment and decent work, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, social equity and environmental sustainability.

On governance, many described closer co-operation between government ministries and efforts to empower providers of TVET in their decision-making. They also reported paying more attention to tertiary TVET, work-based learning in TVET and the role of TVET in lifelong learning.



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While the vast majority have policies relating to TVET, only 43% either have, or are developing, policies solely on TVET. More than half of states are giving more emphasis to lifelong learning, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The types of skills delivered by initial TVET have evolved over the last four years — 79% of states report changes for job-related skills, 65% for foundation skills, 77% for transversal skills, 47% for green and sustainable skills and 65% for digital skills. Ways of boosting TVET's relevance to the labour market adopted include introducing entrepreneurial skills or extra-curricular activities such as business incubators or investing in management information systems (78% of states) or labour market information systems (67%) including using tracer or impact studies.

Around 80% of states have reformed qualifications systems, most often by either setting up or revising qualification frameworks (66%) or establishing systems for the recognition of prior learning (52%). Seventy-four per cent of states undertook reforms in quality assurance, most often by setting clear targets and standards, regulating private TVET providers and making data on how their TVET systems are performing more accessible.

An even bigger proportion, 78%, took measures to improve the monitoring and evaluation of TVET by studying the outcomes of TVET policies and effectiveness and efficiency. More than half of states moved to deepen the knowledge base on TVET by investing in interdisciplinary research.

All in all nearly two-thirds of states report that UNESCO's 2015 TVET Recommendation is now either fully or partially reflected in their TVET laws, policies and strategies. At the General Conference, they pledged to intensify their efforts on implementation and to share the findings of the consultation with all relevant stakeholders. A full report on the outcomes of the consultation is being prepared and will be available in the first half of 2020.

New tool and common language for people on the move

Today more people are on the move than ever before and they take their skills and qualifications with them. If these are not recognized in their new setting, it can be hard for them to find work or continue their education. By the same token, an educational institution may find it hard to assess a potential student, while employers could struggle to see if a candidate is right for the job.

In economic terms, this represents a waste of human capital, in human terms, it can spoil someone's chance of a better life.

World Reference Levels or WRLs, under development by UNESCO and its partners since 2013, aim to make it easier for qualifications and skills from one country to be recognized in another. They act as a neutral reference point or common language enabling learning to be translated and therefore recognized more easily.

Based on research on level descriptors from a wide range of qualifications frameworks and occupations, the tool is designed to complement other systems for managing and recognizing qualifications and outcomes such as regional qualifications frameworks. It works by breaking the larger questions of equivalence and recognition down into a series of smaller elements and indicators.

This work has now produced an online [tool](#) which can describe a person's qualifications, other credentials or sets of learning outcomes in a concise report and a standardized profile — giving the key information in an accessible way.

Since mid-2019, UNESCO has been piloting the prototype digital tool with several partners, including the South Africa Qualifications Authority, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, the Swedish Council for Higher Education, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and WorldSkills. The pilots are providing valuable feedback on the usefulness and usability of the tool, which will inform the next phase of its development.

More details of the tool and UNESCO's work on WRLs can be found on the [WRL webpage](#).



People are hungry for action not words

When Shyamal Majumdar took over as head of UNESCO-UNEVOC in May 2010, he remembers feeling

impressed by its global reach as the world's largest network of TVET providers. "So why not make this huge asset into a powerful way of transforming TVET in the world?" he asked himself, adding "the vision is good, but the million dollar question is how can it be done?"

His approach has been built on several guiding principles, firstly 'from talking to action.' "There were a lot of seminars and workshops highlighting what we wanted to do, but we didn't know how, so the idea was to encourage more centres to go for action — whether big or small," says Mr Majumdar. Achieving this called for the second principle of 'from quantity to quality'. Back in 2010, some members of the UNEVOC Network were like "sleeping tigers" he says. By concentrating on building their capacities, these centres have been supported to take on a more active role, providing the network with platforms to engage and be active, honing their leadership and encouraging them to find out the potential of the network.

Moving 'from silos to convergence' has been a third way forward. Forging strong links between education and work is essential for delivering relevance in TVET so people in the TVET community must be skilled at working closely with many partners. This also applies at UNEVOC; "when I joined, there were only two people engaged to manage such a big Network at UNEVOC, I thought ... the Network must be at the centre of all our activities and that demands more people to look after the needs of our members" said Mr Majumdar, "so now everyone at UNEVOC has a regional network strategy that feeds into our global Network work."

Under Mr Majumdar's leadership, UNEVOC has been busy adapting its work to face some of the cross-cutting challenges facing TVET and society including digitization, climate change and the increasing mobility of people. Now Mr Majumdar is preparing for his next professional and personal challenge when he leaves at the end of 2019.

Returning to the Calcutta of his youth, Mr Majumdar intends to work in rural areas to help stem the tide of silent migration from villages to cities. "If there are no job opportunities, health facilities, drinking water or skill system, rural youth and girls will leave," he says, "this is a major issue — it's not about building a smart city, it's about building a smart village where employment is locally created to attract and make local talents stay."

YEM — tackling youth unemployment in the Southern Mediterranean

Most countries of the Southern Mediterranean have mainly young populations so high numbers of young people enter the job market every year. Many, especially young women, struggle to find work which meets their needs and aspirations. [Youth Employment in the Mediterranean](#) or YEM is a project funded by the European Union and implemented by UNESCO which aims to tackle high youth unemployment by improving the quality and relevance of TVET, fine-tuning systems for skills anticipation and assessment and encouraging the eight beneficiary countries to work together to achieve these ends.

In Tunisia, representatives of different areas of industry are working with people from the TVET community to carry out a prospective analysis of the labour market, aiming to combine this with a model for forecasting skills needs developed under previous EU-funded UNESCO project NET-MED Youth. "Now under YEM, we have looked at the dossier sector by sector, studying the top five sectors with potential for job creation... looking at their needs for skills and the uncertainties that might affect them either negatively or positively," says Mohamed Yahyaoui, director of sectoral analysis at Tunisia's National Observatory of Employment and Skills, "we hope the result will be better policies on employment and training."

Since 2018 participants from Tunisia and other countries have contributed their expertise and learned from peers at a series of workshops on how [work-based learning](#) more accessible in TVET programmes or how to [mainstream digital and entrepreneurial skills](#) in TVET curricula.

Ongoing work behind the scenes is supported by YEM's [knowledge platform](#), launched last July by UNESCO-UNEVOC. The platform hosts online discussions with stakeholders and experts — with the first one, on work-based learning, under preparation. It facilitates cooperation and debate across borders via a community of practice and gives access to up-to-date profiles of national TVET systems and relevant publications as well as UNEVOC's World TVET Database.



Innovative ways of driving innovation

As many in UNESCO-UNEVOC's network of TVET centres around the world know, TVET has to adapt to changes – including new technology, climate change and demographic changes – if it is to stay relevant and attract young people. Innovative practice is key for this.

Two UNEVOC initiatives launched in 2019 are aiming to showcase and boost innovation within the UNEVOC Network and beyond.

Skills for Innovation hubs or i-hubs aims to maximise TVET institutions' ability to innovate as a way of driving employability, economic growth and inclusive social development. Ten TVET institutions from Asia-Pacific, Africa and Europe with a track record of innovation in the fields of entrepreneurship, digitalization and greening have been chosen to help co-develop an effective framework for innovation.

TESDA Women's Center of the Philippines completed a guided self-assessment on 27 September this year, a structured process for assessing the institution's internal preparedness for, and its commitment to, innovation. In TESDA's case, the guided self-assessment documented and strengthened an innovative practice in its newly established business centre for training bread and pastrymakers and baristas just outside the capital Manila.

Here trainees are given targeted training for setting up their own businesses, with practical and financial support from sponsors **Aboitiz Foundation** and **Pilmico Foods Corp**, including allowances, help to refurbish the centre and skills upgrading for trainers. "In the Philippines, it is unusual that a private company would engage with the public sector in this way," says Mylene Somera, TESDA's supervising technical education and skills development specialist, "in five years' time, this programme will create entrepreneurial graduates who are economically empowered. We aim to replicate this approach to other TESDA programmes and institutes."

TVET in Europe is highly innovative, but a lack of time and opportunity can keep new practices from spreading. The **Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET project** aims to facilitate peer learning across the UNEVOC network in the fields of greening, digitalization, entrepreneurship and TVET as key for integrating migrants. A fifth area of work looks at how new qualifications and competences find their way into practice.

Recent and upcoming events

UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development. Berlin, Germany. 2–4 June 2020

Mobile Learning Week 2020. Paris, France. 2–6 March 2020

UNESCO-UNEVOC Global Forum — Advancing learning and innovation in TVET. Bonn, Germany. 2–3 December 2019

First UNESCO capacity-building seminar on greening TVET for teacher trainers. Bonn, Germany. 9–13 September, 2019

UNEVOC TVET Leadership Programme 2019. Bonn, Germany. 24 June – 5 July, 2019

Skills for Innovation Hubs project launch. Bonn, Germany. 28–29 March 2019

Experts' workshop on gender equality in STEM-related fields in TVET. Bonn, Germany. 21–22 March 2019

Greening TVET job roles and curriculum - approaches from the UNEVOC Network. New Delhi, India. 4–8 March, 2019

Recently published

Handbook for Technical Colleges in Malawi. UNESCO-UNEVOC

Handbook for Community Skills Development Centres in Malawi. UNESCO-UNEVOC

Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2019. Volume I: Thematic chapters. UNESCO-UIL, Cedefop, ETF

Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2019. Volume II: National and regional cases. UNESCO-UIL, Cedefop, ETF

Human migration and TVET. A discussion paper. Nottingham University (United Kingdom) (UNEVOC Centre)

I'd blush if I could. Closing gender divides in digital skills through education. UNESCO

Trends mapping study – Innovation in TVET: new opportunities and challenges. UNESCO-UNEVOC

Entrepreneurial learning in TVET. Discussion paper. UNESCO-UNEVOC

Understanding the return on investment from TVET – a practical guide. UNESCO-UNEVOC and NCVER

