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Revising the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education

Report of the UNESCO-UNEVOC special virtual conference 1-14 April 2014

Moderated by Simon McGrath



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Foreword

Coordinating and working towards establishing universal agreements on global issues, defining benchmarks and mobilizing international opinion are central to UNESCO's mandate and signify an imperative tool to achieve the goals for which UNESCO was created. Monitoring the implementation of standard setting instruments in the field of TVET is part of UNESCO's mandate and is one of the key areas of work outlined in UNESCO's Strategy for TVET. Among these standard-setting instruments is the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning technical and vocational education (UNESCO, 2001). This recommendation formulates principles and norms for TVET and invites Member States to take the necessary steps to adapt their policies to these principles and norms.

As the world is changing rapidly, so should the principles and norms that underlie recommendations such as the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning TVE. With countries facing numerous challenges, including rapid demographic and technological changes, high levels of youth unemployment, growing social inequalities, and threats to the environment, new standards should be set. The Third International Congress on TVET, held in Shanghai, China in May 2012, called for profound transformations in the conceptualization, governance, funding and organization of TVET and delegates agreed on the need to revise and update the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning TVE to enable the transformation of TVET globally.

As part of a rigorous process involving a number of high level consultations with UNESCO Member States, UNESCO-UNEVOC and the UNESCO TVET Section jointly organized a Special Virtual Conference on

the UNEVOC e-Forum. Held from 1 to 14 April 2014 and moderated by Professor Simon McGrath, Director of Research and Professor of International Education and Development at the University of Nottingham, the special virtual conference sought to consult diverse stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of TVET systems, policies and programmes.

The virtual conference convened 199 participants from 68 countries and provided the unique opportunity for everyone in the TVET community to share their vision and help shape the future of TVET and skills development. The feedback collected in this virtual conference feeds directly into the broader consultation process that is currently taking place with UNESCO Member States and which will be completed by the end of 2015 at the 38th session of UNESCO's General Conference.

We would like to thank Professor Simon McGrath for sharing his expertise in this special virtual conference and for developing this comprehensive report, which has already contributed greatly to the overall revision process. We would also like to thank all the participants who took the opportunity to share their perspectives and expertise as their input is an important step in achieving a revised recommendation that is relevant to the global TVET community.

Shyamal Majumdar
Head of UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre

Introduction



Background and context

The Third International Congress on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), held in Shanghai in 2012, called for profound transformations in the conceptualization, governance, funding and organization of technical and vocational education and training. During the congress, a special session held on the normative instruments¹ relevant to TVET confirmed that the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning TVE (UNESCO, 2001) would benefit from revision and updating to ensure a stronger focus on lifelong learning and to become responsive to challenges many countries currently face, such as rapid demographic and technological changes, youth unemployment, social inequalities and sustainable

development. Monitoring the implementation of standard-setting instruments is part of UNESCO's mandate and is one of the key areas of work outlined in UNESCO's Strategy for TVET (UNESCO, 2009). It is UNESCO's view that a revised instrument can help to further advance the level of policy interest around the world and improve the quality and relevance of TVET for all. Evidence-based inputs and concrete ideas founded on practical experiences of TVET policies and programmes can strengthen the quality of the new version of the Revised Recommendation and increase its overall credibility and relevance.

This virtual conference is part of a larger consultation process through which UNESCO will consult with practitioners and researchers; representatives of key stakeholder groupings such as employers' federations, trade unions

¹ One of UNESCO's roles is to make known to its Member States the internationally accepted standards in selected disciplines. The Organization transmits this information through normative or standard-setting instruments which help the Member States to aspire to and maintain those standards in their national systems. The normative instruments are usually documents developed following extensive technical consultation at the international level. There are three types of instruments: declarations, conventions and recommendations. More information may be found here.

and youth organizations; other international agencies and Member States in order to draft a new Revised Recommendation that will be taken to the 2015 UNESCO General Conference for discussion and adoption. The virtual conference was convened jointly by the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET in Bonn, Germany, and the UNESCO TVET Section in Paris, France. It was intended to be a unique opportunity for everyone in the TVET community to make their voice heard and be part of a global consultation process on shaping the future of TVET.

Objectives and key questions

The objectives of this virtual conference were:

1. to consult widely with stakeholders from different socio-economic and professional contexts and locations within the TVET system on their views regarding the direction of change for the Revised Recommendation; and
2. to produce a report of the virtual conference that would serve as an input into a meeting of a small invited group of international experts who would be charged with producing a draft of the Revised Recommendation.

The key questions asked as part of the virtual conference were as follows:

- What should be the scope of a successful international standard-setting instrument in the field of TVET?
- What, for the purpose of this revised instrument, should be understood by the term "TVET"?
- What should be the guiding principles upon which to base the Revised Recommendation?
- How should the text of the Revised Recommendation be organized so as to be applicable to a diversity of country contexts and to remain current in a constantly changing world?

Summary of discussions

Given the focus on the Revised Recommendation, the discussions were structured around the key elements of the existing Revised Recommendation and the possible structure for its replacement.

The changing world of TVET

Before embarking into a section-by-section discussion on scope, purpose and themes, the discussion started by considering what had changed in TVET since the time of the 2001 Revised Recommendation.

An early contributor to the discussion saw the 2001 Revised Recommendation as having pointed the way to the language of TVET transformation that was embraced at Shanghai. For her, the main difference in the intervening decade was that a new language had emerged in elements of TVET through drawing on the work of thinkers such as Amartya Sen. Thus, she argued:

The 2001 Revised Recommendation sets the basis for changing the target of VET from economics to individuals. This conceptual change implies to reconsider national strategies focused on satisfying supposedly market needs... and put forward VET that is transformative for the individuals and hence for the structures of work. VET that is transformative implies an education that, as noted in the 2001 Revised Recommendation, does not adapt to current work and societal structures but aims to challenge and transform those. The transformation implies a system of VET geared towards responsible professionals that create, foster and demand quality and just employment. The female training gap, the glass-ceiling phenomena, or the precarious conditions in which many of the jobs created are based upon are examples that VET cannot be only about training but needs to put forward the educational aspect of it.

As another contributor put it: "TVET is effectively a means to develop capabilities, and not only a transfer of technical competencies". Another respondent argued in a similar vein:

TVET should not be responding to 'the world-of-work that is' or 'will be' but as it 'should be', that is, a world where work and life are in harmony. That means there should be a focus on educating (broad, which includes teaching and assessing technical skills and personal competencies) rather than training (narrowly focused on teaching and assessing technical skills).

Although this point explicitly refers to thinking about 'skills for work and life' as UNESCO puts it, it also has some resonance with others' arguments about rapidly changing labour markets. A strand of transformed labour-market issues also included the continued rise of youth unemployment, persistent employers' concerns about skills shortages and gaps, and concerns about wages and productivity. There was some support for the widely-held view that there had been a shift to a knowledge economy and that this required TVET to focus more on cognitive skills.

Several participants pointed to two aspects of a transformation of the TVET landscape. First, they noted that there was a growing acceptance that TVET was a broad concept that encompassed far more of the varied and complex world of skills development than UNESCO's previous notion of 'TVE' had as being something that was provided in public secondary and post-secondary education institutions only. In this light, there was considerable support for UNESCO's decision to move to 'TVET' as its preferred concept. Second, it was noted that the rise of new information and communication technologies were beginning to revolutionize the ways in which vocational learning takes place: a process that was likely to accelerate in the near future. As one respondent put it:

We need to look not only into 'education' and 'training' as provided under government-



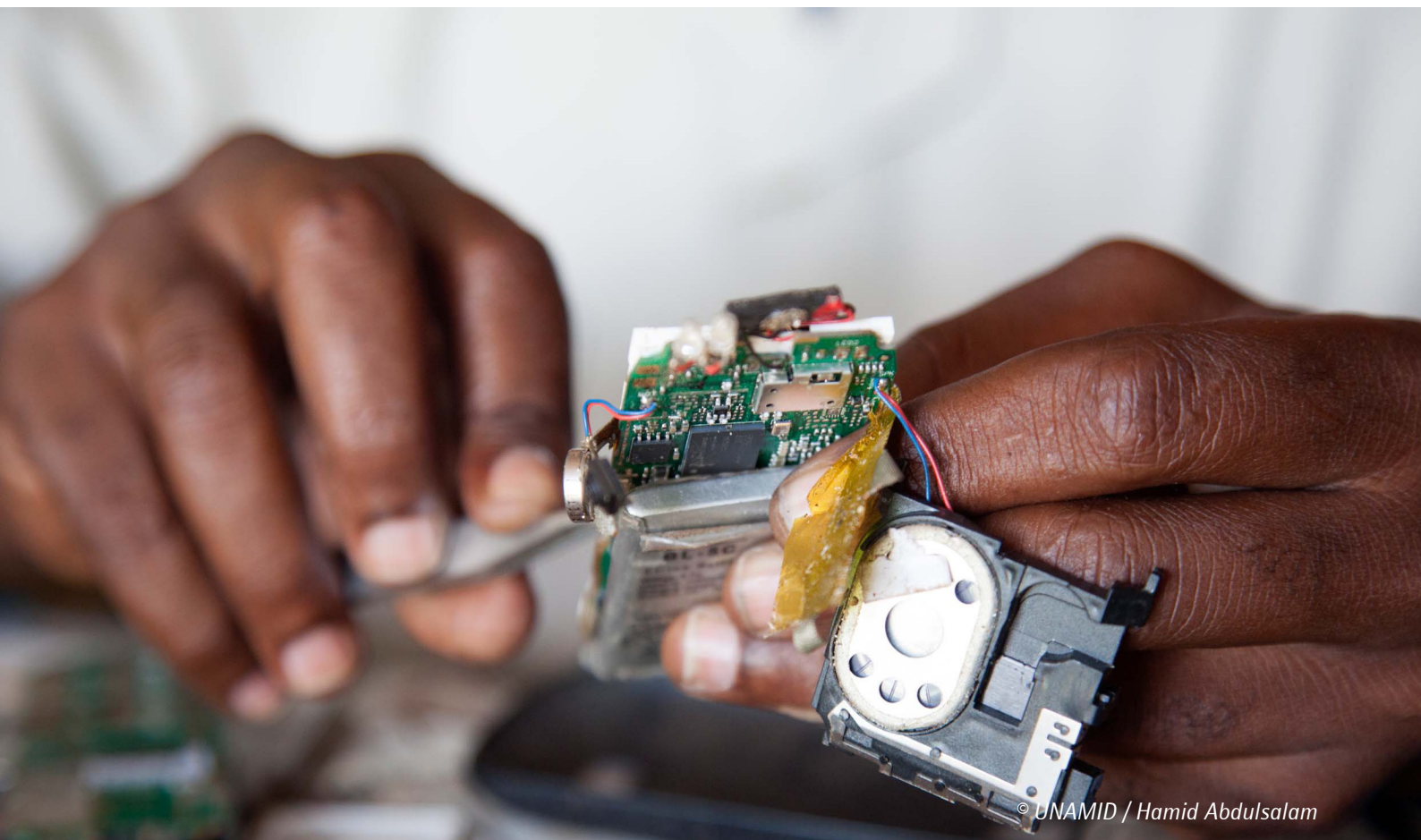
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driven systems and under a broad scope of various other providers, including employers. We also have to look into the broader scope of 'vocational learning'. How do we take into account the contribution of vocationally relevant learning at the workplace, at home, via the Internet, and through self-study?

There was a somewhat related argument that also pointed to the relative decline of importance of the public sector as a central actor in TVET – both as producer and consumer of skills – and the rise of the private sector, again in both these roles. This led several respondents to stress the rising importance of private actors as the pivotal change in TVET in recent years.

As some pointed out, this set of related changes needed to be seen as intimately linked to new approaches to governance of TVET at national and local levels.

Other participants pointed to rising educational levels among those attending TVET programmes. This was linked to the rising attractiveness of TVET. Thus, one wrote "that colleges are an attractive option instead of university". However, it appears that national



contexts are important here. Whilst there was talk of a growing and attractive post-school vocational provision, others spoke of this being crowded out by the massive expansion of higher education that has taken place in many countries since 2001.

There was also some attention to positive developments in TVET regarding inclusion. This comprised greater participation of female learners in traditionally male areas and vice versa, a growing focus in some countries on the needs of indigenous learners, and a stronger focus on rural skills needs.

Nonetheless, a number of respondents sounded a note of caution. For them, there had been much talk of change but there was still far more to be done to make TVET of sufficient quality, relevance and accessibility to make it fit for purpose. The image of TVET was seen as still being poor by several participants. This was expressed by one participant who wrote, "*across the world TVET has a poor image and is simply not understood*".

Scope

The most obvious shift proposed prior to this consultation is that the new Revised Recommendation is on TVET rather than TVE. This reflects continuity with previous recommendations in stressing the range of forms of lifelong learning encompassed by the document.

Part I "Scope" of the 2001 text states:

1. This Recommendation applies to all forms and aspects of education that are technical and vocational in nature, provided either in educational institutions or under their authority, by public authorities, the private sector or through other forms of organized education, formal or non-formal, aiming to ensure that all members of the community have access to the pathways of lifelong learning. (UNESCO, 2001)

The scope of TVET's vision was also held to be wider than that of TVE. The 2001 text states that its understanding of TVE is as:

2 ... (a) an integral part of general education;

(b) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;

(c) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;

(d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;

(e) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation (UNESCO, 2001).

The consultation strongly supported all of these elements, while seeing that they might need further elaboration to take account of changes since 2001. However, one participant asked some searching questions regarding what the first of these statements means:

We need to provide more details about what 'integral' means; is it for everyone or only for those not going on to university? For parents: Is TVET for my child or for someone else's child? For teachers: Is TVET a tool of streaming the poor and marginalized and will anyone admit to doing this? For the state: Is TVET only useful in providing labour for the economy?

Additionally, there was some argument that the reference to general education in 2a needed to address the rising importance of TVET as a pathway to higher education and as a means of educating professionals.

Participants expressed concern that 2b should include reference to decent work and sustainable production, in wider conformance to global goals.

There was some support for 2c being explicit about the recognition of prior learning and stressing more sharply the focus on learners of all ages.

2d was noted by some as containing a narrower notion of sustainable development than UNESCO's Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2004). For instance, it was claimed that:

Often times the focus of TVE is primarily on economic sustainability; secondarily there is some focus on environmental sustainability, and if there is any time or inclination left, there might be some discussion about social sustainability. Often absent from the discussion is good governance to make any of this happen. That must be included in the discussion.

Moreover, it appears sensible to align the emerging text here with the wider deliberations regarding Sustainable Development Goals.

Alongside poverty alleviation, there was support for a Revised Recommendation that addressed both the challenge of inequality and a vision of shared prosperity.

There was also a wish to go beyond these five elements. As noted above, there was felt to be a need to align the text with wider development agendas and this may require a more explicit statement of a vision in one clause that combines 2d and 2e with other core themes of international agreements as they are developing towards the 2015 deadline.

In moving to include a broader range of TVET activities, the consultation strongly emphasized the need to be explicit about enterprise-based training, whether in formal or informal economies. One strand of argument stressed not just including employers but putting them at the centre of the discussion:

Employers are mentioned in the paper just as one of many stakeholders. I hope that the new recommendations may see the industry as a potential strong partner for the leading ministries with partly converging objectives and motivate governments and training institutions to actively seek partnerships with the employers in the interest of all stakeholders.

The discussion also reiterated the importance of informal learning, which was seen as being of heightened significance given the growth of new communication and learning technologies with the potential to transform technical and vocational learning. There was

a degree of consensus regarding the need to stress that TVET is a route of choice for many learners globally and a provider of valuable skills, knowledge and attitudes for work and life. There was also some advocacy for an explicit focus on promoting cultural diversity and ensuring the intergenerational transmission of local knowledge and skills. There are some possibilities here in drawing on the Shanghai Consensus text.

Objectives

Many participants saw a challenge in separating the 2001 Revised Recommendation's notions of scope and objectives, with paragraph 2a-e above largely appearing to be about general principles as much as scope. Thus, one of the key lessons that can be drawn from the consultation is the need to revisit the current division of the text.

Part II. on "Technical and vocational education in relation to the educational process: Objectives" of the 2001 text specifically is about principles as they refer to "the education process". Although not explicitly part of the consultation discussion, it seems important to question whether such a focus is useful for a TVET Recommendation and whether it would send a signal that the revision was too cosmetic. Part II. proceeds as follows (the text below is a précis of the 2001 text):

Paragraph 5: TVE is an integral part of education and should contribute to cultural, economic and social goals [which are not entirely aligned with those of Part I.], lead to scientific and technological awareness, and empower people to be environmentally sustainable.

Paragraph 6: TVE as lifelong learning should better integrate education and the world of work, and create a broad learning culture.

Paragraph 7: TVE should be an integral part of basic general education; "may be freely and positively chosen"; allow progression and articulation across pathways, both within TVE and between vocational and

academic routes; is articulated with non-formal TVE and with training; and is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

Paragraph 8 then focuses on how TVE supports individual development: "the harmonious development of personality and character, and foster spiritual and human values, the capacity for understanding, judgment, critical thinking and self-expression"; "developing the necessary mental tools, technical and entrepreneurial skills and attitudes"; "develop capacities for decision-making and the qualities necessary for active and intelligent participation, teamwork and leadership at work and in the community as a whole"; and "enable an individual to cope with the rapid advances in information and communication technology".

Participants did not find the above a very useful way to proceed and focused instead on what they felt TVET should do. This led to the convenor proposing the following list as a summary of the discussion.

TVET should:

- contribute to wider societal goals, including reduced youth unemployment, sustainable development, decent work and active citizenship;
- both be non-discriminatory and inclusive in its policies and practices and contribute to wider societal efforts to combat discrimination and promote inclusion;
- be driven by principles of quality, equity, access and relevance;
- be seen as lifelong and life-wide;
- transcend boundaries of institutional forms and levels of education and be treated in a holistic manner;
- be promoted as an important element of education systems and of broader human resource development strategies;
- capture the potential benefits of new information and communication technologies;
- involve all relevant stakeholders in decision-making at all appropriate levels;

- be better funded from a wider range of sources;
- be supported by an improved research and evidence base; and
- seek to balance international lessons with local knowledge and contexts.

Participants generally supported this list. However, in seeing these as objectives, there was also considerable concern that TVET was currently failing to meet these objectives and needed reform urgently.

The discussion pointed towards a case for revisiting Parts I. and II. of the 2001 text in quite a radical way that sets out the broad range of shared understandings of the multiple natures of TVET and a set of its widely accepted purposes. There were some concerns that a new language needed to be developed that encompassed all of these multiple natures and that avoided a sense of there being

education and training as two very different concepts. One respondent commented that:

I wonder whether we really should, for the purpose of a Recommendation, continue talking about 'education' and 'training' as if they were two distinctly different areas... I believe the Recommendation needs to address the continuum of vocationally relevant education, training and also learning in a holistic manner. We need to acknowledge the considerable diversity of TVET systems in Member States of UNESCO. We want them all to be able to benefit from a new Recommendation.

While TVET has very many contextualized meanings, such a document must try to make some meaningful drawing together of some key elements. However this text is revised, there was a strong call from the participants to include the messages above, which largely echo the Shanghai Consensus.



Many of these points were further discussed in the second half of the consultation, with a view to revising parts III. to X. of the existing text. This is explored next.

Key themes

Remembering that there is a request to reduce the length of the Recommendation, it can be noted that much of the excessive detail of the 2001 text comes from parts III. to X., which discuss eight major aspects of TVE:

III. Policy, planning and administration
– how TVE should be organized

IV. Technical and vocational aspects of general education – how TVE should be delivered in schooling

V. Technical and vocational education as preparation for an occupational field – key recommendations on TVE as work preparation

VI. Technical and vocational education as continuing education – important considerations in continuing TVE

VII. Guidance – suggested principles and processes for guidance across all forms and levels of TVE

VIII. The learning process – appropriate approaches to TVE learning and its assessment

IX. Staff – recommended principles for improving staff qualifications, capabilities and conditions of service

X. International cooperation – principles and procedures for strengthening TVE through better international cooperation.

Participants concluded that there may need to be slightly more themes but it is undoubtedly possible to treat each of these in a much more concise manner than was achieved in the 2001 text. Across all themes, participants in the discussion agreed on the need to ensure that the language and concepts are

consistent with the multiplicity of forms of TVET both within and between Member States.

Moreover, there was strong agreement that the previous model with separate sub-sections for different elements of TVET – such as initial/continuing – should be removed in the next Revised Recommendation. It is suggested that these, and the existing section on the learning process, be replaced with new sections on teaching and learning and assessment and qualifications. Equally, given that the discussion on policy, planning and administration is very long and rather unfocused, it may be better to replace it with both some higher-level text on policy vision and some greater detail on specific elements such as finance and governance. The following are the 11 themes that arose out of the consultation.

TVET and development

That TVET is an important element of development strategies is apparent from the 2001 text but this gets lost in the shift from general principles to key themes in that text. Therefore, participants in the consultation wanted to give this issue greater prominence. Participants agreed that the developmental role of TVET needs to be acknowledged more in the text, including a call to Member States to prioritize it as such. This would be very much in keeping with the Shanghai Consensus, which is strong on development vision and on the notion of advocating for the importance of TVET.

There was some variance in the discussions, however, as to what development meant for participants. For some, their horizon was purely on economic development and was focused on youth employability and productivity growth. However, for others, and in keeping with the 2001 Revised Recommendation and UNESCO's own vision, there was a stress on economic development needing to be seen as part of a broader concern with human and sustainable development. Quotations to this effect have been included above but some

also focused strongly on the role of TVET in cultural development: "Part of TVET depending on the country where it is implemented encourages learners to create and build on cultural heritage like arts and culture."

There was also concern from several participants about the need for the new Revised Recommendation to stress that TVET is a cross-ministerial responsibility and requires strong coordination between the various ministerial stakeholders as part of overall coherent approaches to national development. For instance, one respondent wrote that

TVET plays an integral role in national economic development. Formulation and coordination of TVET policies could benefit from a wider integration into the planning and development process. You could alternatively say that TVET is a means of (or a basic tool for)

national development and can be deployed in a manner to complement and boost other economic or development initiatives. Also TVET initiatives are often more successful overall when coordinated or integrated with initiatives on a national scale and with other ministries.

Labour-market relevance

In keeping with the shift towards a TVET focus, there was considerable support during the consultation for a greater stress on TVET and its relevance to the labour market. Here again, however, there was some disagreement about breadth of vision. Whilst some participants had a very narrow focus on labour-market relevance meaning immediate employability for youth, there was significant emphasis on the need to balance relevance to the current labour market with projected labour-market trends and a wider emphasis on individual and



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community needs, as noted in some of the earlier quotations. This led to a concern that the Revised Recommendation should stress the importance of a strong alignment of TVET with rapidly changing labour markets both at the level of national policy and planning, and at the level of provider institutions. At the same time, the potential of TVET to bring about changes in labour markets and technology use was also emphasized by some, who insisted that TVET should not simply be reactive.

Whil reaffirming the lifelong and life-wide nature of TVET, no-one disagreed that a particular focus must be given to the challenge of youth unemployment. Participants were often concerned that more work remains to be done in terms of innovative policies and programmes, especially in terms of the ability of TVET programmes to help the most disadvantaged youth to transit the labour market and access decent work. Such transitions to the labour market were clearly

understood both in terms of formal-sector wage employment but also the various shades of self-employment and microenterprise.

One respondent stressed the necessary balance between employability and social-cultural domains thus:

the skills dimension, i.e. through providing skills for employability in a lifelong learning perspective, thus enhancing the labour-market and economic inclusion in society, is very important, but also over-researched and over-exposed in literature. It tends to dominate the public discourse about VET and social inclusion and to give rise to narrower or reductive approaches and policy measures. Therefore it needs to be counterbalanced or complemented by broader considerations anchored in the civic, social and cultural role of VET.

In addition to addressing unemployment and lack of decent work, inadequate schooling



and skills, participants widely agreed that TVET is and should be expected to contribute to address other issues such as poor health, HIV and AIDS, risky behaviours, violence and crime. In many countries these represent tremendous social and economic costs to society.

Some participants insisted that the informal sector must be given a major focus in the Revised Recommendation's discussion of labour-market relevance. As one participant commented,

in many developing countries, the majority of young people are in the informal sector and employment may not be created by the government or formal industry, but people may have to create their job or we may have to consider how TVET can help deal with the informal sector.

However, given that discussions of the informal sector are more than 40 years old, it was not clear what these interventions were doing to advance the way in which informality of work should be addressed in the Revised Recommendation. Indeed, the language tended towards a rather old-fashioned binary between formal and informal sectors, which ignored more recent approaches that focus on other aspects such as precarity or the nature of the employment contract rather than of the employer as other aspects of this issue.

A number of participants also raised the importance of focusing on rural skills, whether in agriculture or the non-farm sector, bearing of course in mind that very many rural people straddle both sectors.

Teaching and learning

TVET learning is highly diverse and much does not include formal teaching inputs. This is an area where contributors thought there needed to be a radical revision of the current text, which was seen as still too formal and educational in tone and focus.

Participants agreed that, where possible, TVET learning should incorporate theory and practice. They also suggested that a revised text should address the importance of learning programmes seeking to develop relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes so as to prepare participants both for immediate employability and productivity improvement and for lifelong learning as citizens and workers. They recommended that programmes should be consistent with the general principles laid out for TVET above. They agreed that learning materials and approaches should be inclusive and non-discriminatory. There was a lot of support for the call for effective use to be made of the possibilities afforded by new teaching and learning technologies and open and distance learning promoted where this is appropriate. For instance, one respondent stated that

having access to information is of utmost importance in today's societies. This applies all the more for the least privileged and for disadvantaged groups. It is thus important that governments take all efforts to make the related necessary infrastructure available for all members of societies, as one important element in creating inclusive TVET systems.

However, the discussion was largely conducted among participants more comfortable in their knowledge of formal and public programmes and there is a need to explore other perspectives on teaching and learning that reflect the wide range of TVET forms to be covered by the new Recommendation. Informal learning requires much more attention than was given during the discussion.

Assessment and qualifications

There was widespread agreement that more needs to be included about assessment and qualifications. However, there was also some disagreement regarding the level of detail and prescription. Some called specifically for either National Vocational Qualification Frameworks or National Qualifications Frameworks:

(...) National Qualifications Frameworks will give back to TVET its original place, that is the possibility for any learner to acquire knowledge, skills and aptitudes that would allow him/her to enter the world of work and even seek the possibility of transfer of knowledge from TVET to Higher Education.

However, it was evident that there was no consensus on the details of such calls, and some raised concerns about the performance of some such systems. One respondent from India cautioned:

just a Framework won't suffice – detailed competencies for the hundreds/ thousands of sub-occupations in a huge diversified economy have to be worked out and updated every so often.

While there was some hesitation about the extent to which NQFs could solve complex problems, there was much more agreement that TVET should support people as they migrate for work, ensuring the international portability of skills and qualifications.

There was also a stronger level of agreement on the need for a holistic approach to assessing and certifying learning that includes more learners and more modes and sites of TVET learning. It was widely acknowledged that there is a challenge of being better able to assess what learners know and can do. This would need to begin with properly stated learning outcomes, defined through an appropriate process, through to effective assessment regimes and certification systems that are responsive to the needs of learners and employers. The text could usefully note that systems need further development so as to signal learners' capability more effectively. This would probably require noting explicitly in the text that both certification of new learning and the recognition of prior learning (RPL) are included in this commitment. However, one respondent noted the practical challenges faced by many learners in achieving recognition of their prior learning:

I think it needs to be made clear that

recognition of prior learning processes should not be so cumbersome as to be unfair – requiring much more work to 'prove learning' than a student might be expected to do in a classroom. I have seen some of our RPL processes for teacher education and as the teacher-educator for some of the courses for which someone can request RPL, I would not want to have to provide that amount of evidence requested to prove my learning.

There was consensus that all relevant stakeholders should be involved in the development and monitoring of the relevance and quality of qualifications and programmes. Some participants particularly noted the importance of certain stakeholders – especially learners and employers – and this may be an issue requiring greater thought in the drafting process. Participants believed that all relevant stakeholders have a right to better information regarding qualifications, their meanings and their equivalences.

There was support for an explicit call that systems should be built with the aim of enabling learner progression both through their lifelong learning and in the world of work. Some participants were insistent that particular attention should be given to how assessment and qualifications systems facilitate learning both in and for the informal economies that are the majority economies of many Member States.

There was also some sense that the Revised Recommendation should stress that progress is also required at the international level on issues related to recognition of skills and qualifications of migrants. There was a call that countries should ensure fair treatment and recognition of skills and qualifications of both their own citizens and foreigners. Governance

There were strong representations that governance was more important than issues of planning and administration, rather old-fashioned notions at this point in time. Participants acknowledged that principles of good governance should be applied to

all aspects of TVET. For instance, it was argued that *"the TVET sector suffers from a lack of good governance. Setting the right governance mechanisms is extremely important to the overall success of the programmes"*. However, there was some sense that good governance will look very different in varying contexts, and that the Revised Recommendation should explicitly state this.

There was some concern that the language of TVET good governance has been part of a discourse of reforming public providers and that it is of less obvious and easy application to other modalities. The consultation did not develop very far in this regard and neither did the Shanghai Consensus, making this another issue that needs more exploration in the drafting process.

Finance

There was widespread faith in the value of TVET and the need to get governments to increase funding:

TVET training is more expensive on the whole when compared to academic training. However, the contribution of a skilled worker to the national economy is very high and this type of Return on Investment (ROI) accounting to justify expenditure needs to be fostered and mastered.

This pledge was seen as an important element of any revision, building on what had been stated in the Shanghai Consensus. There was general assent that all stakeholders and potential beneficiaries should contribute where possible, again in keeping with the Shanghai outcome. However, in enshrining this in the Revised Recommendation, it was argued that it should also be stated that inability to pay should not exclude learners from accessing TVET in some appropriate form.

Several participants noted that public institutions require adequate resourcing in terms of facilities, equipment and staffing so as to avoid the impression that these are low-status institutions

and to support high quality learning.

However, here too, public provider voices were over-represented in the discussions. There is a need for the drafting process to consider whether explicit mention should be made of committing official financial support to private and third-sector providers according to equitable and transparent criteria and in pursuance of the principles outlined above.

Staffing

TVET contexts are highly varied and TVET staff have a wide range of backgrounds, even in a single provider institution. Here too, the discussion betrayed a formal and public bias. Nonetheless, there was acceptance that there needs to be more attention given to the skills needs of TVET staff, whether technical, pedagogical or managerial and in different settings, not just public institutions. This would need to be at the heart of any revision of the existing text. One participant noted:

We are certainly heading toward a professionalization of teaching staff... This is both good and necessary for improvement and so that TVET is taken more seriously. It is also a very important factor to stimulate research and improvement within our own teaching environment. Also let's not forget that we need to train the heads, deans, directors, rectors of the training centres and institutes. Often they are selected from the teaching staff but they need specialized training to take on the role of management. A good teacher does not necessarily become a good manager... This one factor (improvement of management) can immensely improve the performance of the TVET institutes.

As has been noted above, there was a widespread view that new technologies have the potential to transform TVET learning, and this led to several contributors emphasizing that staff need empowering to capture this potential.

Although the discussion was too biased towards the public sector, there was a general

agreement that the Revised Recommendation should commit, where possible, to calling for new programmes to upskill new and existing staff and the encouragement of qualifications frameworks and career paths. There was agreement that, in the public sector, disparities between academic and vocational route salaries should be addressed, with pay and conditions reflecting the needs of TVET lecturers to visit workplaces, to liaise with employers and assess learners.

One of the final contributions made the powerful point that TVET staff should be seen as and supported to be lifelong learners themselves.

Information, advice and guidance

The existing section on guidance was seen as one that should be retained and revised, although this is at variance from the Shanghai Consensus, that merged it into a section on qualifications and pathways. There was no strong disagreement with the current text but there was a strong sense that systems need further development and that this should be captured in the Revised Recommendation. It was argued that, in an increasingly complex world, greater attention needs to be given to supporting people with accurate and unbiased information that takes account of the skills, interests and characteristics of the individual but is mindful of the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes and discrimination. It was suggested that strongly data-driven information, advice and guidance systems should be available across the lifespan, focusing both on advice and information regarding immediate job and study opportunities and preparing individuals for longer-term career paths and lifelong learning. This might entail reorganization of existing services:

In many countries, counselling on education and training tends to be under the umbrella of the education authorities, while job placement and employment services are under the umbrella of labour-market authorities.

Frequently these two services are operating independently from one another, in separate locations, and with little interaction between them. Such structures should be reconsidered from the point of view of the client – the individual seeking guidance about learning opportunities, ultimately with a view to finding appropriate employment. There is need to closely interlink both kinds of services.

Quality assurance

Previously subsumed under policy, planning and administration, there was a view from some participants that quality assurance required more prominent attention in the new Revised Recommendation. Of course, this reflects considerable attention since 2001 to this issue on TVET reforms internationally. Some participants argued that there should be an explicit commitment in the Revised Recommendation to a renewed effort to ensure that quality is enhanced.

It was accepted that quality assurance systems should focus on working with instructors and providers to build on existing levels of performance and should be sensitive to different contexts. It was argued that quality assurance processes need to be inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders. One participant wrote approvingly of her own institution's approach, where "In this QA process, we include a programme advisory committee (made up of industry members), teachers, administrators, current students, graduates, and early leavers."

Participants generally appeared to believe that quality assurance systems should encourage institutions and staff, where necessary, to internalize notions of quality. Above all, there seemed to be consensus that quality should be seen as intimately linked to relevance.

Research, monitoring and evaluation

In keeping with the deliberations of the Shanghai Congress, there was some emphasis on the need to make research more visible

in the Revised Recommendation. There was also a lesser focus on monitoring and evaluation and it remains to be seen whether it is best to combine these under one heading, as will be done here.

There was strong acceptance of the contention from Shanghai that TVET research has been of relatively low priority in many countries and agreement that there is a need to improve its quality, quantity and status. One respondent wrote:

Many of the participants have commented on a sharing of data, experiences and best practices and results. The professionalization of TVET will ultimately assist and provide a boost in this area.

The relatively strong stress on research was striking as the participants were largely not research producers. However, following Shanghai again, there was an acceptance that research evidence is of little value without national capacities to use it effectively at policy and institutional planning levels. Thus, capacity building of all relevant stakeholders in commissioning, assessing

and using research evidence is required, as noted in the Shanghai Consensus.

There was particular concern from some participants regarding the challenge of developing high-quality national and international data on TVET. It was argued that this needs commitment by Member States supported through international cooperation.

Equally, a few noted that monitoring and evaluation has been a relatively low priority in many countries. They stressed that institutions and nations needed data to help them judge the effectiveness of their planning. For instance, it was argued that

schools need a better baseline of statistics to benchmark where they are and then how they improve. This is key to validating continuous incremental improvement. Also somewhere something should be said about tracer studies or keeping data on employment placement.

This issue was not well-developed in the discussion but it appears that approaches to rigorous monitoring and evaluation



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that relate closely to the overall goals and principles of TVET will require both funding and methodological development. Whether this merits discussion in the Revised Recommendation is less clear.

International cooperation

It was agreed that international cooperation on TVET remains an important theme to be stressed in any revision. The view of the participants was that international cooperation is improving but there is more to be done. As the Shanghai Consensus makes clear, participants believed that processes of international cooperation should be motivated by principles of mutual learning and context sensitivity.

Some participants called for further strengthening of processes within the UN and in the Interagency Group on TVET, although largely from a very limited knowledge base regarding these structures. There was more confidence in the calls for a commitment to continue to deepen regional cooperation in TVET. Some saw South-South cooperation as particularly important and raised the dangers of policy transfer from developed countries:

TVET could benefit by a sharing of these experiences from a "South-South" point of view, especially when it comes to developing countries. A solution that works for Indonesia is more likely to work for India rather than copying as concept or system from Germany or North America. Participants made little comment on UNESCO's own activities such as the development of this Revised Recommendation, its wider standard-setting work and the activities of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre and Network. Clearly these require attention in the Revised Recommendation.

Recommendations

Scope

It was widely agreed by participants that the scope of TVET is necessarily broader than that of TVE and this needs reflecting in the revised text. Changed circumstances since 2001 necessitate updating some of the messages of the opening paragraphs of the Revised Recommendation. A particular challenge lies in engaging with the ongoing post-2015 debate about development goals given the different timescales involved. UNESCO should be encouraged to think carefully about how the Revised Recommendation can reflect the post-2015 discussions without becoming too bound to the specific moment of 2015.

Objectives

There was little enthusiasm for Parts V. to VIII. of the existing text and, indeed, there may need to be a radical overhaul of the first two parts of the 2001 Revised Recommendation as there appears to be some lack of clarity as to their respective foci. The discussion highlighted a number of important principles for TVET that should be considered as strong pointers for a Revised Recommendation. There is considerable overlap between the consultation's agreed principles and those of the Shanghai Consensus, indicating a wider consensus about major aspects of a global TVET vision. There were strong voices in favour of ensuring that UNESCO's vision both strengthened its emphasis on skills for work and on skills for life.

Key themes

Participants agreed that parts III. to X. of the 2001 text are far too detailed and that a shorter text would be desirable. While some of the themes in the 2001 text remain worth highlighting, participants felt that others should be removed. In particular, there appeared to be a desire to move away from the way that the existing text focused on different parts of TVET separately. Rather, it was felt that all themes should seek to address the range of TVET forms.

However, this raises considerable challenges and the consultation still reflected more of a public, formal and educational bias. Therefore, one major priority for the drafting process is ensuring a more effective balance of stakeholders and views about the variety of TVET forms. A new set of eleven themes is suggested above, with each being afforded far less text. These themes fit well with strands of previous forms of the Recommendation, but update and broaden the language, in keeping with the Shanghai Consensus. However, there is more developmental work to be done on several of these themes and there are gaps, discussed below. Filling these gaps may imply a slightly different set of high-level headings for the Revised Recommendation.

Underdeveloped or missing issues

From the above, it can be seen that a number of issues were underdeveloped as part of the discussions of the e-Forum consultation for reasons of time, membership, etc. These would include a number of issues that have to do with the challenge of the further evolution of the Revised Recommendation away from being a text that is about formal, public-education provision to include the wide variety of TVET. This means that there needs to be more consideration given to how the text might engage with enterprise-based training (including in urban informal and small-scale agricultural settings) and extend notions such as governance, quality assurance and staffing to the plurality of TVET modalities.

There was some discussion during the consultation of other issues such as the greening of TVET and the rise of new technologies in learning and working, which remain in need of further development for the Revised Recommendation process. The notion of a right to TVET is missing from the discussion and requires careful consideration in the drafting process.

Resources

All of the following resources are available at the following link: <http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=Special%20Virtual%20Conference%20Revising%20the%20Revised%20Recommendation%20-%20Resources>

Background document for the virtual conference

Revising the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education
by Simon McGrath (April 2014)

Key documents

2001 "Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education"

General introduction to the standard-setting instruments of UNESCO

Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training on "Transforming TVET: Building skills for work and life" General report (2012)

Shanghai Consensus: Recommendations of the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training 'Transforming TVET: Building skills for work and life' (2012)

Preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of revising the 2001 Revised Recommendation (UNESCO General Conference 2013)

Education and skills for inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2015, thematic think piece UNESCO

Concept note on the post-2015 development agenda

UNESCO instruments and documents

Rules of Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Constitution

1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education

1962 UNESCO Recommendation on Technical and Vocational Education

1966 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers

1974 UNESCO Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education

1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education

1989 UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education

Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education Recommendations, 1999

Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education Final report, 1999

ILO instruments

1939 ILO Vocational Training Recommendation, No. 57

1962 ILO Revised Vocational Training Recommendation, No. 117

1975 ILO Convention concerning Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training in the Development of Human Resources, No. 142

1975 ILO Human Resource Development Recommendation, No. 150

2004 ILO Human Resource Development Recommendation, No. 195

Other documents

Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability, UNESCO Experts Meeting 2004

Bonn Declaration 2004 (UNESCO International Meeting "Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability")

United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000

Post-2015 international development agenda discussions

ILO concept note number 1 for the post-2015 development agenda

Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013

Sustainable Development Solutions Network: 'An action agenda for the sustainable development', 2013

Participation

Overview

Number of participants: 199

Number of countries from which participants came: 68

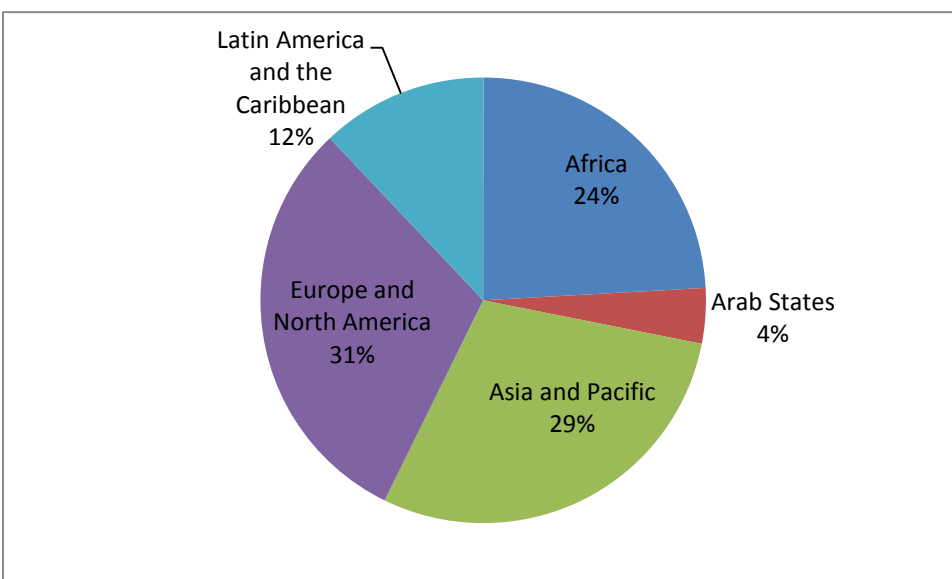
Network Members: 29 (15%)

Male: 123

Female: 76

Number of messages exchanged: 47

Regional distribution of participants



List of participants

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He is the former Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Educational Development, the major international peer-reviewed journal on education's relationship with broader processes of economic, political, societal and cultural change. He has published on a number of aspects of education - economy links, including vocational education and training systems in Africa, the skills development processes of micro and small enterprises, and the role of aid in shaping education. He advises a number of government departments (most notably in South Africa) and international agencies and has worked closely with UNESCO on reviewing TVET in Southern Africa and in supporting the Third International Congress on TVET.

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