

Virtual Conference on Skills for a Resilient Youth

From 6 to 14 July 2020, on the UNEVOC TVeT Forum

This virtual conference is organized as part of [World Youth Skills Day 2020](#)

Topic at a glance

Every year on 15 July, the global community celebrates World Youth Skills Day. The day is an opportunity for young people, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, and public and private sector stakeholders to acknowledge and celebrate the importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.

World Youth Skills Day 2020 will take place in a challenging context. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is substantially affecting education and training sectors worldwide in two ways:

- **Institutional level.** Lockdown measures have led to the worldwide closure of TVET institutions and skills development organizations. UNESCO estimates that nearly three-quarters of the world's learners were affected by school closures across education levels by early May. As distance education and training become the norm, the ability of TVET institutions to implement such systems depends on their capacity to adapt curricula as well as the preparedness of trainers and teachers.
- **Systemic level.** The economic recession triggered by the COVID-19 crisis is causing a massive rise in un- and under-employment that could have a lasting impact on essential livelihoods. Transformations in the labour market will also result in changes in skills demands. TVET systems need to address the short- and medium-term impact of the current pandemic by not only scaling up TVET solutions but also formulating responses that reflect long-term sustainability.

While the pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, in many cases it further intensified existing issues affecting TVET systems, including difficulties in harnessing the benefits of digitalization and mainstreaming entrepreneurial learning. Prior to the current crisis, young people aged 15-24 were two to three times more likely than adults to be un- or under-employed and often faced a prolonged school-to-work transition period. In post-COVID-19 societies, as young people seek employment and are called upon to contribute to the recovery effort, they will need to be equipped with the relevant skills for today as well as the competencies to successfully manage evolving challenges and adapt to future disruptions.

Moving forward, it is important to:

- **Ensure that young people around the world continue to have access to quality education and training opportunities, while keeping communities safe.** This requires innovative TVET institutions that can adequately provide distance learning and flexible learning pathways. TVET institutions face extra challenges beyond those affecting other education sectors, as it is difficult and sometimes impossible to develop practical skills online. TVET programmes often require a blended approach, with some time spent developing practical skills in workshops or industry settings.
- **Identify future skills needs and develop responsiveness to short-, medium- and long-term impacts.** Skills development stakeholders need to anticipate and respond to shifts in demands for labour market skills. As the predicted economic crisis unfolds, we need to better understand the impact of the current pandemic on existing challenges, including youth unemployment, climate change and the transition to greener economies.

Expected outcomes and agenda

This virtual conference is an opportunity for participants to:

- **Assess** the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the pandemic in different country contexts
- **Share good practices from TVET institutions** about how they have responded to the pandemic. For example, how institutions have provided distance learning in no-tech, low-tech and high-tech scenarios, and how teachers and trainers have been supported

- **Gain insights from private sector, employee, and employer stakeholders** about the impact of the pandemic on their sectors, and the changes in job profiles and skills needs that they foresee
- **Learn from young people** about their hopes and fears as well as the opportunities that they see moving forward
- **Reflect on how TVET systems** can respond to the short- and medium-term impact of the pandemic, while also keeping in mind longer-lasting challenges.

Format and agenda

The virtual conference will take place from 6 to 14 July 2020. Virtual conferences are **asynchronous discussions** that take place on the TVeT Forum. The moderator will open threads around specific topics and questions, and all participants are encouraged to contribute to the discussion by posting messages.

The following threads will be opened for discussion on the days specified and will remain open through the virtual conference period:

Monday 6 July, 2020	Thread 1	Context: Implications of the pandemic on youth skills development
Tuesday 7 July 2020	Thread 2	TVET institutions: Good practices in distance learning in no-, low- and high-tech scenarios
Thursday 9 July 2020	Thread 3	Labour market: Implications of the pandemic on jobs and future skills development
Friday 10 July 2020	Thread 4	Young people: Perspectives on their hopes and fears going forward
Monday 13 July 2020	Thread 5	TVET systems: System-wide responses to the impact of the pandemic.

Threads, leading questions and learning materials

Thread 1: Context – Implications of the pandemic on youth skills development

Opens on 6 July 2020

Early in 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, an International Labour Organization (ILO) report noted that 188 million people in the world were seeking employment, and that 285 million people had either given up searching for work or did not have enough work. The world was not tapping into the potential of nearly half a billion people – one in six of the world’s working population, with **women and youth particularly over-represented** (ILO, 2020a). 141 million young people were affected by labour underutilization and 68 million were unemployed. Additionally, about one in five young people were neither in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2019, which meant that they were not gaining the skills that would enable them to gain entry to the labour market.

At the same time, the percentage of industries struggling to find staff with the necessary skills is steadily increasing (ManpowerGroup, 2019), and existing skills development is reported to often not prepare people adequately for jobs, particularly in low and middle income countries (Palmer, 2017; Morsy and Adamson, 2019).

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of those who are unemployed and underutilized have gone up dramatically across the globe. The ILO predicts that in the second quarter of 2020, 6.7 per cent of working hours globally – equivalent to 195 million full-time workers – will disappear in response to the pandemic. The ILO also highlights that ‘worldwide, two billion people work in the informal sector (mostly in emerging and developing economies) and are particularly at risk’ (ILO, 2020b).

Leading questions

- What are the youth unemployment and NEET rates in your context, and what are the general trends affecting youth unemployment (pre- and post-COVID-19)?
- Has skills development played an effective role in addressing the youth unemployment and NEET rates?
- Does the COVID-19 pandemic change the role of TVET and the way it is carried out? What good practices are emerging in response to the pandemic?

References

ILO. 2020a. World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2020. International Labour Office: Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf

ILO. 2020b. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Second edition Updated estimates and analysis. International Labour Office: Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf

ManpowerGroup. 2019. Closing the skills gap: What workers want. ManpowerGroup: Milwaukee. Retrieved from <https://go.manpowergroup.com/talent-shortage>

Morsy, H. & Adamson, N. Mukasa. 2019. Youth jobs, skill and educational mismatches in Africa. Working Paper Series N° 326, African Development Bank, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/wps_no_326_youth_jobs_skill_and_educational_mismatches_in_africa_f1.pdf

Palmer, R. 2017. Jobs and skills mismatch in the informal economy. International Labour Office: Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_629018.pdf

Thread 2: TVET institutions – Good practices in distance learning in no-, low- and high-tech scenarios

Opens on 7 July 2020

Blending distance learning with practical skills development has proved effective in TVET for more than 100 years. For example, in 1910, in response to an urgent need following a typhoid epidemic, Australia introduced its first distance TVET courses to train health inspectors by correspondence while they worked.

Today, we find examples of blended learning for TVET happening across the world (Latchem, 2017). In the current crisis, as-distance-as-possible models allow for young people around the world to continue their TVET programmes while observing travel restrictions and physical distancing guidelines. Distance learning models also allow for the upskilling of essential workers in their workplaces and the reskilling of displaced workers.

The shift towards distance learning – which has been accelerated due to the current pandemic – offers the potential to rethink traditional face-to-face TVET by challenging educational practices that have excluded marginalized and remote learners due to high costs and limited flexibility.

Leading questions

- What distance learning approaches and good practices has your institution implemented in no-, low- and high-tech scenarios?
- What is the difference between emergency remote teaching, such as we are seeing in response to the pandemic, and good practice distance TVET?
- How is distance learning in TVET similar or different to distance learning in the primary, secondary and university sectors? What different solutions do TVET providers need?

References

Delivering high quality online learning in response to COVID-19. Retrieved from http://olc-wordpress-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/05/Faculty-Playbook_Final-1.pdf

Guidelines for distance education COL: Vancouver Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3576>

Latchem, C. 2017. Using ICTs and blended learning in transforming TVET. UNESCO: Paris and COL: Vancouver. Retrieved from <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2718>

Thread 3: Labour market - Implications of the pandemic on jobs and future skills development

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on the labour market. Many businesses are struggling in response to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic or will struggle to adapt to the new world in which we find ourselves. Companies who survive will successfully manage a return to work, learn from their time during the crisis, and chart a new path forward. A return to work will not necessarily mean that the work will be the same as before the pandemic – in many cases, changes in work processes will require workers to have additional skills.

This is true for the formal and informal sectors. However, arguably, formal businesses in developed economies have more options, particularly those using technology, and greater resources available to them. Given the significant percentage of the world's population working in the informal sector who have not had government assistance to help them survive the pandemic, we need global solutions that meet the needs of both sectors.

Leading questions

- What impact will the pandemic have on skills demands in the formal and informal labour markets? Please try to refer to examples of job profiles and possible changes.
- What are examples of continuing training of workers in the formal and informal sectors? What makes these practices successful?
- How can TVET institutes better meet the skills development needs of the labour markets of the future?

References

CEMCA (COL India) 15 June webinar: Mr. Anshul Sonak, Senior Director- Global AI Readiness, Global Partnership & Initiatives, Intel Corporation, Singapore. *Future of Jobs -Post Covid*.

Schwartz, J., Hatfield, S., Scoble-Williams, N. & Volini, E. 2020. Workforce strategies for post-COVID recovery. Deloitte. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/workforce-strategies-for-post-covid-19-recovery.pdf>
<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends.html>

Thread 4: Young people – Perspectives on their hopes and fears going forward

The ILO estimates that more than one in six young people have stopped working since the coronavirus affected global economies, and that those who are still working have lost nearly a quarter of their working hours. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic is hitting young people harder and faster than any other group. Challenges include disruption to education and training, employment and income losses, and greater difficulties in finding a job. It is also unclear what the emotional effect of the crisis will be for this 'lockdown generation'. Young women are particularly vulnerable, being more likely to be in informal low paid work, and at greater risk of being excluded from education and training.

Leading questions

- What are some of the main hopes and fears that young people have? What are emerging opportunities?
- What can TVET stakeholders (ministries, national bodies, institutions) do to support young people in developing the skills to meet the current context?
- What else is needed alongside skills development to support young people at the moment?

References

Humphreys, R., & Crook, P. 2018. Youth employment and entrepreneurship: an annotated bibliography. Plan International. Retrieved from <https://plan-international.org/publications/youth-employment-entrepreneurship-annotated-bibliography>

ILO. 2020c. Global employment trends for youth: Technology and the future of jobs. International Labour Organization: Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf

Thread 5: TVET systems – System-wide responses to the impact of the pandemic

In response to COVID-19, through necessity, governments across the world are moving towards distance education more systematically than ever before. We can predict four phases through which educational institutions will move (Hill, 2020).

Phases of TVET response to COVID-19

	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four
Distance and online learning adoption	<i>Rapid transition to remote teaching and learning</i>	<i>Adding basics</i>	<i>Extended transition during continued turmoil</i>	<i>Emerging new normal</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rapid transition to using whatever technology options are available – Zoom, WhatsApp, LMS, radio, TV Limited or no options for some institutions and learners, especially those in remote and poorer areas, and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Add basics into emergency solutions ➤ Make OER available ➤ Invest for equitable access ➤ Build staff capability ➤ Establish technology ➤ Promote new ways of working to add basics ➤ Online communities of practice sharing learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hybrid models where learners are both in class and online, physical distancing rules apply, and lockdown status oscillates depending on virus spread ➤ Expand TVET system to meet increased demand from displaced workers and changed business practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New levels of online adoption in new normal, based on strategic decisions and emerging learning through Phases 1-3 ➤ Strategic change to scale, improve quality, increase access and reduce costs
	Mar-Jul 2020	Jun-Dec 2020	May 2020 – Dec 2021	2022 and beyond

Adapted from Hill, 2020

Government TVET agencies have a leadership role in supporting training institutions to offer emergency remote teaching now, and in the transition towards the 'new normals'. Quality distance learning requires investment in adequate technological infrastructure, building staff capability and establishing new ways of working. However, governments globally are struggling to find the resources to respond to existing challenges, let alone be able to invest in leading significant change.

Leading questions

- How did the TVET system in your country respond to the pandemic in the first few months (Phase One)?
- What emerging patterns of change are we seeing as national TVET systems implement medium-term responses to the pandemic (Phases Two and Three)?
- What 'new normals' do you hope will emerge? What systemic changes are required to support distance learning in the future? Please think in terms of short-, mid-, and long-term changes. (Phase Four)

References

Kanwar, A. & Daniels, J. 2020. Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From response to resilience. http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/3592/2020_Kanwar_Daniel_Report_to_Commonwealth_Education_Ministers_.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

Neal, T. 2020. Strategies for blended TVET in response to COVID 19.

OECD .2020. VET in a time of crisis: Building foundations for resilient vocational education and training systems. OECD, Paris. Retrieved from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=132_132718-fdwmrqsgmy&title=VET-in-a-time-of-crisis-Building-foundations-for-resilient-vocational-education-and-training-systems-

Hill, P. 2020. Revised outlook for higher ed's online response to COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://philonedtech.com/revised-outlook-for-higher-eds-online-response-to-covid-19/>

About the moderator

Terry Neal is an Education Specialist: Technical and Vocational Skills Development at the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). COL is an intergovernmental organization created more than 30 years ago to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. Terry has worked in distance TVET for 20 years. In 2000, she was part of the team to first introduce online learning at New Zealand's specialist distance TVET institution, Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. She has also managed online learning teams in a face-to-face polytechnic and industry training organization, managed national capability building and innovation projects across New Zealand, and advised the New Zealand government on blended TVET. She has consulted across the Commonwealth. In her present role, she is working with institutes and governments in developing Commonwealth countries to build their capability in flexible and blended TVET, with an emphasis on blending distance and workplace learning.