



ADEA 2022 Triennale

SUB-THEME CONCEPT NOTE

Sub-Theme 3 Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

A. Context

Technical and vocational skills are crucial in enhancing competitiveness and contributing to social inclusion, decent employment, and poverty reduction. The term Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) refers to the acquisition of knowledge, practical competencies, know-how and attitudes – in formal, non-formal and informal settings – necessary to perform a certain trade or occupation in the labour market. Based on the 2021 ILO and World Bank study on Skills Development in the time of COVID-19, the pandemic negatively impacted the acquisition of vocational skills, especially during the closure of learning institutions. This is in part because these skills are practice-oriented and difficult to deliver in remote learning environments that characterized the closure of the learning institutions. The responsiveness of Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) systems to dynamic labour market demands has to be strengthened. In fact, in ADEA's 2021 research study on Rethinking the role of TVSD in Future Work and Lifelong Learning, in light of Digitalization and the 4IR, many of the professions that will most likely be affected by labour market transformation brought about by the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) are linked to TVSD.

With the pandemic having exposed learning gaps and educational inequalities between countries and within societies, there is a crucial need for a holistic approach to skills development encompassing features such as continuous and seamless learning pathways, development of core and higher-level skills, transferability of skills and employability and putting in place sustainable mitigating measures against unforeseen emergencies such as COVID-19.

The lack of contingency plans in most countries for managing a pandemic of this magnitude has been a weakness of all educational institutions. But while the response to the crisis was quick enough to ensure continuity of education in the general education sub-sector, TVSD struggled to continue in almost all ADEA member countries.

As part of accelerating progress towards SDG 4 - and CESA 16-25 for Africa, the UN Secretary-General is convening a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in New York in September 2022. The aim is to rally education actors to commit to "mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions". This is critical in transforming education in the remaining period, and beyond, for SDG4 and CESA 16-15. The outcomes of TES (renewed commitments, greater public engagement, and summary and call to action) will be disseminated and further discussed at the ADEA 2022 Triennale in Mauritius in October.

B. About the Sub-Theme

The four key strategic challenges that came to greater light for the TVSD sector will be the focus of this sub-theme: (1) seeking alternative (sustainable) financing; (2) partnerships to address youth unemployment; (3) relevant skills development and improving the quality of TVSD systems; and (4) the appropriate actionable policies and governance needed for an enhanced TVSD sector.

The main objectives of this sub-theme will be to:

- Share experiences and working practices around innovative and alternative financing mechanisms for TVSD.
- Share relevant skills development initiatives and strategies, including ways of improving the quality of TVSD systems in selected countries through partnership and stakeholder engagement.
- Share ways of improving policies and governance to address the different challenges identified at the heart of TVSD.
- Explore strategies of moving from research and studies to implementation and embedding the strategies and recommendations in country level priorities and practices.

The expected outcomes of this sub theme are:

- Shared understanding of mechanisms for leveraging training and skills development to empower African youths to contribute effectively to the future socio-economic transformation of their respective countries and the continent at large.
- Shared knowledge, experiences, good practices and lessons to inform policies and programmes aimed at preparing the youth for the Fourth Industrial Revolution workplace.
- Fostered partnerships among key stakeholders to advance policy and strategy development and implementation.
- Strategies for moving from research and studies to implementation and embedding the strategies and recommendations in country-level priorities and practices well-documented to inform the next step of developing a policy guide for countries.

C. Storyline

In order to have a close link between employment and/or job creation and TVSD, the financing of the sector must therefore be understood as part of the responsibility of the whole ecosystem and in particular the productive sector, both public and private. Key players in TVSD sector have begun to address the issue of alternative financing for TVSD. To date, only a few African governments currently fund TVSD at a level that can support quality training. The sector is generally expensive in terms of cost per student, yet this is not reflected in the budget allocation for the TVSD sector, which remains subsumed within the education sector. The private sector is a key actor for investment and addressing alternative financing and special policies for procurement. Moreover, most of the resources devoted to TVSD are for trainers' salaries and operating costs; and the share for equipment and working tools holds a very small part of the total national TVET budget. The need for sustainable financing for TVET becomes more urgent, as the demand from countries to improve the quality of their TVSD systems rises. Focus should be on how and where investment will be made; (ensuring inclusivity); with less focus on the amount of investments made, and strongly linked to achieving policy objectives of making TVSD systems more accessible, equitable, efficient, demand-driven, responsive and relevant. With regard to youth unemployment, many former students fall into unemployment due to reasons such as outdated curricula, overstretched teachers, and institutions lacking the right training equipment. There is a need for greater overlap with the private sector to avoid providing qualifications that are not relevant. TVSD systems should be designed to cater to industries and the labor market without losing sight of social inclusion. Bilateral partnerships rather than one-sided approaches are necessary, in addition to having constant engagements with the private sector on TVSD to enable learning on both sides and instituting re-skilling and upskilling programs. While recognizing that labor demands in the African economy are changing under the influence of digitalization and 4IR, a catalog of new resources and skills sets is needed, that combine technical and sectorial skills. This should be followed by making appropriate recommendations on reforming TVSD systems to address the mismatch between the skills demand and supply. Students lack the opportunities to be exposed to jobs, apprenticeship, practical skills activities, due to the lack of connection between private sector and training providers. This is why redefining relationships between partners in TVSD (especially the

African private sector) is needed for a better match between skills supply and demand. This requires first acknowledging and accepting the different roles and expectations of all players, placing focus on the intersections of the private sector in programme delivery and developing flexible and agile programmes to address their needs.

Skills development is a key factor in reducing unemployment and improving employability; increasing productivity and competitiveness; reducing poverty and exclusion; strengthening innovation; and attracting investment. Giving meaning to “relevance” in TVSD and strengthening it to provide a qualified labor force with appropriate skills, for the African economy, will ensure qualifications earned in educational TVET institutions are valuable and help to create job opportunities. Another important issue is the need to recognize and “modernize” professional learning in the informal economy, which represents the majority of the continent’s youth. This includes the recognition of training in informal sectors; and the reinforcement of the skills of master craftsmen, farmers, breeders, improvement of apprenticeship contracts and insertion of new technologies/techniques. There is limited accreditation of informal systems as part of dealing with the large numbers of unskilled out-of-school youth. Information on the labor market and professional certification should be at the heart of professional training systems. Finally on this aspect, bridging the digital gap and training teachers and students in the work of the future is critical. One strategy in achieving this is through creation and supporting teacher training curricula and developing the teachers’ knowledge in designing learning models and materials. Resources can also be provided to the youth to stimulate critical thinking, with greater focus on regions and communities where the youth have little or no access to the right digital tools.

In addition, men tend to dominate TVSD, and when women enter it, they usually tend to specialize in lower-earning occupations, aggravating occupational gender segregation. The issue of equity is also significant as TVSD students tend to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds compared to students in equivalent general education. This also includes learners with disabilities who often have a hard time accessing these programs altogether.

Addressing the above calls for appropriate policies and effective governance systems. There is a need to manage the expectations between governments and the private sector on TVSD, and to create more and better partnerships that strengthen the linkages between technology and other industries, coupled with initiatives to promote skilling of the youth. There is a seeming lack of social dialogue between governments, social partners, TVSD institutions, learners, and parents coupled with the need for a new pedagogy/teaching-training style towards a learner-centered approach and support in self-learning skills, which adds to a long list of factors. It is the anchoring of vocational training policies within national education policies that prevents the development of genuine TVSD policies that must also be taken into consideration in employment policies. Many young boys and girls of school-going age are out of school with no skills – meaning they are in the ranks of the so-called NEET (not in education, employment, or training). Policies and laws promoting gender equality and women’s economic empowerment are either weak or remain ineffective in enforcement. Countries can find ways in which learning can continue despite the pandemic, using digital technology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, policies need to be put in place to enable an environment for teaching and training of youth to adapt, have a robust engagement with the different stakeholders, and use bond structures to address financing of training and education.

D. Guiding Questions

1. Seeking alternative financing: How can financing mechanisms in TVSD be more efficient and sustainable considering factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization, and the role of private sector entities? What are the most innovative and resilient financial and operationalization mechanisms?
2. Youth unemployment: How can countries engage the private sector more effectively to better prepare its youth and adult population, stimulate employment and address the mismatch

between the skills demand and supply in the environment of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and 21st century skills?

3. Skills development & quality of TVSD systems: How are countries rethinking pedagogy and teaching in TVSD to match with national and regional needs? How are TVSD systems providing learning continuity for practical skills acquisition and assessment during crises to build resilience? How can EdTech innovations, such as technology-enabled learning materials help to close the skills gaps in developing countries by improving the quality of TVSD delivery?
4. Appropriate actionable policies and governance: What are the government mechanisms that need to be put in place, including revisiting and improving existing policies and governance issues, to create an enabling environment for improving TVSD?
5. In terms of the cross-cutting issues, how can TVSD systems be organized to enhance access, participation, and achievement of all persons previously excluded, or at a risk of being excluded, with efficient remote learning systems, thinking beyond the COVID-19 pandemic? Regarding data collection and use of actionable data and evidence, TVSD lags far behind other education subsectors – both in terms of the basic data (such as enrollment, completion, number of teachers, etc.) but also in terms of understanding what works for better TVSD. Also, carbon intensity of technical occupations is rapidly changing, how can TVSD programs respond quickly to the green transition or risk irrelevance?

E. Structure

- Each break-out session will discuss a specific sub-theme, or cross-cutting theme, with a moderator and rapporteur.
- The moderator will introduce the session and its structure. There will be a short lead presentation followed by a policymaker response (Minister).
- The moderator will then introduce the 4-person panel and engage the panel based on the questions above.
- This will be followed by an engagement between the audience and the panelists, after which the moderator will wrap up the session highlighting the key messages / takeaways, in liaison with the rapporteur, to be presented in plenary during the report-back session.