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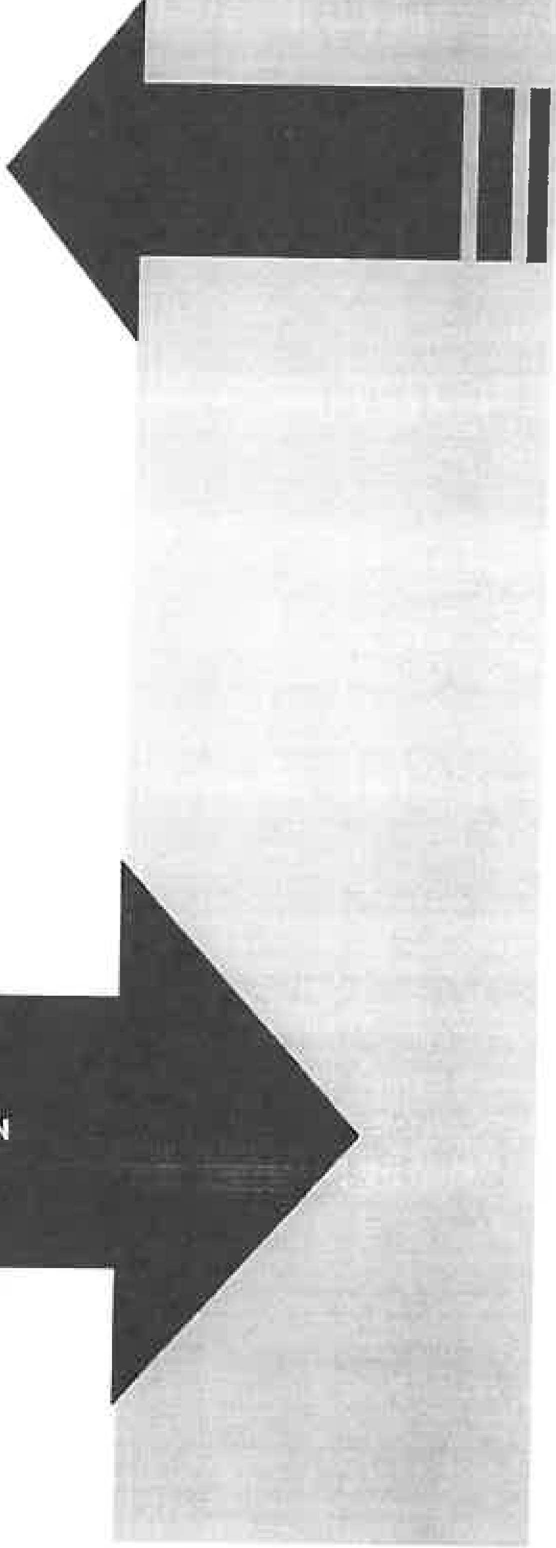
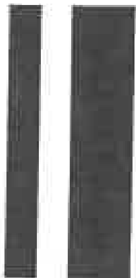
PAPER 8

DEBATES IN
SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT



Skills for Life And Work

Bonn, Germany
April 2003



WORKING GROUP
FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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[1] This section reflects the third discussion in this series of discussion papers of the World Bank study. It is based on the February 2003 version of the study.

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DISCLAIMER

As with previous meetings and discussion papers, the Norrag team facilitating the process has sought to take the discussion beyond the official presentations of agencies. In the introduction to this paper, therefore, the tone is deliberately that of an applied researcher engaging with agency programmes. This includes critical reflection on both the contributions of participants in discussions and on the wider debates surrounding the focus of the meeting. The Working Group does not have official positions and this commentary does not seek such status.

INTRODUCTION

This ninth Working Group meeting was made possible by the continued support of SDC to its secretariat. However, this particular meeting would not have been possible without the kind invitation of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre in Bonn. We thank its Director, Rupert Maclean, for the invitation. Particular thanks go also to Hans Krönner. As well as making his usual contributions to the intellectual life of the Working Group, Hans led a support team from UNESCO with both efficiency and warmth.

The theme of the meeting reflected our visit to a UNESCO Centre, and the growing collaboration between UNESCO and ILO. Hence, this paper focuses in particular on attempts by these agencies, and others, to develop notions of life and work skills. As well as the discussion of such skills, the Working Group returned to the theme of the previous meeting and discussion paper with a session on the February 2003 version of the World Bank's study on skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report also contains the now traditional updating of policy positions of donor agencies. The Working Group particularly welcomes the presentation of two agencies that have not been "core" members of the discussions previously: the European Training Foundation and NORAD. We look forward to further and closer collaboration with these two agencies.

However, our welcoming of new friends is offset by the loss of a key actor in the field of skills development. Pekka Aro, Director of Skills Development in the ILO, should have been a participant at this meeting. Pekka died from SARS on April 6 in Beijing whilst on mission. Here we honour Pekka with some words by his close colleague, Trevor Riordan:

> There are no words to describe the magnitude of our loss. Pekka's driving energy and his love of a challenge are irreplaceable. Pekka had crucial skills for working with people in an international civil service organisation such as the ILO, combining patience with bureaucrats with a great sense of humour. Working with him taught me the importance of nurturing an idea rather than pushing too hard and too quickly.
>
> These skills were honed in his time in the Finnish trade union movement, where he was eventually to rise to be Deputy-Secretary General of the Chemical Workers' Union. He led the first trade union delegation to Bhopal and went on to author a book about ways of preventing such a disaster ever happening again.
>
> His enthusiasm for the field of skills development will be greatly missed, as will his ability to get things done in this difficult field. Pekka left the Skills Development

Department with a good start: the challenge is to make his vision a reality. He was a great human being who will be missed by everyone who knew him.

Michel Carton led the Secretariat and Kenneth King chaired the meeting. This paper is edited by Simon McGrath.

SECTION ONE: LIFE SKILLS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

1.1. LIFE AND WORK SKILLS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEBATES

Simon McGrath

1.1.1. What are skills for life and work?

Life skills or work skills appear to be a set of characteristics that are held to be essential to success or fulfillment in the world-of-work and/or life more generally. There is no agreed definition but a conceptual core for the notions can be discerned, particularly through the several years of operationalisation of the concept of work skills in countries such as Australia, UK and Singapore. Such work skills are typically oriented towards the kind of work that is an increasing proportion of economic activity in advanced economies.

Life skills are seen as those that promote better lives. They help people cope with growing uncertainty and rapid change. Such skills are believed by many to already be possessed by individuals and communities but are seen as being in need of further development. The particular set of life skills relevant to any setting must reflect the contextualised needs of the relevant individuals, communities and nations. Another aspect of the cluster of meanings surrounding life skills is that they are related to lifelong learning. Hence, they are developed throughout life and in various settings.

However, it is apparent that there is considerable variation in understandings of the notions of life skills and work skills, as well as disagreement about the relationship between the two concepts. On the one hand, it is argued that such skills are holistic and so should be seen as relevant to the whole of life. On the other, it is pointed out that work, employment and income are so central to life that the most important of life skills are those that are also work skills. Moreover, in contexts such as that of East Asia, it is not possible to see a set of skills for work as separate from skills for life. In such a view it makes no sense to separate preparation for work from preparation for citizenship. In societies where the two are not so finely intermeshed, it is clear that their relative importance becomes an issue for political not technical debate.

Moreover, there is disagreement as to whether what is being talked about should really be described as skills. The presentation on DeSeCo, for instance, suggests that the concept of competencies is a more appropriate one. That presentation suggests that competence combines notions of skill, values and attitudes into a conceptually coherent whole. However, it is apparent that the UNESCO vision of life skills is one in which not just skills but attitudes, values and knowledge are contained.

There is no agreement on an authoritative list of either life or work skills but some of the most common suggestions for both categories highlight considerable overlap, although also significant differences in emphases.

1.1.1.1. What are some of the more commonly identified life skills?

The following are by no means the sum of all possible life skills, but are common suggested categories:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Entrepreneurial
- HIV/AIDS awareness / prevention
- Gender sensitivity / assertiveness
- Food security
- Self-confidence
- Socialisation
- Coping with disability
- Learning to learn
- Autonomy
- Hygiene
- Nutrition
- Health
- Family planning
- Critical thinking
- Self-evaluation
- Peace skills
- Citizenship
- Personal financial management
- Environmental awareness
- Assertiveness
- Job acquisition skills

1.1.1.2. What are some of the more commonly identified work skills?

Many of the above would also appear in lists of work skills, although the latter might also include the following:

- Team work
- Communication
- ICT skills
- Technical SKILLS
- Resource management
- Occupational health
- Design
- Management
- Decision-making
- Time management
- Stress management
- Negotiation
- Information processing
- Foreign language skills

1.1.2. Are such skills universal?

From the above, it should be clear that there is no single universal list of such skills but that they find their meaning in specific contexts. Some of the elements of life skills have clearly emerged from psycho-social understandings that are culturally relevant in Western cultures, but not necessarily elsewhere. The skills that are deemed locally relevant will also reflect a range of contextual factors. Life skills for the informal sector; for rural development; for transition economies; or for post-conflict situations are all likely to be different. Equally, life skills in the context of high levels of internal or international migration are also likely to take on different forms. Levels of economic and technological development should play an important role in setting a life skills agenda, as will cultural norms.

1.1.3. Where does the notion come from?

Part of both the strength and weakness of the life/work skills concept is that it draws on a series of different discourses form very different times, places and ideological positions. This makes the notion appeal to a wide range of otherwise disparate interests but is can also lead to serious inconsistencies and contestations.

At least five points of origin can be found for the notion. First, in the African context, a concept of essential life skills can be dated back 80 years to the missions of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions. Indeed, the origins lie further back in education for blacks in post-Civil War USA. In Africa, an external call to limit education to life skills such as hygiene, nutrition and reading the Bible was presented as providing a more appropriate education than the classical model present in many mission schools. That the Phelps-Stokes call was taken up most clearly in the racist context of South Africa is a negative legacy for THE modern notion of life skills.

In OECD contexts, notions of an essential set of skills can be linked to three important debates that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, although they are still of influence nowadays. Concerns about rapidly rising youth unemployment during the 1970s began a process of refocusing education and training for those who had "failed", both in the classroom and the labour market. Given the identification of this group as failures, the set of skills were extremely basic. Indeed, critics described them as essentially empty of content. Moreover, these skills took on a class dimension and seemed to be concerned with teaching marginalised youths to behave in ways that were considered appropriate by the middle class. In certain countries, it is in this light that life skills are most likely to be perceived.

The youth unemployment issue was intimately connected with other elements of an overall restructuring of advanced economies, and their workplaces. The rise of new technologies and the decline of old industries led to a growing focus on a set of generic work skills that would be vital to success in the new economy. In some cases, the impetus towards such skills was clearly from the side of employers. However, in other contexts, such as Australia and South Africa, trade union movements played an important role in trying to give these skills meaning and content. This contestation points to the way that life and work skills may be interpreted

within different ideological positions, but also how such interpretations are linked to contestations over policies and practices.

Both of these processes were linked to complex and contested trends within education systems that had their origins in the period before the economic crisis of the early 1970s. From at least the mid-1960s, "progressive" calls to make education less bound up with "elite" knowledge blended with behaviourist psychology to begin a call for outcomes-based education (OBE). By the 1990s, OBE's spread had been far extended as it took on the further connotation of being in line with neoliberal concerns with efficiency. In all of these elements, there was a tendency to prefer practice to theory.

Outside education and training contexts, the notion of life skills took on a specific meaning in the area of health promotion that was apparently shorn of these more ideologised meanings. It has been suggested that it is from here that life skills entered into Dakar goals 3 and 6. The notion of life skills derives its current legitimacy from its explicit location in this international convention. However, its perceived meaning is likely to be influenced by all of the above. This may have profound implications for the success of life skills programmes.

1.1.4. Why might they be important?

Supporters of life/work skills claim that conventional education and training provision is not promoting sufficient development of the skills necessary for economic and social success. It is argued that a new focus on these essential skills is vital in the light of major challenges such as poverty, inequality and mass unemployment. The further challenges of globalisation and the HIV/AIDS pandemic also lend support to arguments for more focused interventions to respond to skills and knowledge gaps. Crucially, it is argued that a period of rapid technological change renders older, static models of knowledge and skills acquisition inadequate. Instead, skills that facilitate lifelong learning and competency upgrading are increasingly important.

1.1.5. If they are important, what needs to be done in the areas of policy and programmes?

These are powerful arguments for suggesting a sharper focus of policy and practice on such skills. Indeed, this is strongly reflected in international trends. Nonetheless, it is necessary to reflect critically on how such programmes are to be developed. Clearly this needs to be a matter for national stakeholders. There are well-established programmes for work skills development in several advanced economies that can provide useful pointers to such stakeholders. However, the concept of life skills is not as well operatinalised and it is difficult to find clear pointers of good practices here.

The roles of the market, of workplaces and of public and private providers are areas of uncertainty and ideological contestation wherever such programmes are to be attempted. Particularly in developing countries, it is not apparent how easy it will be to reorient existing public providers. It is also important to consider what incentives there are for private-for-profit providers to engage with such initiatives. Crucially, there is need for considerable developmental work regarding the monitoring and evaluation of such programmes. For

instance, the South African interest in work skills is perhaps the most widely known example from the developing world, but brings with it no clear strategy for monitoring and evaluating the work skills experiment.

Several WGICSD Discussion Papers have noted the shifts in donor programmes and policies in recent years. The shift of bilateral agencies behind sectoral programmes and budgetary support makes it unlikely that such donors will prioritise the innovative piloting that would be necessary to develop and share good practices in the area of life skills, regardless of their merits. It is significant that the presentations in this Discussion Paper are all related to multilateral agency programmes, whether from UNESCO, ILO, ETF or the OECD.

1.1.6. What are the challenges facing the delivery of core skills programmes?

I have alrady highlighted the strong case for a greater focus on skills for life and work. However, it is essential that issues of delivery and assessment be considered critically.

There has been no consensus over whether such skills should be delivered as a free-standing intervention or whether they should be embedded in more conventional programmes. Evidence on the performance of either approach is inconclusive.

Such a debate is closely linked to the danger of curricular overload. If teaching time is to be devoted to developing life skills, will this be at the expense of other skills or knowledge? Often, such a decision is not made explicitly but is left to teachers to decide on an *ad hoc* basis as they are forced to deal with too many demands on learners' time.

The challenge of overload is linked to the failure to understand the complexities in introducing these skills alongside existing delivery of necessary academic and technical content. In some school settings, the shift towards learning outcomes linked to core skills has led to an excessive downgrading of the centrality of knowledge content. In technical settings, there is a danger that the logic of learner-centred acquisition of core skills leads to a weakening of the crucial role played by instructor modelling of appropriate techniques and behaviours.

Experiences to date also raise concerns about modes of assessment. It is not always clear how the development of these skills is to be demonstrated. Most existing systems for measuring such skills or competencies have proved highly complex, bureaucratic and expensive. The notion of life/work skills is closely related to the rise of lifelong learning across formal, non-formal and informal settings. This points to the need for functioning systems of recognition and accreditation of prior learning if the full range of such skills is to be acknowledged. However, such systems have proven very difficult to put into operation. This has meant that the advantages that such programmes were intended to bring in terms of equity and access have remained primarily rhetorical.

The issue of lifelong learning also raises questions about whether life/work skills need to be acquired in a particular order and at specific points in individuals' life cycles. Any programme to develop such skills needs to address these issues.

In some settings, it has been clear that life/work skills are seen as remedial or compensatory. Just like education for all, does a slogan of "life/work skills for all" hide a practice in which

they are only for the poor or marginalised? Should it be assumed that the better-off already have these skills? This is unlikely to be true for all skills and all contexts.

Many of the life skills noted above seek explicitly to change behaviours. However, this means that there is likely to be resistance and environmental barriers to the development of certain skills. Some of the evidence on attempts to develop life skills points to the serious problems in attempting such interventions where there is an underdeveloped democratic culture of learning and teaching.

Experiences frequently suggest that programmes built around such skills are highly resource-intensive. This is in terms of both teaching and learning materials and the involvement of highly skilled teachers. This points to serious difficulties in rolling out such programmes nationally in poorer countries. National programmes risk further disadvantaging learners in resource-poor environments, as has been alleged in South Africa. This can have the perverse effect of shifting comparative advantage in national tests even further towards the richer learners and institutions.

Such programmes cannot succeed without adequate educator involvement. Too often, decisions to introduce such ideas ignore educators' concerns, which are dismissed as simply being the result of their innate conservatism. Moreover, too many programmes have been implemented without adequate preparation of educators through properly resourced programmes of pre- and in-service training. Of course, such weaknesses are not specific to skills programmes, but are far too typical of educational reforms in general.

None of these challenges are insurmountable. Their inclusion here is not meant to indicate that such programmes are unwise. Rather, they are intended to remind policymakers and agency staff that such reforms are not simple solutions but complex and long-term processes.

1.1.7. What kind of external environment do they need in order to flourish?

Such programmes can tend to assume a consensus between individuals, unions and employers that is often imaginary. Issues of transparency and portability of skills are more in the interests of the learner than that of the existing or potential employer. A clear signal of the skills of an individual`S work potentially brings two problems for an employer. First, it provides a basis for wage claims from the worker that cannot be deflected so easily as if skills are less transparently signalled. Second, it also signals the worth of the worker to other employers, encouraging problems of worker retention. In many settings, labour market segmentation has a degree of functionality for employers. Programmes to accredit life and work skills, therefore, may be less attractive to them than is generally assumed.

Moreover, the language of life and work skills tends to lead to the assumption that employers have an interest in increasing skills in general. As noted above, however, increased skills run the risk of leading to increased wages or loss of staff. The linking of skills with technological change makes it appear that it will always be in the interest of employers to increase skills in spite of such risks. However, this ignores the possibility for employers of increasing profitability through low skill strategies. The balance of the large research literature on skills in Anglophone economies in recent years tends towards a picture of a split between a smaller group of employers who value higher skills among their workers and a larger group of

employers that are following a low skill route. This has led to a widespread academic critique that core skills in practice have a low rather than high skill orientation.

Evidence to date also suggests a challenge in moving beyond a large employer domination of standards generating exercises, which will affect core skills as well as more traditional notions of skill. They have far better resources for involvement than smaller enterprises but this can lead to standards that are inappropriate for smaller firms. The impact of this is exacerbated as smaller employers are less likely to provide structured skills development and are more likely to judge skills systems as excessively complex and bureaucratic. Such problems are even more apparent in informal sector contexts, which predominate in most poorer countries.

1.1.8. What is the likely future of core skills programmes?

There is wide-ranging support for programmes designed to develop skills for life and work internationally. However, there is also considerable scepticism and negative research evidence about many existing practices. There seem to be strong merits in the principles underpinning such programmes. However, their future development will be shaped by two key factors. First, as such programmes continue to develop internationally, they will need to address the weaknesses that they have experienced in their early developmental phase. Part of this addressing of weaknesses could profitably BE through more RIGOrous evaluations than has been the norm to date. Second, given the limited resources for education and training innovation nationally and amongst donors, such programmes will have to compete for resources against a range of other possible interventions. Notwithstanding the merits of skills for life and work, they may be judged to be luxuries in some countries, particularly the poorest.

1.2. A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE OECD PROJECT DEFINITION AND SELECTION OF COMPETENCIES (DeSeCo)

Dominique Simone Rychen

1.2.1. Introduction

What competencies do we need for an overall successful life and a well-functioning society? This question was the starting point of the OECD's programme on the "Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations" (DeSeCo).

The purpose of DeSeCo is to provide a theoretical and conceptual basis for defining and selecting key competencies and a solid foundation for the continued development of statistical indicators of individually-based competencies in the future. It also aims to establish a reference point for interpreting empirical results in relation to the outcomes of learning and teaching. Furthermore, it offers an input to the debate about which competencies should be given priority when education curricula and training programmes are being reformed or reorganised.

DeSeCo relies on three assumptions about key competencies:

- that they contribute to highly valued outcomes at the individual and societal level in terms of an overall successful life and a well-functioning society;
- that they are instrumental for meeting important complex demands and challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts; and
- that they are important to all individuals.

1.2.2. Three broad categories of key competencies as a conceptual basis

Based on an interdisciplinary analysis, DeSeCo idenitified three types of key competencies:

1.2.2.1. Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups

Living and participating in multicultural societies and coping with increasing individual and social diversity requires the ability to interact and coexist with people who do not necessarily speak the same language or share the same memory and history. The competencies in this category are particularly relevant for creating social capital and include:

- the ability to relate well to others;
- the ability to cooperate, work in teams; and
- the ability to manage and resolve conflict.

1.2.2.2. Acting autonomously

To act autonomously incorporates two central interrelated ideas: the development of personal identity, and the exercise of relative autonomy in the sense of deciding, choosing and acting in a given context. The following key competencies have been identified:

- the ability to act within the big picture/the larger context;
- the ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects; and
- the ability to assert and defend rights, needs, interests.

1.2.2.3. Using tools interactively

To use a tool interactively assumes not only a familiarity with the tool itself but also an understanding of how the tool changes the way one can interact with the world. Underlying this is the idea that we encounter our world through our cognitive, social, and physical tools. These encounters shape how we make sense of the world and become competent in interaction. The following key competencies have been identified:

- the ability to use language, symbols, and text interactively;
- the ability to use knowledge and information interactively; and
- the ability to use (new) technology interactively.

1.2.3. Investing in competencies for all

Countries should focus on and invest in key competencies for all that contribute to personal, social, and economic well-being. However, key competencies do substitute for domain- or job-specific knowledge and basic skills. These are necessary, and often constitute important assets for coping with the demands of particular contexts and situations.

1.2.4. A favorable environment

The acquisition and maintenance of competencies is not just a matter of personal effort, it is contingent upon the existence of a material, institutional and social favorable environment and appropriate socio-economic arrangements. It has to be recognised that investment in individually based competencies constitutes only one strategy for generating sustained socio-economic development and improving living conditions in the world. Economic and social policies related to the production and distribution of goods and services remain a key issues.

1.2.5. Competence development in the family, in school and other settings

A competence is developed through action and interaction in formal and informal educational contexts. Although school is and remains an important institution for providing learning and teaching opportunities, other institutions are also responsible for developing the necessary

competencies and the underlying mental disposition: e.g., the family, the workplace, the mass media, religious and cultural organisations. More research is necessary to explore the specific roles that the various institutions play or can play in enhancing the development of the key competencies.

1.2.6. Relevance for developing countries

Improving the quality of education and training, competence development, and lifelong learning strategies have become an important item on the political agenda for all countries in the light of globalisation.

Although DeSeCo was undertaken in the context of OECD countries, it is believed that it has relevance beyond the OECD context. There are at least three reasons for this supposition. First, globalisation is leading to increasing international standardisation of educational challenges and systems. Second, international organisations increasingly emphasise a largely common programme of competence development and lifelong learning. Third, the widespread adoption of international conventions that form the normative basis for the competencies defined in DeSeCo. However, the specific meaning and nature of competencies in national contexts in developing countries will have to be explored through dialogue.

1.3. INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY / ADULT LITERACY AND LIFE SKILLS SURVEY

Richard Desjardins

1.3.1. Introduction

The International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey form part of the same family of instruments as DeSeCo. In particular, they assess the domain of "Using tools interactively". However, it should be noted that an attempt to include "Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups", by developing the domain "Teamwork Skills", failed, as the items developed did not meet the standard for inclusion.

1.3.2. What are the objectives of IALS/ALL?

These programmes have a number of important objectives:

- to profile the level and distribution of skill in specific domains;
- to explore the social and economic determinants of objectively assessed skills;
- to explore the social, economic and health consequences associated with different skills levels;
- to understand how and why skills levels and profiles differ between and within countries;
- to understand the relationships between different types of skills; and
- to identify how skills profiles change.

1.3.3. What can you do with information derived from IALS/ALL type surveys?

These surveys have a powerful potential to deliver timely and policy relevant information. As such, they can help to formulate informed policies and decision-making concerning various issues, such as:

- learning access, participation and provision;
- the knowledge society, information age, technology and ICT;
- globalisation, competitiveness, efficiency, growth and development; and
- social inclusion, social cohesion, democracy and civic engagement.

In particular, the information derived from such surveys can enable the identification of particular areas or sub-populations that could benefit from targeted policies such as additional resources or special programmes. They can also allow for an improved identification of barriers to skill development, assist in selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches, and improve our understanding of skill development processes that operate across multiple settings and over the entire lifespan. Through a comparative framework, the survey also offers the possibility to identify effective versus failed policies from other countries or

regions. Finally, they have the potential to assist stakeholders with the following fundamental questions:

- What is the supply of skills in terms of quantity, quality and social distribution?
- How equitably are skills distributed socially?
- What is the quantity and quality of skills flowing out of various learning systems?
- What is the demand for skills and how is it expected to change?
- How efficient is the labour market in recognising, allocating, employing and rewarding skills?
- What are the most important policy relevant determinants of skills, which can be used as levers to encourage upskilling and development of adult skills

1.3.4. Examples of policy relevant findings and information

Results suggest that literacy does not perfectly relate to education. As such, the results are at variance with the way UNESCO classifies individuals who are functionally "literate" or "illiterate". In particular, the results suggest that significant proportions of adult populations in OECD countries have lower literacy skills than would otherwise be predicted by their level of education. Furthermore, because the survey also documents the incidence, intensity and social distribution of participation in formal and informal learning, at work, at home, in leisure and in the community, it is possible to further explore the process associated with skill formation beyond initial schooling. Although analyses are limited to a cross-sectional approach, results indicate that the development of skills beyond schooling depends strongly on the nature of one's work, as well as their literacy related habits in daily life. By extension this implies that work and other activities in adult life can compensate for low levels of initial schooling.

As expected from social and economic theory, the data supports the notion that at a macro level, social and economic development is positively associated with the average skill level of a country. Moreover, at an individual level, literacy proficiency appears to be rewarded in many labour markets independent of one's level of education and also reduces the probability that an individual will experience unemployment.

1.3.5. Relevance and applicability to developing countries

Literacy is essential to human and economic development globally and forms a crucial element of the development agenda. But we need to know how literacy is distributed in order to take action. Existing measures of literacy are inadequate. The experience of these surveys suggests that direct measurement works and has the potential to inform development policies, especially those relating to skill development.

IALS/ALL type surveys have the capacity to test relatively small samples of adult populations, which can be used to build up a profile of the whole population. This can be done for a range of literacy levels: from basic to higher-level skills. But so far the technology has been limited in its ability to distinguish basic tasks and those unable to read and write at all. Efforts are now being made to adapt current know-how such that higher levels of differentiation among low-literacy adults can be realised. In particular, tests for component

skills, such as letter and word recognition tests, listening ability, etc., which together form the elements needed to be functionally literate, are envisaged. Administering a short locator prior to testing would help to identify those who would be tested using either the IALS/ALL type test or component type tests. The sampling strategy would involve the over sampling of high-skill individuals and the under-sampling of low-skill individuals. This would allow for a representative profile while keeping sample sizes and costs relatively low.

1.4. CORE WORK SKILLS: ILO PERSPECTIVE AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Trevor Riordan and Gianni Rosas

1.4.1. The ILO's focus on core work skills for lifelong employability

The interaction of globalisation, technological development and changes in the organisation of work has resulted in the demand for higher and different skills. Skills have become increasingly important in determining an individual's ability to secure a job; retain employment; and move flexibly in the labour market. Maintaining workforce employability is one of the major challenges for individuals, enterprises, governments and society at large.

A new category of skills has become crucial for the individual's employability. This category has been variously labelled under key and core skills, key competencies, generic skills, etc. These skills differ both in number and type according to the time and the place. However, there is consensus over the requirement of higher and non-vocational skills that enable the individual to perform at work and in society. In other terms, an individual's employability is characterised by a set of vocational and core work skills that can be transferred between and across occupational sectors. They build upon and strengthen the foundation skills developed in basic education.

1.4.2. Core skills for the world of work

The ILO's work on core skills focuses on knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare individuals to compete effectively in the labour market and integrate fully into economic and social life. Education and training are the main competency-building instruments enabling human resources to face the rapidly changing and increasingly demanding world of work. Competence is a building block of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are acquired at different stages in life. Formal acquisition starts from basic education, moving on to initial training and continuing over the adult working lifespan. It is much more than linear, sequential acquisition of a narrow set of job-related skills and the ability to carry out specific tasks in a single workplace.

The skills needed to succeed in the workplace have changed significantly over the past three decades. Research from the USA has indicated that when employers are asked what competencies job applicants are missing they most frequently mention the following skills:

- learning how to learn;
- competence in reading, writing and computing;
- effective listening and oral communication skills;
- adaptability through creative thinking and problem-solving;
- personal management with strong self-esteem and initiative;
- interpersonal skills;
- the ability to work in teams or groups;
- basic technology skills; and leadership effectiveness.

The knowledge society and today's world of work call for individuals who are able to acquire, adapt, apply and transfer their knowledge to different contexts in a flexible manner and under varying technological conditions, and to respond independently and creatively.

1.4.3. The skills gap

To ensure the creation of an employable labour force, education and training systems need to

DEBATES IN
SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT

PAPER 8

Skills for Life
And Work

Bonn, Germany
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WORKING GROUP
FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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[1] This section reflects the third discussion in this series of discussion papers of the World Bank study. It is based on the February 2003 version of the study.

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DISCLAIMER

As with previous meetings and discussion papers, the Norrag team facilitating the process has sought to take the discussion beyond the official presentations of agencies. In the introduction to this paper, therefore, the tone is deliberately that of an applied researcher engaging with agency programmes. This includes critical reflection on both the contributions of participants in discussions and on the wider debates surrounding the focus of the meeting. The Working Group does not have official positions and this commentary does not seek such status.

INTRODUCTION

This ninth Working Group meeting was made possible by the continued support of SDC to its secretariat. However, this particular meeting would not have been possible without the kind invitation of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre in Bonn. We thank its Director, Rupert Maclean, for the invitation. Particular thanks go also to Hans Krönner. As well as making his usual contributions to the intellectual life of the Working Group, Hans led a support team from UNESCO with both efficiency and warmth.

The theme of the meeting reflected our visit to a UNESCO Centre, and the growing collaboration between UNESCO and ILO. Hence, this paper focuses in particular on attempts by these agencies, and others, to develop notions of life and work skills. As well as the discussion of such skills, the Working Group returned to the theme of the previous meeting and discussion paper with a session on the February 2003 version of the World Bank's study on skills development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report also contains the now traditional updating of policy positions of donor agencies. The Working Group particularly welcomes the presentation of two agencies that have not been "core" members of the discussions previously: the European Training Foundation and NORAD. We look forward to further and closer collaboration with these two agencies.

However, our welcoming of new friends is offset by the loss of a key actor in the field of skills development. Pekka Aro, Director of Skills Development in the ILO, should have been a participant at this meeting. Pekka died from SARS on April 6 in Beijing whilst on mission. Here we honour Pekka with some words by his close colleague, Trevor Riordan:

> There are no words to describe the magnitude of our loss. Pekka's driving energy and his love of a challenge are irreplaceable. Pekka had crucial skills for working with people in an international civil service organisation such as the ILO, combining patience with bureaucrats with a great sense of humour. Working with him taught me the importance of nurturing an idea rather than pushing too hard and too quickly.
>
> These skills were honed in his time in the Finnish trade union movement, where he was eventually to rise to be Deputy-Secretary General of the Chemical Workers' Union. He led the first trade union delegation to Bhopal and went on to author a book about ways of preventing such a disaster ever happening again.
>
> His enthusiasm for the field of skills development will be greatly missed, as will his ability to get things done in this difficult field. Pekka left the Skills Development

Department with a good start: the challenge is to make his vision a reality. He was a great human being who will be missed by everyone who knew him.

Michel Carton led the Secretariat and Kenneth King chaired the meeting. This paper is edited by Simon McGrath.

SECTION ONE: LIFE SKILLS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

1.1. LIFE AND WORK SKILLS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEBATES

Simon McGrath

1.1.1. What are skills for life and work?

Life skills or work skills appear to be a set of characteristics that are held to be essential to success or fulfillment in the world-of-work and/or life more generally. There is no agreed definition but a conceptual core for the notions can be discerned, particularly through the several years of operationalisation of the concept of work skills in countries such as Australia, UK and Singapore. Such work skills are typically oriented towards the kind of work that is an increasing proportion of economic activity in advanced economies.

Life skills are seen as those that promote better lives. They help people cope with growing uncertainty and rapid change. Such skills are believed by many to already be possessed by individuals and communities but are seen as being in need of further development. The particular set of life skills relevant to any setting must reflect the contextualised needs of the relevant individuals, communities and nations. Another aspect of the cluster of meanings surrounding life skills is that they are related to lifelong learning. Hence, they are developed throughout life and in various settings.

However, it is apparent that there is considerable variation in understandings of the notions of life skills and work skills, as well as disagreement about the relationship between the two concepts. On the one hand, it is argued that such skills are holistic and so should be seen as relevant to the whole of life. On the other, it is pointed out that work, employment and income are so central to life that the most important of life skills are those that are also work skills. Moreover, in contexts such as that of East Asia, it is not possible to see a set of skills for work as separate from skills for life. In such a view it makes no sense to separate preparation for work from preparation for citizenship. In societies where the two are not so finely intermeshed, it is clear that their relative importance becomes an issue for political not technical debate.

Moreover, there is disagreement as to whether what is being talked about should really be described as skills. The presentation on DeSeCo, for instance, suggests that the concept of competencies is a more appropriate one. That presentation suggests that competence combines notions of skill, values and attitudes into a conceptually coherent whole. However, it is apparent that the UNESCO vision of life skills is one in which not just skills but attitudes, values and knowledge are contained.

There is no agreement on an authoritative list of either life or work skills but some of the most common suggestions for both categories highlight considerable overlap, although also significant differences in emphases.

1.1.1.1. What are some of the more commonly identified life skills?

The following are by no means the sum of all possible life skills, but are common suggested categories:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Entrepreneurial
- HIV/AIDS awareness / prevention
- Gender sensitivity / assertiveness
- Food security
- Self-confidence
- Socialisation
- Coping with disability
- Learning to learn
- Autonomy
- Hygiene
- Nutrition
- Health
- Family planning
- Critical thinking
- Self-evaluation
- Peace skills
- Citizenship
- Personal financial management
- Environmental awareness
- Assertiveness
- Job acquisition skills

1.1.1.2. What are some of the more commonly identified work skills?

Many of the above would also appear in lists of work skills, although the latter might also include the following:

- Team work
- Communication
- ICT skills
- Technical SKILLS
- Resource management
- Occupational health
- Design
- Management
- Decision-making
- Time management
- Stress management
- Negotiation
- Information processing
- Foreign language skills

1.1.2. Are such skills universal?

From the above, it should be clear that there is no single universal list of such skills but that they find their meaning in specific contexts. Some of the elements of life skills have clearly emerged from psycho-social understandings that are culturally relevant in Western cultures, but not necessarily elsewhere. The skills that are deemed locally relevant will also reflect a range of contextual factors. Life skills for the informal sector; for rural development; for transition economies; or for post-conflict situations are all likely to be different. Equally, life skills in the context of high levels of internal or international migration are also likely to take on different forms. Levels of economic and technological development should play an important role in setting a life skills agenda, as will cultural norms.

1.1.3. Where does the notion come from?

Part of both the strength and weakness of the life/work skills concept is that it draws on a series of different discourses form very different times, places and ideological positions. This makes the notion appeal to a wide range of otherwise disparate interests but is can also lead to serious inconsistencies and contestations.

At least five points of origin can be found for the notion. First, in the African context, a concept of essential life skills can be dated back 80 years to the missions of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions. Indeed, the origins lie further back in education for blacks in post-Civil War USA. In Africa, an external call to limit education to life skills such as hygiene, nutrition and reading the Bible was presented as providing a more appropriate education than the classical model present in many mission schools. That the Phelps-Stokes call was taken up most clearly in the racist context of South Africa is a negative legacy for THE modern notion of life skills.

In OECD contexts, notions of an essential set of skills can be linked to three important debates that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, although they are still of influence nowadays. Concerns about rapidly rising youth unemployment during the 1970s began a process of refocusing education and training for those who had "failed", both in the classroom and the labour market. Given the identification of this group as failures, the set of skills were extremely basic. Indeed, critics described them as essentially empty of content. Moreover, these skills took on a class dimension and seemed to be concerned with teaching marginalised youths to behave in ways that were considered appropriate by the middle class. In certain countries, it is in this light that life skills are most likely to be perceived.

The youth unemployment issue was intimately connected with other elements of an overall restructuring of advanced economies, and their workplaces. The rise of new technologies and the decline of old industries led to a growing focus on a set of generic work skills that would be vital to success in the new economy. In some cases, the impetus towards such skills was clearly from the side of employers. However, in other contexts, such as Australia and South Africa, trade union movements played an important role in trying to give these skills meaning and content. This contestation points to the way that life and work skills may be interpreted

within different ideological positions, but also how such interpretations are linked to contestations over policies and practices.

Both of these processes were linked to complex and contested trends within education systems that had their origins in the period before the economic crisis of the early 1970s. From at least the mid-1960s, "progressive" calls to make education less bound up with "elite" knowledge blended with behaviourist psychology to begin a call for outcomes-based education (OBE). By the 1990s, OBE's spread had been far extended as it took on the further connotation of being in line with neoliberal concerns with efficiency. In all of these elements, there was a tendency to prefer practice to theory.

Outside education and training contexts, the notion of life skills took on a specific meaning in the area of health promotion that was apparently shorn of these more ideologised meanings. It has been suggested that it is from here that life skills entered into Dakar goals 3 and 6. The notion of life skills derives its current legitimacy from its explicit location in this international convention. However, its perceived meaning is likely to be influenced by all of the above. This may have profound implications for the success of life skills programmes.

1.1.4. Why might they be important?

Supporters of life/work skills claim that conventional education and training provision is not promoting sufficient development of the skills necessary for economic and social success. It is argued that a new focus on these essential skills is vital in the light of major challenges such as poverty, inequality and mass unemployment. The further challenges of globalisation and the HIV/AIDS pandemic also lend support to arguments for more focused interventions to respond to skills and knowledge gaps. Crucially, it is argued that a period of rapid technological change renders older, static models of knowledge and skills acquisition inadequate. Instead, skills that facilitate lifelong learning and competency upgrading are increasingly important.

1.1.5. If they are important, what needs to be done in the areas of policy and programmes?

These are powerful arguments for suggesting a sharper focus of policy and practice on such skills. Indeed, this is strongly reflected in international trends. Nonetheless, it is necessary to reflect critically on how such programmes are to be developed. Clearly this needs to be a matter for national stakeholders. There are well-established programmes for work skills development in several advanced economies that can provide useful pointers to such stakeholders. However, the concept of life skills is not as well operatinalised and it is difficult to find clear pointers of good practices here.

The roles of the market, of workplaces and of public and private providers are areas of uncertainty and ideological contestation wherever such programmes are to be attempted. Particularly in developing countries, it is not apparent how easy it will be to reorient existing public providers. It is also important to consider what incentives there are for private-for-profit providers to engage with such initiatives. Crucially, there is need for considerable developmental work regarding the monitoring and evaluation of such programmes. For

instance, the South African interest in work skills is perhaps the most widely known example from the developing world, but brings with it no clear strategy for monitoring and evaluating the work skills experiment.

Several WGICSD Discussion Papers have noted the shifts in donor programmes and policies in recent years. The shift of bilateral agencies behind sectoral programmes and budgetary support makes it unlikely that such donors will prioritise the innovative piloting that would be necessary to develop and share good practices in the area of life skills, regardless of their merits. It is significant that the presentations in this Discussion Paper are all related to multilateral agency programmes, whether from UNESCO, ILO, ETF or the OECD.

1.1.6. What are the challenges facing the delivery of core skills programmes?

I have alrady highlighted the strong case for a greater focus on skills for life and work. However, it is essential that issues of delivery and assessment be considered critically.

There has been no consensus over whether such skills should be delivered as a free-standing intervention or whether they should be embedded in more conventional programmes. Evidence on the performance of either approach is inconclusive.

Such a debate is closely linked to the danger of curricular overload. If teaching time is to be devoted to developing life skills, will this be at the expense of other skills or knowledge? Often, such a decision is not made explicitly but is left to teachers to decide on an *ad hoc* basis as they are forced to deal with too many demands on learners' time.

The challenge of overload is linked to the failure to understand the complexities in introducing these skills alongside existing delivery of necessary academic and technical content. In some school settings, the shift towards learning outcomes linked to core skills has led to an excessive downgrading of the centrality of knowledge content. In technical settings, there is a danger that the logic of learner-centred acquisition of core skills leads to a weakening of the crucial role played by instructor modelling of appropriate techniques and behaviours.

Experiences to date also raise concerns about modes of assessment. It is not always clear how the development of these skills is to be demonstrated. Most existing systems for measuring such skills or competencies have proved highly complex, bureaucratic and expensive. The notion of life/work skills is closely related to the rise of lifelong learning across formal, non-formal and informal settings. This points to the need for functioning systems of recognition and accreditation of prior learning if the full range of such skills is to be acknowledged. However, such systems have proven very difficult to put into operation. This has meant that the advantages that such programmes were intended to bring in terms of equity and access have remained primarily rhetorical.

The issue of lifelong learning also raises questions about whether life/work skills need to be acquired in a particular order and at specific points in individuals' life cycles. Any programme to develop such skills needs to address these issues.

In some settings, it has been clear that life/work skills are seen as remedial or compensatory. Just like education for all, does a slogan of "life/work skills for all" hide a practice in which

they are only for the poor or marginalised? Should it be assumed that the better-off already have these skills? This is unlikely to be true for all skills and all contexts.

Many of the life skills noted above seek explicitly to change behaviours. However, this means that there is likely to be resistance and environmental barriers to the development of certain skills. Some of the evidence on attempts to develop life skills points to the serious problems in attempting such interventions where there is an underdeveloped democratic culture of learning and teaching.

Experiences frequently suggest that programmes built around such skills are highly resource-intensive. This is in terms of both teaching and learning materials and the involvement of highly skilled teachers. This points to serious difficulties in rolling out such programmes nationally in poorer countries. National programmes risk further disadvantaging learners in resource-poor environments, as has been alleged in South Africa. This can have the perverse effect of shifting comparative advantage in national tests even further towards the richer learners and institutions.

Such programmes cannot succeed without adequate educator involvement. Too often, decisions to introduce such ideas ignore educators' concerns, which are dismissed as simply being the result of their innate conservatism. Moreover, too many programmes have been implemented without adequate preparation of educators through properly resourced programmes of pre- and in-service training. Of course, such weaknesses are not specific to skills programmes, but are far too typical of educational reforms in general.

None of these challenges are insurmountable. Their inclusion here is not meant to indicate that such programmes are unwise. Rather, they are intended to remind policymakers and agency staff that such reforms are not simple solutions but complex and long-term processes.

1.1.7. What kind of external environment do they need in order to flourish?

Such programmes can tend to assume a consensus between individuals, unions and employers that is often imaginary. Issues of transparency and portability of skills are more in the interests of the learner than that of the existing or potential employer. A clear signal of the skills of an individual'S work potentially brings two problems for an employer. First, it provides a basis for wage claims from the worker that cannot be deflected so easily as if skills are less transparently signalled. Second, it also signals the worth of the worker to other employers, encouraging problems of worker retention. In many settings, labour market segmentation has a degree of functionality for employers. Programmes to accredit life and work skills, therefore, may be less attractive to them than is generally assumed.

Moreover, the language of life and work skills tends to lead to the assumption that employers have an interest in increasing skills in general. As noted above, however, increased skills run the risk of leading to increased wages or loss of staff. The linking of skills with technological change makes it appear that it will always be in the interest of employers to increase skills in spite of such risks. However, this ignores the possibility for employers of increasing profitability through low skill strategies. The balance of the large research literature on skills in Anglophone economies in recent years tends towards a picture of a split between a smaller group of employers who value higher skills among their workers and a larger group of

employers that are following a low skill route. This has led to a widespread academic critique that core skills in practice have a low rather than high skill orientation.

Evidence to date also suggests a challenge in moving beyond a large employer domination of standards generating exercises, which will affect core skills as well as more traditional notions of skill. They have far better resources for involvement than smaller enterprises but this can lead to standards that are inappropriate for smaller firms. The impact of this is exacerbated as smaller employers are less likely to provide structured skills development and are more likely to judge skills systems as excessively complex and bureaucratic. Such problems are even more apparent in informal sector contexts, which predominate in most poorer countries.

1.1.8. What is the likely future of core skills programmes?

There is wide-ranging support for programmes designed to develop skills for life and work internationally. However, there is also considerable scepticism and negative research evidence about many existing practices. There seem to be strong merits in the principles underpinning such programmes. However, their future development will be shaped by two key factors. First, as such programmes continue to develop internationally, they will need to address the weaknesses that they have experienced in their early developmental phase. Part of this addressing of weaknesses could profitably BE through more RIGOrous evaluations than has been the norm to date. Second, given the limited resources for education and training innovation nationally and amongst donors, such programmes will have to compete for resources against a range of other possible interventions. Notwithstanding the merits of skills for life and work, they may be judged to be luxuries in some countries, particularly the poorest.

1.2. A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE OECD PROJECT DEFINITION AND SELECTION OF COMPETENCIES (DeSeCo)

Dominique Simone Rychen

1.2.1. Introduction

What competencies do we need for an overall successful life and a well-functioning society? This question was the starting point of the OECD's programme on the "Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations" (DeSeCo).

The purpose of DeSeCo is to provide a theoretical and conceptual basis for defining and selecting key competencies and a solid foundation for the continued development of statistical indicators of individually-based competencies in the future. It also aims to establish a reference point for interpreting empirical results in relation to the outcomes of learning and teaching. Furthermore, it offers an input to the debate about which competencies should be given priority when education curricula and training programmes are being reformed or reorganised.

DeSeCo relies on three assumptions about key competencies:

- that they contribute to highly valued outcomes at the individual and societal level in terms of an overall successful life and a well-functioning society;
- that they are instrumental for meeting important complex demands and challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts; and
- that they are important to all individuals.

1.2.2. Three broad categories of key competencies as a conceptual basis

Based on an interdisciplinary analysis, DeSeCo idenitified three types of key competencies:

1.2.2.1. Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups

Living and participating in multicultural societies and coping with increasing individual and social diversity requires the ability to interact and coexist with people who do not necessarily speak the same language or share the same memory and history. The competencies in this category are particularly relevant for creating social capital and include:

- the ability to relate well to others;
- the ability to cooperate, work in teams; and
- the ability to manage and resolve conflict.

1.2.2.2. Acting autonomously

To act autonomously incorporates two central interrelated ideas: the development of personal identity, and the exercise of relative autonomy in the sense of deciding, choosing and acting in a given context. The following key competencies have been identified:

- the ability to act within the big picture/the larger context;
- the ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects; and
- the ability to assert and defend rights, needs, interests.

1.2.2.3. Using tools interactively

To use a tool interactively assumes not only a familiarity with the tool itself but also an understanding of how the tool changes the way one can interact with the world. Underlying this is the idea that we encounter our world through our cognitive, social, and physical tools. These encounters shape how we make sense of the world and become competent in interaction. The following key competencies have been identified:

- the ability to use language, symbols, and text interactively;
- the ability to use knowledge and information interactively; and
- the ability to use (new) technology interactively.

1.2.3. Investing in competencies for all

Countries should focus on and invest in key competencies for all that contribute to personal, social, and economic well-being. However, key competencies do substitute for domain- or job-specific knowledge and basic skills. These are necessary, and often constitute important assets for coping with the demands of particular contexts and situations.

1.2.4. A favorable environment

The acquisition and maintenance of competencies is not just a matter of personal effort, it is contingent upon the existence of a material, institutional and social favorable environment and appropriate socio-economic arrangements. It has to be recognised that investment in individually based competencies constitutes only one strategy for generating sustained socio-economic development and improving living conditions in the world. Economic and social policies related to the production and distribution of goods and services remain a key issues.

1.2.5. Competence development in the family, in school and other settings

A competence is developed through action and interaction in formal and informal educational contexts. Although school is and remains an important institution for providing learning and teaching opportunities, other institutions are also responsible for developing the necessary

competencies and the underlying mental disposition: e.g., the family, the workplace, the mass media, religious and cultural organisations. More research is necessary to explore the specific roles that the various institutions play or can play in enhancing the development of the key competencies.

1.2.6. Relevance for developing countries

Improving the quality of education and training, competence development, and lifelong learning strategies have become an important item on the political agenda for all countries in the light of globalisation.

Although DeSeCo was undertaken in the context of OECD countries, it is believed that it has relevance beyond the OECD context. There are at least three reasons for this supposition. First, globalisation is leading to increasing international standardisation of educational challenges and systems. Second, international organisations increasingly emphasise a largely common programme of competence development and lifelong learning. Third, the widespread adoption of international conventions that form the normative basis for the competencies defined in DeSeCo. However, the specific meaning and nature of competencies in national contexts in developing countries will have to be explored through dialogue.

1.3. INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY / ADULT LITERACY AND LIFE SKILLS SURVEY

Richard Desjardins

1.3.1. Introduction

The International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey form part of the same family of instruments as DeSeCo. In particular, they assess the domain of "Using tools interactively". However, it should be noted that an attempt to include "Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups", by developing the domain "Teamwork Skills", failed, as the items developed did not meet the standard for inclusion.

1.3.2. What are the objectives of IALS/ALL?

These programmes have a number of important objectives:

- to profile the level and distribution of skill in specific domains;
- to explore the social and economic determinants of objectively assessed skills;
- to explore the social, economic and health consequences associated with different skills levels;
- to understand how and why skills levels and profiles differ between and within countries;
- to understand the relationships between different types of skills; and
- to identify how skills profiles change.

1.3.3. What can you do with information derived from IALS/ALL type surveys?

These surveys have a powerful potential to deliver timely and policy relevant information. As such, they can help to formulate informed policies and decision-making concerning various issues, such as:

- learning access, participation and provision;
- the knowledge society, information age, technology and ICT;
- globalisation, competitiveness, efficiency, growth and development; and
- social inclusion, social cohesion, democracy and civic engagement.

In particular, the information derived from such surveys can enable the identification of particular areas or sub-populations that could benefit from targeted policies such as additional resources or special programmes. They can also allow for an improved identification of barriers to skill development, assist in selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches, and improve our understanding of skill development processes that operate across multiple settings and over the entire lifespan. Through a comparative framework, the survey also offers the possibility to identify effective versus failed policies from other countries or

regions. Finally, they have the potential to assist stakeholders with the following fundamental questions:

- What is the supply of skills in terms of quantity, quality and social distribution?
- How equitably are skills distributed socially?
- What is the quantity and quality of skills flowing out of various learning systems?
- What is the demand for skills and how is it expected to change?
- How efficient is the labour market in recognising, allocating, employing and rewarding skills?
- What are the most important policy relevant determinants of skills, which can be used as levers to encourage upskilling and development of adult skills

1.3.4. Examples of policy relevant findings and information

Results suggest that literacy does not perfectly relate to education. As such, the results are at variance with the way UNESCO classifies individuals who are functionally "literate" or "illiterate". In particular, the results suggest that significant proportions of adult populations in OECD countries have lower literacy skills than would otherwise be predicted by their level of education. Furthermore, because the survey also documents the incidence, intensity and social distribution of participation in formal and informal learning, at work, at home, in leisure and in the community, it is possible to further explore the process associated with skill formation beyond initial schooling. Although analyses are limited to a cross-sectional approach, results indicate that the development of skills beyond schooling depends strongly on the nature of one's work, as well as their literacy related habits in daily life. By extension this implies that work and other activities in adult life can compensate for low levels of initial schooling.

As expected from social and economic theory, the data supports the notion that at a macro level, social and economic development is positively associated with the average skill level of a country. Moreover, at an individual level, literacy proficiency appears to be rewarded in many labour markets independent of one's level of education and also reduces the probability that an individual will experience unemployment.

1.3.5. Relevance and applicability to developing countries

Literacy is essential to human and economic development globally and forms a crucial element of the development agenda. But we need to know how literacy is distributed in order to take action. Existing measures of literacy are inadequate. The experience of these surveys suggests that direct measurement works and has the potential to inform development policies, especially those relating to skill development.

IALS/ALL type surveys have the capacity to test relatively small samples of adult populations, which can be used to build up a profile of the whole population. This can be done for a range of literacy levels: from basic to higher-level skills. But so far the technology has been limited in its ability to distinguish basic tasks and those unable to read and write at all. Efforts are now being made to adapt current know-how such that higher levels of differentiation among low-literacy adults can be realised. In particular, tests for component

skills, such as letter and word recognition tests, listening ability, etc., which together form the elements needed to be functionally literate, are envisaged. Administering a short locator prior to testing would help to identify those who would be tested using either the IALS/ALL type test or component type tests. The sampling strategy would involve the over sampling of high-skill individuals and the under-sampling of low-skill individuals. This would allow for a representative profile while keeping sample sizes and costs relatively low.

1.4. CORE WORK SKILLS: ILO PERSPECTIVE AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Trevor Riordan and Gianni Rosas

1.4.1. The ILO's focus on core work skills for lifelong employability

The interaction of globalisation, technological development and changes in the organisation of work has resulted in the demand for higher and different skills. Skills have become increasingly important in determining an individual's ability to secure a job; retain employment; and move flexibly in the labour market. Maintaining workforce employability is one of the major challenges for individuals, enterprises, governments and society at large.

A new category of skills has become crucial for the individual's employability. This category has been variously labelled under key and core skills, key competencies, generic skills, etc. These skills differ both in number and type according to the time and the place. However, there is consensus over the requirement of higher and non-vocational skills that enable the individual to perform at work and in society. In other terms, an individual's employability is characterised by a set of vocational and core work skills that can be transferred between and across occupational sectors. They build upon and strengthen the foundation skills developed in basic education.

1.4.2. Core skills for the world of work

The ILO's work on core skills focuses on knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare individuals to compete effectively in the labour market and integrate fully into economic and social life. Education and training are the main competency-building instruments enabling human resources to face the rapidly changing and increasingly demanding world of work. Competence is a building block of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are acquired at different stages in life. Formal acquisition starts from basic education, moving on to initial training and continuing over the adult working lifespan. It is much more than linear, sequential acquisition of a narrow set of job-related skills and the ability to carry out specific tasks in a single workplace.

The skills needed to succeed in the workplace have changed significantly over the past three decades. Research from the USA has indicated that when employers are asked what competencies job applicants are missing they most frequently mention the following skills:

- learning how to learn;
- competence in reading, writing and computing;
- effective listening and oral communication skills;
- adaptability through creative thinking and problem-solving;
- personal management with strong self-esteem and initiative;
- interpersonal skills;
- the ability to work in teams or groups;
- basic technology skills; and leadership effectiveness.

The knowledge society and today's world of work call for individuals who are able to acquire, adapt, apply and transfer their knowledge to different contexts in a flexible manner and under varying technological conditions, and to respond independently and creatively.

1.4.3. The skills gap

To ensure the creation of an employable labour force, education and training systems need to adjust and quickly react to globalisation, technological change and new forms of work organisation. In reality, skills mismatches between labour supply and demand still persist in several countries. For instance, in many developing countries workers often lack basic literacy skills required for learning and "learnability", as well as for employability and access to decent forms of work.

Higher vulnerability, limited responses to and means to cope with market risks seem to characterise many developing countries where the magnitude and impact of global markets is different than in the industrialised world. Recent economic crises affecting several countries and regions have highlighted the volatility of global markets, and the social pressures they produce, not least in the form of massive lay-offs of workers.

Governments and social partners are hard-pressed to find ways for relocating retrenched workers. Training and retraining, micro-entrepreneurship and credit schemes have been widely used to offer hopes for new jobs or sources of income. In addition, temporary job creation in public works has been used as a means of releasing social tensions. However, these measures have not always produced the expected results in terms of helping the labour force shift within and across sectors or into new areas within the same companies.

Existing training programmes do not appear to be working as well as is intended. Too often, their conventional and narrow offerings develop skills that are insufficient to increase or maintain employability of individuals throughout their working lives.

Increasing rates of youth unemployment are a shared concern between industrialised and developing countries. One of the reasons why many young people face difficulties in securing jobs is related to the level and quality of education and training and its relevance to labour market requirements. A major task for public policy is to provide adequate youth education and training policies, as well as support programmes that address the skills gap and reduce the hardship and length of transition from school to work.

Rapid changes in the world economy have increased the risk of labour market exclusion. This leads to a growing incidence of poverty, inequality, economic vulnerability and social exclusion. The most affected groups include women, long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, indigenous populations and rural and urban informal sector workers.

Education and skills alone do not create jobs. They need to be part of an integrated policy approach for promoting growth and shared prosperity. Although core skills are not the panacea for resolving the unemployment problem, their development constitutes an important part of a reform package to prepare individual men and women for the knowledge society. They can play a key role in promoting equity in employment outcomes through the enhancement of employability of many disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

1.4.4. Core work skills for all

Developing core work skills and lifelong learning for all is an enormous challenge for any country. Success will require pursuing and advancing the education and training reforms that many countries have already started.

The issue of core work skills is seen as central to the work of the ILO and its tripartite constituency. Draft Conclusions concerning human resources training and development of the International Labour Conference refer to the role of training in helping individuals to develop their employability "by providing general core work skills, and the underpinning knowledge, and industry-based and professional competencies which are portable and facilitate the transition into the world of work".

1.4.5. ILO's earlier and current work on core work skills

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the ILO has promoted and pilot-tested the introduction of core work skills as part of other technical assistance programmes to developing and transition countries. These skills have been integrated at different levels of skills development programmes, including train-the-trainer activities, curricula development and training delivery.

For instance, core work skills development was part of the technical assistance programme to the Polish Ministry of Labour. The programme, "Development of Adult Training", which was implemented during the period 1993-98, aimed to improve productivity, promote inward investment and enhance labour force mobility through retraining of unemployed and low-skilled workers. To respond to the new labour market requirements emerging from the transition period, core work skills were introduced in the areas related to new forms of work (e.g., learning a new job, team-work, problem-solving and decision-making) and increased competitiveness (e.g., quality awareness, customer satisfaction, etc.).

The "Formujer" regional programme in Latin America addressed gender and poverty through skills development programmes. This was implemented in Argentina, Bolivia and Costa Rica. This programme focused on the reorientation of vocational training systems to changes in the world of work by ensuring that gender and poverty issues were mainstreamed in curricula design and evaluation of vocational training programmes. Core skills introduced by this programme emphasized the empowerment of the individual in society (citizenship skills) and the world of work (employability skills), as well as the role of learning and training for the definition of both a professional and life project.

In Zambia, the youth performance programme targeted young unemployed in possession of vocational skills but lacking core work skills. Stand-alone training programmes were developed to bridge the gap and focused on self-confidence building skills (self-esteem, assertiveness, initiative, building inner strength, etc.) and labour market navigation skills (e.g., job-hunting, presentation, choosing a career, etc.). More than 1 000 people participated in the training programmes conducted in 1999, before the programme moved towards developing the competencies of trainers and curricula developers on these non-vocational skills.

A number of lessons have been learned through the pilot implementation of programmes focusing on key competencies:

- there is tremendous scope for the development of core work skills that enhance workforce employability in developing countries;

- both cultural diversity and different levels of economic and social development make it impossible to identify a common set of core work skills that can be applied in all contexts;

- there is a need to promote international cooperation and exchange of information on national core work skills practices between industrialised and developing countries. At the same time, applied-research should focus more on non-industrialised countries that have developed and introduced their own methodologies, programmes and skills;

- given the growing number of regional integration agreements, it would be worth exploring possibilities for the development of common frameworks for introducing policy reforms and programmes on core work skills in countries with a certain degree of geographical and occupational mobility.

The ILO's Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability seeks to promote greater investment in skills and training so that men and women have enhanced and equal access to productive and decent work. Through the vehicles of advocacy, knowledge development and services to ILO constituents, it promotes the improvement of training policies and programmes worldwide, with special emphasis on training strategies that support the integration of groups that may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

This Programme is currently undertaking research on core work skills with the objective of raising awareness and understanding in non-industrialised countries on the integration of these skills with vocational skills and promote employability and lifelong learning. The aim is to identify good practices, methodologies and enabling mechanisms that can be shared amongst countries in the introduction of policies and programmes on core work skills. Alliances and knowledge sharing between industrialised and developing countries, as well as among international development agencies, need to be explored and exploited further in order to promote individuals' employability through sustained economic growth and within more equitable societies.

1.5. THE LIFE SKILLS DIMENSION OF THE DAKAR FRAMEWORK ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

Wataru Iwamoto and Anna- Maria Hoffman

1.5.1. Introduction

The theme of life skills is apparent in EFA goals 3 and 6:

EFA goal 3 : "Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes"

EFA goal 6: "Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills"

1.5.2. What are life skills?

Life skills is a concept that emerges from field experiences. It lays emphasis on a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills. The concept of life skills refers to psycho-social abilities (use of knowledge, values and attitudes). However, the term has often been confused with the area that it is applied to. Attempts at listing life skills have been abandoned. They are too dependent of socio-cultural contexts.

Nonetheless, it is possible to group life skills into three categories: cognitive skills, personal skills and inter-personal skills. Together with practical skills, they can be seen as building on the four pillars of education identified in the *Delors Report*:

- learning to know;
- learning to be;
- learning to live together; and
- learning to do.

1.5.3. Life Skills and EFA

In the context of EFA goal 3, life skills programmes need to focus on access for all through various delivery options, notably for those who drop out or complete schooling without acquiring life skills. They must also aim at developing capacities: to work; to participate fully in society; to take contol of their own lives; and to continue learning.

In the context of goal 6, there must be a focus on both teachers and learners. There must also be a focus on both curriculum and learning materials. Learning environments and learning outcomes will also require considerable attention. Assessing learning outcomes must take into account the acquisition of skills; their impact on behaviour; and social outcomes.

1.6. CORE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: THE KAZAKHSTAN CASE

Shaizada Tasbulatova

1.6.1. Introduction

In 1998-2000, the ETF implemented a project on standards development in response to requests from six Central Asian Republics for support in establishing a procedure and methodology for the development of VET standards in their countries.

During the project it became clear that there was a need to include new skill requirements into existing VET standards that were, in the main, concerned with the knowledge and skills underpinning the "technical" activities of the occupations and professions chosen for study. Some teams proposed the addition of "core" or "enterprise" skills to better meet the needs of the new market economies. However, it was also clear that there was considerable confusion about the definition and use of core and enterprise skills.

Core skills are generally defined as the personal and inter-personal skills that are necessary in order to allow individuals and groups to cope with and themselves create changes and innovations. They provide for the successful adaptation of workers to a higher level of uncertainty, complexity and changes in society and in the modern labour market.

1.6.2. The process

The general consensus was that although it might be desirable for the Kazakhstan economy to develop a cadre of business entrepreneurs capable of starting chains of small businesses, this was not a realistic objective for this project. Small business development is a complex economic process that is not solely dependent on vocational education and training. This process of clarification resulted in the team proposing a more structured objective for the project. This was: "to strengthen the ability of teachers and students to act effectively and flexibly while seeking a job, entering a job and adapting oneself to the new work place".

Having gone some way towards clarifying the meaning of "entrepreneurial", the team looked at the core skills that they thought to be necessary to meet the main objectives. They developed learning outcomes that described what students should be able to do, rather than lists of skills that they should possess, or the topics that have to be taught. Two important outcomes were identified:

- skills related to finding a job, an increasingly important and challenging aspect of an individual's professional career; and
- skills that improve employability and prepare students to identify and adapt rapidly to the standards, work organisation and behaviour requirements of the modern workplace.

A detailed list of capabilities attached to these skills was then developed (e.g., communicating using the phone, active listening, identifying and obtaining information, planning and implementing, etc.), which represented the local team's opinion of the outcomes required to

enhance employability in Kazakhstan. The list benefited from considerable employer input. It was designed to be modified as conditions change.

The local team conducted in parallel some research by analysing the curriculum content of a number of existing VET standards. They found that hardly any of the content was designed to develop core skills.

The need to encourage more team work (a key core skill) and provide for more cooperative as opposed to individual learning among students within the learning environment is one key issue to have come out of the project. Another is the need to teach students how to plan, make and take decisions and communicate effectively with their peers.

1.6.3. Embedding core skills in teaching methods

Long discussions amongst local experts took place on how the enterprise and core skills identified should be presented in the learning materials. There are essentially two options. The first is to develop specific materials designed to develop the groups of skills. In effect, this means lesson plans to teach the skills. The second is to embed the skills in professional or technical training by designing work related activities that are then "enriched" with the core and enterprise skills.

The first option is favoured in settings where direct teaching and instruction is the preferred learning method. Lessons are developed for communication skills, problem solving, planning, etc. This is the more familiar route for colleagues in Kazakhstan and many other countries from the region. However, the local team made a commitment to a more learner-centred approach. In this light, the development of instructional materials seemed to be a retrograde step. Teachers realised that students cannot be instructed to be enterprising. To achieve enterprising outcomes, they need to move to learning methods that encourage enterprising behaviours.

The discussion turned to the second option. This meant exploring how the skills could be "embedded" in technical activities so that the technical, core and enterprise skills could be developed in parallel and in context. Much of the research into these issues in Europe has shown that the separation of core skills into specific topics is fraught with difficulties. Taken out of context, these "generic" skills lose much of their meaning and relevance.

1.6.4. Employers' involvement

A questionnaire was sent to employers and then analysed. A "reference group" of employers was selected to comment on the validity of the existing list of skills and update it as necessary. For each of the skills, employers were asked to identify different key occupations in their organisation and to rate each skill. Employers were also asked to propose any skills that were missing from the proposed list. This list is being monitored and will be used to update the original list of skills as patterns emerge. The questionnaire has now been entered on a database so that changes can be tracked for requirements in different occupations, industries and enterprises.

Assessment criteria were also developed, together with a "manual" on how to develop more competence based assessment criteria, i.e., assessment aiming at employers who want information about the ability of students to perform in the work place.

1.6.5. Concluding remarks

The work started in this project is important. All transition economies face the challenge of developing competent people to meet the requirements of a market economy. A key to understanding these requirements is the recognition of the importance of what are variously called "key", "core", "generic", "entrepreneurial" and "enterprise" skills. What these skills have in common is that they express the development of the autonomous and competent skilled person. Such a person is able to contribute to the planning and organisation of the work process, to take responsibility for quality assurance and to adapt to new economic requirements. This project has demonstrated a simple but effective method that will help to make that vision a reality.

SECTION TWO: THE WORLD BANK STUDY ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA – A REVISITING[2]

2.1 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Richard K. Johanson and Arvil V. Adams

2.1.1. Why skills development?

Skills development increases productivity and output for the economy. This is clearly related to increased earnings for the individual (and, hence, poverty reduction), as well as increased profits for the enterprise. Moreover, skills development is linked to improvements in job mobility, use of technology, and growth.

2.1.2. Five important messages

The key lessons of the study are as follows:

- raising productivity in the informal economy is important in Africa;
- TVET reforms of the 1990s show promise;
- reforming public TVET remains a challenge;
- non-government TVET is a significant source of skills supply; and
- management and financing are powerful reform instruments.

2.1.3. Clarifying the role of Government

The role of Government in TVET was perhaps the most controversial and misunderstood element of the World Bank's 1991 policy paper. Therefore, it is important to clarify what the Bank is saying about TVET, based on its review of experiences in Africa. There is a clear and important role for Government in TVET systems. It is crucial that they get policies right. They can play a key role in encouraging quality and efficiency through increased competition amongst providers. There is an important place for regulation that is rigourous without being excessively onerous. States have an important part to play in promoting access and equity in TVET systems.

Market failures do occur in the training sectors of Sub-Saharan countries. Therefore, there will be a role for Governments in financing and providing training. Market failures also point to the need to build market institutions: another important area for state involvement. Finally, Governments can play an important role in research, evaluation and dissemination of important lessons in TVET.

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[2] This section reflects the third discussion in this series of discussion papers of the World Bank study. It is based on the February 2003 version of the study.

2.1.4. The Role of International Assistance

International agencies, such as the World Bank, also have an important role to play in strengthening TVET systems in the region. This role includes:

- piloting and innovation to reach the informal economy with skills;
- developing market institutions;
- supporting TVET reform agendas for management and finance;
- supporting the development of performance-based delivery; and
- selective support to building training capacity.

2.2. THE WORLD BANK STUDY ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Simon McGrath

2.2.1. Introductory comments

Through this study, the World Bank has done an important service to the field of vocational education and training / skills development by raising the international profile of this oft-neglected field. The positive nuancing of the World Bank's previous position in this area that is present in parts of the study is also to be welcomed.

At the outset it is important to acknowledge that the study does state that its findings cannot easily be extrapolated to South Africa (page 13). However, the South African case does provide a useful analytical and empirical standpoint from which to engage with a study that, from its title, is about the region in which South Africa is the dominant economic player. Moreover, South Africa is a relatively rich source of data and analysis on skills development, from which to base a response to this study. Finally, the study does make frequent reference to South Africa in building its analysis and it is appropriate, therefore, that the merits of such references are critically examined. The strength or weakness of that analysis is likely to provide insights into the likely overall merits of the data, its analysis and the subsequent recommendations.

2.2.2. The study's orientation

The study is open about its limited focus on economic questions about skills development. However, this is not sufficient. There are non-economic elements to the role of skills development. Moreover, there is a rich political economy and sociology literature about skills development that the study ignores. To ignore such perspectives is to impoverish the study intellectually.

2.2.3. The study's analysis from a South African perspective

South Africa is not like the rest of the region in many ways. Nonetheless, its experiences and evidence on skills development are important. South African public sector training is not failing, although it does face significant challenges. Quality and efficiency are relatively good. Enrolments are increasing rapidly in the public system. Colleges have considerable autonomy and exhibit growing curricular responsiveness. They are relatively pro-equity institutions, probably comparing favourably with private-for-profit providers, and have shown remarkable shifts in enrolments by gender and race in the last decade.

The South African case also provides little encouragement for any call to increase the private training sector. Research in this area is only beginning but it is not clear that private provision is either more pro-equity or of better quality than public provision. The South African

experience does seem largely to confirm the study's arguments that private provision is strong and responsive in some areas such as ICTs, but also the negative story of urban bias.

Evidence from South Africa appears to bring into serious question the very positive story that the study tells about enterprise-based training in the formal sector. It is clear that some large employers in South Africa have a very good training record. However, it must also be noted that most of the best performers historically have been parastatals. Research over two decades has pointed to the reluctance of employers to train. Currently the aggregate rate for "structured training" in South Africa is approximately 11%. Moreover, there is considerable concern about the quality and length of much of this training.

2.2.4. The study's representation of South Africa

Although the study makes it clear that its findings should not be generalised to South Africa, it does use South Africa as part of its argument. Some of the representation of South African experience is reasonable. However, much of it is confusing and inaccurate. Part of the problem comes from a reliance on outdated accounts of a rapidly evolving system. These inaccuracies inevitably reduce confidence in the rest of the report, regardless of the justice of such concerns.

2.2.5. The study's conclusions and recommendations

How much sense do the study's conclusions and recommendations make from a South African perspective? First, I will examine the *conclusions*.

Attention to informal economies is important. This clearly is important. Nonetheless, as the WGICSD has noted, there is a danger in abandoning the strengths of public training for formal employment in seeking to meet informal economy needs.

Reforms in skills development are promising. This is plausible for some elements of reform in some countries but is perhaps an over-optimistic generalisation. Some reforms do not look promising. National training authorities and national qualifications frameworks are two examples where there is insufficient evidence across Africa to merit major further investments. Moreover, the South African experience shows very clearly that there are major issues around capacity, resourcing and the process of institutional change. If the South African systems still appear so fragile after nearly a decade, what likelihood is there for success in poorer countries?

Public training continues to face challenges. This is undeniable. It is also important to note that the World Bank has sought to clarify its position in this regard in the present study. However, the South African case, whilst not necessarily typical, does point to a more positive case for public providers. Moreover, if the vision of the VET system is expanded beyond the narrow economic analysis of the study, it is likely that an even better case can be made for public provision.

Enterprises and non-government providers are active providers. There is a danger here in blurring the distinction between enterprise-based training, private-for-profit training and NGO

provision. Moreover, South African evidence points to a serious underinvestment by employers in skills and a tendency towards what has been called a low skill equilibrium in the international literature. Major concerns have been expressed in South Africa about both the quality and quantity of training undertaken. It is difficult to see why employers in far weaker economies should be more positive in their attitudes to training.

Management and finance provide important instruments for reform. Stated in this form, this proposition seems incontrovertible. However, the South African evidence points to two major concerns in this regard. First, there is a danger in placing too much emphasis on financial reform when it has to be part of a more complex set of changes. Second, the experience of South Africa is presented in such a confused and inaccurate way in Chapter Seven that it raises real concerns about the study as a whole, and the operationalisation of this conclusion in particular.

Now let us turn to the *recommendations.*

Introduce an effective policy framework. As with the fifth conclusion, the statement in itself appears obvious. Appropriate stakeholder involvement, financial systems and standards must be part of an effective overall system. However, the focus in the final sentence on cost-effectiveness as the apparently crucial goal highlights the weakness of the whole approach. Of course, this is important but what about other legitimate goals of VET systems?

Define Government's role in provision and financing. Again the rather bland opening statement has a more controversial point lurking behind it. Again, the whole of the VET system is reduced to narrow economic arguments and, presumably, narrow economic stakeholders.

Develop institutional capacity for improving the performance of training markets. This has not been established by either the empirical evidence or the analysis in the study. It is also highly ahistorical in its failure to address the role that public training provision has played globally (with the exception of Britain as the first industrial nation). To argue that training systems can "sometimes be achieved without building public institutions" (124) is to ignore a crucial fact: that public systems have already been built.

At the systemic level, the recommendation in its fuller form is also questionable in a number of ways. It presents a far more positive picture of the performance of national training authorities than is warranted by the discussion earlier in the study or by other studies. The argument for better management information systems seems reasonable at first sight. However, it is important to interrogate this further. The lack of such systems may well reflect the fundamental lack of capacity in most African countries to attempt such an ambitious programme. Even the well-led and relatively very well-resourced South African system struggles to collect adequate data and then to use it effectively.

2.3. A LOW INCOME COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

David Atchoarena

2.3.1. Accounting for globalisation

The study correctly argues that technological change and globalisation require higher skills in Africa, as elsewhere. It is clear that knowledge production needs to be seen as a key component of socio-economic processes.

2.3.2. Reconciling institutions and markets

This is a central challenge for contemporary training systems. Effective training policies need the guidance of market forces, but competitive markets require a well-functioning regulatory environment. It is also clear that skill development institutions influence the way human capital is effectively produced and used (e.g., training funds, training authorities, qualification authorities and observatories).

2.3.3. Emphasising the need for a plurality of providers

The study notes that all types of providers contribute to meeting skills needs and have valid roles to play. This is important to acknowledge. It is particularly crucial to move beyond a focus on institutional training and to remember, as Illich argued 30 years ago, that "most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school". Recognition of this point highlights the challenge of strengthening work-based learning.

2.3.3. Focusing on poverty reduction

This is a major challenge both for the study and for policies. The study notes that poverty-oriented approaches must be balanced with growth-oriented strategies. It makes the crucial point that improved training for the informal sector should not lead to the neglect of high quality training for the modern sector. Skills are essential to facilitate the transition from an unskilled-labour-intensive economy where low labour standards are seen as a comparative advantage to a higher skill equilibrium where knowledge plays an increasingly strategic role. On the other hand, it is essential that we remember that poverty in the region is largely concentrated in rural areas. In deciding on targeting, it is crucial that the voices of employers be combined with the voices of the poor, of workers, and of civil society more generally.

2.3.4. A warning to donors

The report usefully makes the point that reform is a complex and long-term process. In agreeing with this, it is important also to remember that the issue is not only about transforming the education and training system, but it is also about shaping labour market structures and institutions. Whilst the study looks at the region as a whole, its message that analysis should be country-specific needs to be remembered. Delivery systems remain country specific. There is no clear convergence towards one model of provision.

2.3.5. Taking the analysis further

The analysis of the study can also be developed further in a number of key areas. There is not enough analysis of factors that could force actors to take a long term outlook. Markets forces lead to focus on the short term. This is often disfunctional for training for skills and economic development at the macro level. Despite the importance of private sector training, it is unclear whether the incentives to engage in further learning are strong enough from the point of view of both firms and workers. Equally, more attention is required to factors that encourage cooperation within a competitive environment. A regulatory regime that supports innovation is vital.

The study acknowledges its failure to address agricultural production. However, the gap is serious. A focus of further study needs to be on rural development. Given current trends towards greater decentralisation, there is also a need to focus more on local labour markets. Finally, the issue of improving the transition from school to work needs to be addressed urgently in the light of the presence of between 7 and 10 million new labour market entrants a year.

2.4. AN ADEA PERSPECTIVE

Jean-Marie Byll Cataria

2.4.1. Skills development in broader contexts

The World Bank's report needs to be located in the broader context of the positive and negative trends affecting Africa. On the positive side, democratisation, globalisation and the rise of civil society bring new opportunities. However, in other areas challenges mount, such as dealing with poverty, war, HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, unemployment and technological change.

2.4.2. What can skills do?

We need to ask what life skills and TVET can do to contribute to sustainable development. We need to pay careful attention to who has a voice and how civil society voices are promoted and protected. It is clear that there is a need for a new institutional culture in skills development.

2.4.3. The World Bank report and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa

The World Bank report makes a start in addressing these issues. However, there is a need to go much further in focusing in on these crucial issues when seen from an African perspective.

SECTION THREE: TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

3.1 DANIDA - LINKING DONOR POLICIES FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND NATIONAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Mogens Jensen

3.1.1 Background

Poverty reduction is the overriding objective of Danish development policy. Therefore, a new policy for skills development must take its point of departure in this objective.

A new policy should also be linked to the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. The eight MDGs have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress. These goals grew out of the agreements and resolutions of world conferences - such as the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 - organised by the United Nations in the past decade. They are also linked to the goals of Education for All (EFA) as expressed in the Dakar Framework for Action.

The MDGs focus the efforts of the world community on achieving significant, measurable improvements in people's lives. They establish yardsticks for measuring results, not just for low-income countries but also for rich countries that help to fund development programmes and for the partner institutions that help countries implement them. The first seven goals are mutually reinforcing and directed at reducing poverty in all its forms.

The last goal – Develop a global partnership for development - is about the means to achieve the first seven. It is this goal that creates the challenge for skills development. As one of the targets, it states,: In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, stressed this goal in his address to the first Youth Employment Summit (YES 2002) meeting in Alexandria, Egypt. It forms the basis of the Alexandria Declaration 2002, which is expected to seed a civil society movement stimulating and inspiring the development of programmes and policies worldwide to ensure that young people have access to the education and training programmes, skills-development opportunities, resources and credit that they need to build productive and sustainable livelihoods. So far, YES Country Networks are in the process of being built in more than 90 countries.

In addition to MDG 8, there are other MDGs of relevance for skills development policies such as goal number 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women – and goal number 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, but many areas of relevance for skills development are not covered by the MDGs.

Broadly speaking, the Millennium Development Goals are regional goals for sub-Saharan Africa, for example. Therefore, there is a need to formulate national goals and indicators for co-operation with partner countries. In this relation, the Danish policy is to follow the

approach taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the challenge of reducing poverty in low-income countries based on country-owned poverty reduction strategies that would serve as a framework for development assistance. The principles underlying the approach are that national poverty reduction strategies should be country-driven, results-oriented and long-term in perspective, and based on domestic and external partnerships in line with the principles underpinning the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) approach, of which the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the operational expression in low-income countries. So far, skills development has not featured prominently in the PRSPs although vocational education and training authorities and their line ministries have been involved in the elaboration of the first generation PRSPs in Danish partner countries.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) take on a new significance in relation to the PRSPs, and much effort is at present directed by the donors to find suitable indicators to measure poverty. It is generally accepted that the monitoring and evaluation of a poverty reduction strategy will require indicators or qualitative assessments pitched at at least three different levels: (i) impact and outcome indicators; (ii) intermediate indicators; and (iii) output indicators. Some argue that this may be a too simplistic approach, since poverty is far too complex to be reduced to simple indicators.

From a political economy and a historical perspective, the PRSP process is a radical endeavour, and what has become clear is that any skills development policy will have to justify its contribution to poverty reduction. However, most human capital theories often assume that education and training will lead to employment and increased productivity. This is not the case "where there are no jobs". Interventions targeted at defined segments of the rapidly increasing youth population will have to be developed as a supplement to the traditional institution-based education and training. Clearly, more research is needed in the complex relationship between donor policies for skills development and the new development agenda.

3.2. DFID: RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DFID AFFECTING TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

David Levesque

3.2.1. From strength to strength

DFID is going "from strength to strength", as a recent policy document has it. DFID is committed to building on its existing progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is reflected in its overall Public Service Agreement and its series of Service Delivery Agreements with other departments and agencies of the UK Government. This commitment is also reflected in DFID's practices of working with the international community. DFID does not simply give money to multilateral agencies but has a clear strategy of seeking to influence their policies so that British funds are spent effectively.

DFID's way of working has shifted in other ways too. There is increasing decentralised responsibility for programmes. There is a move from projects to sector and budget support. There is a sharper focus on locally agreed priorities.

3.2.2. Changes in the Policy Division

DFID has abandoned its system of policy departments. In their place, the Policy Division now works in flexible short term teams, responsive to demand. These teams are focused on specific outcomes and aim to support quality evidence-based innovation for development.

3.2.3. Implications for TVET

Centrally-managed TVET projects will be phased out. It is possible that there could be TVET elements in country programme but these are likely to be part of broader sector support or, possibly, focus specifically on skills for pro-poor growth. DFID will support research on skills where this adds to the existing knowledge on poverty reduction, as seen in support to the World Bank study discussed in this volume.

DFID is currently developing an issues paper on human capital and skills development. This will locate skills development within the broader context of support for PRSPs, capacity development for "pro-poor growth" and sustaining the MDGs.

3.3. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION

Henrik Faudel and Peter Grootings

3.3.1. Introducing the ETF

The ETF is a European Union agency set up in 1994 to promote innovation in human resources development for societies and economies in transition. The ETF's main partners are the European Commission on one side and about 40 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the Newly Independent States and Mongolia and, since 1999, North Africa and the Middle East on the other side.

The principal task of ETF is to assist the countries in reforming and modernising their VET and employment systems. This is carried out by providing services directly to the European Commission as well as by initiating and supporting reform activities in and with the partner countries. In this regard the ETF also undertakes a small number of development activities in each region within four broad priority areas:

- skills development for enterprises particularly SMEs;
- VET institutions and human resources development including teacher and trainer training;
- labour market and vocational training including skills development for the informal sector; and
- development of lifelong learning systems.

3.3.2. ETF's work on life skills

An important part of the initial work of the ETF was the management of EU-funded projects within the framework of the Phare and Tacis programmes. These projects often focused on creating methodologies for modernising curricula in initial vocational education to respond better to the requirements of the labour markets in the transition economies. Though the ETF has not as such developed an institutional approach on how to address the development of life skills in vocational education and training, one aspect of the curricula reform initiatives was the introduction of the concept of core skills in curricula with an emphasis on developing skills for employment. The ETF also financed similar projects in a number of countries an example of which is the project in Kazakhstan described elsewhere.

3.3.3. Skills development for poverty reduction

The ETF has recently started addressing issues concerning training for the informal sector and local development in the context of poverty reduction in the Mediterranean countries and Central Asia. Two examples illustrate this work.

3.3.3.1. Skills for the knowledge economy: issues and challenges in VET reform in the Middle East and North Africa

High on the economic and institutional reform agenda in the region is the need to make education and training more relevant to the needs of the labour market and to use training as a means to increase productivity and competitiveness. The World Bank presently finances a series of vocational training projects in the region with mixed outcomes.

Therefore, the World Bank, in close co-operation with the ETF, is undertaking a study in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia to assess recent reform initiatives, outline lessons learnt and define the broad axis for future demand-driven strategies for training in the formal and informal sectors. The key themes to be discussed in the study are:

- promoting flexible and decentralised management of public training institutions;
- enhancing governance of public training systems;
- financing as a tool to promote efficiency;
- improving the quality of training;
- promoting the participation of employers in the design, financing and provision of training; and
- developing the role of the informal sector in the acquisition and transmission of skills.

The ETF is specifically in charge of preparing an overview of training in the informal sector in the five countries. This will include an overview of the existing mechanisms for the acquisition, transmission and upgrading of skills for businesses in the informal sector. It will assess the different modalities for skills needs identification in the informal sector and prepare an inventory and assessment of ongoing initiatives by governments, donors and NGOs to improve the productivity in the informal sector through skills development. Core issues to be discussed in this respect are whether there are specific policies to training for the informal sector and how can and do public and private training institutions reach out to the informal sector. Field missions are presently ongoing and the final report is scheduled for October 2003.

3.3.3.2. Training strategies for local development in Central Asia

Alleviating the human cost of economic transition has become a critical issue in the whole of Central Asia. Unequal income distribution and poverty are widespread in the region. Large parts of the population are surviving on incomes below the official poverty line. 75-85% of poor people in Central Asia live in rural areas. A large informal sector has developed during the recent transition period.

The European Commission states in its regional strategy for Central Asia that:

the potential for poverty reduction through economic growth in Central Asia will essentially lie in utilising the existing human and physical capital resources more efficiently, and setting appropriate conditions for development of private initiatives at the local level.

In line with this, the ETF is implementing a project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to better understand how training and skills development strategies are and/or could be integrated into the different initiatives promoting local development. The aim of the

project is to develop awareness amongst policy makers at all levels and the donor community of the possible contribution of human resources development in local development and to highlight different strategies and approaches to training and skills development in this context. The project will focus on the improvement of skills development for the formal and informal rural sectors.

The project takes the form of a study in the three countries, which investigates the context of a number of local development projects, the extent to which these include significant training components and the reasons for doing so or not. The main issues studied are:

- the context of the local development projects;
- the focus and content of possible training components in local development projects;
- reasons why training not always addressed in local development projects;
- the assessment of training needs and how the results of the assessment are taken into consideration in project design and implementation;
- the design of training packages and programmes and their adaptation to local needs;
- the level of competencies of trainers and how these arefurther developed;
- modes of training delivery;
- modes of training funding;
- assessment of training effectiveness;
- the nature of links between the local development project and labour market players;
- the actual links between training delivered and local development; and
- the influence of centralised or decentralised approaches on local development strategies and practices.

The final report on the survey is expected to be ready by November 2003. Depending on the outcomes of the report, dissemination activities in the three countries are planned for 2004.

3.4 ILO-UNESCO COLLABORATION

Trevor Riordan and Rupert Maclean

3.4.1. Reinforcing an old alliance

The new and rapidly expanding collaboration between ILO and UNESCO is based on a Memorandum of Understanding that actually dates back to 1952. Since 2001, this has been reactivated by new management commitments in both Paris and Geneva. Mr Pekka Aro from ILO and Mr Tang from UNESCO played a leading role in facilitating this alliance. The establishment of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre in Bonn has also played a useful part in focusing collaboration.

3.4.2. Working together

This new relationship has resulted in a joint working group on TVET. Both agencies have identified key areas for practical collaboration, and a series of joint activities have been established. The joint working group is an important strategic alliance between UN agencies, which unites them in support of ILO's Global Employment Agenda.

On the policy side, the two agencies have published a joint statement, containing UNESCO's new Recommendation on TVE and the Conclusions of the Gneral Discussion on HRD and Training at the 2000 International Labour Conference. The Conference asked the ILO to prepare for a discussion of a new HRD Recommendation. Importantly, UNESCO will participate in the further discussions of the new International Labour Standard on HRD and Training at the 2003 and 2004 International Labour Conferences.

The next stage of collaboration is joint programmes. UNESCO-UNEVOC is collaborating with the ILO and UNESCO offices in Bangkok to run training of trainers' activities. The ILO and UNESCO-UNEVOC are developing a programme to support the development of a Regional Qualifications Framework for SADC. In Latin America, there is collaboration between the UNESCO-UNEVOC centres and the ILO's Cinterfor network. At the global level, plans are developing for collaboration in the UNESCO-UNEVOC plan for a knowledge management system for TVET.

It has been agreed to conduct a series of learning and skills policy reviews and this is reflected in both agencies' work plans and budgets. Joint field missions will take place comprising staff from both agencies. This will facilitate more integrated discussions with both education and training authorities in member countries.

3.5. THE NORWEGIAN STRATEGY FOR DELIVERING EDUCATION FOR ALL BY 2015

Betsy Heen

3.5.1. Introduction

In January 2003 Norway launched its new strategy for delivering Education for All. This report is also known as Job Number One, reflecting the primacy of education for poverty reduction. The strategy is principally aimed at meeting the relevant MDG. In addition,focus is placed on the value of quality education, self-respect and cultural identity. Post-primary education, non-formal education and training, and formal skills development programmes are all seen as having a role to play in delivering education and reducing poverty.

3.5.2. The Norwegian Strategy

Norwegian support to education is based upon collaboration and dialogue with other stakeholders and recipient responsibility. The new strategy views education from a human rights perspective and has a powerful equity focus.

Norway is committed to allocating 15% of ODA to education by the year 2005. On a financial level, this constitues a doubling of Norway's 2001 contribution. Although the main thrust of support continues to be towards basic education, Norway now takes a more holistic and systemic approach to education. In this context, TVET and skills development will play a new and more important role.

The policy stresses the need to support training in the formal and informal sectors. The needs of those who have not had access to a full education will be emphasised. The role of the private sector in training is affirmed. However, the exact nature of any new activities must be developed in dialogue with partner countries.

Three particular challenges are faced in delivering on this strategy. First, it will be essential to avoid the mistakes of the past when turning back to support to VET. Second, greater clarity is required in how to work on education and training issues across all the relevant sectors, such as water, health and agriculture. Third, ways of linking Norwegian funds to other donors funds, and to the activities of NGOs, may be vital to maximise impact.

APPENDIX ONE: THE PROGRAMME

MONDAY 28 APRIL 2003	
09:00-09:30	Opening of the meeting: Rupert Maclean (UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre) and Michel Carton (NORRAG): Chair – Kenneth King (NORRAG)
09:30-11:00	**Life skills: a bridge between education and training?** Dominique Simone Rychen (Statistics, Neuchatel) and Richard Desjardin (IIE Stockholm): ***Key competencies re skills development: is the OECD perspective relevant for the South?*** Wataru Iwamoto and Anna Maria Hoffman (UNESCO Paris): ***Strengthening the links between EFA and skills development for employability and effective citizenship*** Trevor Riordan (ILO): ***Core work skills - the ILO perspective and recent developments***
11:00-11:30	*Coffee break*
11:30-12:45	**Presentations of on-going policy preparation and formulation by agencies** David Levesque (DFID) and Mogens Jensen (DANIDA): ***Linking skills development programmes to Poverty Reduction Strategies and Millennium Development Goals*** Betsy Heen (NORAD): ***Making education job number one: Norway's new strategy on education and development***
12:45-14:00	*Lunch*
14:00-15:30	**Life and work skills: African perspectives** Presentation and discussion of the final World Bank Study *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*: Van Adams (WB), Simon McGrath (HSRC, Pretoria), David Atchoarena (IIEP, Paris), Jean-Marie Byll-Cataria (ADEA)
15:30-15:45	*Coffee break*
15:45-17:30	**Working group discussion on life skills** [Three working groups]

TUESDAY 29 APRIL 2003	
09:00-09:15	Brief synthesis of the previous day and guidelines for the day (Carton/King)
09:15-10:15	***European Training Foundation (ETF): General presentation, and illustration of the theme of the meeting through Kazakhstan case*** by Peter Grootings and Henrik Faudel (ETF) and Shaizada Tasbulatova (ETF/UNEVOC)
10:15-10:45	*Coffee break*
10:45-12:00	General discussion
12:00-12:15	Proposals for further activities of the Working Group by Michel Carton
12:15-13:30	*Lunch)*
13:30-14:00	***A Strategic Alliance on TVET between ILO and UNESCO: A Brief Update*** Trevor Riordan (ILO) and Rupert Maclean (UNESCO-UNEVOC): ***Education for All and Skills Development – European Perspectives*** by Michael Frearson (LDSA)
14:00-14:15	International co-operation agencies in TVET: A Guide to Sources of Information, by Hans Krönner (UNESCO-UNEVOC)
14:15-14:45	Discussion of the next Working Group meeting in Bangkok, 11-12 December 2003 on the theme: *Is there an Asian Skills Miracle?*

14:45-16:00 Synthesis and evaluation of the meeting
Preparation of further activities and meetings

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APPENDIX THREE: ABOUT THE WORKING GROUP

1. LAUNCHING THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group was launched in April 1996 with the following goals:
- » to increase the impact of development assistance
- » to reduce duplication and fragmentation of effort
- » to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of new ideas and good practice.

The following themes were identified around which information sharing would be focused:
- » conceptual frameworks of skills development (SD) and technical and vocational education and training (TVET)
- » donor and national policies
- » experiences in programme support to SD
- » project design and implementation
- » specific examples of donor co-operation
- » approaches to evaluation

2. COOPERATION: OLD MYTH OR NEW CHALLENGE?

Cooperation among agencies involved in development assistance is a long standing and commonly agreed objective. However, its attainment has been compromised by a range of factors, not least the rapidly changing global context within which development and assistance are taking place. The notion of cooperation has, thus, to be revisited and a number of questions addressed:

* what is the future of cooperation at a time when competition appears the dominant form of relations?
* what does cooperation mean in a context of many "norths" and multiple "souths"?
* what becomes of cooperation when agencies are decentralising operations and the emphasis is shifting towards the development of southern capacities?
* what effect do attempts to impose intra- sectoral coherence across aid policies have for policies in sectors such as skills development?
* what is the implication of the cross- sectoral nature of skills development for cooperation between agencies?
* what lessons can be learnt from other fora dedicated to agency cooperation?

3. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A BRIDGE BETWEEN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PRODUCTION?

The Group has chosen to use the notion of vocational and technical skills development rather than technical and vocational education and training.

This reflects a concern to take notice of the move away from a focus on the large, homogenising institutions of the state in favour of more varied modalities of skills development which prevail in many countries.

The concept places the emphasis on the exploration of skills development across a range of institutional locations, in education, training and production systems. The process of coming

to terms with this is an on-going one, both in the « north » and in the « south. » As far as agencies are concerned, it has led to a variety of responses. Some have chosen to merge their vocational training concerns with their small enterprise programmes whilst others have come to view skills development in both sectoral and instrumental ways.

4. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: BETWEEN STATES OR SOCIETIES?

The focus on skills development is part of a wider realisation that development cooperation is not simply an affair of states. A variety of other actors are increasingly involved, both « north » and « south ». Agency policies are increasingly coming to reflect the need to include new constituencies in policy dialogues. However, dialogue, coordination and cooperation within countries is by no means easy. The behaviour of agencies can serve to worsen rather than better the situation. Central to the concerns of the Group is the examination of strategies that donors can promote and utilise in order to strengthen the voices of stakeholders and the mechanisms by which they can be heard.

5. THE WORKING GROUP: TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

This Group is intended to enhance the capacity of its members to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of international assistance to skills development. In order for this to be achieved a stable presence of core staff from participating agencies. The personal commitment of these individuals will be as important as their representative roles.

In order to take account of decentralisation within agencies and the imperative for broader dialogues with wider constituencies, the Working Group will focus on the dissemination of information to relevant constituencies and individuals.

6. INTER-NETWORK COOPERATION

By viewing skills development broadly and acknowledging its intersections with other fields, the Group is highlighting an awareness with the need to develop relationships with other groupings. In particular, linkages will be explored with the Donors Committee for SME Development, the Association for the Development of African Education and the International Working Group on Education. The Group intends to explore mechanisms for information sharing across these different networks.

7. MECHANISMS FOR COOPERATION

The groups referred to above each have different modalities of organisation. They exist on a continuum between an informal club and a fully structured organisation. This Working Group is concerned to establish a mechanism for light but effective steering of its activities.

An important consideration when looking at the possible modality of the Group's operations is the potential financial base of its operations. At present a sum of money has been set aside by the SDC for coordination with hosts of each meeting taking responsibility for the costs of delivery of that meeting. It would also be desirable for the Group to be able to develop new funding mechanisms in order that coordinated activities might take place as has been the case with the other networks mentioned above.