Integrating Non-Formal Training Programmes in the TVET System: Perils and Promises![1]

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[1] The phrase 'peril' and 'promise' is borrowed from the 'Task Force on Higher Education and Society' (World Bank 2000), which focused on the potentials and challenges of Higher Education in developing contexts. I use the title specifically to refer to the potential and limitations of non-formal education and its inclusion in 'TVET' systems and more broadly to urge a similar development in the TVET sector for its potential to transform the current state of the sector.

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Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sits at a crucial nexus in the education system between what is considered an absolute necessity i.e. basic education, and the other education level considered to be absolutely fundamental to national development, higher or university-level education. The rest of us mere mortals subsist from what is left over in education budgets. In addition, it exists on the fringe of what is considered the mainstream academic education provision.

If this is a gloomy picture, I'm indeed glad that I'm preaching to the converted - those who are convinced about the intrinsic worth of TVET. What this picture does paint, however, is the kind of challenge that we face as a collective in ensuring that TVET, or what has more recently been called skills development, takes its rightful place as an essential component of the education and training system.

The essential role of TVET has to be understood in terms of its national social development imperative for it to assume this rightful place. It must be crucially linked to the training for employment or employability for the individual which will then contribute to national social, economic (and political) developmental priorities. As such, it forms a cornerstone for any developmental effort to succeed - although judging from the current size of the animal in most Southern Africa contexts; it is far from being able to assume this crucial developmental role.

In a provocative article in an IIEP Newsletter 5 years ago entitled, 'Can technical and vocational education be reformed?', David Atchoarena and Francoise Caillods (1999) point to the current crisis in which the sector finds itself internationally. Clearly this kind of perception begs the question, what is so wrong with TVET that it is in need of reform, that if it doesn't reform it is likely to be a spent force and become obsolete?

It is clearly evident that in sub-Saharan Africa, an entirely plausible, and lengthy, list of weaknesses of VET systems can be produced, i.e. TVET provision is costly and many graduates do not get formal employment (Gichira 2002). Some TVET curricula are very old and some infrastructure is even older and worn-out. The range of programmes often appears to have little to do with existing and potential labour market opportunities. While these regional challenges need to be considered in respect of its international context, they should not detract from the value of TVET provision as an education form which has a vital role to play in national development.

I begin by interrogating the theme of the conference and then go on to explore some global and regional trends as an introduction to the some of the current challenges that TVET faces in the region. I do not presume to know or even pretend to imagine that I could provide all the answers, but I expect that my colleagues and I will have sufficiently identified the challenges that are faced and more importantly have provided important input for the debate to be taken forward. At the close of these deliberations we would have had a sufficient grasp of what I have called the 'perils and promises[3] of including non-formal education programmes into the TVET sphere- a significant reversal to the traditional insertion of TVET into non-formal forms.

It is important to place in context the role of academic research and engagement in perspective. It has been argued that the role of theory has little value in practice. This notion needs to be debunked. The idea that theory needs to be moulded into practice rather than forcing practices to fit theories has been proposed by no other than one of the early protagonists of non-formal (or adult) [4] education - Miles Horton in 1990. I know that my academic colleagues are aware, in keeping with Horton's consideration, that research and practice are intrinsically twinned so as to be in a position of informing, and be informed by, current practices. Anything outside of this is sterile.

Non-formal education revisited!

TVET and non-formal education have a long history of what I call a promiscuous relationship. TVET is considered to be part of the non-formal family, albeit an illegitimate one, in earlier writings (Bock 1983). This meant that the purpose of TVET was subjected to that of the non-formal education project. The inclusion of TVET as a component of the formal system, however, has meant that it gradually assumed its own unique character. While castigated by the non-formal community for not being non-formal enough, it has been ostracised by the 'formal' family of nations as a result of its much more comfortable 'training' and 'work-based' focus, as compared to the academic, component. While the liaison between the two should not change, the form of the relationship should, TVET, as constitutive of the formal form, should incorporate non-formal programmes. This requires a

[3] The phrase 'peril' and 'promise' is one used by the World Conference on Higher Education which identified the 'Perils and Promise of Higher Education to National Development (World Bank 2000). I use the title deliberately in anticipation of a similar development for TVET, which I believe to be long overdue and which is likely to place the issue of National TVET provision in context.

[4] I will not touch on the semantic details and arguments, which raged profusely in the 80's and 90's. For some reference to this, see Coles (1988).

fundamental overhaul of the relationship - with TVET being the central component. For non-formal education, it should not mean 'add TVET and stir' syndrome. A 'vocational' component should not, therefore, be tacked onto to an already pre-defined non-formal literacy and numeracy agenda. TVET should form an intrinsic and provide the utilitarian basis which will serve as the basis for ensuring sustainability. It does suggest, for those proponents of the traditional notion of non-formal forms, that the traditional foci of the informal education sector is subsumed into the TVET agenda, for the benefit of both.

Traditional notions of non-formal education need to be reviewed for it to assume this role. It has been defined as *"...any organised activity outside the structure of the formal education system that is consciously aimed at meeting specific learning needs of particular sub-groups in the community - be they children, youth or adult* (Commonwealth Secretariat 1979: 2). The essential content of this conception, while it is dated, has not changed (see also Rich-Orloff 2002; La Belle 1987; Garrido 1992, Indabawa 1998). To be pertinent to current contexts, it is necessary to ensure that it is able to adequately respond to some current developments. What, for instance, does a conception of an 'organised activity' entail? To whom are these to be targeted? What about educational forms? Should it involve all forms of 'extraneous' educational activity including full- or part-time forms or a combination of these types? What about distance education developments? How is to engage the use of technology and the way it has changed the notion of 'distance'? What about workplace learning? What about the very different sub-groups of learners, those employed, those who are 'older and have never been employed', those 'unemployed out-of-school' youth, those recently unemployed who have been displaced by the reduction of formal employment, those in the informal sector, those considered to be marginalized groups - women, rural sectors and AIDS ravaged communities? What about private education initiatives-both for-profit and non-profit? How have changes in the so-called formal 'structured' education system affected this conception, for instance, by measures to include non-traditional groups into the formal education system, where this has been done with some degree of success.

Traditional notions of non-formal education need to be mainstreamed. Implicit in traditional conceptions of non-formal education, which is richly influenced by Latin American contexts, is the understanding that whatever is non-formal is necessarily 'outside' of that which is considered the 'essential' education task. As an education form that exists outside of the formal system, there is an assumption that it is not as important as the formal system. Is it possible that in this lies its essential failure to provide a legitimate and clearly defined education agenda? This does not suggest that there is no way out of this dilemma. If we are clear that the non-formal target group

is one that is most in need of TVET, we will need to work much harder at ensuring that the negativity of what I call the 'marginal' effect is not sustained. We do this to ensure that the purposes of both the wider non-formal project and that of TVET is usefully served. The lack of 'parity of esteem' to which the TVET sector especially is faced, makes this necessary. As such it cannot be considered to be marginal to education if it is, as I contend, an essential backbone of national development.

The commonsense notion of non-formal education, associated as it is with forms of adult education, means that it is not only a much more nebulous form of education, but that it is less than legitimate as an educational form. As a form of adult education, referred to infamously as androgogy, by those who assume to have a 'pukka' understanding of education terminology, there is a close relationship with what is perceived to be highly 'politicised' or ideological project (Belle 2000). While acknowledging the sterling work of the like of Paulo Freire, Carlos Alberto Torres and Antonio Gramsci, who have powerfully examined the 'political' role of education, there is a need to provide a more nuanced view of the role of the state. In identifying the need for 'conscientisation' of the masses, the role of the state as 'legitimator' appears cast in stone. While it is conceded that the challenges to which TVET needs to respond have a lot to do with the contexts, problems and groups with which these theorists were concerned, the role of the state as an engaged and engaging institution should not be ignored. This does not mean that we dilute the basis on which their ideas were premised. Social exclusion, poverty, unemployment and inequality appear to be more rampant today than it did decades ago and the current neo-liberal capitalist development paradigm does not help this.

While I have argued that current conceptions of non-formal educational forms need to be reviewed, it is necessary to be clear that the essential focus of inclusion should remain intact. We need to redefine the notion of non-formal education so that it responds appropriately to our objectives. This means that 'non-formal education' should be included in the TVET project to serve developmental outcomes. It has been powerfully argued that the education and training of any adult or child for that matter is unlikely to be complete without a significant skills development component as was argued by Kishindo (1993), who provided important insights into the role of vocationalisation in dealing with the non-formal education needs of out-of school youth in Malawi..

Furthermore, current international discourse on engagement suggests that we need to ensure that the enterprise of TVET is not discredited as a result of its 'political' or ideological baggage –

however perceived. There is need to integrate the non-formal educational forms into the TVET system without the possibility that inclusion will be being undermined by a traditional 'non-formal' semantic baggage. Before we, as TVET, take on the responsibility of another educational form, we need to have a concerted understanding of where the TVET system is at this moment, and how best its interests could be served.

International Context

International discourse on TVET is still powerfully shaped on the one hand by the privatisation and marketisation discourse of the policy paper on TVET (World Bank 1991[5]) and, on the other hand, by the ILO notion of the role of TVET in the informal economy. The neo-liberal marketisation discourse, which powerfully favoured market mechanisms to engage the problem of efficiency, relevance and appropriateness, has served to ensure that the state is able to legitimately provide less and less. The ILO recommendations, which effectively delivered a radically transformed role of the TVET sector, were a pragmatic response to the very real unemployment challenge. While it provided a lifeline for the survival of the sector in international discourse, it ensured that the sector responded only to those unable to afford, or see the need for, the skills for which they were to be trained.

Both understanding of the way in which TVET needs to be transformed were misplaced. The World Bank marketisation trend resulted in the implementation of the voucher system in Kenya and elsewhere. These initiatives have been praised by their instigators and whispered against by many others, but have not been rigorously researched. As regards the ILO recommendation for the role of TVET as a means to develop the informal sector, while it rightly pointed to training away from training for formal sector jobs that were simply not there in any case, it also inadequately evaluated the funding and sustainability considerations of this new primary TVET client.

While these reforms were being suggested, the very basis of TVET was being undermined by an international discourse which favoured basic education - The Jomtien and Dakar World Conferences and the 'Education for All' agenda, probably inadvertently, undermined other

[5] The Current World Bank treatise on TVET has broken radically from this neoliberal marketisation discourse (Johanson & Adams 2004).

education levels at the expense of basic education in developing contexts. By ensuring its inclusion as an MDG, it tends to shape both the donor and national emphases. In this regard, as McGrath (2002) has argued, there is an implicit assumption that skills development is not as significant in developing contexts as they are in their countries of origin, at the very time as it has moved up the agenda in the donor countries.

In this respect, it is indeed important to point out that the justification for the basic education 'solution' for development has been found to be wanting. King, Palmer and Hayman (2004) prove that the contextual determinants, in the initial research, which leads to this conclusion have been, perhaps conveniently or inadvertently, left out. They argue that the original research by Lockheed, Jamison and Lau (1980) argued that education makes a difference to farm productivity of about 10% in *'a modernising environment.*[6] Education makes virtually no difference to farm productivity, the researchers argued, *if the environment is non-modern* [where agriculture is traditional and where there are no new methods and new crops being tried out] (Lockheed et al 1980a; 1980b). In other words, if the education is to make a difference to agricultural productivity, this particular research asserted, certain other things needed to be in place in the surrounding environment. If the above research is used for policy without a reference to the crucial importance of context or environment, there is a danger of misleading the audience, as is done in the international literature on the subject. Thus according to one report, "Many studies have shown that schooling improves productivity in rural and urban self-employment. Early evidence suggested that four years schooling was a critical period (UNESCO 2002: 34)[7]. The effect of this discourse has had a detrimental consequence on TVET reform, coming crucially at a when the very basis of TVET was being questioned. It laid the basis for significant downscaling of TVET in the international agenda in an era when there was an ascendancy of a neo-liberal discourse on privatisation of the sector to make it more effective and efficient. The impact of this international push had deleterious effects on TVET developments, especially in Southern Africa. Some regional TVET challenges are explored in the next section.

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[6] Referring to a context where there were 'new crop varieties, innovative planting methods, erosion control, and the availability of capital inputs such as insecticides, fertilizers, and tractors or machines. Some other indicators of [a modern] environment were market-orientated production and exposure to extension services' (Lockheed et al, 1980a: 129; cf. 1980b: 55-56).

[7] The UNESCO publication cites the Lockheed et al. (1980) study directly (see UNESCO 2002: 34, fn 18). Other studies, which make similar references, include World Bank (2003) and ILO 2002: 4.

Regional Context

A brief account of the regional socio-economic and political imperative is critical[8]. Some commonly held (mis)conceptions about the role of TVET in national systems are then identified, followed by some challenges that I consider critical in the current context.

Regional socio-political and economic context

Whilst some economies in the region are showing some impressive economic statistics, it is clear that a number of serious socio-economic challenges remain in the region. There is a general regional unemployment crisis, with figures ranging from c10% in Mauritius to over 30% in South Africa (on the broad definition). The burden of unemployment falls especially upon youth and the rural populace. The region has particularly serious problems arising from several of the highest global rates of income inequality, and this is closely related to a high incidence of poverty, as well as taking Apartheid-influenced spatial and racial forms in Namibia and South Africa. Mozambique faces a particular challenge of post-war rehabilitation.

The region is one of worst global locations too for the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Strikingly, this has resulted in declining Human Development Indices (HDI) in several countries. Botswana and South Africa were highlighted in the 2002 Human Development Report (UNDP 2002) for being the second and third worst countries globally in respect of HDI ranking as compared to GNP per capita ranking. The labour market impact of this is still poorly understood. However, one implication that the ILO shows is that of falling labour market participation rates. It estimates that male labour force participation fell by 16 percentage points between 1995 and 2002 in South Africa and by the same amount between only 1995 and 1997 in Lesotho, whilst Botswana experienced a 23% fall between 1995 and 1999 (ILO 2003). The ILO has also suggested that skilled labour is relatively badly affected (ILO 2001). This adversely affects output and places increased burdens on education and training systems. Moreover, the burden of dealing with

[8] In keeping with the sociological or political economy approaches of skills development systems in the past decade (e.g. Ashton and Green 1996; Crouch, Finegold & Sako 1999; Brown, Green & Lauder 2001; King and McGrath 2002)

HIV/AIDS is likely to depress corporate and family investments in education and training (Bennell 2000).

Role of TVET in perspective

It is important that I sound out what I consider to be four considerations regarding the role that TVET reform has been known to play.

First, a better, even a far better TVET system may not have a dramatic positive effect on employment, growth and competitiveness (Ashton & Green 1996; Wolf 2002). Structural economic fundamentals have to be in place for the benefits of TVET reform to kick in. The fact that there is optimistically an adult Labour Force Participation rate of 33,8% for Africa (UNDP 2002) suggests deep structural inadequacies, which need to be responded to.

Second, a lack of skills at the individual level is widely seen as a major element in poverty. Without skills to sell on the labour market, or to make a viable living in subsistence or self-employment activities, individuals are far more likely to be in poverty (King and McGrath 2002; McGrath 2002). In OECD countries, the expectation that skills development systems could solve mounting youth unemployment developed strongly in the 1970s as these economies underwent a series of crisies which ended the full employment era of the 1950s and 1960s. Interventions in this area were believed to have increase employability and /or income generation. They were also seen to be having similar socio-psychological benefits as growth-oriented training. Through these interventions, such interventions are supposed to reduce poverty, unemployment and crime, and to enhance community development. However, the capacity of TVET systems to has needed to be reconsidered in context of its role as a supply-side intervention.

Third, the ideological impact of TVET reform cannot be underestimated. It has been contended elsewhere that the attraction of TVET reform is that politicians can be seen to be doing something (Keep 1999; Payne 2000; Wolf 2002).

Fourth, the impact of VET is constrained by the size in many of our countries. Although South Africa has more than 400 000 learners in its public FET colleges, Namibia has all in all 2000 learners in its VTCs and other systems are of similar size or smaller. Contrary to popular wisdom - size does matter. But it is the engagement with the policy community, and their commitment to

creating the conditions for creative implementation, that will result in the necessary conditions for systems to expand.

(Some) Regional TVET Challenges

In identifying these challenges, I am indebted to a recently completed project identifying trends in TVET systems in sub-Saharan Africa[9], I isolate four challenges that I consider key to TVET transformation in the region. The challenges identified serve as organizing themes, which I use to draw out other pertinent issues.

Challenge 1: Vision

TVET stands at the unenviable position of being all things to all people. Unwin (2003) and Wolf (2002) have argued at length about is role as national torchbearer for social and economic development. It is expected not only to deliver on the promise of individual skills, but also to ensure that those it trains find employment in these. It is therefore not difficult to pin the failings of both the economic and education systems on the ever '(ir)-responsive' and 'expensive' hobbyhorse TVET. That said, there are two elements which feature prominently in the visions of TVET systems internationally

First, addressing youth unemployment and second skills provision geared to current and projected economic opportunities and challenges (Crouch, Finegold and Sako 1999). These trends can be discerned in sub-Saharan Africa in different forms. As regards youth unemployment in the region, the post independence educational expansion far exceeded the expansion of the formal labour market leading to an explosion in educated youth unemployment. This situation still pertains. Youth Unemployment in Africa varies between 25-35%, with South Africa at 56% (UN, Youth at the United Nations, Comparison of Country Profiles-Africa, in Okojie 2003), whereas youth literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have increased from 61,7%in 1985 to 77.7% in 2000 (UNDP 2002: Human Development Report). The solution

[9] The project undertaken in 2003 explored TVET systems in a seven-country study including Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland – a project under the auspices of and co-funded by The British Council, the Human Science Research Council (RSA) and JET Educational Services (RSA).

was to look at TVET as a means by which the problem could be resolved by providing training for those engaged in self-employment, particularly those in the informal economy.

In this regard, there is an increasing tendency for opportunities to be found in the new globalised knowledge economy. We need, however, to be guarded about the reality that the new economy is not necessarily one that that brings high skills for all (William & Raggett 1998; Keep 1999; Payne 2000; Guile 2002). While there is a challenge to manage the tension between these two imperatives, there is a concerted need to balance the needs of a globalised knowledge economy with the crisis, which results from an increasingly unemployed workforce.

As regards the potential of the TVET sector to deliver on the skills provided in the informal economy, there is need to unpack the nature of skills required and a more carefully defined and systematic addressing of the skills needs of both those already in the informal economy and those likely to enter it. Up to now, the greatest focus has often been in NGO programmes such as the Brigades and the COSDECs. However, even here the adequacy of preparation and the degree of labour market analysis can be questioned.

While it will be important that more attention be paid to skills development for the informal economy in the region, in doing so it will be crucial that the difficulties of interventions of this kind are understood. This may require a closer examination of experiences elsewhere in Africa whilst remaining mindful of the very different contexts involved. The latter will require the development of strong situational analyses of the informal economies of the region.

It is also important to remember the great difficulty inherent in trying to take youth and make them successfully self-employed. International evidence shows clearly that success in self-employment is strongly influenced not only by skills but also by capital, experience and networks (McGrath et al 1995; King and McGrath 2002). The typically long process of becoming successfully self-employed cannot easily be accelerated.

Challenge 2: System Coherence

Often there is not one system, but two largely separate systems under the control of Ministries of Education and Labour (as is evident in countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland). In South Africa the system has evolved in a particularly unusual way with the Department of Education responsible (in partnership with nine provinces) for 50 institutions that are essentially funded and regulated separately from a Department of Labour system that is more

closely aligned with private providers. This lack of system coherence seems to be undesirable. Often it reflects a gap between training and an education philosophy. This also reflects a division between theory and practice, and between an education-oriented and an employer-oriented model (although VET provision is often criticised for its weaknesses in both domains). The duality is particularly problematic if it results in a situation such as that occurring presently in South Africa where public provision under Education needs funding for upgrading (funds which the Labour system has) and the Labour system blames delays in delivery on a lack of providers (which the Education system has).

The best way to ensure coherence between such systems is a complex issue and different countries have varying experiences in this regard. At the heart of the complexity is the reality that decisions will be strongly shaped by political considerations, not least the relative influence of the two Ministers and their senior civil servants? Often "umbrella" agencies are proposed that should be independent from both Ministries. However, experience shows that these are not necessarily a complete solution

Challenge 3: NQFs and Unit Standards

One potential tool for greater system coherence is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Moreover, NQFs offer the possibility of greater coherence of all education and training provision. There is a SADC-wide commitment to a Regional Qualifications Framework and a series of NQFs. South Africa's NQF was enacted in 1995 and Namibia's in 1996; whilst Botswana[10] and Mauritius are in an earlier stage of development. However, the level of understanding regarding the implications of this commitment appears very limited in those countries that are yet to introduce an NQF.

In moving towards NQFs, it is vital that countries in the region remember that NQFs can take quite wide-ranging forms (Young 2003a). It is also important to note that some existing models have undergone quite radical revisions over time. The current review process for the South African NQF is particularly pertinent in this regard. Particular challenges exist in funding and managing such systems in ways that would be sustainable in poorer countries.

[10] The emergent Botswana model is beginning life as National Vocational Qualification Framework before seeking to include schools and universities within its ambit. There may be merits in such an incremental approach (also present in countries such as Scotland) as opposed to attempts to build a full NQF in one go, as in South Africa.

Decisions about the positioning of VET provision lead on to questions about the optimal configuration of entry and exit points between VET and general education. It is important to consider whether VET systems should have formal educational requirements for entry or whether there is a place for recognition of prior learning. It is also important to ask what the appropriate base in terms of education, age and experience is for different levels. Whether VET qualifications permit learners to re-enter the academic stream, and at what level, is also increasingly a focus of attention for policy. The regional commitment to National Qualifications Frameworks means that all these issues will need to be addressed in those countries that have not yet come to firm conclusions through their NQF development experiences.

The further development of the NQF process in South Africa has raised concerns about the appropriate balancing of educational and employer interests in the new VET curriculum (Young 2003b) and is seen clearly in the attempted compromise position of the "NQF Response". South Africa has also seen a debate about the appropriate structure of new qualifications between those that favour the currently dominant unit standards approach and those that favour whole qualifications as the key focus.

It is also evident that capacity for curriculum development is often very weak and will be put under severe pressure by the need to align all curricula with new NQFs. Again, the South African experience of Standards Generating Bodies and National Standards Bodies (Cosser 2001) and the proposals for radical reforms to the model need to be carefully studied elsewhere in the region.

Challenge 4: Funding and Financing

VET systems are relatively expensive. Especially in the technical subject areas they are reliant on costly infrastructure and require low learner: instructor ratios. They also have been widely criticised for their lack of efficiency (e.g., World Bank 1991; Middleton, Ziderman and Adams 1993; Johanson and Adams 2004). Indeed, it is on the grounds of their low rates of return and high cost that many agencies have justified their reduction of support to VET systems since the beginning of the 1990s. It is clearly important that the efficiency and effectiveness of VET systems in the region be addressed, but not to the expense of other considerations as is the tendency in some international policy writings.

Adequate finance is crucial to the development of high quality VET systems and to the achievement of many elements of the VET transformation agenda. However, many VET

systems and sub-systems in the region remain highly dependent upon state funding. This is clearly the case for Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland, and for the Education components of the Botswana and South African systems. Until the levy system comes into full operation, it is also the case for Namibia. This dependence is particularly problematic as VET continues to be accorded a low priority amongst the conflicting claims on education budgets in these countries, and as aid to VET continues to be a low priority.

Inevitably, there must also be difficult decisions made about the relative levels of funding for VET and for primary, secondary and tertiary education. VET systems have typically been a rather minor element of overall educational expenditure in the region. The international trend towards greater importance for VET implies that this needs to be revisited. More importantly, it is evident that much of the VET transformation agenda is highly expensive. Whilst the agenda also highlights the need for greater cost recovery from learners and higher employer contributions, there may well be considerable extra pressure on the public purse, at least in the short term.

The funding problems of VET systems have also led to greater encouragement of public providers to cover more of their costs through their own fund raising. This is clearly in keeping with the vision of them becoming more business-like. There are three other main sources of funding that providers are increasingly identifying. First, there is increasing fees. Whilst VET learners in the public system were once either apprentices or having their places paid for by the state, they are now increasingly private candidates paying full or only partially subsidised fees. Second, there is fund raising through sale of products and services. Elements of training with production are most notable in the semi-NGO parts of systems such as the Brigades of Botswana and the COSDECs of Namibia, where the interest is partly philosophical (Biervliet 1994). Third, there is provision of training at full cost for employers, typically though the delivery of short courses tailored to their needs. There is very little of this in the region, and in some countries it would be seen as inappropriate behaviour for public institutions, already recipients of state funds. There do appear to be merits in expanding this approach across the region, although it will be important to balance such programmes with overall institutional and system-wide missions.

National training authorities have been seen in the international policy literature as a way of breaking the dual role of Ministries in provision and regulation (Johanson and Adams 2004), as part of the broader ideological thrust to reduce the role of the state in VET. They also have the

potential to act as an umbrella agency, free from domination by either Education or Labour Ministries, although this rarely happens in practice. Agencies exist in Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa but they take on different forms. The World Bank recommends that authorities should be autonomous, have significant employer representation and decision-making powers. It is also generally seen that such agencies need to have financial autonomy through levy funds (present or planned in Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa) or some other independent source. Otherwise, there is concern that they may be too subject to government interference.

On Perils, Promises and non-formal education!

There is promise for non-formal education forms to be included in the TVET agenda. Clearly, there is a need for the constituency, traditionally responded to by the traditional 'non-formal' education sector to be accommodated. The marginalized rural populations and the disaffected urban populace, with a specific focus on genderised differences in the African context, needs the attention of communities and governments everywhere The insertion of vocational components are absolutely fundamental to the success and sustainability of non-formal education forms. There is no doubt that the 'vocationalisation' of literacy, numeracy, health and nutrition programmes are important, as is the insertion of these developmental priorities into what has been considered the 'narrow and functionalist' current training curriculum. There is a degree of mutual sharing that can benefit both. It is likely also that inclusion might well result in a more nuanced and considered riposte to the current responsiveness dilemma, plagued as it is by an economic component. Thus non-formal education forms and its relationship to the formal system will see a degree of much needed convergence. Non-formal inclusion might well more appropriately respond to the needs of the formal and informal economy simultaneously.

But the inclusion of non-formal programmes is not without its perils. How is the integration of non-formal educational forms likely to engage the current challenges faced by TVET systems? Just how do we envisage the way non-formal education programmes are to be integrated in the TVET system? Would inserting the non-formal project respond to 'the vision' or will it complicate the wish list even further (as defined by Unwin 2003 and others)? How is funding to be ensured? Would it be necessary for the employed or paying learner to subsidise community development or would governments be more (or less) willing to fund these as a result of their social development responsibilities. How are non-formal education programmes to be inserted into the TVET agenda? What about NQFs, noting that non-formal programmes and their clients

have been known to be less interested in the credentialing than they are in the utilitarian value of the skills (Bock et al 1983)?

This conference comes at an opportune time when the debate about the role of non-formal programmes and its relationship to TVET needs to be opened. Over the course of the following two days, we are to be treated to a veritable feast of offerings that will interrogate the issue. Deliberations have been divided into the following broad thematic areas:

- Integrating non-formal training in the TVET system: experiences, strategies and best practices
- Funding and financing of non-formal TVET programmes
- The impact of non-formal training on wage and self-employment
- Participation by the informal sector in work-based learning and standards development

The integration of non-formal education forms, which will explore regional non-formal experiences, strategies and best practices will serve as a crucial starting point for examining the current state of the art. It will point, importantly, to future sustainability considerations, both from the perspective of the TVET sector and from the perspective of other non-formal forms. It is perfectly likely that inclusion might well change the future landscape of TVET provision in our region. This 'new' form is likely to impact particularly on an already diverse vision identified in current TVET forms Thus it is important that the funding and financing of these non-formal forms are investigated and its likely impact on current situation identified. This is crucial to its continued success as a strategy. The focus of deliberations cannot be successfully concluded without assessing the impact of non-formal programmes on both the individual and society. In particular, its impact on the participants of both the formal wage and informal economy will need to be carefully considered.

While not directly referred to in this framework, non-formal education cannot be complete without a more careful analysis of the envisaged 'new participant' of TVET as a result of this development, both from the perspective of existing provision to accommodate the new form and the participant to be included. In addition, how will different delivery forms be accommodated, if at all? Will be the role of ICT technology? Will there be a role for private (non-State) provision, for-and not for profit, and will these forms be accommodated within an envisaged national qualifications framework, and if so, how? In a context where regional skills migration as a result of economic opportunity is a reality (it actually could do with some encouragement), there is need

to interrogate the wisdom for or necessity of some form of regional articulation. In this regard, the whole issue of standards cannot be ignored. What are these 'elusive' standards? Who develops them? How are they to be monitored?

Conclusion

It is useful to remind ourselves about the challenges referred by Phillips Coombs in his landmark treatise on education, " The World Educational Crisis". I take the liberty of quoting extensively to make the point:

> Education systems are falling far short of turning out the right combination of manpower needed for optimum development (p.74).... A particularly troublesome sector is TVT at the secondary or post secondary level...The poor countries now face a priority task of non formal education which years ago confronted today's industrialized countries. *It is to bring the vast numbers of farmers, workers, small entrepreneurs who have never seen the inside of a formal classroom and perhaps never will- a spate of useful skills and knowledge which they can promptly apply to their own and the nation's development.* Industrialised and developing countries need to bring about a more effective relationship between formal and non-formal education to break down the walls between them and to achieve a more efficient division of labour between the two (p.144) (Coombes, 1968...emphasis inserted)

While we are still engaged in the issue almost thirty-six years later is indeed distressing. I suppose that we can be heartened by the fact that the issue is still on the agenda albeit in frightfully different contexts. We should be grateful that we are provided the opportunity to engage the debate once again. I think the fact that we are (still) living with the results of unresolved tensions means that we have to look to the past for some guidance. The biggest challenge as I see it, is that referred to by Tedesco (1990) who advocates a *planned* association of the formal education system with the non-formal, with the ominous warning that if it does happen in this co-ordinated way the impact on *both* will be "...short-lived, isolated and generally out of touch with the demands, needs and interests of the target population" (p.2). We are at the crossroads of running the gauntlet. Whether it is to be a landmark development in TVET in the region will be for history to judge.

Finally, I have had the benefit of attending the deliberations in Goborone last year, and am fortunate enough to be present here. There is, no doubt, a need for this forum to be sustained for the meaningful regional dialogue to be sustained. This will enable a proactive engagement with the kind of challenges to which I have referred.

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