

A TVET framework model to facilitate policy formulation

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Half the population of the Commonwealth – 1 billion people – are below the age of 25 years, and a significant proportion of them are adolescents. The current global economic climate and scarcity of resources impose a challenge for member countries to cater for the education and skills development needs of young people. The focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on universal primary education (UPE) contributed towards improving enrolment rates at that level, which consequently increased enrolment at secondary level. However, many states face high drop-out rates at secondary and higher secondary levels. There is a broad gap in transition from secondary to any form of formal post-secondary education, including both technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. In many countries with a relatively large young population and limited resources, young people are exposed to street crime, drugs, psychological issues, conflict and, in certain societies, religious extremism. The challenge for many of us is how to transform these young people into a useful resource that can contribute towards the economic development process of their respective countries and help them become responsible citizens.

Research into TVET systems

TVET is a key priority under the Commonwealth Secretariat Education Section's strategic work plan. In this regard, research was commissioned in five countries (Bangladesh, Kenya, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and The Gambia) to identify policy gaps and the key issues they faced. In selecting the countries, factors given attention included large young populations, low levels of skills among young people, a low economic growth rate and geographic spread.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), the peak body representing the government owned Technical and Further Education (TAFE)

providers in Australia, conducted the research into the TVET systems in the five selected countries. The research methodology included the following:

- Desktop research into the demographics and the structure of the education sector.
- Literature reviews of recent and planned policy and programme initiatives.
- Web-based research including online discussion forums.
- News articles and media releases; phone interviews with key stakeholders and representatives of external agencies/international partners.
- A two-day TVET Policies and Initiatives Workshop. This involved presentation of an overview of the education sector and TVET by a representative from each of the five participating countries. It also refined and confirmed the initial research findings with a focus on current and emerging policy gaps and priorities for the further development of each country's TVET system.

For the purpose of this research, it was agreed to focus only on the formal TVET sector – formal learning in an institutional setting. TVET was defined as 'education, training and assessment for work' and the TVET sector as 'the policies, programmes and institutions dedicated to providing formal education, training and assessment for skills required in the workplace'. The research has been completed and findings are being finalised for sharing with the participating countries and partners.

Key features of the research

A detailed study revealed that only around 10-15 per cent of those enrolled in primary education progress to formal post-secondary education (university education or any type of formal

Figure 1 The TVET framework model

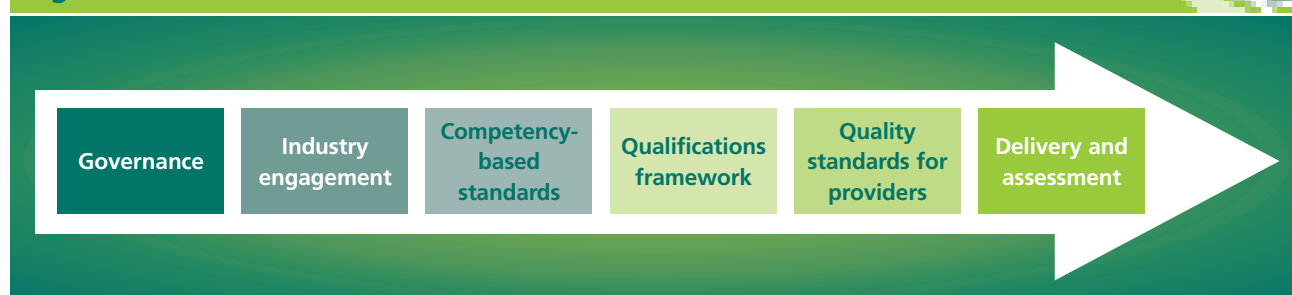




Photo: Commonwealth Secretariat/Victoria Holdsworth

Trainees in Uganda

TVET programme). This leaves a significant majority of young people who have completed primary education but do not go on to formal post-secondary education, though they may have pursued informal and non-formal skills or taken other forms of unskilled employment. Appreciating the value this huge untapped potential could have for the economic development of a country, many new programmes and initiatives have been undertaken by various international donors and partners.

However, because it is based on a specifically created TVET framework model, the research in the five Commonwealth countries is unique in further informing policy-makers and assessing where the key gaps are. Six features were identified as intrinsic to the TVET system in Australia, which was used as a baseline, and how this has been developed, reviewed and refined: governance, industrial engagement, competency-based standards, qualifications framework, quality standards for providers and

Table 1 The elements of the TVET framework model

Governance	Industry engagement	Competency-based standards	Qualifications framework	Quality standards for providers	Delivery and assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National TVET policy National agencies Nationally co-ordinated funding Nationally developed pathways between education sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Skills Councils Advisory Boards Research component Workplace training and placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally endorsed Skills aligned to specific occupations Skills aligned to level of competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally endorsed Competencies aligned to levels of qualifications Pathways to and between school, vocational and higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally endorsed Registration standards for providers Standards for regulators Audit process and schedule Standards for course development Standards for data capture and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified teachers and trainers Recognition of prior learning Flexible learning options Moderated and validated assessments

delivery and assessment (see Figure 1). While developing this model, a key challenge was to identify features that could be meaningfully applied to any country and avoid culturally or socially constructed terms and conditions.¹ Table 1 illustrates the various elements of the model.

Further work was conducted to extend this model into stages of development for each of the six features against which participating countries could be assessed or ranked. The research has taken an evidence-based approach in using the TVET framework model and in allocating a nominal ranking. For example, if there is evidence of industry engagement where companies and businesses deliver their own training, offer work experience or placements for trainees, and are engaged in dialogue with government agencies, the country profile will indicate it is at Level 2 for industry engagement. If there is also evidence of competency-based job descriptions in place and some type of licensing arrangements for employees, then the country profile will indicate it is at Level 3 in terms of industry engagement.

The profiling is not a definitive assessment of achievement. However, it does attempt to provide a snapshot of potential strengths and weaknesses of a TVET system in a given country. Where evidence of development has been identified, this has been plotted on a matrix (see Figure 2).

Using the six stages of development of a TVET system, Figure 2 indicates that this particular TVET system:

- Has one or several government agencies with TVET policies and some pathways or articulation within vocational education provision.

- Is strong in delivery and assessment regimes.
- Has an identifiable qualifications framework.
- Has the beginnings of a competency-based system of training, perhaps limited to a few industries.
- Has some quality standards for providers in place.
- Has minimal industry engagement.

It was interesting to observe that – despite the geographical distance, size of population and diversity – some of the key issues were common in many of the countries. It was also interesting to note that countries are giving due importance to the agenda of citizenship education and are planning ways in which education with regards to social rights and responsibilities, including the development of soft skills, could be imparted to young people alongside employment skills education.

One of the areas where almost all participating countries can work further is ‘delivery and assessment’. A strong TVET system will have guidelines and standards that govern the way training is delivered. This includes appropriately qualified teachers and trainers, adequate facilities and resources, and quality assurance processes for assessment, including moderation and validation exercises.

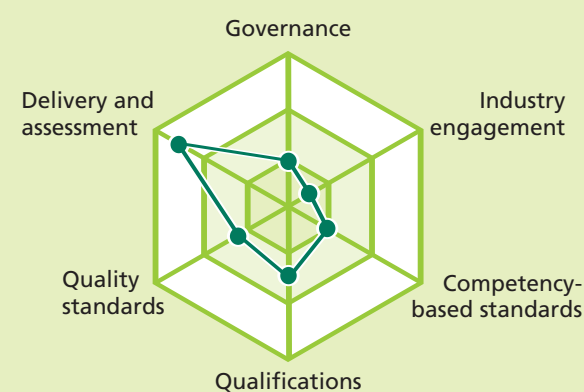
The TVET framework model and associated matrix developed through the research could effectively be used in assessing, against standard benchmarks, TVET system for any of the Commonwealth member states, it can highlight the strengths while make recommendations for the elements that may need further development and improvement.

Endnote

¹ The researchers wish to emphasise that the construct has not been tested or validated and should not be seen as a definitive benchmark or baseline. However, it was particularly useful for the five nations participating in the May 2012 workshop in Kenya where the model was used to explore current issues and policy gaps in their TVET systems.

Figure 2 Development matrix

Example of a matrix of development



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