

Luring youth into agriculture

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Policy reforms for ATVET in Africa/Integration of ATVET into broader systems of agricultural knowledge, skills and innovation, Roundtable H47, 3 December 2020

Agricultural tertiary and vocational education and training (ATVET) in Africa currently suffers from one main problem: it's unpopular with the youth. Although agriculture remains the dominant sector in many African economies, ATVET suffers from outdated curricula that fail to acknowledge students' prior knowledge or align the acquired skills with available jobs. Policy reforms are now centred on a modular approach. While the standard approach required students to follow all courses, a modular approach allows students to follow courses that are relevant to them. Caroline Mutepfa of the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provided an example. In the pineapple value chain, courses would start with sowing pineapple seeds, move on to caring for seedlings and end with the harvest. Students with experience in this value chain could take a course on seedlings and skip the one on harvesting if they already had sufficient knowledge on the subject.

Mutepfa provided a structured overview of the continental approach to the reforms in ATVET using Agenda 2063. This blueprint for Africa's development centres on inclusive and

sustainable development as well as regional and continental integration. A focal point is to ensure the inclusion of women. According to Mutepfa, the modular approach helps to achieve this. Historically, opportunities to move up into higher income segments of the value chain were taken by men. A modular approach helps women to do the same as it reduces the financial constraints women often face. They constitute the larger part of the agricultural workforce, so by acknowledging prior knowledge of all students, women are bound to benefit more.

The second speaker, Eusebius Mukhwana of the Kenya National Qualifications Authority, described the Kenyan experience in ATVET reform. A major constraint is the youth's lack of enthusiasm. In Mukhwana's view, they have a colonial mentality, which requires a decolonising of the mind. 'Everyone wants to be a manager,' Mukhwana said, 'working in clean jobs that are not there.' This preference for working in white collar jobs stems from Africa's colonial history, when Africans were systematically excluded from these kinds of positions.

Quality assurance is also central to Kenya's policy reform, as well as the establishment of occupational standards. The same diploma that could be gained in six months at one institution might take two years at another. Musa Abdullahi Mahadi of Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria also discussed the importance of quality assurance. He described how university and college partnerships helped facilitate a skills-oriented approach through the joint use of facilities, overcoming resource constraints.

Take-aways

- ATVET is very unpopular with the youth
- It suffers from outdated curricula and a mismatch between skills and jobs
- A modular approach can make ATVET more attractive, also to women