



Panel Report

Africa Knows Panel 46

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET): Bridging the gap, Lessons from the Dutch and African experience.

Convenors

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Abstract of Panel

Recent studies demonstrate the deficit of employable skills in a large percentage of young African graduates. The historical legacy of grammar-type schools in many African countries has led to a surfeit of graduates with a lot of theory-based knowledge to the detriment of the competences and skills urgently needed by the rapidly expanding African economy. Several African governments are taking steps to redress this educational gap. In the Netherlands, Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) provide technical and vocational education and training (TVET) driven by the competences and skills needed by the professional labor market. Panel 46 explores which best practices of institutional collaborations between Europe and Africa might serve as steppingstones to increase TVET impact? What is needed in terms of education, stakeholder engagement, policy ,and business planning?



Accepted Paper

Jonas Aryee, Torben Andersen, George van Dyck, 'Industry School Partnerships in Vocational and Academic Training- a Resource Dependency View on the Regional Maritime University in Ghana'.

The paper examines examples of developed industry-university/school partnerships from a resource dependency theory. It also sheds light to the need of specialized training in the maritime industry. Furthermore, the paper explores the challenges faced by inadequate funding for education and training characterizing many African educational institutions, which outcome might end in a fight of survival or lean to an innovation of the institutions. In addition, it addresses research and development where the educational institutions rely on network-based synergies with external actors. This is illustrated in the newest example in the Oil and Gas industry in Ghana and the maritime industry.

Discussion

Makinwa opened the webinar reiterating the fact that the question of increasing the level of employable skills and competences is crucial to the African development experience. She noted that while market-driven evidence-based TVET curricula would seem to be a self-evident choice, HOW to actualize this remains a challenge. After robust presentations and discussion, Panel 46 presenters and participants came up with the following recommendations and conclusions:

1. Education is the engine for growth.

- a. Capacity development is necessary for structural institutional strengthening. African governments must work towards building on creating an intra-African exchange system to share their TVET experiences, which enables them to learn from each other.
- b. Countries should invest in the infrastructure that is necessary for the development of TVET. Olawale gives the example of the agricultural sector where despite the increasing interest of young people, the lack of training facilities is affecting the development of TVET and the industry negatively. Aryee and van Dyck use the example of the Regional Maritime University in Ghana to emphasize that educational institutions often lack the required capacities to manage the projects on their own, as such collaboration with companies is recommended as the sustainable approach. Collaboration is necessary at the operational and policy levels, not just between universities and TVET institutions but also between relevant stakeholders, across and within countries at all levels.
- c. Best practices should be shared and adopted. Zafar and Gaikema presented the Nuffic programme and in particular the Orange Knowledge Program Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as examples of a stakeholder that is already extensively engaged in developing TVET interventions in formal and informal ways including, training, accreditation national qualifications. Van der Stelt and Camara of Maxim Nyansa outlined their Integrated Approach where students 'own' what they learn and in a system that takes the students from 'Training' to 'Hardware and Networking', to 'software' and finally to 'Consultancy Management'. Another best practice is the 'Entrepreneurship Support Organizations' system (ESO's) presented by Odunuga who makes the case that African TVET institutions must shift to an evidence-based approach supported by successful entrepreneurship programs.



2. Need for a 'Learning transformation'

- a. Stakeholders should also work toward addressing the 'low prestige' of TVET. As a participant noted '... as far as universities are involved, I fear that many 'top-level' scholars do not think that TVET is good for their academic careers and leave it to 'administrators'. The low prestige of TVET is associated with 'little interest and motivation from [the] private sector to collaborate with TVET both in terms of contributing to curriculum development and in providing opportunities for internship and practical training. 'This works against the social appreciation of TVET programs. As a participant noted, ' ...we meet a lot of people who do not value technical skills, they rather want their children to be an accountant or a lawyer than an electrician or a plumber - the "inflation" of polytechnics into universities may be related'.

3. Need to include the private sector structurally in this process of TVET educational reform to ensure learnability and employability.

- a. Employers should be encouraged to invest in the capacity building of their workers. Bureaucratic, theoretical ,and outdated curricula result in 'young people learn[ing] skills that are not always in demand on the labour market.' Participants strongly agree with the observation of van Ommering that 'Defining occupational standards, and learning objectives needs a private sector that articulates their needs for skills'. These supports Odunuga's call for Entrepreneurship Curriculum advocacy in TVET education.
- b. The private sector should get involved in the creation of TVET curriculums to meet the current needs of the job market. As Gaikema, Aryee and van Dyck noted, industry partnerships are indeed crucial for technical TVET programmes requiring huge investments ... sharing costs of expensive technology for outreach, training ,and research with companies) provides a more sustainable approach as well as support in the financial maintenance and management of it.
- c. Furthermore, as van der Stelt emphasizes, 'accreditation schemes [that] push vocational training ... to a curriculum overloaded with theories and exams' are problematic as practical application suffers. TVET Curricula should be innovative and provide TVET teachers with adequate training for present day needs. In this regards TVET curricula should be market-driven, leverage digital opportunities as well as seek to partner with Entrepreneurship Support Organizations and other incubators for young entrepreneurs.
- d. Also important is the comment of Dietz who noted that 'TVET seems to be focused on 'making things' while some of the fastest growing successful sectors in Africa are entertainment companies (e.g., Nollywood) and commercial religious ventures (e.g., the 10% churches). Is there a cross-over of experiences in these sectors to the 'make sectors'?' This should be further explored.

4. Equality and Inclusion Another important point is the need for an inclusive development and in particular the inclusion of women and girls and marginalized groups in TVET training.

One best practice put forward by a participant is, 'diversifying core teams especially when doing fieldwork' to enable young girls to '... see female vocational schoolteachers and university lecturers as role models in community development work.'. Another aspect of inclusion raised by a participant is the need to explicit attention to the issue of teaching and assessing students in local languages to encourage inclusion and accessibility.



The participants concluded that this was a useful session and expressed thanks to the organizers of the Africa Knows Conference for creating this opportunity for dialogue on the topic of the importance of TVET to capacity building in Africa.