Expanding Technical and Vocational Education and Training
at the Secondary Education Level

3-4 December 2012, Bangkok, Thailand

Concept Note

RATIONALE

Expansion of secondary education has increasingly been recognized as part of the Education for All (EFA) process, particularly in Asia and the Pacific. Compared to the primary education sub-sector in which students are provided with foundational learning in basic numeracy and literacy, the secondary education sub-sector covers a range of subjects and aims to equip pupils with knowledge and skills required for their transition to adult life and to the world of work. In recognition of the importance of skills development at the secondary level, the 2012 edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) has been devoted to this issue under the topic of “Youth and Skills: Putting education to work”.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the secondary level has been a particular interest to many countries in the region as a mechanism to provide those pupils who may choose the pathway of direct entry into the labour force and leave the education system with secondary certificates with the necessary knowledge and skills required by the labour market. However, increasingly in both developing and developed countries, many graduates from secondary-level TVET programmes are continuing their studies after the completion of such studies.

Given a number of factors including the relatively high unit cost of TVET (i.e., setting up specialised technology/vocational classrooms, establishing its material base, providing practical workshops and thus decreasing student/teacher ratio, and hiring, training and retaining qualified teachers in the specific subject areas are usually associated with high cost), some developing countries are experiencing difficulty expanding TVET at the secondary level.

While TVET has traditionally been provided through dedicated TVET schools and centres, a number of countries have been applying various channels in offering TVET programmes in general secondary schools. Despite the need to make strategic choices under serious resource constraints, governments are often left with limited information in regard to the various experiences and ways of supplying TVET programmes in the Asia-Pacific region. In order to assist the evidence-based and strategic decision making of governments in the expansion of TVET programmes at the secondary level (especially in formal education), UNESCO Bangkok in collaboration with UNEVOC is conducting a study on the various approaches in providing TVET at the secondary education level. The current study builds on the “Regional Study of Secondary Level Technical and Vocational Education: Policies and Rationales for Skills Development” conducted by UNESCO Bangkok in 2008 by providing more updated information and narrowing the focus to provide concrete policy advice to Member States. The resulting study will be published as a booklet in hard copy and/or online, while an expert meeting to be held in Bangkok on 3-4 December 2012 will focus on the exchange of policies, practices and lessons learned from a number of countries with experience in this area.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

The study, which will be published as a booklet, will focus on the various approaches in expanding TVET programmes at the secondary level in the Asia-Pacific and will also aggregate the information available in the Asia-Pacific region in an easily comprehensible format to respond to specific needs of the region. The
list of topics in the booklet include: historical context; current policies and legislative frameworks; strategies and challenges; curriculum development; teacher training/qualifications; financing, etc. There will also be a designated section on country experiences from China, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Uzbekistan given that these countries have dynamic TVET systems at the secondary level that could provide interesting perspectives and lessons for other countries. As a practical manual explaining various approaches for the delivery of TVET at the secondary level, the booklet will benefit both education ministry officials working in this area as well as researchers and analysts in national research institutions, universities and development agencies who are examining issues of TVET and secondary education.

DESCRIPTION OF MEETING

UNESCO Bangkok, in cooperation with UNEVOC Bonn, will organise a regional expert meeting inviting the experts involved in the study as well as government representatives from other interested countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar). The objective of the meeting will be to discuss the preliminary findings of the study, to draw policy options and to examine potential issues that could be further discussed in the regional synthesis report. The meeting will take place on 3-4 December 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The expert meeting will include discussion of regional and international trends of TVET provision at the secondary level, including the findings of the 2012 EFA GMR, followed by presentation of country cases from China, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Uzbekistan. The meeting will allow for a detailed discussion of the emerging issues and challenges of expanding TVET at the secondary level, including issues of enrolment, financing and curriculum. The sharing of the country cases as well as the presence of government representatives from additional countries in the Asia-Pacific region will allow for critical consideration of the applicability and feasibility of case countries’ experience in other countries as well as recommendations for expanding the study. The participants will also benefit from a study visit to the Panyapiwat Techno Business School in Bangkok and discuss how UNESCO can support them in working to expand TVET at the secondary level.