

## Linking (Post)Basic Education and Training: A Way to Fulfil the Needs of Youth and Adults for Generic and Vocational Skills?

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The Conference addresses the linkages between the world of work, skills and knowledge. Working Group No 2 will address more specifically the nature, the reality, the challenges and the limits of linking (post) basic education and training, for youth and adults skills development.

The question is no new as it refers to the debate, which can already be traced in Plato (IVth century B.C.), concerning the autonomy of education vs. the world of work as well as the degree of overlapping between education and training. As far as the first issue is concerned, it refers to the distinction between teaching (and learning) about work and for work. In other words, the question is to know whether education is more concerned by «person rights» than by «property rights». As far as the degree of overlapping between education and training is concerned, it can be analysed in the same terms: when a German apprentice learns German language in the day he spends in a training centre, supposedly this is training. When his «realschule» colleague takes the same course it must be education. Where is the difference? Paradoxically, a German apprentice following a course in a training centre might learn/be educated more about work than a student taught/trained by a teacher working in a school, the management of which is in fact very close to the hierarchical and competitive organisation of an enterprise.

These questions may sound quite academic. They cross every discussion in a Ministry of Education as well as in a small NGO working in the «informal sector», since the early 60's. They have also given the opportunity to thousands of international «experts» to propose solutions that were going to definitely tackle poverty, unemployment, youth marginalisation, gender unbalance in education and development ...

In 1968, P. Coombs wrote in *The World Educational Crisis*: «Educational systems are falling far short of turning out the right combinations of manpower needed for optimum development» (p.74). «A particularly troublesome sector is TVT at the

particularly troublesome sector is TVT at the secondary or post-secondary sector. For a variety of reasons these kinds of formal training have been conspicuously unsuccessful and unsuitable in industrialised countries. Yet, they are nonetheless exported and imported at great expense into less developed countries, side by side with shorter and more flexible non formal training schemes, delivered by a different breed of advisers» (p.76). «Not all efforts at technical training are by any means unproductive and uneconomic. On the contrary, one finds many authentic «success stories». But they are usually cases where a strong effort was made to adapt training forms to a local need» (p.77).

«The poorer countries now face a priority task of non formal education which years ago confronted today's industrialised countries. It is to bring to the vast numbers of farmers, workers, small entrepreneurs who have never seen the inside of a formal class room – and perhaps never will – a spate of useful skills and knowledge which they can promptly apply to their own and nation's development» (p.142). «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). Is the situation different more than 30 years afterwards?

In 1973, the same author proposed in *New Paths to Learning for Rural and Youth* a list of the minimum essential learning needs of the neglected groups of that time (young children, out-of-schoolers, girls):

- Positive attitudes towards co-operation with and help to one's family and fellow men
- Functional literacy and numeracy
- A scientific outlook and an elementary understanding of the processes of nature
- Functional knowledge and skills for raising a family and operating a household
- Functional knowledge and skills for earning a living

- Functional knowledge and skills for civic participation

The basic needs approach proposed by ILO in 1976, of which education was a component, reflects the same perspective. In 1990 the World Conference on Education for All agreed on a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. But in this document, only a few pages long, the word Skill appears only five times. Ten years later, the World Education Forum adopted in Dakar a Framework for Action – Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. This document, of the same length than the Jomtien one, contains four times the word Skill. How to assess this situation which may sound as a slow but sure decline of the interest of the educationists for the world of work, marking a great difference with the 60's? One might hypothesise that the increasing influence of the economic situation on every society via the globalisation process has geared to a counter reaction of the world of education to reassess its autonomy and «protect» its values against the marketisation of everything, including education.

At the same time, the world of training, as a bridge between education and the economy, had to realistically acknowledge the rapid evolution the world is undergoing since more than a decade. In 1999, the Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education organised by UNESCO and devoted to Lifelong Learning and Training, Bridge to the Future (sub-title: Work, Education and the Future), adopted the following Recommendation: there is a «new expanded vision for TVE T which stresses the need for incorporating a new relationship between the various sectors of education and training, an holistic approach to the preparation for life and the world of work and increasingly seamless pathways in life long learning» (Rec. 7).

In 2000, Report V for the 88th session of the International Labour Conference defined HRD and training as «activities of education, initial training, continuous training and life-long learning that develop and maintain individual's employability and productivity over a lifetime». One of the conclusions of the General Discussion held on the basis of this Report reads as follows: «It is the task of basic education to ensure to each individual the full development of the human personality and citizenship; and to lay the foundation for employability. Initial training develops further his or her employability by providing general core work skills, and the underpinning knowledge, and industry-based and professional competencies which are portable and facilitate the transition into the world of work» (Conc. 5).

There are obviously some differences between these two visions of the linkages between education and training: the first one reflects mostly the position of the TVE(T) sections of most Education Ministries, as

the second one is largely influenced by formal employment (trade unions and employers) and Labour Ministries representatives. The debate is consequently going to be particularly difficult when dealing with out/de-schooled and/or un(formally) employed people, as they are not represented as stakeholders in the traditional formal organisations managing a tripartite system, and as their needs and demands are often considered as anti-development/globalisation. An evolution seems nevertheless on its way as the tragic reality of unemployed and angry large segments of some «developing countries» population can no longer be ignored.

Finally, it is worth noting the quasi absence of the World Bank in this debate. The strong views expressed in the 1991 Sector policy on VTET have nearly frozen the reflection on that issue until the end of the last decade. (It seems still being the case today, as the WBI Course on Strategic Choices for Educational Reform held in March 2001 does not refer anywhere in its site presentation to the world of training) Interestingly, nevertheless, some work is being done since three years on Adult Outreach Education. For example, the concept of basic learning skills has been used in Bangladesh in 1999: are we far from the 1973 Coombs categories, which were also relating to the poor and excluded population?

The difference lies may be in the fact that we were at that time still positively working for development and that 30 years later we (only) dream of a world free of poverty! The fact that some WB staff is today reflecting about an integrated conception of post-basic education and training gives an interesting signal, as it refers to the planning (can we still use this term?) imperatives stemming from the financial and structural consequences of the generalisation of UPE in most countries of the world. Secondary (general and technical) education is out of reach for many countries and it is now clear that some diversified and flexible means are the only way to provide relevant education and training.

For example, the type of revisiting by the WB of the adult education/literacy world is quite interesting. On one hand, it could be considered as a mere appropriation of the 60/70's functional approach (including the P. Freire's one). But the world was not as globalised 30 years ago as today, when the concerns about the growing social and economic risks stemming from an unregulated globalisation process emphasises the necessity to consider the integration of billion of people in this process as the price to pay to keep it going. This is reflected in the 1999 WB World Development Report which underline the key role of Information Skills for the «development» of the poor.

Some neo-liberal economists have now to acknowledge the fact that investing in education – even of the poor – is not anti-growth. According to J.

Bhagwati (1988), «More is known now to wean us away from the fear that such educational and health expenditures are necessarily at the expense of growth. What is equally pleasurable is the fact that many of these arguments apply with yet greater force when the expenditures are addressed to the poorer segments of the population. The case for undertaking more such expenditures, with focus on the poor, consistent with being engrossed in the growth strategy, is therefore now seen to be stronger than ever before. I think we have learnt that, within reasonable margins, we may then be able to eat our cake and have it too. Social expenditures could improve the welfare of the poor directly and also indirectly through growth, which in turn would impact on poverty. But beyond these margins, the trade-off remains an issue».

This new perspective allows us to revisit the 40 years old reflection about the linkages between (post)basic education and training for skills development. From the 60's to the early 90's, social development was considered first as a sub-product of economic growth illustrating the trickle down effect, and step by step considered next as a useless public investment. The rising criticism against the predominant reductionist economic theories and the development of a new economic sociology (Grannoveter) are today emphasising the way the social phenomena are interacting with the structure and the functioning of the economic system. In that sense, poverty cannot be analysed and dealt with as a second rate and independent phenomenon as far as its relations with the dominant rational economic model creating wealth are concerned.

That is why dealing with skills development and training of/for/by the poor cannot be disconnected of what is being proposed for the moving/enterprising/growing part of a society. It can also no longer be a field of intervention, where some supposed needs are fulfilled either through Business Development Services considering that every poor is a potential entrepreneur or through some assistencial/humanitarian state or NGO type of intervention. In the same way, answering the skills needs of the economically growing sectors of a society through public and private TVET cannot be conceptualised in a closed world. Because of the rapidly growing and changing complexity of societies the social and economic dimensions of which are more and more related, skills development, and basic education have to be intrinsically linked in order not only to secure some training achievements but above all some transformations in the life of the concerned people.

An «integrated diversity» is consequently required to reach such an objective, which would mean, for example:

- Questioning the divide between formal and non formal education, as the former needs some de-

formalisation and the second some part of systemic structuration.

- Questioning the pedagogical, structural, financial and political divide between production-based and non production-based TVT to avoid useless and costly discussions, which do not look at youth and adults' HRD as a global multifaceted process.
- Questioning the strong impetus favouring a decreasing state investment in training and skills development, including for the disadvantaged segments of the population.

The following issues can then be raised in the light of the above mentioned considerations, i.e. by assuming that linking (post)basic education and training is a more effective way to contribute to individual as well as to socio-economic development than by disconnecting them:

- How to minimally secure the socio-economic inclusion of youth in unpredictable socio-economic change processes, where thinking in terms of progressive transition and life project has nearly any meaning for this youth?
- In other words, how to secure that the above mentioned linkages contribute to avoid exclusion of a majority of youth, to whom basic non-formal education is usually proposed as an assistencial/charitable product?
- How by the contrary, to stimulate the will of learning as a means to exist as individual as well as members of some social networks? How to develop a renewed socio-constructivist approach of literacy?
- How to stimulate an integrated diversity in the provision of individual and socio-economic skills geared at facilitating the survival of the majority of the so called informal sector who will remain in the household or craft economy?
- How to facilitate the policy dialogue at the macro level to minimally secure that this integrated diversity is also considered as a social, political and economical priority by the public (Ministries of Education, Labour and Finance, National Qualification Authorities) and private actors (producers, social organisations ...)?

All these questions are raised since many years in so many documents from both the academic as well as aid and co-operation circles, that one wonders why it is still necessary to put them! That is, may be, because the mere reality at the field level is always one step ahead from the analysis and recommendations put forward by so many observers. At the same time, hundreds of projects, programmes, experiences, networks, organisations, and structures – public and private – are trying to find some solutions:

- International co-operation and development agencies develop sector policies for education (and training) which include some specific components supposedly dealing with the issues the target groups we are interested in bring at the forefront: the 1997 meeting of the WG for International Co-operation in Skills Development (<http://www.vetnet.ch/wg>) has demonstrated the difficulties to apply the sector policy in such situations which are by nature inter-sectoral and request a large degree of flexibility.
  - NGOs and CBOs implement at the grass root level some programmes and projects which can be successful in their social and educational dimensions but often don't provide to the target groups the technical and managerial skills adapted to their situation. The Lebanon case study illustrates the way an NGO is trying to combine human development (including value education) with income generation for youth that have difficulties to build a life project in the disarticulated society they are living in.
  - SMEs professional organisations under development are using ad hoc combinations of basic education and training to secure a better performance of their members and apprentices but also to ground their social existence and recognition through a good training framework. This way of doing can force, as shown in the Mali case study, the government to validate the quality of the proposed programmes and to discuss their integration in the national qualification system.
  - Consortia of government agencies, NGOs, firms, foundations set up ad hoc organisations calling upon the skills of professionals coming from these different backgrounds as well as from some universities running action and participatory research. This approach is mostly used in Latin America.
  - The Business Development Services approach proposed since a few years by the Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprises Development includes the training of entrepreneurs as one of the services the market can provide: it would be interesting to check the type of skills proposed, the ways the later articulate basic education with technical training and whether entrepreneurs are also considered as trainers to be trained Different programmes are using this perspective in South East Asia.
  - South Africa is a very interesting case about which one can wonder whether it is a unique situation and/or a living «good practice». The setting up after 1994, of a National Qualification Authority which aims at including all kinds of education and training in a single recognition and validation framework represents an attempt that many other African countries are closely following, as illustrated by the Botswana case study.
  - On the education side, Departments of Education launch different experiments aiming at defining a new balance between the traditional structures and contents of general and technical education, calling upon the polysemic concept of generic skills/competencies which would cover at the same time human, social and economic basic knowledge needs in the framework of life long learning. This approach relates to the considerations made at the beginning of this paper about the dialectic relations between the worlds of education and training. The Hong Kong case study illustrates this perspective in a highly developed country.
  - Finally, we should not forget the situation in the rural areas of southern countries, where so many attempts have been made over the last decades aiming at better relating formal and informal education and training with the specific needs of youth and adults. The Madagascar case study illustrates the today's efforts to tackle the poverty situation of the rural world in the context of globalisation.
- Are all these attempts aiming at academising TVT, the same way some attempts were made 20 years ago to vocationalise Education, as C. de Moura Castro formulates it today?

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