



Vocational Education and Training for Development



Simon McGrath



What are the Issues?

- ❖ We are seeing a major shift back to an interest in VET-for-development but there is a risk that past critiques are not being addressed
- ❖ Current VET-for-development policies and practices are weakly informed by understandings of the complex relationships between learning, working and living
- ❖ VET-for-development is locked into an outdated model of development, and we need to build a new account
- ❖ Challenge of linking VET to “Beyond 2015” agenda



The Return of VET-for-Development

- ❖ UNESCO World Report, Skills GMR and Third International Congress
- ❖ UNESCO Strategy, Inter-Agency Group, G20 and OECD work; sharp ODA rise; rise of new donors
- ❖ Regional initiatives (e.g., SADC Strategy; next week's Asia meeting)
- ❖ Still largely couched in a youth unemployment "time bomb" rhetoric – cf. NCCK Report 45 years ago; Victoria Falls conference 20 years ago – new notion of NEETs
- ❖ An avoidance of past critiques of public VET



The Complex Modes and Sites of Learning for Work and Lives

- ❖ VET does not simply take place in public vocational schools and colleges for young people
- ❖ It takes place in private providers and in complex public-private partnerships
- ❖ It is found in “academic” schooling and in HE
- ❖ It occurs in public, private and informal enterprises; in community and domestic spaces; and through new technologies
- ❖ It is formal, non-formal and informal
- ❖ It is lifelong and lifewide



The VET-for-Development Orthodoxy

- ❖ Economic development is the ultimate goal of society
- ❖ Skills lead to employability, which leads to jobs
- ❖ Training leads to productivity, which leads to economic growth



Rethinking VET-for-Development

- ❖ Development theory has moved on from this position
- ❖ It is seen as environmentally unsustainable
- ❖ Rise of broader developmental accounts. For instance:
 - ❖ Human Rights
 - ❖ Capabilities
 - ❖ Integrated Human Development (McGrath 2012)



A Human Rights Perspective

- ❖ Tomasevski's 4 As:
 - ❖ availability of provision at the systemic level;
 - ❖ access in practice;
 - ❖ acceptability in terms of quality, process and content; and
 - ❖ adaptability to the needs of individuals and groups.
(Tomasevski 2001)
- ❖ All can be applied to VET
- ❖ Possibilities of a vision of VET for all based on a realisation of the multiple forms of vocational learning that individuals do and could access AND on a rights-based commitment to acceptability and adaptability



A Capabilities Perspective

- ❖ Well-being and flourishing are the goals of development
- ❖ Informed by social justice
- ❖ Aggregate goals determined by public debate
- ❖ Powell (2012) on South African FET capabilities:
 - ❖ learners' voices
 - ❖ capabilities to choose and to aspire
- ❖ VET should be about supporting VET that people value for their lives and livelihoods



An Integrated Human Development Perspective

- ❖ Centred in Catholic Social Teaching
- ❖ Human dignity is the core value
- ❖ Crucial importance of the dignity of labour – cf. ILO's decent work
- ❖ VET is about promoting humanness – learning to be and to become – cf. UNESCO's lifelong learning
- ❖ VET is about developing character and values, as well as about learning narrow work skills – cf. Kerschensteiner and Dewey



Conclusion

- ❖ We need a new debate regarding the purposes, natures and possibilities of VET, which links to:
 - ❖ Emerging notions of development and ties into debates about global development policies “beyond 2015”;
 - ❖ A broad sense of the multiple sites and modes of learning and working;
 - ❖ A realisation that VET does not simply have economic purposes; and
 - ❖ A new commitment to listening to the voices of learners as key actors in the VET system.

