Vocational Education and Training for Development

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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❖ VET-for-development is locked into an outdated model of development, and we need to build a new account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.