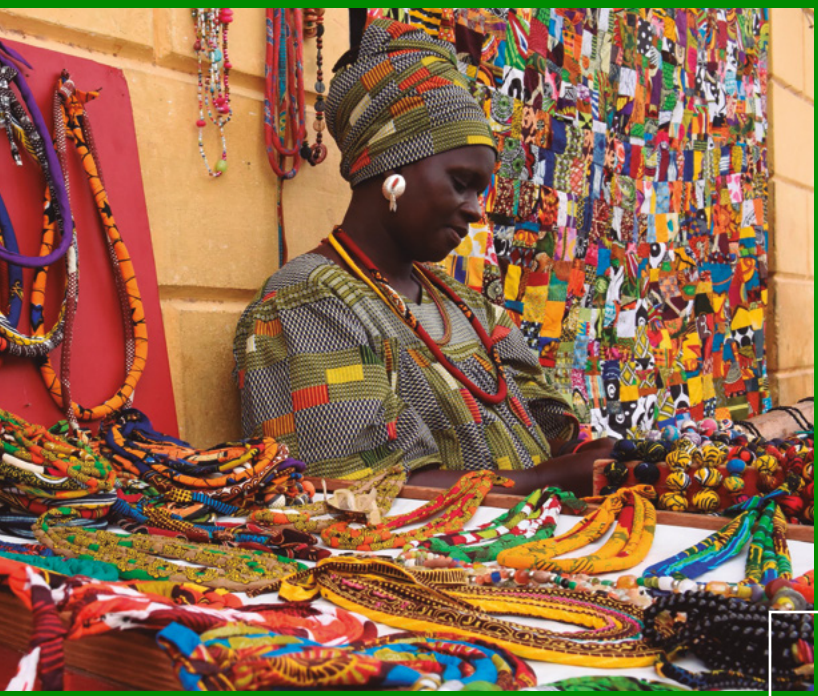
State of

SKILLS

International Labour Organization

1919·2019



Africa

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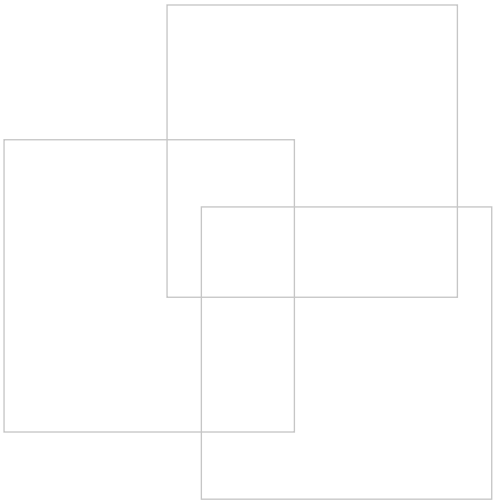

Africa

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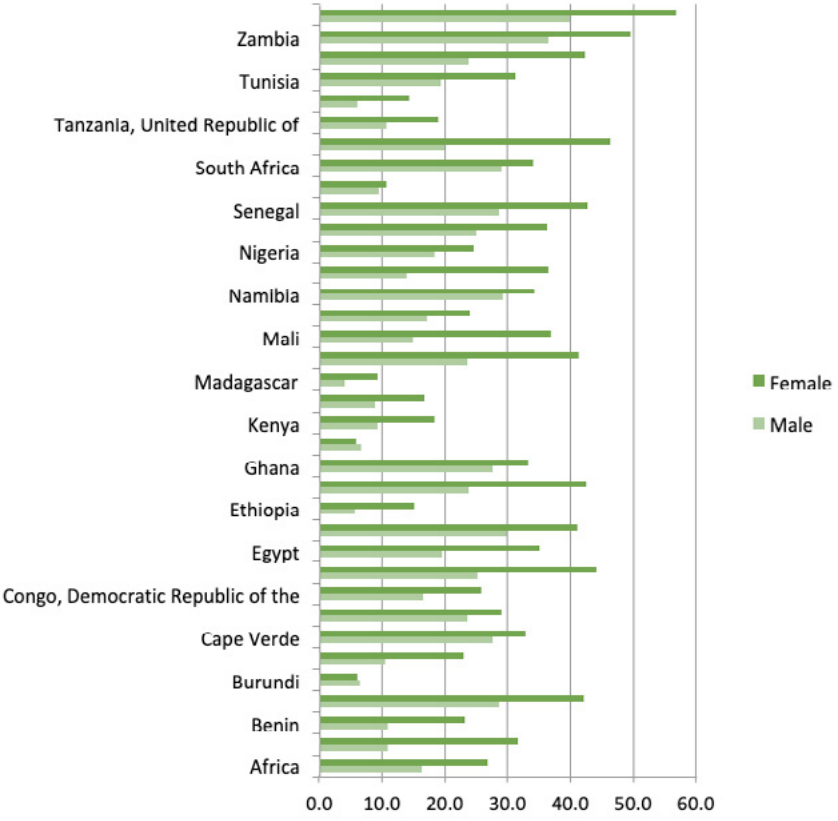
Demographic and economic trends

Although African economies are expected to grow in the 2020–21 biennium, the creation of decent jobs may not keep pace with the combined effects of population growth, unabated urbanization, climate change, migration and an increase in life expectancy. What is more, these trends are likely to bring about a decline in the rate of rural employment and an increase in the already extremely high levels of informal employment, thereby potentially contributing to an increase in vulnerable employment.

Skills development and lifelong learning offer the potential for better jobs and better lives for working people.

New technologies, expanding global trade and the shift to greener economies are opening new avenues for the creation of decent jobs. As an example, according to an ILO estimate, actions to tackle climate change, with supporting skills development policies, could create up to 24 million jobs worldwide by 2030 (ILO, 2018a). To date, however, too many people are being denied the opportunity to acquire new skills during the course of their life. More than one in five persons aged 15–24 years old on the African continent is neither in employment nor in education or training (figure 1). Once they have entered the world of work, only a tiny proportion of adults have access to quality training to reskill or upskill. As a result, most countries in the region suffer from skills mismatches, with a shortage of skilled workers persisting in a climate of high rates of unemployment and underemployment.

Figure 1. Share of youth neither in education nor training (NEET) by country:



Source. ILOSTAT, 2019.

Lifelong learning and skills development, feature prominently on the African continent

A commitment to lifelong learning improves the employability of workers at all ages, moves young people into productive and decent work, and increases the productivity of enterprises. It therefore helps economies to respond flexibly to skills demand by helping workers to move between declining and emerging sectors.

Based on an analysis of lifelong learning systems in 27[1] African countries, this policy brief highlights current challenges and potential solutions to support governments and employers' and workers' organizations in ensuring the availability of inclusive and equitable quality vocational education and training and promoting lifelong learning and decent work for all.

[1] Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A growing youth labour force fuels the demand for more education and skills training.

The African continent has the youngest population in the world and the youth labour force in Africa is growing rapidly. From 124.5 million currently, the youth labour force is expected to grow by 35 per cent by 2030, when it will reach almost 170 million young labour force participants. Demographic growth has been slowing down since 2014 in sub-Saharan Africa but it still represents both a major challenge and a unique opportunity. Population growth will inevitably increase pressure on education and training systems and new jobs will need to be created to accommodate the wave of labour market entrants. At the same time, the youthful population represents a key resource for development, especially in those countries which have already started their demographic transition – that is, especially in North and Southern Africa (ILO, forthcoming).

Dynamic economic growth is failing to translate into shared prosperity.

Economic growth on the continent has increased steadily since 2016 and is expected to increase further. In 2018, the total gross domestic product (GDP) of the African continent increased by an estimated 3.5 per cent, with East Africa leading the way with an estimated 5.7 per cent growth rate, followed by North Africa at 4.9 per cent, West Africa at 3.3 per cent, Central Africa at 2.2 per cent and Southern Africa at 1.2 per cent. Overall growth prospects for the next two years are good, with growth projected to reach 4 per cent. Income levels are highly diverse across the region.

The continent includes upper middle-income countries, such as Algeria and South Africa, as well as a number of least developed countries, such as Liberia and the Central African Republic. Accordingly, GDP per capita ranges between $660 in Burundi and $18,406 in Libya (AfDB, 2019a).

However, economic growth has so far failed to translate into shared prosperity. Income inequalities are rising and the number of people living in poverty has increased in many countries. While poverty rates have been falling, from 54 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015 in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living in extreme poverty – defined as living on less than $1.90 a day – has increased over the same period from 278 million to 413 million. Extreme poverty rates in the region range from just under 4 per cent in Gabon to over 77 per cent in the Central African Republic (World Bank, n. d.). What is more, as many as 38 per cent of those living in extreme poverty are in employment. Young people aged 15–24 years old are twice as likely to live in extreme poverty as their older counterparts (UN, 2019). While extreme poverty rates in North Africa are comparatively low, poverty measured on the basis of national poverty lines in 2015 still affects 31 per cent of the population in Mauritania, 27.8 per cent in Egypt and 15.2 per cent in Tunisia (AfdB, 2019b). There are many factors to explain why growth has not been inclusive on the African continent. One of the main reasons is that economic growth has failed to generate decent job opportunities in sufficient numbers across the region.

The African continent suffers from a lack of decent work opportunities.

Dynamic economic growth alone is not sufficient to create the approximately 12 million new jobs needed every year in Africa to absorb new labour market entrants. Between 2000 and 2014, a 1 per cent increase in GDP was associated with an employment growth rate of just 0.41 per cent. If this trend continues, 100 million people could join the ranks of the unemployed in Africa by 2030 (AfDB, 2019a). The average unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa is around 6.1 per cent in 2019, but the youth unemployment rates for 15–34-year-olds in the region range from 0.4 per cent in Niger to 53.2 per cent in South Africa. In North Africa, the total unemployment rate is more than twice as high – at 13 per cent – while youth unemployment rates range between 21.9 per cent in Morocco and 34.8 per cent in Tunisia (ILOSTAT, n.d.).

In addition to the lack of work, per se, the lack of decent work opportunities is a major source of concern. Informal employment is widespread, especially in the poorest countries, ranging from 35 per cent of total employment in South Africa to 95 per cent in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Informal employment, which includes mostly self-employed workers, but also contributing family workers or employed workers who do not have a formal contract, is usually characterized by low productivity and wages as well as insecure working conditions (ILOSTAT, n.d.).

In most countries, there is a mismatch between individuals' skills and aspirations on the one hand, and the skills requirements of the labour market on the other

Low educational attainment is associated with higher risks of living in poverty and represents a serious barrier for individuals wishing to access quality employment. In particular, young Africans with less than secondary education tend to remain in informal employment, whereas those who attain secondary or tertiary educational qualifications are more likely to transition into formal employment (ILO, forthcoming). The returns on an additional year of education are higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region of the world, suggesting that the economies suffer from a deficit of skilled workers (Arias et al., 2019). At the same time, employers all over the region are complaining that graduates lack relevant skills. According to the World Bank Enterprise Survey, about one-third of firms in sub-Saharan Africa report skills shortages as a greater-than-average constraint. In the United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter Tanzania), for instance, 40 per cent of all firms consider the region's inadequately skilled workforce to be a major constraint to their business growth, while, in Kenya, this is the case for 30 per cent of all firms (WEF, 2017). In Tunisia, 31 per cent of the companies surveyed by the ILO in 2015 stated that lack of qualified labour is the main constraint to filling longstanding vacancies, especially in the industrial sector (ILO, 2015a). Africa therefore faces the double challenge of expanding skills development while increasing the relevance of skills provision to the needs of the labour market.

Skills mismatch contributes to migration on the continent

In the perceived absence of skilled labour, companies sometimes feel compelled to resort to hiring workers from abroad. At the same time, graduates from post-secondary or tertiary education struggle to find jobs that match their qualifications and aspirations. They are therefore often forced to take on informal jobs, where their skills are not properly utilized and recognized, or may be tempted to migrate to countries with more dynamic labour markets, eventually contributing to a loss of human capital (or "brain drain") in their country of origin.This is especially the case in North Africa, where youth unemployment is particularly high among university graduates. Some 61 per cent of young Tunisian men and 72 per cent of young women with advanced education are without employment, compared to 30 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, of young men and women who have attained only basic education. In Egypt, almost one-half of working youth (47.7 per cent) are in occupations that do not match their educational attainment (ILO, 2015b).

Despite significant progress, educational attainment remains low and large shares of the population are still excluded from education

Good progress has been made in enrolling children in primary and secondary school in Africa over the past 20 years, even though huge disparities persist. Those disparities exist between countries as well as within countries between girls and boys, rural and urban areas, or rich and poor households. Progress in sub-Saharan Africa is reflected in the fact that the youth literacy rates (for the population aged 15–24 years old) have surpassed adult literacy rates (for those aged 25 years old and above) by 11 percentage points, to stand at 76.6 per cent (UIS, n.d.).

Educational attainments and learning outcomes on their own are far from sufficient to meet the challenges facing African societies today. Some 37 per cent of adolescents of lower-secondary school age in sub-Saharan Africa are out of school, with this figure reaching 58 per cent for upper-secondary education. In North Africa, the out-of-school rates reach 11.8 per cent and 30.1 per cent, respectively, for lower- and upper-secondary education (UIS, n.d.).

Those countries which participate in international tests, such as TIMSS and PIRLS (Botswana, Ghana and South Africa) are ranked among the countries with the lowest participation rates for mathematics and science, tests notwithstanding their comparatively high enrolment rates (Mullis et al., 2012a and 2012b). Equipping all children with basic skills, and thereby laying a foundation for their further education and training and lifelong learning, is crucial to allow African countries to restructure their economies and seize new opportunities for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Structural change, e.g. the movement of workers from lower to higher productivity employment in Africa, is mainly driven by the services sector

While this sector is largely dominated by informality, low productivity and the inability to create quality jobs, certain branches display positive trends. Tourism, for instance, is identified by many countries in their development strategy as a key sector with growth and employment-creation potential. Digital technologies have significant potential to further transform the services sector on the continent, as the percentage of people using the internet in Africa has increased from 2.1 per cent in 2005 to 24.4 per cent in 2018, according to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) data (Global and regional ICT estimates, 2018)[2]. E-commerce, software development, financial services or business process outsourcing are examples of activities that already contribute increasingly to growth in certain countries, such as Kenya, Morocco, Senegal and South Africa.

[2] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx

Manufacturing-driven periods of growth have had the strongest impact on job creation over the past 20 years

In fact, the impact of manufacturing-driven growth has been, on average, three times higher than the effect of services-driven growth.[3] However, the average share of the industry sector in total employment has been growing very slowly in Africa and is currently around 15 per cent, while the average share in total value added stands at about 20 per cent. The dominance of small firms with low productivity in the manufacturing sector has a significant negative effect on employment creation. Small firms' chances of transitioning into medium and large firms, which generally generate more jobs and pay better wages, are small due to constraints such as poor infrastructure, political instability and corruption. In addition, capital-intensive industries, such as mining and construction, lack the potential to create a large number of jobs although there can be important spillover effects on other sectors. Reversing the general trend of deindustrialization and diversifying the economy by developing new industries, especially in light manufacturing, can be considered a main avenue for employment generation and needs to be supported by appropriate skills development policies (AfDB, 2019a).

[3] The analysis conducted by the AfDB includes examples of growth acceleration episodes driven by manufacturing in Kenya (2004–2016), Namibia (2003–2015) and Uganda (2009–2016). During the same period, Kenya and Uganda also benefited from high rates of growth in mining, which had spillover effects in the manufacturing sector.

Agriculture still accounts for the majority of employment in sub-Saharan Africa

The contribution of agriculture to total GDP reaches around 15 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, ranging from 3 per cent in Botswana to more than 50 per cent in Chad. Approximately 80 per cent of all farms are smallholder farms, which provide jobs directly to about 175 million people, of whom at least half are women. Agro-ecological and cultural diversity is reflected in the varied range of crops and livestock found among countries. A distinctive feature of Africa, as compared to Asia and Latin America, is that increases in agricultural output have accrued predominantly from area expansion and intensification of cropping systems, as opposed to large-scale improvements in productivity. Environmental degradation and vulnerability to changing weather conditions are now increasingly threatening the sector, prompting calls for urgent action to achieve a shift towards a more sustainable agricultural model (OECD and FAO, 2016). However, to date, very few agricultural workers have formal qualifications or access to knowledge and best practices. Policies to increase the productivity of agriculture, to improve its resilience in the face of climate change and to develop the links between farming and agro-processing industries therefore need to address skills shortages in rural areas, with a specific focus on green skills.

Skills development has a key role to play taking into account new and pressing demands for green and digital skills in a rapidly changing global environment

Modernizing the services sector, developing industry and adding value to the continent's abundant agricultural, mineral and other natural resources, while preserving the environment, are critical factors in the drive to provide decent job opportunities to new labour market entrants and contribute to poverty reduction in the long term.


(© ILO)

Policy mix

Skills development features prominently in almost all national development strategies as a key factor in supporting economic diversification, productivity growth and socio-economic development

Most countries also define a set of priority sectors for job creation and human capital development. These often include agriculture and agro-processing industries, tourism and construction, as well as manufacturing, and mining and energy, depending on the country's natural resources endowment. Some countries, such as Ghana and Senegal, also emphasize the opportunities presented by transitioning to a green economy or explicitly incentivize the job-creation potential of small and medium-sized enterprises, including in the informal sector, such as Nigeria and Tanzania.

Education and training policies mainly aim at increased enrolment, quality of training and adaptation to labour market needs

Zambia, for instance, is focusing on increasing the number of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) graduates by 2 per cent per year, while Tanzania wants to have 80 per cent of students enrolling in TVET programmes after finishing basic education by 2025, including in short certificate courses. Governments usually acknowledge the need to invest more in TVET in order to implement their ambitious reform agendas, even though financial constraints often hamper policy implementation.

The state of African skills systems

Governance: Reforms strive to bridge the gap between the worlds of work and education

At the interface between the worlds of work and education, the governance of skills development systems is often challenging. TVET is generally a shared responsibility between the ministry of education and the ministry of labour, while other ministries often manage their own training centres. Therefore, the mandate for TVET is spread across a highly fragmented landscape of private and public training providers with overlapping target groups and programmes.

Orienting training towards labour market needs, and making it an engine of development, therefore, requires the establishment of a well-functioning governance framework. Such a framework needs to incorporate, balance and leverage different interests, expectations and potentials at all levels of the skills ecosystem – policy and reform, skills anticipation, skills development and recognition, and skills utilization – while at the same time ensuring that it is accessible to all (figure 2).

Figure 2. Building blocks of a lifelong learning ecosystem.

Promising approaches to overcome the fragmentation of the TVET system exist across the whole of Africa.

Often, these approaches have included the precise definition of roles and responsibilities and the pooling of expertise on TVET issues under one leading ministry. This ministry is then supported in its tasks by one or more agencies, concentrating expertise in issues such as qualifications, curriculum development, labour market information and quality assurance.[4] In Ghana, for instance, the Ministry of Education (MOE) now has the sole responsibility for TVET, which was previously spread between 15 different ministries. The MOE receives support from the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), which focuses on regulatory competencies and management tasks for the skills system. In countries where several ministries are involved in TVET, national training councils or executive agencies can improve the coordination among them. In Egypt, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education is chairing the Executive Council for TVET, which was established by decree in 2014 and is now operational. Council meetings have already helped to coordinate stakeholders' initiatives in skills development issues (ETF, 2019a).

[4] See, as an example, http://www.miic.gov.eg/English/Resources/Publications/NonPeriodical/DOCUMENTS/WCMS_618591.PDF.

Decentralization and regionalization can be equally important strategies for improving coordination, especially in countries with significant geographic disparities.

In Tunisia, for example, decentralization reforms have consisted of delegating responsibilities concerning evaluation and monitoring and project development to regional authorities. At the same time, pilot projects are developed in collaboration with international partners in order to test new approaches and build capacities at the regional level. In Morocco, the National Vocational Training Strategy 2021 also sets the goal of moving from centralized management towards a gradually decentralized and more participative governance model. Morocco's 12 regions each have an elected president and council and an allocated budget for education and training policy issues. Regional vocational training commissions are in charge of monitoring the decentralization process (ETF, 2019b). Positive developments, with regard to both centralization and decentralization, can generally be explained, at least to some extent, by the presence of a strong, ongoing political will as well as international support for capacity building.

Social dialogue

Social partners are increasingly involved in skills development issues

Social dialogue and public–private partnerships contribute to linking skills development issues with the promotion of decent work and employment creation. Strengthening social dialogue in TVET policy features prominently in most countries' TVET reform policies. In Tunisia, the so-called national dialogue quartet – comprising the General Labour Union (UGTT), the Union of Industry, Commerce and Artisans (UTICA), the Tunisian Human Rights League and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers – won the Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to social dialogue and a peaceful transition to a pluralistic democracy. In sub-Saharan Africa, Chad is successfully involving not only workers' and employers' representatives, but also parents' organizations, as well as trade associations and informal sector organizations in policy development and the monitoring of implementation.

After a particularly productive period between 1993 and 2002, however, the tripartite scheme for linking education and TVET with employment in Chad[5] encountered major difficulties due to the withdrawal of international financial and technical support. As in many other cases, the weak organization of the private sector and trade unions, often coupled with limited capacities and expertise on TVET issues, is hampering social dialogue, requiring targeted support over a prolonged period to build sustainable structures.

Sectoral approaches can provide an important avenue to promote social dialogue at the sub-national level.

In South Africa, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) provide an interesting example of social dialogue at sectoral level. The members of each SETA include employers, trade unions, government departments and bargaining councils (where relevant). There are currently 22 SETAs, each one being responsible for managing and creating learnerships, internships, unit-based skills programmes and apprenticeships within its industry. In Senegal, the social partners have been active in shaping public policies on TVET and they play an important role in monitoring and controlling national and international commitments made by the government and employers. At sectoral level, trade unions have been involved in setting up training centres in the building and public works sectors, as well as in food and agriculture and in ports and airport businesses since 2007. While these approaches are promising, most countries in the region struggle to institutionalize social dialogue beyond the national policy level or single programmes and projects. Nevertheless, such public–private partnerships can be seen as a first step in institutionalizing more systematic forms of social dialogue, contributing to capacity building and growing mutual trust between public and private stakeholders.

[5] Education et la Formation en liaison avec l'Emploi (EFE).

Financing

TVET systems remain chronically underfinanced

In spite of increasing governmental budgets for TVET in a number of countries, financial allocations to skills development remain insufficient. To ensure sustainable financing, the cost of training should ideally be shared between governments, enterprises and individuals. In many African countries, international donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make additional contributions. The issue of chronic underfinancing is particularly alarming when considering the growing demand for education and training at all levels, due to population growth, technological advances and other global drivers of change. Current reforms therefore revolve around three key themes:

- the diversification of financing sources,
- the efficiency of financing mechanisms, and
- questions of equity.

Diversification – To channel contributions from the private sector, skills development funds have been, or are currently being, set up in many countries.

Skills development funds can be found, for instance, in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These funds are most often fed by a levy, which takes the form of a tax on employers' payrolls.

They can address the fact that private sector investments in skills development are often limited because employers fear to lose qualified workers to other employers. Through the levy system, the risks and benefits of investments are spread evenly across contributing companies. Means to access these funds vary. In some countries, training institutions or individual employers can apply for funding; in others, the levy is utilized through governmental programmes or the main TVET agency. Private sector involvement in fund management, coupled with transparency regarding the costs and benefits of training, are key factors to facilitate tax collection. Where collected revenues are not fully allocated to TVET, such as in Burkina Faso, tax collection can be challenging as the sense of ownership among the contributors and their willingness to invest is reduced.

Efficiency – International donors play an important role in supporting TVET reforms, especially in least developed countries, but their engagement should become more strategic.

In Burkina Faso, for instance, around 46 per cent of the funds allocated to TVET policy and reform came from international donors in 2014. In order to avoid the dispersal of resources and unhealthy competition between private and public training providers, some countries are pooling international aid with public and private contributions in a skills development fund. Senegal is already doing this with its 3FPT Fund, while Uganda is still in an experimental stage, piloting its Skills Development Fund in several districts. When funds are distributed on the basis of a challenge, and are thus demand-driven, the efficiency and the impact of financing can be maximized. This is clearly demonstrated by the case of Ghana, where the Skills Development Fund (SDF) is embedded in the Government's TVET strategy. The SDF has already funded training for more than 8,200 individuals through 238 grants over a period of three years, disbursing around $10 million in total. As a result, the productivity of the trained workers increased by 42 per cent, as measured by the added value created per labour hour.[6]

[6] See https://www.niras.com/media/10910664/impact_statement_sdf_ghana_final.pdf.

Another emerging approach is lifelong learning entitlements (LLLE).

Through LLLEs, every citizen has a legal entitlement to learning opportunities, which can be accessed at any time throughout their life. LLLEs can also specifically target vulnerable groups or those who are seeking to extend their working life. They may require a financial contribution from the learner or employer, or be designed to cover the full cost of a training programme. No mature LLLE systems exist in Africa yet, but some developing countries in Asia (e.g. Viet Nam) already implement individual elements of the system and Senegal has inscribed an individual right to training into a range of collective branch agreements (Dunbar, 2019; Bridgford, 2017).

Equity – Learners and their families still shoulder a substantial share of TVET costs.

Although most countries have established some scholarships and grant programmes, tuition fees can still represent a barrier preventing the poorest segments of the population from accessing initial training and lifelong learning. This is especially true for programmes that offer the best prospects on the labour market and that are cost-intensive, such as automotive or skilled construction occupations. Different approaches exist to tackle this issue. Apprenticeships are an important means to provide young people with skills at comparatively low cost, particularly when the training company pays apprentices a training allowance in compensation for their work.

In Ghana, for instance, apprentices in the informal economy receive so-called chop money, which usually exceeds the fees taken by masters at the beginning (commitment fees) or at the end (graduation fees) of the training (Breyer, 2006). In the case of centre-based training, some training providers combine training with production activities, in order to generate additional revenues to cover the costs of personnel, infrastructure or learning materials. This approach is widely used by, for instance, training centres of the Don Bosco NGO all over Africa and in community centres in Zimbabwe. Selling products and services is particularly important for training providers, who do not receive sufficient public funds, particularly for serving disadvantaged target groups. At the same time, this approach allows learners to benefit from some degree of on-the-job training to develop practical skills and enhance their employability.

Skills anticipation

To ensure that training responds flexibly to labour market needs, it is imperative to improve skills anticipation and matching

The need to develop reliable and well-performing systems to monitor labour markets is widely acknowledged across the region: Some countries have already established new institutional structures, or have begun to implement reforms (e.g. Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). In 2015, Morocco established a labour market observatory with a multidisciplinary team of about 25 experts, which has since produced several studies. A year earlier, an observatory of skills and occupations under the National Employers' Confederation, financed via the training levy, had been set up. It contributes to skills forecasting exercises and to the development of occupational standards and human resource plans (ETF, 2019c). Mali set up a national employment and training observatory in 2013 to collect and analyse data from other national agencies and developed a decentralized skills anticipation system at regional level. Since 2010, regional authorities have been responsible for planning TVET delivery over five-year periods, using a participative tool involving local stakeholders for skills needs identification.[7]

[7] The Schémas Directeurs Régionaux de la Formation Professionnelle pour l'Emploi (SDRFPE).

Resources, capacity and access to reliable data are still scarce.

Since a fully fledged skills anticipation system is still an unattained goal for most African countries, policy-making and curricula development rely heavily on studies initiated by governments or international donors. The ILO's Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED) methodology supports the countries and sectors concerned in formulating and implementing strategies to bridge the skills gaps and meet the challenges identified in order to improve export performance in tradable sectors. The programme includes skills needs diagnostics and analysis of the constraints that a lack of appropriate skills places on sectors' growth. After piloting the STED methodology in oil seeds and horticulture in Malawi, the Malawian Government successfully expanded the approach to the dairy sector and adapted the methodology to its specific needs.

In Togo, STED was implemented in the logistics and transportation sector. The sector now has an important crosscutting role in the functioning of Togo's goods exporting sectors, connecting to both sources of supply and markets. This role affects other sectors in the areas of cost, quality, order turnaround time and compliance with standards and regulations, among others. Tracer studies and skills demand surveys conducted by training providers are further examples of efficient tools to improve the responsiveness of TVET programmes to local labour market conditions. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, the national training agency (Agence Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle (AGEFOP)) has a dedicated unit which studies skills needs at the local or sectoral level in order to develop tailored training programmes for companies or specific target groups. However, given the important migration flows between countries, there is also a pressing case for a global approach to labour market intelligence gathering and analysis, based on regional and international cooperation.

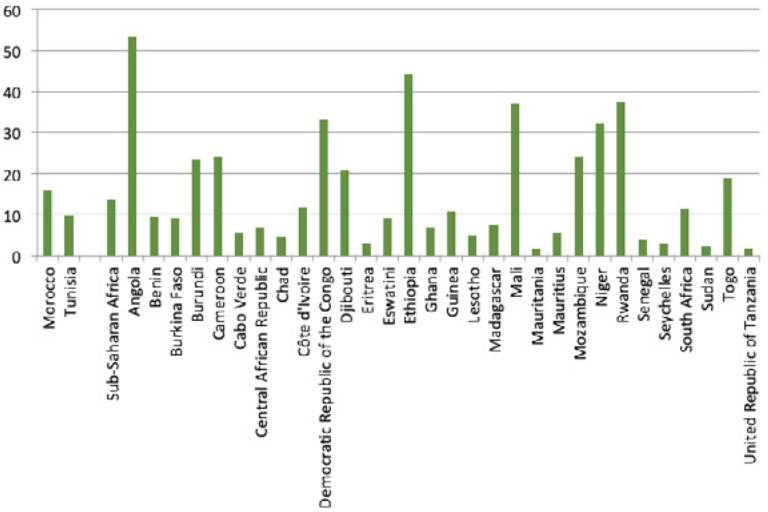
Enrolment: TVET suffers from negative perceptions and enrolment rates are comparatively low

Enrolment data indicate the rising importance of TVET at the regional level.

In 2018, the share of students in upper-secondary education who enrolled in formal TVET programmes increased from an average of 11.4 per cent in 2013 to 13.4 per cent in 2018 for sub-Saharan Africa, and from 14 per cent to 14.3 per cent over the same period in North Africa (figure 3). However, these figures span a wide range, from as low as 1.9 per cent in Tanzania to 37.2 per cent in Mali, and in some places, such as Egypt, they have declined. Moreover, cross-national data are hardly comparable due to the differing structures of the countries' education systems (UIS, n.d.).

At the national level, statistics on TVET tend to be incomplete because of system's fragmented nature, and often fail to include enrolment in private training centres and the high degree of informal training, for example through traditional apprenticeships.

Figure 3. Share of all students in upper-secondary education enrolled in vocational programmes, by country, various dates



Source. UIS data, compiled from the National Ministries of Education.

Note: Angola, 2016; Benin, 2016; Cameroon, 2016; Central African Republic, 2017; Chad, 2016; Côte d'Ivoire, 2017; Eritrea, 2017; Eswatini, 2016; Ethiopia, 2015; Guinea, 2014; Lesotho, 2017; Mozambique, 2017; Niger, 2017; South Africa, 2017; Sudan, 2017; Togo, 2017; Tunisia, 2016. All other countries data are from 2018.

The gender balance in TVET varies across countries.

Girls make up a majority of TVET students in Burkina Faso, but a minority of only 35 per cent in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Participation of girls in TVET mirrors the gender segregation observed in the labour market and varies mainly depending on the programmes being offered – traditionally high in services, it is very low in automotive, construction, mining, etc.

Throughout the region, TVET suffers from a negative image compared to general and academic education.

This image influences the educational choices of learners and their parents. In order to improve perceptions of TVET, reforms and initiatives to improve the quality of training need to be coupled with appropriate campaigns for the promotion of strategic programmes or flagship institutions, as has been done for instance in Ghana, Senegal and Uganda. In the latter, a TV series entitled Hand-in-hand displays craftsmen and craftswomen as role models of success with the aim of promoting public appreciation for their professions (Clement, 2014).

Skills delivery and assessment

The challenge of delivering skills that are relevant to the workplace

School- or centre-based TVET, which is the dominant form of TVET delivered within the formal TVET system, often fails to deliver skills that are relevant to the workplace: All over the continent, this form of institution-based training is widely criticized for failing to deliver those skills that really matter in the workplace, thus negatively affecting the employability of the graduates.

This is mainly due to inappropriate pedagogies, inadequate curricula and the fact that theories, as well as workshop equipment and training materials, are often outdated. In order to tackle this issue, governments are increasingly turning towards competency-based approaches (CBA) to training while strengthening the work-based learning aspects. Often with the support of international donors, countries have engaged in ambitious curriculum reforms to orient the TVET system towards the development of competencies, starting from an analysis of the skills and knowledge required to perform occupational tasks in the workplace and developing learning materials accordingly (this approach has been adopted in, for example, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia). The CBA represents a paradigm shift in teaching and training, promoting methods such as project-based and work-based learning, as well as collective and self-directed learning. Therefore, its implementation demands long-lasting and consequent investments in teacher training and learning materials as well as strengthened collaboration between training centres and the private sector. While the CBA per se receives widespread support, its implementation often proves challenging.

Work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships, is a main avenue for strengthening the relevance of TVET to workplace requirements.

In centre-based TVET systems, work-based learning can be strengthened through internships and enterprise or industry attachments. In apprenticeship systems, work-based learning is the main, if not the only, means of skills development. Evidence suggests that work-based learning, and especially apprenticeship schemes, enhances the skills and employability of learners, both in the informal and in the formal sector (Adams et al., 2013). African countries, at all levels of development, are putting work-based learning high on their political agenda.

Internship and work placements are powerful instruments for boosting the employability of TVET graduates or out-of-school youths.

In Niger, for instance, an internship programme targeting TVET graduates offers three-month internships to facilitate school-to-work transitions. In 2015, around 265 young people participated, of which 16 per cent were immediately hired by the company offering the internship and a further 32 per cent were confident that the practical experience would help them to rapidly find a job. What is more, over 90 per cent of the tutors supervising the interns stated that they would recommend their trainee to other employers.[8] In Mauritania, the project "Chantier École", launched in 2015, offered participating youth two months of theoretical lectures in a national TVET institution and also the practical application of the knowledge gained through four months of on-site "learning by doing" on a road construction project awarded to local contractors. The participants were granted a national diploma of competencies after completion of the project, which enhanced their employability and capacity to find further employment, or even to launch a new enterprise or cooperative. The distinctive feature of this project was the combination of a skills development component with infrastructure development and private sector development through capacity building of the national contractors.

[8] Source https://burkinafaso.luxdev.lu/fr/news/project/NIG/017.

The traditional system of apprenticeship is widespread across the region.

In most countries in Africa, a large share of youth learns a trade under the supervision of a master craftsperson, especially in the skilled trades, in small and micro-enterprises within the informal economy. Those forms of informal apprenticeships are usually regulated by customs and social rules, sometimes also involving trade associations and informal sectoral associations. In Chad, around 55,000 young people are trained each year as apprentices. In Kenya, an estimated 40 per cent of young people acquire their skills through apprenticeships in the Jua Kali (i.e. the informal sector).

In Tanzania, as many as 26 per cent of those who received any training were informal apprentices. The system in its current state, however, has its weaknesses. First, apprentices in most cases do not benefit from any protection as employees in terms of working hours and conditions, sick leave compensation or maternity and work accident cover. Second, training content, duration and quality are not standardized and depend on the individual master craftsperson. Training therefore does not necessarily foster innovation and equip young people with the skills required by employers in their occupational field.

Upgrading informal apprenticeships is an important avenue for supporting the transition to formality and ensuring that training standards are applied equally.

Different pathways exist to connect training in the informal economy to the formal training system and labour market. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

I. Strengthening the institutional framework to provide higher quality training, for example through the definition of training standards through business or trade associations.

II. This is sometimes combined with up-skilling master craftspersons to improve training methodologies and modify or replace "bad rules" relating to working conditions for example.

III. Improving linkages between the informal and formal training systems through, for example, the introduction of complementary theoretical, centre-based courses for apprentices.

IV. Implementing schemes for the recognition of prior learning, to allow apprentices and mastercraftspersons to transition to the formal economy.

Cameroon adopted a new TVET law in 2018, with the aim of strengthening the link between informal apprenticeships and the formal TVET system. The law defines a regulatory framework, the overarching objectives of training, the minimum age of apprentices and master craftpersons, and mandates an apprenticeship contract. Ghana runs a modernized apprenticeship scheme, the Collaborative Apprenticeship Training (CAT) system, which has been progressively extended since 2013 to cover new occupations and regions. In the CAT system, work-based learning is complemented with structured courses at training institutions, based on competence-based standards and learning materials. At the workplace, master craftspersons use workplace guidelines to ensure that apprentices receive a comprehensive training in their trade. In Kenya, the ILO supports the Government and social partners in developing new policies and a regulatory framework, as well as building up capacities to improve the delivery of quality apprenticeships. Among other measures, a National Industrial Skills Development Council (NISDC) is to be established in order to spearhead, coordinate and harmonize efforts in this field.

In Benin, end-of apprenticeship exams organized through local associations of craftspeople in collaboration with municipalities have been linked to national certification mechanisms and standards providing nationally recognized trade certificate (CQM). This system exists alongside a dual apprenticeship that adds compulsory complementary training for both apprentices and master craftspersons and is awarded with a professional certificate (CQP). In Togo, a similar set-up is in place with two different certificates, one following a dual training (CQP) and the other following traditional apprenticeship on the job with a final assessment (CFA). In 2018, over 20.000 apprentices were enroled in CFA apprenticeships, and around 100 in apprenticeships leading to a CQP.

Some countries have also established new apprenticeship schemes that combine school-based and work-based learning in the formal sector.

Such new apprenticeship models are often inspired by the dual system of German-speaking countries, which requires a strong involvement of social partners and close cooperation between the training company and the vocational school or training centre. Examples of such training schemes exist in Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia, where they mainly involve companies of the formal sector and public employers. In Tanzania, for instance, National Guidelines for Apprenticeships were developed with the support of the ILO and adopted in 2017. They provide guidance to all stakeholders in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating apprenticeship training programmes in Tanzania. In the first year of the scheme's operation, a total of 32 youths underwent training and found employment, while 163 new apprentices were enrolled on apprenticeships lasting up to two years and combining work-based with institution-based training. Most formal apprenticeship schemes remain small in scale, however, due to the relatively small size of the formal sector and the difficulty of engaging enough companies to provide apprenticeships.

Short TVET courses, provided mainly by private institutions, delivering skills to adults and out-of-school youths should be better regulated to ensure their quality and recognition.

Non-formal short TVET courses provided by private training providers, including informal companies, and by NGOs are often not integrated into the formal education and training system. In Burkina Faso and Cameroon, for instance, more than 80 per cent of training providers are private organizations, some of which are profit oriented, though others are not. This raises specific challenges in terms of skills recognition and quality assurance, which have prompted many countries to develop accreditation mechanisms, often linked to national qualifications frameworks. This is the case in Ghana, for instance, where providers can gain accreditation by the Council for TVET (COTVET). In South Africa, providers of education and training must apply for accreditation with an Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

To fulfil the requirements for accreditation, programmes must lead to a recognized qualification under the national qualifications framework, curricula must be aligned to the qualification standards, teachers and trainers must be qualified, learners must have access to learning support, and assessment criteria and tools must be valid and reliable. Another issue lies with the financing of non-formal TVET, as it mostly takes place at the initiative of the learners and is financed through tuition fees. This constitutes a serious barrier for vulnerable populations. Companies in the formal sector sometimes contribute to the financing of continuing education and training for employees, but few small and medium-sized companies, especially in the informal sector, invest in skills development due to the costs and the risk of losing trained workers to competitors. To support lifelong learning, governments sometimes implement targeted support schemes for disadvantaged groups, or provide funding through their skills development fund, as is the case, for instance, in Mali and Senegal. In some countries, such as Nigeria, private training institutions and community training centres are encouraged to offer more programmes to adults and out-of-school youths. In others, civil society organizations, including trade unions, are also engaged in skills provision.

Skills recognition and quality assurance

Fostering quality and recognition through accepted standards

Qualification frameworks have the potential to address many of the typical challenges facing TVET, such as increasing the relevance of training, recognition of qualifications, quality assurance, management of fragmented skills systems, mobility within the education and training system, and lifelong learning. Qualifications frameworks are formal systems which classify qualifications according to level descriptors in order to clarify how qualifications relate to each other and offer pathways for progression. Qualifications frameworks imply that qualifications are developed and awarded following standardized procedures, which involve the social partners. This makes their introduction a complex and expensive endeavour, while their impact, in terms of increased participation in training, quality of skills delivery and relevance of TVET to the needs of the labour market, remains questionable, at least in the short to medium term. Early adopters, such as South Africa, started to develop their national qualifications framework in the mid-1990s. Other countries are still in the conception phase and can draw on lessons learned or benefit from regional cooperation initiatives, for instance by participating in the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF).

There is a wide variety of different national qualifications framework models – some are holistic and cover all branches of the education and training system, while others are limited in their scope, applying for instance only to parts of the TVET system. In many of the Central and West-African states, qualifications frameworks only include professional and branch qualifications. While they may play an important role in regulating training provision and assessment in continuing and non-formal TVET, involving the private sector to varying extents, they usually fail to overcome the fragmented nature of TVET provision (e.g. in Burkina Faso and Senegal).

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a crucial element in offering pathways to formality.

RPL is a process by which regulatory bodies and training institutions assess acquired skills, often gained outside of the classroom, against a given set of standards, competencies or learning outcomes (ILO, 2018b). RPL systems can promote social inclusion by formally recognizing work and other learning experiences. They allow for non-traditional pathways into formal employment.

In this regard, they are especially important for migrant workers. Many countries have started to develop assessment standards and certification procedures for both apprentices and experienced workers.

In Tanzania, RPL has been successfully piloted by the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) in selected trades. With technical support from the ILO, competency-based occupational standards were developed covering occupations with a high incidence of informal apprenticeships.[9] As of 2018, 5,282 informal apprentices had been assessed. The pilot programme generated strong demand, as a further 17,000 informal apprentices were identified for RPL assessment in the future (ILO, 2018c). In Mali, RPL benefited 1,688 workers in 2016, among which 61.3 per cent were in sewing and hairdressing trades, 13.8 per cent in the automotive sector and 12.1 per cent in metalwork. With international support, the system is set to be expanded to include more trades and beneficiaries. Other countries, such as Kenya and Zambia, also plan to develop RPL schemes for workers in the informal economy and have drafted policies in this regard. Burkina Faso has already developed and piloted standards in some agricultural trades and in masonry. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) formulated guidelines for RPL in 2017 to assist its member states with the implementation of RPL schemes.

[9] These occupations include motor mechanics, carpentry and joinery, masonry and bricklaying, food production, and food and beverage services in the initial stage, and tailoring and sewing, plumbing and pipefitting, automotive body repair, welding and metal fabrication, and electric installations in a second stage.

Quality assurance, especially in highly fragmented systems, is largely insufficient.

Quality assurance conducted through standards, accreditation and evaluation is usually undertaken either by the responsible ministry (e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire) or by one or more public agencies in charge of accreditation (e.g. in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda). While the optimal approach depends on the overall structure of the TVET system, limited resources at central level and lack of resources, awareness and capacities at provider level mean that quality assurance is considered insufficient in virtually all countries on the continent. New initiatives are therefore under way to combine forces at the regional level and to develop new instruments and strengthen capacities for quality assurance. In 2019, high-ranking experts from East African countries gathered in the Seychelles to develop a quality assurance framework with the support of the African Union, the ILO and UNESCO. The framework will entail guidelines on quality assurance, regional monitoring and evaluation tools and a regional TVET management information system. Participating countries also agreed to develop harmonized qualifications in two sectors and to explore options for regional open educational resources.[10]

[10] See http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/11323/Seychelles+hosts+eastern+African+nations+to+develop+quality+assurance+in+technical+and+vocational+training for details.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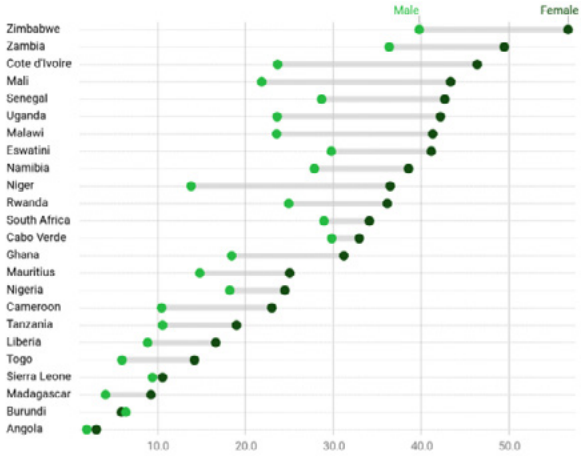
Social inclusion

Disadvantaged groups and individuals need targeted support to access TVET

TVET is widely recognized as a driver of social inclusion.

The pledge to "leave no one behind" in striving to meet the Sustainable Development Goals has further highlighted the need to increase the accessibility of TVET for all. The challenge often lies in the multiplicity of barriers that prevent individuals or groups from accessing skills and entering the labour market.

Figure 4. Gender disparities in secondary TVET (ratio male/female)



Source: UIS data, compiled from the National Ministries of Education

Investments in rural infrastructures are key to increasing the inclusiveness of TVET systems in Africa.

As TVET institutions tend to be concentrated in urban areas and economically more dynamic regions, many countries are investing in new facilities in rural areas. Uganda, for instance, devoted 21.3 per cent of its budget in Phase I of its BTVET Strategic Plan (2011–2015) to building new agricultural training facilities and rehabilitating existing ones in rural areas. Living in a remote area, however, not only implies a longer journey to the training facilities, but also higher transportation costs and, in some cases, increased safety risks, especially for women. In Tunisia, 14 training centres are dedicated to young rural women; these are spread across 13 governorates and have a total capacity of 1,200 places. This system has recorded significant achievements since the 1990s. Lately, however, centres have faced difficulties due to a lack of equipment and accessibility, as well as transport problems.

Tackling harmful stereotypes and removing practical barriers are the two main strategies to increase women's access to education and training.

Girls are often excluded from TVET due to social perceptions and gender stereotypes, the lower value attached to girls' education in some regions, early marriage rates among young women, and responsibilities for unpaid care and housework. Apprenticeships have also often developed in traditionally male-dominated and technical trades, while girls have tended to learn their skills primarily within their own family. Accordingly, female participation in informal apprenticeship is lower than male participation in most countries. In order to bridge the gender gap, it is necessary to address the practical barriers facing young women, such as childcare or training costs. Moreover, girls and women benefit from measures to break gender stereotypes, for instance through image campaigns, awareness-raising among master craftspersons about the benefits of hiring girls or targeted career counselling.

In the case of new occupations, for instance in IT-related fields or "green" jobs, such as solar electric installations, training and apprenticeship programmes can also be developed from the outset in a gender-sensitive way to attract both girls and boys (ILO, 2012). In Senegal, the ILO supported introductory training in software development to 300 girls and young women aged 17–22 years old in order to open new training and career perspectives for them in the field of information and communication technology, where women are still significantly under-represented.

Early school drop-outs may be in need of basic skills and targeted courses that allow them to transition into secondary vocational education.

For young people who did not complete basic education, as well as for migrants, formal entry requirements often represent an obstacle to entering TVET programmes. Basic literacy and numeracy training might therefore be needed to provide a basis for further learning. In Mali, for instance, numeracy training is delivered yearly to more than 93,000 women and out-of-school youth in 4,411 non-formal education centres spread throughout the country. The centres provide learners with the necessary foundational skills to allow them to progress to vocational training and employment promotion programmes. RPL can also facilitate access to training programmes and make learning more attractive to those who already possess some work experience or informal training.

In countries where a large share of the population lives in poverty and where the returns on training in the labour market are uncertain because of a severe lack of decent work opportunities, tuition fees represent another significant barrier to training. Some countries, such as Niger, are therefore operating large-scale scholarship programmes. In 2016/2017, more than 11,600 TVET students, one-third of whom were girls, benefited from scholarships.

Finally, people with disabilities have limited access to training centres, which seldom meet the requirements to cater to their special needs. Some countries, such as Ghana, have developed a legal framework to foster the social inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market, while others, such as Uganda, explicitly include people with disabilities as a target group in their TVET strategy. Many countries also have at least a few training facilities open to learners with special needs, but there is still much to be done to provide truly equal chances to people with disabilities, especially in rural and remote areas.

Recently, new projects and initiatives have been set up to harness the potential of digital technologies for expanding access to TVET.

Existing training institutions have, for instance, been supported to develop e-learning and blended learning programmes for specific target groups, such as informal sector learners. Examples in Kenya and Zambia show the success of such approaches in terms of increased numbers and heterogeneity of students, as well as reduced drop-out rates. They also demonstrate the vital importance for success of leadership at the local level and official support from the responsible ministry (Isaacs, 2017). In Zambia, a mere 2 per cent of registered TVET institutions are already providing distance learning opportunities, but the Government has set a target to expand the number of beneficiaries of such programmes from 3,361 in 2016 to 5,500 by 2021. Alongside such projects, which build on existing training infrastructures, a wide variety of projects are also directly addressing learners through e-learning apps for mobile devices.

Supporting transitions

Support beyond training to ease school-to-work transitions

None of the studied countries in the region already displays a fully institutionalized system of vocational guidance and career counselling.

Numerous programmes aim at supporting transitions from education to work, or from inactivity to decent work. Some countries are undertaking institutional reforms to strengthen capacities at the local level. For instance, employment services in Niger are increasingly involved in providing guidance and Senegal offers an interesting example of systematic efforts to establish dedicated units in training centres and to restructure occupational fields, also implementing youth employment programmes in collaboration with sectoral employment promotion agencies.

In Egypt, School-to-Work Transition Units have been set up in most technical secondary schools and career guidance is provided to students throughout their three-year training period. In most countries, however, employment services suffer from a lack of both capacities and sound employment data to provide a basis for good performance in this area. In this context, a multitude of targeted programmes are implemented by governments, NGOs and international donors. However, while some initiatives exist to identify good practices and share experiences across the continent, most programmes are not carefully monitored and evaluated, so their impact remains unclear.

Given the scarcity of formal jobs, promoting entrepreneurship is an effective, and often implemented, approach to supporting transitions.

A meta-analysis of entrepreneurship programmes revealed that entrepreneurship promotion is, on average, the most effective type of active labour market intervention in terms of labour market outcomes for young people. At the same time, such programmes demonstrate the greatest variability in outcomes (O'Higgins, 2017). These findings point to the need to design targeted programmes in accordance with specific local needs.

In rural areas, the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) approach, developed by the ILO, therefore starts with the identification of employment- and income-generating opportunities, followed by a combination of training and post-training support measures to facilitate access to markets and credit for the young entrepreneurs. This approach has proven to be successful in helping, for instance, young people in Zimbabwe to set up their own businesses (ILO, 2015c). Besides programmes that equip young people with entrepreneurship skills, some countries also use public procurement policies to support young and innovative entrepreneurs. In Zambia, for instance, the Government has ring fenced up to 20 per cent of the country's education budget for the procurement of works from young entrepreneurs, which may create substantial jobs and business opportunities for this target group.

Barriers to employment often encompass more than a lack of skills and qualifications.

Young women, for instance, face additional constraints, including early marriage and pregnancy, which may make them economically dependent on men. In Uganda, an experimental programme run by the NGO BRAC showed that combining vocational training with information on sex, reproduction and marriage was effective in increasing the proportion of young women engaging in income-generating activities, while reducing early marriage and teenage pregnancy (Bandiera et al., 2018).

Key challenges

In order to play a full role in contributing to social and economic development, the skills systems in Africa need to overcome certain inherent weaknesses and pitfalls that stem from their historical development and the challenging context in which they operate today, namely:

1. **Fragmentation of responsibilities and lack of coordination at policy level.**

2. **Fragmentation of responsibilities and lack of coordination at policy level.**

3. **Restricted capacities of TVET systems to meet the increasing demand for training in a context of demographic and economic growth.**

4. **Poor quality training provision resulting in a negative image of TVET among learners and employers.**

5. **Limited access to TVET for disadvantaged groups and individuals.**

The way forward

1 Develop and implement a new generation of lifelong learning policies and strategies.

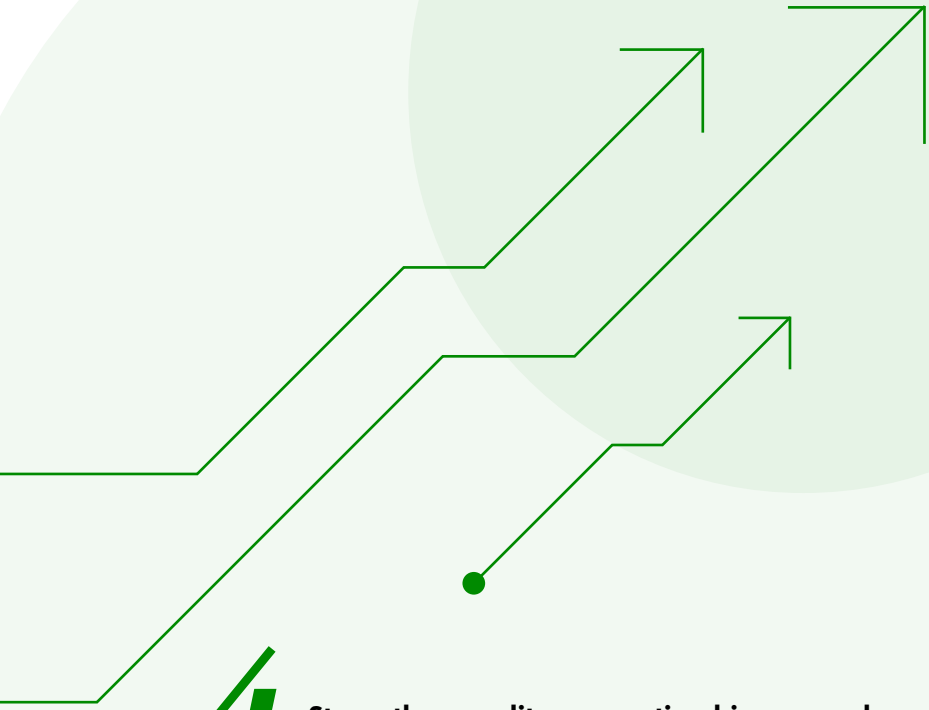
The current challenges facing skills development systems in Africa require new forms of governance, capacity building and staff development. Innovative approaches to governance, inclusive of all stakeholders, a qualified and committed leadership as well as more effective management at all levels of the system are essential to improve policy coordination and governance.

2 Strengthen the role of social partners and public–private partnerships (PPPs).

Enhancement of social partners' involvement in skills development systems through tripartite governance is a key means of building a more effective skills development system. PPPs, and specifically linkages between training institutions and businesses, need to be strengthened.

3 Coordinate and prioritize investment in skills development.

Investments in skills development need to be treated as a priority. In addition, public and private investments, including in technological innovation, trade, industrial development and the environment, need to incorporate an education and training component.



4 Strengthen quality apprenticeship, upgrade informal apprenticeship and increase other types of work-based learning programmes.

Taking these steps will enhance the employability of youths by providing them with practical work experience and the skills needed in the labour market, thereby reducing skills mismatch and improving their transition from school to the world of work. Upgrading informal apprenticeships and promoting RPL will also improve linkages between informal apprenticeship and formal systems and promote formalization of the informal economy.

5 Adopt more "innovative" approaches.

Africa requires non-conventional approaches, such as upgrading informal apprenticeships, establishing communities of practice, digital learning and multidimensional interventions for marginalized groups and those in vulnerable situations. These will accelerate more inclusive TVET and, consequently, sustainable development.

6 Support the development of labour market information systems, skills anticipation and monitoring and evaluation schemes.

Any actions/interventions on skills development need to be based on the best information available, particularly in Africa, where resources for investment in skills are severely constrained and countries can ill afford to waste them. A culture of managing for results, enhanced accountability and organizational learning needs to be instilled at all levels of the skills development system in order to improve the quality of policy-making and skills delivery.

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