

ADB Skills Forum Key Points and Messages

Skills for employment and employability

A key message was that ultimately skills development needs to lead to jobs – that is the most important outcome. Skills development also then need to meet the requirements for growth and be able to provide the work force necessary for structural transformation and transition to higher value added products and services. While programs for TVET in countries tend to address largely education sector reforms, it was suggested that there should be targets for employment that go along with skills development

Upskilling is a mantra

Modernizing economies are very much concerned with upskilling their workforce. Skills for structural transformation –knowledge intensive and high technology industries. Qualifications are considered important but even more important are actual or directly measurable skills and even more important than skills is skills utilization in the workplace. The role of foundational skills was stressed and so was the role of soft skills – we heard about the mainstreaming of soft skills in training programs and how they are important to ensuring how effective technical skills are in the work place.

Industry-led systems for skills training

There has been widespread acknowledgement of the role of industry and the private sector in increasing the quality and relevance of skills training. It was acknowledged that the private sector may not be able to serve the poorest of the poor, yet, their participation in skill training is crucial. Academy-industry partnerships, internships and placement programs are key to matching skills with jobs. However, the need to strengthen the trust and partnership aspect of the private sector was stressed. And to create a legitimate regulatory space. (regulatory cholesterol .

Rebranding TVET

A strong argument was made for improving the image of TVET, which is usually considered less prestigious than higher education and degree programs. A more integrated TVET and HE pathway is considered essential to offer options for people to acquire qualifications and certification in a flexible and non-hierarchical pathway. In any case, the boundaries between HE and TVET institutions are blurring. For higher levels of skills and for knowledge intensive skills, the interface with HE becomes important. More can be learnt from Australia and Canada but also from Sri Lanka.

Real Time Labor market information

There was considerable stress on good quality and timely labor market information systems that provide real time information on the markets for employment. Their effective utilization in training institutions would determine the success of employment outcomes. However, whether skills forecasting is a sensible tool was questioned. Someone indicated it is a bit like astrology!

Skills for informal sector

Asia has large informal labor markets and skill training for people working in informal sectors is a big challenge. How can TVET be brought to the informal sector was discussed as also training for the small and medium enterprises. Some experiences were shared but this is clearly an area that needs much more further work.

Qualification Frameworks need industry validation

Developing countries would like to follow the example of developed countries to implement NQFs. But how should they keep pace with changes to skills and knowledge required so that qualifications remain relevant? QFs are more than just for setting standards for qualifications; QFs help to move the work force towards meeting the economic performance of countries. QFs need to address diversity in training and variations in learning programs; all stakeholders need to engage in working together to develop mutually agreed systems

Quality of Teacher Trainers

The importance of teacher training has been raised throughout the forum. TVET curriculum and provision cannot react to industry needs if the trainers are not qualified. In terms of assistance that ADB can provide to Asian TVET institutes, suggested that direct partnering with established institutes would provide an effective route, rather than the traditional consultant route. The globalization and modernization of TVET is putting increasing pressure on TVET managers and teachers to quickly adapt to changes to remain market relevant. In order to serve a knowledge society, traditional TVET systems need to link up with a modern higher education system with flexible pathways.\

Employability services

Employment services as part of an integrated strategy help to ease obstacles and constraints to work force participation; advocacy for work place support strategies to increase the chances for employment for those that may be challenged in different ways is also valuable. Skill strategies need to be complemented with such supportive strategies. Apprenticeships, internships are important strategies that need to be scaled up. Teacher internship was also talked about

TVET and green economy

While TVET institutions appear to be covering issues such as 'environmental controls', a more comprehensive and broader sustainable development agenda in TVET is still some distance away. A green work force training plan should accompany and support a green industrial policy. Legislative support such as Green Jobs Act and Green Job Skills Development Act (in South Korea) can provide the needed impetus for the development of green skills required in the economy.

Multistakeholder partnerships

Partnerships among all stakeholders has been raised at all levels, from partnerships between industry and TVET providers to determine curriculum and skills matching with employers needs, and among government departments and providers, and government and private sector in terms of funding.

Following up, ADB would like to adopt,

**Think Tank approach with the participants of this Forum and
Consider the creation of Asia Forum on Skills**