

Vocational education in secondary schools

A review of international practices

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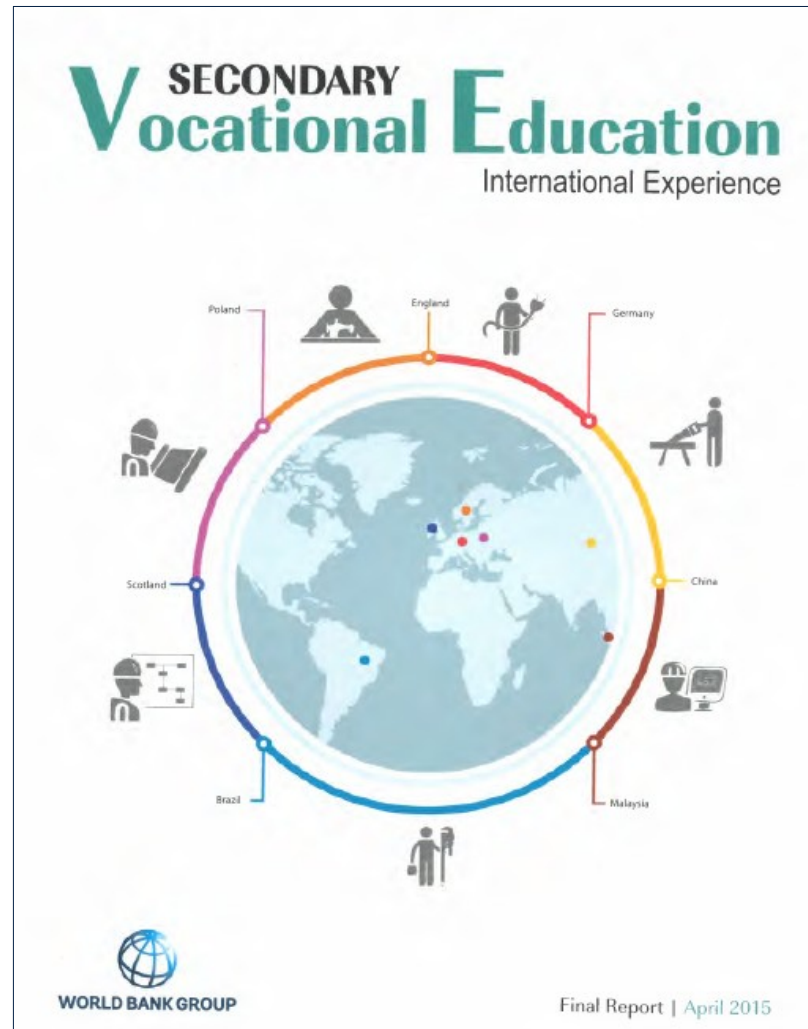
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Current Priorities in
Technical and Vocational Education and Training



Vocational education at the secondary level



Overview

1. Why the study
2. Six issues to grapple with
3. The toughest issues



Section 1: Why the study



Some background

- A desk review
- Selected countries based on client interest: **Brazil, China, England, Germany, Malaysia, Poland and Scotland** – so high and middle income countries
- The report is not an *evaluation* of different secondary education systems
- Schooling/education/training options for secondary age pupils, or for those who have completed elementary but then drop out, are very complex in all countries.



Section 2: Six issues to grapple with



Issue 1: Separate schools, streams or courses?

- **Scotland:** No streaming (1 path), option to choose across academic and vocational subjects (from age 14)
- **England:** same schools, but is some streaming. Choice at 14 years old.
- **Brazil/China:** Two separate paths, one technical. (Brazil, choice at 14; China, as early as 12)
- **Germany:** three types of institutions (choice at 16)



Issue 2: Balance between vocational and general subjects

Issue arises mostly with schools which stream students or have separate schools

- So in **Scotland** it is not an issue

Conflicting trends here, because conflicting objectives:

‘relevance’ is taken to mean more vocational content, but access to tertiary education means more general content

How much vocational content varies enormously across countries and, within countries, across types of courses and institutions; and therefore across types of students

- For example: **England**, <20% of students’ time; **Poland**, 15% of curriculum; **Germany**, U/S Fachoberschule are full-time vocational schools but teach German, mathematics, science, economics and society



Issue 3: Role of workplace learning

Two different approaches:

- A 'taster' of working life (true also in general education systems like **Scotland**)
- An internship/apprenticeship (with link to assessment) (**China, Germany**)

Issues

- Getting *good* workplace arrangements
- Getting *enough* good arrangements as vocational schooling expands (or economy changes, e.g., **Germany**)
- Role of local initiative versus national agreements
- Countries with large informal sectors (do informal firms want to be involved? Student aspiration is for formal sector employment)



Issue 4: Access to tertiary education

- Most countries profess that this is possible, or are being pushed in that direction by students and parents (**China**)
- Most countries have a national qualifications framework (even **Germany** is now developing one; **China** is not)

Issues

- Depends on availability of relevant or accessible courses in tertiary education
- Depends on certification at the end of secondary
 - **Scotland, England**: vocational education exams alongside academic ones; **China**, same tertiary entry exam, but perform worse because of content of exam geared towards academic subjects
- What is the purpose of secondary // secondary vocational education?



Issue 5: Teachers and teaching // provision of infrastructure

Should vocational teachers have a teaching qualification?

- Countries split on this issue. **Germany, Malaysia** have separate requirements; **Poland** and **England**, the same
- What is pedagogy of vocational courses/programs?

Who chooses which courses to offer?

- Movement to localize curriculum development and choice
- But obvious critical funding constraints on amount of offerings



Issue 6: Certification/assessment of learning

- Most countries have assessment/certification of vocational content done by industry (or independent of school).
- Equivalency of general and academic qualifications
 - Mostly by administrative/regulatory fiat (e.g., map onto NQF; appear in school league tables in England)
- Assessment and certification are different – qualification for a specific job



Section 3: Some tough issues



Concluding thoughts

- Program goals are conflicting/very ambitious so don't offer guidance on many decisions/trade offs
- Role of informal sector
- Lack of information about students' mobility post-school
- Belief that vocational education is about the future not the present LM (Asian Tigers example/myth) makes it irrefutable



Thank You

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