Skills Development to Meet the Learning Needs of the Excluded

David Anchoarena, IIEP and Miki Nozawa

2004

This paper was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2005 report. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the EFA Global Monitoring Report or to UNESCO. The papers can be cited with the following reference: “Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, The Quality Imperative”. For further information, please contact efareport@unesco.org
Skills Development to Meet the Learning Needs of the Excluded

David Atchoarena, IIEP, and Miki Nozawa, UNESCO

Skills Development to Meet the Learning Needs of the Excluded

Promoting vocational skills development clearly represents a key instrument to facilitate the social and economic integration of excluded groups thus responding to the learning needs of young people and adults, as called for in Dakar Goal 3. Yet skills development has been a rather neglected area in the Dakar follow-up process. Governments have tended not to focus on out-of-school disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, whose needs are commonly left to non-governmental organizations. Numerous initiatives do exist to reach and empower marginalized groups through non-formal vocational skills training, but they are often locally based, lack sustainability, and are not recognized as part of a comprehensive national strategy. State sponsored skills training is also scattered in nature and often not well coordinated, as it involves not only Ministries of Education, but also other ministries (Labour, Agriculture, Women, Youth).

In 2003, UNESCO’s Education Sector and IIEP jointly launched a project Assisting the Design and Implementation of EFA Skills Development Plans, which aims to support policy formulation and to enhance institutional capacity in the skills development field in selected developing countries (Lao PDR, Mali, Nepal and Senegal). In each target country existing skills training policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups were reviewed by a national team and consultative meetings were held to reach a national consensus on proposed strategies as part of EFA national action plans. The report produced in each target country gives a comprehensive overview of this complex domain and identifies priority areas for further intervention.
Towards a skills development strategy

In each of the participating countries policy analysis related to skills development included the following issues:

- Who are the target groups?
- What skills are relevant in specific contexts?
- What is the existing skill development provision in formal and non-formal settings, within and outside the public sector?
- What training modalities work best in specific circumstances (centre-based versus community-based, use of distance modes…)?
- What are the respective roles of government and NGOs?
- Who are the trainers? How can they be better recruited, trained and supported?
- What languages should be used?
- What financing sources and mechanisms are suitable for skills development?
- What are the needs for monitoring and evaluation of skills development strategies and programmes?

Developing monitoring tools that are comparable internationally has not been the major focus of the project, but the findings of the studies undertaken contain elements which may contribute to a methodology that can be used also in other countries.

Defining the target group

One of the difficulties faced when addressing skills development issues, especially to report progress against Goal 3, is the identification of target groups and their learning needs. While governments need to target children of the primary education age in order to achieve universal primary education, it is more complex to define who should be in the target groups for skills training.

In all countries age constitutes a major variable for targeting. Although children who never attended school or who drop out after a few years are clearly at a disadvantage, skills development programmes cannot substitute for primary schooling. Therefore children of
school age are not the target of skills development efforts. Other criteria included areas considered as the poorest (Lao PDR), sensitive occupational groups (apprentices working in the informal economy in Mali and Senegal), marginalised minority groups (low caste –Dalits- in Nepal, ethnic minorities in Lao PDR), vulnerable youths (street adolescents in Mali and Senegal, disabled youth in all four countries).

Due to the lack of reliable data and centralized information management systems, quantifying the size of these out-of-school groups is a challenge. In Nepal, the study highlights that 80 percent of adolescents are not in school or in any training institution\(^1\). In Lao PDR, the size of out-of-school populations rises sharply above primary school age; the out-of-school population makes up 53% of those aged 15, 67% of those aged 16, and 75% of those aged 17\(^2\).

### Skills for livelihoods

In each country the study teams identified a set of skills seen as relevant in the local context. This often includes agricultural and artisan skills. While the impact of globalisation is

---

\(^1\) Data in 2001 provided by Ministry of Education and Sports of Nepal.

sometimes felt, as in the case of migration policies in Lao PDR and Nepal, the emphasis placed on skills is seen as important for social inclusion and poverty reduction. Besides the acquisition of literacy skills, learning needs of youth and adults must be defined in relation to local development policies or programmes. Preparation for employment and income-generating activities is not sufficient. In countries where most of the working age population are outside the scope of usual labour market policies, learning needs make sense in relation to sustainable livelihoods. In this context the analysis focuses on livelihood systems rather than on individuals’ prospects for jobs. Livelihoods being defined as the activities, means and entitlements by which individuals make a living, skills development policies and programmes must adopt a comprehensive perspective integrating households and community needs. This vision implies that education and training responses cannot aim only at employability and income generation but also at building individuals and communities’ capacities for sustainable livelihoods. Livelihoods systems and therefore strategies differ in urban and rural environments. Considering the high prevalence of rural poverty, skills for rural development merit special attention.

Efforts to improve the impact of skills development programmes sometimes lead to the inclusion of post-training micro-credit schemes (e.g. in Lao PDR). Such initiatives pose additional challenges in terms of programme management but also for developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation instruments.

In terms of learning needs assessment, methodologies derived from participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approaches seem to produce interesting results to contextualise learning and ensure greater responsiveness to local needs.

*A framework for a skills development database and indicators*

- Skills development programmes: information on providers, courses and enrolments

In addition to providing information on levels of participation and the profile of learners, data on skills development programmes need to cover the content and duration of programmes, but information on providers is also important.
Skills development programmes encompass a wide range of activities, some within the government sector and others conducted by NGOs. Besides the Ministry of Education, the Ministries in charge of Agriculture, Labour, Youth and Women are often in charge of various skills development programmes. In the NGO sector the diversity is even larger between programmes supported by large international organisations and those implemented at the grass-roots level by Community Based Organisation (CBOs). In the four countries, the study focused on government programmes and on the most significant, in terms of size, NGOs driven initiatives; including externally-funded programmes.

In Mali and Senegal outsourcing or delegation to NGOs is an important formula for implementing skills development, particularly for reaching apprentices working in the informal sector. This is also envisaged in the case of Nepal through a possible Skills Development Fund. This kind of strategy leads to special requirements for monitoring. The allocation of public resources to private providers normally necessitates the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure efficiency and transparency. Controls are generally easier to introduce when combined with support functions, such as access to funding or the training of trainers.

In the four countries, when these programmes benefit from external support the availability of data is generally better than for small scale programmes implemented by local NGOs. However, even in the public sector there is great heterogeneity in data and times series are often difficult to build for programmes outside of the Ministry of Education.

➢ Efficiency and effectiveness

For monitoring skills development involving youth and adults, it may be useful to assess the completion rate of those who complete after an initial trial period in addition to measuring the drop-out rate as for compulsory education. Another indicator would be provided by the proportion of completers who have acquired the defined minimum level of competence.

However, often skills development programmes, particularly short term ones, do not lead to an assessment and validation of competences. In the case of long courses, increasing attention is paid to certification (e.g. Mali) and often to equivalence this schooling (e.g. Lao PDR). Equivalences should allow learners to build training pathways by complementing non-formal
education by eventually accessing or returning to the school system. This perspective is of course mainly realistic for the younger members of the target groups. Discussions on the establishment of national qualification frameworks suggest that eventually it will be possible to collect data on achievements in a more systematic manner (Lao PDR, Nepal).

It must be stressed that if skills development is also meant to contribute to local development assessment should not only be made at the individual level but at the community level to reflect local priorities.

Cost

How much does skills development cost? At the moment it is difficult to answer such question. While there is much evidence to consider that skills development programmes are less costly than formal vocational education, good practices are often found in those projects that are heavily subsidized by external donors. Furthermore the diversity of programmes offered by the same provider (long term/short term, centre-based/community-based, agriculture skills/industrial skills) often makes it difficult to assess unit costs (see table from Nepal). In Lao PDR, the Ministry of Education, with the support of the project, conducted a cost analysis to estimate unit cost for three main categories of programmes delivered by non-formal education as well as through formal vocational schools. These programmes include basic vocational programmes, vocational programmes delivered by community learning centres and outreach programmes delivered by technical and vocational schools. These unit costs estimates are being used in an EFA simulation model allowing the results and costs of alternative policy options including for skills development, to be assessed.
### Skills development cost data, Nepal (Nepal rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries (non-including Ministry of Education)</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Cost (’000)</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>6272</td>
<td>6847</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry, Trade and Supplies</td>
<td>20672</td>
<td>103020</td>
<td>4983</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>10100</td>
<td>176500</td>
<td>17475</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Reform and Management</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>5320</td>
<td>9172</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Children and Social Welfare</td>
<td>4125</td>
<td>3619</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports (CTEVT)</td>
<td>2868</td>
<td>4380</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Transportation Management</td>
<td>5635</td>
<td>15244</td>
<td>2705</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Promotion Commission</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>55000</td>
<td>20370</td>
<td>2 weeks to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>47596</td>
<td>369355</td>
<td>7760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At the moment skills development only captures a marginal share of national education budgets. In Mali\(^3\) and Nepal\(^4\), non-formal education represents less than 1%. Technical and vocational education constitutes 2.6% of the government education expenditures in Laos\(^5\), and 1.4% in Nepal\(^6\). It should be noted that skills development programmes only form a small part of these shares that are already low.

> Sources of information

Skills development monitoring systems should make use of existing data sources including population censuses, households surveys, administrative reporting and project evaluations. However, proper monitoring may also require special samples surveys, including longitudinal studies to assess the actual impact of skills development programmes on people’s and community’s livelihoods. This of course represents a challenge for data collection strategies considering the diversity of training providers and the difficulties in conducting households surveys among the poorest, often difficult to reach due to geographic remoteness and sometimes cultural isolation. In this context the use of geographical information systems (GIS) may be useful to map out and link various forms of poverty with skills development.

---


data and indicators (e.g. Lao PDR). Such information may prove to be critical for guiding policy interventions where the territorial approach is determining such as poverty reduction programmes. In Lao PDR, the second phase of this project will aim to establish linkages with the Poverty Reduction Fund to provide information on training by districts.
Magnitude of Primary School Drop Out
by Sex  by Size  by Districts

Size of drop out
- Male
- Female

Districts
- 70 Non Poor
- 25 Poor
- 47 Poorest

Source: Ministry of Education of Lao PDR
A way forward

In the short term the problem of limited information on skills development can be addressed by focusing on priority target groups and areas classified as being the poorest (e.g. in Lao PDR). In the medium and long term the response is to gradually build information systems able a) to precisely identify target populations and their learning needs, b) to monitor the delivery of skills development programmes, and c) to evaluate their results. From this perspective, there is still a need for clearly defining the core indicators that can be used in monitoring skills development and conceptualizing the methodology to be followed.

Decentralisation is underway in the four countries and the provincial or regional level often now enjoys considerable responsibilities in the field of non-formal education, including for skills development. Considering the contextual nature of learning needs for youth and adults, there is a need to differentiate local level skills development indicators and those for use at the national level. A grass-roots information system does not immediately provide central-level policy-makers the summary information they need for effective national monitoring and policy setting. Locally relevant data and indicators may need to be aggregated to provide such analytical and diagnostic tools at the national level.

It is clear that countries engaged in skills development strategies will need to devote more efforts to monitoring. However, the progress made at the national level already provides some elements which may be appropriate for future international monitoring.
References

Boupha, P.; Didaravong, S.; Phetsiriseng, I. 2004. *Lao People’s Democratic Republic: Skill development for disadvantaged groups: review, issues and prospects*. Report produced in the framework of the IIEP-UNESCO project ‘Assisting the design and implementation of Education for All skills development plans: skills development to meet the learning needs of the excluded’.

EFA Life Skills Thematic Team; CERID, Tribhuvan University Nepal. 2004. *Towards meeting the EFA goals: skill development to meet the learning needs of the excluded in Nepal – Review of the current status of policies, strategies and programs*. Report produced in the framework of the IIEP-UNESCO project ‘Assisting the design and implementation of Education for All skills development plans: skills development to meet the learning needs of the excluded’.


Maiga, B.; Traore, S.; Traore, M. D. 2004. *Mali: constats, questions et perspectives.* Report produced in the framework of the IIEP-UNESCO project ‘Assisting the design and implementation of Education for All skills development plans: skills development to meet the learning needs of the excluded’.