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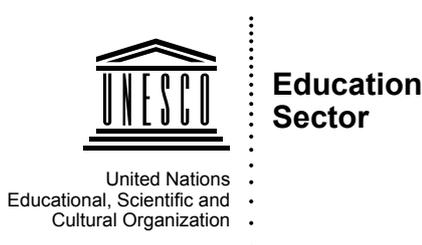
International Literacy Day 2018

Improving outcomes of integrated literacy
and skills development programmes

#LiteracyDay

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Improving outcomes of integrated literacy and skills development programmes

Working Paper prepared for the International Conference on
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A. Introduction

This working paper examines the linkages between literacy learning, skills development and the world of work, in line with the theme of International Literacy Day (ILD) 2018. It aims to identify policy

actions that will help integrate literacy learning and skills development, with an objective of supporting pathways to employment.

B. Context

Changes to the labour market and the nature of work – driven by technological developments, globalization, large-scale migration, sustainability imperatives, and demographic trends – are forcing governments and other stakeholders to rethink education and training strategies.

While these changes have brought opportunities, they are also disruptive. In many national contexts, jobs are being eliminated as fast as they are being created, and unemployment and under-employment, particularly among young people, are urgent global concerns. These concerns are especially acute in communities whose young people and adults have low levels of skills and literacy, and are not well prepared for jobs in the expanding knowledge economy.

Statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018a) put the problem in a sobering perspective: globally, more than 192 million people are unemployed. Worryingly though, this figure, already too high, is likely to increase substantially if education and training are not urgently expanded and improved. Currently, close to one in every seven young people (aged 15–24) is out of school and out of work (World Bank, 2017). If the international community fails to address this issue, it will further contribute to youth unemployment, which has been ballooning for the past decade.

What these figures mean in practical terms is that more and more young people are failing to enter the world of work, because of insufficient skills or skills that do not match employer needs. The human and

social costs of this accelerating trend – most visible in developing countries, but hardly absent in developed countries – would be difficult to overstate. The ILO has observed that the prolonged unemployment experienced by many young people “hinders their skills development, future employability and earning capacity”, placing them in a category that might be adequately thought of as a ‘lost generation’ (ILO, 2017). Women are disproportionately affected. They are 26 per cent less likely to participate in the global labour market than men, and less likely to find a stable job when they do participate. In 2017, 82 per cent of women were in vulnerable forms of employment, compared with 72 per cent of men (ILO, 2018b).

In healthy societies and economies, young people are either using their skills productively in the world of work, or investing in skills acquisition through education and training (or pursuing some combination of the two). A red flag for a country – and the world at large – is when young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET), a condition which is often correlated closely to low educational attainment, weak information-processing abilities, and insufficient literacy and numeracy skills. Despite efforts to keep NEET figures down, the ILO estimates that globally, 13.5 per cent of young people fit in this category (World Bank, 2017). Buried in this headline figure, there are disturbing gender inequities. Globally, young women are over *three times* more likely to be NEET than young men (ILO, 2018c).

The antidote is to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills they need to enter the world

of work. Similarly, adults who are not working require inclusive and non-stigmatizing opportunities to cultivate skills that provide pathways to employment. *First among these skills and pathways is literacy.* Literacy is uniquely important because as a means of text-mediated communication, it enables the cultivation of new skills and knowledge that provide entry points to work, greater community engagement, and better quality of life.

The good news is that global literacy rates are on the rise. Overall adult (15+ years) literacy rates have climbed from 81.5 per cent in 2000 to 86.2 per cent in 2016 (UNESCO, 2018a). Progress among young people (15–24 years) was even stronger because more children accessed schooling. Between 2000 and 2016 the youth literacy rate grew from 86.6 per cent to 91.4 per cent (UNESCO, 2018 a).

The bad news is that there is still a long way to go to achieve universal basic literacy. Looking at the absolute numbers and using the traditional dichotomous literate/illiterate measure, the UNESCO *Global Education Monitoring Report* (2018a) puts the total number of illiterate adults at 750 million, of whom 102 million are young people and two-thirds are women. Schooling is crucial to putting a dent in this figure. Children who have not benefited from formal schooling enter their teenage and adult years without the basic skills needed to continue learning or acquire specific technical and vocational skills that would open doors to the world of work. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 263 million children of primary and lower secondary school age were not in school in 2016, and because of this disadvantage, many of these children are unlikely to achieve literacy abilities that establish a basis for skills acquisition and many types of work (UNESCO-UIS, n.d.).

Increasingly, low-level literacy skills, achieved by the millions of learners who complete some formal education but leave before finishing secondary school, are insufficient for the demands of modern workplaces. People with underdeveloped literacy skills account for a massive proportion of the current workforce, but are at risk as technological advancements, and automation in particular, place new premiums on strong literacy skills that help workers adapt to new

labour environments and cultivate new skills. The World Bank, drawing on data collected from forty-one countries, estimates that globally, 2.1 billion people working-age adults (aged 15–64) have low reading proficiency (World Bank, 2018). Among younger adults (aged 15–24), the number is estimated at 418 million (World Bank, 2018). As the world enters what the World Economic Forum (n.d.) has dubbed the Fourth Industrial Revolution, people with low literacy proficiency are likely to find themselves, according to World Bank projections, “in dead-end jobs with relatively flat lifetime income growth ... [and this] situation will only get worse as technology [continues to] affect the demand for skills” (World Bank, 2018). This reality demands policies and programmes that not only address illiteracy, but seek to upgrade the literacy skills of people – those inside as well as outside the workforce – who have only beginner-level reading and writing proficiency. In modernizing economies, most good-quality jobs and job training require, at a minimum, intermediate-level reading proficiency.

In addition to strong literacy skills, a growing number of employers need workers with specific ‘soft skills’, including an ability to communicate effectively, work collaboratively and flexibly, learn quickly on the job, make autonomous decisions and solve problems. Across countries, these skills are at the top of managers’ expectations for the workforce. Surveys have shown, for example, that employers in Benin, Liberia, Malawi and Zambia rank team work, communication, and problem-solving skills as the most important set of skills after technical skills (World Bank, 2018). A recent analysis of internet job postings in Australia (Korbelt, 2018) showed that communication skills were by far the most frequently requested employability skill across all internet job postings.

Taken together, these global findings point to strengthening bonds between literacy, skills and the world of work. Whereas in the past these elements were relatively discrete – a person could be illiterate yet still cultivate skills that led to work – today they are more interlinked. The knowledge economy treats each element (literacy, skills and work) as catalytic of the other, although the catalytic process does not necessarily move in a straight direction. This latter point is crucial. While ‘literacy’, ‘skills’ and ‘the world of work’ are commonly assumed to exist in a linear

A–B–C pathway – where literacy abilities enable skills acquisition and these skills, in turn, open doors to work – the pathway is better imagined as a triangle where there is not necessarily a predetermined starting point. This means that a working person can – with the correct support and incentives – use their job as a basis to begin to develop new skills and/or improve their literacy abilities. Similarly, someone with a particular set of skills can use these skills as pathway to improve reading competency, and later leverage a combination of existing skills and more advanced literacy abilities to secure decent work. In summary, skills can and should be an entry point to literacy instruction; literacy instruction can and should be an occasion to strengthen and expand skills; and work can and should provide incentives, conditions and a space for skills training and/or literacy instruction. Governments and other stakeholders should strive to build as many webs and linkages between ‘literacy’, ‘skills’, and ‘the world of work’ as possible; they are mutually supportive, not merely modular.

This ‘integrated orientation’ provides governments with a more versatile set of tools to address the global literacy and unemployment crises, especially as they relate to young people. This orientation allows educators, trainers and employers to meet people where they are as they seek to help them thrive in life and work. The orientation also mirrors a core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Agenda (United Nations, 2015). This principle maintains that the seventeen Goals comprising the 2030 Agenda are not stand-alone targets, but rather integrated, interconnected and indivisible. Progress toward one goal creates progress toward other goals. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) specific to education (SDG4) frees learning from the narrow confines of the early years of life, and places it ‘across life’, inviting approaches that move education and training into workplaces, communities, families, the internet and other environments outside the boundaries of formal education, as well as within them. The Goal itself, “Ensure equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, recognizes that people – whatever their age, gender or circumstances – need opportunities to develop basic competencies, vocational skills, and knowledge that will help them succeed in different spheres of life and adopt sustainable lifestyles (UNESCO, 2017a). Thus, the targets embedded in SDG4 underscore the

necessity of equitable access for all to literacy and numeracy learning, as well as opportunities to develop relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. Key components of SDG4 highlight the importance of better connecting learning to work and work to learning.

In light of the global context and the interconnectivity encouraged by 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this paper explores how the international community can start to better triangulate ‘literacy’, ‘skills’ and ‘the world of work’, fostering links between them where possible, and illuminating paths to help countries address literacy challenges and unemployment with integrated approaches.

C. Integrating literacy learning and skills development: strengthening outcomes

Integrated approaches that connect literacy learning and skills development have a long history. A range of functional literacy programmes, with tighter or looser links between literacy and livelihoods, have been implemented around the world (UNESCO, 2017*b*). Examining these experiences can provide rich insights into what factors can provide an enabling environment for successful interventions, and the challenges faced in different contexts. In most cases, functional literacy programmes involve learning activities of different duration and intensity. Work-relevant or work-based learning may or may not be involved, as may formal educational components, and testing and certification of the knowledge and skills acquired. This diversity of programmes has benefits as it allows them to reflect the diverse needs of learners. However, it can also make it difficult to ensure the quality of these programmes, and to measure their outcomes for individuals, communities and economies.

More needs to be done to improve outcomes. A stronger focus on outcomes could lead to better performance, and could thus increase investments in learning by governments, communities and firms, and motivate individuals. While no single programme is the answer, a clear vision and concrete steps taken in concert by all stakeholders can ensure countries bridge skills gaps and equip citizens, particularly low-skilled ones, with the skills they need to seize the opportunities of a rapidly changing world of work. A number of such programmes are outlined in this section, drawing on a variety of sources, including laureates of the UNESCO literacy prizes and the UIL database on "Effective Literacy Practice" (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.a). The programmes are clustered around a set of four policy areas that can drive better outcomes: i) Ensuring equitable access and inclusion; ii) Improving the relevance to the world of work; iii) Strengthening quality; and iv) Leveraging digital technology.

In addition to providing a useful mapping of the sorts of initiative that are being implemented around the world, lessons learned from the initiatives in this brief

overview are used as a basis for the discussion on enabling factors and policy implications in the last part of the paper.

Ensuring equitable access and inclusion

The close relationship between mastery of literacy and numeracy, and the acquisition of technical and vocational skills, means that those without access to learning opportunities for the former tend also to be excluded from opportunities for skills development. Inequities in literacy learning necessarily reduce life chances that come with the further acquisition of skills. These inequities disproportionately affect certain groups (such as women and girls, out-of-school children and young people, rural people, and ethnic or linguistic minorities). Often these groups need approaches and programmes that are specifically tailored to their needs. Some examples of such programmes are described briefly below.

A programme targeting the semi-nomadic herders in Mongolia is a case in point (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.b). A flexible programme was designed to fit with their lifestyle and to meet their specific needs, combining literacy learning with training in other life skills. Vocational skills were aimed at increasing and diversifying income generation, and included making coral ornaments, wool processing and felt handicrafts, based on products of the rural environment. Considering the herders' semi-nomadic lifestyle, teachers mainly focused on providing the opportunity for learners to take responsibility for their own learning, including home studies and principles of self-directed learning. Thus, materials included self-study books and practice materials, with regular visits by teachers to check homework, give advice and assist in areas where learners most needed help. The effectiveness of this programme depended on understanding not only the learning needs of the rural population, for both basic and vocational skills, but also the nature of their connections with markets,

their links with other nomad families, and above all their lifestyle. Rather than insisting that the population should adapt to learning opportunities provided for sedentary populations, learning was organized to facilitate its integration into the prevailing patterns of semi-nomadic rural life.

In Morocco, a programme was designed for vulnerable young people aged between 15 and 20, who had previously dropped out of or had never attended school, based on a residential scheme offering three kinds of skill in an integrated programme: socialization and personal skills through the residential community, fostering respect, communication and responsibility in a stable environment; school-type lessons in basic skills with a focus on literacy and numeracy; and vocational skills, with on-the-job exposure and training, in a sector where the adolescents are likely to find work or employment in the local area (Ministry of National Education and Professional Development of Morocco, 2014a). This programme illustrates not only that learning basic and vocational skills at the same time is a mutually reinforcing experience, but also that skills alone are not enough to give highly vulnerable young people new chances in life: a framework of psycho-social support is necessary to enable effective learning to take place.

In Algeria, the IQRAA programme, managed by the Algerian literacy association, adopts holistic and innovative approaches to the integration of women living in extreme poverty in isolated areas (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.c). This integrated programme provides training in literacy and income-generating skills, focusing on dressmaking, embroidery and silk making. It translates literacy into income-generating activities developed by certified vocational training centres, and secures access to government-supported microcredit programmes. The programme also provides former trainees with legal counselling to help them manage their new businesses.

The Integrated Functional Adult Education programme for the Siliti minority in Ethiopia (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.d) combined literacy learning in the local language with two kinds of skill: first, those that enable young people and adults, female and male, to understand how to effect change in their context, and second, those that address relevant areas of knowledge and

skills to directly improve their quality of life. Skills of the first category include rights awareness, creativity, gender roles, problem-solving and establishing a culture of family learning. Among the skills of the second category are health practices and agricultural development. The learning process itself fostered community mobilization and mutual support. Literacy levels increased and school dropout decreased as adults saw the value of education. This programme shows clearly how literacy learning was embedded in learning other skills, and in a holistic process of addressing the particular socio-economic status of the minority group.

In sum, having low levels of literacy and skills is often closely linked to other disadvantages including poverty, labour market exclusion and marginalization. To address these multiple challenges and to achieve better outcomes, it is important that governments and training providers combine literacy learning and skills development with other social and economic services such as health, micro-finance and access to counselling.

Improving relevance to the world of work

Literacy and skills development programmes need to respond to the demand for skills in the world of work if they are to be relevant and meet the needs of learners, employers and society more broadly. This is particularly important in the rapidly changing context outlined above, and the corresponding shifts in skills requirements.

Approaches to integration can start from the identification of a specific vocational sector, or from learners themselves expressing their needs. In both cases, governments and training providers must move away from a supply-driven approach towards developing demand-led interventions. Inter-sectoral coordination is another important factor for success.

One example of a demand-led intervention comes from Cambodia, where the garment sector is key to the country's economic development (UNESCO, 2018b). However, statistics show that 85 per cent of the 605,000 workers in garment and footwear factories are women, of whom 14 per cent are

illiterate and 29 per cent have low levels of literacy. Targeting these workers, Cambodia's Minister of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), with support from UNESCO, developed a special literacy initiative for factories, commonly referred to as the Factory Literacy Programme, with the aims to enable young women and girls working in factories to acquire basic functional literacy skills and empower them to better understand their own fundamental rights. Managers extolled numerous benefits for their operations, including better motivation among the learners, improvements in discipline, fewer production errors, a positive impact on productivity and better employer-worker relationships. In addition to the improvements in learners' working abilities, many also expressed the joy they felt when they were able to use their newly learned skills outside of the factory in their day-to-day lives.

It is often through intersectoral partnerships that the connection of literacy with learning other skills is made. For example, the National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy (ANLCA) in Morocco forged partnerships with the ministries responsible for trades and crafts, and for ocean fisheries (Morocco, 2014b). For craft workers, the aim was to enable these independent workers to set up and run their own businesses, making and marketing their products. ANLCA was tasked with the responsibility of setting up a targeted literacy programme, with appropriate materials and trained instructors, while the partner ministry paid for the programme, which it intends to expand. In the case of ocean fisheries, the aim was to provide literacy learning opportunities for fishers and their families; fishers had a need to make better use of security information and to access courses leading to vocational certification, while their families, often socially marginalized, would use literacy for marketing fish, and be encouraged to send their children to school and keep them there.

These programmes point to some key success factors that can improve learning and labour market outcomes for individuals, communities and enterprises, including assessment of skills needs, inter-sectoral partnerships and the use of work-based learning. The outcomes can also include social outcomes such as less dropping-out in marginalized families, and the use of acquired skills in their everyday lives.

Strengthening quality

Connecting programmes with the world of work and finding the right incentives to motivate learners are important factors for better outcomes and reducing dropout rates. Integrated programmes that embed a space to apply acquired skills in the workplace are often associated with higher levels of motivation and better labour market outcomes.

The Skill Training for Advancing Resources is an intervention designed to provide apprenticeship-based vocational training along with necessary foundation and soft/transferable skills to out-of-school adolescents in Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2017). The aim of the programme is to provide an alternative pathway to these young people which will lead to better lives and livelihoods. To create sustained impact, the programme focuses in particular on improving training quality; a quality assurance team has been formed to ensure quality training is delivered. Providing literacy, numeracy and digital skills alongside vocational and technical skills is also seen as a way of enhancing the quality of the programme and minimizing dropping-out. A tracer study on the graduated learners conducted by the development organization, BRAC, showed that after 2.5 years, 77 per cent continued to be employed in relevant trades. The programme's impacts include a reduction in early marriage rates and a reduction in social barriers and stigma related to gender-based work distribution and female mobility. Both of these outcomes have huge implications for the sustainability of the impact.

Important indicators of the quality of a programme are learners' completion rates and successful outcomes. To achieve these, learners' motivation is essential. In Australia, the Workplace English Language and Literacy programme (WELL) is often promoted as general workplace training, rather than a targeted language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) programme, so that workers who might fear being stigmatized as illiterate will be attracted to the training (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.e).

Several factors can improve the quality and motivation of learners, including better links with the world of work, integrating literacy into larger vocational training

programmes, reinforcing capacities of instructors/facilitators, and adopting appropriate pedagogies.

Leveraging digital technology

In addition to assuring the equity, relevance and quality of programmes, efforts are being made to leverage new digital technologies to expand the reach and outcomes of literacy and skills development programmes. The global proliferation of internet-connected mobile devices has opened up new ways to reach learners and integrate literacy and skills development programmes.

In Pakistan for example, UNESCO designed mobile learning solutions to build the capacities of female early childhood education instructors working in rural areas (UNESCO, 2017c). This work improved the subject matter and pedagogical knowledge of teachers while also developing their literacy skills. The digital learning content included a mix of text and video learning resources tailored to the needs of teachers and their literacy levels. An independent evaluation of the project found that the intervention – enabled by technology – improved the instructors’ teaching and digital skills, in addition to reinforcing their literacy abilities (UNESCO, 2017c). Work like this is often relatively affordable to scale up because little expense is incurred when large numbers of beneficiaries access digital learning and skills development content, following its initial development.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), a non-governmental organization (NGO) functioning under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India, and winner of the 2016 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy, has also had success in integrating technology to improve literacy instruction and connect this instruction to skills development and employment (UNESCO-UIL, n.d.f). The organization uses a computer-based information system to collect and share information about learners and their performance, allowing educators to better understand learner needs and adjust instruction accordingly. Instruction itself is also facilitated by technology, encompassing conventional tools such as LCD projectors, computers and various audio-visual equipment as well as more cutting-edge devices such

as a ‘smart pen’ which reproduces the sound of written text to help learners with phonetics. The literacy training is tailored to facilitate employment in a variety of local industries, from food processing to textile production. Even the use of technology, in addition to supporting literacy development, serves the dual purpose of developing the digital skills of learners and supporting employment, which is enhanced by these skills as well as by literacy. JSS has, in effect, designed a programme that links education and digital skills with work (UNESCO, 2016).

Beyond merely providing a means to support literacy learning and build digital skills, technology can untether literacy and skills development programmes from classrooms and move them to settings relevant to work. In practice, this means that affordable and dynamic digital learning content can follow people to their workplaces and help them upgrade their skills in situ. Dedicated mobile applications such as those by Jayalaxmi Agro Tech currently help low-literate farmers learn how to better access information on the health of crops, optimize watering schedules and facilitate the identification of insect pests. This learning, thanks to the growing ubiquity of smartphones, happens not in schools or behind a desk but in the fields where farmers work (UNESCO and Pearson, 2018a). Mobile phone cameras, internet connections (when available) and other technology help workers in a variety of professions solve problems in real time and build their capacities in authentic environments, making the benefits of learning and literacy more tangible than they might be in a classroom setting (UNESCO, 2013).

These examples show that technology can both create new avenues for literacy learning and skills development, and complement traditional approaches to education and training, especially in contexts where resources are scarce. This is especially true when digital solutions have inclusive designs that facilitate use by those with limited literacy and beginner-level digital skills (UNESCO and Pearson, 2018b). In addition to improving outreach and strengthening the teaching and learning process, technology can also support data collection and management, reinforcing evidence-based decision making around integrated programmes.

D. Develop the right institutional environment for better outcomes

This paper has argued for the importance of developing integrated approaches to literacy and skills development to improve outcomes, and pointed to a number of policy areas for action, including meeting the needs of marginalized groups and the changing world of work, enhancing quality, and leveraging technology. This section discusses the institutional environment and tools that can help policy-makers to put these approaches in place.

Working across sectors for literacy and skills development

To develop and implement effective integrated literacy and skills development programmes require interaction and coordination across a range of different policy areas. These of course include education and training, but also employment, social welfare, health, agriculture and rural development, and gender equality. Many countries around the world have adopted a whole-of-government approach to policy-making in an attempt to avoid fragmentation and incoherence between different policy areas. Adopting such an approach is also necessary for the development of integrated literacy and skills development programmes. Taking a whole-of-government approach normally requires investing in new structures and partnerships across ministries and institutions, new working methods and processes, and new sets of competencies and capacities. In some cases, a human resources development strategy (HRDS) has played an important role in ensuring a whole-of-government approach. Botswana, Malaysia and South Africa are examples of countries that have developed an HRDS and set-up related councils.

Streamlining the institutional arrangements for managing literacy and skills development

Integrated approaches to literacy and skills development also require effective governance and

partnership arrangements between government and a broad array of actors, such as civil society organizations, the private sector, parents and teachers, who have diverse degrees of responsibilities, authority, powers, and accountability at different levels. Examples of various types of governance arrangement exist depending on each country's context. Governments might for instance establish ministries for literacy (Burkina Faso, Mali), vice-ministries in the education ministry (Afghanistan), in the ministry of vocational training (Senegal) or of youth (Cameroon), or semi-autonomous agencies on literacy (Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, India, Morocco). Common to these different structures is the objective of achieving a high level of youth and adult literacy nationally, pursued with government resources and with a greater or lesser participation of social partners and civil society.

Mobilizing the private sector

The role of the private sector in the development and adoption of integrated approaches is important and multifaceted: it can act as a provider of learning, a financial supporter, and advocate for literacy and skills development programmes. Private-sector companies have long recognized the importance of improving the basic skills of their workforce, alongside further development of technical and vocational skills. In more advanced economies, where the majority of workers are in formal employment, such types of training depend largely on labour laws and regulations, social dialogue, and partnerships between the private sector and government and its agencies. In countries where the informal economy provides a high proportion of jobs, skill development in the workplace depends on the commitment of small enterprises and artisans, often organized along family lines. In such contexts, little or no attention might be paid to foundation skills, and young people may be directed to literacy programmes available outside of the workplace, where learning is

unrelated to the vocational skills needed. The French and Moroccan agencies for the promotion of literacy, for example, have established strong partnerships with employer organizations and successful mobile enterprises, to finance and manage integrated literacy and skills development programmes for their workers. Benin has reformed its traditional apprenticeship programme, reinforced off-the-job learning including functional literacy and numeracy, and set-up a new certificate for those completing traditional apprenticeships (World Bank, 2018).

Funding for integrated programmes

Funding mechanisms for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are well developed in advanced economies, and include direct government support, contributions from trade unions, employers and municipalities, and subsidies to learners (OECD, 2010). Mechanisms such as levy schemes and training funds (UNESCO, 2018c), initiatives to finance individual adult learners through grants and loans, such as income tax deduction (Tuckett, 2017), as well as inter-sectoral cooperation and public-private partnerships, have also been explored beyond developed countries and the TVET community. Where training funds exist, they tend to finance in-service training programmes targeting literacy skills development, such as the Moroccan 'Contrat Spéciaux de Formation' functional literacy programmes for workers (ETF, 2012). In France, a training levy finances literacy training organized by enterprises, and the labour law stipulates that 'programmes targeting literacy skills for workers are considered as vocational training' (France, 2012). In South Africa, sector education and training authorities (SETAs) which, with the National Skills Fund (NSF), are responsible for skills development in their sectors, finance literacy training programmes for workers (South Africa, n.d.).

However, not all countries have adopted these funding mechanisms, and large numbers of young people and adults with limited literacy skills remain excluded from these financial instruments. The fact that much of the provision of literacy programmes is of a non-formal nature also has implications for funding. In contrast to the standardized system of formal education and vocational training, non-formal literacy and skills

learning manifests high diversity, little standardization, few comparable results, and outcomes that differ by location and by individual learner. Hence funders, including governments, the private sector and international donors, find it difficult to justify spending on such programmes, which may in turn lead to lack of resources, low-quality programmes and further lack of funding.

Develop systems for recognition of skills and qualifications

In light of clear and strongly articulated lifelong learning policies that set priorities and budgets, governments may wish to consider a range of specific tools and measures that help promote effective integrated literacy and skills development programmes, such as mechanisms for recognizing and validating prior learning in the context of qualification systems. Mechanisms for recognizing the prior learning of adults, modular training opportunities, and employer-sponsored training have expanded in many countries (UNESCO et al., 2017). However, barriers continue to limit participation, especially for those with low levels of literacy and skills. Efforts should be made to ensure that Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) processes are inclusive of low-literate persons. For example, in Portugal, Qualifica Centres offer information, vocational guidance, and recognition, validation and certification of skills (RVCC), to low-skilled and low-literate persons, free of charge (OECD, 2018).

In integrated programmes, literacy skills and vocational skills may be assessed based on national standards, including within a national qualification framework (NQF), or a standard set within the programme framework. For the former, the French certificate CLEA is a case in point, where all stakeholders agreed to adopt a basic and unique certificate for recognizing foundation skills of workers (Copanef, n.d.).

E. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted a set of areas for policy action at both programme and system levels to promote approaches that integrate literacy learning and skills development, focusing particularly on the relations of such approaches with the world of work.

The four broad areas identified at the programme level – equitable access and inclusion, relevance through a demand-driven approach that considers learners' needs and evolving skills demands, ensuring programme quality for better outcomes, and adequate funding – are inseparable, and in each area, a number of context-specific activities can be designed. Integrated programmes for young people and adults will have a better chance of success when all of these areas are considered. However, there should be different degrees of emphasis on certain activities in each area, such as a stronger focus on training of facilitators as key to improving programme quality.

At the system level, the paper stresses the necessity of a whole-of-government approach to policy-making and governance which can facilitate intersectoral cooperation and greater coherence among different policy areas. Such an approach can also help to improve skills and develop conditions to apply acquired skills at the same time. This paper also illustrates the centrality of lifelong and life-wide learning perspectives which should underpin policies, as well as associated measures and tools, such as RVA systems and NQFs, in support of effective integrated literacy and skills development programmes. The potential role and contribution of the private sector is another area to be explored.

While all these areas of policy action have their merits, it is not realistic to imagine all of them will be the subject of immediate action by concerned governments. It is proposed, where applicable and initially at least, that only a small proportion of the identified policy areas be pursued, without losing sight of the holistic nature of integrated approaches. So a key decision is the initial choice of the most urgently needed reforms and initiatives in a specific context. This should be

informed by a needs assessment and other relevant information.

Transformations taking place in life and work in our globalized and digitized world offer both challenges and opportunities. As this paper argues, rethinking the synergies between 'literacy learning', 'skills development' and 'the world of work' for better outcomes is a way to make the best use of the opportunities and counter the challenges. It is important to note for further reflection, however, that beyond their economic value due to their link with the world of work, integrated approaches can bring about multiple benefits of a social, political, environmental, cultural and personal nature. The joy that young Cambodian female factory workers felt in applying acquired literacy skills, outside factories, in shops, streets and at home, is a case in point. All of these benefits can be a source of motivation for learners to engage with and continue learning, and for providers to initiate programmes to achieve greater learning and development outcomes.

Governments and national stakeholders have the fundamental responsibility to lead and support collaborative efforts across sectors and constituencies to this effect. Such collective efforts must be supported by the international community, if the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the SDG4, is to be achieved, of which literacy and skills are an essential part.

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This working paper examines the linkages between literacy learning, skills development and the world of work, in line with the theme of International Literacy Day (ILD) 2018, “Literacy and Skills Development”. It identifies policy actions at both programme and system levels to establish and facilitate approaches that integrate literacy learning and skills development, focusing particularly on how these approaches can support employment.

This paper will frame and inform the international conference UNESCO will host in Paris on the occasion of ILD 2018. It provides a basis for further development of the topic following expert presentations at the conference.

UNESCO is continuously working to ensure literacy learning and skills development are mutually supportive for better learning and development outcomes, and this paper seeks to facilitate this ongoing effort.

