



United Kingdom
National Commission for UNESCO



SKILLS FOR WORK, GROWTH & POVERTY REDUCTION: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Seminar Report

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FINAL Report

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Foreword

The growing emphasis on Education For All (EFA) is very welcome, and it is to be hoped that the associated investment and policy attention will bring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals nearer. However, the theme of skills is under-represented, if not ignored, in EFA discourse, particularly skills for employability and technical and vocational education and training.

This is regrettable for at least three reasons. First, we risk losing the momentum built up by the successes to date in basic education: if young people cannot acquire the skills they need for the labour market when they finish school, the investment in primary education may be wasted. Secondly, economic prosperity depends on having an enterprising and skilled workforce: unless there are appropriate training opportunities at basic, intermediate and higher levels, economies risk stagnating and individuals will be locked in a low-pay, low-skill poverty trap. Skills provision needs to be based on labour market demand and social dialogue, hence more investment needs to be made in forecasting the ranges of jobs that will be available, the types of skills that will be needed to do them, and the social partnerships that can deliver them. It needs to include non-formal and informal skills, as well as the lifelong learning dimension. Finally, equity and social justice depend on a robust commitment to skills development that builds self-esteem, promotes enterprise and expands life opportunities.

The EFA Group within the Education Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO has commissioned a series on reports on different aspects of EFA.¹ The Group was delighted to be able to join forces with the British Council in commissioning a study from Kenneth King and Robert Palmer on “Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills to address the role of skills for work and enterprise in tackling poverty”. This was presented for discussion at a seminar in London in October 2008 and we believe it makes a very significant contribution to thinking in the area.

Seamus Hegarty
UK National Commission for UNESCO

Katie Epstein
British Council

¹ http://www.unesco.org.uk/Education_for_All_and_Africa.htm

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Special thanks go to Jan Eldred and Jenny Sherrard (both of NIACE) for organising the facilitators and rapporteurs of each of the four themes (section 4 of this report), and to the facilitators and rapporteurs themselves, whose names appear in section 4.

Lastly, the editor would like to acknowledge the comments received on section 6 of this seminar report from Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh / NORRAG, and co-author of the main seminar background report).

This report was prepared and edited by Robert Palmer (Network for Policy Review, Research and Advice on Education and Training – www.norrag.org), email: Rob.Palmer@norrag.org

Contents

Foreword	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Contents	iii
Abbreviations	iv
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background to this report	1
1.2. Rationale for a seminar on skills	1
1.3. Report structure	3
1.4. Opening remarks by Gordon Slaven (British Council)	3
2. Overview: Keynote Presentations	5
2.1. Peter Colenso (DFID)	5
2.2. Chris Humphries (UK Commission for Employment and Skills)	6
3. Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities	11
3.1. Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities: Presentation by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer	11
3.2. Reactions from Robin Horn (World Bank), Nicholas Burnett (UNESCO), Jo Bourne (DFID), Muriel Dunbar (ETF).	18
4. Report of the Thematic Groups	24
4.1. The case for a Global Monitoring Report on skills training	24
4.2. Engaging industry and employers	25
4.3. Training for small and medium size enterprises	28
4.4. Developing TVET indicators	29
5. Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Ways Forward	32
5.1. Simon McGrath (University of Nottingham)	32
5.2. David Atchoarena (IIEP, UNESCO)	33
5.3. Kevin Watkins (Director, EFA GMR Team)	35
5.4. Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh)	36
6. The Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: A Reflection and Look Forward	38

7. Summary of Recommendations Arising from the Seminar	48
Annex 1. Proposed Dimensions for National Targets set at Jomtien, March 1990	51
Annex 2. The Six EFA Goals, agreed in Dakar, April 2000	52
Annex 3. Seminar programme	53
Annex 4. List of participants	55

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALLS	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey
CBT	Competency Based Training
CEDEFOP	The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DBS	Direct Budget Support
DeSeCo	Definition and Selection of Key Competencies
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EFA	Education for All
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GNI	Gross National Income
GVA	Gross Value Added
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KILM	Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEDA-ETE	ETF's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Education and Training for Employment Project
MoE	Ministry of Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO-UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNEVOC	UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WGICSD	Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to this report

The British Council and the UK National Commission for UNESCO Education For All Working Group, of which the British Council is a member, jointly commissioned a research paper on “Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills to address the role of skills for work and enterprise in tackling poverty”.² This research paper formed the focal point for debate and discussion at a seminar of the same name on Friday 31st October 2008. This present report is not only a record of presentations made at this seminar, but also provides some further analysis and recommendations. The focus of the seminar was on the skills for work and enterprise aspects of ‘learning and life skills programmes’; thus, the main focus was more on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) rather than other types of life skills, such as psychosocial and interpersonal skills.

1.2. Rationale for a seminar on skills

The Director General of UNESCO, in launching the 2008 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) in New York on 29th November 2007, cited skills training, adult literacy, teacher education and HIV/AIDS as the focal areas for UNESCO in the next few years. Furthermore, the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education in setting out his vision for education and for UNESCO’s role in promoting it, stated, ‘One of the issues globalisation is raising in almost every country is: what sort of specific skills do people need, what is the balance between specific and general skills? We need to help countries come to their own answers’.³

Since the 2000s there has been an increasing focus by UNESCO, the World Bank and many bilateral aid agencies on technical and vocational skills development for poverty reduction, economic growth and competitiveness in developing countries. This is due, in part, to the success of the concerted efforts of both national governments and international donors to bring millions of primary school age children into primary schools (EFA and MDG goals). However because there has not been a commensurate expansion of post-primary education and training, there is a school leaver problem for millions of primary school children who have little chance of transition to further education or training.

² The draft of the background research paper is available online:
http://www.unesco.org.uk/Skills_Seminar.htm

³ UNESCO (2007) From Education for All to All of Education, Interview of the newly appointed Assistant Director-General for UNESCO’s Education Sector, Nicholas Burnett, by Ariane Bailey and Sue Williams (UNESCO), *The UNESCO Courier*, No.8.

National governments have made a policy case for the expansion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), both in the regions where it is well-established such as East Asia and Latin America but also where there has been modest commitment to TVET, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Underinvestment in post-primary and post-secondary TVET for the last 30 years by many donors has left the sector under-resourced and deprived of any meaningful and comprehensive programmes, curricula, material, equipment, facilities and most of all, teaching staff. Increasingly, however, government bodies in developed countries, including DFID, are being lobbied for assistance. An unintended outcome of this underinvestment in post-primary education and training is that as parents are not seeing adequate progression routes for their children; they are starting to take them out of school – leading to a reversal of the initial gains made in primary education.

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) Jomtien agenda and the subsequent Dakar World Forum 2000 Goals set the framework for development assistance to education in developing countries. ‘Skills’ were explicitly mentioned both at Jomtien and Dakar (see below), and yet attention to skills has been somewhat over-shadowed by a strong agency focus on basic, and especially primary, education.

- ‘Other essential skills’ were an integral part of what the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All called the expanded vision of basic education.
- ‘Learning and life skills’ were included as one of Six Goals in the Dakar World Education Forum.

Meanwhile, the main reporting instrument for the education targets and goals of Jomtien and Dakar, the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs), have so far covered almost all aspects of both the 1990 WCEFA Jomtien agenda and the subsequent Dakar World Forum 2000 Goals. These GMR volumes have rapidly become essential reference works of global progress in primary education, gender parity in education, quality, adult literacy and early childhood education. But they have not, as yet, treated at any length at all the Jomtien and Dakar skills’ or life skills’ goals. The EFA Global Monitoring Team has admitted that EFA Goal 3⁴ has been ‘the hardest to define and monitor’.⁵ The terms ‘life skills’ and ‘skills’ are indeed difficult to define, yet the need for them to be described in a consistent and comprehensive way is urgent. In terms of what should be covered under EFA Goal 3, there appears to be a creeping focus emerging from GMR 2007, 2008 and 2009 to look mainly at non-formal education. But this approach would not do justice to the emerging international focus being given to TVET. And, in fact, a look at the WCEFA framework shows that TVET is covered as a key part of the expanded vision of basic education.

⁴ Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

⁵ See p.60 of the GMR 2008, published by UNESCO in 2007.

1.3. Report structure

The first section of this report is the introduction, and includes some opening remarks from Gordon Slaven (British Council). Section two provides an overview of the seminar from two keynote presentations by Peter Colenso (DFID) and Chris Humphries (UK Commission for Employment and Skills). Section three contains the presentation of the main background paper for this seminar, by Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh) and Robert Palmer (Network for Policy Review, Research and Advice on Education and Training – www.norrag.org), on 'Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities'. Following this, a series of reactions to this background paper, and to the main theme of the seminar, are recorded from: Robin Horn (World Bank), Nicholas Burnett (UNESCO), Jo Bourne (DFID), and Muriel Dunbar (ETF). Section four is a report of the discussions from the thematic working groups, namely: The case for a Global Monitoring Report on skills training; Engaging industry and employer; Training for small and medium size enterprises; and, Developing TVET indicators. Section five presents some "ways forward" according to presentations made from Simon McGrath (University of Nottingham), David Atchoarena (IIEP, UNESCO), Kevin Watkins (Director, EFA GMR team) and Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh). Section six is a reflection of the seminar itself and was not one of the presentations at the seminar. The annexes contain both the Jomtien targets and Dakar goals, as well as the seminar programme and list of participants. The last section summaries some of the key recommendations emerging from the seminar.

1.4. Opening remarks of the seminar

GORDON SLAVEN, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY, BRITISH COUNCIL

The importance of growing human and social capital through the development of skills is increasingly recognised throughout the world, and skills are back on the development agenda. The capacity of people to innovate, to achieve new sustainable livelihoods, and to contribute to economic competitiveness is best developed though giving them the skills to do so. And while instrumental objectives such as these are very important, we should not underestimate the social and psychological value of the self esteem and social benefits that arise from having, and using, a skill that is valued by others. While this may be easy to say, developing a system that delivers high quality training in appropriate skills, at scale, for all who wish to benefit from them, is a less easy task.

The skills sector is, by its very nature, fragmented, and difficult to manage. Skills training is done by central and local government, by the private sector, and by enterprises and skilled individuals. And it is done both formally and informally, in schools, colleges, training institutes, on the job, part time or full time, certificated or not. But skills training still faces the same broad issues as other sectors of education: those of equitable access; of quality provision of appropriate curricula,

of qualified and committed teachers, of forward looking management, and of a clear purposeful strategy. These are the issues that should be central to all skills agendas.

2. Overview: Keynote Presentations

This section provides an overview of the seminar from two keynote presentations by Peter Colenso (DFID) and Chris Humphries (UK Commission for Employment and Skills).

2.1. PETER COLENZO, HEAD, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GROUP, DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)

It is important for us to address two key questions:

1. Why do we, as educationalists, need to be concerned with growth?
2. Are we – governments and agencies - equipped to move forward on this very serious challenge of skills and growth? How is DFID dealing with it?

Why do we need to be concerned with growth?

Growth is high on the agenda for DFID. We see both opportunities and threats however. Opportunities are arising from Africa's growth rate - which at the end of October 2008 stood at about 6%;⁶ opportunities for poverty reduction and opportunities for increased demand for education and skills. But there are threats arising from the current global economic downturn for countries worldwide.

Central to growth is the issue of education and there has been quite a bit of work done on the relationships between education and economic growth. And micro-economic evidence from rate of return to education studies shows that the returns to additional years of schooling can be in the 10% range. But the links between skills and growth are less well known.

Are we equipped to move forward on this very serious challenge of skills and growth? How is DFID dealing with it?

DFID is dealing with this challenge using three approaches; the first concerned with policies, the second with programmes, and the third with capabilities.

Policies – DFID has embraced the centrality of the MDGs, even though we have been criticised for focussing too much on primary education (MDG2). But discussion now is shifting to the delivery of the MDGs and about areas not yet covered by the MDGs. Hence DFID is paying more attention to educational quality, and to skills development, employment and growth linkages.

Programmes - The UK has promised GB£8.5 billion (to 2015) towards education and has pledged to meet the 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) target for aid. Most development assistance from DFID is in the form of bilateral programmes and direct budget support (DBS). Through sector budget support and DBS, DFID

⁶ Editor: As a result of the global financial crisis, the IMF expects that growth in SSA will fall to 3.25% for 2009 (www.imf.org accessed on 04.02.09).

is supporting the whole education sector and not just primary education.⁷ A challenge that DFID is currently facing is that of dealing with the increased interest in skills development. There are now DFID programmes in skills development in India, Pakistan and Rwanda.

Capabilities – DFID has been raising its own capacity to deal with the issue of skills development, including through the writing of a recent (September 2008) briefing paper on *Jobs, Labour Markets and Shared Growth, the Role of Skills*.⁸ At the same time, DFID recognises that others (e.g. World Bank, ETF, ILO, UNESCO-UNEVOC and others) have a comparative advantage in the area of TVET.

We must assume collective responsibility and seek a realistic division of labour, recognising that skill needs cross many traditional boundaries.

We need to be looking at the affordable expansion of post-primary education opportunities, including engaging with those activities going on outside the formal sector.

It is also necessary to get the best diagnostics to inform decisions about skills development.

2.2. CHRIS HUMPHRIES CBE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, UK COMMISSION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

This piece, from Chris Humphries of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, looks at the lessons that can be taken from the UK regarding the value of skills – drawing on the 2006 Leitch Review and other sources.⁹ It closes by asking what implications may be drawn from the UK's experience for developing countries.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills: Making the case for skills

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is charged by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer to help ensure that, by 2020, the UK could maximise its economic prosperity and productivity, and improve social justice. Sandy Leitch, former chief executive of Zurich Insurance, identified skills as the key driver of prosperity:

*The [Leitch] Review has concluded that, where skills were once **a** key driver of prosperity and fairness, they are now **the** key driver.*

⁷ Editor: readers will note, of course, that through DBS one can't be sure that education is being targeted at all.

⁸ DFID (2008) *Jobs, Labour Markets and Shared Growth. The Role of Skills*. A DFID practice paper, September 2008, DFID: London.

⁹ See Box 1, below, for the categorisation of skills used in this presentation.

*Achieving world class skills is **the** key to achieving economic success and social justice in the new global economy.* Lord Leitch, 6 December 2006

Box 1. 21st century skills – skills for work and adult life

'Skills are capabilities and expertise in a particular occupation or activity' (Leitch, 2006: 6). The different types of skills might be categorized in the following way:

Basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills

Core, key, generic, soft - 'employability' – skills – This may include communication, application of numbers, team working, problem solving, learning to learn etc.

Higher order skills – for example: logic, reasoning, analysis, synthesis, statistics, etc.

Specialist, vocational, technical, academic skills - including enterprise, business know-how, financial skills etc

Attitudinal and behavioural skills – such as initiative, confidence, willingness, determination etc.

Life skills - social, health, interpersonal skills

Lessons from the Leitch Review¹⁰

The *Leitch Review of Skills* was an independent review by Lord Sandy Leitch, commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in 2004, 'to identify the UK's optimal skills mix in 2020 to maximize economic growth, productivity and social justice, and to consider the policy implications of achieving the level of change required' (Leitch, 2006: 137). Key lessons from the Leitch Review are summarized below.

- Economic and social ambition drives the market for skills. Such 'ambition should be for developing skills in order to maximise economic prosperity, productivity and to improve social justice' (Leitch, 2006: 1);
- Objectives and measures must be established, and benchmarking put in place;
- All skill levels and the whole working age population have to be considered;
- Understanding/promoting the value of skills, including learning skills, needs greater attention;
- The importance of anticipating the economic and social need for skills in the near future and for the longer term, to match provision with projected demand, needs to be recognised. Supply trends can be compared with anticipated demand to identify potential gaps/mismatches. However, 'no one can accurately predict future demand for particular skill types. The [skills] framework must adapt and respond to future market needs' (Leitch, 2006: 3).

¹⁰ Leitch (2006).

The value of skills to UK employers

There is evidence from the UK which shows that firms that invest in skills reap great benefit.

UK companies which invest more in skills perform better in terms of productivity by 50%. Indeed, according to the Leitch Review, 'productivity is increasingly driven by skills. The ability of firms to succeed in the face of growing international competition depends increasingly on the skilled labour force they can draw from. Skilled workers are better able to adapt to new technologies and market opportunities. Higher levels of skills drive innovation, facilitate investment and improve leadership and management. For innovation to be effectively implemented, businesses must be able to draw on a flexible, skilled workforce' (Leitch, 2006: 8).

On average, UK companies with no training are 2 ½ times more likely to fail compared to those firms that undertake employee training (Fig. 1).

Fig 1. UK company failure rates by sector – training vs non-training

Sector	No Training (% closure)	Training (% closure)	% Difference
Manufacturing	51	20	31
Construction	47	11	36
Wholesale/Retail	24	10	14
Hotels/Restaurants	28	3	25
Transport/Comms	38	20	18
'Other' Business Services	12	18	-6
Health	18	14	4
'Other' Community Services	4	3	1

Source: Collier, Green and Kim (2007)

In the 10 years leading up to 2008, the UK qualifications improvement has added:

- Around 200,000 jobs to the economy;
- 2% points to Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker;
- Between £30 - £50 billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In the period up to 2020, the Leitch Review estimated that the upskilling of the labour force would benefit the UK in terms of job creation, productivity growth and increases in GDP. This Leitch 'Dividend' could add to the UK (see Leitch, 2006: 60):

- 10% increase in rate of jobs growth: 200,000 jobs;
- 15% increase in rate of productivity growth: £1,800 per worker;
- Around £80 billion net to GDP (over 30 years).

It is not clear what impact the current global financial crisis will have on these estimates to 2020, or on investment in skills more generally (Editor). Skills will probably suffer as a result, but many people know that the worst thing to do in times of uncertainty is to lose faith in people, and cut spending on improving the skills people have. Cuts may be less severe now than in the past as a result of this observation.

It does matter *where* we invest in skills. It is important to ‘run with the grain’ of economic strengths (as Thailand has done) and work in growth areas rather than invest in, or bring in, industries that are in a weak market position. Balance of the right types of skills is the key between the generic softer skills for employability and the more specialised, technical skills; it is important to avoid over provision of skills in areas where demand has fallen off. In this regard, working with industries – and letting them lead the process – is vital. Transferable and core skills for all sectors are perhaps the most important skills that need developing.

Characteristics of a responsive 21st century education and training system

A responsive 21st century education and training system needs to be designed to serve all young people and adults – at all levels. A proper balance between employability and specialist skills needs to be achieved; such a balance needs to be determined by employers and will fluctuate over time as the education and training system responds to/anticipates labour market change and demand. Similarly, standards and qualifications must keep pace with industry change and international best practice. Education and training systems increasingly need to be highly flexible in terms of time, pace, place and mode of learning. To ensure skills are demand driven, close integration between institutions and the workplace is required. The financing of education and training systems needs balanced investment from the state, from employers, and from individuals according to need and benefit.

The value of skills to global economies

Globally, the ‘skills race’ is on! Around the world there are major investments going into skills. In order to remain economically competitive, countries are increasingly recognizing the need to invest more in skills. [Editor: in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, many governments are increasingly paying more attention to post-basic education and training than they have done in the past].

By 2020, there will be large labour surpluses in the working age populations of many developing countries; for example, 47 million in India, 19 million in Pakistan, 7 million in Bangladesh, 5 million each in the Philippines and Indonesia. At the same time there are increasing labour deficits in many European countries and North America. It is clear that the number of migrant workers will increase substantially; and this has implications both for skill levels

and for skill portability. India is already training people - who cannot be accommodated in India's formal economy – specifically with a view to export their skills; the economic rationale being that the remittances sent back to India by migrants will provide greater returns than the cost of training the people in the first place.

Multi- and bilateral development agencies will need to find effective ways to monitor and support the changing nature of global skills needs. [Editor: the current global financial crisis will undoubtedly make this more challenging].

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3. Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills

Kenneth King¹¹ and Robert Palmer¹²

'We do not really know how we are doing on skills, because we have not figured out properly how to define them and measure them', Nick Burnett, Assistant Director-General, Education, UNESCO, Gaitskell Lecture, 22 May 2008, University of Nottingham

The following is based on the presentation made by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer on 31st October 2008. Readers may wish to consult the longer paper on which it was based.¹³

Foreword: The irony of skills as measurable and not measurable

Here at the outset is the overarching contradiction, irony or mystery - that all the EFA Goals set at Dakar have been covered in single major volumes of the *Global Monitoring Report (GMR)* – but not the EFA Goal 3 which is about skills.

Progress on all Six Goals is also assessed each year in a special chapter, but over six years, skills have received by far the least analytical coverage. Why? The GMR team keeps saying it is the 'hardest to define and monitor'.

But arguably the skills we are actually concerned with today are becoming more measurable all the time both in Europe and internationally.

Overview

The first part of this presentation covers the changing global context for skills in the 21st century, its drivers and its meanings. The second section examines briefly skills and Education for All from Jomtien (1990) to the present day. The third section examines the challenges and opportunities for monitoring one dimension of skills - technical and vocational skills systems. The fourth section contains some preliminary conclusions.

Global drivers of skills development

Since the 2000s there has been a dramatic rise in the salience of skills on the global agenda. There have been a series of commissions and analytical work

¹¹ Emeritus Professor, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh. Email: Kenneth.King@ed.ac.uk

¹² Network for Policy Review, Research and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG). Email: Rob.Palmer@norrags.org

¹³ The full draft paper is based is available online at: www.unesco.org.uk/Skills_Seminar.htm

done, for example, by the ADB, OECD, World Bank, China, India, Pakistan, Australia and others. The renewed interest in skills is being driven by a number of different factors, including:

- The success of UPE and challenge of post-UPE provision – Agencies (UNESCO, DFID and others) report the rising national pressure both for TVET and secondary school expansion.
- The notion of skills for competitiveness, enterprise productivity, individual prosperity and poverty reduction - Countries perceive the availability of skills as an element in global competitiveness, enterprise profitability but equally as a way out of poverty.
- The politics of skills-for-employment and skills-for-security - More controversially, skills gets linked to the politics of employment creation; and to dealing with young people in fragile states, and states dealing with terrorism.

Multiple meanings of skills in Jomtien and Dakar agendas

We argue that all the following different expressions of skill can be found in the expanded texts of Jomtien and Dakar; and many elements of them are already being seriously monitored regionally and internationally, as we shall note later:

- Core, generic, foundation skills (3Rs, ICT);
- New skills, soft skills, higher order skills;
- Attitudinal skills e.g. confidence, perseverance and effort;
- Technical, vocational, design & technology skills;
- Entrepreneurial, employability, business, marketing skills.

The different worlds of life skills and work skills?

Two clusters of skills are very important to the international debate about skills and the EFA Goals.

- Life skills as psycho-social and interpersonal as well as core or foundation, and
- Livelihood, work and career skills linked to enterprise and employability.

Life skills can have very different meanings even within one country like the UK, including simple personal and social development skills for the less gifted. But they are also, through the OECD, coming to be used for essential core and soft skills such as problem solving, and team working, that are critical in education and the work place.

Similarly the discourse of livelihood and work skills is also covering these very same qualities of problem-solving and team work, in addition to the essential literacies in the work place - as seen in the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. The two discourses of life skills and work skills seem much more complementary

than when we first debated them in the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development (WGICSD) in 2003.¹⁴

The discourses and domains of TVET/VET and of skills development

These two discourses are also crucial to the positioning of skill globally: in Europe, VET is preferred to TVET but thanks to excellent work by the World Bank, ADB and ETF, TVET is now regularly used to cover skills in schools, training centres, both formal and nonformal, public and private. And skills development, still more an agency term than a national government one, has come to be used for all these domains as well as enterprise-based training, including in the informal sector.

Skills at the World Conference on EFA, Jomtien (1990) and the World Education Forum, Dakar (2000): The spirit of these texts

Looking back to the actual texts of the World Conference on EFA (WCEFA) and the Dakar World Forum, we note that the WCEFA covered ‘education and training in... essential skills required by youth and adults’ and ‘skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and nonformal education programmes’ as key parts of the expanded vision of basic education.

At the Dakar World Education Forum, the wording was changed from **essential skills** to **life skills**, with the phrasing – ‘equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes’ in Goal 3 and into ‘essential life skills’ as part of Goal 6. In fact, the Dakar terminology of ‘life skills’ has proved very problematic. We would argue, however, that the wording of these Goals should not be regarded as a sacred text – it is the spirit of Dakar captured in the expanded commentary that we should adopt. The wording of ‘life skills’ should not get in the way of that broader intention and broader vision.

Skills as an EFA entitlements but also as a link to work

From this holistic reading of the discourses of Jomtien and Dakar, all of these meanings of skill (core, soft, attitudinal, life skills and TVET) can be regarded as EFA rights or entitlements. But TVET and enterprise skills can also be regarded as a means of accessing other human rights, like the right to work.

Skills in a future GMR

With the publication of GMR 2009, we see that the GMR team is moving beyond the sole focus on the 6 Goals. We have argued that a great deal of the skills discourse is legitimately within the expanded vision of EFA, but some of the skills for employability are within EFA and also go beyond its current frontiers.

¹⁴ See www.norrag.org/wg

So it is a good moment to advocate a thorough treatment of the skills domains and discourses – and especially TVET with its crucial links to the labour market.¹⁵

The global architecture for monitoring skills systems: TVET's multiple domains

There have been some attempts to provide international data on TVET, though all have limitations.

UNESCO's GMRs and a report 'Participation in Formal TVET Worldwide' produced by UNESCO-UIS/UNEVOC in 2006 provide only a very limited picture of the wide array of TVET modalities, referring only to formal school-based programmes, with no data on the larger non-formal or informal training sector. However, from the perspective of what UNESCO has published and defined thus far, the 2006 report study takes a major step forward in defining TVET to encompass non-formal learning and informal learning; this goes distinctly beyond the GMR and various existing UNESCO definitions of TVET

Meanwhile the ILO is neither producing statistics on proportions of young people who access skills through different TVET modalities, nor is it monitoring skill training in vocational institutes or in the informal economy. Only at the project level is the ILO monitoring the outcome of skills interventions. ILO's Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) provides important labour market information for defining the context of technical and vocational skills development at the country level. However, the KILM do not include any indicators directly related to skills development.

Of the multiple domains of TVET noted earlier, therefore, only school-based TVE is covered.

Of course, some of the other skills domains referred to earlier have been monitored within the OECD through its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS), and Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (DeSeCo).

International monitoring of TVET systems: what opportunities?

Some major work is required to address the need for robust information on technical and vocational skills but there are already activities and initiatives on which this work can be built.

Firstly, we could make better use of what information and data sources do exist at the international and country level. For example, the data on school-based TVE as reported in the GMRs could be improved:

¹⁵ We refer below to a 'Skills GMR' – a Global Monitoring Report on Skills.

- It can often be confusing for analysts when this GMR data differs from that reported in country's own official reports.
- The GMR data on TVE refers to enrolment in TVE at the secondary level, but it is not possible to tell from this what proportion of TVE is taking place at the lower- and upper-secondary levels. This would be important to know.

Another example would be to more effectively mine existing population, household and labour surveys for data on skills.

Secondly, several agencies have been making progress towards better monitoring of technical and vocational skills development, notably CEDEFOP in Europe which coordinates national research and policy reports on TVET systems and reform programmes in member states and evaluates progress made against the Lisbon targets.

Outside the EU, the ETF Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Education and Training for Employment (MEDA-ETE) project includes a component which aims to improve the information collected and analysed on technical and vocational skills at the regional level – operating in 10 MEDA partner countries. National reports from these countries are being produced that synthesise the state of TVET delivered by multiple ministries; while this is a step forward it still does not cover all ministries nor does it cover enterprise-based training or other private TVET providers. Nonetheless, it is something that other countries can learn from. Similarly, 16 OECD countries are shortly publishing national policy reviews of their VET systems.¹⁶

UNESCO has also made much progress towards better monitoring of technical and vocational skills systems by developing a framework to monitor non-formal education and training through a Non-Formal Education Management Information System.

- This instrument covers categories such as life skills training, income generation and non-formal vocational training, agricultural extension and further education.
- The instrument acknowledges and tackles the multiplicity of both providers and target groups.

In many countries the move towards competency based training (CBT) and development of National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) will improve measurement of competencies and help to promote comparability of these competencies (at least regionally). But systems to measure such skills and competencies have often proved highly complex, bureaucratic, expensive and not easily operationalised in some developing countries.

¹⁶ *Learning for Jobs*, OECD reviews of vocational education and training, see www.oecd.org

Lastly, the OECD's new Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) promises to provide better ways of monitoring workplace skills, among other areas.¹⁷

National monitoring of technical and vocational skills systems: Current challenges

There remain a series of challenges related to monitoring technical and vocational skills systems at the country level.

The first challenge relates to the fragmented provision of skills in many countries where skills are provided by multiple ministries, through enterprise-based training, formal and informal, as well as through other private providers. The fragmentation and lack of coordination that characterise skills systems in most developing countries has at least three effects:

- It means that it can be difficult to establish national skills strategies with agreed objectives to which indicators can be assigned and progress monitored.
- It means that it is hard to aggregate data on technical and vocational skills.
- And quite often it means that the only data on a country's highly complex skills system that reaches to the outside world is data on school-based TVE from MoEs.

The second challenge relates to the weak state of information and skills forecasting systems in many developing countries, where good systems are not in place to collect and aggregate comprehensive data on skills (in all its types and forms), and to project future demand for skills. The fact that information systems in MoEs are often slightly better than in other TVET-delivering ministries strengthens the MoE information bias.

A last, but related issue is that developing country governments typically lack the capacity in terms of funding and staff to design, implement and analyse adequate data collection instruments.

Monitoring skills systems: What next? What purpose for a Skills GMR?

A Skills GMR could, first and foremost, seek to better compile and analyse what existing data sources countries have related to skills, from core skills, and life skills to TVET. A first step towards this would be the need to compile an inventory of:

- the range of survey instruments used to gather information across the different domains of skill in different countries and,
- the range of available data on skills in different countries.

¹⁷ See www.oecd.org/els/employment/piaac

Secondly, a Skills GMR could point the way towards a future, more comprehensive national monitoring of skills systems, across the different domains of skill.

For example, it could suggest ways to improve skill sections of school, labour and household surveys.

Conclusions

A GMR on skills could kick-start international and national monitoring of skills.

Due to the diverse nature of skills and the complexity of drawing together what data is available, it would be necessary for the Skills GMR to have a two year cycle, rather than the current one year period normally allocated to the production of a GMR.

A GMR on skills is much more than simply fulfilling the Jomtien and Dakar commitments.

Main impacts of a Skills GMR, both nationally and internationally:

- It would lead to a better conceptual understanding of skills across the different domains, as has happened with other GMR themes, such as Early Childhood and Adult Literacy.
- As a result of an improved conceptual understanding of skills and a GMR that outlines some of the key domains of skill, a skills GMR could ultimately result in better data collection instruments being designed at the country-level that are more able to capture the diversity of skills providers.
- It would strongly make the case for a sustainable and comprehensive global effort on skills data collection, indicator development and analysis at the national level.
- It would draw together the existing international experience in skills monitoring.

At the national level, a Skills GMR would encourage governments to plan more realistically for skills, particularly re demand-led technical and vocational skills. This guidance would be very timely, as governments are minded to move rapidly on the whole skills domain.

Indeed, it would raise the profile of technical and vocational skills which has received insufficient attention since 1990. Perhaps most importantly it will make more visible the whole world of informal skills training and private training provision more generally.

Lastly, the increased importance given to technical and vocational skills development suggests two further things:

- One is the need for better cross-agency dialogue and coordination, perhaps drawing on existing mechanisms like the Working Group on Skills Development (WGICSD) which has provided critical policy advice to agencies for the last 12 years.¹⁸
- Another need is for there to be more south-south learning in so-called ‘good practice’ about skills provision, both between national governments and between regional networks.

3.2. Responses from Robin Horn (World Bank), Nicholas Burnett (UNESCO), Jo Bourne (DFID), Muriel Dunbar (ETF) to the seminar background paper

This section is a record of the responses from the four above named people to the seminar background paper on “Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills to address the role of skills for work and enterprise in tackling poverty”.¹⁹

Robin Horn, Education Sector Manager, the World Bank

Some of the demand related to the increasing interest in skills is for the wrong reasons, or at least not the correct ones. For example:

- It is being used to address unemployment;
- It is being used to address social pressure (as a result of larger UPE cohorts);
- It is being used as a way to divert students from tertiary education to alleviate some of the pressure on the tertiary level.

There is confusion in the global community with respect to life skills, knowledge and technical skills and it is important to explore different concepts of skills.

But there is a need to move towards the issue of measurement and, in particular, we need more from monitoring to explore demand issues. Indeed there is a tendency in the literature to look at skills only with respect to the supply side. But skills are a derived demand. Jobs are created as an economy expands and job content is not necessarily a function of what is being provided by providers. New skills needed for growing economies aren’t always being taught within the current system.

What can be done to improve the relationship between skills and employment? The issue of skill mismatches is an important area that needs addressing. We need to better develop the dimension of skills that are being demanded by

¹⁸ See www.norrag.org/wg to access the reports of these meetings.

¹⁹ The draft of the background research paper is available online: http://www.unesco.org.uk/Skills_Seminar.htm

employers. Information asymmetries are inherent in the skill-industry relationship and bad information can create mismatches.

It is possible to point to several 'mismatch stories', for example in Bulgaria, Slovakia and East Timor. In other countries, like India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, there is a high demand for higher levels of skill but not the link to employment. There have been lots of highly qualified people out of work but gaps in skills at technical levels. We need more and better information.

The World Business Enterprise Surveys are the next evolution of the Investment Climate Surveys that the Bank has been involved with.²⁰ This instrument is designed to look at the demand side of training. The focus is on firm-level surveys. About 90 countries participate, including 20 from Africa. 18 skills and education questions are included, 5 of which ask about labour demand. However, there is still the need to improve the education and skills modules in this survey instrument and also ensure that the instrument can cover much smaller employers (the focus at present is mainly the formal sector). There is an opportunity to add cognitive and non-cognitive assessments into the education and skills module of this instrument.

The importance of skills monitoring is not that it is an EFA goal. The importance lies in the fact that skills can increase productivity and economic growth.

Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director General for Education, UNESCO

Let us remember that the GMR process is about EFA, but it is certainly the case that EFA is a fluid concept. It is evolving in several different directions, for example to include skills and secondary education.

Regarding the coverage of Dakar Goal 3 in the past; it is true that to date the coverage of Goal 3 has been thin. Why is this? Certainly for some of the reasons mentioned by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008). Not only is it a difficult goal to monitor; it is not in the MDGs. Then there is the whole definitional issue (e.g. work skills and life skills). And, while the other goals are universal, skills are not the same for every person. There is thus an issue of universality and specificity.

More data is available that could be used to monitor skills. But which data do we want to monitor? What skills are important for growth? What do skills programmes look like? There is not one simple delivery mechanism for skills.

TVET is certainly part of the skills agenda, but we need to take a broader approach to skills than TVET alone.

²⁰ Editor: see www.enterprisesurveys.org

It is interesting at this juncture to ask why there has been so much skepticism regarding TVET in the past. What did we not like about TVET in the past? Several issues are worth highlighting:

- TVET was unpopular in primary and secondary schools and it has been used in the past to ‘track’ children.
- Then there is the cost issue (TVET is very expensive for the supposed benefit).
- There is the disagreement concerning the role of the private sector and public funds in relation to the skills agenda.
- There is the difficulty of actually predicting skill needs from the point of view of the economy.

From UNESCO’s point of view; there is a UNESCO TVET policy being developed.²¹ We have to do this as we need to respond to demands from member states. There is great political pressure from ministries of education (who are themselves responding to pressures created by large numbers of unemployed in their countries). We need to respond to this but it does not necessarily mean we have to offer TVET for All.

We need to understand the links between skills and the economy in order to understand what skills we should monitor and what approach we should take.

A GMR on skills would have to go significantly beyond basic TVET, to include higher skills levels. It may be that there could be a report on skills beyond the EFA agenda, which may not necessarily be a Skills GMR.

Jo Bourne, Acting Head of Profession, Education, Department for International Development

DFID considers the issue of skills for work, growth and poverty reduction as being highly topical. DFID has recently (September 2008) produced a briefing paper on *Jobs, Labour Markets and Shared Growth, the Role of Skills*.²² And the issues raised in King and Palmer’s paper (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008) are very timely.

Many governments now find themselves tackling problems connected to their changing demographics (leading to increased urbanisation, rising unemployment) and the threat to social stability that these changes may bring. In many cases, the political response has been to seek the expansion of technical and vocational skills systems. For example, in Rwanda, the Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Science and Technology

²¹ Editor: See, King, K. (2009) *Outline Issues for a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy for UNESCO*, draft of 09.01.09.

²² Editor: See, DFID (2008) *Jobs, Labour Markets and Shared Growth. The Role of Skills*. A DFID practice paper, September 2008, DFID: London.

and the Office of the President are all supportive of an expansion and development of TVET in Rwanda.

But in many cases, we are seeing that education and skills training policies/reforms are not being based around the actual performance of the education and skills systems, but tend to focus on government-led supply side interventions. Meanwhile, there's inadequate evidence about growth and the role of skills and employment and a paucity of data at national and regional levels undermines attempts to monitor TVET.

However, there is an increasing body of evidence regarding the quality of education and its relationship to economic growth.²³ And yet in developing countries there is an alarming data gap regarding the quality of education.

Skills must be seen as wider than traditional TVET. Indeed, TVET is not the best area to play 'catch up' for some of the educational failures that might have happened at lower levels of education. In other words, it is difficult to use TVET to reverse trends lower down the learning scale when people left school early or didn't gain skills in initial education.

Moreover, there are more binding constraints to growth than education and skills. The enabling environment is important. For example, we need to focus on the market for skills rather than the supply of skills. And we need to focus on better coordination among private and public providers. We also need to ensure that the private sector leads the way on skills development.

In general, DFID agrees there might be a case for a GMR on Skills. A Skills GMR might provide a framework for the better monitoring of skills. It might promote better monitoring work at the country level, look at incentives for the private sector to finance skills, and look at the capacity of non-state providers. But there would need to be further discussions regarding several issues, including whether a Skills GMR would embrace the concept of a right to work or a right to skills training associated with that right.

A Skills GMR could not take place in the EFA 'bubble'. It would require better data collection and analysis at the national level.

Muriel Dunbar, Director, European Training Foundation

The comments here focus on the chapter 4 of the King and Palmer report (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008) that dealt with the challenges and opportunities for developing and monitoring indicators for skills for work and enterprise.

²³ See 'The Role of Education Quality in Economic Growth', Hanushek & Wossman, 2007.

In the field of skills and the labour market we can point to weaknesses in three areas:

- The lack of data collection and analysis;
- The lack of policy relevant studies; and,
- The lack of research in general.

Would a Skills GMR perhaps act as a catalyst to improve this?

ETF's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Education and Training for Employment (MEDA-ETE) project²⁴ is designed to improve labour market data and statistics. It is a 10 country project in the MEDA with the aims of developing capacity in data collection and analysis in each participating country and to promote regional comparability of skills systems. Several indicators are being developed under this project, including those related to attainment by gender, employment and unemployment (gender, age and education), higher education qualifications and others. But the most difficult area to collect comparative data on, and develop indicators for, is the area of TVET. This is due, among other things, to the fragmentation of delivery and the high percentage of informal and non-formal skills provision. Furthermore, there are problems related to the comparability of TVET data across regions.

As the King and Palmer paper notes (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008), a Skills GMR would have to look very different from the others. In other words, we may have to look at different ways of reporting and not using the GMR process as it currently seems to be.

We must capture data on impact and the effect of education and training rather than focus on inputs. Equality and quality remain important issues to address in the monitoring process.

Regarding equality of access, there is a tendency to look at this in terms of gender equality alone. But there are other types of inequality that merit attention; for example inequalities for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, rural populations and others.

We must also guard against looking at averages, or average indicators, as these can cover some deep areas of difference especially in relation to deprivation. By using indicators that tell us about 'averages' we lose sight of the fact that certain groups of people are left behind.

Regarding the approach to education and labour market reform, it can be observed that many countries have a tendency to move towards *policy borrowing*, rather than *policy learning*. This may partly be due to bilateral donors and consultants who encourage a policy borrowing approach. Policy borrowing

²⁴ <http://www.meda-ete.net/>

can be described as the tendency to import approaches that work in other countries, without the adaptation and contextualisation of these approaches to what can be very different environments. And, while it can be very tempting to opt for policy borrowing in countries where a fast response and/or fast impact are needed, it doesn't always match with concepts, capacity and the infrastructure available in the 'borrowing' country. We must instead encourage a policy-learning approach which results in embedded and sustainable outcomes.

Regarding the link between skills and economic growth, ETF is currently part way through a project on education and training for competitiveness, aimed at better exploring the links. Part of this project is trying to do some skill forecasting. Results are expected towards the end of 2009.²⁵

²⁵ See: http://www.etf.europa.eu/WEB.NSF/pages/Project_Competitiveness_EN?OpenDocument

4. Report of the Thematic Groups²⁶

This section is a report of the discussions arising from the four thematic working groups, namely: The case for a Global Monitoring Report on skills training; Engaging industry and employer; Training for small and medium size enterprises; and, Developing TVET indicators. Each thematic group was led by a facilitator, with a rapporteur recording the notes.

4.1. THEMATIC GROUP 1: THE CASE FOR A GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT²⁷

There was a large variety of views about the need for a GMR on skills expressed during the plenary. The issues raised during the plenary session included:

- Concerning the scope: is the wide variety of skills fully part of EFA, or is EFA only related to basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy?
- Concerning the philosophy of provision: does universality apply to skills? Can a rights-based approach (supply-driven) be used? There was a consensus to recognize the right of all to some sort of orientation towards the labour market. ILO promotes the right to decent work; access to skills contributes to achieving this right.

Recognizing the complexity of the issue

Many participants in the thematic group stressed the need to clarify what forms/levels of TVET can be included in the EFA framework. Some participants also insisted that the scope should include both a lifelong and a life wide perspective.

Although many participants agreed that TVET should be demand-driven, issues were raised about the meaning of a demand-led approach in low-income countries where the economy is dominated by the informal sector and traditional agriculture. Whose demand? And for which labour market?

However, the GMR on literacy dealt with deep complexities surrounding definitions, conceptualization, modes and sectors of delivery, so it should be possible to consider skills in a similar way.

Acknowledging the need to address skills as part of EFA

There was a consensus to recognize skills as part of the EFA agenda (Goal 3).

²⁶ The following section is based on the reports of the rapporteurs for each of the four themes. In some cases, the editor has changed the order of remarks made and re-phrased sentences in order for this section to read more easily.

²⁷ The facilitator for this group was Jan Eldred (NIACE) and the rapporteur was David Atchoarena (IIEP).

Furthermore, several participants stressed that there is much empirical evidence about the link between skills, employment, income and economic growth. Particular mention was made of the European framework and the importance given to secondary TVE as a vehicle towards work in many European countries.

In this context placing skills high on the international agenda constitutes a key challenge.

Most participants agreed that the GMR process, with its strong reputation, constitutes a powerful and unique instrument to place key education policy issues high on the international agenda. Hence, a GMR could certainly raise the profile of skills. It could also bring agencies together to map out the territory.

Exploring the possibility of monitoring skills within the framework of the GMR

Most participants agreed that skills should be monitored in a different way than other EFA goals are currently monitored in the GMRs. The need to develop a new methodology and the complexity of the issue necessitates extending the time frame of the GMR process. It was mentioned that a two-year framework would be more appropriate to effectively produce a report on monitoring the progress of skills development at the international level.

Considering the methodological challenges involved in monitoring skills at the global level and the significant adjustments that would need to be made to the usual GMR approach, some participants expressed reservations about this option and concluded that it would be more appropriate to launch (for this purpose) a specific initiative, similar to but distinct from the GMR.

Besides the time-frame, the need to carefully delimit the scope of the exercise was also mentioned. It appeared that focussing on a particular dimension of skills would make the enterprise more feasible. An option could be to limit the scope to the skills delivered within the education system, not including enterprise-based training and apprenticeship schemes. A strong recommendation was that a precursor to a Skills GMR should be a feasibility study that explored how and for what purposes.

4.2. THEMATIC GROUP 2: ENGAGING INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYERS²⁸

Focusing on a critical minority

²⁸ The facilitator for this group was Christine Evans-Klock (ILO) and the rapporteur was John Oxenham (Council for Education in the Commonwealth).

In many developing countries that have not yet achieved any of the EFA goals, most people of working age actually work in the subsistence and informal sectors in either family and self-employment or casual wage labour. Focusing on formal industry and employers, therefore, means looking at a minority, even an elite, of the labour force: the people who are in regular waged or salaried employment in the formal sector of the economy. But of course it is this minority, and the skills they have to offer and further develop, that will diversify and expand the economy, attract investment and open the economy to globalisation with its opportunities, risks, disadvantages and challenges. Skills need to be developed both to utilise opportunities to expand and to bring more people into the formal sector, as well as to be prepared to capitalise on opportunities for new products or services.

Monitoring the status, promotion and evolution of such skills and their accessibility to poor people should clearly be part of a Global Monitoring Report on skills.

Emphasise the demand side of skills development

Past experience with workforce planning counsels that developing skills for the formal sector should emphasise the demand side: what are employers actually using, what do they actually need now, what are their likely future needs, how do they set about satisfying their needs? However, workforce planning also counsels that employers often don't know what they want. Governments and other agents should be cautious about dealing mainly with the supply side of technical and vocational schools and institutes, as mismatches in the forms of unemployed graduates, engineers or technicians can occur only too easily.

Encourage employers to engage in skills development and monitoring

Dealing with the demand side effectively requires engaging the employers as active advisers and agents. That in turn requires recognising the costs to employers of even monitoring and reporting the skills they use, the additional skills they need and the skills they themselves are trying to develop in their workforces. Employers, especially small scale employers, are wary of taking on tasks that do not directly help their productivity and profitability. Many are also wary of undertaking skills development for fear that the benefiting employees will use their new skills to move to better paying employers.

These facts suggest using appropriate incentives to encourage employers to take the initiative for skills development and monitoring and to work out the best modalities among themselves. Possible institutions for facilitating this are Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations, Confederations of Industry and the like.

National Qualifications Frameworks

One of the difficulties with non formal skills development provided by employers is according proper recognition for it and for other prior learning. A partial response is the creation of national qualification frameworks for apprenticeships and other forms of on-the-job formation. These frameworks can be useful for workers and employers alike: recognised qualifications are portable and facilitate job mobility. Further, they facilitate the task of monitoring skills development, since they allow for categorisation and analysis. However, they also have the limitation of not indicating the 'tacit' knowledge, language and practices that develop in particular work environments and could thus understate the capabilities of work forces.

Monitoring costs and quality

It is well known that the costs of technical, vocational and in-service training are much higher than those of more general, book-based education. This fact can lead to deficiencies in learning materials and short-cuts in instructional methods that then lead on to falling quality and effectiveness in learning and practice. The implication is that monitoring, to be of any real use, needs to look not only at access and enrolments, but also at the costs and at the quality of the learning achievements.

Monitoring outcomes as well as outputs

Although many employers will support or provide for skills development of their employees, governments and other agencies will of course need to complement such provision with additional programmes. To assess the relevance and usefulness of the latter, governments and other investors should monitor not only the outputs in terms of successful completers, but also the outcomes in terms of the proportions of completers who actually find the kind of employment where they can put their skills into practice.

Longer term perspectives for skills development

Further, many employers tend to take relatively short term views about their skill needs and to discount longer term flexibility and adaptability. Governments would need to offer incentives to encourage less restrictive perspectives. One approach in Africa has partnered universities with employers in an effort to help the latter articulate their needs more precisely and forecast their likely future needs on sounder bases. The universities for their part learn how their curricula can contribute more immediately to the larger economy and society. They would also be better placed to monitor and advise their governments on emerging trends in

employers' demands for skills and on the provisions necessary to enable their acquisition.

4.3. THEMATIC GROUP 3: TRAINING FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE ENTERPRISES²⁹

Combining work and learning is a strategy adopted by many of those in developing countries, where the informal economy accounts for 60-80% of all employment opportunities. Learning occurs in both organised informal settings and in the family/ community context, but it can often be assumed that there is a deficit of skills in developing countries; this view fails to recognise the informally acquired skills people already possess. Without recognition, such skills are not regulated, and thus there are few indicators used to monitor them.

How is it most effective to support people in the informal sector in these countries?

Skills recognition and documentation are important, as is identifying where learning takes place and how people acquire competencies in informal settings.

Work skills are learnt in many different contexts. Developed countries often reduce this to a work context (informal learning). In developing countries it is more cross-cutting but 'life skills' should incorporate work skills.

From formal-informal dualism to a continuum perspective

Just as the concept of an informal sector versus a formal sector has now given way to a recognition of a continuum between formality and informality, it may be useful to move away from categorising learning as 'formal' and 'informal'; and recognise that people are learning all their lives and the acquisition of skills takes place along a continuum with different levels of formality.

Skills for growth versus skills for poverty reduction

Growth and poverty reduction are often referred to but the thrust for growth is generally from national governments and thus does not account for the informal economy where a lot of poverty resides.

SME specific skills issues and needs

We need a better understanding of what small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are and the specific skills needs of this group (often harder to reach due to their relatively informal nature).

²⁹ The facilitator for this group was Madhu Singh (UNESCO, Institute of Lifelong Learning) and the rapporteur was Jenny Sherrard (NIACE).

- Most training tends to be quite informal but concentrated.
- Some individuals acquire skills informally and then turn those into business (e.g. learning photography as a hobby and then turning that into a vocation).
- Data collection is very challenging. What criteria would be used for developing typologies/ competencies?
- Providing demand-led skills to harder-to-reach groups is problematic.

Skills training and work

It is important to realise that training in many cases will not create jobs but access to employment as well as increase the efficiency and improve productivity of those in jobs.

Is the purpose of informal learning the transition to work or, more broadly, a right to quality education with work as a by-product and thus better provision for future generations?

4.4. THEMATIC GROUP 4: DEVELOPING TVET INDICATORS³⁰

The development of comprehensive indicators for TVET/skills was regarded by the group as both challenging and expensive, which is why agencies have tended to shy away from it in the past. For example, the World Bank's energies in this area have been devoted not to the pursuit of global indicators but to developing and refining measuring instruments in the form of household and other surveys. Collecting empirical evidence about the value employers attached to skill development by observing employer behaviour in recruitment, training and skill upgrading is important.

Sequential development of indicators

The development of skills indicators is made more difficult due to the diversity of providers and agencies involved with varying aspects of skill provision even in a single country, each with a different perspective and set of objectives. A good start therefore in addressing the challenge of developing indicators is to ask who is going to use the indicators and for what purpose. Before developing indicators it is first necessary to define criteria (efficacy, efficiency, progress etc) by which skills development systems were to be judged.

The way forward should not be to aim for an unattainable ideal but to build up gradually from what already existed. The diversity and complexity of skills would always represent a particularly difficult challenge, but it had to be borne in mind that all the different types of skill were brought together at the level of the individual and this meant that household surveys were particularly valuable

³⁰ The facilitator for this group was Cesar Guadalupe (UNESCO, Institute for Statistics) and the rapporteur was Peter Williams (Council for Education in the Commonwealth).

instruments. The improvement and expansion of data collected through household surveys was one way forward, therefore. However, attractive as such an approach might be, one could expect a battle with education administrators (and/or National Statistical Offices) who are often allergic to making data-collection instruments any longer or more complex than strictly necessary.

The example of indicator development in Jordan, through an ETF-supported activity, illustrates the sequential process of developing indicators. First a co-ordination body bringing together skill providers and public and private employers was created. Then the policy documents of the different parties were assembled and common objectives of the various parties were identified. The final stage was to develop indicators relating to these common objectives.

Distinguishing between output and outcomes

TVET indicators must make a distinction between output and outcomes. Indicators of efficiency of TVET systems would express the relationship of outputs to inputs and in an efficient system a high proportion of those entering the system would 'pass' the final assessment. Unfortunately this was no guarantee that the system was effective or that graduates were 'fit for purpose' and actually able to apply themselves successfully to problems in the workplace. In discussion the group noted that in the UK the indicators of the existence of skills relied on qualifications data, rather than evidence of actual competence.

Improving data availability on TVET

A step-by-step approach should be used. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) would be addressing issues of data collection and indicator development within the framework of a review of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) by 2011. UIS was not currently collecting data on adult education programmes and non-formal education provision, and at this stage was not expecting to do anything substantial on outputs - the testing and measurement of skills - beyond general literacy and numeracy skills.

It was recognised that one particular challenge was to work out how the production of additional data on skills development would take account of existing National Qualification Frameworks and the work of institutions in charge of certifying skills acquired outside the school setting.

Improving data availability needs to go hand in hand with improving utilisation of data

In Kosovo an elaborate data collection system is now in place – largely at the behest of donors - to yield labour market information. But little use is being made of the data generated to inform policy and practice. The mismatch between school outputs and labour market needs was highlighted by the indicators: but

data availability was not in itself enough - beyond that one needed systems to develop and apply appropriate policies.

Monitoring skills through the GMR reports

The group saw the task of a GMR themed on skills as being to provide a better conceptualisation of what was meant by skills, and to illuminate and clarify issues of definition, data availability and the challenge of constructing indicators in this area. It would not hold out the promise of producing a series of global indicators of skill development. Interesting case studies of efforts to measure skills might be cited, but the context-specific nature of country cases and findings would be stressed.

The group also hoped that in the part of each individual GMR monitoring progress towards attainment of the EFA goals, the section on progress towards the skills goal would be expanded.

5. Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Ways Forward

This session, the last of the seminar, consisted of four panellists giving their views on the 'ways forward'. The panellists included Simon McGrath (University of Nottingham), David Atchoarena (IIEP, UNESCO), Kevin Watkins (Director, EFA GMR team) and Kenneth King (University of Edinburgh).

5.1. SIMON MCGRATH, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

This seminar has brought together a number of different constituencies that do not usually talk to each other. That can only be a good thing and we hope that the dialogue continues.

In regard to the England-Africa perspective on partnerships, the seminar has raised a number of new questions. The latter are perhaps better than new answers.

The first is why vocational education and training were marginalised earlier. The work of Philip Foster in Ghana and 'The Vocational School Fallacy' and the work of George Psacharopoulos on the higher costs and lower benefits of technical and vocational education are well known and helped explain the apparently perverse phenomena of high cost, low status vocational schools that led to relatively low status, lower paid employment.

But we have learned from history, as we can see from the English case, where radical changes have evolved in the system. From focusing on crafts and specialist skills, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) have switched radically to generic skills and to the service sectors that rely on them. TVET programmes now spend much more of their time compensating for deficiencies in the earlier sectors of the education system. In effect, TVET in England has reconfigured itself to deal with learners who are not ready for the labour market. Has the switch made TVET more relevant now? The question awaits an answer.

Another question is why we keep having to come up with new ideas. What drives this constant change? In more detailed terms, how have the new colleges in the UK evolved and dealt with the tension between autonomy and regulation?

For one thing, they have invested in upgrading their staff. At the same time, however, the drive for flexibility and responsiveness to changing labour markets has led them to use varieties of short term contracts that have in effect turned their staff into pools of casual labour.

What lessons are we to take then from two decades of National Qualifications Frameworks? A look at private vocational education in Africa shows a strong movement beyond ideology and monolithic systems and networks of public institutions. Private vocational education has brought in low cost forms of training and education, on the one hand, but, on the other, a range of quality, from the very good to the less than indifferent.

For the future, have we become any better at forecasting the ranges of jobs that will be opening up and the ranges of skills that will be needed to do them? How might we apply what we have learned to developing countries with very different trajectories from ours?

Today's discussions have confirmed that there is serious conceptual work to be done.

5.2. DAVID ATCHOARENA, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING, UNESCO

Several gaps can be identified that need to be filled if we are to adequately deal with the increasing global attention being paid to TVET.

Data gaps

There is a need for more robust information and better information systems at the local and national levels. Comparable data at international level should be a secondary objective.

Education monitoring information systems need to be built at national levels which cover TVE and can be gradually extended to include skills outside of school settings. Data collection needs to include data on provision (public and private),³¹ data on participation (school-based, apprenticeship, adult programmes), and on cost. Collecting accurate cost data for TVET would require support to be provided to countries to develop a national TVET account.

Collecting such data is a prerequisite for efficient and effective TVET policies. At the same time, there is a need to improve labour market information. Analyzing the labour market situation of TVET graduates is required to build a case for investing in TVET by providing evidence of the cost/effectiveness of training.

However, assessing the non-economic outcomes of TVET (transmitting values, building citizenship, and social capital) remains a challenge. Similarly, the opportunity cost resulting from not investing in TVET would need to be measured; in other words, what would be the cost in terms of economic growth and social development, if no investment in TVET were undertaken?

³¹ Data on the scale and scope of private TVET provision would also tell us something about the social demand for skills.

Much attention is being paid to the demand side and the need to shift from supply-driven systems to demand-led provision. However, analysing labour market demand goes beyond measuring needs, it implies establishing interfaces between the supply and the demand. The challenge is not only about improving statistical systems alone, it also involves building the kinds of institutions that actually can create interfaces between demand and supply.

Financing gaps

TVET is a relatively expensive option in view of constrained national and international resources and the competition for them.

Even though currently there is small investment in TVET (at both national and international levels), how can we convince governments to increase the share of public resources allocated to skills development? There is clearly the need for stronger evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness in comparison with other forms of education and training. But such cost-benefit analysis should focus on both economic and social outcomes of TVET.

There needs to be a diversification of funding so that the costs of TVET are covered by multiple stakeholders. More effective use should be made of existing resources by allocating them more efficiently. Allocation and utilisation of resources can be improved through several instruments or approaches including: the use of vouchers, performance-based funding, and giving greater autonomy to public institutions.

The tensions that can arise between skills development policies for competitiveness and skills development policies for social cohesion also extend to TVET financing. For example there are tensions related to: achieving both effectiveness and equity/social cohesion; and combining market principles with redistribution principles.

Capability gap among donors

Both multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies have over recent years shed much of their in-house expertise on TVET. This limits the capacity of development partners to enter into an informed dialogue on TVET policies at a time when TVET is rapidly increasing in salience among partner countries.

How are the gaps in expertise among donors for conducting productive dialogues with their partner governments to be remedied? The principles of the Paris Declaration and the experience with SWAPs have contributed to greater coordination and harmonization in development cooperation. Fund pooling between several donors, silent partnerships -where one donor takes the lead on

behalf of others in dialogue and negotiation - are possibilities, but more options are needed.

EFA: Trap or opportunity?

Including TVET in the EFA agenda can increase country and donor awareness and attention for skills development; in other words including skills in the EFA framework is an opportunity. However, a number of traps lie hidden in this approach including:

- Limiting the TVET debate on basic and intermediate skills while overlooking high level skills provided at the tertiary level;
- Neglecting non-formal and informal forms of learning (that most people in developing countries have to use currently), and focusing on school-based TVE provision;
- Overlooking the lifelong dimension of skills development which helps in securing sustainable employability;
- Approaching TVET issues and policies only through an EFA lens underestimates the labour market dimension of TVET and the need to place skills development within the framework of social dialogue. It could disconnect planners from actual labour market issues and exacerbate that tendency to stress only the supply side of skills development.

The development impact of skills depends not only on the quantity and quality of skills produced but also on how they are allocated on the labour market and used in industry (skills development/skills utilisation). Hence, skills development policies need to be related to labour market policies and framed in the context of a broad dialogue involving social partners.

5.3. KEVIN WATKINS, DIRECTOR, EFA GMR TEAM

Persuading the GMR governing committee to give priority to a particular MDG or EFA goal is a matter of advocacy. One of the cardinal principles of advocacy, well learned by the non-governmental organisations of civil society, is doggedness. A second is to devise a strategy that will make the adversary miserable. The authors and financiers of the base paper [King and Palmer, 2008; see also King and Palmer, this report] for today's discussions have adopted both effectively.

The GMR governing committee has to ask what distinctive contribution a given GMR could offer to the debate of the main theme. There are two criteria for distinctiveness: clear goals and compelling evidence. In the matter of skills development, both these criteria are defective. The goals are complex, as they involve the interface between the education system and the macro-economy and the key issues of the relationships between the human capital base, economic growth, human development and poverty reduction. They involve also the political issues of increasing inequality, the distribution of opportunity and the

outcomes that stem from the distribution of educational opportunity. On the matter of compelling evidence, human capital is increasingly seen to be central to developing and utilising the knowledge base for the evidence; and in this, developing countries continue to be at a severe disadvantage. What compounds the controversy and undermines the force of the supporting evidence is the fact that some countries have indeed improved their skill bases, but have still not achieved much growth and still have high unemployment rates. They underline the importance of the relationship between labour markets and macroeconomic policies. Skills development on its own is not enough.

Labour markets require an understanding of both the demand for and the supply of skills. Successful countries have good industrial policies with skills development as an integral element: they do not have an 'education policy'. In China, for example, TVET is a standard part of the contracts awarded to corporations to invest in the country. India also provides examples where the government requires the private sector to develop precisely the skills needed. But there are failures, too. The inference is that those who advocate a GMR on skills development need to sort out the evidence of what works and why, and in what contexts.

Context is critical. The example of the UK presented at the beginning of the seminar demonstrated the point. Compare the capacities that were invested in the collection and analysis of all that data with the capacities available to so many developing countries. Using all that data to determine and regulate the right balance and mix between sector-specific skills, generic skills and the skill and value of learning to keep on learning demands highly developed capacity. India, for one example, is indeed getting there, but many other countries have a long way to go. Institutional capacity is critical and developing this capacity is complex.

To return to the opening point on advocacy: the process of deciding on the themes and topics of a GMR is almost as mysterious and obscure as the process of electing a new pope. But advocacy by people and organisations external to the process remains important, if only to ensure that no important aspect of the EFA and Millennium Development Goals and aspirations is overlooked or neglected.

5.4. KENNETH KING, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

The audience in this seminar reflected what is so often wrong about TVET: most of the participants came from the world of education, not employment. They are educators, not employers; the suppliers of skills of the many types of skills discussed here, not the users.

The OECD has undertaken a number of low cost policy reviews and analyses of the specialised occupation-related skills acquired in schools and has found that

19 of its 30 members have more than 50 per cent of their youth in some kind of formal TVET. Compare this with the relatively tiny formal TVET provision in developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

TVET in developing countries remains mostly in Ministries of Education and some countries now plan to raise its percentage in schools. Compare this approach with that of China with a massive number of young people in secondary vocational schools or Latin America, which has developed skills provision through training agencies funded by enterprises.

TVET and skills are certainly part of EFA. But the texts of EFA are neither sacred nor immutable; so the EFA vision in them has to be realistically and creatively interpreted, and the form of this expanded vision will need to vary country by country.

In terms of rights-based approaches to skills development, the right to skills and to opportunities to develop skills derives from the right to decent work and to decent employment for the skills that are learned.

The question of context is indeed vital in the trade off between supply-led and demand-led strategies. The issue is slippery in contexts where possibly only 5 per cent of the labour force works in the formal sector of wage and salary employment. After the drive for UPE, what would demand-led really mean for the huge majority of primary school leavers? If they looked solely to the demand from the formal sector, there would be minimal openings apart from the fortunate few. A number of others could expect to be engaged as casual labour. But the key question is how to identify and respond to demand from the huge informal sector. Generating more congenial and more productive livelihoods for the majority of primary leavers would demand additional skills very different from the core skills learned in primary school.

References

King, K. and Palmer, R. (2008) *Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction. Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills*, paper for the UK National Commission for UNESCO Education Committee, the Education For All Working Group and the British Council.

6. The Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: A Reflection and Look Forward

Robert Palmer

This section of the report is the editor's reflection on the 31st October 2008 seminar and was not one of the presentations made on the day. The views and opinions stated in this section are those of the editor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the British Council or the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

6.0. Introduction

Sustaining, accelerating and sharing economic growth – in a rapidly changing world trade context – is a key challenge faced by governments and development agencies according to DFID's 2008 briefing paper on *Jobs, Labour Markets and Shared Growth, The Role of Skills* (DFID, 2008). And 'skills are at the centre of this new challenge' (DFID, 2008: 1) (Box 2).³² Clearly, therefore, there is an urgent need for governments and development partners to have access to more and better quality information on the wide domain of skills. This includes not only the core, generic and foundation skills (3Rs, ICT), but also soft skills, technical, vocational, design and technology skills, and entrepreneurial, employability, business, marketing skills, among other areas. All the preceding different expressions of skill can be found in the expanded texts of Jomtien and Dakar (King and Palmer, this report). There is a need to clarify which skills can and should be monitored, which contribute more to economic growth (and how), and which contribute more to poverty reduction (and how).

Box 2. Skills and the global economy

Today's global economy requires countries to nurture pools of well educated workers, who are able to adapt rapidly to their changing environment because:

- Production processes are changing - being unbundled and dispersed across borders – with the result that the location of foreign investment is becoming more responsive to labour costs.
- Skills-biased technological change is becoming apparent in developing countries – with the implication that skills are becoming relatively more important in determining how fast countries move up the value chain - and therefore their overall growth performance.
- In the highly competitive and fast-moving global economy, economic security cannot be provided, nor inequality managed, by trying to protect particular jobs, and comprehensive social protection is beyond the means of most developing countries. Increasingly, economic security must come from ensuring all people have the support they need to stay in employment and to take new opportunities as they arise. Skills are an essential part of this.

Source: DFID, 2008: 1

³² However, 'skills' in this DFID briefing note are not clearly defined. The term is used variously to refer to skills acquired through primary, secondary and tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training, on-the-job training, and to general workforce 'core skills' and to high-level management and technical skills (DFID, 2008: 6).

The 31st October 2008 seminar on ‘skills for work, growth and poverty reduction’, as well as the background paper produced for it (King and Palmer, 2008), focused principally on the technical and vocational skills dimension of skills. This section attempts to look at skills in a slightly broader sense, but maintains the principal focus on technical and vocational skills. The first part will examine briefly the treatment of skills in the latest Global Monitoring Report (GMR), published on 25th November 2008. Second, this section looks briefly at what the ways forward might be in relation to monitoring foundation skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy) and ‘soft skills’. The third, and main, part of this section looks at the ways forward with regard to monitoring technical and vocational skills. The fourth part of this section looks at the implications of having TVET as part of the EFA agenda.

6.1. The treatment of skills in the 2009 Global Monitoring Report

The background paper for this seminar (King and Palmer, 2008; see also King and Palmer, this report) noted that no serious attempt has so far been made in the GMR process to treat the conceptual richness, multiple locations and policy relevance of skills. Equally, no serious attempt has so far been made in the GMR volumes, 2002-2008, to monitor the coverage of skills or technical vocational education and training, apart from:

- some reporting since 2003-4 of the total number of young people taking a technical stream during secondary schooling, and the proportion of girls within that;
- some very preliminary analysis of life skills; and,
- some background papers on nonformal education profiles for the GMR 2008 volume.

What then does the latest GMR 2009, *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters* (UNESCO, 2008), have to say about skills?

Like earlier GMRs, the 2009 GMR again notes that monitoring of ‘life skills’ (EFA goal 3 and the latter part of goal 4) has been ‘stymied by problems of definition and lack of data’ (UNESCO, 2008: 91). While this is ‘old news’ – in that this has been highlighted in earlier GMRs - the 2009 GMR does make a commitment to address these issues ‘as part of an overarching theme’ of a future GMR (UNESCO, 2008: 91, emphasis added). It is hoped that the ‘part’ given to skills in a future GMR is a major one.

The 2009 GMR mentions a number of factors which have contributed to the neglect of monitoring skills to date, including the lack of clear quantitative targets and the ambiguity concerning the language of the commitment to the goal. The GMR identifies several steps towards more effective monitoring of life skills (see below). In the next section, we examine briefly what the GMR 2009 has to say on

this, as well as highlighting existing, and planned, monitoring of literacy, numeracy and 'soft skills'.

6.2. Monitoring of literacy, numeracy and soft skills: a brief comment on ways forward

In searching for ways forward to better monitor literacy, numeracy and soft skills as part of a GMR process, it may be instructive to look at international experience. But planners should be very aware of the danger of 'borrowing' or transplanting to developing countries approaches being used in developed countries. It may be that some approaches are more transferable than others, but there needs to be a high degree of 'policy learning' (ETF, 2008) if these methods are to be localised.

Some of the skills domains referred to earlier in this report – for example core, generic, foundation skills (3Rs, ICT), and soft skills (see King and Palmer, this report) - have been, or will be, monitored within the OECD through:

- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses the performance of 15 year-old students in mathematical literacy, reading literacy, scientific literacy and problem-solving.
- The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS), which provides information about literacy and numeracy skills and about analytical reasoning/problem solving skills.
- The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (DeSeCo) project, which is a new instrument that can be used to assess competencies in three broad categories, namely:
 - Using tools interactively – this includes the competencies that relate to using language, symbols, text, knowledge, information and technology interactively.
 - Interacting in heterogeneous groups – this includes the competencies to relate well to others, cooperate and work in teams, manage and resolve conflicts.
 - Acting autonomously – this includes the competencies required to situate their actions and decisions within the wider context, the competencies required to develop life plans and projects, and the competency to defend and assert rights, interests, limits and needs.
- The new Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which promises to provide better ways of monitoring key cognitive and workplace skills. It will be administered for the first time in 2011.

Investigating the usefulness of these approaches to assessing and monitoring skills, either as part of the GMR process, or as part of some other monitoring process, either at the international or national level may be a valuable exercise.

The 2009 GMR highlights some specific information gaps that need to be filled in order for there to be an adequate base for monitoring of life skills including: national conceptions and commitment to addressing the learning needs of young people and adults through life skills provision, the demand for training, the nature of the provision, the target groups, and the flexibility and sustainability of such provision (Box 3). These issues highlighted in the 2009 GMR build upon some of the areas already suggested in the 2003/04 GMR (UNESCO, 2003: 86).

Like earlier GMRs (e.g. GMR 2008 and GMR 2007), the GMR 2009 appears to be assuming that the focus of Goal 3 is non-formal education (NFE), especially for out of school youth. While UNESCO's working definition of NFE states that it includes 'work skills',³³ which might theoretically include technical and vocational skills, most governments would usually see NFE and technical and vocational skills as separate. For example, the GMR 2009 notes that countries have different definitions of NFE, with some associating it more with adult education, some seeing it as a complement to formal education, and others viewing NFE as organized learning activities outside the formal education system (UNESCO, 2008). The whole series of background papers produced for the GMR 2008 on NFE hardly touched on technical and vocational skills development, or TVET. An interpretation of Goal 3 as only being about NFE fails to do justice to the actual texts of the World Conference on EFA (WCEFA) and the Dakar World Forum; for example, the WCEFA covered 'education and training in... essential skills required by youth and adults' and 'skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and nonformal education programmes' as key parts of the expanded vision of basic education (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008).

Box 3. Steps towards more effective monitoring of EFA Goal 3 and the latter part of Goal 4, concerning life skills

The 2009 GMR argues that improved information is needed in the following areas:

National conceptions and commitment: How do government agencies understand the learning needs of out-of-school youth and adults? To what extent do authorities address these needs by articulating a clear vision, setting policy priorities, providing for resource mobilization and allocation, and enabling partnerships with non-government and international organizations? How long do various adult learning programmes last? To what extent are specific lifelong learning opportunities put in place?

Demand: What is the demand for youth and adult learning programmes, which populations are involved and how has demand changed over time?

Nature of provision: What are the character and focus of existing youth and adult learning programmes? Do they include frameworks oriented towards re-entry into formal education? Basic literacy programmes (reading, writing and numeracy)? Literacy programmes to promote life skills or livelihood skills? Other skills development programmes (especially related to labour market participation)? Rural development?

³³ UNESCO's working definition of NFE states that it 'may cover education programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and general culture' (UNESCO, 1997: 41).

Target groups: Which groups do existing youth and adult learning programmes target? Which target groups do the biggest, most established adult learning programmes serve? To what extent does existing provision create or worsen disparities based on age, gender, educational attainment, wealth, residence, ethnicity or language?

Flexibility and diversification: Are youth and adult learning programmes highly standardized, or do they incorporate flexibility so as to better address the learning needs of diverse groups?

Sustainability: How long have youth and adult learning programmes been in existence? Which agencies and stakeholders provide funding? Has funding been constant and/or increasing over time? How long have educator/facilitator training frameworks existed?

Source: UNESCO, 2008: 91-92

Having briefly looked at possible ways forward for monitoring literacy, numeracy and 'soft skills', we now turn to the main theme of the 31st October 2008 seminar, the area of technical and vocational skills.

6.3. Monitoring of technical and vocational skills: ways forward

International monitoring: initial ways forward

Given the current paucity of national data on the range of technical and vocational skills in developing countries,³⁴ it may only be possible in the short term to focus on getting better information on school- and college-based technical and vocational skills. Indeed, and with a future Skills GMR in mind, some would argue that UNESCO's clearest global advantage is in applying further its existing capacity in statistics and indicators to the domain of formal school- and college-based TVE (see also King, 2009).

As noted earlier in this report by King and Palmer (see also King and Palmer, 2008), the data on school- and college-based TVE as reported in the GMRs could certainly be improved. Below are a number of observations and suggestions in this regard:

- At the moment such data can often be confusing for analysts when the GMR data differs from that reported in country's own official reports.
- The GMR data on TVE refers to enrolment in TVE at the secondary level, but we can't tell from this what proportion of TVE is taking place at the lower- and upper-secondary levels.
- It would also be useful to disaggregate other dimensions of school-based TVE, for example providing data on separate TVE schools compared to TVE streams within a more general curriculum.
- At the tertiary level, the GMRs contain no information on post secondary technical colleges or polytechnics, but only information on students' field of study (e.g. 'engineering, manufacturing and construction' and 'agriculture').

³⁴ In Europe, CEDEFOP does hold good national data on range of technical and vocational skills.

These elements of school- and college-based TVE would be important to know and, probably, not too hard for UIS to find out from the country level.

This first step towards getting better disaggregated information on school- and college-based TVE should be accompanied by significant additional support to developing country-level national information systems on technical and vocational skills; in other words it is not just ministry of education statistics units that need to be supported. Stronger national information systems would then – in the medium term - be better placed to deliver more comprehensive national data on the wide range of technical and vocational skills (see below). Once there is more comprehensive national level data and monitoring being undertaken, it may be more possible to strengthen international monitoring. Given the diversity of the skills domain, however, cross-country comparability will remain a challenge.

Furthermore, attention should be given to building capacity within multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies in the area of technical and vocational skills, which have, over recent years, shed much of their in-house expertise on TVET (Atchoarena, this report). This limits the capacity of development partners to both enter into an informed dialogue on TVET policies, and support improvements in national level TVET information systems - at a time when TVET is rapidly increasing in salience among partner countries. While the initial school- and college-based TVE disaggregation (noted above) may not need a lot of capacity building, it is the further work (collecting, monitoring and analyzing data on the wide domain on TVET) that would need capacity building at country level and in agencies.

In the short term, to get around their lack of capacity, development partners (DP) may opt for greater reliance on fund pooling between several DPs and/or silent partnerships (where one DP takes the lead on behalf of others in dialogue and negotiation), for example when DPs at the country level are encouraging better TVET information systems.

More comprehensive monitoring should start at the country level

There is a need for more robust information and better information systems at the local and national levels. Without such national level data, comparable data at international levels can only be a secondary objective (Atchoarena, this report).

Education monitoring information systems need to be further developed at national levels which cover, more effectively than at present, formal TVET (school and institution-based, public and private). Such monitoring information systems could then be gradually extended to include skills outside of formal settings; but this should not be limited to NFE (the GMR 2009 states that it is already planning to look at non-formal settings). However, agencies and governments should recall the fact that skills acquired outside of the formal system are, in many countries, the predominant mode of technical and vocational

skills acquisition. Delaying the development of an adequate monitoring system for these types of skills is therefore ill advised.

At the national level, collecting such data on formal, informal and non-formal provision of skills is a prerequisite for efficient and effective skills policies (Atchoarena, this report). Without such information and the monitoring of both the diverse provision of skills and the demand for such skills, policies will continue to rely on often long-held and inaccurate, assumptions about what it is that skills can and cannot do for individuals and for the economy. More and better information and monitoring must be a priority area.

Despite the challenges associated with monitoring the skills domain (King and Palmer, 2008), there are perhaps a number of areas where attention should focus first.

Getting more and better data on formal TVE(T) provision: It was noted above that an initial approach could be to develop further expand the data collected from formal school- and college-TVE providers. After this, greater attention should be paid to formal TVET provision delivered through ministries of labour and not just ministries of education. Similarly, attention should be paid to obtaining more information of the formal private institutional providers.

Using household and labour-force surveys: Given the diverse nature of skills provision, it could be argued that the most effective monitoring approach would be to focus on household and labour force surveys; this would capture the one place where skills all reside in one place: the individual. It would be possible to improve the technical and vocational skills sections of labour-force and household-based surveys so that they can provide more data on skills training from which to develop indicators. Such surveys could be better used to capture skills data not only on formal provision, but also on non-formal and informal skills.

However, planners must also recognise that survey administrators will likely be averse to adding in much more detailed questions on skills that may expand further a particular module of a questionnaire (see also the report of thematic group 4, this report; Horn, this report).

Analysing what monitoring approaches are currently used, and what have been used in the past: There may be some merit in compiling an inventory of the range of survey instruments that have been used to gather skills information at the national, programme or project level, and to look at what has worked well or not so well, and why. For example, UNESCO's new Non-Formal Education Management Information System, noted below, may be one useful approach to explore.

Developing monitoring capacity of institutions at the national level: It was noted above that developing the capacity of institutions is clearly vital if there is to

be an improvement in the monitoring of skills at the national level. Development partners should pay particular attention to supporting such capacity development. Agencies like the ETF are already undertaking valuable work in this area in countries in the Middle East / North Africa region (see below; King and Palmer, 2008; Dunbar, this report).

Improving labour market information: Analyzing the labour market situation of TVET graduates is required to build a case for investing in TVET by providing evidence of the cost/effectiveness of training. However, assessing the non-economic outcomes of TVET (transmitting values, building citizenship, and social capital) remains a challenge (Atchoarena, this report).

TVET reforms across the world pay a great deal of attention to the demand side and the need to shift from supply-driven systems to demand-led provision. However, analysing labour market demand goes beyond measuring needs; it implies establishing interfaces between the supply and the demand. In other words, monitoring of technical and vocational skills must include not only supply-side monitoring, but also demand-side monitoring and the relationship between supply and demand (King and Palmer, 2008).

But in most developing countries, where the majority of their labour force are engaged in informal economic activities, there is perhaps a need to ask about what kind of demand are we are looking at; in other words, whose demand counts? Quite often 'demand-driven' skills means skills demanded by the formal sector; but what are the implications of this approach in countries where the informal economy is the normal economy; where the bulk of the country's workforce can be found?

6. 4. TVET and skills as part of EFA and the GMRs: Opportunity or trap?

Arguably, TVET and skills are part of EFA. But the texts of Dakar and Jomtien are neither sacred nor immutable, for the vision in them has to expand and the form of expansion will vary by country. But including technical and vocational skills within the EFA framework and assessment in the GMRs represents both an opportunity and a possible trap.

Potential opportunities

Including TVET in the EFA agenda can increase country and donor awareness and attention for skills development. A Skills GMR, which is linked to EFA and the inclusion of skills, may encourage national governments to plan more realistically for skills, particularly regarding an appropriately critical approach to 'demand-led training'. This guidance would be very timely, as governments are determined to move rapidly on the technical and vocational skills domain, especially secondary technical expansion.

It is not suggested that a Skills GMR should, or even could, be preceded by a large, and costly, international data collection exercise where new instruments are employed. Developing a GMR in this area requires a willingness to adopt a slightly different approach, methodology and mind-set to the rest of the GMRs.

A GMR on skills could potentially result in a number of positive impacts or opportunities. It could lead to a better conceptual understanding of skills across the different domains, as has happened with other GMR themes, such as Early Childhood and Adult Literacy. As a result of this improved conceptual understanding of skills and a GMR that outlines some of the key domains of skill, a skills GMR could ultimately result in better data collection instruments being designed at the country-level that are more able to capture the diversity of skills providers. A skills GMR could strongly make the case for a sustainable and comprehensive global effort on skills data collection, indicator development and analysis at the national level. It could also draw together the existing international experience in skills monitoring, highlighting emerging approaches,³⁵ instruments³⁶ and projects³⁷ and advocating policy learning rather than outright policy borrowing of approaches used in other countries.

Potential traps

However, a number of traps lie hidden in the approach of including TVET and skills as part of EFA, and having a Skills GMR that included TVET. For example, this approach may have the following implications:³⁸

- It may limit the TVET debate to basic and intermediate skills while overlooking high level skills provided at the tertiary level;
- It might lead to a neglect of informal ways of learning (that most people in developing countries currently use), and focus only on school-based TVE provision. The coverage of non-formal ways of learning (NFE) seems fairly secure; there having been a whole series of background papers on NFE produced for the GMR 2008 and with the GMR 2009 hinting that monitoring of Goal 3 may mean a focus on NFE;
- It may overlook the lifelong dimension of skills development which helps in securing sustainable employability;
- Approaching TVET issues and policies only through an EFA lens (especially if a rights-based approach is used) underestimates the labour market dimension of TVET and the need to place skills development within the framework of social dialogue. It could disconnect planners from actual labour market issues and exacerbate that tendency to stress only

³⁵ E.g. the modularization of skills through competency based training and the linking of these identified competencies together in National Qualification Frameworks (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008).

³⁶ E.g. UNESCO's Non-Formal Education Management Information System (see King and Palmer, this report; King and Palmer, 2008), and the OECD instruments (noted above).

³⁷ E.g. the ETF Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Education and Training for Employment (MEDA-ETE) project.

³⁸ The first four of the below bullet points draw heavily on Atchoarena, this report.

the supply side of education and training for skills development. In other words, the established GMRs all essentially relate to supply side information, whereas an adequate monitoring of technical and vocational skills as part of a skills GMR requires that both supply and demand side factors are considered.

- Lastly, if a GMR on skills were only given the usual one year reporting period, this may not be long enough for an adequate treatment of the wide skills domain.

Clearly, a precursor to a Skills GMR should be a feasibility study that explored what might be covered, by who and how – and for what purpose.

6.5. Concluding comments

The development impact of skills depends not only on the quantity and quality of skills produced but also on how they are allocated in the labour market and used in industry (skills development/skills utilisation). Hence, skills development policies need to be related to labour market policies and framed in the context of a broad dialogue involving social partners (Atchoarena, this report).

Any analysis and monitoring of skills systems, particularly technical and vocational skills, needs to be fully linked to an awareness of what is happening, or not, with regard to other complementary reform initiatives, especially those related to work, growth and poverty reduction.

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7. Summary of Recommendations Arising from the Seminar

This last section of the report contains a summary of the recommendations that emerged from the seminar on 31st October 2008.

1. The conference brought different constituencies together who have not been in dialogue before on skills for employability and their place in the MDG's. There is clearly a great interest in this issue and a consensus that the accompanying debate was very valuable. Delegates certainly found it helpful to have the opportunity to have such an event and to enter into dialogue with organisations they do not normally have the opportunity to meet. This dialogue is to be encouraged and should be continued among donor agencies in a transparent and open way. Some sort of follow up event could be helpful, as the debate is perhaps just as useful and not just a means to an end.
2. Both multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies have shed much of their in-house expertise on TVET in recent years. This limits the capacity of development partners to enter into an informed dialogue on TVET policies at a time when the profile of skills and the demand for TVET is rapidly increasing among partner countries. Donor agencies need to build greater capacity and expertise in TVET in order to conduct productive dialogues with partner governments. This recommendation echoes discussion at a 2004 meeting of the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development where it was noted that growing concern was being expressed by a number of agencies regarding the state of their capacity in the field of skills development.³⁹
3. There needs to be more robust information and better information systems - at local and national levels - on the labour market and on types of TVET provision and participation rates; in order for efficient and effective policy making to be possible. Further research needs to be undertaken on indicators and on assessing how existing methods of collecting data could be more effectively used.
4. The 'vocational school fallacy' and the World Bank studies on diversified secondary schooling in the mid-1980s have become outmoded and outdated stereotypes of vocational schools and skills training that continues to dominate the thinking in donor agencies⁴⁰ – they do not

³⁹ Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development (2004) *Reforming Training for Countries and Agencies*, Report of the Turin meeting, Paper 9 www.norrag.org/wg

⁴⁰ Not only was Psacharopoulos and Loxley's work only on school-based skills, but their analysis drew heavily on the rate of return to education estimates which have also lost favour in many agencies. Similarly, the research upon which Phillip Foster's vocational school fallacy was based was on school-based TVE; and not the wider domain of technical and vocational skills development.

- reflect the changes in TVET, the European framework with its focus on generic skills and lifelong learning, the range of formal and informal apprenticeship schemes, adult education and informal training in the workplace. Further research is needed on these modalities to assess the benefits of these approaches and their transferability. The loss of investment in market led TVET and skills in developing economies, while donor agencies have subscribed to the vocational school fallacy, needs to be redressed.
5. Reforms in TVET must be complemented by labour market reforms, including support to increasing the productivity of the informal economy where most people in developing countries work.
 6. More investment needs to be made in forecasting the ranges of jobs that will be available and the types of skills that will be needed to do them. More importantly the existing mechanisms and tools used to articulate the demand side with the supply side need to be better understood and disseminated. These include engaging employers in the development of national occupational standards, qualifications and credit frameworks, and social partnerships.
 7. More should be learned from what European agencies have been doing in relation to monitoring skills. For example, the work of CEDEFOP in coordinating national reports on TVET across member states is providing a rich picture of these across EU member states. ETF is doing likewise with developing and transition economies in the neighbourhood countries.
 8. Teaching and learning needs a radical overhaul away from rote learning to student centred “learning by doing” in primary and secondary education. This approach fosters initiative, enterprise, problem solving, learning to learn and all the softer skills that are needed in the labour market and provide the bridge to employment.
 9. There needs to be a more holistic approach to education across primary, secondary and beyond with a clear focus on the development of generic skills throughout.
 10. There is clearly the need for stronger evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness in comparison with other forms of education and training. But such cost-benefit analysis should focus on both economic and social outcomes of TVET.
 11. There needs to be a diversification of funding so that the costs of TVET are covered by multiple stakeholders. More effective use should be made of existing resources by allocating them more efficiently and introducing performance based funding, autonomy to institutions and vouchers for

individuals. Stronger information systems are obviously one prerequisite for a move towards performance based funding.

12. Any GMR on skills must take account of the different levels and dimensions of skill and the importance of social dialogue and partnerships. A GMR on skills should be aware that including TVET in the EFA agenda can increase country and donor awareness and attention for skills development; in other words including skills in the EFA framework is an opportunity. However, a number of traps lie hidden in this approach including:
 - Limiting the TVET debate on basic and intermediate skills while overlooking high level skills provided at the tertiary level;
 - Neglecting non-formal and informal forms of learning (that most people in developing countries have to use currently), and focusing on school-based TVE provision;
 - Overlooking the lifelong dimension of skills development which helps in securing sustainable employability;
 - Approaching TVET issues and policies only through an EFA lens underestimates the labour market dimension of TVET and the need to place skills development within the framework of social dialogue. It could disconnect planners from actual labour market issues and exacerbate that tendency to stress only the supply side of education and training for skills development.

The lifelong learning framework adopted in Europe has been developed precisely to encapsulate all these dimensions of TVET across all levels and the formal and the non formal dimensions. It provides a productive lens for research and policy making.

13. Efforts should be made to improve data collection and the availability of data, but a Skills GMR is not necessarily the only answer. It would be useful to undertake a feasibility study to explore what might be the best reporting mechanism for monitoring skills, including what might, and might not, be covered in a Skills GMR (and also thinking about skills monitoring post-2015). Such a feasibility study could map existing data availability and gaps, and draw in intelligence from organisations such as the OECD, ETF, ILO, CEDEFOP and the World Bank. There would need to be an inter-agency group set up to undertake this feasibility study, and such a group should ensure that it draws on the strengths of the organizations noted above. In order for a Skills GMR to interrogate the demand side of skills, an inter-agency group responsible for a feasibility study would need to ensure that it cut across enterprises, employers, industry as well as the providers of skills.

Annex 1: Proposed Dimensions for National Targets set at Jomtien, March 1990

1. Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children;
2. Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or what ever higher level of education is considered as “basic”) by the year 2000;
3. Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e. g. 80% of 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement;
4. Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to, s ay, one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female illiteracy rates;
5. Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity;
6. Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change.

Source: WCEFA - World Conference on Education for All (1990) *World Declaration and Framework for Action*, International Consultative Forum, UNESCO: Paris.

Annex 2. The Six EFA Goals, agreed in Dakar, April 2000

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Source: World Education Forum (2000) *Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. The Dakar Framework for Action and the Expanded Commentary on the Framework for Action*, UNESCO: Paris.

Annex 3: Seminar Programme

SKILLS FOR WORK, GROWTH & POVERTY REDUCTION: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Friday, 31st October 2008
 Jeffrey Hall, Institute of Education, University of London
 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

8.45 – 9.30	Registration and Tea / Coffee
9.30	Welcome a. Chair: Professor W. John Morgan, UK National Commission for UNESCO b. Dr Mary Stiasny, Assistant Director, Institute of Education c. Gordon Slaven, Director, Education, Science and Society, British Council
9.45	Overview a. Peter Colenso, Head, Human Development Group, Department for International Development b. Chris Humphries CBE, Chief Executive, UK Commission for Employment and Skills
10.15	Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges & Opportunities a. Chair: Professor Seamus Hegarty, Chair, EFA Working Group, UK National Commission for UNESCO b. Professor Kenneth King, former Director of the African Studies Centre, University of Edinburgh c. Dr Robert Palmer, NORRAG (Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training), University of Edinburgh
10.50	Response/ Discussants: a. Dr Robin Horn Education Sector Manager, the World Bank b. Dr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director General for Education, UNESCO c. Jo Bourne, Head of Profession, Education, Department for International Development d. Dr Muriel Dunbar, Director, European Training Foundation
11.45	Tea and Coffee
12.00	Discussion at Each Table on the Overview and Responses: a. Buzz session (15 min)
12.15	b. At Plenary, each table shares two key points
13.00	Lunch

<p>14.00</p>	<p>Thematic Groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The case for a Global Monitoring Report on skills training 2. Engaging industry and employers 3. Training for small and medium size enterprises 4. Developing TVET indicators
<p>15.15</p>	<p>Plenary</p> <p>Chair: Katie Epstein, Director, Vocational Education & Training, British Council</p> <p>Each group presents 3 key points or recommendations</p>
<p>15.45</p>	<p>Ways Forward Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities</p> <p>Chair: Dr Peter Lavender, NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Dr Simon McGrath, University of Nottingham b. Dr David Atchoarena, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO c. Dr Kevin Watkins, Director, EFA Global Monitoring Report Team d. Professor Kenneth King, former Director of the African Studies Centre, University of Edinburgh e. Discussion from the floor
<p>17.15</p>	<p>Seminar Closes</p>
<p>17.00-18.30</p>	<p>Reception</p>

Annex 4: List of Participants

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
John	Aslen	John.ASLEN@jiu.gsi.gov.uk	Acting Head	International Strategies & Education Organisations Team	Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills
David	Atchoarena	d.atchoarena@iiep.unesco.org	Head	Training and Education Programmes Unit	IIEP
Natasha	Bevan	nbevan@unesco.org.uk	Programme Secretary	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Alec	Boksenberg	boksy@ast.cam.ac.uk	Chair	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Douglas	Bourn	D.Bourn@ioe.ac.uk	Director	Development Education Research Centre	Institute of Education
Jo	Bourne	Jo-Bourne@dfid.gov.uk	Acting Head of Profession	Education	Department for International Development
Anne	Breivik	abreivik@unesco.org.uk	Programme Secretary	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Nicholas	Burnett	n.burnett@unesco.org	Assistant Director-General	Education	UNESCO
Michel	Carton	michel.carton@graduateinstitute.ch	Vice-director and Coordinator	IHEID / NORRAG	
Peter	Colenso	p-colenso@dfid.gov.uk	Head	Human Development Group	Department for International Development
Alexander	Cook	acook50@btinternet.com	Senior International Project Manager	Scottish Qualifications Authority	
Natalia	Cuddy	cuddyn@qca.org.uk	Network Co-ordinator	Curriculum Division	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
Mehboob	Dada	m.dada@unesco.org	Programme Specialist	Division for Basic Education Section for Secondary, Science, Technical and Vocational Education	UNESCO
David	Davies	david.davies@edexcel.org.uk	International Business Manager	Edexcel	
Philip	Davies	pdavies@air.org	Executive Director	AIR UK	
Ida	de Kat-van Meurs	ida-de.kat@minbuza.nl	Education Advisor	Education and Development Division	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Alba	De Souza	adesouza@unesco.org.uk	Programme Secretary	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Simon	Devine	simon.devine@educationforall.com	International Development Manager	Education for All Trust	
Janice	Dolan	J.Dolan@savethechildren.org.uk	Education Advisor	Save the Children	
Gari	Donn	g.donn@ed.ac.uk	Director, International Education	School of Education	University of Edinburgh
Muriel	Dunbar	muriel.dunbar@etf.eu.int	Director	European Training Foundation	
Janine	Eldred	jan.eldred@niace.org.uk	Associate Director	Global Skills and International Development	NIACE
Richard	Ennals	ennals@kingston.ac.uk	Professor	Centre for Working Life Research	Kingston University
Katie	Epstein	katie.epstein@britishcouncil.org	Director	Vocational Education & Training	British Council
Christine	Evans-Klock	evans-klock@ilo.org	Director	Skills and Employability Department	International Labour Office
Amanda	Felipe	amanda.felipe@britishcouncil.org	Programme Manager	VET - Skills for Employability	British Council
Tracy	Ferrier	tracy.ferrier@britishcouncil.org	Senior Adviser, VET and Development	British Council	

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
Chris	Gale	chris.gale@skillsdevelopment.org	Project Co-ordinator	Research and Development body for skills development	City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development
Shelley	Goffe-Caldeira	S.Goffe-Caldeira@acu.ac.uk	UK-Africa Partnerships Project Assistant	Africa Unit	Association of Commonwealth Universities
Andy	Green	Andy.Green@ioe.ac.uk	Professor of Comparative Social Science	Institute of Education	University of London
Iris	Grobenski	iris.grobenski@gtz.de	Education Expert	Division of Education and Youth	GTZ
Cesar	Guadalupe	c.guadalupe@uis.unesco.org	Senior Programme Specialist	LAMP/ALO	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
Richard	Hanson	rhanson@camfed.org	Executive Adviser	Camfed International	
David	Harding	dharding@worldbank.org	Education Project Leader	Human Development Division	The World Bank
Seamus	Hegarty	seamus.hegarty@onetel.net	Chair	EFA Working Group	UK National Commission for UNESCO
Thelma	Henderson	Thson349@aol.com	Education Committee	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Tanja	Hillbrink	thillbrink@unesco.org.uk	Acting Head of Secretariat	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Keith	Holmes	k.p.holmes@sussex.ac.uk	Lecturer in Education	Centre for International Education	University of Sussex
Wim	Hoppers	wim.hoppers@telia.com	Regional Education Advisor	Netherlands Government Development Cooperation	South Africa
Robin	Horn	rhorn@worldbank.org	Acting Education Sector Director	Human Development Network	The World Bank
Dingyong	Hou	dhou1@worldbank.org	Senior Education Specialist, Task Team Leader	East Asia and Pacific Region	World Bank

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
Elizabeth	Hughes	ejh@aber.ac.uk	Deputy Chair	UNESCO, Cymru Wales	UNESCO Cymru-Wales
John	Humphreys	J.Humphreys@jhc.org.uk	Chairman	Tabesa UK	
Chris	Humphries CBE	chris.humphries@ukces.org.uk	Chief Executive	UK Commission for Employment and Skills	
Colin	Jacobs	colin.jacobs@britishcouncil.org	Senior Adviser, Governance	Education, Science and Society	British Council
Henry	Kaluba	H.Kaluba@commonwealth.int	Head of Education	Social Transformation Programmes Division, Commonwealth Secretariat	
Kenneth	King	kenneth.king@ed.ac.uk	Director (former)	African Studies Centre	University of Edinburgh
Christian	Kingombe	christian.kingombe@oecd.org	Economist	Development Centre	OECD
Peter	Landymore	p-landymore@dfid.gov.uk	Ambassador	UK Delegation to UNESCO	
Stephanie	Langstaff	stephanie.langstaff@graduateinstitute.ch	Research Assistant	IHEID / NORRAG	
Peter	Lavender	peter.lavender@niace.org.uk	Deputy Director	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education	
Tom	Leney	LeneyTO@qca.org.uk	Head of International Department	Vocational Education & Training Across Europe	Qualifications & Curriculum Authority
Dominique	Levasseur	Dominique.Levasseur@international.gc.ca	Senior Programme Officer	Canadian International Development Agency	
David	Levesque	d-levesque@dfid.gov.uk	Senior Education Adviser	Policy and Research Division	DFID
Keith	Lewin	k.m.lewin@sussex.ac.uk	Director, Centre for International Education	University of Sussex	
Angela	Little	A.Little@ioe.ac.uk	Department of Education and International Development	Institute of Education	Department for International Development
Rupert	Maclean	r.maclean@unevoc.unesco.org	Director	UNESCO-UNEVOC Int. Centre	UNESCO

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
Jacques	Malpel	Jacques.MALPEL@diplomatie.gouv.fr	Expert in Vocational Training and Employment	Human Development, Social Cohesion and Employment	European Commission
Alain	Masetto	alain.masetto@diplomatie.gouv.fr	Bureau des politiques éducatives et d'insertion professionnelle	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes	
Simon	McGrath	Simon.Mcgrath@nottingham.ac.uk	Professor of International Education and Development/Editor-in-Chief, International Journal of Educational Development	University of Nottingham	
John	Tuck	John.Tuck@akdn.org	Director	Finance, Administration and Resource Mobilisation	Aga Khan Foundation (UK)
Bob	Moon	r.e.moon@open.ac.uk	Director, Centre for Research & Development in Teacher Education	Open University	
W. John	Morgan	John.Morgan@nottingham.ac.uk	Director, Centre for Comparative Education Research	University of Nottingham	
L. Efison	Munjanganja	e.munjanganja@unevoc.unesco.org	Head of UNEVOC Network	UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre	UNESCO
Yahel	Onono	anyinna@hotmail.co.uk	Intern	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
John	Oxenham	john_oxenham@yahoo.co.uk	Joint Deputy Executive Chair	Council for Education in the Commonwealth	

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	
Robert	Palmer	rob.palmer@norrag.org	Education and Skills Development Specialist	Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training	
Neena	Patria	neena.patria@britishcouncil.org	Business Manager – VET and Youth	Education, Science and Society	British Council
John	Payne	John.Payne@britishcouncil.org	Director, Business Management	Education, Science and Society	British Council
Andreas	Pfanzelt	andreas.pfanzelt@gmx.de	Education Expert	Division of Education and Youth	GTZ, Germany
Rachel	Phillipson	R-Phillipson@dfid.gov.uk	Economics Adviser	Beyondstandards Ltd	
Caroline	Pontefract	c.pontefract@unesco.org	Director	Social Transformation Programmes Division	Commonwealth Secretariat
Caitlin	Porter	c.porter@savethechildren.org.uk	Young Lives Policy Manager	Policy/Research	Save the Children UK/ (Oxford University)
Sally	Pritchard	sally.pritchard@education-action.org	Head of Programmes	Education Action	
Klaus-Dieter	Przyklenk	klaus-dieter.przyklenk@bmz.bund.de	TVET-Specialist	BMZ/ GTZ	Germany
Alan	Rogers	alan.rogers14@btopenworld.com	Professor	University of East Anglia	
Simon	Schofield	Simon.Schofield@britishcouncil.org	Business Manager	Education, Science and Society	British Council
Anthony	Sequeira	info@unesco.org.uk	Seminar Coordinator	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Kate	Shoesmith	kate.shoesmith@skillsdevelopment.org	Senior Manager - Policy & Practice	Centre for Skills Development	City & Guilds London
Madhu	Singh	m.singh@unesco.org	Senior Programme Specialist	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning	Hamburg
Gordon	Slaven	Gordon.Slaven@britishcouncil.org	Director	Education Science & Society	British Council
Anthony	Somerset	tonysomers@aol.com	Visiting Research Fellow	Centre for International Education	University of Sussex
Mary	Stiasny	m.stiasny@ioe.ac.uk	Assistant Director	Institute of Education	University of

Forename	Surname	Email	Position	Organization	London
John	Stone	jstone@lseducation.org.uk	Chief Executive	Education	Learning & Skills Network
Nils	Tomes	Nils.Tomes@britishcouncil.org	Senior Advisor	Education Science & Society	British Council
Peter	Troy	p-troy@dfid.gov.uk	Deputy Leader	Education/Skills	Department for International Development
Madhuri	Vadgama	Madhuri.VADGAMA@jiu.gsi.gov.uk	India, China and Africa team	Joint International Unit	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Nada	Wanni	N.Wanni@acu.ac.uk	Project Officer	Africa Unit	Association of Commonwealth Universities
David	Wardrop	davidwardrop@bulldoghome.com	Chairman	United Nations Association, Westminster Branch	
Annette	Warrick	Annette.Warrick@jiu.gsi.gov.uk	Head of International Education Organisations and Strategies	Joint International Unit	DCSF/DIUS
Kevin	Watkins	k.watkins@unesco.org	Director	EFA Global Monitoring Report	UNESCO (Global Monitoring Report Team)
Katy	Webley	K.webley@savethechildren.org.uk	Head of Education	Save the Children	
Ian	White	iwhite@unesco.org.uk	Communications Officer & Programme Secretary	UK National Commission for UNESCO	
Joan	Whitehead	j.whitehead@ucet.ac.uk	Policy and Liaison Officer	Universities Council for the Education of Teachers	
Peter	Williams	peterrcwilliams@onetel.com	Deputy Executive Chair	Council for Education in the Commonwealth	