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## **Editorial TVET<sup>@</sup>Asia Issue 3:**

### **Transferable skills in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and vocational teacher education (VTE): Policies and implementation**

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It is widely acknowledged that the world of work is changing. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET), however, largely continues to follow a traditional model developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which used to prepare youth for industrial work. As some economies in the Asia-Pacific are becoming knowledge-based, there is growing recognition of the mismatch between skills taught in TVET and skills needed in the labour markets. As a result, transferable skills are increasingly seen as a missing link between education and training and the world of work.

But what are transferable skills? There are different understandings and conceptualizations of these skills across countries but in general transferable skills refer to a number of important competencies (communication, problem-solving, collaboration skills, etc.) that can be learned and can help people to make transitions between education levels, education and the world of work, as well as within and between sectors. They are non-occupation specific skills that can give workers the comparative advantage in an increasingly interconnected and competitive world of work.

To prepare students for the jobs of today and tomorrow, TVET, which has traditionally provided specific occupational skills for existing jobs, now needs to give more attention to improving students' holistic development and pay more attention to developing their transferable skills for future jobs. This, however, can only be achieved if TVET policies clearly define transferable skills for the country context and set out clear guidelines for implementation. Despite a general agreement on the importance of transferable skills among most Asian countries, there is still a pressing need for clearly defining transferable skills and creating a shared understanding of these skills among all TVET stakeholders. Besides establishing clear policy guidelines, the challenge remains in aligning policies with curricula, pedagogies and assessment for transferable skills in TVET.

At implementation level, TVET teachers are the key in ensuring that students acquire the appropriate levels of transferable skills for their future occupations. Many TVET teachers in Asia, however, seem to lack understanding, skills, pedagogies and resources to effectively impart transferable skills in their students. In addition, in some Asian countries TVET can be

found in different streams and at different education levels which results in some disagreement between the general education teachers and the TVET teachers on the relative responsibility of each group for teaching transferable skills. Clear policy guidelines are, therefore, instrumental in addressing this and other issues related to transferable skills.

Despite existing challenges, there are some examples of the ways in which some Asian countries conceptualized transferable skills in their TVET and VTE policies, and there are examples of some promising initiatives of teaching and learning of these skills. The 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of TVET@Asia gives an insight into these developments and explores other skill-related topics. The issue is based on selected country reports prepared for a regional study entitled “Transferable Skills in TVET: Policy Implications”, which is the result of a collaboration between UNESCO Bangkok and the Regional Cooperation Platform (RCP), as well as additional submissions. It is hoped that the issue will contribute to broadening the knowledge base on skills, and particularly transferable skills, in Asia and provide the basis for further research in this area.

*The Editors of Issue 3*

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