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TVET@Asia Issue 22: Skills for Industry: The Role of Vocational Skills Development in the Context of Industrial Transformation

With the ever-evolving landscape of industry and technological advancements, the demand for a skilled workforce has become paramount. However, in many countries, especially in the global South, TVET plays a minor role in this regard: Large parts of the employees in industry often lack vocational qualifications, so that skills development takes place primarily on-the-job – while public TVET in particular is considered to be of little relevance. Against this backdrop, this Special Issue looks in particular at how TVET is linked to very different industries (e.g. garments, electronics) in different countries. In conclusion, the authors contribute to highlighting best practice examples from their respective countries by also highlighting the relevance of TVET research and the role of teachers and trainers for ensuring that TVET can contribute to overall economic and social development.

The special issue starts with an article by VI HOANG DANG and THUY THANH NGUYEN (Ho Chi Minh University of Technology and Education, Vietnam) who investigate the adoption of formal and non-formal training programmes within **Vietnam**'s manufacturing sector. The study, based on a survey of 162 companies in electronics, food and beverage, and garment industries, coupled with in-depth interviews, reveals a pronounced preference for in-employment training due to its perceived effectiveness in addressing industry-specific skill gaps. Non-formal training emerges as a strategic approach for ensuring future competitiveness in a dynamically evolving sector. While formal TVET programs receive positive evaluations, their enthusiasm is tempered, particularly for lower-level positions. The study advocates for a balanced approach, recognizing the complementary roles of formal and non-formal training, while urging enhancements in the formal TVET system to enhance labor-market relevance.

SHEIKH SHAHANA SHIMU (BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University) conducts a comprehensive study on the inclusiveness and efficiency of skill formation in the **Bangladeshi** garment industry, with a specific focus on enhancing women's participation and relative positions. Drawing on survey data from 100 garment companies, case studies of nine selected companies, and interviews with stakeholders from training institutes, government agencies, and industrial associations, the research evaluates the social impact of vocational education and training (VET) on women's participation and positions in the labour market. The study highlights the underrepresentation of women in both formal and non-formal TVET programs, attributing it to negative social attitudes and challenging work environments. It concludes by advocating for an inclusive skills formation regime to bolster women's roles and positions in the garment industry and the broader labor market.

KARA CHAN, MAGGIE FUNG, JUSTIN LAU, MANDY TSE and JASMINE ZHANG (**Hong Kong Baptist University**), present a case study on the impact of an Applied Learning course, "Multimedia Storytelling," introduced in 2022. Aimed at preparing secondary school students for the creative media industry, the curriculum team implemented three co-curricular activities in line with Kolb's experiential learning model. This paper delves into the learning objectives, activity design, instructional strategies, and resource support, drawing on teacher observations and post-activity surveys. Results indicate significant improvements in students' personal, cognitive, and social dimensions, particularly in confidence and collaborative skills. The study recommends the incorporation of intensive skill-training opportunities in vocational education, emphasizing the need for financial support due to the resource-intensive nature of such activities.

The study by KEONAKHONE KHOUNVILAY (National University of Laos), SANTIPHAP MEUNMANY (Ministry of Education and Sport, Lao PDR), BOUNSENG KHAMMOUNTY (Vocational Education Development Institute, Lao PDR) and MICHAEL MORLOK (orange & teal, Switzerland) scrutinizes skills shortages, growth, and transformation in **Lao PDR's** manufacturing industry. Surveying 144 formal sector companies, with a focus on the Garment and Food & Beverage industries, the study reveals substantial growth and resilience in these sectors. Despite skills shortages, particularly in Food & Beverage, companies prioritize hands-on skills and on-the-job training over formal education. The article underscores the imperative for an enhanced TVET system to align with industry demands and foster the continued growth of the manufacturing industry in Lao PDR.

In their contribution, AZAREEL A. SUMAYA (TESDA-LLDA Provincial Training Center, Philippines) and RUTH A. ORTEGA-DELA CRUZ (University of the Philippines) provide a descriptive overview of the technical vocational education and training (TVET) system and discuss challenges it faces in developing skills for the tourism sector in the **Philippines**. A combination of secondary data analysis together with focus group discussions and key informant interviews of the trainers and graduates were employed for it. Findings showed that the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Women's Center conforms to the national goals of TESDA, but objectives are limited to core competencies only. The Women's Center programs employ a modified competency-based training approach with uniquely designed curricula that includes more hours, various modes of learning and methods of training. The challenges encountered were the time-consuming process of realigning instruction and assessment to the twenty-first-century skills, and in maintaining a conducive learning environment. By addressing these challenges, TVET can play a pivotal role in shaping a competent workforce for the future of tourism.

The paper by ADAM VOAK (James Cook University, Australia), ABDULLAH HELMY (State Polytechnic of Malang, Indonesia), BRIAN FAIRMAN (James Cook University, Australia), and ANGGI AFRIANSYAH (National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia), critically examines **Indonesia's** attempts to reform its education system that has, for decades, been strongly shaped by the largely colonially imposed Further Education Framework. In particular, the study scrutinizes a new vision of emancipated learning, known

as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), that is aimed at crafting a more de-centralised, localised and industry-based response to skills development in Indonesia. The study finds that that MBKM's acceptance has not been universal, with many stakeholders questioning the policy's implementation, motives and ongoing sustainability. In conclusion, the study allows a better understanding of the impacts of the implementation of MBKM, and defines the potential challenges and opportunities which will be faced by educational institutions as they go about implementing such a radically different policy initiative.

In his text on the case of **Cambodia**, NARON VEUNG (Cambodia Development Resource Institute) investigates the significance of collaboration in the TVET sector of that country. Using qualitative data, the article explores diverse forms and degrees of collaboration between training providers and companies while addressing the associated challenges. The findings uncover various collaborative activities, such as student internships, job announcement dissemination, curriculum development, consultative meetings, and workplace visits. However, issues like limited funding, resource constraints, and a lack of mutual benefits hinder the intensification and regularity of these collaborations. The study emphasizes the need to address these challenges for fostering closer and more effective partnerships between training providers and private companies in the Cambodian TVET sector.

The special issue closes with a text by BOUNSENG KHAMMOUNTY (Vocational Education Development Institute, Lao PDR), MARKUS MAURER (Zurich University of Teacher Education, Switzerland), and SOMPHAVANH KHAMSANG (Vocational Education Development Institute, Lao PDR) who investigate the crucial role of industry experience for the effectiveness of TVET teachers. Focusing on the garments, food processing, and electronics industries in **Lao PDR**, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative survey with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal a lack of industry experience among TVET teachers, primarily attributed to poor cooperation between training providers and industrial enterprises. The article proposes strategies to enhance collaboration, facilitating TVET teachers' immersion in industry settings for more robust professional development.

The Editors of Issue 22:

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