

Observations from the first day

Overview:

The observations were meant to bridge the two days of the conference. As such they were going to review the first day and to provide a preview of the second day. Observations reported were grounded on quotes and statements of previous speakers, but also on interpretations and sharpening arguments. This follows a principle the famous Bertolt Brecht once called as “making familiar things strange and making strange things familiar”.

Statements put forward by various speakers on existing and future practices of TVET can be typologized into three categories:

- Programmatic, i.e. rhetoric, concepts, declarations, strategies, expectations, or the like on the future design of VET.
- Implementations, i.e. examples of realizations or concrete practice, failed ideas and innovations (following the principle that innovations take place by going from failure to failure without losing the enthusiasm).
- Diffusion, i.e. ideas about making innovation sustainable.

Starting with the obvious

It means trying to convert the converted when emphasizing the relevance of TVET in fast changing economies and developing societies. Why is TVET both relevant and key? Economies gradually evolve towards the provision of high quality products and services. Thus, low and unskilled labor will decline, skilled labor is needed. Skilled workforce and the building of human capital is both a critical constraint and a key driver for economic resilience as well as inclusive growth and poverty reduction. TVET will be a major accelerator for socio-economic transformation.

Nevertheless there are some major challenges in advancing TVET in the ASEAN countries ...

Involvement of companies

Participation of companies in the strategic and operational running of TVET is on the top of the agenda of most TVET policy makers. Companies are not only needed to provide work-experience for the TVET students but also for the teachers being involved in pre- or in-service teacher training programs.

There are many areas of involvement on different levels of the TVET system possible, and there are also some good practices in many countries. However, overall participation of companies are often islands in the ocean. So: How can good intention be transformed into good implementation and sustainable practice?

Governance

Lack of involvement of the private sector is partly due to the governance of the TVET system. Most TVET systems are state-governed, mostly top-down, with low participation of stakeholders from the private sector. If industry and companies were to join in, does this require a different TVET governance? Is the idea of a tripartite governance with an independent agency negotiating the interests of different stakeholders realistic in the cultural and political context of the ASEAN countries?

Branding

TVET is in continuous competition with academic programs. A refreshed branding needs both good marketing and convincing success stories of careers resulting in well-paid, secure and challenging positions in the labor market. Apart from words, it is deeds which count. How can a branding policy proactively be conducted? How can the best be attracted for TVET, on the student side as well as on the teacher side?

Flexibility

What kind of TVET system should be designed and implemented? There is a broad consensus that the alternation of theory and practice, reflection and action, knowing and doing is a core principle for designing a modern TVET system. TVET in the ASEAN states more resembles a modularized system along the Competency Based Training than the Dual System well known from German speaking Europe. The German or Swiss type of Dual System is just one of many ways to implement duality. Overall, apprenticeships à la Germany or Switzerland are rare exceptions in the spectrum of realized TVET systems.

How can the principle of duality be implemented and at the same time be made more flexible? Is there a synergetic combination of the Dual (apprenticeship) system and the modularized Anglo-Saxon CBT system?

Sustainable capacity building in the area of TVET personnel

Countries with a high reputation of TVET invest a lot into the professionalization of TVET personnel (teachers, trainers, management). In turn, this contributes to the status, appreciation and reputation of TVET in general. It requires convincing concepts of capacity building and competence development, but also working conditions designed in an attractive and invitational way.

How can working as a TVET teacher or trainer be made attractive in terms of professionalization, working conditions and status?

Inclusive TVET

On the agenda of TVET innovations, there are topics which have made great progress, and there are some which need a long-term perspective. Exploring the benefits of TVET is of the latter type. Sometimes (long-term) issues such as dealing with disabilities or designing inclusive TVET programs start from the assumption that some people do have deficiencies which have to be overcome (e.g. by barrier free

buildings, special needs classes). A different approach turns to the point where not deficiencies but the potential of inclusive education is emphasized – for those to be ‘normal’ (whatever this may mean) and for the society and the economy (e.g. by making use of specific characteristics such as loyalty, resilience, persistence in fulfilling tasks).

How can the complex and thus long-term issue of inclusive TVET be positively branded and be prepared for a constructive discussion?

Finishing without ending ...

With the strong emphasis on TVET, ASEAN are doing the right thing! Now they have to find their way to do the things right. They are well-advised if they don't confine TVET to its functional role of providing skilled workers for the economy. TVET also has a key role in promoting social inclusion and the integration of the vulnerable.

TVET in the ASEAN countries is less a ready-made system solving all economic and social problems in short term, but a framework in continuous evolvement. In that context, how to do the right things right is still a matter of exploration and mutual learning.

In that spirit I finish without ending the discussion ...