

REGIONAL TVET CONFERENCE 2014

Ensuring TVET Quality
Preparing for AEC 2015

1 - 2 April 2014, Shangri La Hotel, Jakarta

Concept Note

Background

Over the past decade, Asia has increasingly become the growth engine for the world economy. Along with the newly industrialised economies of China and India, the 10 ASEAN economies have experienced strong economic growth and social development. With an emphasis on the importance of knowledge and the need for a skilled workforce, the countries in the ASEAN region see vocational education as a priority if sustained economic and social development is to be ensured. ASEAN supports knowledge sharing, the alignment of educational systems through negotiation of mutual recognition arrangements and a more open labour market. These are key factors in upgrading the status of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in order to better prepare the future workforce for an ASEAN common market.

The member countries still have several challenges to overcome, such as the lack of skilled labour, limited practical training in (vocational) secondary and higher education and restrictive labour market regulations still in force. As a result, TVET modernisation and quality enhancement have become key concerns among policy makers and practitioners in recent years. They lie at the core of the agendas for socio-economic development and ASEAN integration. Regional exchange and cooperation in the field of TVET are emphasised as drivers to enhance the skills and mobility of the future workforce, increase the productivity of the business sector and promote economic development.

In October 2012, the first Regional TVET Conference, entitled 'TVET Quality Breakthrough', took place in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The conference was hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Vietnamese Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA). More than 300 decision-makers and TVET experts from 14 countries participated, including representatives of regional and international organisations, donors and implementing organisations, as well as the research and the business sector of the broader ASEAN region.

The main issues addressed during the conference were occupational standards, cooperation with the business sector, TVET teaching staff and the financing of TVET. Amongst others, the conference stressed the necessity for outcome-based occupational standards, the need for the greater involvement of companies and policies in supporting their TVET role (in particular for occupational standards and TVET delivery). Furthermore, the participants discussed the need for solid and practical TVET teacher training including measures to raise teachers' status and pay. Steps towards the introduction and implementation of national TVET funds as independent institutions to achieve quality and sustainability in TVET were also reviewed.

Overall, the Hanoi conference participants emphasised the need to continue the exchanges and networking between TVET decision-makers and actors in the ASEAN region, and especially to build on the experience of international cooperation with Germany. One of the means to support this will be the second Regional TVET Conference due to take place on 1-2 April 2014. Indonesia was nominated as the next host country for the second Regional TVET Conference.

Indonesia is the largest economy in the ASEAN region. With its economic growth rates of around 6% and large potential in human and natural resources, it is a driver in the development of the ASEAN community. In the field of TVET, Indonesia is promoting regional cooperation and the dissemination of its experience and know-how. Indonesia has long since established a strong partnership in TVET with Germany and sees the latter as its leading partner for the further development and strengthening of regional cooperation in this field. This is also stated in the 'Jakarta Declaration', signed by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2012.

Conference title

‘Ensuring TVET Quality – Preparing for the AEC 2015’.

Objectives and benefits of the conference

Through discussions and the exchange of good practices, the conference aims to facilitate collaboration and the joint improvement of TVET implementation within ASEAN. The key objectives are in particular:

1. To share and learn from good practice examples;
2. To stimulate regional TVET networking within ASEAN;
3. To formulate recommendations for raising the quality and demand orientation of TVET; and,
4. To contribute to regional integration processes.

Conference Topics

The Regional TVET Conference in Indonesia will address key issues for increasing TVET quality in the national and regional context and enhancing the mobility of qualified workers in the region. These are:

(1) Cooperating with the business community – Improving the demand orientation of TVET

TVET aims to develop skilled workers with competencies and capacities that fit the demand of the labour market, especially the business sector. However, the labour markets in Asia often suffer from the low employability of TVET graduates and un(der)employment, particularly among young people. The state alone is no longer able to tackle the numerous challenges relating to TVET reforms and employment promotion.

Technological advancement and faster development cycles require the existence of an adequate fit between TVET supply and demand. They call for coordinating and cooperating mechanisms in new partnerships between public and private TVET providers, civil society initiatives and the various business sectors. Business sector representatives need to not only voice their demands and needs, but must take responsibility and be actively, continuously and consistently involved in TVET framework design and TVET delivery itself.

As an example of good practice for the direct involvement of the business sector, the German dual (or cooperative) TVET system acts both as a trademark for the German vocational training system and a hallmark of public-private partnerships. Inspired by this, several ASEAN countries have implemented similar approaches adapted to local circumstances.

Therefore, the conference will provide a forum:

- for regional business communities to articulate their views and responses to the challenges and opportunities that a more open regional labour market in 2015 will bring, their expectations of regional organisations, national governments and TVET providers;
- for exchanging good practice examples of public-private or other TVET partnerships at regional, national and local levels (e.g. provision of industry trainers, new TVET delivery ‘vehicles’, etc.);
- for exchanging views on approaches to increase business sector engagement in TVET through the development and implementation of a range of incentives; and,
- for increasing awareness among participants of the indispensable role of the business sector in ensuring quality in the TVET system.

(2) Harmonising standards and certification – striving towards mutual/regional recognition

Industry-‘owned’ occupational standards and certifications are a critical factor in enhancing the quality of TVET. In the context of an integrated ASEAN labour market and the expected labour mobility, standards and vocational qualifications (and the level at which they are aligned in national

qualification frameworks), they provide critical reference points for both internal and external benchmarking of the quality of a country's vocational training system.

The Hanoi conference advanced several recommendations in order to develop standards as key reference points for demand-oriented, high-quality TVET. They include the creation of legal and other conditions in which the business community can lead the setting of standards and capacity building within institutions, enabling them to administer standards, assessment and certification (including the recognition of prior learning/current competencies). The key recommendation was to advance the mutual recognition of labourers' skills in the ASEAN region, based on harmonised standards and the sharing of experience with other countries.

Building upon these outcomes, the conference will provide a forum to:

- show good examples of the recent developments of standards in ASEAN region countries (e.g. using the example of the tourism sector, one of the pilot sectors for the ASEAN integration process);
- display the development of occupational standards involving the business sector, the packaging of standards into vocational qualifications and the 'implementation' of vocational qualifications through teaching and certification;
- debate mutual acceptance of nationally issued certifications and the potential benefits for national and regional enterprises; and,
- discuss further necessary steps for harmonisation and the mutual/regional recognition of standards within ASEAN, with a view to a freer labour market in 2015.

(3) Measuring TVET quality - From measuring input to measuring performance

Defining "Quality" in TVET and measuring it are core challenges for TVET systems to achieve their aim: providing the workforce with knowledge, skills and attitudes that correspond to the demands of the labour market. The international discussion on quality indicators supports benchmarking as well as establishing a framework for national systems to develop outcome-based TVET systems. In many cases, however, the parameters used to measure the quality of TVET remain input factors (number of teachers, student numbers, amount of funds provided). But how are these inputs successfully, efficiently and sustainably used and developed in order to achieve high quality performance and outputs – i.e. suitably employed graduates?

The parameters for performance measurement in TVET systems and institutions include immediate graduate employment rates or transparent graduate assessments based on standards and vocational qualifications. While research provides a framework, the measurement of actual implementation and transformation from input to output still poses major challenges. Instruments such as long-term tracer studies and assessments of the quality of teaching and learning processes based on the demands of the labour market are complex and demanding to implement.

These and other factors must be taken into consideration when designing instruments to measure the quality of TVET systems and institutions. The conference will therefore:

- enable an exchange on priority indicators (parameters) for measuring TVET performance;
- showcase approaches for the design and implementation of TVET quality-measuring instruments (amongst others from Indonesia); and,
- promote a common understanding of TVET quality criteria in order to enable the benchmarking of TVET systems regionally. Success factors, especially those of the German dual TVET system, will serve as input and means of comparison.

Date & Participation

Date of the conference: 1-2 April 2014.

Expected participants: Around 150 participants from Indonesia and 150 participants from Asian countries and Germany.

Composition of participants: Policy-makers, practitioners and experts from the TVET sector, representatives of the business community, bilateral and multilateral institutions and implementing agencies, academia.