UNESCO UNEVOC REGIONAL CONFERENCE '96
November 1996

Articulation and other Factors effecting Status
- Implications for Policy Development of TVE

A paper by

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Summary
Status is one of the key issues which impinge on the provision of technical and vocational education (TVE).

Factors which effect of status need to be taken into account in a coherent way by national TVE authorities when formulating policy.

Significant factors which affect the status of TVE are:

- Satisfactory arrangements for articulation and credit transfer which recognises TVE prior learning.
- Provision of courses that are structured around the concept of broad based learning.
- Relevant TVE Curriculum which reflects the needs of industry and commerce within a culture.
- Quality TVE program resources, delivery and assessment.
- Competent teachers.
- Sound linkages between TVE institutions and industry.
- Integration of TVE provision in a systematic way which provides recognisable outcomes regardless of how or where programs are delivered.
- International recognition of TVE qualifications.

The importance of status
Status is about how an individual or group views somebody or something, and as a consequence assigns a ranking of desirability or recognition. Such ranking is usually given in a subconscious way.

Status may be accorded by others, not necessarily involved in the activity being ranked.
Those according status to technical and vocational education include students or potential students, parents, employers, industry and commerce, union and professional bodies, government and the community at large.

Status may be reflected in income earning ability, or occupancy of high office. Status may also be given by the industrial or commercial community, in recognition that those competently trained are able to contribute to the operation of an efficient organization. Likewise, a lack of status reflected in the avoidance by individuals of low status occupations.

In many countries, TVE suffers from a perception that it has a lesser status than accorded more 'academic' streams of secondary or post-compulsory education. This situation is partly a reflection of the perception that TVE has, certainly in former times, been seen as often having a mainly utilitarian training function.

Frequently national objectives to enhance the overall quality of the workforce as a whole, can be frustrated because of a perception that TVE has less status than say higher education, with the result a nation may not have enough TVE graduates in fields of economic need.

Status is intertwined with culture. Education is usually related to the culture of a nation, or pressures will emerge to encourage the objectives of an education system, to be modified to support cultural objectives. Within the overall context for education to support cultural norms, technical and vocational education needs to deliver broadly trained personnel that meet the needs of industry and commerce, such that national advancement will occur. If individuals are to be given status within a culture, it is essential that the contribution of those individuals is seen as important for the welfare of that society.

Status is connected to the concept of relative importance, and is significant when decisions are made involving the provision of resources. As the provision of TVE is both an investment and a cost, and there are increasing pressures towards a market economy in many sectors of national economies in the Asia Pacific region, the ability of TVE to attract sufficient funding from both government and non-government sources is directly related to the perceived status accorded to TVE, and the value of that form of education within a culture.
Strategies to Improve Status

The provision of TVE in any nation will be within the overall delivery of educational services of that country.

In the Asia Pacific region, provision of TVE may be delivered as an alternative stream of secondary education, or be incorporated within secondary education. TVE may be made available through dedicated post-secondary institutions, or elements of TVE provision incorporated in higher education institutions. In many countries, TVE is delivered through government departments, not having education as the main focus. Increasingly, the provision of TVE is a result of efforts by private sector providers. Further, elements of TVE will often be delivered through industry training arrangements.

There is also a trend towards provision of TVE through flexible learning systems, and this trend will probably increase as the quality of programs available improves and program delivery technology becomes more cost efficient.

Regardless of how TVE is provided, status within a culture is a key issue.

There are a number of factors which might be addressed to improve the status of TVE:

1. Articulation  Probably the most important factor impinging on the status of technical and vocational education is the question of articulation. Well structured TVE programs require effective arrangements for articulation, not only to higher level courses, but also to related programs at the same or lower levels. Where such arrangements are not in place there will be a perception that programs are of a 'dead end' type, with a resultant negative effect on the status accorded such programs.

Students undertaking technical and vocational education programs which do not articulate to any extent will be disadvantaged in their careers, they may be less useful to their employers, and in the larger picture, national economies will be disadvantaged through having a workforce that is less able to be retrained for new forms of work.

When curriculum designers develop courses they should build in articulation pathways, but still ensure that the course has as its main objective the development of competencies for those that the course is designed. If a TVE course has emphasis on credit transfer to a higher level programs it may unintentionally disadvantage those not looking towards higher level studies at the time.
However, there will be instances where significant convergence occurs between say TVE and secondary education, or TVE and higher education. This may be desirable in some instances, to address the needs of service and high technology industries.

Successful articulation arrangements are usually a question of balance between development of occupational competencies and making sensible arrangements for credit transfer to higher level courses.

Effective arrangements for articulation are not simply the responsibility of educational providers. In the case of technical and vocational education, cooperation is also necessary from other stakeholders such as employers, universities, polytechnics etc., particularly at a local level where practical arrangements have to be put in place if effective articulation pathways are to be available.

Articulation arrangements can become more complicated when the provision of technical and vocational education in delivered through a multiplicity of educational providers in the government and non-government sectors. The more diverse the provision of technical and further education, the greater the incentive for the establishment of a national educational framework which defines standards and qualification levels in a generic way so that student achievement can easily be recognised by employers, professional bodies and other stakeholders.

2. Broad based training Unless a program is simply directed towards the development of some skill or knowledge that might be achieved in a relatively short period of training, it is essential that significant courses of study are broad based.

To develop a work force that has the ability to cope with increasingly more complicated demands, invites the creation of programs which provide future options for the individual and society at large. Many of the challenges to be addressed in the future are now either not known, or only perceived in an imperfect way.

The necessity of having a work force that has been trained in a broad based way is already apparent in those economies that are shifting away from an agrarian society or low labour cost manufacturing towards service and information based technologies.
The Taylorist approach that segments work into specialized tasks that might often be gained with limited and directed training, under the direction of a limited number of experts, has been widely used since the Industrial Revolution. This approach is no longer appropriate for nations wishing to move on to a new era, where flexibility and adaptability of the workforce is increasingly the keystone of national advancement.

The desirability of having a broadly trained workforce that does not specialize too early in the initial vocational training cycle is increasingly important. It is of importance in the structure of technical and vocational education courses to ensure that students can effectively articulate to higher level programs or even leave open the possibility of further cycles of retraining as the nature of work changes.

3. Relevant curriculum The status of any educational activity is directly related to the quality and relevance of curriculum.

Technical and vocational education has the added requirement of ensuring that any curriculum developed satisfies the needs of the related industry, business or service sector. Therefore it is important that any curriculum produced results in the development of competencies required by industry and business, as well as addressing the objectives of articulation and broad based training.

4. The Quality factor The question of quality is an essential factor pertaining to the standing of any product or service. Status is intimately linked to the notion of quality. That which is of poor quality will inevitably be seen as having low status.

Therefore, within the availability of resources it is important that the quality of technical and vocational education is sufficient for achievement of any objectives. This is related to the relevancy of curriculum, the efficiency and effectiveness of course delivery, as well as staff and student management.

Clearly the focus should be on the provision and management of resources which results in desired outcomes, rather than simply feeding resources into an environment which absorbs inputs, without careful monitoring of achievement of desired objectives and appropriate modification of program management. Effective usage of resources invites increasing use of technology to deliver and manage TVE programs.
5. Competent teachers The availability of competent teachers that have relevant industrial experience, are up to date with the knowledge required to teach their discipline, are trained to impart knowledge and manage the educative process are critical elements in the effective provision of technical and vocational education.

Because of the demands of industry and commerce, many countries in the Asia/Pacific region find it difficult to recruit and hold teachers of technical and vocational education, particularly those who have the necessary industrial experience.

It is likely that this problem will persist into the foreseeable future, and will encourage the use of technology to deliver and manage significant elements technical and vocational education programs. This possibility may increasingly redress the question of quality program delivery in spite of limitations due to the shortage of competent TVE teachers.

6. Sound industry linkages One factor that is vital to the question of status of TVE is the question of effective industry linkages between TVE and industry in the broad sense.

Unless effective linkages exist between the TVE system and industry in a country, and the needs of industry are addressed when developing course curriculum, it is unlikely that graduates from TVE institutions will be particularly useful, certainly in the short term.

This matter encourages national governments to involve parties from industry and commerce in the process of establishing an educational framework for course structures as well establishing broad generic objectives, whilst at the same time fostering dialogue and cooperation between TVE providers and industry parties at the local level. Where industry itself is a TVE provider it is important that these provisions are integrated into the framework of TVE delivery by other providers in the government and non-government sectors.

7. Integration of TVE provision As in other sectors of educational provision, a multiplicity of TVE provision is frequently apparent in many nations. As has been mentioned previously, technical and vocational education may be delivered through a government controlled college or institute. TVE may also be provided through an agency of government that is not part of the mainstream education system. The private sector is increasingly becoming involved in the provision of TVE as governments try to limit the financial resources they have to commit to the delivery of TVE programs.
In some countries charitable bodies are prominent in the delivery of TVE programs. TVE programs may be provided by an employer or by industry based training centre.

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of TVE delivery mechanisms, it should be an objective to facilitate the provision of national approaches to course nomenclature, generic course guidelines, effective articulation arrangements and some form of national course recognition which applies to the output of all providers of technical and vocational education. If effective mechanisms are not put in place to address these issues the result is a diminution of status for TVE generally.

8. The International factor As the world economy is increasingly global, so educational provision in one country will impact on another.

This already apparent in a number of countries where nationals from one country work in another. In some instances the qualifications attained in one country will be a determinant for recruitment for work in another country, as well as the type of employment available in these instances.

The possibility of migration is increasingly determined by the qualifications and experience of the would be migrant.

Increasingly, the standing of TVE provision in one country will have later consequences for those who contemplate working abroad or migration.

Students will increasingly wish to articulate to courses of study on an international basis, particularly if the availability of further or higher education is limited in country.

These factors will encourage the development of transparency of qualification standards and nomenclature, as well as international cooperation between educational institutions and systems.
Policy development implications The factors outlined in this paper might be taken into account by technical and vocational education authorities when formulating development and delivery policies.

Clearly the question of status is one of the key issues which impinge on the recognition of TVE, as an essential and worthwhile activity to secure long term economic and other national objectives.

Note: Many concepts discussed in this paper are drawn from A. Haas, Case Studies on Technical and Vocational Education in Asia and the Pacific - An Overview, UNESCO, Melbourne, 1994 which was a summary and synthesis of research from the series Case Studies on Technical and Vocational Education in Asia and the Pacific. This series investigated factors which affect the status of technical and vocational education in the Asia and Pacific region. Individual country case studies were prepared for Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam.