

Sectoral organized TVET an essential condition for sustainable development

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TVET worldwide can be characterized traditionally by a great variety of approaches, ranging from school-based provision to non-formal training situations. In response to the globalization, a market-oriented approach towards TVET is favoured by more and more actors. Skills are required to respond flexibly to changing demands in a combination of traditional and new fields of work.

In the Netherlands, TVET takes an important role in preparing young people from the age 16 to 20 for the labour market. This part of the Dutch educational sector absorbs about 60% of all youngsters taking education and offers them a wide range of courses in various levels running from the assistant to middle management level. During the early 1990's, the economic and social needs arose to make TVET more integrated and national in the Netherlands . Important factors were decentralization, integration of different education and training structures into one national qualification structure and the creation of regional TVET colleges instead of a huge number of small schools. These priorities were implemented through the Act on Vocational and Adult Education (WEB).

Since this Act is established in 1996, there are, in broad terms, three interrelated levels in the Dutch vocational education and training system:

- 1 national: ministries, umbrella organisations, advisory organisations and national social partner organisations (employers organisations and trade unions);
- 2 sectoral: social partner organisations by sector, national expertise centres for vocational training and the labour market;
- 3 regional/local: schools, private training centres, municipalities, regionally organized social partner organisations.

In particular, the sectoral level of the system has afforded the permanent involvement and commitment of the social partners in the Dutch TVET system. Each branch or sector in the Dutch industry has an expertise centre for vocational training and the labour market. Each of the current 18 sectoral expertise centres has a board consisting of representatives of both employers and employees and (in most cases) education. These institutions are quite unique and do not have exact equivalents in other countries. The Adult and Vocational Education Act defined the following tasks of these sectoral expertise centres:

- 1 to develop and maintain the qualifications for TVET by defining occupational profiles and work together with educational representatives to translate these into qualification profiles;
- 2 to recruit a sufficient number of companies offering practical training places and to monitor the quality of these companies;
- 3 to increase quality and professionalism in their branch by providing advice, information and training;
- 4 to be involved in ensuring the quality of examinations.

Since 1996, CINOP is the Dutch centre of expertise in TVET with an explicit task within the public domain. Recognized by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the main purpose is to strengthen the knowledge infrastructure in vocational education and to provide research support in policy making and evaluation. Our centre has an (inter)national reputation for conducting quantitative and qualitative research in the TVET sector and issues in lifelong learning.

Research is specifically aimed at:

- lifelong learning;
- vocational education and knowledge economy;
- design and development of inclusive and effective education;
- career development and learning paths;
- personnel en organization;
- management and responsibility;
- earnings and performances;
- knowledge development and transfer.

CINOP participates in international networks (ELAP and Cedefop, ReferNet) and comparative policy research (in Europe). The centre is partner in current EU TVET-studies .

In addition to their activities in the Netherlands, CINOP has also got involved in supporting ministries and national authorities abroad to reform their TVET system. Our organization was and is active in South Africa, the Netherlands Antilles, Zambia, Tanzania, Romania, Libya and Ethiopia. We use the knowledge and experiences we built up in the Netherlands to support these countries . In our consultancy, we are very focused on introducing the sectoral level in the TVET systems. We observed that this level is missing in the most TVET systems of countries in transition.

The Romanian Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family was our client during the period 2007/2008. The Ministry asked CINOP to assist its TVET authority and sectoral committees:

- to build their capacity in the development of the National Qualification System;
- to support the sector agreed partnerships in developing and implementing:
 - a methodological qualifications framework, compatible with the European Qualification Framework;
 - an operational methodology for the qualifications and competences certification correlated to the TVET system.
- to develop the methodology for creation of Professional Qualifications National Register (PQNR).

Results of our support were:

- recommendations on tripartite agreement on National Qualification Framework;
- Strategy Development for Sector Committees;
- action plan for development of qualifications in specific sectors;
- development and implementation of the methodological qualifications framework;
- evaluation of methodologies regarding job analysis, qualifications development and validation;
- evaluation of certification system and development of new system;
- proposal for the PQNR structure and elaboration of the PQNR database.