

Recommendations for the role of Dutch embassies in supporting TVET in developing countries

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The report by David Atchoarena about TVET in the Dutch partner countries shows the need for a coherent approach towards TVET in developing countries. Woord en Daad underlines the importance of formulating guidelines for the Dutch embassies, in order to bring about that coherence. According to us, important elements to be included in the guidelines are the following.

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should develop a clear policy on TVET. Up to now, no such policy exists. Simply because vocational education is not part of the MDGs, it risks getting not enough attention by policymakers. A definite anchorage of TVET in Dutch development policy is therefore highly desirable.
2. Part of a well worked out policy should be under what circumstances what form of financial support should be chosen, and what the role of Dutch embassies is depending on the financial relationship.
3. In all partner countries the embassies should have TVET knowledge, especially in those countries where the Dutch embassy has specialised in education. TVET knowledge should also reside with the economic staff of the embassy.
4. The aforementioned report did not pay much attention to the possibilities for including TVET in the policy dialogue between the embassy and the government in question. Woord en Daad would be glad to see the Dutch embassies play an active role in the policy dialogue with governments and other partners on TVET. Elements for that dialogue could be:
 - Putting TVET higher on the agenda of governments as a relevant form of education to enlarge chances on the labour market and to contribute to social and economic development;
 - Developing clear policies regarding TVET by governments and the including TVET in PRSP strategies or education SWAps. Different actors regarding TVET (businesses, providers, the target group) should be involved in this process;
 - Enlarging the room for and recognition of a diversity of TVET-curricula by governments in order to meet the needs of different target groups and different needs within labour markets;
 - Promoting the importance of TVET from the perspective of sustainability of primary education. To make investments in primary education relevant and sustainable, sufficient opportunities for post-primary education, especially for TVET, are needed. A good connection between TVET and other forms of education and attention for TVET in primary education are important aspects in this respect;
 - Improving the access to TVET, by diminishing barriers to access and creating more opportunities (especially for marginalised groups) to attend TVET;

- Stimulating the set-up of TVET partnerships between governments, training institutes, employers and other relevant actors, building on the Dutch experience with social dialogue;
 - Setting up qualification/certification frameworks for technical and vocational skills.
5. Wherever embassies stimulate good quality TVET, they should also give attention to the creation of an enabling environment, by supporting economic development (e.g. local governments linking local companies to training institutes). Without an enabling environment TVET will not have the economic pay-off we would like to see. In this respect it would also be challenging to link Dutch companies that are present in the countries with vocational training institutes.
 6. In many developing countries, knowledge about TVET is scarce or scattered. Dutch embassies could play an intermediary role in sharing Dutch TVET knowledge with governments and private partners. The embassies can play an active role in gathering information from Dutch NGOs working on TVET in the respective countries. They can also exchange practices that have worked with embassies in other countries.