

Greening Technical and vocational education and training in Latin America

Virtual Conference on the UNESCO-UNEVOC TVeT from 05 to 11 June 2017

Moderated by Irene Alvarado Van der Laet

Introduction

All UN Member States agreed in September 2015 on the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\)](#) for the next 15 years. Education and training plays a vital role in achieving these goals; specifically technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is essential for the fulfilment of Goal 4 on Quality Education, as well as Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth.

However, the potential for TVET to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs is not limited to those two goals. UNESCO and Member States also recognize that TVET can significantly contribute to many of the other SDGs, including among others Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 7 on Clean Energy and Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities. One of the three priority areas under UNESCO's [Strategy for TVET \(2016-2021\)](#) is to 'facilitate the transition to green economies and sustainable societies', and to this end UNESCO aims to promote green skills development and cross-sectoral approaches to facilitate the development of such skills.

TVET plays a critical role in supporting green growth and sustainable development due to its links to the labour market. A well-designed TVET system has the potential to not only facilitate school-to-work transitions, develop enterprising skills, and help youth and adults acquire skills, competencies and qualifications for personnel and professional development. TVET can also contribute to training workers in the water, energy and agricultural sectors to use natural resources more efficiently, and plays a major role in the development of skills for the renewable energy sectors. Moreover, TVET has a role to play in supplying the knowledge, skills and competencies required to promote resource efficiency, reduce waste and advance more environmentally conscious practices in any occupational fields.

While TVET's role in facilitating the transition to sustainable economies and societies has been widely accepted, the implications that this has for TVET systems in Latin America have not been explored in detail. The objective of the proposed virtual conference is to shed light on how the socio-economic situation in Latin American countries can impact the greening of TVET policies and institutions, and exchange and discuss experiences and knowledge on policies and practices among TVET stakeholders in Latin America and any experts interested on relevant topics.

Youth and skills development in Latin America

Young people in Latin America will play an important role in contributing to Member States' transitions towards sustainable societies and economies. Youth in Latin America aged 15 to

29 number more than 163 million people – around one quarter of the region’s total population. However, one-fifth of those 163 million young people work in informal jobs, and another nearly 30 million young people are currently not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) (OECD, 2016). Part of the problem is the existence of weak TVET and school-to-work transition systems; around 50% of formal firms in Latin America do not find the workforce with the skills they need, compared to 36% of firms in OECD countries (OECD, 2016).

Green skills in Latin America as a potential

Green jobs and the development of green skills are not only essential to the transition towards sustainable societies and economies, but they also present TVET stakeholders in Latin America a possibility to develop relevant skills for the future labour market.

The demand for green skills is likely to increase around the world as the number of green jobs increases. For a start, employment figures in the renewable energy sector have over the past years significantly grown; in its 2015 annual review, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimated an increase of 7.7 million direct and indirect jobs in 2014 worldwide (excluding large hydropower) (IRENA, 2015). This represents an 18% increase compared to the number reported in the previous year.

Numerous Member States in Latin America are already taking the first steps to promoting green growth. Costa Rica introduced a low-carbon agenda in 2009 with an aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2021, while the Mexican government has also made steps to reform the energy sector to make the transition towards clean energy. Chile is currently taking steps to implement its Green Growth Strategy, while Colombia is implementing a Low Carbon Development Strategy to promote growth in sectors that generate less GHG emissions (OECD, 2015).

TVET’s role in the transition to sustainable economies and societies

The increase in the demand for green jobs and skills in the region presents an opportunity to the TVET sector in Latin America, especially considering the indispensable role of vocational education and training to the acquisition of the skills and knowhow for the green sectors.

However, it should also be noted that the contribution that TVET can make goes beyond meeting the growing demand for green jobs and skills. TVET can and should contribute to advancing more environmentally conscious practices in any occupational fields by greening skills development.

UNESCO-UNEVOC’s upcoming *Greening TVET practical guide for institutions* is one way TVET stakeholders can integrate more green and sustainable principles in their TVET institutions and systems. It primarily targets TVET institutions and helps them understand why it is important to undertake a greening process, and what this entails. The *Guide* takes a whole-institutional approach; the greening of institution should not focus on supporting TVET leaders, school principals and other stakeholders understand global sustainable developments and targets alone. Rather it also involves transformations in managing physical

resources, transferring green knowledge, skills and competencies through well-designed curriculum and training, and creating awareness and solutions at the community level.

Scope of the Virtual Conference

This virtual conference sheds light on how countries in Latin America are responding to climate-change policy developments, and the role TVET can play in this regard. The virtual conference answers the following questions:

What are the links between social, economic and environmental factors for the sustainable development?

1. *What are the main links that need to be addressed in your country to achieve sustainable, harmonious and integral development?*
2. *What role should education play in addressing sustainable development?*

How are Latin American governments developing their adaptation strategies and solutions to implement global climate change agreements?

1. *In accordance with your experience and knowledge, mention examples where the creation of green jobs has been incorporated into government plans in a comprehensive way?*
2. *Do you think green jobs are essential for development or do you see other alternatives?*
3. *Where do you think green jobs are concentrated in rural areas or large metropolitan areas?*
4. *What are the priority areas for the development of green jobs or other employment alternatives in your country to face climate change? Is there room for the incorporation of young people?*

What are the areas that most demand green jobs in Latin America?

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About the moderator



Irene Alvarado Van der Laat

Irene is an Agronomist and holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a Doctorate in Economics with emphasis on environmental economics, recently completing a sub-specialization in Renewable Energies. She currently teaches courses in the area of Business Development, specifically focusing on Project Evaluation and Environmental Economics.

She currently coordinates the EARTH University Entrepreneurship Programme, and is Director of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promoter (PROCOMER). She is also a permanent member of the Advisory Board of the New York-based Sustainability.

She has served as General Manager of Export Companies, was President of the North Caribbean Tourism Chamber, has represented Costa Rica in Sustainability, Education and Management panels for change in the tropics, and is the recipient of international awards for her research in Field of endeavors.

Her research work focuses on two areas: the analysis of new market structures for the development of agricultural products in green economies, and the promotion of entrepreneurial capabilities for young people.