

## Pathways between technical and vocational education and training and further education

Virtual conference on the UNESCO-UNEVOC TVeT Forum from 23 to 27 October 2017  
Moderated by Simon Field

### Introduction

This note sets out the background to the virtual conference on the '*Pathways between technical and vocational education and further education*' hosted on the UNESCO-UNEVOC TVeT Forum.

The topic, of 'pathways', that make it easier for graduates of TVET to enter different forms of postsecondary and higher education, has become very prominent, and it is the subject of a current UNESCO project, involving case studies and a policy paper, that will reach fruition in a final report in 2018. The purpose of the virtual conference is to share experience and knowledge of this issue, which should prove valuable in its own right, and as an input into the wider UNESCO exercise.

This note sets out some of the issues, and poses some questions for discussion during the seminar.

### The issues

#### *Opportunities for further education opportunities are vital for TVET graduates*

In the past, few graduates of initial, school-level, vocational training aspired to further education. But higher-level qualifications are now a common expectation among young people, reflecting increased ambitions, labour market demand for higher level skills and a need to upskill and reskill throughout life. When academic school education is seen as the natural route to university, it is vital to show that TVET programmes can also open a pathway to lifelong learning, including higher education.

#### *UNESCO is now putting a spotlight on this issue*

In response, UNESCO and other international bodies, are now giving increasing attention to opportunities for further education for TVET graduates. UNESCO is recommending that "*Member States should develop pathways and facilitate transitions between secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education including flexible admission procedures and guidance, credit accumulation and transfer, bridging programmes and equivalency schemes that are recognized and accredited by relevant authorities. TVET institutions, and other education institutions and authorities, should collaborate for the implementation of such measures.*"

#### *Effective pathways serve multiple goals*

'Effective pathways' means that those with TVET qualifications or practitioner backgrounds should have a full opportunity to benefit from further, post-secondary and higher education. This does not

mean that those with TVET backgrounds 'should' pursue post-secondary or higher education, but rather that they should face no unreasonable hindrances if they wish to do so. Effective pathways serve several policy goals. They:

- increase the attractiveness of initial TVET by meeting student aspirations, and remove any perception of TVET tracks as dead-ends;
- help to meet growing economic demands for higher level skills and qualifications;
- support lifelong learning, so that individuals can continue to develop knowledge and skills throughout their adult lives, and economies can adapt the skills of the workforce in response to technical and economic change;
- remove artificial barriers, such as requirements to repeat course material, that increase the costs of learning and prevent some from realising their full potential;
- reduce inequality and promote social inclusion and mobility, by opening up access to further and higher education to a wider group of people, including the most disadvantaged.

## Questions for discussion

In posing these questions, we are particularly interested in hearing about what your country has done, and is doing to promote effective pathways between TVET and further and higher education, and how well the measures employed have worked to that end.

### *Making learning transparent*

While growth and diversity in post-secondary and higher education programmes are positive, they can also cause confusion, so that students have little understanding of the pathways available to them, while post-secondary institutions do not always understand what TVET graduates already know.

**Question:** What can be done, through measures such as qualifications frameworks, systems of credit recognition and careers guidance, to improve information flows between initial TVET and post-secondary education, so that students better understand the requirements of post-secondary and higher education institutions, and these institutions have a better appreciation of the attainments of TVET graduates?

### *Preparing TVET students for lifelong learning*

Initial TVET programmes are sometimes narrowly focused on the skills required for a target occupation, and offer insufficient support for lifelong learning.

**Question:** What can be done to help those with TVET backgrounds to gain the additional skills, and sometimes qualifications to gain entry and succeed in post-secondary and higher education – for example by providing targeted support for literacy and numeracy within TVET programmes, or through access programmes that prepare entrants to succeed in further and higher education?

### *Making further learning accessible*

Both graduates from initial vocational training, and adults with practical experience, sometimes face barriers to further study. There may be financial barriers, and sometimes an inadequate range of options at post-secondary level, while modes of study at post-secondary level are sometimes also better adapted to young full-time students than adults requiring more flexible modes of study.

**Question:** What can be done through measures such as targeted funding support, and a flexible and diverse offer of postsecondary vocational programmes to strengthen pathways of further education for graduates of initial VET, as well as adults seeking upskilling?

## About the moderator



Simon Field is a leading expert on the international comparative analysis of country skills systems. As leader of the OECD's work on vocational education and training over many years, he led reviews of vocational skills systems in more than 30 countries throughout the world.

He is the lead author of two major comparative reports on country skills systems in *Learning for Jobs* and *Skills beyond School*, as well as many reviews of individual countries.

He is now the founder and Director of Skills Policy.