

ICSB Gazette

The Global Leader Supporting Micro-, Small and Medium Enterprises

Monday, December 9, 2019. Issue 45

INVESTING IN AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE: HOW ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION IS INTEGRAL TO EGYPT'S TVET REFORM

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Education is at the core of the upliftment of standards and quality of life since it is the foundation for human capital. The application of appropriate science and technology is the basis for improved economic growth. As an alternative to traditional academic learning in Egypt, technical and vocational education and training is a substitute for the Egyptian high school degree Thanweya 'Ama, where students enroll after the completion of their preparatory education and focus on occupational learning. With the globalization wave, requirement to develop knowledge and practical skills on a continuous

basis is necessary. Many education development initiatives have taken on board the need to foster transferable skills, because characteristics such as innovation and creativity are increasingly needed for all levels and types of work. TVET has a special role to play in providing the knowledge and practical skills that empower people to improve the quality of their daily lives and earn income. TVET today involves more than skills acquisition programmes. Its policies and strategies stress the need for stronger links with the labour market and for strategies to help graduates to adjust continuously to the fast changes in the market.

Yet for a long time, TVET in the Region has been neglected, fragmented and unevenly developed. In recent years, with Egypt's recognition of prior learning and skills acquired informally, there has been a policy shift that recognizes the importance of TVET in addressing a number of socioeconomic challenges faced by the

government. Accommodating close to 2 million students and over half a million graduates per year, the sector in Egypt faces many challenges, especially in relation to the efficiency of the labour market and the deteriorating conditions that have disproportionately

+2 MILLION
STUDENTS ENROL IN
THE TVET SYSTEM
ANNUALLY

+150,000
TEACHERS AND
TRAINERS ARE REGISTERED
IN THE TVET SYSTEM

+750,000
GRADUATES ENTER
THE LABOUR MARKET
ANNUALLY

+3500
SCHOOLS AND TRAINING
CENTRES EXIST ACROSS THE
NATION FOR THE TVET SYSTEM

+30,000
PRIVATE SECTOR
FACILITIES DEMAND
SKILLED LABOUR

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affected many of Egypt's youth. The important role of education in promoting more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors is now becoming recognized and the benefits of entrepreneurship education are no longer just limited to start-ups, innovative ventures and new jobs.

In the past decade, most TVET reform programmes have been designed to prepare people for paid employment and many focus on employment in large enterprises to help TVET planners and providers improve the relevance of supply, by ensuring that the demand side is considered. Still there have been limitations in gearing Egyptian TVET youths to become active contributors due to pre-defined ideas of what they can and cannot do, depriving local communities of their talents, and therefore constraining meaningful pathways for individuals and economic growth. Entrepreneurship has also become a key competency for all, helping young people to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake. TVET, at all levels including tertiary education, is a main contributor to entrepreneurship skills acquisition in both its senses because of its relevance in ensuring that the current and future labour meet economic development needs. Nonetheless, there is still relatively little emphasis in national development policies, and even fewer highlight the skills dimension of this component on the national economy.



As governments, industry, NGOs and the general public become more aware of the urgency of sustainable development, a vital role for education in learning and teaching towards sustainability, comes the realization of the importance to foster an environment of combining entrepreneurship skills and occupation-specific skills in mitigating unemployment and opening opportunities for self-employment as policy makers try to address the critical developmental issues of unemployment, rural-urban imbalance, industrialization, capital formation, and labor utilization.

International and regional developmental partners as well as decision-making bodies are nowadays focusing on TVET to boost economies and promote equity. To meet the growing demand for skills, TVET Egypt has been setup by the Government of Egypt, with the European Union, where vocational education is seen as a policy instrument to promote economic and social progress through multi-dimensional strategies to reach a balanced spectrum of delivering skills (including entrepreneurial) through intensive engagement with partners and effective mobilization of interest groups to boost economic and social change.

The strategic partnerships established amidst Egypt's declaration of '2019 as the Year of Education' has placed unprecedented commitment to adopting policies that clearly focus on lifelong learning, skills development and TVET to gain competitive advantage by increasing the speed and effectiveness with which we learn and act on that learning as means to ensure that people will be more employable, and more productive once they are employed (or self-employed). As such, providing a unique identity to the programme as an overarching platform that utilizes the combination of knowledge, skills and experiences from varied segments pushes the boundaries of traditional conceptions until the necessary TVET policies

and systems are in place to cover the preparation of tomorrow's workforce for competitive labour markets. The paramount importance in developing, competitive economies and better societies through TVET and assessing the extent to which relevant programmes are preparing TVET students for the whole spectrum of working life, entrepreneurship development is now seen as being of considerable importance in Egypt.

A general trend can now be observed in the shift of national TVET curricula from contents to competences. And while the uptake of entrepreneurship education in Egypt's technical and vocational schools and centres are still in its infancy stages, introducing entrepreneurship as an explicit goal in the curriculum is a clear signal that this is important. The new competency-based learning system uses a multidisciplinary teaching approach that allows students and trainees to organize what they learn, in terms of skills, knowledge or attitudes, in a way that facilitates recalling and using it, as appropriate, in different types of employment. It also aims to help them to think about using these competencies in an innovative way in their work and in their life more generally.

The new system also tackles the existing lack of capabilities of teachers in providing the necessary support to TVET students in problem-driven and experience-oriented education, which is essential to fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and abilities. A wide range of pedagogical tools, in close collaboration with international organizations (ILO, GIZ, UNIDO, USAID), have been developed to upgrade teaching methods and train them in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education is not yet included systematically in training programmes for educators, yet it will soon be as relevant Egyptian Ministries establish and formalize transition to employment units. These Units focus on providing the necessary know-how to allow students and trainees who receive entrepreneurship as general skills for all would be able to optimize their workplace experience, as a part of the TVET education, by looking beyond their skills and knowledge to other issues crucial in empowering them to take career decisions. The Units have also been setup to provide counseling for schools and teachers in designing TVET curricula where entrepreneurship is an explicit goal during the programme of study, allowing TVET students to continue to use their acquired entrepreneurship skills in mastering skills and acquiring knowledge that would enable them to become self-employed, establish their own business, or become more productive in paid employment.



Inclusion of entrepreneurship education to serve a disadvantage segment of society is now an integral part of the TVET mandate, to allow TVET graduates to gain access to a wider and better range of employment opportunities. Utilizing systems approaches to bring interconnectivity as transformation and re-alignment of the underlying processes and methods take place to change the way government works in a cross-cutting way, while involving all of the affected actors both inside and outside government regardless of the vocational training area, the most effective way to teach entrepreneurship is to have students participate in practical projects and activities, in which learning by doing is emphasized and real experience with entrepreneurship is gained.



The Transition to Employment aspect of **TVET Egypt** integrates the innovative mindset developed through entrepreneurship education and career guidance to help people in choosing and pursuing the career that most suits their abilities and interests. It also helps them in changing their occupation, should the need arise, in fast-changing labour markets. Within its framework, awareness programmes for all teachers, trainers and other related staff have begun with building capacity to ensure that innovation revolves around the use of different resources in new ways to dramatically better outcomes through many national and international initiatives to secure additional and sustainable technical assistance in order to promote entrepreneurship, and build a national cadre of professional trainers from different backgrounds, including young entrepreneurs. Thus, enabling TVET youth to become more productive employees as transferable skills are embedded into their lifelong learning processes, helping improve the public perception and image of TVET.

The development of a unified entrepreneurship and innovation curriculum has the scope of opened employment opportunities for TVET graduates, as it promotes enrolment in TVET and improves their social perception. Transferable skills acquired has helped Entrepreneurship be seen an employment strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency for TVET youth. Through entrepreneurship education, young people, learn organizational skills, including time management, leadership development and interpersonal skills, all of which are highly transferable skills sought by employers.

Working on key challenges that are currently facing the sector, TVET Egypt encourages relevant stakeholders to embrace a context-mindful framework towards a long-term objective with agility and adaptability to suit situations that may arise. Building on the opportunity provided to network, guide, learn, and further develop the innovative ideas generated by beneficiaries, embracing diversity and supporting initiatives that nurture strategic thinking and responsibility to lead changes in government managing the complexity and contradictions within the TVET sector. The strengthened linkages between education and sustainable social and economic development, with the promotion of technical and vocational education that offers practical skills and broader competencies, opening pathways to higher education and improving employability and entrepreneurship has raised a growing awareness of the role of entrepreneurship in growth and employment in Egypt. The issues of redefining entrepreneurship, and consequently entrepreneurship education and training, have become important to foster a paradigm shift toward skills based TVET. As such, entrepreneurship and innovation must be developed by concrete policy initiatives taking into consideration available

human and material resources as well as its developmental plans, to decide how available allocations can be best utilized.



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This Gazette issue is from the 2019 MSME Report.

Dr. Ayman El Tarabishy

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