GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH MARKET-DRIVEN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Practical guidance, examples and tools for effectively engaging the private sector to ensure that vocational training programmes provide the skills needed for sustainable employment opportunities.

CZECH REPUBLIC
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

PEOPLE IN NEED
CZECH REPUBLIC

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WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEARN ABOUT?

WHY WE SHOULD ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR	HOW TO CONDUCT LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENTS
HOW TO DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR	HOW TO ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
HOW TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINERS AND MENTORS	HOW TO OPTIMISE THE QUALITY OF WORK-BASED LEARNING
HOW TO SUPPORT VET CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES	QUALITY CHECKLIST

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

WHAT CAN IT HELP WITH?

This guide was developed by People in Need (PIN) to provide you with practical guidance, examples and tools for **engaging the private sector to ensure that Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes sustainably increase access to productive and fulfilling employment opportunities**. The guide demonstrates how engaging the private sector can improve the quality, scale and impact of VET skills development interventions. In this guide, 'private sector' primarily refers to industry and employers and 'VET' refers to education and training aimed at equipping people with the knowledge and skills required for certain occupations or for the labour market more broadly. What 'works' is highly context-specific. As such, the guidance provided should **always be adapted to the context in which it is being used**. Rather than offering comprehensive guidance on each of the topics covered, this guide provides a user-friendly framework for approaching each topic alongside information about where to find additional practical resources.

WHAT IS THIS GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE?

Who is it for?

→ Field Officers/Coordinators

→ Project/Programme managers

→ Technical advisors across sectors

→ Proposal writers

Where did the guidance come from?

This guide has been developed by PIN and draws from PIN's programming experience and a review of dozens of written resources, including guidance from Mercy Corps, the International Labour Organisation, the International Youth Foundation, USAID, Practical Action, the Beam Exchange, and the Women's Refugee Commission.

This is one of a series of guides on engaging the private sector. The other guides include:

ENABLING POOR PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

INCREASING POOR PEOPLE'S DEMAND FOR ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

IMPROVING SMALL PRODUCERS' ACCESS TO PROFITABLE MARKETS

1.

WHY WE SHOULD ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Across the world, unemployment and under-employment pose critical challenges for communities, families, and especially for young people. Of the roughly 1.8 billion young people alive today, approximately one third can be described as not in employment, education or training[1], and youth are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed.[2] One way development interventions have aimed to improve employment opportunities for youth is through improving VET systems, so that they better provide people with the skills they need to find a job or start their own business. A common problem with these interventions is that they tend to be heavily driven by the workers' (supply) side, with curricula and standards developed without substantial input from the employer (demand) side. This has hampered their effectiveness in contributing to employment outcomes.[3] Other reasons why vocational training programmes are not as effective as they might be include:

→ **Poor quality and relevance of the vocational training:** The curricula are not relevant and market-driven, which results in a skills mismatch between the qualifications and skills that individuals possess and those needed by the labour market.[4] For example, in Armenia, the agriculture sector has been unable to provide job opportunities to all graduates, partially due to an inadequate vocational education system, in which students lack quality training facilities and do not receive the up-to-date technical qualifications relevant for the current agricultural production systems.[5]

→ **Lack of skilled trainers with industry connections and experience:** Training outcomes often reflect the competencies of the vocational trainers, which can be limited if trainers lack recent industry experience and technical or pedagogical skills. For example, in Ethiopia, it is difficult to find highly competent leather trainers with knowledge of new technologies and international quality standards for leather products.

→ **Lack of opportunities for work-based learning and internships:** The transition from school to work is often challenging and the lack of opportunities for work experience during training can dramatically limit graduates' chances of finding jobs after study.[6]

→ **Lack of effective platforms for dialogue between employers and education institutions:** A lack of coordination and communication between employers and VET colleges also contributes to the skills mismatch problem.[7] In Georgia and Ethiopia, sectoral coordination platforms were established by PIN to address this problem and each involves the regular participation of VET colleges, VET government officers, sectoral private companies and associations, and NGOs.

→ **Lack of career counselling and coaching services within the VET system:** A lack of relevant and suitable career information and support for graduates, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can prevent them from finding stable employment opportunities. In Ethiopia, the Government recognised this problem and included within its national strategy the establishment of a dedicated career services department within each VET provider.

PIN prepared this guide in order to provide **practical guidance on how programmes supporting VET can overcome some of these challenges and ensure that they sustainably increase access to productive and fulfilling employment opportunities** for youth, women and men.

1 Making Cents International (2017) Demand-Driven Training for Youth Employment Toolkit
2 Glick, Peter J.; Huang, Crystal; Mejia Gonzalez, Nelly Josefina (2015) The private sector and youth skills and employment programs in low and middle-income countries, World Bank Group
3 Dunbar, Muriel (2013) Engaging the Private Sector in Skills Development." Health & Education Advice and Resource Team. Oxford Policy Management
4 Angel-Urdinola, Diego F., Kuddo, Arvo and Amina Semlali, eds. (2013). Building Effective Employment Programs for Unemployed Youth in the Middle-East and North Africa. Directions in Development
5 World Bank (2014) SABER Country Report Armenia
6 Glick, Peter J.; Huang, Crystal; Mejia Gonzalez, Nelly Josefina (2015) The private sector and youth skills and employment programs in low and middle-income countries, World Bank Group
7 Olabiyi Oladiran Stephen, Benjamin O. Okafor & Bamidele O. Ebenezer (2014) Facilities Improvement Through Public-Private Partnership for Enhancing Foundation Skills Among Technical Vocational Education Students in Nigeria

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WHY SHOULD WE ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT?

Close collaboration between public and private stakeholders is critical to establishing successful vocational training systems. The private sector, which creates the majority of new jobs in most countries, is required to play an active role. A review of evidence found that comprehensive programmes, which combine training (vocational, or vocational plus life skills) with internships at companies, or other kinds of work experience (often referred to as a 'dual training system') have more positive effects on employment, than training in colleges alone.[8] While cooperation with the private sector on VET can take a variety of forms, experience has shown that the most fruitful types of employer participation in training programmes is their involvement in curriculum development, and provision of on-the-job experience (e.g. internships) to complement classroom learning.[9] Not only can this cooperation play a key role in reducing skills mismatch, improving employment and income outcomes for graduates, but it can also support growth in the economy.[10] As the number of young people entering the workforce is rising, so too is the demand for skills development, which places higher demands on the often-limited resources of government. The private sector can play a role in financing VET programmes and addressing such resource shortages, if the content and outcomes of vocational training are geared towards their needs. Whilst this offers the potential to improve the outreach and sustainability of training programmes, private sector involvement in VET generally does not happen without facilitation support from either government, donors, or NGOs.[11]

Women participating in beautician training at a beauty parlour in Afghanistan. © PIN Archive

8 L. Fox and U. Kaul, 2017. 'The evidence is in: How should youth employment programs in low-income countries be designed?'
9 Glick, Peter J.; Huang, Crystal; Mejia Gonzalez, Nelly Josefina. 2015. The private sector and youth skills and employment programs in low and middle-income countries, World Bank Group
10 P. Glick, C. Huang, N. Mejia (2015) "The Private Sector and Youth Skills and Employment Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries"; Glick, Peter J.; Huang, Crystal; Mejia Gonzalez, Nelly Josefina. 2015. The private sector and youth skills and employment programs in low and middle-income countries, World Bank Group; Dunbar, Muriel. (2013) "Engaging the Private Sector in Skills Development."
11 Dunbar, Muriel (2013) Engaging the Private Sector in Skills Development.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS AND VET COLLEGES:

For the trainee/job seeker:

→ Greater awareness of job and career opportunities.

→ Greater understanding of job tasks, work environment, and employers' expectations.

→ More opportunities to practice classroom learning and gain relevant skills for the current job market, including life skills, and self-confidence.

→ Opportunities to meet and develop relations with potential employers and display skills ahead of job interviews.

For private sector employers:

→ Access to qualified, work-ready job candidates, leading to improved recruitment.

→ Reduced costs of training newly hired workers.

→ Increased coaching, mentoring and management skills.

→ Increased job satisfaction of employees involved in training programmes.

→ Improved reputation, brand, visibility and relations with the local community.

→ In the long-term, improved productivity and quality of products or services and reduced costs.

For VET colleges:

→ Increased placement and job-retention rates for graduates, due to better skills alignment.

→ Access to employers' resources (e.g. technologies and facilities, information, experts and funding).

→ Opportunities to improve existing curricula and materials and establish new courses.

→ Improved reputation within the local community and with students.

Source: Adapted from the Making Cents International (2017), Demand-Driven Training for Youth Employment Toolkit.

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2. HOW TO CONDUCT LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENTS TO IDENTIFY CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Labour market assessments are fundamental to designing effective skills development interventions. They help us to identify the supply side factors (e.g. current skills of jobseekers, quality of vocational training etc.), the demand side issues (e.g. skills in demand by local employers, hiring trends, etc.), and important rules and norms (e.g. attitudes towards women in the workforce, labour policies and laws) which can influence the labour market for a given vocation. Labour market assessments typically involve a range of research methods commonly used in the development sector, such as desk reviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Tools with detailed guidance on how to conduct labour market assessments are listed at the end of this section.

STEPS AND TOOLS FOR THE LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This section provides an overview of key steps, research questions, and data collection methods that can be used in carrying out a labour market assessment. The following guidance relates specifically to conducting labour markets assessments to inform the design or improvement of VET programming. Some of the steps may take place concurrently.

Step one: Define the goals, key research questions and methodology of the labour market assessment: A key first step in the labour market assessment is defining the main goals and research questions, as these will inform the methodology and tools used. An important part of this process is defining the target group of the project interventions (e.g. urban poor women, youth with disabilities, migrant workers). Assessments will vary in their scope, methodology and resources allocated. Check out this 'Tip Sheet' from Mercy Corps, for further practical advice on Developing an LMA Methodology.

Step two: Identify and select relevant sectors: It is important to understand the local economic context and opportunities for employment (and self-employment, if relevant) for your target group. This information is required in order to select the sectors or subsectors that the VET programme will target (if these sectors have not already been selected

WHAT CAN LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENTS HELP US DO BETTER?

→ Identify sectors and specific businesses with an existing or **anticipated demand for labour**.

→ Identify **potential growth sectors** that may provide opportunities for entrepreneurs and new businesses.

→ Identify technical and transferable **skills (and specific training methodologies) in demand** by the labour market.

→ Understand the **current skills training opportunities** available to job-seekers and how they are functioning.

→ Understand the **career aspirations and interests** of job-seekers.

→ Identify the **constraints that job seekers face** in accessing employment opportunities, as well as those faced by **employers in finding** skilled employees (including skills mismatches).

→ **Identify and build relationships with employers and business associations** that can be valuable during project implementation.

→ Understand **gender dynamics** and **employment conditions** within different sectors.

→ Identify **constraints and opportunities in the labour market system**, such as policies, norms and important supporting functions, which can influence your project design (e.g. job matching services, financial services).

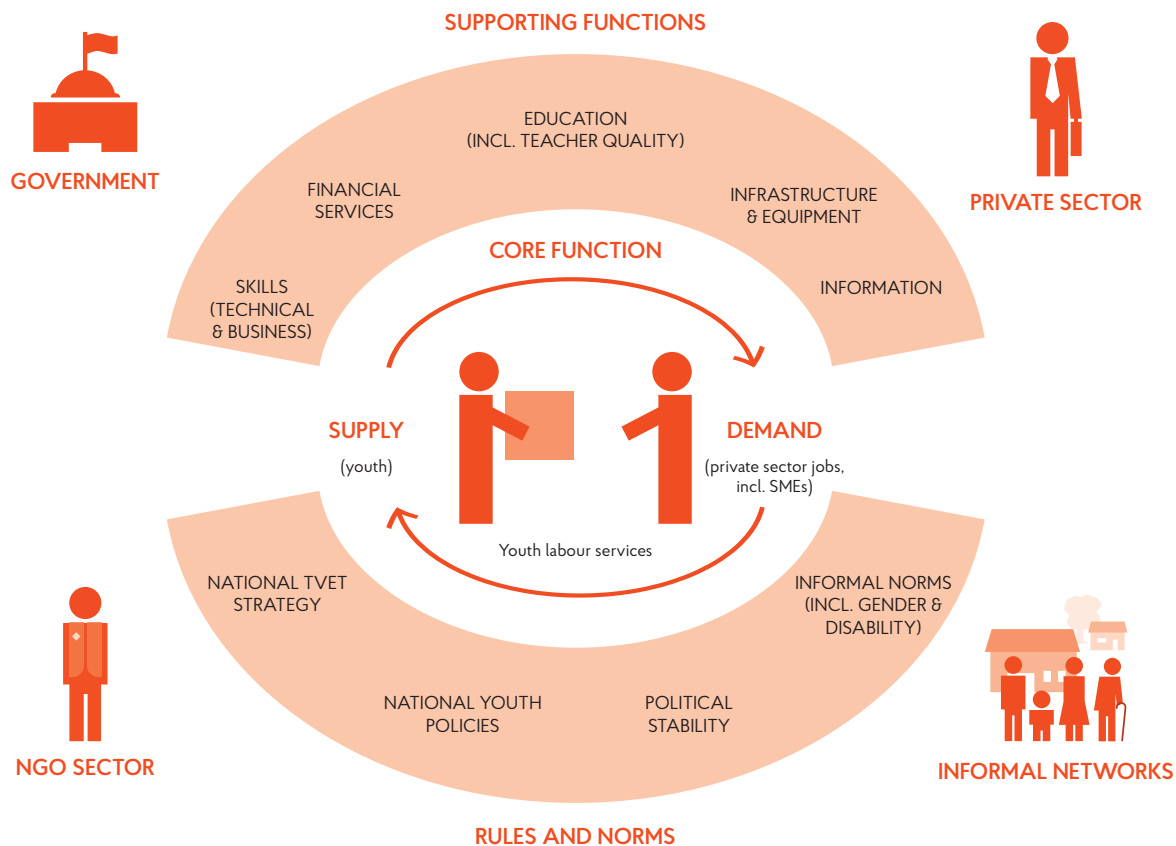## WHAT IS A LABOUR MARKET AND A LABOUR MARKET SYSTEM?

A labour market is the system through which workers (supply) and employers (demand) interact with one another. Like other market systems, these interactions take place in a system that is influenced by a range of factors, which can have impacts on both the supply of and demand for labour. As an example, the labour market system (for youth) in Ethiopia's leather sector is visualised using a market system diagram (or 'donut'), which divides the market system into three parts made up of the 'core', 'supporting functions', and 'rules and norms'. The 'core' of the market involves suppliers of labour (youth) and businesses that demand these labour services (large employers

and SMEs). In order for young jobseekers to be able to find jobs and employers to find suitable workers, there are a number of important 'supporting functions' required. These include training programmes that enable young jobseekers to develop skills, financial service providers that offer loans to leather SMEs, and information provided to youth about job opportunities in the sector. Similarly, rules and norms, (which can be both formal and informal), also shape and influence the interactions between youth and employers. For example, employers' perceptions of youth and people with disabilities can have an influence on their hiring practices.

YOUTH LABOUR MARKET SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIA'S LEATHER SECTOR

by a donor, based on good research). A sector can be specific to a product (e.g. rice, leather, solar technology) or a service (e.g. construction, eco-tourism, ICT). Due to limited resources, it will not be possible to assess all potential employment sectors. An initial desk review of opportunities and consideration of donor and organisational interests can help you limit the selection of sectors for further analysis.

To help narrow the list of potential sectors and select those with the highest potential for creating or enabling access to decent jobs for your target group, a structured selection process based on clearly defined criteria can be used. Criteria should consider impact potential (e.g. the number of quality jobs that the sector can create for your target group), growth opportunity (e.g. which sectors of the local economy are growing or projected to grow) and feasibility (e.g. the likelihood that the project can affect changes in this sector). Other criteria that take into account the project's specific goals should also be added. Considering gender when selecting sectors is very important given the additional barriers faced by the female labour force in some countries. Guidance on the sector selection process, including suggestions for criteria, can be found in this International Labour Organisation (ILO) Value Chain Development For Decent Work guide (pages 18 to 28).

WHAT TO DO WHEN NO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE IDENTIFIED?

In some instances, the labour market assessment may inform us that there are simply not enough jobs to absorb local populations. There might also be no formal employers present in the target areas (e.g. in remote rural areas). In such cases, programme efforts should focus on supporting small and medium enterprises in order to strengthen job creation, support new business plan development and the start-up of new micro-enterprises. Instead of interviewing formal employers, project teams may have to consult with local authorities and community leaders and do market observations to understand growth opportunities for self-employment.

WHAT IS DECENT WORK AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

While incomes are often one of the most pressing issues for the poor, there are other important factors to consider when designing and implementing programmes to support employment outcomes. Rather than looking at income or productive employment impact alone, a more holistic approach is needed. According to the ILO, decent work includes work that is productive and provides a fair income, in addition to workplace security and safety, social protection for families, prospects for personal development and social integration, and treats men and women equally. When conducting labour market assessments to identify and analyse potential labour opportunities, it is very important that these decent work factors and their relevance to the sector are taken into consideration. Beyond development outcomes, there can be a strong business case for businesses to provide good working conditions and it is important that project teams understand these opportunities. For instance, motivated employees can have greater performance and contribute to business growth. For guidance on how to integrate a decent work approach into each stage of a skills development programme, refer to the ILO's 'Value Chain Development for Decent Work' guide, in addition to this sector selection example from an ILO jobs programme in Afghanistan and this ILO brief on 'A Market Systems Approach to Decent Work'.

Step three: Identify skills gaps in the selected sectors: Once we better understand economic opportunities and how the labour market system is functioning, we can begin to analyse the demand for certain skills and knowledge in the selected sectors and see whether those skills are being supplied or not. The Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) process, which captures the major duties, related tasks and necessary knowledge, skills, and traits included in an occupation, can be a helpful tool to use when talking to employers about skills needs. Please refer to this section of the guide for more information on DACUM. It is also important to gather information on the existing education and training systems, in order to assess whether they align with the demands

MAIN GOALS AND STEPS IN THE LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENT	KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Identify which economic sectors are relevant and show potential opportunities for your target group	→ Which markets have significant potential for growth and opportunities for employment creation? → What types of employment opportunities could be provided by these sectors (e.g. apprenticeships, production, self-employment, wage jobs, etc.)? → What is the quality of these potential jobs (e.g. working conditions etc.)? → How many people could be employed in these sectors, and from which demographic (e.g. youth, women, migrants etc.)?	→ Desk review of secondary data (e.g. labour market studies, unemployment rates, poverty analysis, business environment reports, sectoral studies etc.) → Consultations with development actors (e.g. INGOs, donors) and relevant government departments → Key informant interviews with employers, businesses and business associations → Needs and livelihoods assessments with your target group → Gender analysis → Consumer surveys and market observations
Identify skills gaps in the selected sectors	→ What are the skills (both technical and non-technical) in demand by employers in the targeted sectors? → What knowledge and skills do your target group currently have and what skills do they need to access potential job opportunities? → What skills and training opportunities are currently available to your target group? → What training programmes or curricula need to be developed and/or updated to improve the employability of your target group? → How are the existing skills, interests and barriers to accessing training and work different for different social groups (e.g. men, women and youth)? → What skills development interventions have been tried in the past and why did they succeed or fail?	→ Review of relevant sectoral research and skills gap analysis reports → Key informant interviews with employers, training institutions and government departments → Focus group discussions with jobseekers → Review of enrolment and graduation data from VET programmes in relevant sectors → Gender and disability analysis
Understand relevant constraints and opportunities in the labour market system	→ What other constraints do your target groups face in finding employment? These can be social (e.g. negative employer perceptions of women), structural (e.g. no childcare for young mothers, lack of access to information about jobs etc.) or related to regulations and policies. → Which other stakeholders are involved in or have influence on this market (e.g. job-search service providers, private training institutions, government departments, NGOs, financial service providers)	→ Market systems, value chain and stakeholder mapping and analysis → Key informant interviews with employers and training institutions → Focus group discussions with jobseekers → Gender analysis → Key informant interviews with financial service providers, career service providers and other actors with influence on the sector

of employers in terms of their content, quality, financial accessibility, location and whether they are producing suitable numbers of graduates. An example of a skills gap analysis conducted on Kosovo's ICT sector as part of the Helvetas-implemented EYE project, can be accessed here.

Step four: Identify additional constraints and opportunities in employment in the targeted sectors: In conducting the labour market assessment, it is important to think of the labour market as a system made up of many actors and interactions that influence how the market functions. Mapping the structure of the labour market and the selected sectors, to provide a visual representation of the overall system you are aiming to influence, can be a useful step in this analytical process. This mapping process not only helps you to identify who the relevant market actors to meet with are, but also which interview questions to develop for them.

Step five: How to use and analyse the labour market assessment data: Once primary and secondary data have been collected, the project team will have to draw out the key findings from the assessment. This process should include consideration of supply (e.g. core competencies needed) and demand factors (e.g. employers' perceptions of your target group), along with other system level constraints and opportunities identified in the assessment. The information gathered should be discussed by the project team and partners in de-brief meetings and be used to inform the design the project's overall strategy and interventions. The planned interventions should also take into account the project's budget and staffing resources. Designing the interventions will involve deciding together with relevant stakeholders about whether to introduce new or revise existing courses in order to match the market labour demand and increase students' employability. Ensuring the market-driven design and availability of a training programme alone is insufficient to enable people to enter the labour market. Other important factors, such as how the training courses will be sustainably financed and how their quality will be assured are also critical factors that need to be considered in this design stage. The findings and recommendations should be summarised and disseminated in the form of a labour market assessment report (an example from Mercy Corps and EDC's work in Liberia can be found here).

In Afghanistan, vocational trainings are provided also in the context of self-help groups aimed at increased self-reliance of vulnerable communities.

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WHY TAKE A SYSTEMS APPROACH?

It is important that skills development interventions are designed in an integrated way with other dimensions of the labour market system. Understanding who the key active actors are in the labour market, as well as the availability of supporting services (e.g. job-matching services, financial services), the job creation initiatives (e.g. from private sector development and investment) and the social norms, policies and regulations that can influence the labour market, are critical for designing effective skills development programmes. For example, a project designed to improve the skills of young female graduates in a leather training programme may not be very effective if critical supporting services, like financial services (for leather enterprises) and career services are missing and not properly assessed, or if a key constraint to employment is negative employer perceptions towards hiring young women. This information is important to know in order to design interventions that can affect changes to the overall system. Such changes, also referred to as 'systemic' or 'system-level' changes, are much more likely to continue after project support ends. A useful explanation of 'systemic change' by Helvetas can be found here. Even if addressing some 'system-level' factors and constraints are beyond a project's means, the analysis is still important for forming a picture of how the overall labour market functions and building an understanding of factors that might enhance or limit the effectiveness of an intervention.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENTS

💡 Use the labour market assessment to help develop relationships with employers and other labour market actors. This can be valuable for securing their involvement in the project. Conducting the assessment internally also provides an important learning opportunity for the project team.

💡 Assessing the labour market should not be a one-off activity. Labour markets and skills needs are dynamic and employers cannot always predict their labour needs accurately. Project teams should continue to monitor the labour market conditions and trends during implementation and VET curricula should be updated and revised periodically, based on developments taking place in the industry. Some practical ways this can be done include: having regular consultations with project steering committees, employers and external advisory groups (e.g. chambers of commerce); designing mid-term evaluations to include consultations with employers; and monitoring internships and job placements to identify how well a training is meeting the current market needs. PIN's IndiKit website also has a range of guidance on indicators that can be used to monitor labour market interventions.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR MARKET ASSESSMENTS

Mercy Corps'
Labour Market Assessment Guidance

For use in both relief and development contexts, this series of tip sheets and tools (including questionnaires) has been developed to guide field teams through the assessment process, from creating the initial methodology to utilising and sharing the data and final report.

Women's Refugee Commission's
Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth

This three-part toolkit is a combination of resources, questionnaires and activities for gathering information on market demand and translating it into programming.

International Youth Foundation's
Connecting Employment Training with Labor Market Demand and Opportunities

This simple and practical guidance explains how to identify labour market demand and integrate it into the curriculum development process of training institutions.

The International Labour Organisation's
Value Chain Development For Decent Work

This material offers practical guidance on how to conduct market assessments using a market systems approach, in order to create employment and improve working conditions in targeted sectors (see pages 18-53 for guidance on the market assessment process).

FIELD EXAMPLE: CONDUCTING A LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENT TO UNDERSTAND THE SKILLS MISMATCH IN GEORGIA'S AGRIBUSINESS SECTOR

Context: In Georgia, PIN has been implementing an EU-funded project aimed at reducing the mismatch between the labour market demands of the agribusiness sector and the skills and qualifications offered by VET. In this project, called 'Improving Formal, Non-formal and Informal Vocational Education for the Agribusiness', the four pilot areas of study for targeted VET institutions include agro-logistics, beekeeping, tractor operation and veterinary services.

The labour market assessment: After the initial desk research, in-depth interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with VET institutions; small farmers and agro-businesses/cooperatives; private sector partners of VET providers; high school students; government departments and local and international NGOs. The assessment also involved an analysis of the agricultural value chain in Imereti, one of the project's target areas.

The identified constraints: The assessment found that there were low rates of formal employment amongst agricultural VET graduates and that of the relatively few VET programmes across the country, these had a reputation for poor quality. Small farmers were not interested in long-term formal education but needed to improve their skills to unlock significant productivity and income gains for themselves and the country. There was a need for more informal training and skills opportunities as well as revisions to the formal VET programmes.

The intervention: The intervention supported public-private partnerships (PPP) through apprenticeships with employers and sectoral coordination platforms in order to improve the alignment of the VET curriculum with the demands of the industry and increase the quality and accessibility of targeted VET programmes. At the same time, informal trainings such as courses for beekeepers and non-formal training for the Regional Information and Consultation Centre on adult learning were provided to address skills gaps.

The outcomes: 70% of apprentices found employment in their chosen vocation within six months of completing their apprenticeships. There was also a 45% increase in the number of private sector partners working with VET institutions to provide practical training opportunities and apprenticeships. More information about the project's 'Agricultural Labour Market Survey' can be found here, in addition to the questionnaires used in this assessment.
A study on the importance of private sector engagement in Georgia's agricultural vocational education, conducted as part of the project, can also be accessed here.

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3.

HOW TO DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSS

An important step in working with the private sector to improve VET programmes is knowing how to identify suitable partners to work with. During the labour market assessment, the project team may have begun to consider which employers could be potential partners, but not selected which of these would be most suitable for a partnership. The following steps (and tools linked at the end of this section) can be used in this selection and partnership development process. Note that the steps do not always have to be followed in sequence and are often part of an iterative process.

Step 1 – Research potential businesses: This research typically starts during the market assessment process. It involves understanding which private sector businesses/employers are active in a given sector and can be further investigated for partnerships.

Step 2 – Assess their suitability: In determining which employers to partner with in a project, it can be helpful to develop a list of criteria for the selection process. Consider which types of businesses best align with the project's objectives as well as other factors including:

→ The business's motivations and willingness to participate in new (or expand) relevant business activities (e.g. hosting interns, helping develop curricula, employing more female staff in certain roles) and their constraints for doing so,

→ Their history as an enterprise (e.g. reputation, relations with other actors, track record),

→ Their 'leverage' or the potential and networks they have for reaching and influencing a high number of businesses or workers. For example, a large leather company buying products from hundreds of smaller supplier SMEs may have considerable influence in setting skills quality standards for the sector and may be willing to co-invest in skills-building initiatives.

Step 3 – Conduct due diligence checks: An essential step before commencing a partnership is conducting due diligence to assess the possible risks and advantages. Links to external guidance on

this are provided at the end of this section and organisations may have their own set of procedures and principles.

Step 4 – Define and develop the partnership agreement: Consider which type of partnership will best contribute to the project's objectives (e.g. a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a Contract for Services etc.), while also aligning with donor requirements. Effective agreements clearly define the objective of the partnership, the roles and responsibilities of VET institutions and private businesses, the financial (if any) and non-financial contributions (e.g. staff time) of both sides, and a work-plan. Agreements should reflect a partnership in which the **private sector partner undertakes activities, with support from the project, for its own benefit and not for the benefit of the project.** No matter what type of support is provided, the project's role should only be as a temporary facilitator and must not become a permanent actor in the market (more information on this 'facilitation' role is provided in the box). This '10 Principles of Partnership' Tip Sheet from Mercy Corps provides a list of important principles for building effective partnerships.

Examples of partnership activities that can be included in agreements:

→ Employee visits to classrooms to talk to with students and teachers about the company, industry, career pathways and job roles,

→ Site visits to businesses for students to observe work and possibly undertake job-shadowing,

→ Collaboration on curriculum development, aligning training content and methodology with industry standards,

→ Company donations of equipment, use of facilities, time of experts, financial and in-kind support and other resources to education partners,

→ Company commitments to setting a specific number of internship/apprenticeship places for partnering schools and to hiring graduates,

→ Private-sector partners delegate senior staff to participate in joint governance structures and advisory boards (committees) of VET colleges,

→ Partners provide each other with testimonials, press releases, events, referrals and other opportunities for increasing visibility and branding.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Have a clear, specific and credible offer. Try to identify a constraint or interest the company has (or may have) and how your project may contribute to addressing this. When identified, clearly explain to the partner what the goal of the project is **and why working with you can mean good business for them**. It is important to give details of the type of partnership you want as soon as possible.

Adapt your language and approach. As private sector actors have a different logic and language to NGOs, it is **important to be conscious of your communication style** when meeting with potential partners (see here for good tips on this from Mercy Corps). To improve your credibility and stimulate the interest of the private sector partner, **it is important that the project team demonstrates a good technical understanding of the sector and the business.** Consider investing in the project team's private sector engagement skills and approach.

The process should be driven by self-selection. Select businesses that demonstrate commitment by investing their own time and resources before receiving project assistance. Some practical lessons learned on self-selection by USAID can be found here.

Take an adaptive management approach. When working with private sector actors, conditions can change quickly. It is necessary to use adaptive management approaches, e.g. start with small-scale pilots of any new approaches and prepare to learn and adjust accordingly. This learning note by Mercy Corps provides practical advice on how to integrate an adaptive management approach into your work.

Interested businesses should **see the partnership opportunity as something to compete for**, rather than something being offered by the project. Consider application processes in order to reinforce this.

Minimise risk. Consider identifying and working with several businesses to minimise the risk of not achieving project objectives in the case that businesses drop out or fail to fulfil commitments.

WHAT IS A 'MARKET FACILITATION' APPROACH AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

To avoid having a negative impact on markets and to ensure that interventions are sustainable, it is important keep in mind the principle of taking a 'facilitation' role. A common reason why skills training interventions are not as effective as they could be, is that implementers have taken too much of a direct role in their support for employment outcomes, thus becoming a part of the labour market system itself. **Facilitation can be understood as creating the conditions for public and private market actors to drive change themselves.** Rather than organisations directly implementing activities and making sure participants know that they supported them, organisations should try to bring local actors together to do the work and act simply as 'connectors', to build relationships, fill in knowledge gaps and facilitate the actions of the permanent local actors. Through this approach, organisations ensure that the activities can continue without their ongoing involvement and funding. Engineers Without Borders (EWB) have developed a useful list of best practices and ideas for facilitation activities here.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR SELECTING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS

The International Labour Organisation's Value Chain Development For Decent Work

Material offers guidance on how to create employment and improve working conditions in targeted (see pages 80-87 for guidance on selecting suitable private sector partners and developing agreements).

Mercy Corps' Private Sector Engagement Toolkit

Kit includes tools for identifying private sector partners, including a 'Business Sector Scanning Tool' and a 'Firm Identification Tool'.

Mercy Corps' Due Diligence Assessment Tool

This tool includes guidance on how to structure research into the risks and compatibility of a potential private sector partner and contains a useful due diligence checklist.

Will/Skills Matrix in the M4P Operational Guide (page 24)

This guide provides advice on how to use the Will/Skills Matrix to inform your selection of appropriate private sector partners.

FIELD EXAMPLE: ENGAGING COMPANIES IN VET DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA

Context: PIN and partners (VIS, Concern Worldwide and CHADET) in Ethiopia are undertaking a project aimed at reducing irregular migration from Northern and Central Ethiopia. The project, funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa and titled 'Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern and Central Ethiopia' (SINCE), aims to improve the living conditions of 1500 potential migrants and returnees and 200 refugees by improving access to VET and formal employment opportunities in the leather, metalwork and construction sectors.

Engaging private companies: Private companies have been engaged in different stages of the project. During the labour market assessment, key company representatives from the leather, construction and metalwork sectors provided information about skills gaps and the possibility of hosting apprenticeships. During the learning facilities assessment of target VET Colleges, private companies indicated necessary equipment and tools needed to provide market driven courses. During the development of two manuals on short-term and cooperative training, private companies participated in the revisions to ensure that the work-based learning component reflected their needs. Private companies also regularly participate in sectoral platforms, which were established by the project to facilitate dialogue and information sharing between companies and VET colleges. Private companies also provided valuable inputs during the curriculum revision process lead by the national TVET bureau.

The outcomes: As a result of the private companies' involvement at various stages, the companies have developed a level of ownership and trust in the TVET system and are currently (as of February 2019) hosting over 765 trainees in apprenticeships with commitments for later job employment.

4. HOW TO ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

If the initial labour market assessment identified a gap in the skills demanded by the private sector, there will be a need for curriculum revision or development. In an ideal scenario, once the partnership is established, implementing organisations should facilitate the curriculum development/revision for the related course in the identified sectors. The duration of the courses will vary according to the number of training modules but both class-based and work-based learning (WBL) are needed to enable trainees to develop required skills and competencies. Behavioural/employability skills in areas such as communication, problem solving, decision-making, teamwork and time management, also need to be included in the curriculum. The Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) methodology can be used for this. DACUM is a systemic process for analysing a job by capturing the major occupational duties and tasks that competent workers must perform, as defined by a group of professional high performing workers through a facilitated workshop.

STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM (DACUM)

Occupational standards analysis and task identification: Expert workers are guided by a trained facilitator during in a two-day workshop to identify the duties and tasks of the occupation.

Validation: Once tasks and duties are identified, a DACUM chart is sent to other professional high performing workers under the same occupation for verification.

Task analysis: Once the DACUM chart has been validated, the facilitator starts interviewing key workers to identify the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to perform each task, as well as ways to measure when the task is done well.

Curriculum development: The information is used by a team of experts, in coordination with VET authorities, to develop a new or revise the current curriculum.

The curriculum should be competency-based rather than subject-based. This means it should focus on skills to learn progressively and address what the person can do and learn rather than focus on the subject to teach.

The same team will proceed with the following steps:

→ Identify learning outcomes and a related sequence of skills to be achieved in a logical order,

→ Group learning outcomes into modules,

→ Determine the purpose and duration of each module,

→ Identify practical learning opportunities and the type of work-based learning,

→ Conduct a learning outcomes quality check, to assess for example the language and relevance, and check whether the outcomes are clear and measurable and have a logical sequence for progressive learning.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING SOFT OR NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

There are different ways to refer to non-technical skills, for example, generic skills, employability skills, soft skills or transferrable skills. Non-technical skills, including cognitive (comprehension, reasoning, problem solving, decision-making), and non-cognitive skills (personal traits, social and emotional skills), are very important to employers.[12]

Evidence shows that "both cognitive and non-cognitive abilities determine social and economic success" for young people and adults.[13] As a result, integrated courses that combine in-class employability and life skills lessons with at-work practical experience "have higher rates of success, with success defined as improving the probability of obtaining employment and/or higher earnings."[14]

12 Nikoloski, Zlatko, Mohamed Ihsan Ajwad (2014) Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills Affect Employment Outcomes: Evidence from Central Asia

13 Heckman, James J., Stixrud, Jora and Sergio Urzua (2006). The Effects of Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities on Labor Market Outcomes and Social Behavior, p. 28.

14 Angel-Urdinola, Diego F., Kuddo, Arvo and Amina Semlali, eds. (2013). Building Effective Employment Programs for Unemployed Youth in the Middle-East and North Africa. Directions in Development, p. 17.

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FIELD EXAMPLE: ALIGNING VET CURRICULA WITH THE NEEDS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ETHIOPIA'S CONSTRUCTION, METAL AND LEATHER SECTORS.

The context: PIN and partners involved in the 'Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern and Central Ethiopia' (SINCE) project in Ethiopia are working towards improving the living conditions of 1500 potential migrants and returnees and 200 refugees by improving access to VET and formal employment opportunities in various sectors. Based on an initial labour market assessment, the leather, construction and metalwork sectors were pre-identified as having high potential.

The labour market assessment: In the initial labour market assessment, in-depth interviews with over 50 private companies across the three sectors were conducted to better understand their skills needs, as well as their potential for engaging with TVET colleges in a long-term partnership and their policies related to decent work. The assessment results showed that one of the major constraints to employment was the lack of a skilled work force. A reason for this was that trainees were not familiar with the equipment and machinery used by private companies since the TVET training courses did not offer the use of such equipment. The short-term training system was also not comprehensive enough to accommodate soft skills trainings.

Incorporating the findings into the process: The data were analysed and used by a team of experts (representatives from Governmental TVET Bureau, private companies, Examination body, NGOs) to revise one curriculum per sector. Each sector had different needs and all sectors highlighted the importance of soft skills.

Outcomes in the construction sector: The project team found that companies prefer to employ staff with more than one competency whom they can allocate to different tasks according to the needs.
Before the labour market assessment: The curriculum focussed on one occupational standard such as tiling, painting, concrete, or tiling.
After the labour market assessment: The curriculum was adapted to focus on developing a combination of competencies (e.g. painting and tiling).

Outcomes in the metalwork sector: The project team found that companies required a more comprehensive knowledge-base from graduated students.
Before the labour market assessment: The curriculum was very specific focussing on basic metal works and assembly.
After the labour market assessment: A new more comprehensive curriculum was developed with six competencies including soft skills (welding, benches, basic machines, metal sheet, life skills).

Outcomes in the leather sector: The project team found that companies prefer staff to be highly qualified in a few specific competencies only.
Before the labour market assessment: The curriculum spanned various general topics such as goods, footwear and garments.
After the labour market assessment: The new curriculum focusses on a building a few specialised competencies (e.g. cutting and stitching only).

Outcomes related to non-technical/soft skills: All the short course curricula used for the 1500 participants were revised and upgraded with modules on communication skills, team work, gender and inclusion and work values.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- Curriculum development should always take into consideration labour market information to make sure students will learn skills relevant to the employers.

- Expert workers should help to conduct a job analysis to determine the competencies to be included in the curriculum. For this, the DACUM methodology can be used. The analysis will result in a DACUM chart - a list of duties and related tasks a successful worker should be able to perform.

- The curriculum should be competency based. Students should progressively learn new skills only when they are performing sufficiently in the previous ones. The focus should be on what the students should learn and not what the trainer should teach.

- The curriculum should include a work-based learning component with specific learning objectives and related instructions and methodologies for acquiring and applying the knowledge.

- The curriculum should include modules on non-technical/soft skills required for that particular occupation, such as communication, teamwork, problem solving and or technological skills.

- In-class and at-work trainers should be trained on the new/revised curriculum as well as on the integration of theory and practice. Inputs from instructors in school and from mentors at the work place should be aligned and integrated.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The OHIO University's
Competency-Based Education via the DACUM and SCID Process: An Overview

This overview gives a four-page summary of the DACUM process flow chart. See figure 1 for the nine components that make up the DACUM process flow.

WESTERN BALKANS ALLIANCE FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING
A Methodology for the Development of Regionally-based Occupational Standards

The guidebook includes the main guiding principles, steps and methods relevant for different stages in the development of regionally-based standards of occupations.

International Youth Foundation's (IYF)
Life Skills Guide

This 'Life Skills Guide' is a practical tool to help donors and youth-serving organisations enhance the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of life skills programming and training

5. HOW TO SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINERS AND MENTORS

VET trainers: Continuous professional development is critical to ensure quality teaching. Implementing organisations can collaborate with specialised universities, VET training colleges and other local experts to design and facilitate the training delivery. The first step will be to conduct a training needs assessment to verify the existing knowledge among trainers in terms of their technical and non-technical skills and competencies. Subsequently, VET trainers should be trained according to the results of this assessment. Topics for training might include:

→ **Technical skills:** For example, trainers can learn how to use new machineries and new technologies to acquire up to date skills and competencies in line with market demand.

→ **Non-technical skills:** For example, trainers can develop their communication skills in order to improve their training skills as well as deliver dedicated modules on communication.

→ **Work-based learning benefits:** If the WBL component is newly introduced, then a module on the new role and function of trainers in terms of their collaboration with employers will need to be included.

→ **Teaching methodology:** For example, trainers can broaden their knowledge of adult learning methods and multi-sensory techniques. For further reading on how to facilitate a training for adults, check out PIN's guidance here.

→ **Gender and inclusion:** Trainers can develop their knowledge of strategies to make the class environment more inclusive. The focus should be on an inclusive delivery and an inclusive assessment of learning progress. Some countries have developed national strategies to promote gender equality in education and specifically in VET systems, for example in Bangladesh. UNESCO's 2016-2021 Strategy for TVET also focusses on promoting equity and gender equality and fostering social inclusion. For further reading on making VET systems inclusive for people with disabilities, see the policy brief from ILO.

In-company mentors/coaches: To improve communication and collaboration between companies and VET institutions it is critical to identify and train in-company work based learning supervisors who will play as mentors. They will contribute to the quality of the WBL components, making sure the learning objectives are achieved. Mentors/coaches will provide one-to-one support to students in their work experience placements and can contribute to sustaining a high motivation to learn. This can help prevent dropout during the transition from school-based to work-based learning. Both mentor and learner should meet on a regular basis to engage in constructive discussions and feedback sessions. Mentors/coaches are usually expert employees who will need to be prepared for and trained on various topics. Such topics may include: **the benefits of work-based learning; mentor duties and responsibilities; adult learning principles; proper communication with students and VET colleges; student management at the work place (including how to prepare an individual plan, checklist, daily diary etc.); conducting regular student feedback and evaluation sessions during and at the end of the WBL component; and gender and inclusion.** A guide from Keystone Development Partnership on how to become a good mentor can be found here.

🔍 TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

European Training Foundation's Continuing Professional Development for Vocational Teachers and Trainers in Kosovo

This document provides an evaluation of the impact of continuous professional development (CPD) for vocational teachers and trainers in Kosovo and includes a practical survey designed to assess VET teachers' experience of CDP.

CEDEFOP's Guiding Principles on Professional Development of Trainers in VET

These guiding principles give policy pointers on how to support VET trainers in companies update and develop their competencies. The principles are illustrated by concrete examples of practice from EU Member States.

Eurochambre's Toolbox for Apprenticeship Coaches: Increase Apprenticeships in SMEs

This very practical toolbox for apprenticeship coaches includes a set of tools for in-company trainers. The document contains practical tools (including for monitoring and evaluation) that can be used before and throughout the apprenticeship period in the company..

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6.

HOW TO OPTIMISE THE QUALITY OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work-based learning (WBL) refers to all forms of learning that take place in a real work environment. WBL provides individuals with the skills needed to successfully obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional development.

During the curriculum development, each module must clearly indicate what will be learned in class and what will be learned in the work environment. Work-based learning should take place in professional work environments where students are able to practice the different skills required to perform specific duties. To make sure the experience will be of high quality, the following points should be taken into consideration.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET

Definition: Activities such as planning, implementing, evaluating, reporting and quality improvement, that are undertaken to ensure that education and training (including the content of programmes, curricula, assessment and validation of learning outcomes etc.) meet the quality requirements expected by stakeholders. (Cedefop)

Preparatory work

→ **Meeting occupational health and safety requirements:** VET colleges must ensure that these requirements are in place at private companies hosting students. VET institutions should verify that the minimum standards are met, to ensure that students are not put in danger. If the relevant safety information is not available to VET institutions, sectoral associations can support them in understanding the minimum requirements for safety.

→ **Working conditions should be appropriate for students**: Conditions for decent work, such as future minimum wage, the number of working hours and the tasks and duties to be performed need to be verified by the VET colleges. This information can be gathered during selection interviews with private companies or during due diligence procedures.

→ **Careful selection and matching of learners with workplaces:** Students should be matched with a specific WBL opportunity based on various criteria, such as their field of study, their career plan, the distance of the workplace from their home and their ability to travel, as well as the skills/knowledge/attitudes required by the companies.

→ **Students should be prepared before they go to a workplace:** During orientation sessions provided by career guidance departments of a VET college, students should learn what will be expected from them during the WBL experience in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

→ **Capacity of enterprises to teach skills required by the programme:** During the process of selecting companies, VET colleges need to verify that students will have a supervisor/coordinator who will also act as mentor/coach. Students not only need to experience the work environment but also need to learn new skills as outlined in the curriculum. If mentors are not able to transfer their knowledge, then the project should offer a specific training to them on how to mentor students. For more information within this guide go here.

→ **Individual learning plans (when, who, how):** Individual learning plans should be jointly prepared by the mentor and the VET teacher in charge, in order to identify skills to be addressed during the WBL experience. The general learning outcomes will already be established in the course curriculum, but each student will have a unique experience. The methodology and tools needed to achieve the learning outcomes can be different in each company. Preparing the plan in advance will help all actors follow up and verify the progress

During Work-Based Learning

→ The WBL supervisor should provide an **introductory tour** to students to teach them about the company, the sector and related career possibilities as well as raise awareness of safety issues.

→ The WBL supervisor should use the **individual learning plan** to help students learn and document their progress towards their learning objectives.

→ To facilitate the role of the WBL supervisor as mentor/coach, different documentation can be used in line with the individual plan such as a **toolkit** comprising: a log of

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hours; a log of accomplishments; and a checklist of learning objectives broken down into skills, knowledge, duties and tasks, ideally with progressive difficulties. A useful handbook, produced by Eurochambre, containing a practical set of tools including checklists and templates for in-company trainers can be found here.

→ Students should keep their own **learning diary** (on a daily or weekly basis) to keep track of the duties and tasks performed during their WBL. Each duty will then be associated to the new skills acquired.

→ Students should be continuously assessed to verify their readiness to proceed and learn new skills. WBL supervisors can assess students by observing their task performance, evaluating any products made and giving feedback. All different assessments and feedback reports should be collected in the **student's portfolio**.

→ Students and mentor/coaches should regularly have **feedback sessions** to discuss the learning progress. The mentor should facilitate the discussion, providing constructive advice to the student about their performance and potential areas of improvement. Students should also have space to express her/his opinion so that the mentor can adjust the mentoring style in order to optimise the student's learning.

→ **Coordination** between VET colleges and private companies is also critical and regular meetings should take place in order to follow up on students' learning progress.

After Work-Based Learning

→ The WBL supervisor should **assess and evaluate** each student's ability to perform specific tasks related to their position. The individual plan and the student's portfolio will help the supervisor evaluate if the student has achieved all learning outcomes as initially planned.

15 Glick, Peter J.; Huang, Crystal; Mejia Gonzalez, Nelly Josefina (2015) The private sector and youth skills and employment programs in low and middle-income countries, World Bank Group

FINANCING WORK-BASED LEARNING

Different forms of financial support are offered to facilitate participation in work-based learning initiatives. Financial support can not only encourage participation of learners by reducing costs and enabling disadvantaged groups to participate but can also incentivise employers to participate in work-based learning programmes. A wide variety of approaches can be used, including loans, grants, scholarships, vouchers and wage subsidies. A practical handbook from the European Training Foundation provides guidance on effective financing approaches for work-based learning in order to enable improved access to and quality of VET programmes. While evidence has shown that financial support and subsidies can be effective in helping youth access jobs,[15] any provision of financial support should be carefully designed so that the programme can be scalable and sustainable without it. This involves developing a clear vision of how the project's support and interventions will work sustainably in the long term, when the financial support is no longer there. The 'Who Does, Who Pays' matrix is an effective tool for developing a vision and exit strategy for a project's intervention. The guidance is available here in the Springfield Centre's M4P Operational Guide - Ch.3: Vision.

FIELD EXAMPLE: HOW INTERNSHIPS ARE HELPING TO TACKLE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG FEMALE AND MALE YOUTH IN AFGHANISTAN

The context: PIN is implementing 'The East-West Livelihood Initiative for Uprooted People' (EWLI) project in the cities of Herat and Jalalabad in Afghanistan. To tackle high unemployment rates and soaring levels of poverty, PIN has been supporting vocational skills training with courses based on current market trends and demands.

Types of internships supported: Trainings are followed by intensive post-graduation support, such as internships, exposure visits, facilitation of business linkages, business trainings and start-up toolkits, in order to enable the most vulnerable people to gain stable income, either through employment or starting their own business.

The outcomes: Over 85% of graduates are already working in the sectors they were trained in and have established a new source of income for their household. Important linkages have been established between the vocational trainees and business communities through the business roundtables, exposure visits and exhibitions that have been organised by PIN.

TVET colleges in Ethiopia create employment opportunities for the youth in the leather sector. © Petr Štefan

7. HOW TO SUPPORT VET CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

The main goal of career guidance services is to support and empower graduates/job-seekers to find the right career pathway, including training and occupational choices. Career guidance services can be provided within the VET institution or externally at career service centres, public employment centres or through dedicated websites. Effective guidance services within the VET colleges will increase the chances for graduates/job seekers finding and retaining suitable jobs.

The three main elements of career guidance are:

Career counselling: individual or small group sessions in which attention is focused on the distinctive career issues faced by students/job seekers.

Career education: as part of the training curriculum, attention is paid to helping students develop the competencies needed for their career pathway.

Career information: provided in various formats (increasingly, web-based), and relates to information on courses, job vacancies and career paths. This includes labour market information.

Based on the needs and gap analysis, dedicated VET institution staff should be trained on relevant topics such as:

→ **Student career guidance and orientation:** To learn how to support students by offering individual guidance in their transition to work.

→ **Private company engagement:** To learn how to connect with private companies, assess their skills gap, collaborate with them and develop understanding about which work-based learning is most suitable for each course.

→ **Market mismatch:** To learn how to identify market mismatch in order to keep the curriculum up to date according to market demand.

→ **Use of databases and data:** To improve capacities to keep data in order, and collect, analyse and use the data to improve the quality of the courses offered.

→ **Tracer studies:** To learn how to track graduates after they complete the course. By ascertaining when and whether graduates found a job and what kind of job they found, VET

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WHAT ARE TRACER STUDIES, AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

One of the responsibilities of the VET career guidance department will be to conduct tracer studies of graduates to learn more about the relevance and effectiveness of the VET programme. The main objectives of the tracer studies are:

→ **Labour market information:** To track the effectiveness of a specific course in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully gain employment (or self-employment).

→ **Retrospective evaluation:** To use the results to further improve the course in the context of quality assurance.

Tracer studies are valuable for collecting systematic and reliable data on the links between the field of study and subsequent employment and work. Graduate surveys provide information about what former students are doing at a specific time. The surveys should seek to ascertain the following information: the kind of job gained; the duration of the job; how long graduates took to find a job; the use of competencies and required competencies; the usefulness and relevance of the study/training programme; strength and weaknesses of the study/training programme and proposals for improvements; the relevance of the job to their field of study; their income and satisfaction.

According to the context and the availability of resources, a proper methodology should be prepared. The most adopted method is the collection of quantitative data through questionnaires. A form can be sent to graduates by email, or VET career guidance staff can conduct face-to-face interviews based on a structured questionnaire. Then the information should be entered in a system, analysed, interpreted and shared with management staff and potentially with other stakeholders. When possible, qualitative methods such as focus group discussions could also be used. If the results of the tracer study reveal areas for improvement in the VET course, related actions and adaptations to the course should follow to make sure the course is more relevant and effective in the future.

staff can better assess the relevance and effectiveness of the course.

→ **Gender and inclusion:** To learn how to promote the integration of marginalised groups, including girls, women, vulnerable youth and people with disabilities.

In Georgia, a VET toolkit for tracing graduates and private sector engagement was successfully piloted. The toolkit included databases of agricultural businesses and cooperatives, as well as sample questionnaires and a systematic manual for VET colleges. The user-friendly kit enabled users to follow the guidance when then needed to collect and analyse data from labour market actors in agriculture.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR VET CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

EU and IBF International Consulting's Handbook for career guidance

This handbook provides a theoretical framework, the expected results and a step-by-step process of career guidance. In an annex some good practices from Georgia and other countries can be found.

Helvetas' Measuring Education's Path to Prosperity: A practical Toolkit for VET Tracer Studies

This toolkit is intended as a hands-on manual for tracer studies and includes a step-by-step guide on how to carry out a tracer study. Four questionnaires are also included in this toolkit: the Pre-Tracer Study Questionnaire, Graduate Questionnaire, Informant Questionnaire and Employer Questionnaire.

HOW TO ORIENT STUDENTS THROUGH CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

Pre-enrolment

→ Provide a complete overview of all available courses provided by the VET college,

→ Organise "open days" with presentations about VET school profiles,

→ Provide individual professional orientation and career guidance consulting.

During the training

→ Process databases about VET graduates' employment situations,

→ Cooperate with private companies providing practical training

→ Provide information about employment opportunities according to graduates' qualifications,

→ Provide support for developing job application documents (CVs, motivation letters etc.) and preparing for job interviews.

Vocational centers in Georgia provide trainings for jobs that are in high demand, such as hair stylists. © Kristina Kvetenadze

QUALITY CHECKLIST - THINGS THAT PRACTITIONERS SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR

What is this checklist? This practical checklist has been developed to be used by project staff to ensure the right steps are considered and taken when planning and implementing initiatives to develop market-driven VET courses. It can be used during the project design stage or when planning and implementing activities under ongoing projects.

Quality Checklist – How to increase employability through market-driven VET courses			
Have you conducted a labour market assessment to properly diagnose the constraints and opportunities?	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure to integrate a decent work and inclusion perspective into your labour market assessment and project design? (Refer to this ILO guide for additional guidance on decent work and this guide on inclusion.)	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure to conduct due diligence of your private sector partners, to assess the possible risks and advantages of a potential partnership? (Some useful guidance from Mercy Corps is available here)	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure that, as much as is possible, you are playing only a facilitation role? (Consider reviewing EWB's useful list of best practices for facilitation activities.)	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure that labour market conditions and job placements are monitored regularly and the curriculum is revised accordingly?	Y	N	N/A
Have you ensured that the curriculum integrates soft/non-technical skills and contains a work-based learning component?	Y	N	N/A
Have you facilitated the preparation and finalisation of a detailed Memorandum of Understanding between VET colleges and private companies, which clearly outlines roles and responsibilities?	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure the professional development of teachers and trainers at school and at work functions as a continuum in which they engage during their professional career, as life-long learners?	Y	N	N/A
Have you facilitated the capacity development of a VET career guidance department, with particular focus on private sector mapping/networking?	Y	N	N/A
Have you made sure to coordinate your activities with other market or non-market actors?	Y	N	N/A
Have you included a tracer study in the internal regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism of VET institutions?	Y	N	N/A
Have you promoted quality assurance as an internal quality management system for VET institutions?	Y	N	N/A
Have you considered how to integrate a gender-sensitive approach into your interventions? (Christian Aid's guide has a range of useful guidance for adopting gender-sensitive market development approaches.)	Y	N	N/A
Have you developed a vision for sustainability? (The 'Who Does, Who Pays' analysis is a useful tool for this. For further guidance on how to do this see here, especially pages 21-24.)	Y	N	N/A
Have you allocated resources for building the capacity of the project team to facilitation and private sector engagement approaches?	Y	N	N/A

Student of shoetailoring, Georgia. © Kristina Kvetenadze

READ ALSO:

ENABLING POOR PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

INCREASING POOR PEOPLE'S DEMAND FOR ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

IMPROVING SMALL PRODUCERS' ACCESS TO PROFITABLE MARKETS