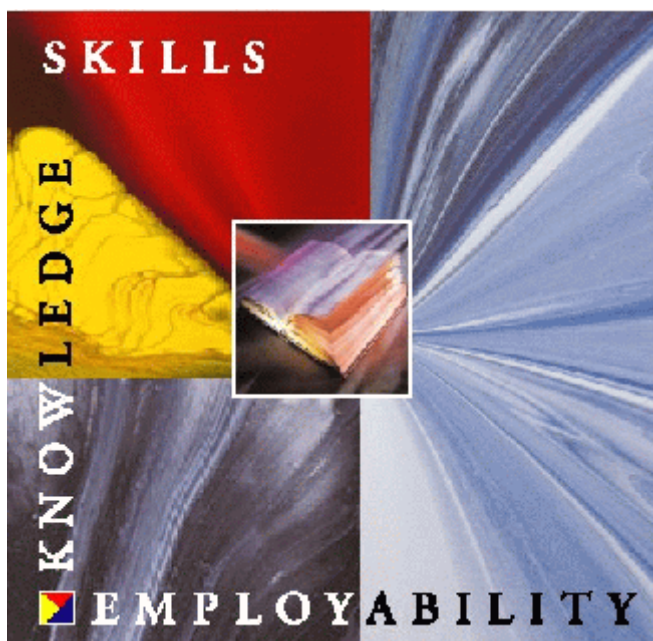


InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability

An ILO Round Table

***Knowledge and Skills for Productivity
and Decent Work***

Montreal, 23-24 April 2002



**Information Note
and
Programme**



International Labour Office Geneva

An ILO Round Table

Knowledge and Skills for Productivity

and Decent Work:

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“A critical challenge that faces human society at the start of the twenty-first century is to attain full employment and sustained economic growth in the global economy and social inclusivity. The ILO's framework of decent work addresses both the quality and quantity of employment and provides a basis for new education and training policies and strategies. Human resources development, education and training contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society.” (Conclusions of the General Discussion on HRD and training,

1. Background

During the ILO's Global Employment Forum, held in Geneva in November 2001, it was agreed to hold a series of high-level Round Tables in ten technical fields, including knowledge and skills development. The ILO, through its InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability, therefore proposes to organize the first of these Round Tables around the theme of *Knowledge and skills for productivity and decent work*.

The Global Employment Agenda, presented at the Forum, noted that at the opening of the 21st century, the world community set itself ambitious targets to reduce the number of people in poverty. Specifically the rate of poverty of 1990 was to be halved by the year 2015. The central challenge in doing this is to secure decent work for people everywhere in conditions of equity, security, and human dignity. This will draw out of poverty the 1.2 billion people, a full fifth of the world's population, who are living on less than one dollar a day. Employment is fundamental to this challenge and yet the present reality glaringly reveals that being at work alone is not enough to provide satisfactory employment. There were 160 million unemployed people at the outset of this decade. This is indeed a loss of human potential. But most of the 1.2 billion poor people are supported by 530 million family members who do have work. They are the working poor who are engaged in low-productivity, low-paying work that is inadequate to raise themselves and their families out of poverty. An additional almost 300 million people in the world do not have enough work: they are underemployed, and would work more if they had the opportunity. Taken together, a full third of the world's labour force of 3 billion people cannot obtain the material rewards from work which they need and to which they aspire. These facts, combined with the expectation that in the next ten years there will be an additional 500 million more people in the world's labour force create a daunting challenge for employment creation and development.

Education and training are major instruments to overcome the syndromes of poverty and discrimination, and enhance the employability, productivity and income earning capacity of many disadvantaged people. In many developing countries, in particular, development and recognition of skills of workers in the informal economy can greatly improve their access to decent jobs and contribute to better living conditions among large sections of the population who earn a living there. This Round Table will examine the contribution that education and training can make to meeting the employment challenge, by improving employability through the development of knowledge and skills.

The Round Table will consist of three closely linked sessions: the Global Employment Agenda framework; the major policy challenges of developing knowledge and skills, for both international competitiveness and social inclusion, in the Agenda; and the recognition of workers' skills, in the context of lifelong learning and national qualifications frameworks. It is planned to organize this event to coincide with the G8 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in April 2002 and invite officials from the G8 Meeting together with policy makers from developing countries, and representatives of workers' and employers' organizations. Other international agencies including UNESCO, OECD, EU and the World Bank, will also be invited to participate. The theme of this Round Table is closely linked to the theme of the G8 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting - *The Knowledge Imperative, Skills and Learning Challenges for the 21st Century*.

In addition to facilitating a high-level discussion on knowledge and skills issues among the participants, it is proposed to build on the existing strategic alliance with UNESCO on technical and vocational education and training and expand this to other international agencies. As the ILO is already collaborating with UNESCO and the OECD on national qualifications frameworks, and plans to do joint work with the EU on the same subject, we believe that this topic is well suited to establishing new strategic alliances with other international agencies, as well as extending our existing alliance with UNESCO.

2. Introduction

Knowledge and skills are the engine of economic growth and social development. By making *individuals* employable, education and training help them gain access to decent work and escape poverty and marginalization. Education and training are powerful tools for the economic and social emancipation of disadvantaged population groups. It is by means of education and training that women and other victims of discrimination can access more and better jobs in the labour market. Education and training improve individuals' productivity and income earning opportunities at work, their mobility in the labour market, and widens their choice of career opportunities. By investing in their human resources, enterprises are able to improve productivity, and compete successfully in increasingly integrated world markets. It is only by increasing investment in knowledge and skills that governments, enterprises and individuals can improve an economy's competitiveness and ensure decent employment outcomes for all. In order to be effective, education and training must form an integral part of a comprehensive set of economic, labour market, community development and other policies for employment and growth. The issue of recognizing workers' skills has generated strong interest among the ILO's constituents, which is reflected in the *Conclusions concerning human resources training and development* of the General Discussion at the 2000 International Labour

Conference. The *Conclusions* stated that “The development of a national qualifications framework is in the interest of enterprises and workers as it facilitates lifelong learning, helps enterprises and employment agencies match skill demand with supply, and guides individuals in their choice of training and career.” The *Conclusions* also stressed that “Every person should have the opportunity to have his or her experiences and skills gained through work, through society or through formal and non-formal training assessed, recognized and certified.” This is particularly important for men and women who have gained their skills through work in the informal economy. These skills are rarely recognized. The growing interest on the part of governments in reforming national systems of qualifications, and in using qualifications as an independent instrument of education and training reform, has come about largely as a result of economic changes and the new skill and knowledge demands which are emerging across the world. Many countries have either attempted to introduce or shown an interest in the idea of a **single** national qualification framework designed to include all types of qualification, school and work-based, general, vocational and professional, and all levels of qualifications from basic skills to post graduate degrees.

As a result of the importance of skills recognition and qualification frameworks, the Round Table will address issues related to this topic and, in the process, contribute to strengthening and expanding the strategic alliances between the ILO and other international agencies. This is one of the major objectives of the follow up to the Global Employment Forum.

This Round Table offers an opportunity to bring together expertise from governments and the social partners, both from industrialized and developing countries, along with researchers and practitioners, to exchange national and international experiences in promoting the development of knowledge and skills to increase productivity and to provide women and men with greater opportunities to secure decent work, in the context of the Global Employment Agenda.

3. Objectives of the Round Table

The main objectives of the Round Table are to: review, exchange and disseminate national, regional and international experiences of training policy reform, supporting increased investment in learning and training, and developing national skill recognition and qualification frameworks; and, advance the development of the Global Employment Agenda, within the context of improving productivity and promoting decent work.

The Round Table will focus on: (i) the major policy challenges for knowledge and skills development stated in the Global Employment Agenda, with consideration of the respective role of different actors in this process; (ii) skills recognition systems and qualifications frameworks which lead to increased mobility of workers and promote lifelong learning. The discussion under point (ii) will provide the basis for a strategic alliance between international agencies on skills recognition, mobility and qualifications frameworks. The meeting may also consider the ways and means of increasing investment in learning and training to facilitate access and opportunities for decent employment for all.

4. The Round Table structure

The Round Table will be organized in three discussion sessions with a panel discussion at the start of each session. During the first two panel discussions, the ILO team and the resource persons will make an introductory presentation. The social partners on the panels will act as discussants and provide their comments. A question and answer session will follow. During the third discussion session the representatives of the international agencies will outline their work on skills recognition, mobility and qualifications. This session will explore the possibilities of a strategic alliance between the agencies on this subject. Again, a question and answer session will follow the panel discussion.

5. Participants

The Round Table is designed specifically for senior officers in Government, and Employers' and Workers' Organizations, dealing with human resources development and training, to participate in analytical discussions on training policies and programmes. The countries to be invited are: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria and South Africa.

6. Country papers

Participating governments are invited to prepare a brief paper for the meeting in collaboration with the social partners. The length of the paper should be no more than 8-10 pages, A4 and single-spaced. The paper should briefly describe:

- Government policies, programmes and strategies, including recent reforms (where appropriate), for developing the knowledge and skills of the workforce;
- policies and programmes for skill recognition and certification, and the national qualification framework (where it exists).

The country papers should be sent by e-mail to the ILO in Geneva at ifpskills@ilo.org by **12 April 2002** at the latest.

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***Knowledge and Skills for Productivity
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Programme

Tuesday, 23 April, 2002

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| 08.30 - 09.30 | Registration |
| 09.30 - 10.00 | <i>Inaugural session</i>

Addresses: Mr Pekka Aro, Director, InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability, ILO Geneva.
Inauguration by Mr Peter Larose, Director General of Skills and Learning Task Force, Human Resources Development Canada |
| 10.00 - 10.30 | Tea/coffee break |
| 10.30 - 12.00 | <i>Discussion session 1: The Global Employment Agenda - an overview</i>

Panel Chairperson: Ms. Carla Coletti, International Department, Confédération Générale Italienne du Travail (CGIL), Italy
Introduced by: Mr Rashid Amjad, ILO Geneva
Panel members: Mr. Patricio Eskenazi, Economist, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Chile
Mr. Liu Yutong, Deputy Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, People's Republic of China
Ms. Anna Walker, Manager, United States, Council for International Business

Questions and comments. |
| 12.00 - 14.00 | LUNCH |
| 14.00 - 15.30 | <i>Discussion Session 2: Innovative policies and reforms which promote the development of workforce knowledge and skills - the</i> |

skills policy challenges of the Global Employment Agenda

Panel Chairperson: Mr. Ashraf Tabani, President, Employers' Federation of Pakistan

Introduced by: Mr Torkel Alfthan, ILO Geneva

Panel members: Mr. Babayo Bello, Assistant Director, Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, Nigeria

Mr. Adang Farid Kantaprawira, Director General of Training Development and Domestic Placement, Department of Manpower and Transmigration, Indonesia

Mr. Thomas Thomas, General Secretary, Singapore Shell Employees' Union, Singapore

15.30 - 16.00 Tea/coffee break

16.00 - 17.00 ***Discussion session 2*** (continued)

18.00 - 20.00 Reception for participants hosted by the ILO

Wednesday, 24 April, 2002

09.00 - 11.00 ***Discussion session 3: Skill recognition and the development of national qualifications frameworks - a strategic alliance***

Panel Chairperson: Ms. Marie Niven, International Affairs, United Kingdom

Introduced by: Mr Trevor Riordan, ILO Geneva

Panel members: Mr. David Atchoarena, Programme Specialist, UNESCO-IIEP, France

Mr. Georg Fischer, European Commission, Brussels

Dr. Maria Gallart, Centro de Estudios de Población (CENEP), Argentina

Mr. Alain Dumont, Director, Education and Training MEDEF, France

Mr. Roland Schneider, Senior Policy Adviser, TUAC-OECD

Questions and comments.

11.00 - 11.30 Tea/coffee break

11.30 - 12.30

Synthesis and review - presentation of main outcomes

Panel Chairperson: Mr Stephen Pursey, Senior Adviser, Office of
the Director-General, ILO Geneva
Panel members: Chairpersons of the three technical sessions

12.30 - 13.00

Closing session

Chairperson: Mr Stephen Pursey, Senior Adviser, Office of
the Director-General, ILO Geneva
Statements by: Ms. Micheline Racette, Skills and Learning
Policy Directorate, Human Resources
Development Canada
Mr. Andrew Finlay, Vice-President and
Assistant General Counsel, Employee
Relations and Employment Law Group,
Canada
Mr. Claude Parrot, Executive Vice-President,
Canadian Labour Congress