

**ILO/Regional Skills Programme/Japan
Regional Workshop and Study Programme
on “Strengthening quality assurance mechanism through capacity building and
knowledge sharing”**

**The Pullman Bangkok King Power, Thailand
March 17-19, 2015**

Background Note

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• **Background & Justification**

Skills development systems, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) have been recognized as an effective instrument for productivity and sustainability improvement for a country. It plays an important role particularly in (1) providing the skill sets required by enterprises and across national economies; (2) supporting pathways into employment particularly for vulnerable groups, i.e. youth, women, disabled people, etc.; (3) strengthening mobility between occupations for experienced workers; (4) supporting the development of new skills and assisting workers to be prepared to change or progress in their occupations/careers; and (5) Promoting the capacity adjustment of workers to be more quickly as the pace of change of industry product and processes increases (Bateman et al. 2012: 6).

Continuous economic growth has been seen in many countries across the Asia Pacific. Such growth has consequently created growing demand in the qualifications and productivity of its workforce due to their determinant role in a country's competitiveness, thus, many countries are imposed greater pressure on the capacity and **quality** of their skills and TVET systems.

Meanwhile, the globalization of economies and cross-country flow of labor also requires more attention to improve the quality of skills development programs to assure skills recognition across the region. For instance, the ASEAN member countries have been working on the mutual recognition of skills to smooth out the free flow of skilled labour in order to achieve ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure strong foundations of quality assurance at national level on which the recognition process can further proceed.

In this context, continuous efforts need to be made to improve the quality of TVET. Priority should be therefore, be given to the strengthening of quality assurance mechanisms, as they play a decisive role in ensuring TVET's effectiveness in responding to the changing labor market demands and reducing the gap between education and training and the demand for skills.

Quality assurance mechanisms vary across systems, they can range from basic compliance mechanisms to systems that are designed to monitor the performance of national skills systems, and advance the broad social and economic objectives that are attached to the skills development agenda. Broadly speaking, quality assurance mechanisms are influenced by the following national characteristics:

- governance structures, mechanisms and cultures of the nation
- structure, processes and cultures of education and training systems
- location of the 'ownership' of the skills system, between occupational communities, government and other agencies
- perceptions of crises (or lack of) in education and training systems
- institutional capacity
- relevance of trans-national and/or regional skills systems
- costs and available resources

- regulatory burden
- priorities for reform

There are key issues and challenges arising from these characteristics that have hampered the implementation of quality assurance which include: financing; mismatch with industry needs; supply driven systems; resistance from stakeholders and lack of political will, etc. To meet these challenges, it is important, among all other means, to embrace an appropriate quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality and effectiveness of provision.

The proposed theme is designed to improve the quality of skills through enhanced quality assurance mechanisms so as to bridge the gaps between the supply of skills and labor market needs. This will further contribute to bringing employment opportunities to more people, especially vulnerable groups such as youth, women and disabled people who otherwise disadvantaged in the labor market. As such, this project will emphasize on capacity building and knowledge sharing to enhance quality assurance mechanisms for better skills provision.

- **Approach**

The regional workshop will help participating countries to establish the partnerships and collaboration required amongst social partners to strengthen quality assurance in skills development. In doing so it also supports a number of ILO country programme outcomes in the region. Participants will be encouraged to implement and continue to develop their own internal policies and practices after the workshop is completed. Information and knowledge sharing on the improvement of quality assurance mechanisms in skills development will be documented and distributed to all other partner organizations via the ILO website and Skills & Employability Community of Practice (CoP). This sharing of information should contribute to improve the ability of skills policy makers so that they can develop their own national policies on quality assurance and to increase employability of their labour force.

- **Objectives**

This workshop is designed to provide opportunities for discussion on the challenges of implementing quality assurance mechanisms and strengthening quality assurance systems across the region. Good practices will be identified and shared among the participating countries. Recommendations and lessons learned from this regional workshop will feed into ongoing national activities and follow-up by ILO offices in the region.

The immediate objective is to increase the knowledge and capacity of the participating partner organizations in enhancing quality assurance for effective and quality TVET delivery. It is envisioned that through the 2014 Programme, improved quality assurance mechanisms will be implemented in the participating countries to ensure the quality of their TVET systems and the overall productivity and competitiveness of their labor force.

By the end of the Workshop, the participants are expected to have deepened knowledge of:

- how quality in skills systems is understood and what mechanisms exist to address it;
- benchmarking different quality assurance mechanisms within different country contexts;
- challenges and constraints in quality assurance implementation and their implication for program delivery; and,
- recommendation for adaptable policy approaches/options to enhance quality assurance.

Workshop Structure & Methodology

The workshop will consist of a number of technical sessions, panel discussions, including country presentations, and technical working group sessions. After an overview of the challenge of quality assurance in skills and TVET systems, the workshop sessions will be organized under the following sub-themes:

- Measuring Quality: Standards & Indicators;
- Quality Skill Standards, Curriculum & Qualifications;
- Quality Systems for Training Organisations; and
- Quality Assurance of Delivery & Assessment.

Participation

For this year's programme, invitations will be extended to the following tripartite participating countries which are: Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Vietnam. Participants should be senior level staff of the ministry/agencies/organizations, who are involved in the regulation and/or implementation of quality assurance arrangements in TVET and skills development in line with the four key workshop themes identified earlier. Participation of women in the meeting will be strongly encouraged.

The participating countries will be given the opportunity to share experiences and good practices on their quality assurance mechanisms as well as lessons learned.

Country papers and presentations

All participants are requested to jointly prepare one consolidated country paper for the workshop. **The paper (and supporting presentation in MS PowerPoint) will be prepared in collaboration with the other participants from the country and** should be submitted by March 1, 2015, in Microsoft Word format only. The length of the paper should be no more than 12-15 pages, A4 and single-spaced. The papers and presentation will follow the structure indicated by the details below:

1. A brief overview of the skills development and TVET system, including details on the nature of the training market;¹
2. An overview of the quality assurance system highlighting relevant systems, key institutions and quality standards;
3. A summary of how the social partners (employers and workers) are involved in the different quality assurance measures; and
4. An outline of current and planned initiatives to improve quality assurance in the country.

¹ The training market comprises the major training public and private training providers and the key programs/mechanisms through which training places are funded.