

Private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and national development: The South African reality

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the extent to which the private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector in South Africa is responsive to national development. National development is understood as associated with a range of socio-economic imperatives which include challenges of poverty, unemployment, inequality, the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its associated impacts. In addition to these, the educational component of national development is to ensure access, redress and equity, which are necessary to undo the impacts of an apartheid-related skills regime. Skills development is considered a crucial means to respond to these challenges. Without skills for formal and informal labour markets, as well as productive self-employment, South Africa's capacity to respond to the new globalised era is likely to be considerably stunted and will negatively affect its developmental trajectory.

The methodology used in this study included a mix of quantitative and qualitative strategies to obtain the size, shape and nature of provision. The quantitative component, undertaken in the course of 2002, was supplemented by randomly chosen qualitative case studies. Together, they provided the basis for unravelling a sector distinct in nature, form and content.

Developing a comprehensive typology provides important insight into responsiveness of a sector characterised by wide-ranging provision forms. The typology of provider type based on profitability and form, i.e. 'for-profit', 'non-profit' and 'in-house' providers, was replaced with a multi-dimensional model. Learner type, as a primary typological category, includes the 'pre-employed', 'unemployed', the employed 'self-funded employee' and the 'corporate client'. Provider types responding to these

learner types are distinguished on the basis of location, delivery patterns and programming. The various provider forms include 'multi-providers', 'specialist providers', 'consultants', 'in-house' and 'non-profit' providers. Provider purposes include those responding to employment, either formal labour market or self-employment, and self-development, including leisure-related skilling and lifelong learning.

Learner types and training purpose determine the manner, form and characteristics of provision. This understanding of a widely divergent and heterogeneous sector provides the context for assessing its contribution to national development in South Africa. The notions of responsiveness and receptiveness are used as conceptual devices to assess the role of the sector. *Responsiveness* describes specific labour market purpose, while *receptiveness* refers to the social development and educational imperatives of access, redress and equity.

The sheer size of the sector suggests an important demand-led element of provision and represents an important measure of receptiveness to national development prerogatives. The conservative estimate of 706 884 learners, located at 4178 sites for 864 providers that pre-registered with the Department of Education in 2001, provide the basis for serious consideration of the sector.

The sector adequately responds to the immediate short-term needs of employers. Programmes offered for corporate providers respond more deliberately to their immediate short-term skill requirements and which has made it possible for them to outsource a considerable proportion of their training. In addition, there is no other education and training form flexible enough to provide for the training needs of employees, and sometimes the customers of corporate concerns, as in product upgrading and support, at times and locations suitable to their requirements.

Private providers did not necessarily have more linkages with the formal labour market than do public providers and are not necessarily able to secure more effectively employment opportunities for their pre- and unemployed learners

With respect to receptiveness, the sector comprises learner patterns consistent with national demographics. The sector is associated with an older, employed learner type,

typically enrolled in shorter-term courses. This demonstrates the sector's accessibility. In comparison with their public counterparts, costs were not prohibitive and programme structure allowed adequate flexibility to enable learners to weave in and out of the system. Variable admission requirements also allowed learners to slot into appropriate levels. The absence of data makes comparative judgements of throughput, and quality, with public institutions difficult to make.

The current need to regulate all providers equally may not be the most efficient way of dealing with the sector. In light of the national development prerogative to protect those most vulnerable from the risk of market failure, there is need to grant support to those providers most responsive to this group - in this instance, those 'full time' providers responding to the pre- and unemployed learner set. The market adequately regulates providers responding to the employed and corporate client groups.

Keywords: South African Education, Private education, Private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Private Further Education and Training (FET), Education and National Development, Skills development.