

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 12TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

A policy debate session was held during the 12th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG). The Working Group came up with some concrete policy recommendations for improving vocational education, especially for the children from poor families, in the OIC and approximating policies among the member countries in this important issue. The policy advices presented below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report titled “Skills Development: Vocational Education in the Islamic Countries” and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questionnaire which was sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

Policy Advice 1: Improving access of poor student/youth to vocational education through eliminating/reducing school fees, offering monthly scholarship schemes and providing adequate facilities (i.e. accommodation) for students coming from remote areas

Rationale:

Vocational Education and Training (VET/TVET) primarily focuses on providing skills to the youth in formal/informal sector. These young people are the major workforces in any industrial activities. Therefore, VET system can contribute in equipping youth for occupation, providing necessary skills and meeting the industrial requirements for economic growth. Successful VET system can also play an important role in poverty eradication and reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor.

There is a great number of young unemployed people in the OIC Region and the main constrain is to attract poor young people to skill trainings. The empirical evidence shows that many young people could not be able to enter into skills trainings due to school fees and other related costs. Vocational education and training should be offered free of charge or at lower prices to attract poor youth. Besides, monthly stipend or interest free loan may be provided to poor people for their education. Free vocational training, and monthly scholarship schemes can also enhance enrolment and provide greater opportunities for poor students.

Furthermore, a great number of people in the OIC Region are living in rural areas, and their income level is mostly very low. In order to attract poor youth in skills training for future employment, TVET institutions should be expanded in rural areas or these institutions should have necessary facilities (i.e. provision of hostels) in the OIC Region.

Policy Advice 2: Matching the skills thought in TVET institutions with the industrial requirements through job-oriented and demand-driven curriculum update and improving facilities of TVET institutions as well as establishing a training centre inside industrial area

Rationale:

There is a strong relationship between TVET sectors and labour market demand. Vocational education generally provides job focused short and long-term training, which make unemployed people competent to meet industrial demand. Nonetheless, finding a job may not be easy for the graduates of TVET institutions if their education and training do not match the requirements of the industry. For this reason, bridging the gap between TVET and labour market demand is crucial to enhance the productivity of youth, who are well skilled, competent and professional capable in different areas.

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On the other hand, there is a lack of industrial linkage with TVET institutions in many OIC member countries. A great majority of the TVET institutions do not have modern machineries. On the contrary, most local industries have modern machineries installed to ensure continuous increase of their production capacity and to compete in global market. Therefore, TVET facilities need to be improved with modern equipment, labs, and machineries for offering updated skill training. In this point, industries should enhance cooperation with TVET institutions in the form of establishing a training centre inside the industrial area that will provide demand driven current skills for the TVET students for a certain period of time.

Furthermore, outdate curriculum and training hinder the graduates to meet the current industrial demand. In order to close the gap between TVET and the industry requirements in the OIC member countries, curriculum update is required to make it more job-oriented and demand-driven.

Policy Advice 3: Increasing both the quantity and quality of teachers in TVET sector through providing professional development programs, industrial attachment, and recognition of their work based on performance

Rationale:

Teachers are of particular importance since they have direct influence on educational outcomes. Students learning outcome in TVET sectors largely depends on teachers' teaching practices. However, research report conducted for this meeting shows that the level of competency and knowledge of the teachers in TVET sectors is not adequate and teachers do not have enough practical industrial experience in many OIC member countries. Moreover, numbers of specialised teachers (subject specific) are very low in TVET institutions.

In order to address these challenges, three specific strategies are recommended: *firstly*, teacher-training programs for updating instructors' (teachers) skills should be continued in different forms (pedagogic, subjective, and exchange programs); Additionally, teachers should update their pedagogical techniques by means of using modern technologies in case of face-to-face, blended and online teaching approaches in TVET sectors; *secondly*, industrial attachment for technical teachers for a certain period of time (six months) can be practiced in TVET sectors; and *lastly*, achievement of teachers certification (license) for teaching involvement in TVET sectors is necessary before starting regular teaching. In order to attract bright and meritorious competent teachers in TVET sectors, motivational incentives such as attractive salaries can be provided and new teachers having industrial experience can be recruited in TVET sectors of the OIC member countries.

In addition, for enhancing the capacities of teachers and trainers, experts from different industries can be invited as Resource Persons in TVET institutions for sharing their expertise. Both teachers and students should visit industries regularly to observe industrial practices. Furthermore, in order to enhance sustainability of TVET sectors, and to cope up with the current trends, teachers should have provision for life-long learning that would assist them for updating their knowledge and skills.

Policy Advice 4: Increasing awareness about TVET and social recognition of its graduates in order to increase enrolment in TVET sectors and create new job opportunities for skilled graduates

Rationale:

Skills training is not attractive when finding job is not secure. Evidence shows that job focused skills attract young people towards vocational education. Research evidence shows that due to lack of knowledge and awareness on TVET and relatively low social status of TVET graduates, parents mainly

send their children to general education instead of TVET institutions.

In order to attract poor young people towards skill training, a number of job opportunities should be available in OIC member countries. Few initiatives in this regard can be as follows: governments and private sector should create a number of job provisions; donor agencies should work with the government to generate alternative sources of employment for skilled graduates; and TVET graduates should be actively involved in creating jobs through entrepreneurship.

Industry should not recruit any technician and/or any skilled labour force without having relevant certificate from TVET institutions. Furthermore, TVET institutions and the industry need to close cooperation with Employment Agencies.

In this framework, awareness about TVET and recognition of skills training need to be enhanced in the OIC Region through seminars, conferences, and public service advertisements. The promotional activities of TVET sectors can also be extended via all media. Moreover, awareness raising activities can be organized among teachers, students and parents at school level so that they would be encouraged to enter into TVET sectors.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office issues calls for project proposals each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For realizing above-mentioned policy recommendations, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding facility. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparation of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

SESRIC's OIC-VET Programme: Member countries can benefit from the capacity building/experience sharing opportunities provided within the framework of OIC-VET Programme.

