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Research Report

Skills for decent work, life and sustainable development: Vocational education and the sustainable development goals

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18 BRIEFING PAPER

Skills for decent work, life and sustainable development

Vocational Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

EFA	Education for All
HDR	Human Development Report
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise/Small and Mid-sized Enterprise
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Abstract

While Vocational Education and Training (VET) was almost absent from earlier international development frameworks, the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attach greater importance to it. VET is an integral part of the education SDG (SDG 4) and its transversal role for a global transformation is widely acknowledged. However, the conceptual and policy debate is lagging behind. This Briefing Paper analyses the VET and SDG debates from different angles. In the first part, the paper traces the history of VET in international development cooperation and summarises the discussion on current VET concepts, policies and practices in the SDG context with a focus on migration. In the second part, the Briefing Paper, in drawing on a number of theoretical approaches, examines how skills and VET are conceptualised in the broader context of poverty reduction, growth and decent work. Finally, the Paper reflects on the potential contribution of Germanophone VET models to a new human and sustainable development paradigm that arises out of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

***Key words**:* Vocational Education and Training, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Poverty Reduction, Growth, Decent Work, Migration, Dual system of apprenticeship training

1. Introduction

While Vocational Education and Training (VET) was almost absent from earlier international development agendas like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), the Agenda 2030 and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attach greater importance to it. VET is an integral part of the education SDG (SDG 4) as referred to in the targets SDG 4.3. and SDG 4.4. Moreover, the SDG focus on sustainable economic growth, sustainable production patterns and decent work, all of which topics were absent in the MDGs, highlights the need of adequate skills formation across a number of goals.

While the transversal role of skills is widely acknowledged, the conceptual and policy debate is lagging behind. In fact, the question of what skills are needed for the global transformation aspired to by the Agenda 2030 and how VET and skills development patterns have to be transformed themselves in order to deliver on the expectations remains unanswered as of today. Even less mature is the debate on the theoretical concepts underpinning the traditional VET and development discourse. Indeed, predominant VET conceptions continue to be rooted in a productivist imaginary of work and a modernist idea of development that hardly fit into the vision of a global socio-ecological transformation and sustainable development for all.

This Briefing Paper aims at analysing the VET and SDG debates from two different angles. In a first part, the paper will briefly trace the history of VET in international development cooperation. It will then outline the place of VET in the SDGs and how this has changed with regard to earlier international agendas. This will be followed by a summary of the discussion on current VET concepts, policies and practices in the SDG context. The first part will conclude introducing the debate on VET and migration, an increasingly debated issue.

In a second part, the Briefing Paper will analyse how skills and VET are conceptualised in the broader context of poverty reduction, growth and decent work. It will refer to a number of theoretical approaches such as the human capability approach that critically reflect on the dominant VET concepts and their underlying assumptions. The paper will outline the need for a new VET for development paradigm that specifically accounts for the needs of the poor and is respectful of our planetary boundaries.

Based on these analyses, the Briefing Paper will in a third part reflect on the specific context of VET in the development cooperation strategies of German-speaking countries. The Paper will analyse whether Germanophone VET models, in particular the dual system approach, do comply with the skill formation requirements of the SDGs to a higher degree than other VET approaches, which is often assumed. It will in particular discuss whether Germanophone VET models are conducive to a new human and sustainable development paradigm that arises out of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

1.1. A Brief History of VET and development

Under colonialism, Southern territories were there to generate resources for the “motherland” at the minimum cost. It was rare, therefore, for there to be any meaningful focus on developing technical skills amongst local populations. What exceptions there were came in cases when there were valuable resources that required technical skills to extract and/or export but the climate was too hazardous for white labour. Even then, recourse was often made to colonial labour from elsewhere, as in the large-scale movement of Indian labour within the British Empire. Since the decolonising wave of the 1940s to 1960s, VET in the South has gone through three main post-independence phases, reflecting wider developmental orthodoxies of modernisation, basic needs and neoliberalism. With the latter's decline as both political

ideology and development theory, there are calls for a new theory of skills for development, linking to the emergence of the SDGs.

The first of these three phases began around the point of transition between colonialism and independence for much of the South after World War Two. The new economics of education supported a massive increase in local schooling and a focus on development through industrialisation (McGrath 2011). This required the replacement of highly skilled expatriates and the localisation of middle-high skills capacity through investment in public VET in order to achieve economic "take off" (Rostow 1960).

However, concerns quickly grew about the new phenomenon of "educated unemployment". This led to a second phase of VET planning, which focused more on rural skills (NCCK 1967; Van Rensburg 1974) and training for the urban informal sector (Fluitman 1988).

Even this focus on "basic" vocational skills declined after The World Conference on Education for All (1990) and the MDGs shifted the focus of educational aid almost entirely to primary schooling. Whilst World Bank research argued that VET of any kind was a bad investment (e.g., Psacharopoulos 1981, 1985), it did remain on the agenda of many Southern governments and some international development agencies. What emerged was a third phase in which the World Bank and others offered a new account of public VET that presented new policy conditionalities for continued lending to VET (Middleton/Ziderman/Adams 1993; Johanson/Adams 2004). Inevitably, these drew from the wider neoliberal approach. At the sectoral level, they borrowed from the 'Old Commonwealth' (specifically, Australia, England, New Zealand, Scotland and South Africa) a "tool kit" of new public management reforms that included new governance structures giving institutions more autonomy and businesses more say at local and national levels; sectoral bodies; competency-based curricula; national qualifications frameworks; and outcomes-based funding (Allais 2003; McGrath 2012).

The overly narrow reading of EFA of the 1990s was made worse in 2000 when the new MDGs were developed. Ignoring important elements of the Millennium Declaration about issues such as decent work, the MDGs narrowed the official priorities to education even more clearly to getting children (particularly girls) into school. Moreover, lacking any viable account of how development came about, the MDGs sidelined any notions of skills being important for industrial development, in spite of the strong evidence that this was a core part of the more successful development paths of a number of Asian countries in the 1980s and 1990s.

1.2. VET and the SDGs

VET has returned to the global policy table since the mid-2010s, led by UNESCO, and echoed by regional development banks. The Third International Congress on VET in 2012 and a new UNESCO Recommendation and Strategy helped the case for VET to be included in the SDGs. UNESCO's vision is of "transformative VET", combining economic development, equity and environmental sustainability concerns.

The SDGs provide a number of targets that are relevant to VET, as Table 1 demonstrates.

Table 1: Vocational Education and Training and the SDGs

4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
4.b	By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
8.3	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
8.5	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
8.6	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
8.b	By 2020, develop and operationalise a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organisation
12.8	By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
13.3	Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

Source: UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) 2017

For the purposes of this Briefing Paper, we can distinguish between the following groups of SDG targets:

1. a set of education targets that look at matters of educational access and quality and which, implicitly or explicitly, include VET. These include all the education targets in the table above, with the exception of 4.7;
2. youth employment targets under SDG 8. Target 8.6 has an explicit education and training dimension, but this is implicit in the other goal 8 targets included in the table; and
3. a further group of content-oriented education-related targets under a number of goals. This includes 4.7 as well as targets that look specifically at environmental issues (12.8 and 13.3). VET is implicitly included in these due to the scope of SDG 4.

SDG 4 apparently marks an important shift from MDG 2 in insisting on lifelong education. This is seen in targets that extend the age coverage of the goal at both ends. However, target 4.1., on quality education for all, on further inspection, does not contain an upper secondary target and defines quality education very narrowly in terms of meeting minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.

Targets 4.3 and 4.4. contain explicit reference to VET and skills. However, both are problematic in important ways. 4.3 states that by "2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university". However, 4.3.1 measures participation in "formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex", with no mention of quality. However, the question of how to measure participation, let alone quality, across hugely diverse VET sectors is a major one. VET learning takes place in formal education settings but also in non-formal provisions, and in enterprises both formal and informal. Programmes vary hugely by length and level. There is a danger that there will be a focus on what is easily measurable, leading to a privileging of formal courses, institutions and employers.

From a VET perspective, the indicator for target 4.4 is particularly problematic. Rather than a meaningful indicator for "skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship the indicator measures ICT skills, a very different emphasis. Crucially, this undermines the intersectoral relationship to 8.6 and 8.b, thus risking an MDG-style division of education from work.

As we noted above, the most explicit mention of education (and training) under SDG 8 is in target 8.6, which looks at the concept of "not in employment, education or training". This is a hugely controversial measure, which has been widely criticised both for its mismeasurement in OECD contexts and its misapplication to Southern youth labour markets, which typically lack the social security arrangements and formality of employment relations that exist in countries such as Austria (cf. Elder 2015). Given its inclusion in the SDGs, the challenge, therefore, is one of making it accurately measurable in order to support policy interventions. However, as Elder (2015: 7) notes: "Without a qualitative employment indicator, we will never gain proper insight to the labour market challenges faced by the majority of the world's youth population".

Many millions learn and work in the informal economies of the South but SDG 8 is weak on skills and work in the informal economy. No explicit mention of the informal economy is present in SDG 8, although indirect references are present in targets 8.3, 8.5 and 8.8. The aim of target 8.3 is to promote "development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services". The implication of this target for the informal sector is that of formalisation. However,

this is problematic and does not take into consideration the complexities of formal-informal linkages and the needs of informal sector workers and employers. Some of the problems faced by workers in the informal sector include poor or lack of access to quality infrastructure and services such as transportation, electricity, internet and business advisory services. Of the many challenges, it is the financial constraint to the growth of SMEs that is acknowledged in target 8.3 and stressed in 9.3.

Targets 8.5 and 8.8 also relate to the informal sector and focus on the promotion of productive employment, decent work and labour rights for all women and men. In complementing target 8.3, these are more concerned with labour regulations necessary for ensuring the dignity of workers. This is good for curbing the vulnerabilities surrounding informal employment. However, it is unfortunate that education and training in the informal sector, which underpins skills for productive employment and decent work, is ignored in both SDG 4 and 8.

Targets 4.7, 12.8 and 13.3 focus on important messages that education should communicate to youth. In looking at what we already know about progress towards the new education indicators, UNESCO (2016a) notes that there is considerable unevenness on what is covered in existing curricula and how well in terms of the academic schooling system. However, from a VET perspective, we need to raise the question of how well VET provision is doing, and can do, in terms of meeting these key learning for sustainable development challenges.

VET's place in the SDGs in practice will depend on funding decisions over the SDG era. The actual Education for All vision was far broader in practice than what funders decided to prioritise and there is evidence already that certain key organisations are motivating for a renarrowing of the SDG 4 agenda to a focus on primary education, girls and early childhood development.

UNESCO has already projected a major shortfall in national and international financing of SDG 4 (UNESCO 2016a) and the major initiatives to address this, the Global Partnership for Education and the Education Commission, are very clear in their neglect of VET issues. Whilst there is a lack of political will to address adequate SDG funding (e.g., through tax reform), there remains a powerful schooling lobby that repeats the discredited argument that VET is a poor investment, whilst insisting that equity requires a focus on primary schooling above all else. Thus, there is a real danger that SDG 4 is largely an irrelevance and that the official VET for development debate is still locked into the positions held in 1990.

1.3. VET and the discussion on migration

Parallel to the SDG process, migration has become an important issue in education and development debates. In 2016, the Education Cannot Wait Fund was introduced in order to help meet the educational needs of people in crisis affected countries. The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report will discuss the influence of education on migration, as well as the challenges that migration presents to education systems and skills acquisition.

From a different perspective, migration has become an increasingly important public policy issue in OECD countries. In 2017, estimates of international migrants reached a total of 258 million, compared with about 152 million people in 1990 (IOM 2017). Out of the total number of international migrants, labour migrants constitute the majority. In 2015, they numbered about 150 million (ibid.). On the other hand, environmental issues, political and religious persecutions have increased the scale of internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers in the past years (UNHCR 2017). Whilst developing countries continue to be the destination of most of these displaced migrants, Europe has witnessed a surge in the number of forced migrants since 2015. This evolving scale and trend of migration has increased concerns, especially about irregular migration, its costs to migrants, their host and origin

countries. In view of these concerns, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration has been drafted and awaits adoption by member countries of the UN later this year.

In spite of the Global Compact for Migration, debates ensue about the effects of migration. One group argues that the oversupply and integration of migrants drive down wages and cause unemployment amongst citizens in host countries (Angrist/Kugler 2003). Others acknowledge the wide contribution that migrants can make to host economies in the long term, provided the barriers for their labour market integration are addressed (Cedefop 2011). Some of these barriers include skills mismatch, non-recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications and language difficulties. Central to these migration debates is the idea that VET is useful for two purposes. First, to mitigate the pressure for migration in origin countries. Second, to mitigate the pressures of migration through its potential to facilitate the labour market participation and social integration of migrants in host countries. Regarding its first role, there are bilateral and multilateral agreements between host and origin countries that aim to invest in the education and training of people in the hope that it will prevent them from migrating. The second role of VET is borne out of the refugee crisis in OECD countries. The crisis has created the need to invest in migrants' education and training in order to facilitate their integration into host-country economies and society in general. The overall objective is to reap the economic benefits of the integration of migrants in the labour markets of host countries. However, there are limitations to the effects of VET.

While it is true that VET can be used to facilitate the labour market integration of migrants in host countries, the relationship between VET for migrants and labour market benefits or economic growth is complex. The benefits that could be reaped depend on the responsiveness of migrants towards VET, their legal status and the nature of VET systems in the host countries. In relation to the push for VET in mitigating the pressure for migration in origin countries, there is the need to adopt a holistic investment approach, rather than focusing on only VET. This is because VET does not lead to jobs and policies and investments need to be made in creating decent jobs and boosting economic development as stated in SDG 8.3.

Furthermore, the scale of displacement and migration, its environmental, socio-political and economic causes and consequences is a reminder of the need to promote sustainable development. Within this broad sustainable development agenda, VET has a significant role to play in mitigating the causes and effects of migration such as climate change, environmental changes, violence, poverty amongst others. This is due to its connection with production, consumption and sustainable livelihood. From the view of skills necessary for promoting sustainability, there is a concurrence in the literature that both specific occupational skills and generic skills are needed (Mertineit 2013). However, before the question of skills, there should be knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and key values and concepts related to it such as climate change and the environment (ibid). It is with this understanding that more generic skills such as problem solving and critical skills can be put to use in assessing one's attitudes, lifestyle and practices, its effects on others and the environment. Specific occupational skills or competences become necessary to undertake tasks differently, especially in the transition to green jobs and economies. For VET institutions, especially in the developing world, challenges remain in predicting occupational skills that will be needed in the green economy and matching supply to demand (McGrath/Powell 2016). The changing world of work and technological innovations make this even more difficult. Also, greening TVET, jobs and economies is a very resource intensive process, while support is needed for many countries, care needs to be taken in ensuring that the process is not costly for the poor.

2. Towards a New VET for Development Account

Noting that the SDGs might be problematic as an engine of VET for development renewal, there is nonetheless value in how they add further legitimation to the processes led by UNESCO in recent years. The UNESCO TVET Strategy 2016-21 conceives of three pillars for a new approach to VET:

- Fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship
- Promoting equity and gender equality
- Facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies.

Although the genesis of these pillars predates the SDGs, the Strategy explicitly used the SDGs justification of what is a significant shift from orthodox skills policies, which have focused solely on the first of these three pillars. Whilst youth employment and entrepreneurship are seen by UNESCO as essential to meeting the SDGs, especially 1, 8 and 9, the Strategy argues that this must be balanced with a strong focus on equity, keyed particularly to SDGs 5 and 10; and a broader sense of sustainable development, which cuts across the SDGs (UNESCO 2016b).

In more theoretical terms, McGrath and Powell (2016) argue that an adequate skills development paradigm should promote sustainable production and consumption, meet the needs of the poor and respect planetary boundaries.

Whilst accepting that youth employment and entrepreneurship are important, recent theoretical work on skills has sought to get beyond the simplicity of the human capital orthodoxy. Rather, a new account of skills and economic development is being developed, drawing on institutional, evolutionary and complexity economics traditions. This focuses on how firms individually, sectorally and economy-wide develop capabilities to succeed (Nübler 2014; Hidalgo/Hausmann 2011). It places emphasis on how the state and intermediary organisations (e.g., local economic development or sectoral skills bodies) can help build the collective competitiveness and capacity of an industry (Kruss et al. 2015). It understands success as being emergent, responsive and purposive rather than centrally planned or left to the vagaries of the market (Wedekind 2018). This complements a political economy of skills tradition (Brown/Green/Lauder 2001; Allais 2012; Busemeyer/Trampusch 2012), which argues that skills are acquired and utilised socially and not individually. It highlights the roles played by a range of actors and the importance of national skills regimes that evolve historically out of stakeholder negotiations, situated within wider national and international political economies.

In keeping with the UNESCO approach, recent literature on VET and development is determined to move beyond the economic domain. Much of it has drawn on the work of Sen (e.g., 1999) and his notion of human development. It uses this to offer a wider vision of the purpose of education, skills and work. This is also heavily influenced by Sen's account of equality. Applied to the VET context (McGrath 2012; Tikly 2013; Powell 2014; de Jaeghere 2017; McGrath/Powell 2018), this moves beyond the excessive individualism of the orthodox human capital approach by developing a far stronger account of agency. However, it also seeks to avoid the extremes of agency-based accounts by insisting that structure matters, as in the political economy of skills approach. This has led to a strong focus both on the need to give considerable attention to young people's voices in articulating their aspirations for meaningful work and lives, and on their intersectional experience of marginalisation and disempowerment.

The era of the SDGs necessitates reflection on wider concerns about the future of the planet and VET's complicity in environmental degradation (Anderson 2008; McGrath/Powell 2016).

This account critiques VET's location in unsustainable consumption and production. McGrath and Powell (2016) argue that we need to replace this with an approach to skills that specifically focuses on meeting the needs of the poor without exceeding our planetary boundaries (cf. Raworth 2017). Success in this paradigm needs to be thought of in terms of important sustainability concepts, such as resilience, and the extent to which skills development promotes individual and collective practices that promote sustainable futures (Rosenberg et al. 2016; Ramsarup et al. 2017).

A theory of skills for sustainable development requires a parallel theory of sustainable work. The 2015 Human Development Report (HDR), entitled "work for human development" offers a crucial contribution here, stressing that work can both enable and undermine human potential (UNDP 2015). Being unable to work enough to earn a decent income undermines many other capabilities and functionings, as does being forced to devote too much time to work. Equally, being stuck in poor quality, indecent work is inevitably undermining of human flourishing. Even work that is not particularly dirty, dangerous or exploitative may be simply boring and/or undermining of self. Moreover, work is profoundly gendered, and much of the work of women is done in households and rendered invisible. As Sayer (2012: 586) argues, the unequal household distribution of labour "allow[s] men to enlarge some of their capabilities at the expense of women's. It also handicaps women's participation in public life in general and the labour market in particular."

However, a radical reconceptualisation of work is profoundly challenging to the conventional orthodoxies and critiques of VET, both of which are still focused on the primacy of the economy and of formal work. Moreover, in thinking about transformation of skills, work and economies, it is vital to remember that the poor and marginalised are most likely to find themselves doing the dirtiest, most precarious, indecent work. It is tempting to wish, or legislate, such work away but the problem is that this work is often better than none at all. Too many green initiatives do away with the work, and hence incomes, of the poorest; reduce their access to cheap (though unsustainable) fuels; and replace their jobs with new ones that are typically higher skilled and higher status, and thus are inaccessible to those most in need of them.

It is vital, therefore, that new green policies are based in rigorous analyses of how they are likely to affect the most precarious. Indeed, the priority should be on making the most marginalised active participants in policymaking and ensuring that meeting their needs is a core dimension of any sustainable development strategy. Inevitably, this will have a skills element. VET is routinely characterised as a system for the poor and "education failures": how then can it better equip the already marginalised to be more skilful and empowered agents of sustainable human development?

This clearly can be couched in rights terms. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education has argued that "Technical and vocational education and training cuts across formal or school-based, non-formal or enterprise-based, and informal or traditional apprenticeship. It has a nexus with the right to education and the right to work." (Singh 2016: 16). Although not couched strongly in an overall rights language, UNESCO's work on VET has sought to draw increasingly on the work of Tomaševski (2001). This has allowed new questions to be asked regarding whether there are policy frameworks in place that guarantee VET access for all or for more people. Moreover, we can explore the extent to which policy commitments specify particular groups, such as youth, women or people living with disabilities. This can lead to an exploration of the extent that such policies are limited to thinking about formal education or incorporate wider human resources perspectives that include training functions of other ministries as well as non-formal and private provision; and also learning that takes place in formal and informal workplaces. A rights lens can lead us to question whether there are sufficient sites and modes of VET learning practically available, i.e., within physical or financial reach for those who want to access them.

3. Potential contributions of Germanophone VET models to a New VET for Development account

Responding to the SDG narrative, Germanophone countries point to their prestigious VET approaches as potential models for improved VET strategies at international level (BMZ 2017; SDC 2016). This is supported by increased international recognition for work-based learning in close cooperation with enterprises (UNESCO 2015) that stands in contrast with the earlier predominance of school-based VET.

Against the background of a VET renaissance in both OECD and developing countries, there is growing interest in Germanophone VET models at global scale. Reasons for these are assumptions that these models reflect a particular variety of capitalism that has long been seen as delivering high levels of economic growth, individual prosperity and societal cohesion. Consequently, export and transfer activities of Germanophone VET approaches, in particular the dual system of apprenticeship, are rapidly growing. In Germany, and to a lesser degree in Switzerland, an increasingly commercialised context of VET transfer is observable driven by corporate rather than by developmental interests (Heller/Grunau/Duscha 2015; Jäger/Maurer/Fässler 2016). In both countries, institutionalised cooperation bodies of several ministries implied in VET transfer and export exist. Related national strategies, while making reference to development goals, express the overall aims to internationally commercialise their respective VET models and to support skills requirements of their national enterprises at the domestic and international level (Deutscher Bundestag 2013; SBFI et al. 2014). In Austria, this trend is less dynamic. However, dual system transfer activities have increased in recent years.

Intermingling economic and political interests, the strong transfer dynamics have come to frame bilateral development cooperation strategies of the German speaking countries in the education and VET sector. Increasingly these countries refer to key components of their national VET systems and wider VET cultures as guidelines for their VET strategies in development cooperation. These include:

- integration of school and work-based learning to varying degrees;
- curriculums designed according to firms' demands;
- institutionalised dialogue between social partners, in particular between governments and enterprises.

Only Germany has a tradition of dual system transfer as part of its development cooperation, which was however almost abandoned during the 1990s due to its limited success and a general reorientation towards poverty reduction and the informal sector (Clement 2012; Mayer 2001). Yet, in recent education strategies of German and Swiss development cooperation the dual system is referred to as the overall VET paradigm (BMZ 2017; SDC 2016). This contrasts with the 1990s and 2000s where the informal sector and/or school based VET played a stronger role and recourse to Germanophone paradigms was less important (Clement 2012; Jäger/Maurer/Fässler 2016; Van Dok 2016). While in current strategies there is still reference to skills development for the informal sector, it is less clear how this relates to an overall VET vision couched on the dual system approach. In the Austrian strategy, reference to the dual system approach is less explicit (ADA 2013), although interventions in this area have increased in the last years. In 2016, the German, Swiss, Austrian and Liechtensteinian development cooperation founded the Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training[1].

[1] See: https://www.dcdualvet.org/

With regard to the SDG narrative, the question arises whether Germanophone VET models, beyond their prestige and obvious economic success, do comply with a theoretically and conceptually new VET for Development account commensurate to the transformative UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Such an account, as outlined in part 1 and 2 of this paper, has to overcome the VET orthodoxy rooted in a productivist approach to development. Rather, it has to develop new VET paradigms for decent work and life that are respectful of our planetary boundaries. The following policy issues emerge as crucial points for such a new VET account:

- a stronger account of agency and the voices of learners, specifically of the poor;
- appropriately balanced and intertwined VET strategies aimed at both the formal and the informal sectors;
- equity of access and outcome;
- promotion of sustainable development
- a skills account that is linked to a parallel account of decent and sustainable work which enables rather than undermines human potential.

Against this background, a number of components integral to the Germanophone VET approaches stand out that appear to make these approaches theoretically attractive for the SDG era. Indeed, one of the fundaments of the dual system is the institutionalised dialogue between social partners that ascribes a high degree of voice and agency to workers and their representative bodies in a dynamic setting of constant negotiation. Likewise, the principle of 'Beruf' and the social status attached to it points to a holistic understanding of work processes that include integrated theoretical and practical qualifications, a high degree of autonomy, as well as possibilities for social and professional self-organisation. Undoubtedly, there are many elements in such a holistic and socially appreciated understanding of work that have much to offer to a transformative VET account for decent work and life and are, at least potentially, questioning the human capital orthodoxy.

However, there are some basic elements of Germanophone VET traditions that contrast with the outlined requirements of a new VET for development account at a conceptual level. At a more practical level, a number of risks emerge from the predominant patterns of concrete transfer approaches.

First, even though Germanophone VET models do not comply with the fragmented understanding of skills and work processes associated with Anglo-Saxon VET traditions (Allais 2012), they are still conceptually rooted in a productivism and modernisation paradigm that sees industrialisation as its core (Mayer 2001). This does not easily facilitate an account of work respectful of planetary boundaries, nor does it help to overcome gender stereotypes associated with the modernisation paradigm (ibid.).

Second, in the actual transfer processes the institutionalised social partnership in which Germanophone VET models, and in particular the dual system approach, are rooted, is mostly reduced to a dialogue between government and enterprises neglecting the role of workers' representative bodies (SDC 2016; BMZ 2017). Such a truncated model of social dialogue does not only fail to account for increased participation and voice of the learners and workers, it also reduces the chances of improving the social status of VET within the recipient countries. In a commercialised transfer context, neglect to integrate workers' representative bodies can also lead to a very short-term understanding of demand-led curriculum design. As Allais (2011) points out, skills defined on the basis of immediate and short-term economic needs of enterprises run the risk of not taking account of either the learning needs of young people nor the necessities of sustainable economic development in the medium to long term.

Third, Germanophone VET models are highly formalised and require a certain level of prior education of trainees, usually lower secondary education. They are typically carried out in formal work places combined with provision of school-based VET. Consequently, they do not easily offer solutions to the skill requirements of informal sector workers and are not necessarily helpful to meet the main developmental challenge of improving skill levels of the poor. Rather, the concrete risk associated with the transfer of Germanophone VET traditions is that they will further increase the trend of stratification rather than promoting educational and social equity.

This argument is further supported by the experience of limited replicability (Stockmann 2014; Stockmann/Silvestrini 2013) of the dual system approach in economic and cultural contexts that differ substantially from German speaking countries. In practice, attempts to implement VET reforms based on the dual system have been successful in single enterprises or at most in spatially and sectorally concentrated areas. In a context of strong commercial interests associated with the transfer of Germanophone VET strategies, it is even more likely that individual aims of particular enterprises or political bodies outweigh developmental goals of system wide replicability or social equity.

4. Conclusions

As this paper argues, the SDGs have reintroduced VET into the overall education and development narrative after a number of decades of conceptual and practical marginalisation. They have also made visible the transversal nature of skills development and important interconnections with economic development, poverty reduction and decent work. However, the focus of education in the SDG era still lies on formal and general academic education. From a VET perspective, there are a number of conceptual shortcomings in the SDG framework mainly associated with the neglect of skills and work in the informal economy and consequently the skills requirements of the poor. Moreover, some indicators turn out to be highly inadequate in how they account for a variety of VET settings across formal and non-formal provision. In practice, funding decisions will decide over VET's place in the SDG era. As of today, major education financing initiatives tend to marginalise VET issues

In the VET and development debate, migration has become an increasingly important issue. VET is seen as useful to mitigate migration pressure on the one hand and to facilitate migrants' integration in host societies on the other. However, the interrelationships appear to be more complex, in that VET strategies need to be complemented by adequate economic, labour market and social strategies in order to reap either of the intended benefits. Moreover, migration pressures emanating from environmental degradation point to the necessity of developing a new VET paradigm that is responsive to the sustainable development learning challenges.

At a conceptual level, a significant shift from orthodox skills policies was introduced by UNESCO in 2012 and reinforced through the SDGs paradigm. Whilst earlier policies solely focused on youth employment and entrepreneurship, with its new strategy UNESCO adds two equally important pillars, namely equity and the promotion of sustainable development. In more theoretical terms, discussions have been moving away from a focus on skills locked in a human capital thinking. Amongst contributions by a variety of theories, Sen's capabilities approach has introduced a strand of human development thinking and a stronger account of agency. On this basis, the necessity of a new VET for development account is being voiced that puts the needs of the poor centre stage concomitantly promoting sustainability concepts and practices.

VET models from German speaking countries, or rather a number of its components and underlying principles, can contribute to the development of such a new VET paradigm. These include their strong account of learner's agency, the social dialogue in which they are rooted and their holistic conceptualisation of work processes and vocational learning integrating theory and practice. A prerequisite for this, however, is to avoid the pitfalls of increasingly commercialised transfer contexts driven by corporate interests. To do so, the social dialogue should not be reduced to government and enterprises but include workers' representatives and civil society organisations (Wolf 2017). Research on VET transfer of Germanophone models should increasingly be carried out from the recipient countries' perspective, something that is lacking to date. However, limits of Germanophone VET models reside in their restricted transferability to different socio-economic contexts. A key challenge is also how to complement Germanophone VET models with other strategies in a way that avoids further social and educational stratification and ensures that skills requirements of the poor are adequately accounted for.

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