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‘Back to the Future?’ Namibia’s current vocational education and training reform

Matthias Grossmann¹ and Raimo Naanda²

In the context of its Vision 2030, the Namibian government has initiated a far-reaching reform of its education and training sector. The aim of reforming the vocational education and training (VET) sector as one part of the education system is to improve its management, introduce competency based training standards to increase access, improve the responsiveness of skills supply to skills demand and increase the financial base through the introduction of a levy. The paper argues that the current reform looks promising in scope, but many caveats exist that might limit its successful implementation. Among the greatest dangers are a neglect of the micro-level of reform implementation, a low involvement of the private sector and the inappropriateness of introducing a training levy.

1. Introduction

The Namibian government embarked on an ambitious path towards development: the main objective is to achieve the status of a newly industrialised country by the year 2030 (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2004b).

Education and training are key elements for achieving this goal and the successful development and utilisation of the country’s human resources are a priority area for policymakers. In order to remedy the inequalities caused by Namibia’s colonial past, the government’s budget contribution to education and training is among the eight highest in the world. Apart from free and universal basic education, vocational education and training (VET) has been regarded a key sector to provide skilled workers and employees needed for industrialisation. Already in 1994, the Namibian government introduced the Vocational Training Act to regulate its VET system. Today, more than 10 years later, the ambitious expectations have not been met. Major problems that the Namibian VET system faces include a mismatch between skills supplies and skills demands, low intake and outputs of graduates, high failure rates in national trade tests, high unit costs and inefficient management of the VET system.

Due to a lack of efficiency and effectiveness in the education and training sector in general, the government has initiated the Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan (ETSIP) to improve the delivery and outcomes of education and training. The long-term visions for an improved VET system is (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2004a, p. 18):

¹ Matthias Grossmann is a visiting researcher from the Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance at Oxford University. For comments email: matthias.grossmann@geh.ox.ac.uk

² Raimo Naanda is Senior Manager for Training and Development at Telecom Namibia and former principal of Windhoek Vocational Training Centre. His email is: naandar@telecom.na

“To achieve an effective, sustainable system of skill formation closely aligned with the labour market that provides equitably the skills needed for accelerated development and the competencies needed by youth and adults for productive work and increased incomes.”

The current VET reform objectives as proposed by the ETSIP include a more efficient management of the VET system, the introduction of competency based training, a better matching of skills to private sector demand, the introduction of a training levy and enhanced access to VET. Many of the proposed reform initiatives have been around for quite some time in Namibia.

Given that many of the reform objectives were already proposed in the past and have not been properly implemented until today, the emerging question is whether the current VET reform is more promising than past ones –hence the question: is Namibia’s VET reform on the way ‘back to the future?’ The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of factors that might influence the success of the current VET reform in Namibia.³

2. Factors influencing VET reform –an overview

Governments around the world engage in reforming their respective VET systems. The reasons range from the need to adapt skills delivery to the increasing challenges posed by globalisation (the need to remain or become competitive) to addressing various social objectives through the VET system (reducing youth unemployment or the integration of formerly disadvantaged groups into the formal employment sector).

Reform initiatives mostly focus on 1) the general orientation (objectives) of the VET system; 2) the overall structural set-up or management on the macro level with the aim to improve the delivery and responsiveness of training (e.g. the management of the VET system and the co-operation among stakeholders); 3) the management of the micro-level (methodologies and approaches to training delivery like Competency Based Training vs. traditional training, the quality of instructors, equipment and management of training centres in general).

Experiences from a number of countries that reformed their respective VET systems demonstrate that various factors influence the outcome and success of the initiated reform measures (Gill, I. D., Fluitman, F. and Dar, A. 2000). The following major lessons were derived from these reform initiatives:

- 1) Experiences from addressing the general orientation/ objectives of the VET system
 - VET systems are linked to a country’s overall economic context and past development. Adopting entire systems (like the German dual system) from abroad is very difficult and almost always leads to considerable deviations in outcomes
 - The clearer and fewer the objectives attached to the VET system, the more effective it is in terms of training delivery and training outcomes. VET systems that are expected to fulfil several objectives such as providing skills that are in demand and reducing youth unemployment, social inclusion or increasing self-employment opportunities are burdened and less effective due to a multiplication of objectives and resource constraints. These secondary

³ This paper is based on a more in-depth analysis of the current VET reform. The detailed discussion paper also provides a theoretical overview of VET reform in general as well as empirical examples that are linked to the Namibian VET reform. The paper is also available on the IPPR website at: <http://www.ippr.org.na>



objectives should better be addressed through separate avenues that are linked to the formal VET system (e.g. special upgrading or bridging courses). Similarly, VET systems that have to remedy the insufficiencies of the basic education system (especially lacking maths and language skills) are less effective and efficient than VET systems that solely focus on skills training

- Political will is a central factor for successful VET reform. The political attitude to consider VET as equally important as higher education is crucial for driving any reform. This includes the willingness to transfer responsibilities away from the state to stakeholders. The attitude of trainees vis-à-vis VET is also important: as long as it is considered a second-best alternative compared to higher education, VET won't be completely effective. VET reforms that emphasise the work-qualifying role of skills over academic qualifications are better received. Similarly, campaigns to remedy the 'academic legacy' of the past help improve the effectiveness of VET

2) Experiences from reforming the structural set-up/ management of VET systems

- The fragmentation of training provision reduces the effectiveness and relevance of training delivery. Unifying responsibility for the VET system within an independent training authority is one approach of increasing the relevance and outcome of training
- Feedback mechanisms (i.e. evaluation and monitoring of training effectiveness) are crucial to allow VET system to change according to economic and skills changes. The lack of information on skills needed and the effectiveness of public training provision are a major obstacle for successful implementation of reforms on the macro level.
- Experiences with increasing the private sector's involvement in the provision of training are mixed. One way of a better involvement is through delegating management responsibilities for the VET sector to the private sector. The imposition of training levies (i.e. negative incentives for firms to increase either their provision of training or their financial contribution) has largely been ineffective. One major problem occurring is evasion by companies and the resulting difficulties to effectively manage and govern a levy-based training fund. Some countries have switched from negative incentives to positive incentives, whereby companies offering training receive tax incentives or direct financial contributions for their training contribution.

3) Experiences from implementing reforms on the micro-level

- Most deviations of reform objectives occur on the micro-level (within training centres). One major problem is that the majority of reforms only look at the macro level but hardly take into account the implementation on the micro-level. Insufficient involvement of instructors/ teachers, principals/ administrative staff and trainees as well as insufficient resources and training/ information are major reasons for deviations and re-interpretations on this level. Generally, the more actors are involved and the less they participate or the less they are trained during the implementation, the more likely it is that the original reform objectives are re-interpreted and deviations (fragmentations) occur.
- Similar to the importance of increasing the effectiveness of the VET management on the macro-level, efficient management structures on the micro-level are necessary to accommodate reform initiatives. Decentralised

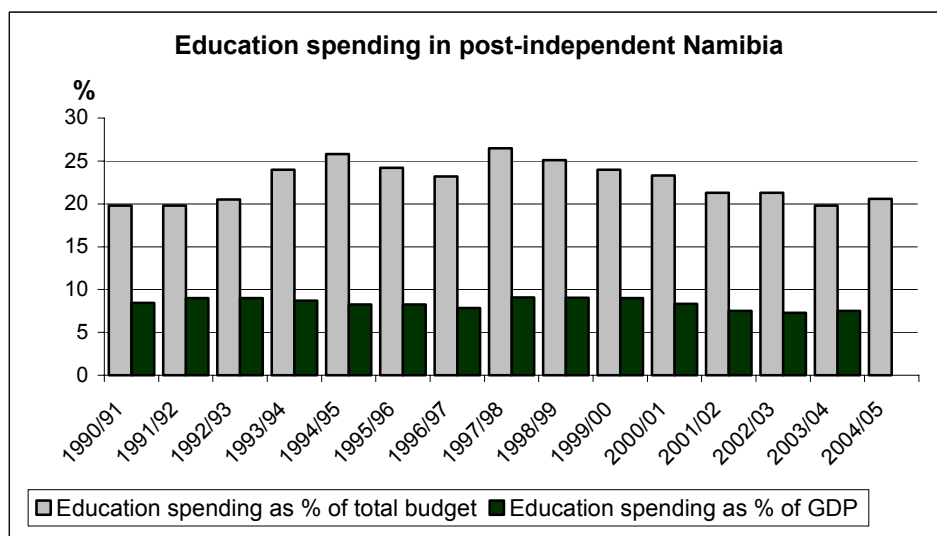
management structures are better able to address and implement changes without being overly dependent on a centralised government agency.

3. A glance at Namibia's VET system and its performance

One major challenge that the Namibian VET system faced after independence are the legacies of the past. More than one hundred years of colonial domination first by Germany and then by South Africa have led to a highly fragmented and unequal education and training system. The predominant characteristic of the education and training sector was the unequal orientation towards the education of 'whites', whereas the large majority of 'blacks' and 'coloureds' had no access to education and training and if they did, it was of considerably less quality than education for 'whites.'

One priority of the post-independence government thus was to remedy these inequalities of the past by improving the education and training sector and enabling access for all Namibians. The right to free universal education was also written into Namibia's constitution (Republic of Namibia 1990, Article 20, 2). One of the first tasks after independence was to unify the fragmented education system into a single authority responsible for schools and curriculum development. The government's strong commitment to improving its education and training sector is also reflected in the high percentage of its budget devoted to education.

Figure 1: Namibia's education spending



Source: based on IPPR Database on public expenditure

The Namibian government spends between 20 to 25% of its budget on education, which represents about 7 to 9% of Namibia's GDP. This places Namibia among the eight countries in the world with the highest education spending.

When looking at the VET sector in particular, it is important to note that vocational training is much more expensive than basic and secondary education.

In 2004, the average public allocation per learner in VET was about N\$21,425, making VET about eight times more expensive than average costs for primary education (Republic of Namibia 2004). However, tuition fees only cover a very small part of the costs for VET (tuition fees at Windhoek Vocational Training Centre currently range between N\$2,000 and N\$5,000 per learner, for example).

Enrolment rates for six public (or publicly supported) training centres increased from only 152 in 1992 to 2,825 in 2004. The places available in the VET sector are still far below demand for vocational training and about only one in ten of the estimated yearly 20,000 to 30,000 school leavers are able to obtain a place in public VET (assuming every school leaver opts for VET). The fact that the VET sector still represents a second-best alternative for many trainees is reflected in the high number of Grade 12 qualified trainees. In a survey recently conducted by the authors at Windhoek Vocational Training Centre (WVTC), 67% of the surveyed trainees responded that they would have preferred higher education to vocational



training if they had been given the opportunity to access higher education. This also reflects the fact that the whole post-secondary education sector is not yet capable of absorbing all school leavers according to personal motivations and wishes and that VET is still regarded as inferior to higher education. One inherent danger of this situation is that the VET sector might only serve to absorb young people who have no other opportunity, which might constrain overall performance.

Despite the relatively small size of the VET sector and government's large financial contribution to education and training, performance of the sector is still weak and below general expectations. The three major problems of the VET sector are: 1) high failure rates in trade examinations, coupled with high drop-out rates; 2) mismatch between skills demand and supply; 3) inefficient governance structures at the macro-level and within training centres (Grossmann, M. 2001).

1) Higher failure and dropout rates

- More than half of all trainees (52% in 2003 and 61% in 2004) failed in level 3&4 examinations. Among the reasons are: mismatch between curricula and training contents in the different training centres, inadequate equipment and exam preparation and lack of examination capacity. Especially the latter point represents a major problem with a low involvement of the private sector and low capacity of the testing authority. Cases have been reported where trainees were required to perform tasks manually during exams that are impossible to achieve without the proper equipment (Grossmann, M. 2001).
- Dropout rates are a major problem as they represent a waste of resources and motivation for trainees. No data is available on dropout rates for the entire VET sector, but evidence from WVTC on dropouts between 1993 and 1999 reveals that more than 1/3 of all trainees dropped out before finishing training. The major reasons for dropping out include: lack of money for school fees, failing exams and the occurrence of employment alternatives (Lund, S. 1999).

2) Mismatch between skills demand and supply

- Industry's skills demand is not fully met. Evidence on companies participating at a job attachment programme at WVTC in 2001 reveals that skill needs are not fully met: nearly half of all companies surveyed thought that their skill demands were rather not met (Grossmann, M. 2001). A national study on 58 companies reveals that 59% have difficulties finding the skills they need (Westergaard-Nielsen, N., Hansohm, D. and Motinga, D. 2003).
- The major reasons for mismatches are: trainees often have weaknesses in basic education skills (especially maths and language skills), which reflects the weaknesses of the basic education system that are brought forward to the VET system; low qualification and industry exposure of instructors; insufficient practical training in companies; lack of adequate equipment and practical training (Grossmann, M. 2001).

3) Inefficient management of the VET system

- The current management of the VET system is strongly influenced by the state with limited co-operation among stakeholders on various levels. The management approach is a typical top-down approach with low inputs from below. There is, for example, low involvement of trainees at the various decision levels and bodies
- The low involvement of the private sector is a major constraint for the efficiency and effectiveness of the VET system. The major reasons for the sector's low involvement is: a high degree of government influence; the perception that nothing



changes or moves forward; no interest in training as it is too costly and not responsive to their needs; time constraints to participate in lengthy decision-making procedures

- Inflexible management of training institutes on the micro level. Public training centres are heavily dependent on input from the Directorate for Vocational Training and cannot flexibly decide on their own expenditure needs. This often hampers the efficient management of training centres and slows down the time it needs to react to needs.

4. Analysing Namibia's current VET reform

Many of the weaknesses have been known for a long time and repeated attempts have been undertaken to streamline and reform the VET system to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Most of the proposed initiatives to address these weaknesses have not been implemented properly, mainly due to a lack of commitment to fundamental change.

The current reform initiative is far more inclusive than past attempts. The impetus for the current reform stems from the policy formulation process of the Vision 2030 and its distinct focus on building a knowledge society. With the input from the World Bank, an education sector review was initiated under the Prime Minister in 2003. The resulting Marope report provides a critical analysis of the entire education and training sector, its weaknesses and needs for further improvement (Marope, M. T. 2005).

The government initiated the Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan (ETSIP) in 2004 to formulate education objectives and strategies in line with Vision 2030 and the 2nd National Development Plan (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2004a). The ETSIP is based on the strategic plans of the then three ministries of Basic Education, Sports and Culture; Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation; and Women's Affairs and Child Welfare. Another key document in the reform process is a proposed new training policy.

The ETSIP strategic framework covers the period 2005-2020. In addition, it covers a five-year programme (2005-2009) with concrete steps and tasks to be undertaken in the different sectors. In regard to VET reform, the framework identifies five major objectives:

- 1) Enhance the delivery of vocational skills through better organisation and management
 - Establish an employer-driven National Training Authority (NTA) to govern all aspects of the VET system (the organisation is a tripartite body)
 - Training centres become semi-autonomous bodies with own rights of decision
 - Generate and manage data and information on VET and skills needs
- 2) Raise the quality of skills delivery
 - Change traditional teaching approach to competency based training (CBT) and standards
 - Strengthen and encourage private training provision
 - Improve the testing system and instructor training and qualifications
- 3) Mobilise financial resources for training and use them more efficiently
 - Introduce a payroll levy to increase available funds for the VET sector
 - Increase the efficient use of funding through channelling funds into a National Training Fund and improve financial management capabilities of training institutes



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- 4) Enhance the external effectiveness of vocational training to economic demands
 - Generate regular data on skills needs and employment opportunities
 - Extend training capacity and private provision to increase participation in VET
 - Plan and design short courses and community skills courses to cater for all training needs
 - 5) Improve equality in skills provision
 - Improve access to adult education and special access programmes for disadvantaged groups or regions
 - Increase part-time training programmes and non-formal skills training approaches

Although the proposed reform objectives are comprehensive and address a range of issues in the VET sector that have been identified as part of its insufficient effectiveness, there are still a number of factors that might negatively influence the success of the current reform. Above all, the current reform is much more complex in terms of its range (number of issues addressed) as well as the number of involved stakeholders and resources required, which makes implementation much more difficult. Why then, given the experiences with incremental reform attempts in the past, should the current complex reform initiative be more successful? We are convinced that it will only be successful if the major implementation weaknesses of the past are taken into account and addressed accordingly. The discussion below will focus on the reform objectives and the major factors that are likely to influence its success.

1) Enhance the management of the VET system on the macro-level

As compared to the current set-up of the VET system, the reform initiatives clearly focus on a shift away from government centred involvement to an employer driven system. The following issues are crucial if the management of the macro-level were to be successful:

- Political will to delegate government responsibility to an independent and employer-driven entity is crucial. The government clearly needs to change from a determining agent to an advising one. This is only realistic if the overall objectives that the VET system is expected to fulfil are set out clearly by all stakeholders before devising training programmes and curricula. Stakeholders should be very clear that an overburdening of the VET system with multiple objectives leads to a less effective system. The multiplicity of (legitimate) objectives should be addressed through parallel avenues (e.g. separate bridging/ access courses for unemployed or disadvantaged groups). An employer-driven VET system is only useful if its main focus is on delivering skills that are demanded by the industry
- Although the basic and higher education ministries have been merged, more and better co-ordination between the various education departments (basic, secondary, higher education) is necessary. This is crucial because currently, the VET sector is also burdened by the inefficiencies of the other education sectors (insufficient basic skills). The VET sector is part of the entire education system and although the management of the VET system should remain centralised with the NTA for the sake of efficiency, co-ordination between all education sectors is crucial. For this purpose, representatives from the other education streams should have an advisory role on the NTA Board.
- One of the major challenges and requirements for successful reform is a better involvement of the private sector in all aspects of the training system, ranging from the provision of training to management of the VET system. The lack of private sector involvement is also due to the fact that the focus of the current set-up is not entirely on skills provision but is influenced by various political inferences and interests from

various sides. As one private sector representative stated on a national VET workshop, *'the private sector is willing to contribute and get involved, but we need to see results, we need to see change.'* In order to increase private sector involvement, it is crucial that employers have a large say in the overall management of the VET system. The chairman of the NTA, for example, should necessarily be an employer representative. Positive incentives should be applied to increase involvement (e.g. in the form of tax rebates or direct financial contributions for companies that engage in the VET sector).

- Duplication of responsibilities of organisations should be avoided. One critical issue of the current reform is that the responsibilities of the NTA and the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) are not clear. According to the new training policy draft, both, NQA and NTA seem to have a mandate for setting curriculum standards, registering and accrediting training providers. It is explicitly stated that NQA should recognise NTA's lead position to develop VET guidelines. Similarly, NQA seems to be responsible for the broader task of generating National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) that also include inputs from the other education levels. Nonetheless, the double responsibilities in standard development and registration might prove inefficient due to co-ordination problems. Some stakeholders suggested that the reason that NTA has opted for an own standard setting and accreditation responsibility might be due to NQA's low effectiveness over its nearly 10 years of existence (especially in terms of very low registration and accreditation rates). In this sense, thus, this compromise might be rather due to political motives instead of efficiency considerations. In terms of efficiency, it certainly would be better if the entire standard setting and accreditation responsibility would remain within one authority (be it NQA or NTA).
- A functioning evaluation and monitoring mechanism is crucial for a VET system that 'learns' and is capable of addressing various challenges that emerge from outside and inside. Only if past experiences lead to changes will the VET system be responsive to new challenges. Current reform objectives provide for the regular collection of data and evaluation of the VET system. According to the new training policy draft, NTA will report to Parliament on the performance of the VET sector. However, this is not sufficient if the VET system were to address challenges timely. NTA should have an automatic right of intervention to address any issues emerging from the evaluation and monitoring exercise.

2) Raising the quality of skills delivery and responsiveness of the training system—the role of the micro-sector

The most ambitious element of the VET reform is the transformation of the current linear and time-based training and curricula into competency based training (CBT) and curricula. And it is here that we also see the greatest danger for a successful implementation of the reform.

- As compared to traditional training approaches, CBT is not a linear and time-based learning approach but entirely focuses on the learner's skills. Qualifications for different trades are modularised and broken down according to the skills required. A learner who already has skills in some areas can get his competencies certified. The advantage of this approach is that it opens up training to all those who have work experience without necessarily having formal qualifications or education. The major danger is related to the fact that the change to CBT involves a completely different approach of teaching, testing, learning and also requires different curricula and standards.



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- The greatest deviation from reform objectives occurs when those at the receiving end of the reform (mainly instructors and trainees) are not properly involved in the process. A trainee survey conducted by the authors at WVTC in March 2005 revealed that the large majority (70% of the 32 trainees that answered this question) had not been consulted on the introduction and concept of CBT. Trainees certainly have been informed of CBT, but only four out of 34 were able to correctly describe what CBT was and what it meant for their own training. This reveals that there is a strong need to make the reform and its implications much clearer than they are now. Similarly, there is the danger that instructors, who are not properly involved in the reform process, might simply boycott it, as they do not know how to address the complex changes that are about to take place. Instructors, especially from VTCs outside Windhoek, have voiced the concern of not really knowing what CBT's practical implications would mean for their own teaching. There have been workshops for instructors from all VTCs to explain and teach CBT approaches, but external constraints (like time constraints and lack of transport money) have compromised attendance. In order to ensure that instructors are trained how to use CBT approaches it should be compulsory for every instructor and training manager to participate at an upgrading course (which itself should be based on CBT approaches) before CBT is introduced. As this is unlikely to happen, given the financial implications this would have coupled with a low involvement of stakeholders from outside Windhoek, it remains doubtful whether CBT is implemented without leading to another fragmentation of teaching approaches in the different training centres as it is currently the case.
 - Capacity building especially for the management of vocational training centres (VTCs) is crucial. Firstly, managers and administrators play a central role in making VTCs fit for CBT and more efficient training delivery. This requires strategies to identify instructors' strengths and weaknesses and to develop human resources accordingly. Secondly, VTCs should have the opportunity to dismiss and employ instructors based on experiences and performance. Treating them like teachers for who higher payments are linked to higher academic qualifications needs to be phased out and a proper section for instructors created either within the Public Services Act or in a separate legislation.
 - Creating and improving capacity of a CBT based national testing system is required. The dismal performance in the past is a warning that an otherwise good VET system and training approach cannot perform unless the testing and certification of skills and competencies is effective as well. An increase in financial resources and staff to testing centres is required. One approach to dissolve the ambiguity in responsibilities between NQA and NTA is to merge the NQA with the trade testing centre and thus provide an increase in staff and expertise and avoid duplications and resource inefficiencies. Equally important is the development of effective testing procedures that are based on objective and transparent rules. The involvement and training of the private sector is crucial. Again, given its low involvement in the past, it is crucial to provide real incentives for the private sector to participate; otherwise, the testing system will remain state biased.

3) Mobilise financial resources for training and use them efficiently

One central aim of the reform is to introduce a payroll levy to increase the financial base of the VET system and to encourage greater involvement of the private sector in terms of training provision. However, a levy might not lead to the expected outcomes, which is not only due to the difficulty of implementing it but to its very nature. Many countries that introduced a levy made negative experiences and many abolished it.



- Although the idea of the levy –providing an incentive for greater participation and financial resources- is good, it might not be effective simply because it represents a negative incentive for enterprises, which considerably increases the problem of evasion. The idea of the levy has been around for many years in Namibia, but until today it has not been possible to precisely predict the amount that a levy would generate or the number of eligible companies to participate. Given a tax system where the revenue authorities are not capable of efficiently collecting all taxes from the private sector in the first instance, it remains doubtful why this should be different for the case of a levy. Experiences with the levy in South Africa, for example, demonstrate that it is extremely difficult and inefficient to collect eligible taxes (Ziderman, A. and Van Adams, A. 1997). A better way to increase private sector involvement in terms of private training provision is to provide positive incentives (e.g. tax cuts or direct state contributions for those companies that provide training). The disadvantage is that financial resources need to be obtained elsewhere (e.g. through either direct or indirect taxes and fees).
- Tuition fees play a central role given the high per learner costs of VET provision. At the same time, the difficulty of raising tuition fees is the major reason for trainees to drop out. Currently, financial support exists for trainees to pay for their training out of the training fund. One approach to deepen the financial basis is to introduce post-training fees, whereby trainees have to re-pay a certain amount of their respective income into the training fund. The advantage is that the VET system would be opened up to trainees irrespective of their economical background and would directly link training to the world of work (jobs obtained later).

4) Improve equality in skills provision

Due to the injustices of the past, one major focus of the VET reform is to enhance the access to the VET system by integrating formerly disadvantaged groups and to provide more and better training on the community level. One aspect is to increase the overall number of trainees absorbed by the system to 10,000 VET trainees and 4,500 COSDEC trainees by 2010.

- Important as this reform objective is, care should be taken not to overburden the VET system by a multiplicity of objectives. One point of discussion between stakeholders has been to relax the entry requirements to VET (by reducing minimum requirements for maths, for example). Fortunately, this point has not been taken up, as this would have meant that the VET system had to remedy the weaknesses of the basic education and training system even more than today. Parallel bridging and access courses should be offered to those where an upgrading of basic skills is necessary, but this should be done outside the formal VET stream in order not to compromise its quality. This requires the close co-operation between the different education sectors and actors involved. In addition, the CBT approach might help to improve the access situation, as it focuses on individual competencies, irrespective of where they have been obtained. Nonetheless, it needs to be assured that applicants have the minimum basic skills, or, if they are not sufficient, upgrading courses are available.
- The projections of creating 7,000 new VET places within the next 5 years is overly optimistic, as this requires large amounts of financial resources, and above all well qualified instructors. Improving instructor training and qualifications alone are a lengthy process and should have begun many years ago if the projected target was to be achieved in time. The focus should instead be on improving and upgrading existing training centres by identifying strengths and weaknesses. Some VTCs' performance in the regions had been dismal in the past and the upgrading of management, teachers



and equipment is crucial to raise training standards. Too broad an expansion of the VET system poses enormous constraints on scarce finances and human resources. The case of Egypt demonstrates the negative effects of a rapid expansion of the VET sector without strengthening its efficiency: in order to accommodate the large number of school leavers not finding a place in higher education, the Egyptian government opened up the VET system for those learners without a parallel increase in the number of instructors and equipment. The result was a drastic drop in training quality and outcomes (Gill, I. D., Dar, A. and Fluitman, F. 1999).

5. Conclusion

The current reform initiative in Namibia is promising in scope, as for the first time, the complexity of the VET system has been addressed in the reform process and not only parts of it as in the past. At the same time, the current reform is quite ambitious and complex and one concern is whether it is not too ambitious given the disappointing experiences with reform initiatives in the past. There are a number of inherent dangers to a successful implementation of the reform objectives.

One of the major dangers is that the reform focus is too much on the macro or structural level at top, without really addressing the particular issues at the micro level. As a consequence, it often happens that intended changes and policies lead to outcomes that have not been anticipated per-se. Potential dangers in the Namibian reform process on the macro-level are a low involvement of the private sector and a fragmentation of responsibilities between organisations (especially NTA and NQA). One of the greatest dangers, however, is the low involvement of the micro-level. Trainees and instructors feel not being properly involved in the process. In the worst case, this might lead to a re-interpretation and subsequently fragmentation of the CBT approach, which would considerably affect its effectiveness.

Other reform aspects such as the introduction of a training levy and the broadening of access to VET also pose potential dangers for successful reform. The experiences with a training levy around the world are mediocre and we are doubtful why a levy should be much more successful in Namibia, where already one of the major problems is a low involvement of the private sector. Similarly, the danger of broadening access to VET is that it adds functions and responsibilities that are not primarily its task (such as remedying the insufficiencies of the basic education system). We acknowledge the importance of providing training and access to education to all Namibians, but it is more efficient to do so separately, without, however, closing the VET system to all those with the required minimum competencies at a later stage.

Overall, the Namibian VET reform seems to be on the right path. It is crucial for policymakers to fully support the reform measures in the future and to be aware of the many caveats that such a complex undertaking bears.

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