
**Addressing Skills Gaps of Cambodia's Rural Youth:
Success Factors and Challenges for Dual Vocational Education
and Training in Development Cooperation**

Essay on Development Policy

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CQF	Cambodia Qualification Framework
CRDT	Cambodian Rural Development Team
DC dVET	Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training
DGTVET	Directorate General of TVET
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
INBAS	Institute for Vocational Training, Labour Market and Social Policy
LSE	Lower Secondary Education
USE	Upper Secondary Education
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEET	not in employment, education, or training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NTB	National Training Board
NTTI	National Technical Training Institute
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PTC	Provincial Training Centre
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDP	Skills Development Programme
SFIVET	Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
USD	United States Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational and Professional Education and Training
VSD	Vocational Skills Development

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VSD Project Typology Tool (SDC, 2017a, 2)

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Executive Summary

Cambodia's economy is thriving and every year a large number of young women and men join the world of work – but many of them, especially in rural areas, do not have the opportunity to gain market-relevant skills through quality education and training. Currently, the Cambodian education and training system is supply driven, and youth face skills gaps and vulnerable employment. Despite the potential for economic, social and individual development, only few international cooperation initiatives target market-relevant education and training. One possible approach to reduce the skills gaps of the youth cohort is quality vocational education and training inspired by the Swiss “dual-track” system, i.e. through public-private collaboration and shared ownership. This policy essay analyses key success factors and challenges for introducing dual approaches to vocational education and training in Cambodia – with specific consideration on reducing skills gaps and implications for rural youth – and presents policy recommendations for development cooperation. Based on a synthesis of (Swiss) development cooperation experience and labour market research, this essay contends that six key prerequisites need to be addressed for a more market-relevant vocational education and training system in Cambodia, namely: an enabling policy framework and institutional governance, engagement of the private sector and dual ownership, workplace learning and joint financing, relevance and social recognition of standards and qualifications, qualification of training institutes and staff and coupling of the market systems with the education and training system. In light of the analysis presented, this essay suggests the following policy recommendations for (dual) vocational education and training in Cambodia:

- 1) *For overall vocational education and training development in Cambodia (whether dual or not), systemic quality issues need to be addressed for poverty alleviation and economic development. This would entail that the quality of education and vocational training and access to it need to be improved, that vocational education and training needs to be better coordinated with the general education stream and supported by substantial inputs from the private sector, that capacity building of training providers and teachers is required, and that special attention should be given to improving the skills of those already in the workforce.*
- 2) *Development cooperation should consider migration aspects for Cambodian rural youth and adapt dual vocational education and training programmes accordingly.*
- 3) *Development cooperation should consider focusing primarily on one impact area of dual vocational education and training programmes for rural youth in Cambodia, i.e. either on inclusion and access to skills training (enhancing education and reducing transition barriers); on dual vocational education and training system development (improving governance, coordination, quality and relevance); on industry solutions in strong economic sectors (skills for the economy and catalysing dual approaches); or on labour market insertion (career counselling and employment promotion).*

In an effort to promote social and economic development and to address vulnerable employment, poverty and inequality, this essay hence asserts that strengthening quality vocational education and training are essential for Cambodia's rural youth.

“Maybe, just maybe, if the right spots are pushed at the right time, a seemingly unchangeable situation can be altered. Call me a dreamer if you will, but thoughts give rise to dreams, and dreams to actions.”

Gaffar Peang-Meth (Brinkley, 357)

1. Introduction

Cambodia’s experience of two decades of strong economic growth driven by garment exports and tourism is quite notable. While the large youth cohort presents the possibility of an economic dividend (see World Bank, n.d.), persistent performance gaps in secondary education and (technical) vocational education and training (TVET, or VET)¹ have become a constraint to the medium-term growth potential of the economy due to skills gaps. Especially in rural areas, young women and men face challenges to access relevant and quality VET and decent employment opportunities. At the nexus of the world of learning and the world of work, VET aims “to render people employable, including their ability to cope with all aspects of the social, economic and technical environment” (SDC, 2017b, 65). Hence, VET stands for processes that prepare people for the professional world, while it also stands for national systems that organise these processes (see DC dVET, 2016b, 4). Dual-track approaches to VET share the responsibility between public and private partners and are demand driven. The four donor countries Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, where dual VET is an integral component of the education system, have founded the Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET) to disseminate experiences on transferring dual VET approaches to new contexts (see DC dVET, 2016b, 3), including key success factors for implementation in development cooperation. While demand rather than supply driven VET would be crucial to enhance economic productivity, competitiveness, employment opportunities and social inclusion of young women and men in Cambodia, only few international development cooperation initiatives target dual VET interventions.

The main objective of this policy essay is thus to analyse key success factors and challenges for introducing dual approaches to VET in Cambodia – with specific consideration on reducing skills gaps and implications for rural youth – and to set out policy recommendations for development cooperation. This essay is based on a desk review of recent research and development cooperation experience, as well as on a labour market analysis.² While chapter two presents Swiss approaches to VET, chapter three and four explore Cambodia’s current demand and supply of skills. Based on a synthesis of (Swiss) development cooperation and the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) (see Geiger), chapter five analyses success factors and challenges for introducing dual VET in Cambodia and presents implications for rural youth. Lastly, this essay presents policy recommendations for development cooperation.

¹ The terms ‘TVET’, ‘VET’, ‘VPET’, ‘vocational education’, ‘vocational training’ will be used generically in this policy essay. The term ‘education and training system’ refers to both general education and vocational education and training.

² A Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) was conducted in 2017 by the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) for the “Skills Development Programme (2016-2020) (SDP)” Cambodia (see CRDT & Sambodhi Co., Ltd.). SDP is a Swiss development cooperation project, implemented by Swisscontact in consortium with INBAS.

2. Swiss Approaches to Vocational Education and Training

The Swiss vocational (and professional) education and training (VPET) system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough skilled people in the future. It has a high labour market relevance and is an integral part of the education system (see EAER-SERI, 2016, 4).

2.1. Introduction to the Swiss Dual Vocational Education and Training System

The Swiss VPET system is divided into two sectors: upper-secondary level VET and tertiary-level professional education. VET is the most popular form of upper-secondary level education and training, with two-thirds of all young people coming out of compulsory education in Switzerland enrolling. Most VET programmes are of the dual-track variety (i.e. part-time classroom instruction at a vocational school combined with a part-time apprenticeship at a host company), the less common variety is a school-based VET programme (see EAER-SERI, 2016, 4). Typically, VET and professional education are very flexible and permeable: learners may pursue more advanced education and training opportunities and switch from vocational/professional pathways to general education/university pathways (see SDC, 2017b, 16; EAER-SERI, 2016, 4). This is also reflected in the principle of “no dead-end qualifications”, offering opportunities for individual professional career paths. The dual system shares responsibility between the public and the private sector, as well as social partners. Dual ownership creates a labour-market oriented and labour-based VET through acquisition of professional competences that are actually in demand, and for which there are existing job vacancies (see EAER-SERI, 2016, 4). The duality of VET entails three dimensions: a) dual VET as an *organisational – institutional system*, which refers to duality of learning venues (practical training at the workplace with classroom-based training in schools or training centres) and dual ownership; b) *duality as a pedagogical concept* (alternation between classroom learning and practice learning); and c) a *societal dimension of the professional concept* (professional pride, comprehensive qualifications) (see DC dVET, 2016a, 3). Data indicates remarkable positive impacts of the dual system on economy and society compared to fulltime schooling education alone, for example concerning enhanced employability and labour market integration of youth, increased productivity and industrial innovation, international competitiveness, greater export prospects, sustained growth of the economy as well as poverty reduction (see Strahm, 20). The following chapter will hence look at Swiss approaches and experiences promoting VET.

2.2. Swiss International Cooperation: Promoting Vocational Skills Development

Switzerland’s international cooperation in the field of VET is motivated by different policy areas such as education policy, development cooperation policy, foreign policy, foreign migration policy and foreign economic policy (see Oertle & Swars, 2016, 127). To enhance the coordination and coherence of Switzerland’s international engagement, the relevant federal agencies have developed a *Joint Strategic Framework Paper on Swiss International VPET Cooperation* to strengthen the Swiss VET system within an international context, to encourage economic and social development in partner countries and to position Switzerland as a VET player at the international level (see EAER-SERI, 2014, 3). Switzerland can draw from over forty years of experience in incorporating basic education and VET

in their development cooperation efforts. The concept of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) has increasingly been adopted to include broader aspects of skills trainings in development policy, for example in the *Federal Council’s Dispatch on Switzerland’s International Cooperation 2017 – 2020* (see FDFA, 2477) and in SDC’s corresponding *Education Strategy* (SDC, 2017b), where SDC defines the concept as follows:

The broad concept of VSD encompasses all organised learning processes for the development of technical, social and personal competencies and qualifications that contribute to the sustainable long-term integration of trained people in decent working conditions in the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis. VSD usually combines theory and practice and can take place in schools or technical institutes, workshops or at the workplace in enterprises. According to the concept of lifelong learning, VSD can take place at all education levels, from lower-secondary to tertiary, and be acquired throughout an individual’s economically active life. It includes formal and non-formal VSD offers. (SDC, 2017b, 15)

Specific to VSD in development cooperation is the inspiration from the Swiss dual-track system of VET, a strong labour-market orientation, private sector collaboration, practical training, orientation towards improving the employment and income situation of target groups, increasing productivity and economic growth and strengthened VET systems according to the context (see SDC, 2017b, 16). This concept reflects SDC’s mandate to alleviate poverty through “an increased offer of relevant training, qualifications and better access to gainful employment and incomes for its target groups, including the poor and vulnerable” (SDC, 2017b, 52). From a development policy perspective, VSD is “an instrument to promote social and economic development and to address problems such as youth unemployment, poverty and inequality” (SDC, 2017a, 1). For implementation in partner countries, SDC also coordinates with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), which is increasingly engaged in professional skills development as well (see SDC, 2017b, 52). A synthesis of this experience forms SDC’s project typology tool that suggests four major impact areas of VSD interventions. The tool is a means to analyse the social or economic policy orientation (vertical axis) and the intended impact on employment or education systems (horizontal axis) (see SDC, 2017a, 2):

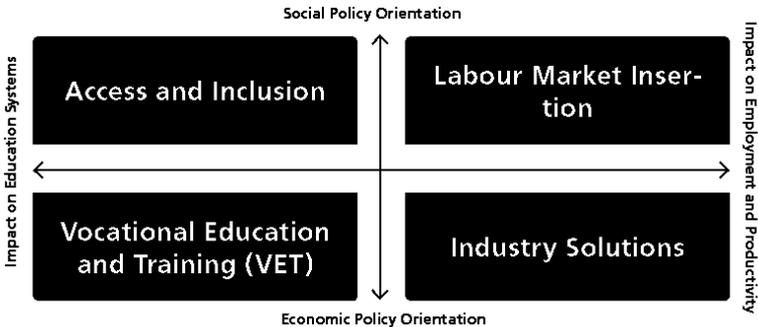


Figure 1. VSD Project Typology Tool (SDC, 2017a, 2)

While overall VSD may pursue impact in all four areas, SDC’s experience in development cooperation indicates that the identification of a priority impact area is “key to the success of projects and their project components” (SDC, 2017a, 1). Thus, interventions tend to be more successful and have a higher

impact if their focus is positioned primarily in one impact area (see SDC, 2017a, 2). For example, interventions could primarily focus on impacting employment, skills shortages and labour markets, or contribute mainly to the development of sustainable national educational capacities and inclusive VET systems (see SDC, 2017a, 2). Social objectives “respond to the social demand of young school-leavers, pursue the labour market integration of the unemployed, or facilitate the access and inclusion of any group with specific barriers hindering their participation in educational programmes at any qualification level” (SDC, 2017a, 2). Economic objectives “respond to the existing labour market demand, and build the quality, productivity, competitiveness and innovation capacity of the national economy, of industries, and of individual companies” (SDC, 2017a, 2). Depending on the main goals and target group of a development programme, different instruments and partners might be chosen to adapt better to the specific local context and the challenges to be addressed. In other words, development programmes benefit from knowing what exactly they wish to achieve and how, and by not trying to achieve everything at once and at the same time. However, long-term sustainability of positive social and economic development requires well-developed national VET and Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) systems to be in place, and also enough jobs to absorb the young people entering these systems (see SDC, 2017a, 1).

3. Cambodia’s Demand for Skills: Socio-Economic Background and Labour Market

This chapter presents the socio-economic context of the growing Cambodian economy as well as the labour market dynamics.

3.1. Socio-Economic Context of Cambodia

Cambodia’s sustained high economic growth is remarkable. With a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.8 per cent on average between 2000 and 2014 and a GNI per capita of 1,140 current USD in 2016 (see World Bank, Open Data, n.d.), the country is now considered a lower middle-income country (World Bank classification). Cambodia is a relatively ‘young’ country, with the youth population (according to the UN definition those aged 15 – 24 years) comprising of 20.6 per cent of the total population of 15.8 million people in 2016 (see UIS, n.d.). Poverty continues to fall, albeit more slowly than in the past. The 3.1 USD PPP a day poverty headcount ratio is 21.6 per cent (see UIS, n.d.). About 90 per cent of the poor live in rural areas. The vast majority of families who escaped poverty were only able to do so by a small margin. Around 4.5 million people remain near-poor and vulnerable to falling back into poverty when exposed to economic and other external shocks (see ILO/ADB, 2015, 4, World Bank, n.d.). Nearly 80 per cent of Cambodians live and work in rural areas (NIS, 2013, 27), but migration is common, with an estimated one million Cambodians currently working abroad and two million (mainly seasonal) internal migrants (see ILO, 2007, 3). The economy is primarily built around agriculture, garment manufacturing, construction, and tourism. While agriculture remains dominant, the sector’s share has decreased, while the industry’s share has increased. Services have remained stable

and have tilted significantly toward tourism (see ILO/ADB, 2015, viii). The World Bank's *Cambodia Economic Update* indicates that exports of clothing and other textile products have moderated, and that the construction sector is showing signs of easing. There is a rising share of non-textile product exports, especially the exports of electrical machinery, equipment and auto parts, attracted by improved connectivity and access to a more reliable energy supply. There is also a marked increase in the arrival of foreign tourists (see World Bank, 2017, 5). The sustained high economic growth has attracted a wave of foreign direct investment (FDI), mainly from China, but predominantly in industries with labour-intensive, low-skill and low-paid work (see ILO/ADB, 1). About 78 percent of the employed population are in vulnerable self-employment (the sum of unpaid family workers and own account workers), mostly in the informal economy (see NIS, 2013, 57). The latest *Cambodia Inter-censal Economic Survey 2014* indicates that the total number of establishments in the private sector in Cambodia (except street businesses) was 513,759 in 2014 (see NIS, 2014b, xxxix). The five smallest provinces in terms of the number of establishments were all located in more remote, rural areas (see NIS, 2014a, I-10). Most establishments or enterprises are very small: almost 70 per cent have only one or two workers (see UNESCO, 2013, p. 17; ADB/ILO, iii). In 2011, 99.8 per cent of business establishments and 73 per cent of employment in non-agricultural establishments were accounted for by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Most of these MSMEs are informal and their workers often lack legal protection, earn low wages, do not have a written contract nor access to benefits (see ADB/ILO, x). The potential for decent wage employment for youth is thus much smaller in rural areas. A major policy challenge is sustainability of growth, which will depend on the ability to diversify the economy and to migrate to higher-end skills industries, which in turn will require a wider and different range of skills from Cambodia's youthful work force (see ILO/ADB, viii; UNESCO, 2013, 1).

3.2. Labour Market Dynamics of Cambodian Rural Youth

The labour force participation rate of youth aged 15 – 29 is high (76 per cent) and the respective unemployment rate is low (0.7 per cent) (see OECD Development Centre, 2017, 27). In 2012, out of the total employed youth aged 15 – 29, 50 per cent were active in agriculture, 16 per cent in industry and 34 per cent in services (OECD Development Centre, 2017, 29). Following the manufacturing and tourism expansion, youth are shifting from agriculture to services and industry, with wage employment making up an increasing share of youth employment (see OECD, 2017, Development Centre, 28). Of the rural labour force, the youth cohort makes up one third (ILO-IPEC & NIS, 31f). Their challenge is mainly poverty and social exclusion due to vulnerable and unstable employment prospects. Although the youth unemployment rate is low, this indicator does not reflect the quality of jobs or underemployment. With the vast majority of the population being relatively poor, few can afford to be out of work and most youth take any job, regardless of pay or working conditions. In 2014, 40 per cent of youth were in vulnerable self-employment, and close to 70 per cent of those were found in the agriculture sector. Young women and youth from poor households were more likely to be in vulnerable employment (see OECD Development Centre, 2017, 27). Young people in rural areas find it hard to integrate into the labour market due to limited education and training attainment, poor access to job

information, skills gaps and skills mismatches (see OECD Development Centre, 2018, 20; UNESCO, 2013, p. 20). Employers in rural areas are unable to fill posts with qualified candidates, and rural youth are struggling in poor-quality jobs. In 2014, only 31 per cent of employed youth had matching qualifications for their current occupations. In rural areas, the share of undereducated youth in employment was 49 per cent (see OECD Development Centre, 2017, 30f). On top of this, a relatively high fraction of rural youth is not in employment, education or training (NEET). Numbers range from 7.1 per cent to 14.4 per cent depending on the survey and methods used, with the latter likely capturing substantial amounts of seasonal agricultural underemployment (see ADB/ILO, 26f) and with young women more likely to have this status than young men (see ILO, 2016, 1; see ADB/ILO, 26f). The inclusion of the sizeable young labour force in rural areas will depend to a large extent “on the capacity of the economy [...] to provide decent work, and on the capacity of decision makers to provide opportunities to youth and adults to develop skills that will be rewarded in the labour market and that will support further learning” (UNESCO, 2013, 24). In light of this, the following chapter will look at Cambodia’s current supply of skills through the education and training system.

4. Cambodia’s Supply of Skills: The Education and Training System

Despite notable progress, several social indicators show that the effectiveness, quality, and equity of Cambodia’s education and training system are low (see UNESCO, 2013, 26). It is important to recall though that the entire system basically disintegrated during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975 – 1979) and is, in a sense, still recovering from the loss of generations of skilled educators (see UNESCO, 2013, 12; see ADB/ILO, 39). One might even argue that the current VET management and delivery system is predominantly a legacy of Cambodia's history. Many of the institutions were on a centralized planning system, where training programmes were developed to meet the specific skills needs of each ministry and post-training job placement was guaranteed. This system was characterized by a supply driven philosophy and has contributed to inefficient and low-quality training and limited market responsiveness in existing VET institutions today (see World Bank, 2014, 6).

4.1. Formal and Non-Formal Vocational Education and Training

After compulsory education, which consists of a six-year primary education followed by a three-year lower secondary education (LSE), students can enrol in a three-year general upper secondary education (USE) or in formal or non-formal VET programmes. General USE is offered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), and leads to tertiary education at universities. Formal and non-formal VET programmes are officially under the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT). Currently, the MoLVT offers non-formal short courses in basic skills; formal certificate course programmes requiring an entry point of grade nine or skills bridging; and formal higher education VET programmes requiring an entry point of grade twelve or completion of the certificate levels.³ As a formal mechanism of quality assurance and skills, the National Training Board (NTB) established the

³ See World Bank, 2014, 6; UNESCO, 2013, 26ff; ADB/ILO, 2015, 40f; NTB, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014, 7

Cambodia Qualification Framework (CQF) in 2012, with national standards and accreditation criteria. Supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Cambodia's curriculum reform agenda is also shifting its education and training system to a competency-based approach with modularization of skills trainings (see UNESCO, 2013, 47). The implementation and effectiveness of the CQF and the competency-based approach for an improved quality of VET provision, however, remain to be seen (see ADB/ILO, 44). Within the CQF, there are eight levels of VET provision. Short courses from a few weeks to less than a year are provided in provincial or vocational training centres, sometimes leading to a 'Vocational Certificate' (CQF level 1). Further one- to three-year certificate courses (post grade nine entry) are offered in provincial and regional training centres and lead to a 'Technical and Vocational Certificate 1, 2, 3' (CQF levels 2 – 4). Formal higher VET education (post grade twelve entry, CQF levels 5 – 8) leads to a diploma, bachelor or master (including, theoretically, a doctorate, although this is not offered). Higher VET programmes are delivered in eight technical institutes and polytechnics, but the majority of student places are in the Phnom Penh area. Higher VET is also limited to three sectors (engineering, technology and business administration) (see World Bank, 2014, 6; ADB/ILO, 44). Hence, access to formal or higher VET is very limited in rural areas, especially due to the remoteness, limited training opportunities in training centres and low educational attainment of rural youth that restricts their educational mobility. The twenty-three provincial training centres (PTCs) of the MoLVT currently offer mostly non-formal short courses in basic agriculture, construction, motor repair skills, craft, and basic food processing to improve household income (some courses are also formal certificate courses). Despite the official mandate of the MoLVT, the MoEYS offers non-formal short courses in over two hundred community learning centres (CLCs) as well, focusing on adult literacy, basic skills and skills bridging.⁴ Furthermore, there is an array of other non-formal trainings offered by private providers and NGOs, which focus on agricultural provision, craft, textiles and garments (see UNESCO-UNEVOC, 7), leading to challenges with information sharing and coordination (see chapter 5.1). Due to a lack of complete statistical information, a reliable and comprehensive assessment of Cambodia's VET system is difficult to perform, particularly on costs, financing and completion.

4.2. Educational Participation, Attainment and Return on Investment

Cambodia has made significant progress in achieving primary education enrolment (96 per cent) (see ILO/ADB, 42). In secondary education however, the enrolment and completion rates drop significantly (see OECD Development Centre, 2018). Data indicates that in 2014, only 40.5 per cent of youth completed compulsory LSE and even fewer (21.2 per cent) completed USE (see UIS, n.d.). Children in urban areas are also more likely to attend lower secondary school than those in rural areas (60 per cent versus 50 per cent gross enrolment rates in 2013) and more than twice as likely to attend upper secondary school (44 per cent versus 21 per cent) (see ILO/ADB, 42). The situation is especially critical for poor youth: 90 per cent of poor urban youth and 82 per cent of poor rural youth do not have the chance to complete LSE, compared to 31 per cent of urban rich youth (see UNESCO, 2012, 258), showing a

⁴ The basic skills offered by MoEYS are handicraft, hairdressing/make-up, dance/music, and machine repair, as indicated on the official website of MoEYS. Accessed on May 23, 2018 from <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/>

persistent location- and income-based inequality to access to education. The combination of high drop-out rates and low enrolment rates in the next level leaves only a small pool of young people in school (OECD Development Centre, 2017, 23). This is reflected in a large majority of youth in employment (77.4 per cent) that have had only partial or completed primary education (see UNESCO, 2013, 20). The reasons for dropping out are complex and numerous. According to the ILO (2016), the vast majority of youth (72.4 per cent) leave school because of economic reasons and due to the low value parents place on investing in education due to its poor quality (see 1). Young Cambodians themselves are pessimistic about the return on investment of education. In fact, in many occupations, primary and secondary school drop-outs earn more than school graduates (see OECD Development Centre, 2018). This could in part stem from Cambodia's pattern of economic growth and the historically low economic returns to secondary education that have prevailed in the past: development has been narrowly based on a few sectors which have predominantly demanded low-skilled workers. Better-paying jobs that require more education and specialized skills have been relatively scarce, especially in rural areas. Average wages by education have followed this skewed structure, thus providing little economic incentive for youth from poor rural households to pursue education after primary school (see ILO/ADB, 42). This has adversely affected attitudes towards the continuation of education, especially when families are not capable of supporting students through higher education (see UNICEF, 2015, 21). There are also differences in the economic returns on education between rural and urban areas that may lead to demand driven differences in attendance rates: secondary schools and VET training centres are sparsely distributed in rural areas, and the distance to and the cost of accessing nearby schools appear to be among the factors behind the regional disparity in the access to secondary education (see ILO/ADB, 42). Low educational attainment, mobility and prospects are also reflected in the relatively low number of youth enrolled in formal tertiary education (13.1 per cent gross enrolment in 2015) (see UIS, n.d.). These numbers indicate that the majority of youth is no longer in formal education or training, is predominantly working in vulnerable employment and that the system is not able to address the rising market demands by the growing economy. In light of this, the following chapter will analyse prerequisites for the dual VET approaches.

5. Dual Vocational Education and Training for Cambodia's Rural Youth: Analysis of Success Factors and Challenges for Development Cooperation

According to an analysis of development cooperation experience and 'transfers' of elements of the Swiss dual-track system abroad, Geiger (144-159) (on behalf of SFIVET) sees various opportunities and success factors, but also challenges for successful introduction in a 'new' country. In his view, approaches should mainly strive towards the "establishment of market-oriented and demand driven programs and courses in a dual-track VPET system" (Geiger, 142). The landscape of the Cambodian VET system suffers major quality concerns: coordination and harmonization challenges as evidenced in the overlap of responsibilities; lack of quality assured certificates and recognition of those certificates in the labour market; varying quality of training by small training centres and informal apprenticeships which suffer from narrow theoretical and practical knowledge; outdated curricula and absence of formal

recognition; poor funding of VET programmes; and little interaction with the productive sector (see UNESCO, 2013, 51). All these challenges need to be explored when introducing dual VET approaches.

5.1. Enabling Policy Framework and Institutional Governance

The first factor for consideration Geiger presents is that “every country has its own unique structure and rules of engagement”, and that it is essential “that these be considered and respected in any new VET system” (145). In 2005, responsibilities for formal VET were officially transferred from the MoEYS to the newly constituted MoLVT under the Directorate General of TVET (DGTVET). The DGTVET serves as the secretariat to the NTB, the most important policy-setting authority (see World Bank, 2014, 6). Responsibilities for non-formal and informal (short course) vocational training were similarly transferred to the MoLVT from the Ministry of Social Welfare. Although the MoLVT is supposed to regulate (technical) VET, thirteen other government ministries and agencies operate vocational programmes as well, in particular the MoEYS and the Ministries of Women’s Affairs, Health, Agriculture and Tourism (see UNESCO, 2013, 35f; ILO/ADB, 41). A report of the World Bank (2010) suggests that in addition to the 38 public VET institutions of the MoLVT and the institutions by the other line ministries, 214 VET training providers registered with the MoLVT in 2011. Of these, 72 were run by NGOs and 142 were private training providers (see 94). In the absence of a recognised government ministry in charge of coordination, curriculum development and certification, each ministry also sets operational requirements for teachers and schools under their responsibility and administers public funding. One of the main institutional challenges is thus the largely unregulated myriad of ministries, stakeholders and providers operating in VET, creating substantial coordination problems and impeding quality control and recognition of skills trainings. For example, the main responsibilities for setting performance standards, evaluating performance, setting operational requirements, providing technical and pedagogical support and distribution of funding are all arranged across various levels of governance. Governance arrangements are also characterized by a non-separation of policy and oversight function. This limits the involvement of the private sector as a potential VET partner and enhances the possibility of conflicts of interest that may arise when the same public agency evaluates the success of the policies and programmes for which it is also responsible (see UNESCO, 2013, 37).

The silo understanding of the VET system creates a further governance challenge in Cambodia: Technical VET seems to be inherently linked with the MoLVT and the recently developed *National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017 – 2025* (see MoLVT/DGTVET, 1). Goals of this ‘TVET policy’ are to improve access to and quality of VET, to promote public-private partnerships, to mobilize funding and to improve governance and operation. While this policy is an important step towards defining overall goals and objectives of VET, the policy remains unspecific in terms of collaboration with other VET stakeholders. Practically, the understanding of the term ‘TVET system’ does not seem to include vocational approaches and sectoral skills training programmes by other ministries. For example, while the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) is responsible for skills training of room attendants, receptionists or food and beverage servers in the hospitality and tourism sector (including curriculum development and training of trainers and assessors), local stakeholders and ministries do not

seem to consider this to be part of the ‘TVET system’, because responsibility does not lie with the MoLVT.⁵ One further example of this silo approach is also the relatively newly established technical education in the MoEYS with a *Master Plan for Technical Education at Upper Secondary Level (2015 – 2019)*. This plan envisions the introduction of a two-stream system with ‘general and technical high schools’ for grades ten to twelve, with their own curricula for mechanics, electricity, electronics, agronomy, accounting and other trades (see MoEYS, 12-15). It is not clear to what extent this has been realised already (it seems that so far, ‘vocationalisation’ of general education has been implemented in two high schools), how the curriculum is developed or whether the private sector or the MoLVT are involved in this process. According to the MoEYS itself, the current technical education programme lacks both a strong quality framework and quality inputs, and there is neither an accreditation system nor a school quality assurance system. Links between the school system and the labour market are therefore very limited.⁶ Consequently, a re-definition of the VET system and a deconstruction of silo approaches would be necessary for a more enabling environment for dual VET.

5.2. Engagement of the Private Sector and Dual Ownership

A second crucial factor for success according to Geiger is the “interest and willingness of stakeholders in the economy to engage (support from entrepreneurial leadership)” (146). Besides this, collaboration between the public and private sector with clearly defined roles is necessary: “The state (education authorities) and private sector (associations/representative bodies of industry and labour market) typically work together through Public-Private-Partnerships” (Geiger, 145). Active support of the Cambodian economy for VET could be achieved by joint responsibility that “ensures the systematic involvement of the private sector in the development of occupational profiles and curricula, the training delivery, examinations, steering and financing VET” (DC dVET, 2016a, 5). Due to the limited market-orientation of the current skills supply, employers face the challenge of addressing skills gaps in their own establishments and companies, for example through in-service training programmes, which are not regulated. There is little information available regarding the actors, the scale and the importance of in-service training (see UNESCO, 2013, 31). Data indicates that 58.4 per cent of establishments with more than 10 employees have funds or arrange some forms of training for their new employees (see NEA, 63). Only a few large enterprises actually spend significant amounts on in-company technical and vocational training (see UNESCO, 2013, 31). Employer organisations, such as the Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA), operate mainly at national level to safeguard the interests of employers, with limited reach or capacity for skills trainings. Members of the NTB are also mainly senior government officials (including the Deputy Prime Minister), and only five positions (out of 32) are occupied by the private sector and employer associations such as CAMFEBA. A *Rapid Market Assessment (RMA)*⁷ conducted in three northern, rural provinces in 2017 indicates that

⁵ Experiences and lessons learned by the Skills Development Programme (2016-2020) (SDP) Cambodia, a project of SDC, implemented by Swisscontact in consortium with INBAS. Based on Annual Report 2016-2017.

⁶ See also the official website of MoEYS. Accessed on May 23, 2018 from <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/>

⁷ The RMA (see CRDT & Sambodhi Co., Ltd.) was conducted in 2017 by the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) for the “Skills Development Programme (2016-2020) (SDP)” Cambodia. SDP is a Swiss development cooperation project, implemented by Swisscontact in consortium with INBAS.

the majority of enterprises are informal MSMEs. The RMA found that 65 per cent of enterprises did not always find people with the required skills for recruitment, thus almost all of the MSMEs hired young, unskilled workers. Almost all enterprise owners reported that they provided informal on-the-job training or enterprise-based skills training with a duration ranging from two to twelve months, depending on the occupation. However, employers also indicated reluctance to invest their limited human and financial resources in training of young, unskilled people because of their fear of low return on investment: employers reported that almost 70 per cent of their trainee employees left after their training. RMA findings also suggest that only 10 per cent of the enterprises were part of a training provider's network for skills development of their employees or for recruitment purposes. While employers were open for such collaboration, one concern was that they would not be able to send their employees for off-the-job training, as this would halt their business. Employers indicated that they would prefer in-service training for their employees during work hours (see CRDT & Sambodhi Co., Ltd., 1-2). Evidence thus indicates that the private sector is willing to be part of the solution to reduce the skills gaps and skills mismatch, and that the government is increasing efforts to engage employers' representatives in dialogue on VET (see UNSECO, 2013, 60). However, the absence of representatives from employer's organizations, for example in the team charged with developing the CQF, shows the difficulty in the shift in attitudes and practices.

5.3. Workplace Learning and Joint Financing

Dual VET as a system and as a pedagogical principle includes learning alternation in dual venues (business and classroom) and requires respective ownership. Geiger sees one of the key success factors for a dual-track VET system in the division of labour and division of roles between on-the-job training and classroom instruction (see 153). With clearly assigned tasks, competencies and responsibilities, funding could be assigned more specifically as well. Often, classroom instruction lies with a ministry of education and some forms of apprenticeship trainings at a host company are the responsibility of a ministry of labour and some companies and associations. In Cambodia, the (official) responsibility for formal VET delivery (classroom instruction and some practical workshops in training centres) is solely located with the MoLVT, although various other ministries offer some forms of training as well (see chapter 4.1). Workplace learning in the form of apprenticeship is legally defined and regulated by the Cambodian labour law, in practice, however, apprenticeship schemes are not regulated. By law, all Cambodian establishments that have sixty or more workers are obliged to take on an additional 10 per cent of people as apprentices or pay 1 per cent of their wages bill in lieu. There is no data regarding the quality of the apprenticeship scheme, whether participating enterprises are able and willing to provide training, whether apprentices are retained once they have completed their indenture, whether they get jobs in the same occupations elsewhere, or what wages they receive during and after their training (ADB, 2011, qtd. in UNESCO, 2013, 61). In 2010, only 92 enterprises had apprentices. The total number of apprentices was 5,569, mainly women (92 per cent) (see UNESCO, 2013, 61). The large proportion of women apprentices suggests that these enterprises were mainly from the garment sector in urban or semi-urban areas. The proportion of enterprises which comply with the law on apprenticeship lies

between 6.4 per cent and 13.3 per cent only, and the proportion of apprentices is between 1.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent of workers, well below the official ‘regulatory’ proportion (see UNESCO, 2013, 61). In the formal sector, apprentices are thus seldom recruited. One reason could be that companies might be reluctant to comply because of concerns about their overall costs, although there is a growing demand for work-based experiences to be included in education and training. In construction, engineering and other craft sectors, basic competencies are learned through informal apprenticeships, but without any contractual arrangement (see UNESCO, 2013, 87). In the Cambodian *Employers Skills Needs Survey 2015*, employers reported that the poor preparedness of first-time job seekers straight from general education was mainly due to lack of skills like customer handling, taking initiative (work attitude), team work, and foreign language skills (see NEA, 39f). Engaging enterprises in VET would ensure that skills gained through professional training meet the demands of the economy. It would also bring advantages for life skills training, as practical work experience for trainees fosters entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour, furthering the transition of schooling to the world of work. In reality, however, very few training providers in Cambodia use the workplace as part of the learning process (see UNESCO, 2013, 61), and even less in rural areas due to the lack of industry.

In terms of funding for formal VET, the lack of coordination between ministries and the limited involvement of the private sector in training creates significant challenges. Currently, VET is funded by the government, international organizations, donors and other stakeholders. The government and non-government funds are allocated by the NTB (see UNESCO-UNEVOC, 8). In 2009, the recurrent budget for the MoLVT was set at USD 12.7 million, of which USD 9.2 million was earmarked for central administration and USD 3.5 million for provinces and cities (see UNESCO, 2013, 40). The principal sources of funding for VET are: a) direct budgetary support for revenue administration and salaries, as well as scholarships (for example through the ‘Prime Ministers Special Fund’); b) student fees, voluntary industry levies, donations and in-house training; and c) grants and concessional loans to the government (see UNESCO, 2013, 41). Development assistance from bilateral, multilateral, and private donors thus continues to play an important role in Cambodia’s education system (see Ek & Sok, 63). From 2015 to 2016, education accounted for nine per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA), with the largest donors being the ADB, Japan, the USA and South Korea (see OECD, 2017). The analysis of the current funding system highlights various challenges: coordination difficulties due to the diversity of funding; donor dependency which triggers sustainability challenges; the importance of wage expenditures which impacts quality; and low involvement of enterprises which reduces the capacity of the VET system to respond adequately to labour market needs (see UNESCO, 2013, 42). Currently, little funds are available for developmental expenses such as capacity building or teaching and learning materials to improve VET quality. Compared with school-based VET systems, a dual system would be relatively lower in cost for the state, as businesses bear a substantial part of the training costs. At the same time, many of the businesses would benefit even financially, latest in the form of qualified employees (see DC dVET, 2016a, 6). Overall, larger enterprises in major growing sectors or employers’ associations could possibly be a driving source of taking on responsibility in the training system, for example with the

apprenticeships scheme. Joint ownership and financing would also influence up-to-date and market-relevant curricula, standards and qualifications.

5.4. Relevance and Social Recognition of Standards and Qualifications

One further key success factor for transfer of dual VET approaches is that standards, “titles and qualifications are recognized by the state and internationally” (Geiger, 150). Recognition is an important element of the quality and attractiveness of a VET system. The ‘value’ of skills trainings and qualifications can only become clear if they have attained a “recognized and comparable level within the country’s education system [...] [and if] the business world participates in the definition of requirements and curricula, while the state certifies qualifications and awards titles” (Geiger, 150). Thus, the state ideally certifies, monitors and guarantees the quality of courses, and transparency of those standards and qualifications enhance recognition. In Cambodia, the lack of coordination between the public and private sector and between the MoEYS and the MoLVT creates great challenges with regard to design and recognition of standards, curricula and qualifications (see chapter 4.1 and 5.1). Despite the endorsement of the CQF and current efforts to change to a competency-based approach, the comparability and recognition of vocational training is a major challenge. In 2009, fewer than 2 per cent of youth aged 20 – 24 received a VET certificate. Limited recognition by the labour market and the lack of close-by VET schools seem to be among the reasons for low attendance and graduation rates (see ADB/ILO, 54). The low number of VET certificates and the limited availability and quality of formal training courses in rural areas further reduces social recognition, which may again lead to low enrolment in VET training providers. For example, PTCs operate at a variance with each other in terms of enrolment, length of training, delivery modality and in terms of certification (PTCs offer mainly non-formal courses). Of the few formal certificate courses that are offered, the majority only lead to level 1 or 2 of the CQF due to limited training capacity. What may also be a tell-tale of the current (social) recognition of VET is the number of VET establishments in the education sector: The *Cambodia Inter-censal Economic Survey 2014* indicates that out of about 12’000 establishments (mainly primary and general secondary education establishments), only 0.1 per cent were officially classified as ‘technical and vocational secondary education establishments’. Those few establishments only engaged 1.6 per cent of all persons engaged in education (see NIS, 2014b, 94). Overall, limited availability, accreditation and quality of training in rural areas reduces the chances for educational mobility, especially for those rural youth without completed compulsory education. The CQF bears potential for flexibility of the system, for example through recognition of prior learning and skills upgrading. However, creating the necessary competency-based occupational profiles, standards and curricula at each level of the CQF remains a major challenge for the different government ministries that are currently charged with developing the qualifications. In the MoEYS, the Curricula Design Department is responsible for the upper secondary curriculum (see UNESCO, 2013, 47). In the MoLVT, the National Technical Training Institute (NTTI) is responsible for curriculum development and upgrading VET institutions. However, they are engaged with teacher training and initial technical VET at post-secondary level (in Phnom Penh), and they seem not to have the necessary expertise or capacity for the transformation to the

competency-based system (see UNESCO, 2013, 48). Furthermore, the lack of involvement of social partners, enterprises and private sector associations reduces the capacity of ministries like the MoLVT to develop market-relevant standards and qualifications, thus further delimiting recognition of standards by the market system.

According to Geiger, one further key success factor for transfer of dual approaches is that a “country’s society recognizes the value of a dual-track VET system and enables young people to make a free and equal choice” (156). This view emphasizes that mindset, values, and upbringing in society matter too. One example would be the core values and philosophy of parents and relatives in relation to the training and education system. In Cambodia, social recognition of VET is relatively low, especially where access is more difficult, quality falls short and private sector involvement is low (see chapter 4.2). Comparability of qualifications, recognition by the labour market and better access and relevance of training would create more confidence in young women and men from rural areas, as well as in their families, that the time and resources spent in training are worth it. However, such a system reform goes hand in hand with changing philosophies and mindsets, which is time consuming (see Geiger, 157f).

5.5. Qualification of Training Institutes and Staff: Teaching – Learning Processes

A further key factor needs to be taken into account when endeavouring an effective transfer of dual VET approaches, namely that teachers in the VET system are “recognized and respected” and that “teachers and support staff are systematically selected, educated, and trained further” (Geiger, 152). This is especially true when new curricula are introduced. The current state of the qualification of training providers, technical trainers and teachers appears to be somewhat in a crisis. Currently, teachers in Cambodia are trained through the general education stream, but teaching is not a particularly attractive profession for top graduates, primarily because of low salaries. Almost all teacher trainees enrolled in teacher training centres are bottom-half performers on the grade twelve exam (see World Bank, 2018, 113). The incentives to do teacher training and move to a rural area to teach in a possibly understaffed, underfunded training centre are not that manifest either. As of late, the NTTI has set out to provide one-year pedagogical training courses for tertiary graduates under the age of 30, mainly from engineering or information technology (see UNESCO-UNEVOC, 8).⁸ There appear to be no official schemes at national level to offer industry professionals teacher training or pedagogical courses in order to include them as instructors or assessors in VET, although some ministries (like the MoT) are working on training their own instructors and assessors.⁹ However, with the adoption of the CQF and the competency-based approach at national level, Cambodia will require resources and teachers’ capacities at operational levels (UNESCO, 2013, 49):

The process of developing new curricula and implementing them requires intensive in-service teacher training and clear mechanisms for teacher career management and incentives. A new curriculum is expected to be substantially different from the existing one, implying a paradigm shift in teaching, learning and assessment processes. Such changes present a major challenge for current teaching staff. Massive in-service

⁸ See also the official website of NTTI. Accessed on May, 23, 2018 from <http://www.ntti.edu.kh/index.php>

⁹ Experiences and lessons learned by the Skills Development Programme (2016-2020) (SDP) Cambodia, a project of SDC, implemented by Swisscontact in consortium with INBAS. Based on Annual Report 2016-2017.

teacher training, and further support at the TVET institution level, will be needed in order to help teachers acquire the necessary skills to implement the new curricula. Practical steps have also to be taken in partnership with employers, for example to ensure that TVET teachers have a good understanding of workplace settings. (UNESCO, 2013, P. 50f)

While this plea is commendable, it seems to focus mainly on training the (general) education teachers in some basic technical skills and does not take into account the potential of training industry professionals as instructors and incorporating them in training processes. This limited technical training capacity is also a major concern for PTCs: many teachers are general education teachers with little technical knowledge (apart from agriculture). As a result, PTCs might need to hire external instructors from industry that have limited or no teacher training. For example, for short courses in ‘chicken raising’ or ‘mushroom farming’, PTCs might hire external instructors that may have attained little schooling or vocational training themselves.¹⁰ Furthermore, crowded training classes and workshops in poorly equipped facilities and under-funded institutions do not allow for active pedagogical methods and approaches (UNESCO, 2013, 49). Geiger goes even further by stating that “knowledge-transfer methodologies that are based on full-time, school-based and academic curricula are unsuitable for and counter-productive to VET” (152), indicating that the current lack of technical curricula and respective teacher training in Cambodia are hindering successful skills development. While many rural enterprise owners might be very reluctant (or not able to) leave their enterprises to become VET teachers or instructors, they might be willing to receive some basic pedagogical training, or training on standardised curricula, in order to enhance the workplace learning of their new employees, trainees, or even VET students also enrolled in a training centre. One of the prerequisites to develop a quality VET system would be that VET teachers, instructors and support staff are remunerated in line with market rates (see Geiger, 152). In terms of salary, secondary teachers represent the worst paid job category for graduates, USD 125 for males and USD 100 for females as basic remunerations, which increase thanks to additional activities, to USD 160 and USD 150 respectively (see UNESCO, 2013, 22). It is unclear whether this is the same for teachers in vocational centres, but probable.

5.6. Coupling of Market Systems with Education and Training Systems

Another success factor for transferring dual approaches to VET in development cooperation is linking the various other factors together, specifically the “coupling of market systems with education and training systems” (Geiger, 154). This creates a market oriented dual-track VET system that links the world of learning with the world of work. When requirements for qualifications and skills are agreed with companies and associations, the proximity to the labour market creates success for dual approaches to VET, because once the training programmes (systems) are coupled with and linked to the labour market, graduates are more likely to find employment (see Geiger, 154). In Cambodia, ALMPs are in place, but only with limited employment and career guidance systems in rural areas. The establishment of the National Employment Agency (NEA) in 2009 as a special operating agency of the NTB was key

¹⁰ Experiences and lessons learned by the Skills Development Programme (2016-2020) (SDP) Cambodia, a project of SDC, implemented by Swisscontact in consortium with INBAS. Based on Annual Report 2016-2017.

to creating a labour market information system and getting employment and career guidance services organised. The NEA offers job fairs and job placement services and supports the provision of an information base where employers can announce their hiring needs and provide new graduates, out-of-school youth and the unemployed with information (see ILO/ADB, 40; UNESCO, 2013, p. 56). However, the NEA's services are limited to (semi-) urban areas in a few provinces and do not reach the majority of youth in rural areas. Also, there seems to be no unified system of career counselling or dissemination of labour market information in general education schools (although the NEA does have some career counselling quizzes and materials) or even in training centres like the PTCs. Youth women and men in rural areas thus do not have the opportunity to experience the process of getting to know their own talents, skills and the world of work in order to find a professional field or occupation that would be a relevant 'match' for them. Instead they often just accept any low-skill, poorly paid job that might be available. In successful dual VET systems, "dual-track VET and academic education are interconnected" (Geiger, 154), which means that individuals have a range of possibilities for future development and can switch between VET and general education, or at least transfer from general schooling into vocational education. An essential prerequisite for this transfer would be, however, the clear specification of courses, competencies and qualifications that need to be obtained (see chapter 5.5). With the current VET system and with competencies and curricula still being defined, this process of fostering interconnectedness will take effort, time and resources.

6. Conclusion

A well-functioning, mature VET system meets economic objectives (productivity, competitiveness, quality), social objectives (education and social integration) and individual objectives (employment and income, mobility, personal development, and career) (DC dVET, 2016a, 6). As the analysis of the context of Cambodia shows, the success factors for introducing dual approaches to VET are only partially existing. Despite strong economic growth, the country faces a large youth cohort with low educational attainment and skills mismatches that need to be addressed. On the one hand, Cambodia thus faces the challenge to create a well-coordinated, relevant skills system which includes the private sector, and, on the other hand, the challenge to link the skills system with the market system. In all this, disadvantaged young women and men from rural areas are especially vulnerable in terms of quality and access to VET (due to poverty, limited educational attainment, limited training opportunities, remote location), and also in terms of labour market insertion and vulnerable employment. The analysis of the key success factors for an enabling VET environment also shows that VSD could be an effective strategy for rural Cambodian youth, because the broad concept brings general and vocational education closer together and incorporates skills training and employment measures.

6.1. Policy Recommendations

The first key policy recommendation for overall VET development in Cambodia (whether dual or not) is to consider addressing systemic quality issues for poverty alleviation and economic development: This would, inter alia, involve addressing the following concerns: quality of education and training and

access to it need to be improved; vocational training needs to be better coordinated with the general education stream (including better pathways through VET programmes and pathways across from general education); vocational education needs to be supported by substantial inputs from the private sector (including more enterprise involvement, connections between VET institutions and the labour market and market-relevant curriculum development); more and better-trained teachers with technical skills are required (including capacity building of training providers); and special attention should be given to improving the skills of those already in the workforce (see ADB/ ILO, 2015, iii; World Bank, 2014, 6; UNESCO, 2013, 50). Development cooperation efforts could build upon this first recommendation to address the skills gaps of rural youth with dual VET approaches.

The second key policy recommendation is that development cooperation should consider migration aspects for rural youth and adapt dual vocational education and training programmes accordingly:

While migration is a socio-political concern, development cooperation initiatives need to consider whether their objectives are for disadvantaged rural youth, in rural areas, so they may remain in rural areas, or whether programmes consider migration to (semi-) urban areas or to neighbouring countries for training or for work. This consideration may also be different for various target groups (for example recent LSE graduates from rural areas, or rural youth that have been out of school longer). While migration may be a personal choice, the answer to this question will change the nature of programmes and the focus on different actors and sectors. Programmes should therefore seek to formulate and adapt objectives, approaches and instruments accordingly.

The third key policy recommendation is that development cooperation should consider focusing primarily on one impact area of dual vocational education and training programmes for rural youth:

Development cooperation should seek to position a programme primarily in one impact area of VSD, i.e. inclusion and access to skills training, (dual) VET system development, industry solutions, or labour market insertion (see SDC, 2017a, 3). In this context it would also be essential to encourage public-private collaboration and to develop solutions mutually with the private sector. Because policy objectives and corresponding approaches are different, the recommendations for each impact area will vary. The following paragraphs will therefore present recommendations for each impact area (i. – iv.) for consideration:

i. Access and inclusion: improve quality of education and reduce barriers for VET transition

If the purpose of a programme is to support access and inclusion of the mass of school leavers and of the most disadvantaged learner groups into the formal VET system, the concurrent development of a high-quality and sustainable dual VET system will be more challenging because national VET systems have to be attractive to the majority of school leavers (see SDC, 2017a, 3 – 4). A fully dual-track model would thus be difficult to implement in rural areas due to limited private sector involvement. Development programmes would benefit from partnering with the MoEYS for better quality of general LSE, and to include life skills and individual career counselling, otherwise VET might remain ‘poor training for poor people’. Besides vocational counselling services, instruments to ease transition to VET

could be bursaries, relaxed entry requirements, transport arrangements or user-friendly scheduling (see SDC, 2017a, 3).

ii. VET system development: improve governance, coordination, quality and relevance

Interventions with a focus on developing, strengthening and reforming formal (dual) VET as a whole require a long-time horizon. It is also essential to assure collaboration with the private sector to warrant that VET meets market demand and enjoys public recognition while being firmly embedded in the legal framework (see DC dVET, 2016b, 8). In Cambodia, there is the need for a fundamental change in VET governance, i.e. a reduction of the inherent silo approaches and public-private dichotomy in VET legislation, governance and delivery. However, the concept of dual ownership is not simply a question of a government or a ministry consulting with employers. Instead, the ministries would have to step back from taking all the decisions as suppliers of VET. They would also have to develop a more participative approach in which the knowledge and skills of the world of work are brought to bear on the reform of VET institutions, qualifications systems and curricula (see UNSECO, 2013, 60). In terms of governance, there is also the need for better connections between general education and the VET stream, and the realisation of pathways across. At national level, development programmes could work at the intersection of MoEYS and MoLVT to support their strategic collaboration. At the provincial level, organisational and institutional capacity development of training providers would ensure better coordination and quality of training.

iii. Industry solutions: skills for the economy and catalysing dual training approaches

Development programmes with economic policy objectives and intended impact on employment and productivity (industry solutions) respond to the existing labour market demand and build the quality, productivity, and competitiveness of the national economy and of industries, including the qualification of the workforce (see SDC, 2017a, 2). One recommendation for industry solutions in Cambodia would be to develop workplace learning through dualising, standardising and formalising apprenticeships and in-service training in medium and large-scale enterprises (see DC dVET, 2016b, 7). Other options would be to select pioneering companies (or innovative training institutes with good contacts in industry) as partners for dual VET and to promote dual learning venues in traditional apprenticeships in the informal sector (see DC dVET, 2016b, 8). While dual models developed as industry solutions may serve as a role model and catalyst for expanding dual VET approaches in Cambodia, this could mean that rural youth might have to migrate to (semi-) urban areas where larger industry or pioneering enterprises are available. In this case, development cooperation would need to incorporate considerations on safer migration and measures to reduce vulnerable employment, especially if the programme targets younger women and men.

iv. Labour market insertion: career counselling and employment promotion

The fourth impact area focuses on the labour market integration of the unemployed or other groups of selected beneficiaries. While special programmes for specific target groups may be a core business of many development cooperation programmes, they belong more to ALMP and do not directly lead to (dual) VET system development or access and inclusion. Because full market-orientation is difficult to

reconcile with the current supply driven Cambodian VET system, some dual VET initiatives could potentially be better implemented in the frame of labour market programmes (see DC dVET, 2016a, 9). In this case, development cooperation could support labour market integration of rural youth through employment promotion (closer linkages between training providers and enterprises), through fostering career awareness services and labour market information (including in schools and training centres), through skills development and placement services, and through promotion of gainful self-employment.

6.2. Considerations: Quality – Quantity

This paper mainly focused on key success factors and challenges for introducing dual VET approaches in Cambodia, but there are some limitations as well. By training skilled workers, VET contributes to the productivity and competitiveness of a given sector or economy, as well as to labour market integration and individual development of the trainees. However, these quality effects often come to fruition only over the long term and the contribution of VET to social integration is often only effective once the education and training system is able to offer specific courses for specifically poor or disadvantaged youth (see DC dVET, 2016a, 9). Furthermore, with the current relatively narrow industrial base in rural areas, demand for highly skilled workers in rural areas will only grow over time. This hiatus gives an opportunity to work on boosting the quality of education and training as the demand grows gradually. Producing a large quantity of less-well trained workers could actually have a deleterious effect: the demand for higher quality skilled workers could still be unmet, VET graduates could still be un(der)employed and the future demand for VET places could be depressed as job prospects following VET could be seen as more problematic than for those who successfully completed more academic pathways (see UNESCO, 2013, 72). Finally, one might also argue that skills programmes seeking to create prospects for the most disadvantaged and poor youth will not contribute to quality VET system development. Since Cambodian youth still seem to view VET as a last resort for school drop-outs, large numbers of short, low quality trainings for disadvantaged people in rural areas could actually be counter-productive to enhancing VET system relevance and participation.

In an effort to promote social and economic development and to address vulnerable employment, poverty and inequality, this essay contends that strengthening quality education and training are essential for Cambodia's rural youth.

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