

TVET Country Profile

Timor Leste



July 2020

Compiled in collaboration with SEAMEO VOC TECH

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TVETipedia Glossary

In case of further clarification and definitions of terms contained herein, please refer to UNESCO-UNEVOC’s online TVETipedia Glossary, which provides definitions and background information from various trustworthy sources on terms commonly used in the area of technical and vocational education and training. Find out more at www.unevoc.unesco.org/l/68.

Acknowledgements

The following report has been compiled in collaboration with SEAMEO VOCTECH. Further details of the contents contained herein can be found at the TVET Platform for South East Asia <https://sea-vet.net/>.

Statistics¹

General information (Unless otherwise indicated 2020)

Category	Indicator	Statistics
Demographic	Total population ²	1.32 million
	Population growth (annual %) ²	1.9 %
	Median age of population ²	20.8 years
	Population aged 15-24 years ²	278,370

Socio-economic	GDP growth (annual %) ³	-4.8 %
	GDP per capita (current US\$) ³	1,237
	Unemployment rate (%) ⁴	4.6 %
	Youth literacy rate, population 15 years and above, both sexes (%)	91% (2019)

Participation in education by level and by programme orientation (2018)

Category		Gross enrolment ratio (%)		Gross enrolment ratio Female (%)	
Primary education (ISCED 1)		115.3		113.2	
Secondary education, all programmes	Lower secondary (ISCED 2)	83.6	94.8	87	98
	Upper secondary (ISCED 3)		72.1		75.7
Tertiary education, all programmes (ISCED 5-8)		-		-	
Indicator		Female enrolment in Secondary Education, Vocational			
Secondary Education, Vocational Pupils (Female)		42			

Education finance

Category	Indicator	Statistics
Expenditure	Expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (%)	7.9 % (2019)

SDG thematic indicators related to TVET and skills

Category	Indicator	Statistics
Selected SDG thematic indicators	Participation rate in technical-vocational programmes (15- to 24-year-olds) (%)	4% (2019)
	Percentage of youth/adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills (%)	-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics have been gathered from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). <http://uis.unesco.org/>

² World Population Prospects UNDESA <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

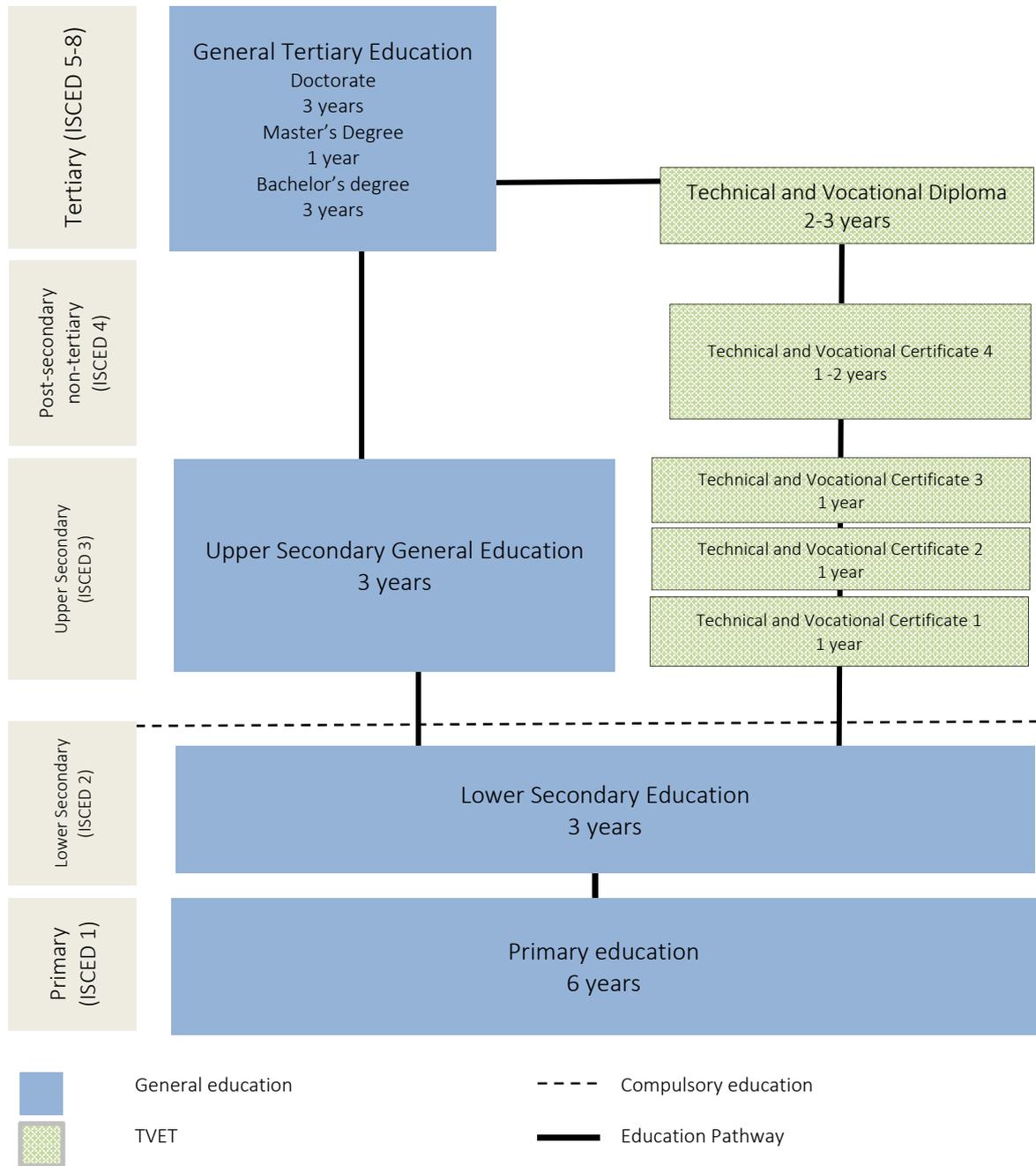
³ Asian Development Bank – Asian Development Outlook April 2020 <https://www.adb.org/countries/timor-leste>

⁴ ILO Estimates 2020 ilostat.ilo.org

⁴ World Development Indicators data.worldbank.org

1. TVET Systems

TVET in Timor Leste's Education System



¹³ Compiled by UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre.

Formal TVET system

The formal TVET system in Timor Leste is structured as follows:

TVET programmes are initially offered as Technical and Vocational Certificates 1 – 3 at the upper secondary education level (ISCED 3).	
Duration:	3 years
Admission requirements:	Completion of lower secondary education
Taught in:	Technical Secondary Schools
<p>Entry into Technical Secondary Schools is subject to successful completion of Junior High School. However, lower-secondary school drop-outs are still eligible for Foundation Courses. TVET programmes at the upper secondary level are taught in fields, such as agriculture (Technical School for Agriculture) and construction (Technical School for Construction). The programmes are aimed at enabling an early entry of the graduates in the labour market and are structured in three successive levels, where the students have the choice to enter the labour market after completing each level.</p> <p>Experienced workers lacking any prior qualifications can gain entry into Certificate Level III in specific qualification areas, if they possess extensive field experience in their areas and pass the admission examination.</p>	
TVET Certification Courses Level 4 are provided at the post-secondary non-tertiary education level (ISCED 4).	
Duration:	1-2 years
Admission requirements:	Completion of General Upper Secondary Education or Vocational Upper Secondary (Holding Certificate 3)
Taught in:	Polytechnics
<p>Vocational Certificate programmes are offered in the technical areas such as automotive repair, general mechanics, ICT, agricultural mechanics, electronics, civil engineering, etc. Graduates of Certificate Level IV can either access the labour market, or continue further learning at Vocational Diploma level.</p> <p>Experienced workers lacking any prior qualifications can gain entry into Certificate Level IV in specific qualification areas, if they possess extensive field experience in their areas and pass the admission examination.</p>	
TVET programmes at tertiary level are offered at Polytechnics (ISCED 5)	
Duration:	2-3 years
Admission requirements:	Vocational Certificate 4
Taught in:	Polytechnics
<p>The Polytechnics offer a wide range of courses at the tertiary level that equip students with industry-relevant skills, to prepare them for careers in fields such as mechanical, electrical, agriculture, ICT, health sciences, hotel management. The Technical and Vocational Diploma is the highest vocational qualification, and graduates can either access the labour market or gain entry into the general tertiary education at the Bachelors level (at an advanced stage) subject to the satisfaction of the related entrance requirements.</p>	

Non-formal TVET systems

Despite continued efforts to formalise TVET, a sizeable segment of the marginalised population and a high number of young people still remain unemployed and outside the formal education system. Non-formal and informal vocational training continues to play a valuable and distinct role in addressing these issues. A high reliance is still placed on community-based systems in delivering livelihoods skills, small business and entrepreneurship training, and important social and community development programmes.

Several international as well as local organisations have been providing non-formal education via onshore and distance-learning modes. Some of the key initiatives include:

- a) Science of Life Systems:
A self-funded social enterprise that work towards 16-25 year olds' employability and further education; it offers two-year full time courses (with part-time option for all ages) on English, computer literacy, personality development and more including provision of boarding facility at 47 centres covering all districts;
- b) 'InfoTimor':
A non-profit social enterprise, focusing on ICTs oriented skills development in partnership with Dili Institute of Technology, Infoxchange Australia, and the Government of Timor Leste (GoTL) to expand education and employment opportunities for young people.
- c) 'Empreza Diakis':
A Timorese NGO that engages in capacity-building for entrepreneurship and assists innovative businesses by promoting local products, supporting vulnerable women, and collaborating with public/private organisations and business partners.

Moreover, National Directorate for Recurrent Education (DNER – Ministry of Education) also implements basic literacy and skills development programmes targeting the illiterate groups to achieve high school equivalence by means of *substitutionary non-formal education*. This is done through the 'Community Learning Centres' across various districts to equip people with skills that are in demand at local level. These centres are managed by local committees and funded by the Ministry of Education.

2. TVET strategy and key policy documents

The main strategy and policy documents guiding the TVET and skills development agenda are as follows:

Name of document	Timor Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-30
Date entered into force	2011
Website link	https://t1p.de/5qfr
Key points and objectives	
The Strategic Development Plan sets out the following objectives specifically with regard to TVET:	
<u>Short term (2011-2015):</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring about a paradigm shift in the quality and relevance of secondary education, allowing students to acquire the practical skills to enter employment or to learn the core scientific-humanistic knowledge needed to continue their studies in higher education; • Develop a Technical and Vocational Education and Training Plan 	
<u>Medium term (2016-2020):</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a National Training Commitment that provides new training opportunities across Timor-Leste; • Develop a National Labour Policy to ensure that international and national businesses provide training opportunities; • Significant investment to be undertaken in building training facilities and in developing human resources in the vocational training sector; • Establish a Centre for Employment and Vocational Guidance in each district to provide employment services and advice; • Enable the TVET system to yield the skilled people needed to enable the realization of the national development plans. 	
<u>Long term (2021-2030):</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates of the higher education system to have the advanced skills and knowledge needed to analyse, design, build and maintain the social and economic infrastructure of Timor-Leste. 	

Name of document	The National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Plan 2011-2030
Date entered into force	2011
Website link	https://t1p.de/q2jf
Key points and objectives	
The TVET Plan matches its objectives with the Timor Leste Strategic Development Plan (SDP) objectives and performance indicators, and has the following key objectives:	
<u>Short term (2011-2015):</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of National Training Commitment • Establishment of National Skills, Employment and Productivity Council • Development of Labour Market Information System • Training funding reform • Skills need analysis in key industries and regions are conducted; 	

- Capacity building of training resources and organisations are conducted;
- Infrastructure investment in key industries and districts.

Medium term (2016-2020):

- All industries have skills standards;
- National traineeship system is developed.

Long term (2021-2030):

- Skilled labour force driving increased services and economic development, diversification & innovation;
- Training system is measured by quality and industry demand;
- Industry, society & Government partners on increasing skills of all people & creating new opportunities for secure work;
- Labour Content Policy is established;
- Industry skills centres are established;
- National network of accredited training providers is established;
- Articulation of training from school to TVET to work to higher skills;
- Review of TVET system: funding, curriculum & demand.

Name of document	National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2017-2030
Date entered into force	2017
Website link	https://t1p.de/390g
Key points and objectives	
<p>The NESP prioritises:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Universal completion of basic education by 2030, Elimination of illiteracy by 2025, and Gender parity by 2025. <p>One of its goals is to have 60% of secondary school age population enrol in secondary technical schools. It proposes the following action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating secondary technical schools that are ‘centres of technical excellence’ in a number of regions with courses in economics, agriculture, engineering, tourism and hospitality; • Developing new curriculum for secondary technical schools based on market needs in agriculture, engineering, business management and tourism; • Increasing teacher training through the National Education Training Institute; • Adoption of the National Qualifications Framework for higher education; • Developing ‘formal links with industry and the marketplace’ to give students at secondary technical schools direct experience of the workplace; and • Establishment of polytechnics to ‘offer technical higher education that is specific to Timor-Leste’s development needs’. 	

Name of document	National Employment Strategy 2011-2030
Date entered into force	2011
Website link	https://t1p.de/390g
Key points and objectives	
<p>The National Employment Strategy (NES) is a part of the broader strategy for human resource development and affects the policies and strategies for education, health and nutrition. TVET is a strategic area in the NES, as its ultimate goal of creating quality jobs and decent work directly depends on the work-readiness of students joining the workforce.</p> <p>The overall strategy to achieve this is through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Continued implementation of the TVET Plan; ii. Stronger links between the Ministry of Education and the Policy (SEPFOPE); and iii. Strengthening of training centres and higher education, improving the social protection system and inclusiveness of vulnerable groups, and promoting gender equality. <p>Some of the key strategies and actions relevant to TVET under the NES include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Encourage entrepreneurship and business skills to enable the private sector's growth and employment creation; ii. Maximise the impact of public spending by imposing conditions on public contracts that stipulate quotas for Timorese workers and accredited training; iii. Up-skilling of existing agribusiness workers to increase productivity; iv. Reduce the mismatch between training supply and training demand, including undertaking skills gap analysis and especially of the skills required to implement the SDP; v. Use the Employment and Vocation Training Fund (FEFOP) to provide training for vulnerable groups of workers (young people, unemployed, women, single mothers and disabled); vi. Involve business in all aspects of training, from planning through to evaluation – including involvement in on-the-job training; vii. The effective use of all human capital underpinned by gender equity; viii. Enhancing the capacity of SEPFOPE to undertake ongoing labour force surveys and labour market analysis; ix. Enhancing the function of Centres for Employment and Professional Guidance (CEOPs) to enable strategic and professional counselling and information sharing service; and x. Developing the nation's labour framework to support and/or implement an ongoing tri-partite dialogue; dispute resolution and arbitration; worker's rights; international conventions; labour inspectors; and occupational safety and health standards. 	

3. Governance and financing

Governance

Three key agencies are responsible for Technical and Vocational Education in Timor-Leste:

1. Ministry of Education (MoE) - for technical secondary schools;
2. Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) and its TVET regulatory body i.e. the National Institute for Labour Force Development (INDMO) - for post-secondary TVET; and
3. National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (ANAAA) - for private institutions delivering higher education

Of these the Ministry of Education has a leading role in all matters related to TVET. It implements its functions through its subservient directorates that include:

1. National Directorate for Vocational Training (NDVT):

The NDVT is responsible for:

- Drafts national policies and defines priorities regarding the professional training of the Ministry's staff, including initial, continuing and in-service, teaching and non-teaching staff at education institutions;
- Designs and assesses training programmes to determine their adequacy, as well as the performance of trainees;
- Establishes, updates and manages the training framework for non-teaching staff under the Ministry in coordination with the regional directorates and the competent central services;
- Signs cooperation agreements in the field of vocational training with private, public and foreign entities.

2. National Directorate for Secondary Technical-Vocational Education

Direção Nacional do Ensino Secundário Técnico-Vocacional - DNESTV

- Implements MoE's educational policies particularly for technical-vocational secondary schools through their accreditation, licensing and evaluation
- Oversees quality, administration and management of such schools
- Supports the MoE in the development of annual strategic proposals, plans, budgets, curricula.

3. National Directorate for Higher Technical Education

- Coordinates and executes policies related to public, private and cooperative technical and higher education of higher education institutions, as well as the training of their staff
- Defines organisational framework for technical and higher education
- Secures and provides guidance to vocational training modalities
- Supports newly graduated students and trainees when entering the labour market
- Oversees the proceedings regarding the accreditation of private and cooperative higher education and professional training institutions

- Oversees the proceedings regarding academic recognition of diplomas and equivalences between technical and higher education qualifications
- Provides technical, logistical and infrastructural support to institutes

4. National Directorate of Recurrent Education

Direcção Nacional de Ensino Recorrente (DNER)

- Deals with non-formal education, particularly to advance 'Education for All' by promoting the right to education for out-of-school children and youths
- Works closely with municipalities, local administration and community-based organisations
- Operationalises MoE's plans such as establishing training and learning centres; new centres opened in seven districts

In the area of accreditation, assessment and teacher training, the Ministry of Education has also delegated some of its responsibilities to the following agencies:

National Agency for Academic Accreditation and Assessment

(Agência Nacional para a Avaliação e Acreditação Académica - ANAAA)

- Holds the administrative, technical and scientific autonomy to regulate academic standards in post-secondary education
- Accredits higher educational establishments for quality assurance
- Responsible for qualifications undertaken at universities and levels five to ten of TLNQF offered by proposed polytechnics
- Monitors the progress and development of post-secondary institutions by reviewing their annual data reports; analyses proposals to establish new post-secondary institutes based on progress

National Institute for Training of Teachers and Education Professionals (INFORDEPE)

- Deals with non-formal education, particularly to advance 'Education for All' by promoting the right to education for out-of-school children and youths
- Holds the administrative and scientific autonomy to improve the quality of teaching, develop teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as promote relevant areas of vocational training
- Offers accredited pre-service qualifications such as degrees in education and in-service training programmes such as continuous subject-specific training for implementation of revised curricula for teachers' professional development
- Provides in-school support through capacity-building programmes on management, administration and budgeting for school directors and administrators
- Furnishes data on qualified teachers and staffing to ensure that an adequate number of teachers with required competences are supplied.

Public-Private Partnership

The TVET Plan prioritizes the engagement of businesses and institutions and building of partnerships for the development of the TVET sector. A major gap in the education system is that the skills of students and graduates do not meet the requirements of the industry. Resultantly, employers are unable to find the right people for work while the existing workforce remains unemployed.

To address this issue, a market-led and an industry-driven education system is being developed to foster a greater collaboration between training providers and the private sector. Private sector cooperation is particularly needed in defining strategic priorities, identifying and forecasting future skills, developing relevant curricula, qualifications and competency standards, conducting training programmes, offering traineeships, and recruiting graduates. Efforts towards facilitating this cooperation are ongoing, and have resulted in the establishment of Industry Sub-Commissions (ISCs), Centers for Employment and Professional Guidance (CEOPs), Labour Market Information System (LMIS), National Directorate for Vocational Training Policy (DNAFOP) and more.

The Industry Sub-Commissions (ISC) comprise of the Chamber and Commerce Industry, and Work Unions, which are responsible for:

- Identify job categories in the industry sector and the skills and knowledge required for each job;
- Advise on the development of the competency standards for the skills, knowledge, and qualifications;
- Manage the process for the validation of the competency standards according to the validation guidelines approved by the Executive Commission;
- Monitor the assessment process and advise on the assessment task for the competency standards;
- Provide advice to the Executive Commission on industry training requirements including current and emerging skills development needs;
- Facilitate and promote linkages between enterprises, industry and vocational training providers;

Thus far, ISCs have been established in the areas of Education & Training, Agriculture, Civil Construction, Tourism & Hospitality, Automotive, Oil & Gas, Community Service, Admin/Finance & IT, and Maritime. Development of more ISCs, particularly in health sector is currently underway.

The Centers for Employment and Professional Guidance (CEOPs) are established at various training centres to encourage employers to promote job vacancies and facilitate employment opportunities for youth and graduates.

The Training and Employment Support Project (TESP) is one of the main initiatives under a joint programme of AusAid, SEPFOE and ILO. With the aim to boost employment growth through development and delivery of demand-driven skills training, the TESP secured private sector's participation in the work of DNAFOP, ISCs, LMIS, and CEOPs. The private sector provided proactive support to:

- i. Technical working groups for adopting 26 competency standards and 6 national qualifications through the ISCs
- ii. DNAFOP for finalising on-the-job training agreements with employers. It also led to the establishment of CEOP offices throughout the districts.

Financing

TVET funding is provided mainly through the Human Capital Development Fund (FDCH). The FDCH aims to develop skilled human resources in a sustained manner by financing training programmes for the professional development of teachers, scholarships for Timorese students to study abroad and more.

Since its establishment in 2011, the FDCH's budget was part of the Ministry of Education. However, since 2015 onwards, it has been presided solely by the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Strategic (MPIE), which is responsible for proposing and developing the human capacity building policy.

The FDCH allocates funds to all TVET line ministries and agencies responsible for the delegated responsibilities. The fund is managed by an 'Administration Council', which includes the Prime Minister, Ministers for Education, Justice and Finance, the Secretary of State for Natural Resources, and other government representatives from institutions that receive funds from the FDCH. The starting annual budget of the FDCH was \$25 million in 2011, which rose to \$45M each subsequent year and totalled \$175M over the five-year period in 2015. As of 2019, the [budget allocated](#) to FDCH amounted to US \$ 200 million.

Funding for training providers is allocated by the State Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training (SEPFOP). Funding for technical secondary schools is decided by the MoE. Decisions are mostly based on enrolments and funds are allocated from the state budget. Schools can apply for more funding and partnerships with foreign institutions, however, the ultimate power rests with the MoE.

Furthermore, the GoTL has also created funds to address specific needs. Employment and Vocational Training Fund (FEFOP), for instance, finances labour-intensive works in rural areas such as Active Labor Market Programmes (ALMPs) to promote hiring of Timorese workforce and capacity-building initiatives of the Centers for Employment and Professional Guidance (CEOPs) to offer career guidance to the youth and help them in identifying training and self-employment opportunities.

Additional support to TVET in the form of administrative and financial assistance is supported by various bilateral development partners. TVET is one of the priority areas for Australia in particular, which is Timor-Leste's largest bilateral development partner. Apart from this, international developmental agencies such as the ILO and ADB also assist the Government of Timor Leste through technical, financial and operational support.

4. TVET teachers and trainers

National Directorate of Vocational Training (DNFP) is responsible for the development of the TVET sector's training providers and for the funding of priority training programmes.

In general, teachers should possess a Certificate 3 and 4 in Training and Assessment and a minimum of one level higher from the course level they are teaching. There is no particular pre-service training center that is recognised by Government for the preparation of trainers. The selection of trainers is largely based on the current training needs assessed by vocational training providers. Often trainings are organised during in-service period where the proposal is submitted by the respective training providers. Under the funding of FDCH secretariat, DNAFOP selects trainers from registered and accredited training providers to participate in the capacity building programmes.

The majority of in-service teacher training is offered by small private universities and NGOs and is of, at times, dubious quality. In addition, training providers, from time to time, have identified severe limitations of the materials in use and approached INDMO, SEPFOP and other training

agencies for support in developing resources. Consequently, a Learning Resource Development Centre has been established at SEPFOPE that is working closely with registered training providers to produce standard teaching and learning materials that meet national qualifications, are relevant to Timor-Leste and are written in Tetum.

Furthermore, TESP, through its partnership with INDMO, has contributed to the development of a demand-driven accredited vocational training system in Timor Leste for developing a National Quality Training System. The system consists of criteria to be met by training providers, a collaborative auditing system between INDMO and training providers seeking accreditation and funding policies linking funding to accreditation.

5. Qualification system and quality assurance

The Timor-Leste National Qualifications Framework (TLNQF) was created in August 2011 (Decree-Law of the Government No. 36/2011). It enlists all post-secondary school qualifications under a single framework. These qualifications are responsive to the needs of the industry, international quality standards, and employment prospects of Timorese people.

The distinguishing feature of the TLNQF is that it gives due importance to a still largely non-formal vocational training sector and practical skills gained outside the formal system. It continues to support a very robust community based non-formal vocational training system that delivers livelihoods skills, small business and entrepreneurship training, and important social and community development programmes for youth and marginalised groups particularly in the rural and remote areas.

The TLNQF establishes ten levels of qualifications at the post-secondary level. While levels one to four (including foundation certificates) fall under INDMO's mandate, levels five to ten including qualifications undertaken at universities are under the regulation of the ANAAA. More than twenty national qualifications and five national certificates, have been developed, approved and registered on the national database with national codes and include over 200 units of competencies.

The national qualifications cover various industry areas and focus on 'six key training areas: administration and finance, construction, tourism and hospitality, education, training and assessment, and agriculture and automotive mechanics'. While it is a promising initiative, it should be noted that less than 25% of total post-secondary TVET training providers are covered under the system. This creates the need to expand the system's capacity to include all post-secondary TVET training institutes. Furthermore, the TLNQF does not cover qualifications issued by secondary schools, both General as well as Technical Secondary Schools. These qualifications are issued under the Basic Education Law 14/2008.

Quality assurance

The Timor Leste Strategic Development Plan (SDP) prioritises the implementation of a strong quality assurance regulatory system through:

1. The registration of all national qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework; and
2. The continuing development of the national quality assurance bodies

According to the TVET Plan, the TLNQF standards and related laws require training providers to be accredited to deliver national qualifications and to demonstrate that they comply with standards for buildings and equipment, staffing qualifications, assessment and certification of student skills, records administration and organisational management.

Consequently, in consultation with the MoE and the SEPFOPE, the INDMO set up an accreditation procedure for quality assurance, as well as published guidelines outlining all the competency standards of accreditation along with the ANAAA. Over the years, the Industry Sub-Commissions (ISCs), which include industry representatives from relevant sectors and training providers have also been involved in defining competency standards.

At present, the INDMO and the ANAAA are the two authorised agencies that have the power to:

1. Determine competency standards and criteria for quality assurance;
2. Register and issue national qualifications under the TLNQF;
3. Accredite vocational training providers including government training agencies, institutes and academies.

The responsibility for quality assurance for all ten levels of qualifications is clearly divided between them, such that INDMO oversees levels 1-4 including foundation certificates, and ANAAA oversees levels 5-10 in the post-secondary education. The accreditation is mandatory for providers that want to receive government funding and offer national certificates. It is valid for five years, during which time the authorities perform regular checks to ensure providers' compliance with accreditation/registration standards. Furthermore, both agencies have the power to punish training providers in case they breach compliance standards or if students and employers lodge a complaint against them.

Although efforts are being made to establish a strong quality assurance system, there are some issues that need to be addressed. There is an oversupply of training providers with only a few having the capacity and the ability to deliver training programmes effectively; the system does not apply to Technical Secondary Schools; it is not mandatory to have a certificate to engage in an occupation, not all relevant occupations have defined standards, and a relatively few training centres have been accredited.

6. Current reforms and policy discussion

Some of the most recent reforms and recently concluded projects include the following:

Workforce Development Programme Timor-Leste - WDPTL (2014-19)

Run by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) with funding of AUD 13 million, the WDPTL offers scholarship opportunities for tertiary study in Australia, access to vocational training for employment and supports Timor-Leste to raise its participation in Australia's seasonal worker programme. The programme has helped the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) develop five new nationally accredited qualifications in hospitality (Certificate 1, 2 and 3 levels). The WDP supports pre-departure training courses for Seasonal Worker Programme run by SEPFOPE to ensure that workers have

English language and work-ready skills. The specific work-ready skills training includes English language, driving instruction and forklifting training. On return to Timor-Leste, the programme provides workers linkages with potential employers, financial training, and information on setting-up small businesses.

Gender Action Plan - GAP

The GoTL's Gender Action Plan (GAP), as a part of the Mid-Level Skills Training Programmes, is aimed at to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, stresses on increasing women's participation in non-traditional careers by offering skills training and counselling and reserving internships and recruitment for women in construction and automotive trades. GAP is facilitating placements for Timor-Leste's first female mechanics.

A concurrent review and implementation of the Strategic Development, National Education Strategic Plan and the National Employment Strategy remains a continuing agenda.

Challenges

According to the SEAMEO-VOCTECH, Timor Leste faces the following key challenges to TVET:

Constraints of policy coordination and implementation

While the GoTL is formulating policies at a fast pace, the capacity to implement these is severely lacking. There is also a lot of overlap in the delivery of oversight and policy functions related to TVET that while one ministry heads general education, another is responsible for vocational training and other ministries also are setting up their own training centres in rural areas, resulting in coordination issues and fragmented efforts.

Inadequate financing of the TVET

Although budget allocation towards education (including both general education and TVET) has increased considerably in the last decade, it is far from enough to develop the education sector.

Limited appeal of TVET vis-à-vis general education

According to a Youth Training and Employment Perception Study, a common perception regarding TVET is that of a pathway chosen by those unable to cope with formal school education. Another common problem associated with TVET is the highly variable quality of training centres, and mismatch between skills and industry requirements. People fail to perceive it as a viable career pathway since it is a common occurrence for even the government to prefer foreign workers to local TVET graduates for government jobs. A greater evidence of TVET's ability to move in tandem with the realities of the workplace and ensure long-term gainful employment in Timor Leste could improve its perception amongst the society.

Lack of availability and access to quality training

A major concern is that of limited access to professional development opportunities that help bridge TVET instructors'

training gaps in view of skills sought by industry. Shortage of qualified instructors is compounded by the shortage of accessible training centres. A dearth of standardised TVET centres in most districts, barring Dili and a select others, has led to neglect of rural areas and migration of youth to urban centres in search of jobs, leading to skewed economic development and large rural-urban divide.

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