



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

SDC «How to do» Note

Interlinking BE and VSD for Labour Market Integration and Economic Development



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Introduction

Purpose of the guidelines

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has longstanding expertise in supporting its partner countries in Basic Education (BE) and Vocational Skills Development (VSD). In 2017, a common thematic guidance document on BE and VSD¹ was drawn up for these two subsectors with the clear purpose of strengthening their complementarity². In 2021, an external review of the implementation of the thematic guidance found that although the benefits of more closely interlinking VSD and BE were well recognised, more needed to be done to achieve this objective. Following the recommendations of the external review, the SDC is committed to developing a common understanding of the interplay between BE and VSD, comprising both the demarcation between the two (what they do separately in the framework of their respective core business), and their interconnection (what they can and should do together)³.

The guidelines aim to advise SDC staff and partners how to identify and make use of the interlinkages between BE and VSD to equip people with the skills they need to develop both as an individual and as a member of society and to access productive employment. The guide shows why a combination of basic education and vocational skills are needed for decent work⁴ and for inclusive, sustainable economic development, and how the SDC can operationalise BE–VSD interlinkages in the context of education, vocational education and training (VET), inclusive economic development, or programmes in other fields, e.g. migration, that aim to prepare people for labour market integration.

To do so, this guidance

- ▶ reminds SDC staff and key stakeholders of the rationale behind efforts to increase the interlinkages between the themes of BE and VSD;
- ▶ describes the main challenges that improved interlinkages help to address;
- ▶ offers guidance on how to effectively integrate BE–VSD interlinkages into strategic programme development at regional or country level at the SDC;
- ▶ identifies and provides practical examples of different approaches, and the role that the SDC and its projects and partners can play in addressing the main challenges.

While this guide focuses specifically on the interlinkages between BE and VSD, the SDC's approaches, tools and guidance in BE/VSD, including on the topic of labour market integration and decent work, can be found on the SDC's thematic Shareweb pages⁵.

1 SDC (2017), The SDC's Education Strategy. Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development – as of 2021 labelled "Thematic Guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development" to reflect the change in terminology at the Federal department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). [accessed 18.7.2022]

2 Strengthening the complementarity and interconnections between BE and VSD is one of the 5 key priorities (see page 6) and one of the implementation strategies of the SDC Thematic Guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development (2017) (see page 34). [accessed 18.7.2022]

3 External Review of the Implementation of the SDC Education Strategy: Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development and the SDC Education Fund

4 Decent Work as defined by the ILO, see Decent work (ilo.org) [accessed 8.6.2022], and as operationalised by the SDC in a working paper:

"Addressing decent work in international cooperation. Operationalising the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy's goal 'Contribute to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs'". Working paper, taking into account contributions to the e-discussion of the e+i and FCHR networks. Version 2, June 2021.

5 Vocational Skills Development page: SDC Vocational Skills Development Shareweb
Education page: SDC Education Network Shareweb

Rationale for increased interlinkages between Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development

“Education develops people’s abilities to lead meaningful and productive lives, to pursue sustainable development, and to enhance social cohesion and resilience⁶”

To reach this objective, BE and VSD must encourage learners to develop different categories of skills. This journey starts with **foundational skills**, which are best acquired through basic education (compulsory education up to lower-secondary).

Foundational skills must then need be further strengthened and developed in post-compulsory education and training, usually at the upper secondary education level, in combination with vocational skills. VSD plays an important role in cultivating cognitive, socioemotional, and technical skills (World Bank, 2018)⁷. In the current debates on skills requirements, studies have repeatedly emphasised the importance of the multidimensionality of skills and confirmed that the lack of foundational skills will leave people unprepared for an uncertain world where the nature of jobs is changing rapidly, and adaptability is at a premium (World Bank, 2019)⁸.

Foundational skills are understood as **literacy and numeracy skills**, as well as basic life skills – sometimes referred to as transferable skills in the wider discourse on this topic – such as **cognitive skills** (e.g. problem-solving and critical thinking), personal skills (e.g. self-management) and **social skills** (e.g. communication or working with others).

Basic Education aims at meeting basic learning needs. It is delivered through formal compulsory education (most often comprising pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education). It can also be delivered through alternative non-formal education programmes for children, youth or adults who could not access or achieve formal BE (e.g. second-chance and accelerated education, catch-up classes, literacy/ numeracy programmes, etc.). BE, especially in emergencies, can take place in different locations, including school buildings, temporary shelters in contexts of humanitarian crisis, or in any other protected learning environment.

Vocational Skills Development⁶: 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 as the SDC defines it can take place at secondary to tertiary education levels and be acquired throughout an individual’s economically active life. It includes formal and non-formal VSD opportunities⁶. Internationally, the term ‘vocational education and training’ (VET) (or variations thereof) is more commonly used.

6 SDC (2017), Thematic guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development. [accessed 18.7.2022]

7 World Bank (2018), World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise. [accessed 18.7.2022]

8 World Bank (2019), Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take? [accessed 18.7.2022]

Lack of foundational skills and low transitioning between BE and VSD

Most middle- and low-income countries do not adequately equip learners with foundational skills and fail to enrol youth into meaningful, good quality vocational skills programmes to equip them with the competence⁹ needed to gain employment and income. Pertinent further training and life-long learning schemes¹⁰ are often lacking despite an ever increasing need to respond to skill gaps in the workforce due to digitalisation and the need to be more resilient in light of different types of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the World Bank¹¹, the 'learning poverty rate' (i.e. 10 year-olds who cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text) concerns 53% of children in low and middle-income countries and up to 87% in Sub-Saharan Africa (and is projected to rise due to school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic). The Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)¹², revealed that in many countries the vast majority of youth aged 15 to 19 years are unable to develop foundational skills because they do not complete lower secondary education for various reasons. This leads to very low numbers of learners transitioning to post-compulsory education – and hence low enrolment and attendance rates – at the upper-secondary level, with an even a smaller share of students opting for VSD.

While these transitioning, enrolment and attendance rates vary greatly between countries, the situation is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia¹³ where only 41% and 65% of learners respectively, complete lower secondary level, while regions with the lowest rates of enrolment in VSD are Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (only 1% of youth enrolled in VSD). In addition, we continue to observe strong inequalities between rich and poor, and between women and men on all education levels¹⁴.

These alarming figures call for an intensified focus on the interlinkages between BE and VSD, and for targeted interventions to address the ruptures in the education systems of the SDC's partner countries. The consequences of a lack of foundational skills and a lack of quality vocational skills development are exclusion from further learning and access to decent jobs. They also deprive societies of the human capital of youth, which represents the workforce of the future. Moreover, 'second chance' opportunities for children and youth lacking foundational skills are scarce considering the huge demand and the importance of such opportunities for the development of societies and economies at large.

9 Aligned with the definitions issued by the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO) and the CEDEFOP. "competence is understood as the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development). Competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social or organizational skills) and ethical values" [accessed 18.7.2022]

10 E.g. courses for upskilling and reskilling

11 World Bank (2019), Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take? [accessed 18.7.2022]

12 UNESCO (2021) Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2: Non-state actors in education: Who chooses? Who loses? [accessed 18.7.2022]

13 Western Asia in this report encompasses Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

14 World Inequality Database on Education by UNESCO. [accessed 18.7.2022]

Inspiration from the Swiss education system

The characteristics and strengths of the Swiss education and training system at all levels, including Switzerland's compulsory school system and dual-track apprenticeship system¹⁵, is considered an added value of the SDC's engagement in international cooperation; where interlinkages between BE and VSD are hardly addressed by other donors, who tend to support the general education and vocational education and training subsectors in isolation of each other.

The SDC sees the strengths of the Swiss education and training system as a source of inspiration, and not as a model or blueprint. It is fully aware that the systems' achievements are the results of very long and complex processes. For example, it took several policy interventions and strategy processes over the last 20–30 years for the Swiss system to achieve today's permeability.

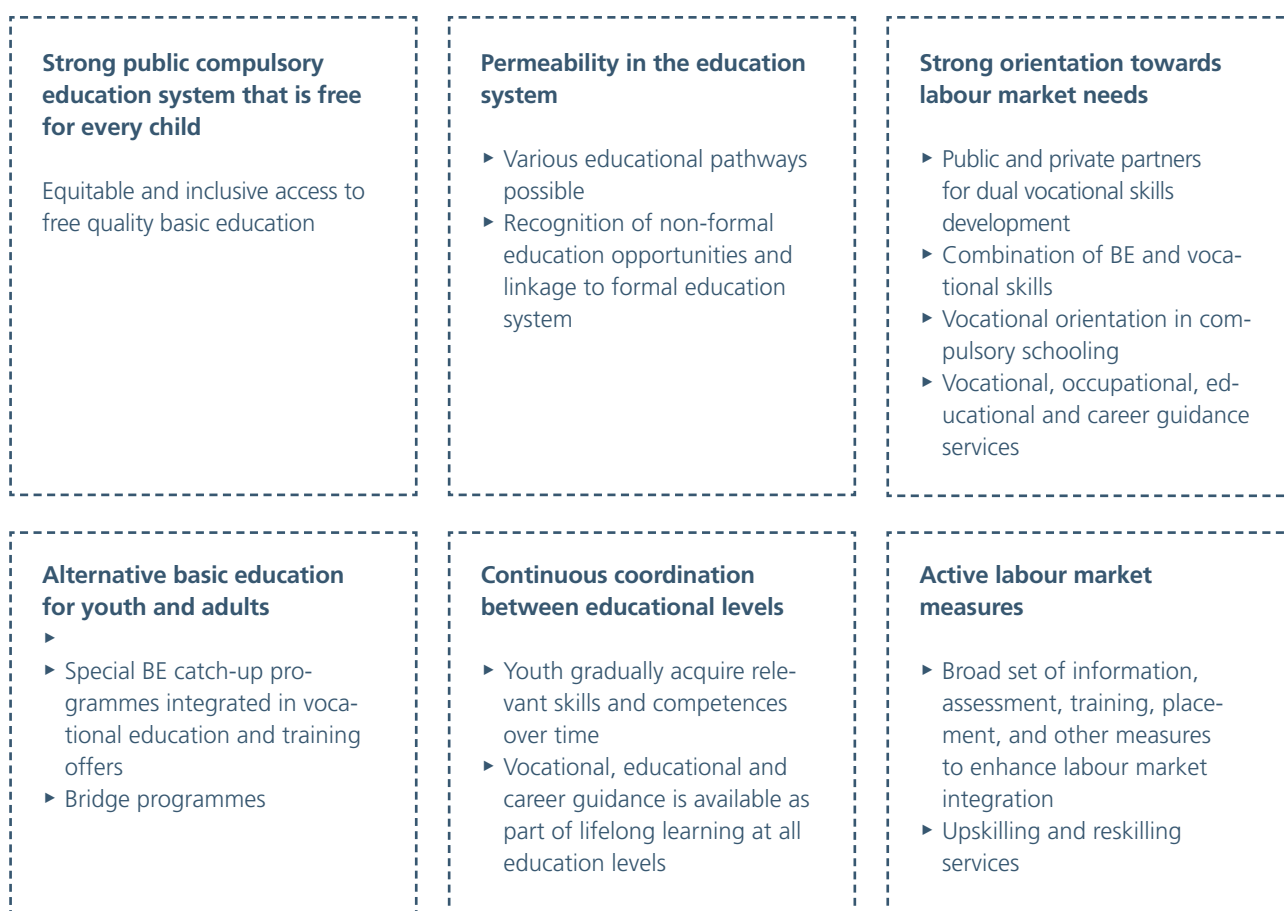


Figure 1 Selected key success factors in the Swiss education system and labour market integration

¹⁵ Most VET programmes in Switzerland are of the dual-track variety, i.e. training content is divided between different learning locations (part-time classroom instruction at a vocational school, part-time workplace training at a host company and for some occupations also branch courses at a branch training centre). Tertiary-level professional education also combines classroom instruction with work-based training, thereby ensuring a smooth transition from dual-track VET programmes (from: State Secretariat for Research, Education and Innovation (SERI), (2022) Vocational and Professional Education and Training in Switzerland Facts and Figures 2022. [accessed 18.7.2022]).

Challenges for BE and VSD and related solutions

At what levels can interlinkages between BE and VSD be strengthened?

Interlinked BE/VSD approaches can take place at different levels of the education system within the 'continuum' from compulsory education up to lower-secondary level to post-compulsory education. This includes vocational education and training and general education on upper secondary level and extends to labour market transition ('school to work transition') as well as to non-formal programmes.

Interlinked approaches are generally open to all learners, but they can also be tailored towards specific target groups, in line with age- and learning-specific skills needs and gaps. Similarly, interlinked approaches can take place at the level of governance, policy, management, etc.

We distinguish between:

- ▶ General programmes in the formal education and training system – in view of education and training systems strengthening, smooth transition from school to work and successful labour market preparation of all (see section 3.2 below).
- ▶ Programmes tailored to specific target groups, formal or non-formal, based on their specific skills-gaps and needs (see section 3.3 below).

Figure 2 describes and visualises the BE/VSD interlinkage approaches that are relevant for the SDC in a generic education system overview. The approaches are numbered for easy reference throughout the document.

What are the key challenges and potential solutions?

Figure 3 and the subsequent tables describe and visualise the BE/VSD interlinkage approaches focusing on the most frequently encountered challenges and suggest typical solutions that might be most appropriate to address them. It is important to be aware that these are not 'one size fits all' approaches, and other solutions may be applied in specific settings, and often combined interventions are most appropriate. Agreement with partners and piloting/testing is required to determine which solution is most effective and relevant in a given context.

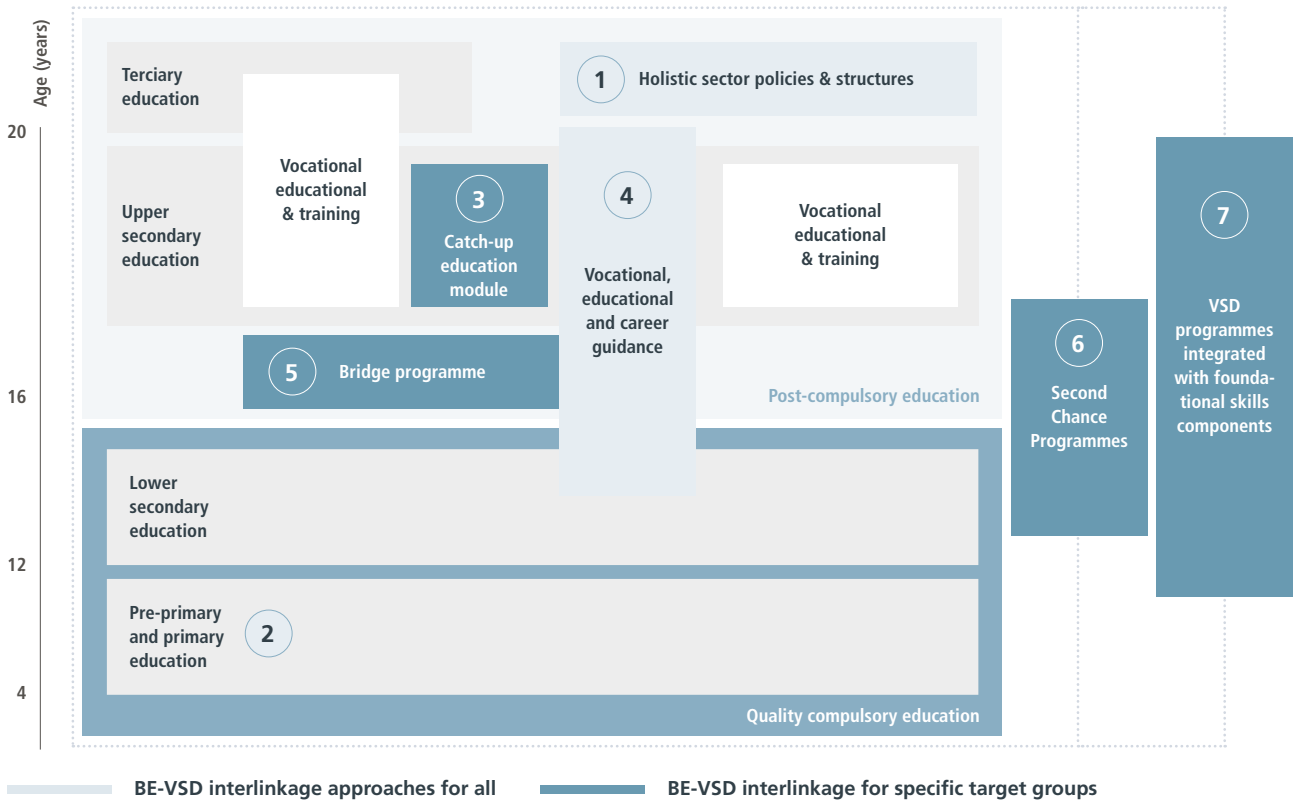


Figure 2 Key approaches to interlink Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development

Challenges

- Weak permeability and non-aligned curricula of compulsory and post-compulsory education**
- Learners who complete compulsory education...
 - ... face difficult transition to post-compulsory education because of limited foundational skills
 - ... take uniformed choices with respect to their post-compulsory education and training
- Learners who complete or drop out late in compulsory education...
 - ...struggle to directly transition to post-compulsory education, but may succeed with support to further develop their skills, knowledge and attitude
- Learners with no lower secondary education
 - ...have low chances of accessing further education due to substantial limitation in foundational skills
- Learners with no compulsory education
 - ...are often denied access to further training and decent jobs

Solutions

- 1 Holistic sector policies, structures, governance and coordination
- 2 Relevant quality compulsory education (improve the system)
- 3 Catch-up education and foundational skills in VSD programs
- 4 Educational, vocational, and career guidance particularly in lowersecondary education
- 5 Bridge programs
- 6 "Second chance" education (partially with pre-vocational training)
- 7 Programmes combining foundational skills and VSD

— Solutions for all learners — Solutions for specific target groups

Figure 3 Overview of key challenges concerning Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development interlinkages

Solutions for all learners¹⁶

Challenge

Weak permeability and non-aligned curricula of compulsory and post-compulsory education

Situation analysis

- ▶ Lack of 'permeability' and non-aligned curricula between lower-secondary and upper-secondary education
- ▶ Education and training are not sufficiently anchored at policy level, or
- ▶ Sector plans include all levels of education and training, yet holistic governance is missing (i.e. insufficient alignment and coordination between ministries, especially at the interlinkages of compulsory and non-compulsory education).
- ▶ Low levels of 'permeability' between general and vocational education pathways.
- ▶ Insufficient mechanisms to recognise non-formal education/training and prior learning.
- ▶ Public and private financial resources are not efficiently allocated to compulsory and post-compulsory education and training (resource allocation mismatch).

Consequences

- ▶ Learners who could not complete lower-secondary education are blocked in their learning pathways (insufficient BE 'second chance' alternatives and/or lack of formal recognition of these alternatives).
- ▶ Difficulties in transitioning from lower secondary to upper secondary education, especially to vocational education and training opportunities.
- ▶ Difficulties in moving back and forth between general education and vocational/practical training.

Solution

1 Holistic sector policies, structures, governance and coordination

Learners: all ages

- ▶ Sector policies and plans covering the entire compulsory and post-compulsory education and training system.
- ▶ Holistic governance and coordination for the implementation of sector policies and plans.
- ▶ Structures in place that involve the responsible ministries and entities and ensure adequate allocation of resources.

Possible roles of the SDC

- ▶ Facilitate the formulation of holistic policies and education sector plans (also to improve the transition from compulsory BE to post-compulsory education and training).
- ▶ Participate actively in national sector coordination (e.g. technical working groups on education and/or vocational coordination, donor coordination groups, etc.)
- ▶ Support comprehensive system governance across ministries, i.e. advocate to enhance the communication and alignment between the entities of the different ministries involved.
- ▶ Facilitate measures to increase the 'permeability' of the education and training system, and add alternative education programmes for specific target groups, allowing learners to follow different pathways.
- ▶ Support mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and of non-formal education and training.
- ▶ Advocate for formal pathways for specific target groups (e.g. minorities, migrants and refugees) within the education and training system through specific measures (e.g. by recognising certificates from other countries).

Examples: Education sector plans (GPE and IIEP support for education and training system planning); national policy dialogue in Mali; Bolivia for the recognition of prior learning, working closely with the ministry of education in a holistic way

Challenge

Learners who complete compulsory education face difficult transition to post-compulsory education because of limited foundational skills

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners who complete compulsory education face a difficult transition to post-compulsory education because of limited foundational skills
- ▶ Lack of relevance and quality of BE (due to many factors such as curricula, pedagogy, teacher training, education system governance, etc.).

Consequences

- ▶ Even among learners who complete BE, many lack foundational and life skills necessary for post-compulsory vocational or education pathways, future life and work.
- ▶ Some of them do not enter and others drop out during post-compulsory education and training (VET or general education) due to the inability to follow the teaching and/or inability of post-compulsory education and training to adapt to learners' levels.
- ▶ VSD is required to compensate for the learning deficits of compulsory BE. Hence VSD programmes underperform in reaching targeted objectives as learners struggle to meet the expected competency levels.

Solution

2 Relevant quality compulsory education (improve the system)

Learners: 4–15/16years

- ▶ Strengthen the quality and relevance of compulsory basic education.
- ▶ Ensure that all learners develop the basic skills, knowledge and attitudes that serve as a foundation for life, further education and training and future work.

Possible roles of the SDC

- ▶ Engage in policy dialogue about the key determinants of pertinent, good-quality compulsory basic education to prepare individuals for post-compulsory education/training and life/work.
- ▶ Apply a systemic approach to determine the bottlenecks in the system and define holistic interventions based on the opportunities available in a specific context.
- ▶ Support inclusive quality basic education provision focusing on foundational skills.

Example: Education programme in Chad

Challenge

Learners who complete compulsory education take uninformed choices with respect to their post-compulsory education and training

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners who complete compulsory education take uninformed choices with respect to their post-compulsory education, training and/or employment.
- ▶ Lack of systematic integration of vocational, education and career guidance in lower-secondary education.

Consequences

- ▶ Young people are inadequately informed about the labour market, different career opportunities and their respective pathways in the education and training system, which leads to uninformed educational, vocational and career choices.
- ▶ Increased drop-out rates in VSD courses due to a mismatch between learners' expectation and the training and workplace reality.
- ▶ Young people and their parents do not find VSD programmes attractive due to a lack of knowledge and understanding thereof.

Solution

4 Educational, vocational, and career guidance particularly in lowersecondary education

Learners: 12–20 years

- ▶ Support establishment and/or improvement of skills needs/gap analysis among employers as well as skills forecasting processes and instruments to supply adequate and updated information to providers of employment services.
- ▶ Integrate vocational, education and career guidance into the curriculum of lower secondary education.
- ▶ In collaboration with national public and/or private sector actors (i) facilitate job and career fairs as well as open days where learners can visit companies to understand the work environment, (ii) carry out promotion campaigns in social or print media, radio/TV to distribute information on certain occupations and on where additional information can be found.
- ▶ Promote work in certain professions and/or sectors with relevant sectoral bodies (e.g. professional associations).
- ▶ Engage proficient VSD learners and successful graduates as role models to give 'real life' examples to current learners.
- ▶ Engage parents as important influencers of students' education and employment decisions.

Possible roles of the SDC

- ▶ Engage in policy dialogue to institutionalise educational, vocational and career guidance in lower-secondary education.
- ▶ Apply a systemic approach to determine the bottlenecks in the system and define holistic interventions depending on the opportunities offered by the context.
- ▶ Engage in targeted activities to improve or to integrate educational, vocational and career guidance elements into the curriculum, and, depending on the context, into school structures at lower secondary level.

Examples: Jobs programmes in Kosovo, YEPP in Mongolia, E2E Serbia? (educational, vocational and career guidance)

Solutions for specific target groups

Challenge

Learners who complete compulsory education face difficult transition to post-compulsory education because of limited foundational skills

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners completing compulsory education and transitioning to post-compulsory education, and particularly VSD programmes, with certain gaps related to their foundational skills.
- ▶ Because of poor quality compulsory education, many learners who enter VSD lack (some) foundational skills.
- ▶ Migrants and refugees may face gaps in foundational skills and/or language skills to enter vocational education and training or general upper secondary education.
- ▶ VSD providers are not always aware or prepared to compensate for these skills gaps.

Consequences

- ▶ Increased drop-out rates in VSD programmes, as students cannot keep up with the training or cannot cope with situations they experience as challenging related to training and employment.
- ▶ Migrants and refugees cannot access and/or follow formal education at the post-compulsory education level.
- ▶ VSD programmes underperform in reaching targeted objectives as learners struggle to meet the expected competency levels.

Solution

3

Catch-up education and foundational skills in VSD programs

Learners: 15/16–20 (up to 30+ years) years old

- ▶ Allocate time and financial resources to programmes to catch-up on and strengthen foundational skills (especially in literacy/numeracy, basic life skills and in the local language(s) as an integrated part of VSD programmes.
- ▶ Allocate integrated social and learning support to learners struggling to attend and keep up with the training programmes.

Possible roles of the SDC in VSD

- ▶ Assess the foundational skills gap of the target groups.
- ▶ In case of significant foundational skills gaps, integrate BE module into VSD programmes.

Example: SIM! Project in Mozambique

Challenge

Learners who complete or drop out late in compulsory education struggle to directly transition to post-compulsory education, but may succeed with support to further develop their skills, knowledge and attitude

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners with incomplete lower-secondary education (basic education) are locked out of the formal system for further education and training due to certain gaps in foundational skills and/or the absence of a formal certification.
- ▶ In the context of poverty, it is common for learners to leave lower secondary school once they reach an age that is considered by their parents as 'working age', leading to high dropout rates at that education level.
- ▶ Additionally, it is required for learners to pass a final exam at the end of compulsory schooling in many low- and middle-income countries. Learners who fail these exams cannot receive a school leaving certificate (terminology varies depending on context) and, being prohibited from accessing formal post-compulsory education and training, are locked out of the education system.
- ▶ Even where school leaving certificates are not required for post-compulsory education and training, learners with incomplete lower-secondary education struggle to access further learning and training offers as well as productive employment due to their gaps in foundational skills.
- ▶ Migrants and refugees may have incomplete lower-secondary education or face difficulties in having their certificates or number of school years recognised as equivalent. They are hence barred from formal education and training.

Consequences

- ▶ Learners with incomplete lower-secondary education do not enter vocational education and training or general upper secondary education but opt for low-skilled labour instead.
- ▶ Learners with incomplete lower-secondary education chose learning paths that are not the most appropriate for them.
- ▶ Learners with no or incomplete lower-secondary education often do not know what vocational education or general upper-secondary education pathway is open to them. They usually do have adequate access to vocational, education and career guidance.

Solution

5 Bridge programs

Learners: 15/16–18 years old

- ▶ Provide bridge programmes to prepare youth to successfully transit from an incomplete lower secondary education to vocational education and training or general upper secondary education pathways. *Main characteristics of bridge programmes:* (i) Duration is usually up to one year; (ii) They mainly: close the gaps in foundational skills; offer pre-vocational orientation and training, and offer placement services for post-compulsory apprenticeships; (iii) They can be school-based and/or work-based. They can e.g. combine general education (at school) for 2-3 days a week and vocational training at the workplace for the other 2-3 days; (iv) For people who have attended school in other countries, bridge programmes can last up to two years and should focus specifically on foundational and language skills gaps as well as (pre)vocational orientation and training.
- ▶ Bridge programmes can be governed, realised, and financed under various set-ups (e.g. ministries of education, VSD, labour and social affairs).

Possible roles of the SDC in VSD

- ▶ Support pre-vocational bridge programmes.
- ▶ Engage in policy dialogue to institutionalise bridge programmes where it is not the case.
- ▶ Apply a systemic approach to determine the bottlenecks in the system and define holistic interventions depending on the opportunities offered by the context.

Challenge

Learners with no lower secondary education have low chances of accessing further education due to substantial limitation in foundational skills

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners with incomplete primary or lower-secondary education are locked out of the formal system for further education and training due to substantial gaps in foundational skills and the absence of a formal certification.
- ▶ In least developed countries, the vast majority of learners (up to 75%) never complete compulsory education. The obstacles are manifold and well-known (poverty, distance to schools, conflicts, poor quality of schooling, gender-based violence, etc.).
- ▶ The provision of 'second chance' education for over-aged children¹⁷ and youth falls far short of demand.
- ▶ Due to their interrupted schooling, this target group often does not have access to labour market information and does not know what different occupations are available to them.

Consequences

- ▶ This target group has very limited foundational skills and is therefore deprived of the formal prerequisite to access post-compulsory (completed lower-secondary education and a diploma/certificate).
- ▶ The few that can access alternative training opportunities (e.g. in non-formal on-the-job learning, sometimes also referred to as 'traditional apprenticeships'), are difficult to retain because of limited foundational skills.
- ▶ This target group, due to the limited information available to them, is often unaware of opportunities related to training and education and the traits of different occupations in the market. It is thus common for them to opt for work that promises instant income opportunities, e.g. daily wage work in construction or agriculture.
- ▶ Youth with incomplete primary or lower-secondary education often only have access to low-skilled and often informal and precarious work, associated with risks of child labour, social stigmatisation, severe poverty and ill-health.

Solution

6

"Second chance" education (partially with pre-vocational training)

Learners: 12–17 years old

- ▶ Strengthen the provision of 'second chance' education to allow learners to develop foundational skills and to have the opportunity to transit to VET or general post-secondary education, or post-compulsory education/training, or access decent jobs.
- ▶ *Main characteristics:* (i) Second chance programmes can be very diverse in duration (from one to several years) and in organisation, depending on learners' age and skills gaps; (ii) They either aim: to (re) integrate learners into the formal compulsory school system at primary or lower-secondary level – if they are not overage; or to provide them with equivalent skills (and/or certificates) through alternative (non-formal) pathways; (iii) They often provide 'accelerated education' (contents are condensed to essential basic skills and taught in less time than formal education); (iv) 'Second chance' programmes for out-of-school and drop out youth (aged 12+) often include vocational initiation components. For older youth (aged 15+), VSD components and vocational, education and career guidance can be more substantial (e. g. blended BE and VSD learning; referral to vocational training programmes upon completion).

Possible roles of the SDC in BE and/or VSD (depending on magnitude of the gap in foundational skills)

- ▶ Strengthen the provision of and access to second chance basic education (for children and youth who did not complete compulsory education), blended with vocational components, depending on age-group.
- ▶ Advocate for the formal recognition of second chance provision (equivalent to formal compulsory education) in the policy dialogue, and potentially apply a systemic approach to determine the bottlenecks in the system and define holistic interventions depending on the opportunities offered by the context.
- ▶ Advocate for the integration of second chance opportunities in education policy frameworks.

Examples: PAEFE in Benin, Burkina Faso

¹⁷ Learners who are older than the official school-age range for the educational programme they are enrolled in, as per UNESCO, (2022) glossary, [accessed 19.7.2022]. Overage enrolment is an issue resulting in delayed completion and lower educational outcomes. Overage enrolment is slowly declining globally, but it remains high especially in Sub-Saharan countries (UNESCO (2021), Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2: Non-state actors in education: Who chooses? Who loses? [accessed 18.7.2022]). It might restrict access to formal post-compulsory education and training in some countries that apply age as enrolment criteria.

Challenge

Learners with no compulsory education are often denied access to further training and decent jobs

Situation analysis

- ▶ Learners without or only a few years of compulsory education are often unable to access further education, training and decent jobs.
- ▶ In least developed countries, the majority of youth (age 15+) and adults (especially women, rural and poor populations) are illiterate or have very limited basic (life) skills, as they never had access to school, dropped-out before completion of compulsory education or did not reach sufficient levels of literacy and numeracy and other basic skills.
- ▶ There are scarce opportunities to develop these skills in adulthood.
- ▶ The quality of literacy and numeracy programmes is often weak and poorly connected with VSD, which most often is the main motivation for learners.
- ▶ Learners fail to access, complete or fully benefit from VSD opportunities. This leaves them to highly vulnerable low-skill job prospects, often leading to non-decent working conditions and social exclusion, which bears severe poverty and health risks.

Consequences

- ▶ Vast numbers of youth and adults face considerable obstacles in all areas of their family, social and economic life.
- ▶ Training programmes in all areas (agriculture, environment, governance, health, etc.) face the challenge of dealing with learners who have no or very limited foundational skills.

Solution

7 Programmes combining foundational skills and VSD

Learners: 15+ years and adults

- ▶ VSD programmes – or programmes of other sectors such as agriculture – that integrate basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- ▶ Literacy/numeracy programmes that integrate a VSD component.
- ▶ Pre-VSD basic literacy/numeracy catch-up programmes (e.g. one year before entering a VSD-programme).
- ▶ These programmes can be developed, governed, and financed by different systems (e.g. Ministry of education, VET, labour market or social policy).

Possible roles of the SDC

- ▶ Where the SDC is active in VSD and/or BE or in any other thematic field (e. g. migration, food security, health, etc.) working with illiterate youth and adults:
- ▶ Strengthen an integrated approach that combines basic literacy and numeracy, vocational skills as well as other basic life skills.

Examples: Skills for life Kenya/Kakuma

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