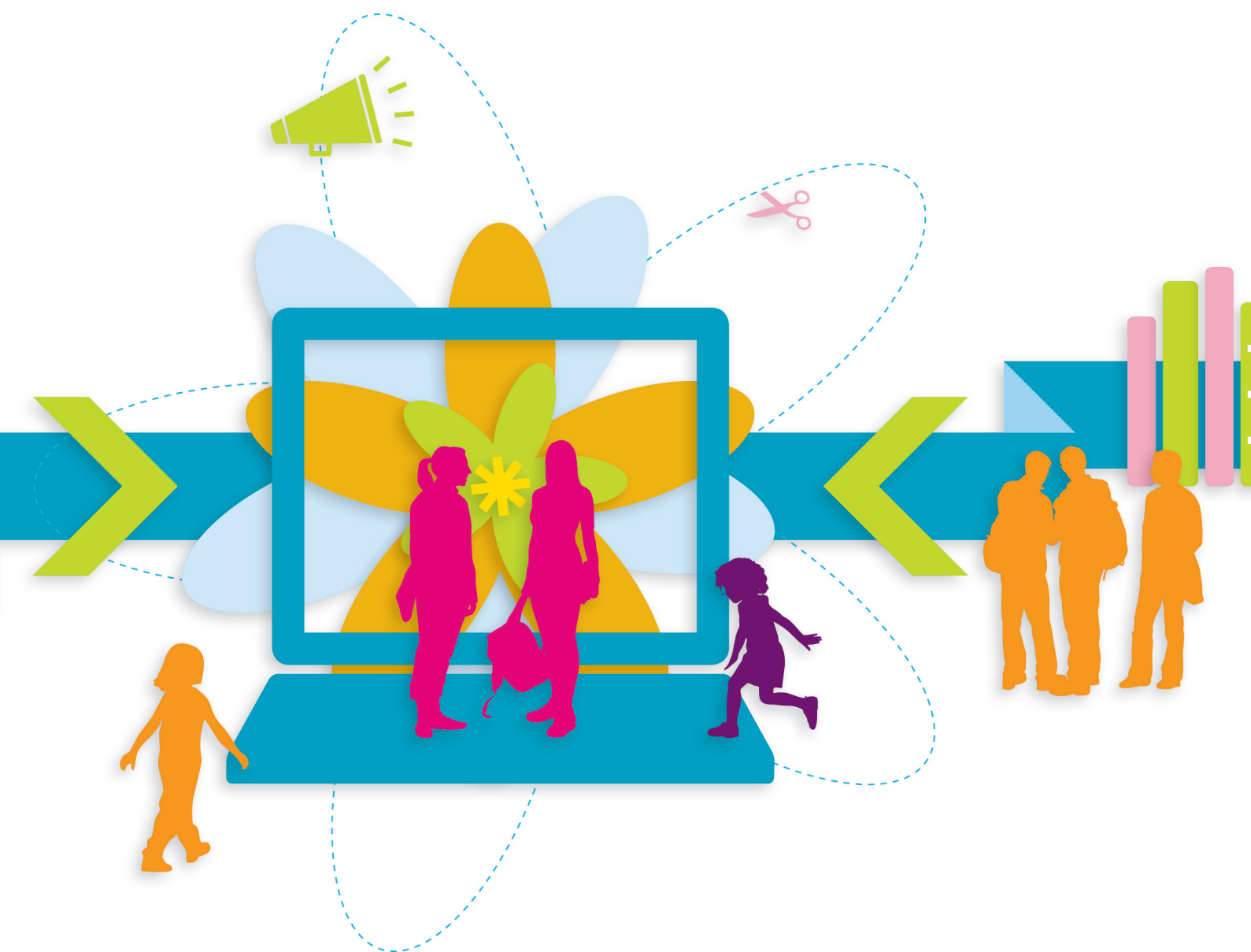# ETF YEARBOOK 2012

EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS AND THE ROLE OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN THEIR REFORMS

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ETF YEARBOOK 2012
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PREFACE

The *ETF Yearbook 2012* continues the tradition of highlighting a thematic field of particular importance to the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF). The theme of this yearbook is **evaluation and monitoring of vocational education and training (VET) systems and the role of evidence-based policy in VET reforms in ETF partner countries**. As always, most chapters are written by ETF staff and provide deeper reflections on the challenging operational work we carry out in the countries. However the 2012 edition is different in two ways.

First I would like to briefly present the tradition of ETF yearbooks and the topic chosen for the 2012 edition.

For those of us who have known the ETF since its start in 1995, we cannot but admire its transformation from a (project) administrative institution to a centre of expertise. This has required a concentrated effort and years of hard work and to some extent this process is still ongoing. The ETF yearbooks have been an important contribution to it. The series of yearbooks was launched in 2003 because it was felt that there was a need for the ETF to capitalise on its knowledge and expertise and to share these among colleagues and with the outside world. Engaging colleagues in a joint publication effort stimulated professional communication and built confidence in our interactions with the outside world. The yearbooks provided an opportunity for many staff members to become more familiar with the current discourse outside the ETF and for the agency as a whole to position itself clearly in the field. In a unique partnership our former colleagues Peter Grootings (1951–2009) and Søren Nielsen, who retired this year, insisted on this expertise work. They developed a range of creative ideas and committed themselves fully to the often very long march from ideas to final drafts and to supporting colleagues in formulating qualified chapters. This has been an important contribution to the transformation of the ETF.

The topic of the *ETF Yearbook 2012* is crucial for the ETF. The theme was chosen in late 2009 to strengthen the ETF knowledge base and our internal professional capacity to carry out the Torino Process in 2010. ETF work is based on what we call 'a triangle' of VET expertise, the EU VET policy framework and country knowledge. This territory is not very well covered by contemporary social and educational research and the ETF therefore has the ambition, and in my opinion also the obligation, to help to develop a better knowledge base for policy facilitation.

From January 2011, the ETF implemented a new organisational structure that aimed to strengthen our knowledge management and expertise development. While the basic unit is still the geographical department responsible for work in our partner countries, two new departments were created to strengthen the expertise base:

- a Thematic Expertise Department which was tasked with developing the ETF's knowledge base in areas of key relevance to partner countries, such as qualification, labour market matching, learning, education governance, entrepreneurship and social inclusion;
- a Department for Evidence-based policy making which would concentrate on developing capacity in the partner countries to assess progress in reforms and to make evidence-informed policy decisions.

This suddenly offered us an opportunity to make the yearbooks far more operational than before. The drafting of chapters could go hand in hand with in-depth reflection on the role and functions of the new 'evidence department' and help to shape a shared identity among its staff who, in the meantime, were developing the Torino Process 2012 and launching capacity building efforts in selected partner countries. Most chapters of the *ETF Yearbook 2012* are therefore written by colleagues from this department.

The second change is that the *ETF Yearbook 2012* has contributions from five external experts. Today, the evidence base covering the (intended or unintended) effects of reforms is relatively weak, although there is an increasing emphasis on documentation of what works, how it works and why it works. We thought that, within this context, it would be useful to consider more closely the distinction between different types of policy research: research *on* education policy and education research *for* policy. The former type of research tends to be ad-hoc, conceptual, backward-looking and critical, whereas the latter tends to be forward-looking and concerned with solutions to practical problems.

Our focus is always oriented towards the solution of problems in specific contexts. We use development activities and action research (understood as knowledge-generation from and through practice) to find solutions to concrete problems that are directly applicable. Knowledge is thus not only produced by (fundamental) research, but also by other institutions. We have asked the external experts contributing to this yearbook to share their views on the linkages between VET research, policy and practice and how the existing gap between research and policy may be bridged.

The *ETF Yearbook 2012* discusses challenges that touch the core of the work of the ETF. Policymakers are increasingly interested in what education delivers and hence, in what education research can tell us about it. The need for such information is even more acute in countries in transition, where donor-financed VET reforms have radically changed

systems. Given the scarce resources for education reform, the importance it holds for national policymakers and the diversity of opinions and approaches within the technical assistance community, the ability to assess what works in VET is critical. As a result, policy analysis and policy research are increasingly prioritised.

The ETF is committed to promoting the capacity of countries to apply evidence-informed methods in the field of VET policy. The participatory Torino Process is currently its main instrument for VET analysis and policy assessment. It is expected to be implemented in partner countries on a bi-annual basis, with the first round carried out in 2010 and the second round in progress at the time of writing.

The Torino Process has documented the vision that policymakers have defined for VET. It has also captured evidence to assess the integration of VET policy into and against broader social and economic development. The Torino Process has mapped the main features of VET systems and used available evidence to assess their internal efficiency and their capacity to meet the needs of the labour markets and social inclusion in the societies they serve. The results of the first round in 2010 confirmed both a shortage and limited use of evidence and limited institutional capacity. However, it also documented a strong commitment by policymakers in partner countries for progress in this type of policy development, as confirmed at the high-level conference in May 2011 and codified in the Torino Declaration 2011.

The next years of the Torino Process will work on this by enhancing long-term capacity and the quality and relevance of policy making. Opportunities will be provided for partner countries to learn together with other stakeholders. The ETF has launched the Torinet platform, a networking partnership between the ETF and its partner countries that is built up around the Torino Process, with the purpose of increasing the capacity in partner countries to carry out objective policy assessment, gradually assuming an international standard across the human capital development spectrum and throughout the policy cycle.

Both initiatives are discussed in depth in this yearbook.

Madlen Serban
Director, ETF

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INTRODUCTION

CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES UNDERPINNING THE ETF'S ANALYTICAL REVIEWS AND POLICY FACILITATION

Søren Nielsen, ETF

SETTING THE SCENE

This introduction presents the core issues, arguments and overall structure of this ETF Yearbook, the theme of which is the ETF Torino Process and the concepts and methodologies that underpin it. The ETF Torino Process is an analytical exercise that informs policy making in vocational education and training (VET) and related policy learning processes in the ETF's partner countries in the Southern Mediterranean, Eastern and South Eastern Europe as well as Central Asia.

In education policy and in international consulting and cooperation, demand is increasing for concepts and tools that aid VET experts, policymakers and advisors to take stock of the state of VET systems. There is even greater need for VET policymakers in ETF partner countries to be able to assess the current state of play in reform and what the next steps should be. For this reason, a sharper focus on analytical concepts and approaches is needed.

The issue of what education and VET systems are supposed to achieve constitutes what has been called a *complex* and *ill-defined* problem[1]. It is common sense that education has an influence on individuals and society but how and to what extent is still very much a matter of substantial debate. There is a demand for research and useable knowledge in education policy making, which is not yet being met as well as it could be. The challenges are even greater in countries in transition or under modernisation. Such changes are substantial – they involve dismantling the old and the emergence of a new social structure. VET and labour market reforms take place within a context of profound transformation where the basic characteristics of a new social order are emerging: private ownership, a market economy, multi-party parliamentary democracy, civil institutions, human freedom and rights.

There is a high demand for methods and instruments that enable VET experts to analyse and evaluate systems, recognise strengths and weaknesses as well as to identify possible areas for system development and to monitor improvement. The over-arching aim of this Yearbook is therefore to take stock of such approaches, methods and instruments and to provide an opportunity for mutual exchange of experience and an in-depth discussion with the partner countries.

STRENGTHENING THE ETF'S KNOWLEDGE BASE

As a centre of expertise for the development of vocational education and training within a lifelong learning perspective, the ETF must always base its work on knowledge of how to carry out complex tasks in countries in transition. The ETF has to work within an expertise triangle of (i) VET and labour market expertise, (ii) radically expanding and innovative EU policies in the field, and (iii) in-depth country knowledge. This is a territory not very well covered by contemporary social and education research, and the ETF therefore has an obligation to develop a better and more consolidated knowledge-base for policy facilitation.

Today, the evidence base on the effects of reforms and whether the effects are intended or unintended is relatively poor, although there is an increasing emphasis on what works, how and why. Within this context, it could be useful to consider more closely the distinction between different types of policy research: research *on* education policy and education research *for* policy. The former tends to be ad-hoc, conceptual, backward looking and critical, while the latter is usually forward looking and concerned with solutions to practical problems. As the ETF's focus is on development and the practical facilitation of VET reform processes, our interest is in developing our knowledge base and is therefore stimulated by the latter research type. The ETF's development activities and action research generate knowledge in and from practice and are governed by finding solutions to concrete problems in specific contexts that are applicable directly. Knowledge is therefore not only produced by (fundamental) science, but is also an output of society's other functional systems.

EVIDENCE AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION

Two major discourses dominate contemporary education research, one is derived from the quest for international comparisons, and the other is 'evidence-based' education. Policymakers are increasingly interested in what

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1   See Simon (1973) for a discussion of complex and ill-defined problems.

education delivers – and hence with what education research can tell us about this. This is even more acutely needed in countries in transition where donor driven VET reforms have radically changed systems. Given the scarce resources for education reform, the public interest in education, the importance it holds for national policymakers and the diversity of opinions and approaches within the technical assistance community, the ability to assess what works in VET is critical. The increased emphasis on making use of policy analysis and structured information from policy research is a result of this need for informed policy making.

Within the EU Member States there is a growing interest in evidence-based policy and practice and an increased activity related to strengthening the knowledge base in education and training. In March 2007, the German Presidency of the Council of the EU organised a major conference on 'Knowledge for Action in Education and Training'. A key message was that practitioners look mostly for empirical evidence and clear and precise answers that can be put into practice. Politicians, on the other hand, seek research results that can be used in politics and decision making. As was emphasised by the then Director of DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, Odile Quintin, referring to Europe's future depending on the right decisions on education and training policies, the creation and diffusion of knowledge is not enough. For evidence in education policy and practice we need to reduce the *application gap* and devise new mechanisms for implementing research findings[2].

This political interest is related to a better configuration of the relationship between research, policy and practice in education and training. This Yearbook questions the simplicity of the research-policy-practice chain. Education policy is influenced by many other factors, not least 'politics'. And actors in VET systems are – as in all human activity – highly influenced by the reflexivity of its many professionals and stakeholders. The Yearbook therefore prefers to use the term 'evidence-informed' policy.

The scope is deliberately broad and will cover quantitative and qualitative methods and will discuss more rigorous empirical methods as well as constructivist approaches. The ambition is to analyse and reflect on a broad range of topics such as (i) VET system analysis; (ii) indicators and benchmarks; and (iii) quantitative and qualitative methods, including peer reviews and mutual learning. In the ETF's field of work, we cannot just concentrate on the scientific research code – 'true-false', but we must also always be very open to the education practice code – 'what works'.

THE TORINO PROCESS AND EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

As became clear at the Torino Process conference held in May 2011, policymakers are increasingly interested in the impact of education reforms – and in what education research might contribute to measuring effect. This is a pressing need in transition countries where market forces as well as donor driven VET and labour market reforms are continuously changing education and employment systems. Making better use of policy analysis and structured, empirical information from policy research is therefore a priority for ETF partner countries. This is a key message from the Torino Declaration of 11 May 2011[3].

The ETF is committed to promoting the capacity of countries to apply evidence-informed methods for the development, monitoring and assessment of policies in VET. Although all ETF activities and projects use evidence-informed policy development as a principle of action, a targeted effort has been made to enhancing this approach through the Torino Process since 2010. This process is a participatory instrument for VET analysis and policy assessment which will be implemented in partner countries on a bi-annual basis. The Torino Process has documented the visions that policymakers have defined for vocational education and training, and captured evidence to assess the integration of VET policy within broader social and economic development. In addition, it has mapped the main features of the VET systems and used available evidence to assess internal efficiency as well as capacity to meet labour market needs and be socially inclusive. The results of the first round in 2010 confirm the shortage and limited use of evidence combined with limited institutional capacity. However, the Torino Process has documented strong commitment from partner countries for progress in this type of policy development.

The ambition is to take this forward by enhancing long-term capacity and the quality and relevance of policy making, and to provide opportunities for partner countries to learn together.

FACILITATING VET REFORM THROUGH POLICY LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Many assistance projects in transition countries funded and undertaken by international donors are characterised by policy transfer or policy copying, based on the assumption that 'best practice' exists, can be relevant in

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2 Symposium 'Knowledge for Action – Research Strategies for an Evidence-based Education Policy', 28–30 March 2007 in Frankfurt/Main, during Germany's EU Presidency.

3 For an analysis of the Torino Declaration, see chapter 2.

other countries and can therefore be taught by and learned from international consultants, including ETF staff, or studied and copied by national policymakers. Practice is considered 'best' when it fits into particular theoretical or ideological constructs, or because it 'works'. Nevertheless, policies based on quick fixes, or on transfer or copying best practice have generally resulted in unsustainable policy proposals, which often did not fit the context or induce ownership among key stakeholders. As a result, the implementation of new policies has too seldom achieved the desired results.

Policy learning can be defined as the ability to inform policy development by drawing lessons from available evidence and experience. Effective policy learning should aim for a deeper understanding of policy problems and processes than what is provided by a simple search for 'best practice'. Policy learning involves using comparisons to better understand a country's current policy challenges and possible solutions, by observing similarities and differences across different national settings. Peer policy learning therefore appears to be a more effective way for governments to inform policy by drawing lessons from available evidence and experience. Recent work (ETF yearbooks 2004–08) suggests that policy learning – as distinct from policy borrowing and copying – encourages situated problem solving and reflection. The dilemma has been eloquently described by Ben Levin (1998): 'We cannot afford the unthinking copying from elsewhere of education policies dimly understood. Nor can we afford a situation in which many jurisdictions are doing similar things while failing to learn from each other.' New policies need to be strategically linked to goals and outcomes for national education systems and must be firmly related to concrete national policy priorities as well as anchored up in specific country institutional contexts. The identification of national 'anchors' for evidence-informed policy making is therefore a priority in ETF partner countries.

In the 'Torinet' project the operationalisation of the policy learning concept will include developing the ability to: (i) learn from past national experience; (ii) learn from other countries; and (iii) learn from local innovation projects. This learning platform has therefore been designed around country-led 'policy learning' approaches[4], whereby countries develop a capacity to continuously learn from reform initiatives. Policymakers are not only policy learners, they also have to act; and acting on the political scene, especially in environments that are undergoing radical change such as in transition countries, means that key actors do not have a lot of space and time for careful and gradual learning. High-level policymakers in partner countries have to engage in daily political decision making and, depending on their position in the system, active engagement often takes priority. This project will provide opportunities in terms of time and space to share experience and reflect on how to improve policy making in their countries.

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS YEARBOOK

The Yearbook will place a key focus on the Torino Process review strategy and analyse and assess the overall approach, the methodology and main findings from the exercise carried out in 2010.

What can be learned from this huge activity and how can we come closer to country ownership of the tools and instruments developed and how can the social learning processes be improved?

VET sector assessments are not new to the ETF and the Yearbook will synthesize the wisdom gained from the many years of undertaking policy reviews by the ETF and other organisations. It will incorporate reflections on the various evaluation exercises. A fundamental question is whether VET systems can best be understood though empirical evidence or if they will require more refined conceptual frameworks capturing the specific logic of different systems.

How do we understand VET systems? What can be derived from other approaches in this field undertaken before the evidence 'movement' and to which extent can traditional 'building block' system analysis and hermeneutic approaches inform VET system and policy reviews?

Interest in strengthening the impact of education research has been growing around the world, among governments and practitioners as well as scholars. In many countries and internationally, governments and researchers have been looking for ways in which research in education can have a greater impact on education policy and practice. However, in education, beliefs, ideological values and sensitivity to voters often drive political action more than facts do. While research is of growing importance, it is seldom the final arbiter of political decisions. Politics is much too complicated and contentious for that to happen (Levin, 2009, p. 53). The particular contribution of researchers seems to be to bring evidence and careful thinking to the unavoidably messy process of public policy learning.

How do we facilitate a better use of available, robust knowledge in policy making in transition countries? How do we build capacity and identify institutional 'anchors' through which evidence-informed knowledge can be accumulated, consolidated and brokered?

The Torino Process documented weaknesses in almost all countries concerning the availability of data, methodologies for capturing data and indicators for policy achievement. And in all countries there is an application gap and a need to find new mechanisms for implementing research findings by policymakers and VET officers. There is a high demand for methods and instruments that can help VET experts to take stock of the

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4 The policy learning approach was formally endorsed by the ETF Advisory Forum at a conference in 2003 and reinforced by the Advisory Forum conference in 2006. See formal statements on www.etf.europa.eu.

state of the VET system to enable them to recommend appropriate measures to policymakers.

Which methods, instruments, tools and indicators should be used for monitoring and evaluating VET system development? How can improved data capturing and interpretation ensure more solid knowledge? How can we develop instruments which can establish measurable policy indicators to assess VET policy development?

For ETF partner countries (just as EU countries) it is a challenge to attempt to (re)balance the links between research, policy making and practice. The need for policymakers to have increased access to precise evidence before, during and after education reform interventions is much stronger because reforms fundamentally transform whole societies while often providing insufficient – if any – evidence that they actually work. Transition countries need to be equipped with the capacity to be able to monitor, assess and measure the impact of foreign donor reforms and to gauge whether new 'transplants' fit into national contexts.

How can we strike a better balance between available but under-used knowledge, facilitation of policy development and measurable, effective indicators in ongoing VET reforms in the countries? Could the ETF sharpen its focus by becoming a clearing house for knowledge on 'what works' in policy changes within the expertise triangle of VET, EU policies and country knowledge?

This Yearbook analyses and discusses these questions. The ETF aims to facilitate capacity building for evidence-informed policy making in partner countries through an approach based on policy learning whereby countries are helped to help themselves.

How can the quest for evidence be embedded in the ETF policy learning strategy?

The argument does not claim to present a 'holy grail' for VET system reviews, which does not exist. Instead we want to discuss the concrete ETF approach in a broader perspective. These broader perspectives are presented by external experts in chapters 11 to 17.

THE CONTENTS

Chapter 1 sets out the main principles of the Torino Process and its key role in evidence-informed planning of VET activities in partner countries. It presents the unique features of the Torino Process's analytical framework and specifies its conceptual foundation – approach, methodology and research techniques. This approach is different from other analytical frameworks because its departure point is national visions for VET (values, priorities and preferences) rather than externally set criteria as in comparative research. The Torino Process is linked to other relevant EU review and learning processes (in VET the Bruges-Copenhagen Process), and the ETF relates the analyses to those carried out by the European

Commission (DG Education and Culture, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). It is designed as an ETF 'brand' that denotes a certain standard approach to the design and structure of country VET reviews. Examples of findings of the country reviews and how these have led to concrete and robust policy recommendations are discussed. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach? What has been learnt from the first round and how does this influence the ongoing preparations for the next round of the Torino Process in 2012?

Chapter 2 concentrates on the 2011 Torino Conference. The chapter presents the Torino Declaration of 11 May 2011 and discusses the key messages from the conference by analysing the response of policymakers and stakeholders to the evidence-based policy making approach. The chapter interprets the declaration, discusses the long lines of ETF strategy development and presents solid guidelines for future ETF work from participants' statements. It also reflects on how to perceive joint social learning activities such as big conferences as a basis for producing evidence and which methods and tools can be employed to include and capture qualitative elements in the evidence concept. Finally, the chapter extracts the implications of the Torino Process findings and recommendations as important pipelines which may channel substantial evidence-informed knowledge into the formulation of the ETF Work Programmes.

Chapter 3 develops the concept behind Torinet, exploring how the network of institutions involved in the Torino Process reinforce policy making in the partner countries. Torinet was inspired by previous ETF experience with national observatories and by the need to enhance ownership and reform sustainability flagged up during the first round of the Torino Process in 2010. Torinet is based both on developing a network of institutions with roles and responsibilities across the policy cycle (from analysis to evaluation) and on practicing social dialogue in human capital development at different decision making levels. Overall, the initiative aims at creating more democratic, efficient and effective governance systems in partner countries to steer VET policies. The chapter outlines how Torinet has been the inspired by approaches to EU governance, and in particular the Open Method of Coordination. Torinet emphasises the important relationship between social partnership and governance, and the advantages of ensuring that national networks are able to practice social learning and build capacity through policy experiences, projects and action research in the country, and from the international context. This relationship is then illustrated by a policy learning case from Romania in which national, regional and local networks of institutions, including social partners, were set up as learning platforms as well as governance structures for the VET system.

Going from the process of policy analysis to policy facilitation requires a lot of capacity building. **Chapter 4** analyses the reasons why we need to move from project to policy support through policy learning and how the ETF can shift from policy analysis to policy facilitation. The chapter presents collaborative processes and discourses which may enable policymakers in partner countries to

promote a modern VET system that contributes to social and economic development. A key discussion is about how the ETF can help to create knowledge and promote the use of knowledge in policy making in partner countries, and how such processes can be mediated while at the same time enhancing ownership. The governance systems of knowledge creation, dissemination and use in policy processes as well as broader issues related to knowledge management are analysed. The chapter outlines how the ETF can function as a broker and facilitator of policy learning processes, with an emphasis on examples of policy learning in action. The chapter sums up how the ETF as a facilitator of knowledge creation, application and mediation processes in partner countries will require new methods for its capacity building efforts.

Chapter 5 focuses on how to go from analytical reporting to understanding and shaping VET systems. It states that it would be wrong to rely exclusively on refined analytical frameworks or tools derived from system analysis, as the evaluators' broad understanding of the essential components of VET, of the relationships between them and with their environment is an important starting point. A broader evidence base – or knowledge base – is needed to be able to formulate meaningful policy proposals. This implies a deeper understanding of the policy problems and processes in question, of why the system ticks as it ticks or why certain actors behave as they behave, of the fundamental logic as well as change levers of a given VET system. New policies need to be linked to locally defined goals and must be firmly embedded in the institutions and routines of a given country. This contrasts with the view that policies could simply be borrowed or copied from elsewhere and that external consultants just need to build the capacities of local actors to 'embrace' such imported policies. Instead, the Torino Process explicitly encourages not only participation in a process pre-defined by the ETF, but a collaborative learning effort involving both local and international peers. Such a joint learning journey requires ownership, leadership, a longer time horizon and considerable resources, which are however not yet guaranteed in all countries.

Chapter 6 asks the question: how should we understand VET as a system? What is 'a system'? What is a VET system and how can it be delineated? VET system inputs (demands and support) and outputs (qualifications) operating within a certain system environment (the social system). What do we understand by a systemic approach to VET monitoring and evaluation? How should the importance of different VET system ´logics´ be taken on board? What are possible strategic levers for change? The chapter discusses and juxtaposes a traditional 'building block' approach and more dynamic system models with feedback mechanisms. The core concept of 'autopoiesis' is seen as the structuring principle around VET system analysis. The chapter highlights the importance of the demand side for changing VET systems and the role of the social partners in mediating and channelling these demands into the system. Through analyses of reform efforts in a number of ETF partner countries, the chapter draws lessons in terms of action, time requirements and capacity building for more targeted interventions in future.

Evidence and evidence-informed policy making in education must always be understood in the context of the realities of politics, values and ideologies. In **chapter 7** the authors trace the origins of where this discourse on 'evidence' comes from and how the concept came into education. Issues under discussion include what is meant by evidence and evidence-based vs evidence-informed policy making? Should we perceive education as a field of science like medicine or physics (which are evidence-based) or as a humanistic research field – even with an affinity to art? The chapter discusses the dilemma for our analyses that education and training reforms do not take place in a scientific laboratory. In education and training 'reflexivity' plays an important role: what people think about reforms, i.e. opinions and meanings, influences their shape, and their success or failure, even if their design was informed by 'empirical evidence'. Thus, for successful VET policies it seems clear that opinions, contexts and politics matter, because actors are reflexive individuals. The chapter includes an in-depth case study of Kosovo[5]. It concludes that in VET assessments we must use broader knowledge forms than what is delivered by the scientific research code: 'true-false'.

The production, analysis, dissemination and probable use of evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, cannot be seen as an automatic mechanism or a social function which 'just' happens. **Chapter 8** argues that these are complex tasks that need firm 'institutional homes' and firmly established practices in order to have any systematic impact on VET reform. Capacity building requires national 'anchors', and VET agencies/centres are identified as having a key role in ensuring the links between policy, research and practice. The chapter develops guidelines for how VET centres can act as intermediaries with potential for the creation, dissemination and use of evidence-informed knowledge. The governance arrangements required to establish such 'anchors' are analysed, and the instruments that can contribute to better evidence-informed policies are spelled out.

Chapter 9 focuses on data, benchmarks and policy indicators as tools for international comparisons and for advising national policymakers. The chapter discusses the different levels of evaluations in VET: systems, methodologies and instruments, and data. It argues in favour of qualitative as well as quantitative data, including peer reviews and mutual learning. Building on the analysis and findings from a new ETF study that points to a lack of data and indicators to inform VET and labour market policies in the ETF partner countries, the chapter discusses how research may better contribute to ensuring evidence-based results. It highlights the problems identified during the Torino Process and provides guidelines for overcoming shortages of information in the 2012 round. It highlights the need for a methodology for concrete measurements of policy development and presents a model for carrying out such qualitative analyses.

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5   So-called without prejudice to position on status, and in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence, hereafter 'Kosovo'.

Chapter 10 discusses the challenges of knowledge management and outlines a potential role for the ETF as a clearing house for knowledge. The chapter sets out by discussing the conundrum that in many VET fields we know plenty but we do not make use of these 'known knowns'. It asks a number of important questions. How can we strike a better balance between available but under-used knowledge, the facilitation of policy development and monitoring and measuring effective change in ongoing VET reforms in the countries? What role could a sharpened knowledge management system have to provide policymakers with up-to-date evidence-based information? Could the ETF focus more on becoming a clearing house or brokerage institution for knowledge on 'what works' in policy changes within the expertise triangle of VET, EU policies and country knowledge? And how could such a facility become pivotal in an on-going exchange with partner country institutions? The chapter introduces the idea of embedding such a brokerage function either through establishing a network of 'national observatories' or through an electronic community of practice.

While on an internship at the ETF from the Ministry of Education and Science in Belgrade from April to July 2011, Danijela Scepanovic began to reflect on how the ETF could get closer to its constituents in partner countries. In **chapter 11** she analyses the potential of web 2.0 tools to help develop policy in VET. Against a backdrop of the huge policy learning needs in partner countries, she presents a number of concrete examples of how the ETF Torinet project could capitalise on ICT in new and powerful ways. The challenge for the ETF is to further explore the possibilities of technology to help facilitate policy learning, develop the necessary in-house expertise, and get much closer to national policymakers and practitioners in transition countries.

Chapter 12 reflects on the concept and practice of accountability and how institutional performance can be measured by presenting how these functions are performed at the ETF. The chapter explains how institutions in different settings can combine the quest for autonomy with the social demand for 'value for money' by making use of instruments to ensure quality and accountability. The chapter broadly analyses acountability principles developed under the dominating paradigm of New Public Management and how these principles are used for governance purposes by setting centrally determined objects and defined frameworks for modern institutions. The main section describes and assesses how the ETF has defined its own approach to developing a battery of instruments to monitor its institutional performance and how these inform the overall management. The chapter points out how the strengthened external demand for documentation on the ETF's added value and impact can be linked to the Torino Process cycle, as this process establishes both baseline information through national reviews and informs the ETF Work Programmes as well as enabling the measurement of indicators.

Chapter 13 presents an external perspective on methods and instruments which can be used to evaluate VET systems. The chapter, written by Philipp Grollmann and Birgit Thorman from the Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB) in Bonn, takes as its point of departure the international conference on VET evaluation methodologies and tools organised in Königswinter in December 2009 and extracts lessons from papers presented at this event. The paper reflects on two overarching trends in contemporary VET policy: the increasing demand for instruments that can help policymakers and practitioners and the rising expectations about the quality of such instruments. A discussion on the potential applicability of approaches forms the core of the chapter. The chapter also discusses the importance of interpretive frameworks and the potential role of hermeneutic approaches (*Verstehen*) when trying to assess VET reforms. Finally, the chapter argues that organisations and centres of expertise, like BIBB and the ETF, could take a stronger role in further systematising of available knowledge in the field.

Chapter 14, written by Romanian university professor Cesar Bîrzea, analyses the concept of 'evidence' in education and training by presenting different levels of methods available for evidence-based policy making. It argues for a pragmatic use of the notion to make the methodology useful and fit for purpose in developing policy and practice in vocational education and training. The chapter suggests a pragmatic understanding of the notion and lists a whole range of methods at different levels which can be perceived as creating evidence-based knowledge. The chapter outlines why evidence-based approaches are important to fully understand where a country is in terms of VET reform at a given time, and how the approach may be successfully employed by the ETF in its partner countries.

The 'VET and Culture Research Network' conference, organised at the ETF in August–September 2011, was the first attempt to discuss how the ETF could capitalise on support from established VET researcher communities to provide evidence with a view to improving the facilitation of VET reform policies in partner countries. **Chapter 15**, written by Professor Philipp Gonon from Zürich University, is based on the transactions of the conference. An important aspect discussed is the debate on the functions and use of policy oriented education research. The distinctive nature and purpose of the policy community on the one hand, and the academic research community on the other, and therefore the tension between the two must be recognised. The chapter presents three concrete research papers discussed at the conference and concludes that neither 'advocacy research' as often conducted for policy purposes, nor practical hints for practitioners in implementing VET programmes are at the core of the network. The conference was a first and successful attempt to bridge this gap.

In **chapter 16** Professor Jens Rasmussen from the Danish School of Education at Aarhus University, discusses evidence-based policy making through an analysis of different forms of knowledge production. Today, the evidence base of the effects of reforms and whether the effects are intended or unintended is relatively poor, although there is an increasing emphasis on documentation of what works, how and why. It is

useful to consider the distinction between different types of policy research more closely: research *of* education policy and education research *for* policy. Development activities and action research at the ETF always seek solutions to concrete problems and aim to be directly applicable. Knowledge is thus broader than what is produced by (fundamental) science, it is also an output of society's other systems, which embody a knowledge-production of their own. The ETF needs to have stronger links with both types of knowledge producers in the coming years. The chapter discusses how both types of knowledge production are equally important and why they need each other.

In **chapter 17** Anis Zakhary, Director of the Federation of Construction in Egypt, presents the overall justifications for applying evidence-based approaches to knowledge creation as a basis for VET policy development and implementation in education and training. The issues of evidence-based policy making are discussed from the perspective of the needs of an important ETF partner country – Egypt. The reasons why evidence-based practice is so difficult to make use of in developing countries with weaknesses in policy making, governance and research platforms are analysed and possible ways to overcome these obstacles are discussed.

The **concluding chapter** extracts the main messages from the chapters above and formulates recommendations for the ETF's analytical reviews and policy support processes in VET. It summarises concepts, objectives, outcomes and approaches. It places the debate within the different country contexts for VET and outlines a few issues and challenges that characterise the different geo-political regions or countries with which the ETF works. This is linked to the impossibility to 'just embrace policy messages from the EU' or transfer policies or models from other countries. The chapter concludes that there is no holy grail in terms of conceptualisation or methodology related to VET policy evaluation. The engineer's toolbox is of limited use. Thus, the best remedy seems to be the evaluator's broad understanding of the essential components of VET systems, of the relationships between them, of the fundamental logic between the system and its environment and of change levers. However, VET reviews require consolidated analytical tools. The Torino Process review methodology has provided a substantial study that provides guidelines on carrying out VET system assessments. The Torino Process methodology has developed a policy consensus building structure which is undoubtedly more valuable than the toolbox.

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1. THE TORINO PROCESS: CONCEPTS, APPROACH, METHODOLOGIES AND FINDINGS

Marie Dorléans, ETF

INTRODUCTION

Torino – a former royal city, the cradle of Italian liberty, the automobile capital of Italy, her feet in the waters of the river Po, her head in the Italian Alps… and the Mole Antonelliana watching over it all.

Just like the city it took its name from, the beauty of the Torino Process lies in its complexity. Indeed, the ETF's ambitious reviews of vocational education and training (VET) systems and policies in 30 partner countries endeavours to strike a subtle balance between multiple objectives and guiding principles.

Following up on the lessons learned in the first round of reviews conducted under the Torino Process in 2010, this Yearbook offers a great opportunity to look back at the process followed and the results obtained, and to propose improvements for the 2012 second round. The first round yielded important findings on policies and systems that are worth sharing on these pages as a source of inspiration for re-thinking, (re)structuring or professionalising public policies in the field of VET and employment.

This chapter will present the principles behind the design of the Torino Process and its broad methodological approach. It will discuss some challenges for coping with 'system' and 'policy' analysis in VET. Key findings from the 2010 review process pertaining to strengths and weaknesses in VET systems will be highlighted. A concluding section will list achievements and barriers identified in 2010 and outline the way forward for 2012.

A SUBTLE BALANCE BETWEEN POLICY ANALYSIS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Inspired by the Bruges-Copenhagen Process, and drawing on the Open Method of Coordination, the Torino Process is a periodic, participatory analysis of VET systems and policy progress that follows an ETF-designed methodology. It aims to provide a concise, documented assessment of VET reform in each partner country that can serve the information and knowledge needs of three different audiences: the countries themselves, the ETF and the European Commission.

The analytical framework of the Torino Process identifies thematic areas for review and the main policy issues that must be documented in order to assess the VET system and policy progress. The national vision on VET is taken as a starting point for reviewing its performance against the underlying objectives or values, combining internal and external efficiency perspectives, and economic and social dimensions. Each analysis is closed with an assessment of the contribution of VET to broader innovation and development goals.

Capacity building

The Torino Process is designed to maximise the involvement of national stakeholders. As such, it is not a classical review of VET systems and policies that may be outsourced to consultants and possibly shelved after its completion for lack of ownership. It is a collective, analytical exercise. The degree of participation may vary from one country to another, but it always assumes an empowerment of national stakeholders. This added dimension of capacity building in policy analysis sets it apart from other review methods.

Through the Torino Process, countries can learn from other reform initiatives. Once the national reviews are completed, discussed and endorsed, the ETF organises exchanges among countries to enable them to discuss the features, choices, strengths and challenges of their VET policies with others. This is an integral part of the process' capacity building element.

The more a partner country commits to the exercise and mobilises a team to do the work, the more national capacities are developed or reinforced. At the same time, the ETF accepts the rules of its own game: while providing the analytical framework and technical advice on how to analyse the evidence, the ETF yields control over the full content of the final product, as it no longer produces the final analysis. The ETF plays the role of the peer reviewer and as such remains an important part of the quality assessment chain. But it cannot play this role in a very strict manner as it could have for an internal writing task. This is deliberate and important: political and even diplomatic considerations are at stake – we cannot promote ownership for capacity building, and at the same time, specify the exact parameters for analysis and writing. This emphasis on capacity building may have had some consequences for the quality of the first policy analyses

that were carried out as part of a learning process, but the assumption is that over time both aspects will be satisfied equally: skillful analysis will be performed by country teams following the ETF methodological framework.

All of this requires active shepherding by ETF country managers and their teams who need to spot and compensate for possible weak aspects of the reviews. In those countries where the 2010 Torino Process provided a robust analysis but little ownership, such as in Azerbaijan, efforts in 2012 will be made to reinforce the participatory approach and engage more stakeholders from the beginning. Conversely, in those countries where a broad and perhaps unprecedented range of actors engaged in the 2010 exercise, such as in Tunisia, the country team may need assistance to reinforce the evidence base.

OWNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, EVIDENCE, AND A HOLISTIC APPROACH

To strike the balance between policy analysis and capacity building objectives, four principles have been defined to guide the work of the Torino Process.

Holistic approach

The nature of VET is unique. It is placed at the crossroads between education and employment. It also aims to satisfy very diverse aims that are linked to economic development and competitiveness, employability, social inclusion and social cohesion in a sustainable development perspective.

The Torino Process has adopted a holistic approach to reflect the need for VET to respond to a broad array of demands. It aims to assess the internal and external efficiency of vocational education and training systems against economic and social challenges by reviewing governance, quality, financing, entrepreneurship and innovation issues. Its methodology is based on a standardised analytical framework, divided into five main complementary building blocks. Within this comprehensive, structured framework, all types of training-related measures and policies can be analysed. This implies that the Torino Process covers not only training within the formal VET system and training components of active labour market policies, but also informal or non-formal training, including the private provision of education and training.

Evidence

To ensure the robustness and soundness of the analyses coming out of the Torino Process a wide range of information and data are gathered from different sources, both within the country and from international sources. These information types and sources are highly diverse and provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence in the form of statistical data and indicators, examples of

good practice, qualitative assessments, existing national and international studies, reports from different stakeholders and the results of focus group meetings. For example, in order to document the assessment of governance in the system, a mix of regulatory texts is used. These can cover anything from the missions and mandates of the different institutions involved to the roles and responsibilities of vocational schools. These texts can be held against an analysis of system financing, which may provide indications on the level of effective decentralisation for instance. Or they may be held against organisational documents that explain the involvement of social partners, corruption or transparency indicators, in-depth interviews and qualitative surveys. All of this evidence can help to build a reliable picture of the state of the art in governance in a particular country.

Ownership

In the above example of governance assessment, the likelihood that proposed improvement measures will be implemented following the assessment will be higher if the authorities have been closely involved in the entire process, have recognised the sources of evidence as valid, and thus feel part of the analysis made. The same applies to other stakeholders. For this reason, the Torino Process has made ownership one of its guiding principles and has allowed space for different modalities that can ensure this ownership.

The most complete of these modalities is called 'guided self-assessment', whereby the government takes leadership of the whole exercise while the ETF's role is essentially limited to supporting the analytical activities technically and methodologically. It operates as a peer reviewer, facilitator and broker of knowledge. Seven countries followed this model in 2010.

Other implementation modalities are possible if institutional or human capacities are not easily mobilised, if awareness of the value of the exercise still lacks, or if some constraints, such as access to evidence or broad participation, put the quality of the process in jeopardy.

Whatever model is chosen by the partner country, the minimum common denominator is to make sure that the outcome of the analysis is broadly discussed, reviewed and validated by the national stakeholders, for example through a national seminar. It is the weight on this minimum common denominator that sets the Torino Process apart from other studies or evaluations.

Participation

Inspired by the Open Method of Coordination, the Torino Process is implemented on the basis of broad participation by and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders – policymakers, social partners, practitioners and researchers from the public and private sectors, civic society, communities – who are involved at different stages of the process in collecting data, discussing the findings of the review exercise and formulating recommendations.

A DYNAMIC APPROACH: FROM SYSTEMS TO POLICIES

Like snapshots, the 2010 results of the Torino Process revealed the key features of current VET systems in the countries under review. From these, the steering team at the ETF drew up a cross-country comparative analysis of the main trends in the countries involved. This panoramic picture was presented at an international conference in Turin in May 2011 (see chapter 2).

This first overview allowed for an assessment of different national VET systems against a common set of simple indicators. Because of the analytical framework used, it also allowed these VET systems to be held against a number of composite parameters, such as vision, economic external and social efficiency and internal efficiency and governance. These capture the complexity of VET systems in areas covered, stakeholders engaged and development aims targeted. This is an important and unique characteristic of the Torino Process. Comprehensive assessment exercises of entire VET systems are generally lacking in most of the partner countries.

The reviews developed through the Torino Process use statistical data from the past ten years. As such there is a retrospective element which, combined with the repetitive nature of the process, renders a storyline of relationships between policy measures taken and the evolution of the system. The process also helps to create an institutional memory of policy measures. This is the first step towards true policy learning. Change measures are documented in a systematic way, analysed and related to other measures. The rationale for their adoption can be further explained, and the evaluation of their impact can, over time, form a feedback loop for new policies. This gives unprecedented depth to the analyses, as they are no longer based on raw data, but also on decisions made in the policy process, the change conduct and the lessons learned from past experience.

This double interest in the performance of the systems and the efficiency of the policies is another distinctive feature that sets the Torino Process apart from other exercises.

IMPORTANT FINDINGS FOR POLICYMAKERS' CONSIDERATION

The cross-country analysis of the Torino Process reports has enabled the ETF to compare the situation in partner countries to success factors that are commonly associated with effective VET policies and systems. The result is the following set of key messages. They are intended to serve as inspiration for partner country policymakers as they drive their reform agendas forward.

Context

- Like many other countries in the world, the ETF partner countries are experiencing a changing economic and social context, largely brought on by effects of globalisation, including rapid technological change, economic interdependence, a move towards free market economies, international migration movements, increasing calls for public accountability and aspirations for active citizenship.
- More than ever before, VET systems are expected to fulfil a dual role in supporting sustainable development. Their economic role is to support growth and competitiveness by providing relevant and high-quality skills. Their social role is to contribute to inclusive societies by educating young people and enabling adults to gain additional skills, and by providing them with the key competences and values needed to ensure their employability and active citizenship.
- Many partner countries look at VET as a key vehicle for economic competitiveness and, to a lesser extent, for social cohesion. Combining formal, informal and non-formal education and training, articulating initial and continuing VET at all levels, providing training opportunities for skills development, and targeting unemployed people and other vulnerable groups still do not receive as much attention as labour force development. A comprehensive and integrated vision that looks at VET from a lifelong learning perspective calls for changes in institutional settings and for more flexibility in the provision of education and training.
- VET policies are supposed to be designed in relation to other policies. In practice, in the partner countries they rarely are. In order to ensure the maximum impact of VET policies, better inter-policy consistency and synergy is necessary in three directions: socio-economic, educational and learner-oriented. This consistency and synergy is still flawed in most countries.
- In the socio-economic direction, VET policies are insufficiently linked to economic and industrial development policies, and are supposed to address skills' needs. Economic policies need to foster job creation so that VET efforts aimed at enhancing employability can be rewarded in a fair way. In the educational sphere, synergy with general and higher education policies should offer a permeable education and training system which approaches all citizens coherently from a pedagogical point of view. The system also needs to abandon the classic view of pupils as children and students as young people and instead embrace lifelong learning as the modern education paradigm. Finally, VET policies need to be learner-oriented, encompass the formal and informal provision of training and promote greater recognition and portability of skills and competences built up over a lifetime.
- Multi-level and inclusive governance is a key condition for successfully putting visions into practice. It should apply to all stages of the policy cycle: from formulation to implementation, system management and evaluation, and from central to school level including

the sectoral dimension. Social partnership and cooperation with industry and commerce are becoming increasingly recognised as effective tools for this, although they are often hampered by overly centralised government or a lack of capacity among social partners to contribute effectively to the policy cycle.
■ Reviewing governance schemes can help to increase the relevance and quality of the system and improve public accountability. However, this reviewing process needs to be supported by thorough institutional capacity-building efforts targeted at social partners and civil society.

External efficiency

■ External efficiency reflects how well a VET system is tuned to its surrounding environment. The issue of external efficiency in relation to labour market development is moving up national policy agendas. However, improvements in this area are hampered by a dearth of information about (and attention to) present and future needs, mainly because the tools are lacking that can generate the relevant information needed to match skills and job offers. The active involvement of social partners is critical to the success of this process.
■ External efficiency also reflects how well education responds to the social demand for education. In VET in many partner countries this varies. It is often hampered by the lack of attractiveness of VET, but this is typically a result of poor job prospects, the absence of pathways to continue education after VET and unequal access opportunities. Developments in post-secondary and tertiary VET are promising ways of increasing youth employability and increasing the attractiveness of initial VET. Continuing VET, including adult learning, still requires a genuinely systematic strategy, and this is especially urgent in countries with ageing populations. Such strategies should build on an accurate diagnosis of what makes people want to learn.
■ The external efficiency of VET systems regarding socially challenged groups is an emerging policy priority. Outreach strategies are currently embryonic or are being dealt with in an ad-hoc manner, as is the case with the training component in most active labour market policies.

Internal efficiency, quality and financing

■ Quality in education needs to be addressed in a systematic, holistic way. Although quality assurance mechanisms are being developed, they are not truly operational at all levels. As the pivotal element in learning processes, teachers deserve a dedicated, comprehensive policy approach covering issues such as status, wages, career planning and continuing professional development. Qualification systems and frameworks are shifting curriculum development in a promising way towards competence-based approaches that address labour market skills needs.

The issue of key competences and 'soft' skills as a means of achieving the social objectives of VET, however, needs further consideration.
■ VET financing deserves proper attention which should be shared among the various ministries involved. To address all stakeholders, adequate funding schemes should be established. These should include incentives for private training providers to offer requested curricula and incentives for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage in human resources development strategies.

Innovation and creativity

■ Policymakers are increasingly concerned with the innovation potential of VET policies. Inspired by global economic and technological developments and by EU initiatives such as the Small Business Act, policymakers are paying greater attention to measuring innovation capacity and to introducing entrepreneurial learning as a key competence, but this effort needs to be sustained.

Policy cycle management

■ The monitoring and evaluation of VET policies requires targeted efforts to improve the collection, use and dissemination of data. This can be supported by sustaining the contribution of the Torino Process to the development of evidence-based approaches and tools. Effort must be made to design tools for collecting, using and disseminating evidence, for imposing reporting and review processes and for building technical capacity among stakeholders, not only for public accountability purposes but also to build on experience and take full advantage of a policy learning approach.

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE VET POLICY CYCLE MANAGEMENT

As we can see, the challenges of VET policies and systems are complex. The policy cycle must therefore be managed in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. There is no single blueprint for how this should be done and different options must always be considered. In general, however, effective policy cycle management seems to benefit from:

■ a high-quality policy debate involving all relevant stakeholders and based on evidence;
■ a policy learning approach based on exchanges with other countries in the region and beyond;
■ a policy management approach building on consistency between political and technical considerations and transparent and open governance schemes, backed by adequate budgeting and allocating financial resources as well as institutional capacity, and by regular reporting and evaluation.

Despite the differences in approach from country to country, the Torino Process reports show convergence towards the following challenges for the effectiveness of VET policy management.

FROM VISION AND POLICY FORMULATION TO IMPLEMENTATION: THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY CHALLENGE

The institutional setting is a crucial element in the implementation of reforms. The role of non-governmental stakeholders – social partners, school authorities, trainers, students, parents, civil society and influential change agents – is slowly gaining importance in VET reforms. This is positive, but their influence still seems to be considerably greater locally and in sectors than nationally.

Above all else, institutional capacity is related to leadership. The unequivocal and recognised leadership of one ministry is a huge help in ensuring the overall consistency and progress of reforms. But this leadership can be a politically sensitive issue. Many countries have therefore opted to set up independent VET authorities or bodies which are entrusted with various functions and roles: from the simple provision of policy orientation to quality assurance for the overall system. While these independent authorities do not remove all governance problems, the Torino Process reviews report positively on their functioning.

Institutional capacity is also a matter of participation: VET policy concerns both the labour market and education. Therefore social partners must be consulted and involved. In most contexts, especially in Central Asia and the Mediterranean, such involvement is still sporadic and needs to be institutionalised.

IMPLEMENTING VET POLICIES: FINDING SPACE AND TIME FOR VET

VET policy reforms should be part of broader reform frameworks. This is not always the case, which impedes implementation and impact. Too often, VET reform is designed with little reference to other ongoing reforms, in particular those relating to economic and social policies, education policies, decentralisation, and budget modernisation. There is a need for consistency and harmonisation. It is also recognised that for many reasons sector-wide approaches generally contribute to the success of policy reforms.

Such integration in a broader framework is not so easily applied in VET. Its range of stakeholders is broad and its aims in both the economic and social spheres are

manifold. Efforts should therefore be made to develop a holistic, integrated vision for VET which includes non-formal and informal learning, continuing training and lifelong learning. This requires a wider range of stakeholders to be involved in the policy cycle.

Where these exist, ambitious policy visions are insufficiently supported by budget allocations. All countries involved in the Torino Process operate with rather constrained national budgets. In most partner countries, public expenditure on education is below the EU average (5.1%). But there are noticeable variations in public financing for education. These variations are often, but not always, related to private education and training and the public–private partnership infrastructure that is in place.

With a few exceptions, countries have prioritised higher education and its rapidly increasing participation rate. VET has not received enough funding to implement the results of pilot projects on a larger scale, particularly where these required money for teacher training and technical equipment. Rationalisation throughout school networks has become a theoretical priority in most countries in South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, where enrolment is falling due to demographic changes. In practice, most plans have remained just that: plans.

Different options are now being considered:

■ the development of public–private partnerships between schools and enterprises with possible incentives to support practical training for students and to overcome the lack of modern equipment in schools (an option developing in many countries in South Eastern and Eastern Europe, sometimes supported by financial incentives such as tax exemptions);
■ the selection of a limited number of schools as regional centres with a higher status, privileged links with enterprises, and more financing (an option now operational or under consideration in Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo).

Whatever the organisational arrangement – school-based or work-based – the most important consideration is to make VET more demand-driven.

The pace of VET reform is slower than anticipated. The question arises as to whether this is a matter of objectives, timeframes or targets? The Torino Process reviews have revealed a kind of distorting causal chain that is easily triggered in VET policies in many countries. Rethinking management in order to shift from a supply-driven, education-inspired and school-based paradigm to a demand-driven approach based on labour market needs calls for very ambitious policies. By necessity, these policies are organised around fundamental reform pillars or building blocks that act as levers in shifting the paradigm, such as national qualifications frameworks and competence-based teaching methods. The pillars and blocks take time to build and implement, so results take time to become

visible and the relevance of the reforms to labour market needs only become evident much later. As a result, in the short run, VET continues to be unattractive. At this point, the question may be asked as to whether the pace of the reforms is slower than expected or whether it is the timeframe that is unrealistic, pushed as it is by a political or electoral rationale.

Policy implementation can ultimately be hampered by limited absorption capacity, which refers not only to the ability to disburse available funds but also to carry out (reform) measures within a certain time period. Given the lack of relevant data, it is difficult to measure such capacity. National strategies all share the priority of increasing VET coverage, but in none of the countries have simulations been carried out to predict the implications for teachers, classrooms, materials and equipment.

The key components of successful VET policy still require more systematic attention. While the overall links between VET policy and other policies has been pointed out as a key success factor for successful implementation, it is important to note that VET policies continue to pay too little attention to some crucial elements, most notably teachers and trainers. They need a comprehensive, systematic policy approach that covers status, initial training, career path, wage grids, working and living conditions, and upskilling and upgrading in partnership with business and industry.

Another area for improvement is the social communication of VET policy to constituencies. This would help to improve the attractiveness and recognition of VET to both learners and employers.

POLICY CYCLE MONITORING: FOSTERING A CULTURE OF EVIDENCE-BASED EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The long timeframe of VET reform and the often slow pace of its implementation bring a need for close monitoring. The ambitious reforms of initial VET, most of which were launched in the early 2000s, require a long-term view and need to take into account the time it takes to implement changes in any education and training system. The impact of reforms cannot therefore be properly evaluated before at least a decade has elapsed.

For instance, Tunisia launched its pioneering Mise à Niveau de la Formation Professionnelle (MANFORME) programme in 1994 and introduced competence-based VET curricula in 1995. However, even today only 61% of the Tunisian curricula have been designed in line with the new approach, any evaluation of the impact of this new departure – even after 17 years – would be premature. In the meantime a close monitoring of achievements is needed so that timely adjustments can be made.

The measures that are being introduced to improve monitoring and evaluation can be roughly divided into three groups:

■ procedures for the external and internal assessment of schools and training centres;
■ accreditation and certification procedures regulating private training centres and universities;
■ national examinations for the evaluation of students.

These changes, which are particularly visible in the IPA and ENPI East and South regions, have some limitations, as they are being implemented in the context of very centralised systems that are still reluctant to give more autonomy to schools. Nonetheless, they have created the beginnings of a monitoring and assessment culture that now needs to develop in line with reform processes.

Most countries have started assessing their own VET systems in order to make comparisons with those of other countries in their region. They are generally keen to make use of international benchmarks such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). They also feel the need to develop national indicators and to implement quality assurance in education, including VET.

The leading role played by governments in such assessments has been crucial for maximising impact; evaluations conducted within the framework of projects operated by donors with little local involvement or consultation are scarcely referred to or used in new national strategies. The association of a broader range of stakeholders, including ministries, statistical offices and social partners, is likely to further influence the future impact of these assessments. They provide an opportunity to start or to develop sector and policy dialogue, and to create or institutionalise space for discussion and joint monitoring of the sector.

To be fully effective, however, they require robust evidence, which is still not sufficiently available. The Torino Process has demonstrated that collecting data is still a general challenge. It may not be there, it may not be accessible, it may not be good and it may not be reliable. It revealed that relevant information is often missing or not well circulated among stakeholders, between ministries, between technical and political units, between decentralised and central levels, or between donors and governments.

The institutional memory is also very weak, with few knowledge management or even document management policies in place.

As a result of donor efforts (particularly by the World Bank in South Eastern Europe) and closer association with the EU, the development of information systems in education has long been a priority. So has the identification and forecasting of skills needs. However, in most countries information systems must still be further institutionalised. Even when indicators exist in the statistical departments

of employment services, they are not systematically used as indicators for the design and monitoring of VET policies.

The establishment of VET centres or VET agencies is an attempt to create an infrastructure for gathering and disseminating relevant information, but they need capacity development and political support in order to be able to adequately monitor reforms. Nurturing a culture of evaluation is an overarching challenge that, if addressed will help to overcome these different limitations. But changing a culture requires time and VET reforms cannot be postponed.

Beyond the technical aspects, gathering, processing and disseminating evidence on reforms and their achievements has a cultural dimension that can hamper the implementation of review processes in centralised countries where democracy is still in its infancy. Information may be politically processed or economically negotiated (bought). Public accountability is a requirement for results-oriented management and performance-based systems, but it has to be translated into proportionate mechanisms and tools.

The collection and use of evidence for policy making is a possible area for external support. While the Torino Process has revealed persistent problems with the availability, quality and reliability of data and other types of evidence in the ETF partner countries, it has also documented a clear interest in evidence-based approaches. The conditions for improvement therefore seem to be available and the timing for introducing data management systems seems quite right, particularly if they are launched and tested in a limited fashion initially, such as within a specific sector or policy area.

THE ROLE OF THE EU AND OTHER DONORS AS STRONG DRIVERS OF CHANGE

For various reasons, the EU provides an enabling framework for VET policies in partner countries:

1. Its own agenda and instruments lend themselves to application in other systems.
2. The prospect of privileged relationships with the EU revitalises the reform process in a number of partner countries.
3. EU funding instruments for partner country support are typically empowering tools that may lead to long-term policy sustainability.

Partner countries are often inspired by the EU VET policy agenda, instruments and tools. EU policies on employment, education and VET have played a substantial role in the development of VET policies in many ETF partner countries. These include three candidate countries, which are now fully involved in enhanced cooperation in VET through the Copenhagen Process, and the potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans.

In fact, most countries have expressed an interest in the Copenhagen Process and its characteristic Open Method of Coordination. Benchmarking has become popular among regionally connected countries such as those in South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. Peer pressure and cooperation are increasing forces in countries involved in EU or ETF mutual-learning projects. The Torino Process has been welcomed by almost all countries.

In terms of content, several EU instruments, principles and references have been considered in partner countries and some have started early implementation steps. Examples of these include the national qualifications frameworks and measures related to quality improvement and quality assurance, entrepreneurial learning, vocational counselling and guidance, social partnership in VET and lifelong learning. They were referred to in many country reports of the 2010 round of the Torino Process. Other principles, such as the recognition and validation of prior learning and credit transfer, are mentioned in some reports as important topics to be considered in the future.

National qualifications framework reforms have enjoyed an overwhelming popularity in most countries, even if this was not always accompanied by a full understanding of the necessary conditions and steps for successful implementation. All national qualifications framework reform efforts take some form of inspiration from the European Qualifications Framework – a safe way of facilitating labour mobility with the EU.

Progress is substantial in countries such as Turkey and Croatia, which have organised sectoral committees to design new competence-based qualifications. In other countries the development of national qualifications frameworks is a way of bringing qualification issues to the centre of VET reforms and developing cooperation and dialogue among partners on the main reform issues, such as adult training, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, post-secondary and short higher VET, pathways between secondary and higher VET and, of course, social partnership. Since the involvement of social partners in VET policy developments is poor in many countries, some national qualifications frameworks are now being developed as the basis for formal qualifications only. Other countries are inclined to 'import' national qualifications framework components in order to speed up the creation of their own national qualifications framework.

Quality improvement and assurance are also seen as important contributions to the attractiveness of VET in many partner countries. Procedures for external and internal assessment of schools and training centres have been established. Accreditation and certification procedures have been developed and national examinations have been introduced.

European VET policy developments have also helped to move the focus in partner countries towards entrepreneurship learning, especially in support of SMEs. The issue of core competences is also gaining momentum: a shift towards competence-based curricula

and closer complementarity between general education and VET can be observed in countries such as Israel, the Republic of Moldova and Tunisia. Guidance and counselling is another area whose popularity in the EU is leaving its mark in the neighbouring regions, although comprehensive counselling and guidance systems are still lacking in most countries.

The prospect of privileged relationships with the EU is a strong incentive for reforms. In Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the need to get into line with the body of EU law is a major reform force. But pre-accession countries are also heavily supported and thus influenced by EU Member States, and even the 'advanced status' recognition (already obtained by Morocco, and under negotiation in Tunisia and Jordan) offers strong incentives for modernising the VET system to improve the quality of the labour force. Successful regional economic integration with Europe is an objective of all Southern Mediterranean countries.

Advanced EU assistance funding models promote country ownership of VET reforms and, as such, better sustainability than many donor pilots that may be hard to mainstream. Examples of such models include the Sector Policy Support Programme and budget support implemented in the Maghreb countries.

In profound VET reforms, assistance from the EU and international donors has been very important but not always coordinated around compatible policy messages. For example, some donors advocate modernising secondary VET and keeping it as a valuable option, while others insist on prioritising general education and pushing VET towards post-secondary and higher education. This shows how important it is for policymakers to learn from a range of experiences and then choose their own policy paths. Agencies such as the ETF can provide useful technical support for such policy learning.

It also shows why external support models should always attempt to align themselves with policy choices made by the countries themselves. While this assumes the existence of clearly formulated policy choices from recipient governments and thus strong national leadership and clear political vision, it also requires a certain discipline from donors to nest their support within these policy frameworks. Because pilot projects often lack this initial embedding in long-term policy, they can be extremely difficult to mainstream. All of the Torino Process country reports mention this.

EU Sector Policy Support Programmes inherently provide this guarantee. Such programmes are implemented in countries such as Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia. Commitment through budget support promotes consistency of vision and policy, empowers governments in implementation, and allows for more flexible and harmonised funding. It does, however, assume strong institutional capacity at all levels of the system.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Through the 2010 round of the Torino Process, partner countries have accomplished a number of achievements that are promising for the development of an evidence-based policy making culture.

Greater political momentum and commitment

Most of the countries have demonstrated a great interest in, and commitment to, the assessment exercise, which for many was their first attempt to carry out a systemic and evidence-based assessment of their VET system.

VET higher up on the agenda

In some countries the Torino Process has resulted in a greater emphasis on the specific role and position of VET in the broader field of education and training.

More ownership and self-assessment

In the countries that opted for guided self-assessment, governments and stakeholders have taken the driving seat from the beginning of the process, which ensures ownership and even leadership, and better prospects for sustainability and impact of the results.

More sector-wide and multi-stakeholder dialogue

The development of broad, inclusive consultation within the Torino Process has, in many countries, created a platform for VET stakeholder dialogue (e.g. among ministries, social partners and donors) and has revitalised the policy making cycle. This demonstrates an innovative, participative approach to assessment, whether at the analysis stage or in identifying and agreeing on policy priorities.

Improved donor coordination

In the countries where the EU Delegation organised donor meetings to share Torino Process findings (Kazakhstan, Kosovo and the Republic of Moldova), the validation process encouraged donors to take into account partner country assessments of their VET system needs and to closely coordinate their support for improved effectiveness, in compliance with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee working principles and the European Consensus on Development.

Enhanced interest in the EU VET framework

The Torino Process has stimulated partner country interest in the Copenhagen Process, in EU priorities in education and training and in relevant EU policy initiatives. This has paved the way for future exchanges on EU VET policies, especially in regions that are less sensitive to the EU agenda, such as Central Asia and the Southern Mediterranean.

Identification of the need for more evidence and institutional capacity

The first round of the Torino Process has revealed a shortage of robust evidence in most countries, either because it does not exist or because it is not available to policymakers or not used for policy making. This has highlighted the importance of reinforcing information systems and building institutional capacity for their management.

Informed, evidence-based ETF initiatives

The policy priorities identified through the Torino Process have informed the ETF's work programme, which now includes specific support to the creation and use of evidence through the Torinet initiative.

In 2012, policy analysis through systems performance reviews will be maintained and further developed. Hugely inspired by the first round, the following key questions have been formulated to guide policymakers and their teams in the assessment:

- Policy vision: What is the vision for VET development and does this vision comply with the broader socio-economic development objectives?
- VET in relation to economic competitiveness: Do skills offered by the VET system match those required by the labour market and economic development?
- VET in relation to social demand and social inclusion: Do VET institutions and the programmes and skills they offer match the aspirations of individual learners and the needs of vulnerable groups?
- Internal quality and efficiency: Which further reforms are necessary to modernise the various building blocks of the VET system?
- Governance and financing: Are budgets, system management and institutional capacities adequate to bring about the desired changes in the VET system?

Together with the participatory approach employed, in each ETF partner country these questions will offer a new opportunity to launch or revitalise the policy dialogue. As such, hopefully, the 2012 Torino Process will be an additional milestone in the development of the evaluation culture that our partner countries need to ensure more effective and more efficient vocational education and training policies.

2. THE TORINO DECLARATION AND KEY MESSAGES FROM THE TORINO CONFERENCE

Peter Greenwood and Dagmar Ouzoun, ETF

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by capturing the key messages from the May 2011 Torino Conference through an analysis of its Torino Declaration. It analyses how social learning activities such as major international conferences produce evidence, and how such activities have shaped the recent work of the ETF and helped to define its policy learning approach. It analyses the response of policymakers and stakeholders to the Torino Process and considers the implications for the ETF's engagement with partner countries. The example of ETF work in Kazakhstan is presented to illustrate how the Torino Process and the Torino Declaration have shaped the national reform programme, the work of the international community and the ETF's own activities in the country.

THE 2011 TORINO CONFERENCE

The 2010 round of the Torino Process concluded with a high-level international policy conference in May 2011. The event had ambitious objectives. The immediate operational objective was to present and validate the policy priorities identified by the 2010 round of the Torino Process. Beyond that it would provide a networking platform for policymakers and experts to exchange experiences, lessons learned and practice from the EU and ETF partner countries. More strategically, the conference set out to develop a common understanding and an action plan with policymakers and practitioners on the contribution of evidence-based policy making and the role of the EU's Copenhagen Process in defining the ETF's interventions in partner countries. As such, it would further refine the ETF policy learning methodology and adapt it to the opportunities provided by evidence-based policy making.

The ETF works with a heterogeneous group of partner countries who have different political, social and economic backgrounds, different interests, and divergent norms and values. In spite of this, the conference succeeded in formulating a final declaration which sets out a common framework of priorities for VET reform and short-term actions for partner countries. It strengthened the potential for participatory, evidence-based approaches to support policy leaders and national stakeholder networks along the journey. The declaration also provided an agenda for international cooperation and policy learning on VET

reform, inspired by the Copenhagen Process and in line with developments in the international arena, notably the G20 agenda.

To fully appreciate the declaration, however, we must first take a brief look back at the development of the ETF as an organisation in the past decade.

FROM 2003 TO 2011 – THE LONG LINES OF ETF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The 2011 Torino Conference was not the first occasion when the ETF used a major conference or study to shape its work and agenda.

Following the European Commission reform in 2000–02, the EU asked the ETF to adapt its role from that of a technical assistance body with responsibility for the administration of EU assistance projects, into a centre of expertise in VET reform in partner countries.

There were at least two different concepts of what exactly constituted a centre of expertise. One view saw the ETF develop into a specialist expert organisation that had the knowledge to make decisions for others. The other saw the ETF develop as an institution which directed its expertise to enable decision-makers and practitioners in ETF partner countries to take well informed decisions.

As a specialist expert organisation, the ETF would have to know what partner countries need and hence what they should do. It would have to assist partner countries based on expert knowledge. Internally, it would have to strive for self-sufficiency as far as expertise is concerned, being able to do most of the work by itself. Externally, it would suggest that ETF experts should know most of the answers to most of the problems of its partner countries.

In contrast, the second view gave importance to clearing expertise, recognising the basic pedagogic principle that important learning processes must be gone through by the people who are to use their results. It was welcomed by the participants of the Advisory Forum conference in 2003, formulated in the Torino Declaration of 2003 and essentially became the guiding principle of the ETF in the years that followed.

Staff involved in operational work should have a profile that reflects the ETF expertise triangle: a combination of (i) partner country specific expertise; (ii) VET and labour market know-how; and (iii) experience with EU assistance methodologies. The ETF should be able to mobilise both internal resources and outside expertise.

This line of reflection was further developed in the 2006 Advisory Forum conference 'Skills for Progress: Learning through Partnerships'. This conference concluded that technical and specialist expertise alone are insufficient for policy development. Effective reform implementation requires partnership and collaboration between different parts of the education, training and employment systems. Policy leaders driving education reforms should encourage the development of effective collaboration and learning partnerships with the whole spectrum of other stakeholders, both in other sections of the government and outside it.

ETF expertise, in the meantime, had to support the development of such learning partnerships with instruments that would promote cross-country and cross-regional learning between the EU and partner countries, including the elaboration of a series of applicable and voluntary evidence-based benchmarks against which progress could be measured.

This ETF approach was refined not only through the 2003 and 2006 Advisory Forum conferences but also through the ETF yearbooks 2004–08 and in the special edition of the *European Journal of Education* (2010)[6]. These major studies draw on examples of ETF work and reflections on EU and international developments in VET reform. They themselves made up the robust evidence base that came to underpin the main role of the ETF and its specific added value: the facilitation of policy learning, through which ETF staff can assist partner country stakeholders in developing the answers to the reform problems that they are facing based on experience from elsewhere[7].

The consistency between the 2003 and 2011 declarations (and the ETF yearbooks) is clear. The emphasis remains on policy learning, but the 2011 Torino Declaration takes this approach further by defining concrete tools and instruments for policy learning facilitation, networking and by further underlining the importance of evidence-based approaches.

The Torino Declaration contains six key observations which are used as evidence to guide the future work of the ETF:

■ the continued importance of policy learning as an approach to facilitate national reform and international peer learning;
■ the increasing recognition among policymakers in ETF partner countries of the value of evidence to the policy process;
■ the emerging opportunities from the Copenhagen Process;

■ common interests, thematic priorities and short term deliverables to guide the ETF's support to reform and cooperation in the next Torino Process cycle;
■ the agreement on a specific methodology to drive the Torino Process: as a holistic approach under national ownership and leadership and active participation of social and economic stakeholders;
■ the recognition of the specific role of policy leaders in shaping and driving the policy cycle and reinforcing the value of policy exchange in their country.

RELEVANCE AND VALUE OF THE TORINO DECLARATION

This section considers the relevance of the key messages from the Torino Declaration for the ETF's ongoing work, as well as for the future development of its evidence-based policy making approach.

The Torino Declaration and policy learning

The Torino Declaration confirms the importance of policy learning as a method for policy development in partner countries. The key principles of the Torino Process draw directly on this policy learning approach as a participatory methodology involving broad stakeholder groups and country ownership for reform as opposed to policy borrowing and copying. It also underlines the importance of a system perspective where the value of individual VET policies depends on their consistency with the broader national vision for development and with other components of the system.

The declaration emphasises the benefits of policy dialogue at all levels: VET institutions, economic and social stakeholders, sector representatives, practitioners and researchers within countries. A key consideration here is that this policy dialogue triggered by the Torino Process is at least as important as the final report.

The declaration also recognises knowledge sharing across partner countries on policy challenges and achievements as another essential component of policy learning. By defining a common analytical framework and indicators for all countries, the Torino Process supports knowledge sharing across all the partner regions. While benchmarking is a tool to trigger reflection and dialogue, this knowledge sharing is the real added value.

Furthermore, by linking the Torino Process framework with the structure of the Copenhagen Process, the ETF has also supported knowledge sharing between partner countries and the EU. The Torino Process fosters a discussion on common challenges faced by partner countries and the EU, such as strengthening links between VET and the labour market, quality, attractiveness, equity and social creativity and innovation.

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6   *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 45/2, 2010.

7   These considerations were highly influential in revising the ETF mandate by the EU institutions in the period 2007–09, and in the Mid-term Perspective 2010–13 which identified four key functions: input to Commission sector programming; support to partner country capacity building; evidence-based policy analysis; and dissemination and networking.

THE 2011 TORINO DECLARATION

We, the participants at the high level international conference 'Torino Process: Learning from Evidence', organised by the European Training Foundation (ETF) in Turin on 9–11 May 2011, representing the ETF partner countries, European Union Member States and international organisations discussed the importance of evidence in the vocational education and training policy cycle.

Our discussions were inspired by European policies, tools and approaches, and in particular the Education and Training 2020 initiative, the EU Employment Strategy, the Copenhagen Process, and the external relations policies which place skills at the heart of sustainable development. Our work has also been framed by the increasing attention given to skills strategies for strong economic development and job creation in the international community, including the G20. Our debates have also been enriched by evidence of progress in reform in VET illustrated by cases from the ETF partner countries. These inspirations will help us to improve our VET policies and systems according to our contexts.

For the ETF's partners, the Torino Process has provided a valuable opportunity to review the efficiency and effectiveness of VET policies. This includes their contribution to sustainable and inclusive growth and economic development. The Torino Process confirmed priorities for the further development of our VET policies and systems, as well as for policy dialogue with the EU and international community. In particular, the following policy priorities were confirmed during the conference:

■ ensuring the relevance of skills provision and increased employability;

■ providing an integrated, lifelong learning approach to education and training;

■ supporting the changing role of the teachers, trainers and managers of VET institutions;

■ improving opportunities for access to education and training for all;

■ investing in quality and improving the attractiveness of VET;

■ reinforcing anticipatory, inclusive and good multi-level governance, also through education and business cooperation and enhanced social dialogue;

■ stimulating creativity and innovation also through entrepreneurial learning.

The Torino Process has underlined the value of structured evidence in guiding policy decisions from formulation, adoption and implementation to monitoring and evaluation in line with international developments. In addition, the assessment methodology adopted by the Torino Process, inspired by the Bruges Review, has encouraged national authorities to take a leading role in driving the assessment process. This helps to build a strong sense of ownership for the outcomes. The participatory approach has also reinforced the role of national networks of stakeholders representing economic and social interests in the policy cycle under the leadership of national institutions. The Torino Process has also provided a framework for peer-to-peer learning, policy dialogue and exchange with other partners facing similar policy challenges, including the European Union institutions and Member States.

The conference provided a structured opportunity for institutions and experts to share practice and experience on the contribution of evidence to policy making, as well as the importance of methods, tools and inter-institutional cooperation. As a result, we identified a number of short-term actions for consideration by each country according to its context:

■ articulate a strong vision;

■ focus on solutions with sustainable results in mind;

■ strengthen national partnerships and peer learning opportunities;

■ strengthen governance and accountability.

The conference was an important occasion for policy leaders to work together to share knowledge and build a network across the countries and with the EU institutions. It was a strategic and effective platform for tackling the critical socio-economic policy challenges facing our countries, with a view to boosting youth employment through improving the transition from education to work; and increasing the contribution of VET to competitiveness through creativity and innovation.

We appreciate the launch of the second 2012 round of the Torino Process at the conference to update the 2010 assessment. We acknowledge the principles reaffirmed for the second round, notably:

■ the holistic approach linking education, training, employment, economic and social development;

■ the importance of national ownership and leadership;

■ the active participation of social and economic stakeholders in the process;

■ the focus on evidence to guide decisions through the policy cycle.

We welcome the ETF's support and cooperation for the second round, and call upon the EU and the international community to cooperate in the review process and its outcomes.

We welcome the ETF Torinet initiative to build capacity in partner countries in this critical area.

We call for the EU, through the ETF, to continue providing opportunities for policy learning at the highest level.

Finally we thank the ETF for this rich opportunity and call upon the agency to arrange a further occasion for policy learning to celebrate the second round of the Torino Process.

This link will become increasingly valuable as the EU moves to implement the short-term deliverables and longer term policy priorities in the Bruges Communiqué in the years ahead.

Finally, the Torino Process and the declaration confirm the close relationship between policy learning and capacity building. Policy dialogue serves not only to advance the policy process in partner countries, but also to familiarise stakeholders with concepts, tools and approaches. This relationship is underlined by linking the Torino Process with the launch of Torinet – the ETF initiative that supports capacity building for evidence-based policy making.

Expanding the evidence base

The Torino Process and the Torino Declaration introduce a new dimension in policy learning by stressing the importance of evidence in policy making and in the periodic monitoring and evaluation of progress. To expand this evidence base, a greater use of socially produced knowledge is encouraged in addition to more traditional statistical information.

These two pillars reflect the high complexity of the field. Knowledge can now be produced by combining theory, statistics, and sharing ideas, practice and experience. It can be based on facts from the Torino Process reports but also on arguments. The quality of evidence will be increased as it is no longer limited to systemic indicators.

Inspiration from the Copenhagen Process

The aim, scope, principles and intervention methodologies of the Torino Process are designed to enable and stimulate international cooperation in VET. To support this, they have borrowed heavily from the EU's Copenhagen Process.

Similar to the Copenhagen Process, the progress of VET reforms will be reviewed regularly in ETF partner countries (every two years). National policies for VET reform and VET quality development will be supported by the EU and the ETF based on the priorities and recommendations extracted from the country reviews.

In the future, the Torino Process could add an external dimension to the Copenhagen Process similar to that of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is implemented as an international, intergovernmental process now involving 46 countries and aiming at the development of an international higher education space. The Copenhagen process is currently limited to EU Member States and candidate countries as well as EFTA countries.

One characteristic of the Copenhagen Process that is different from the Bologna Process is its decentralised bottom-up approach with the active involvement of social partners. It is based on the commitment of Member States to a common strategic framework based on priorities for intervention and benchmarks. Ministers meet informally every two years to evaluate progress and agree on next steps and action lines. Cooperation among policymakers and social partners from Member States in thematic working groups and high level expert groups is guided by the Open Method of Coordination. Relationships are defined by recommendations which refer to all areas of European cooperation in education and VET and which are formulated on consensus principles. They form an important basis for the design of European action programmes in education.

The Torino Declaration confirms not only the systematic policy review exercise of the Torino Process but also the methodological approaches and priorities for joint learning and capacity building activities. Evidence based on indicators will be produced by international peer learning teams and policy learning platforms. Regular VET reviews and progress documentation will support the development of a formal framework for multilateral cooperation in VET between EU Member States and selected ETF partner countries. The Torino Process cycle can provide a framework for the development of instruments and tools for quality assurance and for building further trust and transparency.

Towards a shared framework for VET policy development

The Torino Declaration provided an evidence base for the future direction of VET policy reform in the partner countries. Drawing on the outcomes of the Torino Process analysis and the discussions at the conference, delegates from partner countries identified a number of shared policy priorities for their reform agendas. These not only presented a focus for national reform, but were also seen as a guide for policy dialogue with the EU and the international community, so as to achieve greater coherence between national and international reform efforts in the spirit of the multilateral Paris Declaration (2005), Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and (anticipated) Busan Partnership Agreement on Aid Effectiveness[8].

These policy priorities match the analytical framework of the Torino Process.

■ Enhancing the vision was covered through the links between VET and other education sub-systems as part of a wider lifelong learning approach.
■ Improving the external efficiency of VET policies refers to the relevance of skills provision and access for all user groups.
■ The need to improve the internal efficiency of the system was covered by discussions on quality, attractiveness, and the provision of specific teachers and trainers.

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8 The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Korea followed meetings in Rome, Paris and Accra that helped to transform aid relationships between donors and partners into true vehicles for development cooperation. The Busan Forum of 29 November–1 December 2011 agreed on five principles for aid effectiveness: local ownership, alignment of development programmes around a country's development strategy, harmonisation of practice to reduce transaction costs, avoidance of fragmented efforts and the creation of results frameworks.

- Innovation and creativity was given a specific reference, including the role of entrepreneurial learning.
- Finally, the priorities also included a reference to inclusive and good multi-level governance partly through education and business cooperation and enhanced social dialogue. This topic had not been specifically dealt with in the 2010 analytical framework but has now been included in the 2012 framework.

Similar to the Bruges Communiqué, the conference and declaration resulted in the identification of a number of 'short-term deliverables' in broad policy areas. These included articulating a strong vision, focusing on sustainable results, strengthening national partnerships and strengthening governance and accountability.

The priorities and short-term deliverables have informed ETF planning for 2011 and 2012. In addition to country specific actions the ETF has launched a number of major activities to further develop its support capacity.

The challenge will be to report back to the next corporate event on the Torino process (planned for May 2013) with evidence on progress in the fields agreed in the declaration.

TOWARDS A SHARED METHODOLOGY

The discussions during the conference and the declaration were important steps towards a common agreement between partner countries, the international community and the ETF on the main principles underpinning the Torino Process methodology.

Participants appreciated the progress made in the first round of the Torino Process. They referred in particular to the development of an analytical framework which took a holistic view of VET policy and provided a recommended evidence base to assess:

- its contribution to social cohesion and economic development, including the critical issue of transition from school or training to work;

TABLE 2.1 ETF RESPONSE TO PRIORITIES AND SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES IDENTIFIED BY THE TORINO CONFERENCE AND THE TORINO DECLARATION

Priority/short-term deliverable	ETF activity
Enhancing visions	Revised Torino Process framework 2012
	Regional project on lifelong learning in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
External efficiency – labour market	Regional project on matching in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
	Regional projects on entrepreneurial learning in all regions and Community of practice on employment and employability
	Community of practice on entrepreneurial learning
	Innovation and learning project – Match
External efficiency – social cohesion	Community of practice on equity and social cohesion
	Regional project in the Western Balkans and Turkey
Internal efficiency	Community of practice on qualifications
	Regional projects on qualifications in the Southern Mediterranean
	Regional project on quality in the Western Balkans and Turkey
	Regional project on school development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
	Innovation and learning project – Learn
Partnerships	Torinet initiative
	Community of practice on social partnership
	Regional project on social partnership in the Southern Mediterranean
Governance and accountability	Community of practice on governance
	Revised Torino Process framework 2012
Sustainable development	Community of practice on sustainable development
	Regional project on sustainable development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

- the policy cycle from vision to implementation;
- a broad range of the specific components of the VET system, such as curricula, quality and teacher training;
- the links between VET and other subsystems in education.

Further attention needs to be given to the field of governance in particular through a better understanding of institutional responsibilities. This is included in the 2012 round.

The framework was also considered to fit well into recent international developments, such as similar evidence-based analytical frameworks that have been proposed at the initiative of the G20 following the Seoul Summit in December 2010[9].

The key breakthrough at the conference, however, was the broad recognition of the importance of the Torino Process itself. Participants stressed the need for a methodology which emphasised ownership of both the process and the results (the final report) by the partner country's policy leaders and stakeholders. This promoted complementarity between the Torino Process, the national policy agenda and other relevant processes.

Particular attention was drawn to those countries which had carried out a self-assessment[10] as the declaration noted that this had encouraged national authorities to take a leading role in the assessment process and build a strong sense of ownership for the outcomes. In other words, where there is a strong sense of national ownership, the likely long-term impact of self-assessment on the reform process will be more extensive. In addition, the self-assessment approach also had a more powerful 'learning' impact for the policy making community in the country.

The conference also emphasised the importance of broad participation in reform processes of relevant stakeholder groups, including parliamentary committees, policy leaders, social partner representatives, school managers, teachers, local authorities, company representatives, researchers and civil society representatives. This provides the basis for reflections and consensus building by local actors, thus connecting policy analysis with agreements on policy choices and implementation.

RECOGNITION OF THE SPECIFIC ROLE OF POLICY LEADERS

The conference also brought a new dimension to ETF support to partner countries. The Torino Process methodology, in defining national ownership and participation as key features, had implicitly recognised the significant contribution which policy leaders, such as ministers or deputy ministers, play in the policy process. In most partner countries, these are officials from the ministries responsible for education and labour. In the broader sense, policy leaders may also comprise people who lead those institutions which VET policy should serve and who therefore exert a significant influence on the politics governing VET policy. These stakeholders would include, for example, leaders of social partner organisations representing employers and workers or chairs of relevant parliamentary committees.

While these stakeholder groups have considerable responsibilities for VET, as political nominees they may not have a relevant professional background. They may not be sufficiently versed in handling the complexities of modern VET policies, directing strong inter-institutional coordination or making their case for the VET budget with the ministry of finance. Their leadership role can be specifically demanding in countries undergoing fast transition or in situations of political or social volatility, such as in countries caught up in the Arab Spring. In these cases policy leaders, typically on a limited mandate, have to balance the near-impossible trade-off between effective short-term emergency measures and long-term development policy visions. Their tasks become even more complex with the increasing international dimension of education and VET policies.

An analysis of the outcomes from the Torino Process identified some specific challenges for policy leaders:

- the potential of the EU policy framework and in particular its policy benchmarks to measure progress in policy development;
- developing the capacity for innovation and creativity in the VET system;
- measuring the transition from school to employment.

Policy leaders responsible for VET from across the ETF partner countries were invited to take part in a dedicated session during the conference. A total of 12 ministers and deputy ministers from across the ETF partner regions took part. The session was highly interactive, with short opening statements followed by considerable and spontaneous exchanges of experience among the ministers. Most importantly, the session was productive

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9 The Seoul Summit Final Declaration stated that 'developing human capital is a critical component of any country's growth and poverty reduction strategy […] it is important for developing countries […] to continue to develop employment-related skills that are better matched to employer and market needs in order to attract investment and decent jobs'. Two actions were defined in particular for low income countries: (i) develop internationally comparable and practical indicators of skills for employment and productivity in developing countries, and produce a comparable database across countries to serve as a monitoring tool for assessing employable skills development; and (ii) support a pilot group of self-selected countries to enhance their national strategies for developing skills, improving productivity in existing jobs, and promoting investment in new jobs.

10 Russia, Belarus, Israel, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory and Ukraine.

in leading to a number of clear and shared policy conclusions for future development.

The following conclusions were shared with all conference delegates in the plenary and included in the declaration.

- Inspired by the Copenhagen Process, the Torino Process was considered a valid tool for partner countries to begin a policy benchmarking process.
- To enhance innovation and creativity, VET policies need to be aligned with the demand side, in particular through close alliances with enterprise and industrial development sectors.
- VET policies should interconnect with other key policy sectors.
- Innovation requires autonomy of governance, problem solving approaches and prepared teachers and trainers.
- For sustainable innovation, policymakers need to consider how pilot activities can be scaled up.
- To improve the transition-to-work evidence base, institutions should track the progress of graduates from education to work and during their careers. This process provides valuable information for the institution's own development and is extremely informative for policymakers. It was also considered important to include the public employment services in such a system so as to make public policies talk to each other.
- It was considered critical to interconnect transition-to-work measurements with other policy initiatives, such as qualifications, qualifications frameworks, quality and career guidance.

In conclusion and as stated in the declaration, policy leaders expressed their interest in continuing this type of dedicated peer learning and exchange to help to build their capacity to play their expected role fully and effectively. In response, in 2012 the ETF will continue to develop this specific capacity building function linked to the next round of Torino Process, which is expected to feature a regional meeting for policy leaders from the Arab countries for a peer exchange on policy responses to the Arab Spring and the challenges of improving the effectiveness of public policy management in the region[11]. Leading stakeholders from social partners and civil society will also participate in this meeting. In the longer term, the ETF will work towards developing a network of policy leaders.

THE TORINO PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT IN THE FIELD

As mentioned earlier, the conference stressed the need for evidence-based policy. How does this impact on the design of ETF activities and what does it mean for ETF

projects? A brief presentation of ETF work in Kazakhstan in 2011 illustrates how the Torino Declaration helps to integrate the VET review, analysis, priority formulation and the strategies of intervention.

The Torino Process findings offer excellent opportunities for channelling new knowledge into the ETF work programme at a country level. Socially produced knowledge and fact-based knowledge are integrated into holistic intervention strategies which match the characteristics of each individual country and its policy issues. Special attention is given to observing decision making processes in partner countries and basing policy learning activities on strengthened reflection and communication.

COUNTRY EXAMPLE: KAZAKHSTAN

The example of Kazakhstan[12] illustrates how a coherent ETF intervention approach is designed and implemented following the Torino Declaration principles while at the same time sticking to the historic, geographical, social and political circumstances of the country.

It integrates European, international and national interests and translates the priorities worked out in the first round of the VET policy and system analysis of 2010 into a coherent strategy. It also strengthens the capacity for participation and ownership in the whole policy cycle.

The fast developing Kazakh labour market has stimulated government interest in strengthened international cooperation in education and training. Kazakhstan participates in the Bologna Process and assesses its VET developments against international VET performance.

First and foremost, the Torino Process review of 2010 has led to a shared, evidence-based assessment of the three policy priorities for the next stage of the reform process. These are closely related to the shared framework for VET policy development defined in the declaration.

Governance and accountability

The key priority in the field of governance is to increase 'down-up' policy development through an appropriate mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches. This is in line with a tendency to delegate work to regions, sectors and institutions based on shared responsibility and active participation in policy making, policy implementation and governance. This also implies strengthening connections between on the one hand national, regional, local, sectoral and institutional initiatives and knowledge, and on the other hand different thematic core areas.

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11 This event is expected to be held in Amman, Jordan, 25–27 September 2012, in conjunction with the Fifth Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on Public Management organised by the European Group for Public Administration.

12 The purpose of this case description is to illustrate how the Torino Declaration and Torino Process report have influenced ETF work in the country. For other details about the country, see the Torino Process report on Kazakhstan (ETF, 2010).

Dialogue between economy, research and education to make VET more attractive

A major policy challenge for the country is to make VET more attractive for young people. The country is making a significant investment in creating a new and more extensive VET infrastructure and new institutions and pathways. However, these physical and legal reforms need to be consolidated by a review of what is meant and commonly understood by 'ability', 'talent' and 'giftedness'. Here there is a role for evidence-based dialogue between players in the field of economy, research and education to rebrand and make more attractive abilities related to VET.

Qualifications and partnerships

VET staff must be prepared for partnership arrangements, in particular vocational teachers and in-company trainers on whom the actual implementation of VET policies depends. The very dynamic Kazakh labour market is having a significant impact on the development of new qualifications. In parallel, this demands closer collaboration between vocational teachers and in-company trainers, between schools and companies and between the education and business sectors in general.

The policy learning methodology has been embedded in the reform process under national leadership and with the support of the ETF. An example is provided by the affirmation in the Torino Process that Kazakh VET reform should aim at strengthening national reform processes, but also regional reform processes, especially in three regions and sectors: Pavlodar (agriculture), Ust-Kamenogorsk (mining) and Atyrau (oil and gas). In 2011, the ETF and the Ministry of Education and Science organised five events in the capital Astana and in the pilot regions Ust-Kamenogorsk, Pavlodar and Atyrau. These involved national and regional policymakers, social partners and other stakeholders. The design of the events respected Kazakh priorities in three ways: in thematic focus and objectives (capacity building among VET staff for successful cooperation between education and business), both in form and in output (evidence-informed policy making and implementation). It offered a policy learning platform for all participant groups. The exercise was organised as a process, with each event integrating the accumulated outcomes of previous events.

The regional events were part of the Torinet initiative. Participants were offered the chance to share knowledge, reflect and learn how to interpret information and access diverse sources of knowledge. As a particular development in policy learning methodologies, knowledge management tools are being employed to look at how thematic areas can be developed and how a mutual understanding of policy implementation can be achieved.

The focus on the added value of evidence-based approaches emphasised in the declaration has also been integrated into the Kazakh reform process. One of the lessons learned was that in evidence-informed policy making it is necessary to produce material which is useful and meaningful to policymakers. Policymakers need to ensure that quantitative and qualitative information is collected (and disseminated) in all relevant areas. Involving stakeholders in national and regional networks in the whole Torino Process cycle will support this process in the years ahead. In order to develop ongoing dialogue and collaboration, it will be necessary to monitor internal processes in regional micro systems to build up communities of knowledge and communities of practice and support sustainability. This requires the ETF to further support policymakers in using the evidence generated through practice and research in the formulation of policy recommendations.

The inspiration of EU and international policy approaches has also been confirmed in ETF work in Kazakhstan. A good example of this is the country's participation in the ETF Innovation and Learning Project, LEARN, where a member of a pilot focus group is building up a network of policymakers and social partners to discuss the professionalisation of vocational teachers and in-company trainers. Through a peer learning visit to Austria that covered the role and tasks of vocational teachers and trainers in education-business cooperation, the ETF provided an international platform for mutual learning, where the Austrian VET system served as a laboratory for reflection against participants' own national backgrounds. The pedagogical concept was based on the three priorities outlined in the Torino Process report as well as on previous ETF experience. By integrating theoretical and practical learning approaches it provided a creative learning and exchange space.

In conclusion, in Kazakhzstan, through active involvement in the Torino Process and the use of the Torino Declaration for both ETF policy facilitation and national policy making, VET reform processes are receiving a new impetus.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown how the Torino Declaration represents a further evolutionary step in the ETF's systematic use of major international events and studies to develop the evidence base for its intervention logic and to define its operational activities in consultation with the partner countries, the EU and the international community. The longer strategic lines of the ETF's work have been presented and the chapter has illustrated how the ETF's policy learning approach has been refined through the analytical frameworks, tools and instruments developed for the Torino Process. The chapter has argued that the Torino Process and the Torino Declaration have identified and formulated areas of common interest between partner countries, the EU and international organisations for evidence-based approaches, shared reform priorities, and short-term actions. The declaration has established an enabling framework for ongoing policy learning by policy leaders and stakeholder groups, inspired by the Copenhagen Process and driven by the Torino Process. The ETF is using the declaration and the Torino Process reports to shape the further development of its

evidence-based policy facilitation, its thematic approaches and its multi-country, regional and country specific operations.

Six key messages have been extracted from the Torino Declaration, and its emerging impact on consolidated capacity building in partner countries has been demonstrated. Its potential for policy learning and evidence-based policy making in partner countries, for the work of the ETF and for the European Union has been clearly outlined. However, this is a work in progress and much still needs to be done.

The next round of the Torino Process is planned to close in 2013 with another major international conference. This will be the moment to verify the current approach and consult with stakeholders on the future perspective for the ETF's activities.

3. THE TORINET CASE

Madlen Serban, ETF

INTRODUCTION

Torinet is a network of institutions involved in the Torino Process: a network of institutions[13] with roles and responsibilities in policy analysis or policy making and practicing social dialogue in human capital development at different decision making levels. The goal of Torinet is not to develop one single, global network but to link together a matrix of interlocking stakeholders.

The Torinet project was inspired by the ETF's experience with its national observatory network. Created in 1996, this network aimed at producing the intelligence and knowledge that were needed as evidence for policy making in VET and employment.

The launch of systematic and similarly structured policy analysis in all ETF partner countries through the Torino Process responded to the need for a new institutional approach to fulfilling the role that the observatories had – an approach that facilitates the development of ownership and ensures the sustainability of investment in capacity building.

The Torinet project was also inspired by the work of the new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe (Serban, 2011), building on their experience with EU support to social partnership development. The Torinet networks (Torinets) will serve to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education and training policies, paving the way to a modern governance system.

GOOD GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES AND THE TORINETS

Policy making processes should ideally be organised around certain democratic and efficiency principles. A key concept in this is 'governance'. Democratic governance generally refers to transparency in decision making processes and to their openness to participation and input from society at large. This helps to ensure timely responses to needs arising from society with a minimum use of resources.

Torinets as networks of relevant institutions are not meant to substitute or limit broad participation throughout the policy cycle. Policies must be inclusive and inclusive policies take into account the interests of all. Torinets should contribute to the achievement of more qualified

VET policies in accordance with good governance principles. In the case of democratic governance, public consultation and participation as well as openness and transparency are to be observed. It is critical to note here that good governance is more than just broad consultation.

In effective governance, a consistent approach within a complex system can only be achieved by respecting policy coherence, a focus on outcomes and strategic and management efficiency. It is essential to bear in mind that policies work across organisational boundaries and must deliver desired changes in the real world. By observing these principles, Torinets contribute to policies that are flexible and innovative. They tackle the causes, rather than the symptoms.

THE RELEVANCE OF PAST EXPERIENCE

In this section we will look at the conditions under which the experience of some transition countries can be applicable in others (and perhaps even beyond) as a model for developing and optimising the effectiveness of social partnership.

The state exerts a strong influence on policy development, both as a legislator and as an employer. This is substantiated by a number of studies from Central and Eastern Europe[14] where the role of the state appeared to be more extensive in countries where the overall transition towards a market-based economy was slower. Throughout the region, the unstable and unpredictable environment, with immature and inexperienced social actors, resulted in more state intervention than in Western Europe.

In general, although there is a lack of tradition in social partnership in the region, the collapse of the communist regimes in these countries made space for stronger social partner institutions. Their strength grew further because their active role was a condition for joining the EU. There is, however, a certain degree of similarity in their structures and the way they function, not least because there was no long and relevant tradition they could build on: social partner organisations in Central and Eastern Europe had not been able to develop themselves organically through more than 100 years of collective learning by way of conflict and collaboration, as they had been able to in other EU Member States.

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13 These include government institutions at all levels, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, including the economic and social partners, and education and training providers, including universities.

14 For example Martin (1998), Vickerstaff and Thirkell (1997), Pollert (2000).

Throughout the 1990s, the newly-created tripartite institutions lacked experienced staff which reduced their effectiveness in practice (OECD, 2000; Rusu, 2002, p. 31). Hence, legal support was not sufficient in itself to engender the involvement of the social partners in policy making.

How could a private sector be developed and who should represent it? Who were to be the government's dialogue partners? Who would mediate between the worlds of work and education? What would be the new signalling system for the supply and demand of qualifications?

The answer to these questions lay in the development of a culture of effective and efficient social partnership and building the capacity of social actors was essential for achieving this. Since their contribution to human capital development was perceived as vital, 'shaping' and 'empowering' became the action verbs.

The 1990s experience in what now are the new Member States of the EU cannot simply be repeated, but it can certainly inspire other countries who find themselves in similar political and economic situations today. Although the term 'transition economies' usually covers the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, it may have relevance in a wider context. There are countries outside Europe that are actively transforming a command-type economy[15] into a market-based economy. In the vicinity of the EU, there are countries moving towards more inclusive and participatory policy making processes, democratising the governance of their public policies, such as those emerging from the Arab Spring.

Moreover, in a wider sense, the definition of a transition economy refers to all countries which attempt to move towards market-style economic fundamentals. Efficient social partnership and promising intervention strategies to optimise the capacity of social partner organisations could also be a sensible approach in post-colonial situations, in some of the heavily regulated Asian economies, in Latin American post-dictatorships or even in some economically underdeveloped countries in Africa.

NETWORK GOVERNANCE

Choosing the right type of network governance has been perceived as a solution to different problems confronting the EU as a supra-national institution. This is particularly well illustrated by the example of the Open Method of Coordination which through its informal spirit has arguably achieved more than any more legally binding platform could have done. The debate on network governance is part of a wider discussion on whether or not there is a move from 'government' to 'governance', signifying a shift in policy making from central to local government and from national administrations to policy networks cutting across geographical and institutional boundaries. The conceptualisation of a shift from government to

governance reflects the increasing complexity of modern societies and the difficulties of political institutions to deal with this complexity.

The concept of governance is also closely linked to internationalisation and the required shift in policy making from a national to a regional or even global perspective. The traditional definition of government as a political process focused on the authoritative allocation of values, based on the understanding of a unified nation-state with a single and centralised place of power, is losing ground. The concept of governance is supposed to capture these changes in policy processes from national policy processes to processes running beyond a national polity, and the nation-state involving many different actors – both public and private – in the policy processes. By way of an example, in a new book, Juergen Habermas (2012) explains that the EU is remarkable for two innovations: the first is that Member States monopolise the use of legitimate force, but they have willingly subordinated themselves to supranational EU law; while the second is that EU treaties establish that sovereignty is shared among the people of Europe both as EU citizens and members of their own nations.

Pia Cort (2009, p. 175) has analysed the Open Method of Coordination and illustrates how three types of governance flow together in EU policy making.

As discussed in the Romanian case below, public policy governance networks are managed networks which are not open to anyone. The actors must be nominated and approved by ministries, social partners, and in the case of EU networks, the European Commission and its agencies. However, governance networks may come to live a life of their own as individual actors form personal relationships and draw on each other in related policy matters. Network governance may be seen as a way of establishing a culture of consensus, taking the confrontational character out of a political process in order to move a policy forward. This indeed is a need which policymakers are confronted with on many policy issues.

TORINET: THE OVERALL DESIGN

Social partnership is a complex social learning context that is one of the key components of the lifelong learning system, together with other forms of inter-institutional and education partnerships, such as school-family, school-community and school-company relations. Research[16] shows that the main internal and external influences on the development and optimisation of social partnership as an inter-institutional network are those that affect cohesion, effectiveness and organisational features.

In the absence of known systematic studies of the relationship between social partnership and social capital,

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15   Though 'planned economy' and 'command economy' are often used synonymously, some make the distinction that under a command economy the means of production are publicly owned. As such, a planned economy is an economic system in which the government controls and regulates production, distribution, prices, etc., whereas a command economy, while also having this type of regulation, necessarily has substantial public ownership of industry. Therefore, command economies are planned economies, while the reverse is not necessarily true. In both cases, the role of government and its stakeholders remain equally relevant.

16   For example, OECD study into Higher Education for Sustainable Development, 2006.

TABLE 3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE THREE MODES OF EU GOVERNANCE

Mode of governance	Means of regulation	Objective
The Community Method	Hard law/sanctions	Realising the economic community
The Programme Method	Funding through action programme/practice learning/ bureaucratic procedures	Creating a European identity and European communities of practice
The Open Method	Soft law/policy learning/'naming and shaming'	Achieving the Lisbon goals: economic competitiveness and social cohesion

and between governance and values of participatory democracy in the current ETF partner countries, the ETF decided to capitalise on its intimate knowledge of and experience with similar contexts in transition countries where it has worked earlier. This experience was used as a reference for the development of social partnership and social dialogue.

Torinet was proposed as a form of inter-institutional organisation, which retains:

■ its own collective identity;
■ its own organisational culture;
■ a set of prescriptive rules, which are generated in social interaction.

The effectiveness of social partnership is measured by the performance achieved by members of the partnership-based group (in our case Torinet) when performing common specific work tasks (in our case generating evidence or carrying out policy analysis and/or policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

Partnership effectiveness increases as work tasks are solved that are common to all members of the partnership group. Work tasks can be a common action or a common project formulated in close correspondence with the common interest shared by all members of the partnership-based group. Later we will discuss the common projects agreed with some partner countries that started their Torinet journey in 2011.

For a partnership-based group, achieving the targets set by the work task is a social learning process. With the purpose of supporting a directed learning process, tailored interventions for the Torinets therefore aim at improving learning effectiveness. As a consequence, social partnership effectiveness will be optimised through different interventions. The gradual improvement of social partnership effectiveness, the careful analysis of its causality and the conditions supporting or hampering increased effectiveness will be considered.

It is important at this stage to underline, in connection with the development of the inter-institutional network of social actors, the cyclic nature of social interaction and learning processes and their iterative character. This vision is centred on the reflective practitioner concept, which

Schön (1983) describes as the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. This is a crucial aspect of the model of shaping and increasing the effectiveness of Torinets.

The Torinet initiative is rooted in constructivist approaches to learning and an understanding of the learner as someone who is able to actively construct his or her own knowledge and competence. Learning is seen as a holistic, complex process which is closely connected to experienced meaning and motivation. Meaningful learning is characterised by personal involvement. It must be self-initiated (but supported) and evaluated by the learner. The learner knows best whether or not it meets the needs and whether it leads to what the learner wants to know or wants to be able to do. The most important element in learning is its point of departure: previous experience. Experiential learning is a type of learning that demands a combination of action and reflection. It is cyclic and iterative in nature. Its point of departure is that knowledge exists in action, not in theory. This is reflection in action. We learn by doing, discovering and reflecting, and by integrating what we have brought about. Experiential learning refers to learning as a person's knowledge development rather than knowledge acquirement. The learner is an active subject and learning is a process.

Based on this theory and earlier experience and practice, at the ETF we have now learned and recommend that:

1. It is important to carry out training and capacity building for multiple social actors. Moreover, among all activities, training seems to be the most effective intervention for activating social partnership, in particular when the composition of the group is decided on administrative criteria by the management of the concerned institutions rather than more strategic criteria.
2. It is important to ensure capacity building at all decision making levels provided that there is a common vision. On the one hand, decentralisation is a priority in making governance more efficient. On the other, it is important to also consider the contribution of social partnership to building up and assuming a *coherent* systemic vision, when adopting, implementing and assessing education and training policies in a multi-level governance environment.

Our experience shows that besides national and sectoral partnership, we must now focus on local partnership by empowering social actors for change from the bottom up, to help inform and better balance existing efforts. Multi-level governance requires effective participatory institutions at all decision making levels. These principles are at the heart of Torinet.

CAPACITY BUILDING BASED ON ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a strategy for producing knowledge in and from practical applications. Today, action research has developed in a number of ways and paradigms, such as practice research, action inquiry and community action research. A common basis for all of these approaches is a normative ideal of participation and democracy in the research process – an ideal that often becomes more important than the actual interest in the production of knowledge.

It is sometimes said that action research is of direct instrumental use and produces new *experiences* more than developing these experiences into new, scientifically valid *knowledge*. As there is a need for both educational research *on* policy and research *for* policy, the process is just as important as the results achieved.

The formative features of action research are not new. As Bîrzea (1990) mentioned in his work on the epistemological status of action research, it can be applied as a research strategy, a method for social change and a method for continuing education. As a method for continuing education, action research was introduced in 1957. Corman (1957) and Good (1972) both explicitly mention the contribution of action research to teacher training.

As a form of capacity building, action research is similar to the project method proposed by Dewey and Kilpatrick in the early 20th century (see Kilpatrick, 1918; and Dewey, 1986). This focuses on experiential learning and assures a better coordination and complementary of practice and theory in the learning processes.
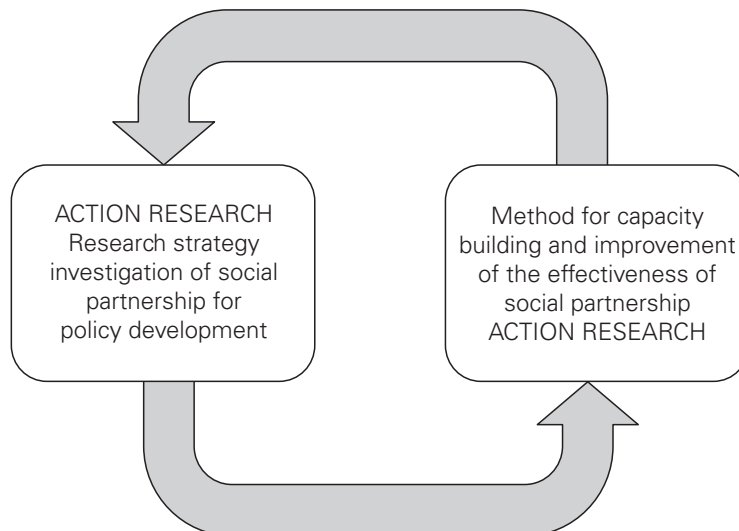
In our context, professional development concerns competence development for social actors. Here, competence is understood as the ability and willingness to do things in practice. In order to train (and assess) this competence, practice must be part of the competence development process. This can be done by using the principles of learning-by-doing or action learning (Revans, 1982).

The main principle is to do something that is important, to improve it by working with it and to learn from it at the same time. That is why many leaders of organisations are interested in the concept – they get value for money, and staff may find it more exciting to change and improve their own practice while they learn at the same time.

In action learning, the learning process is based on a number of assumptions.

■ The handling of everyday tasks is the starting point. They must be approached in such a way that the solution to the problem will in itself become a learning process.
■ The handling of the problem requires that the learner must also take a personal risk – the problem must mean something to the learner for it to be solved.
■ You learn best by working with real and specific problems. Through these you realise your own progress and learn to control the factors influencing it.
■ Behavioural change is achieved as a result of re-interpreting previous experience more than through the acquisition of new knowledge.

FIGURE 3.1 THE DOUBLE LOOP OF THE ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

ACTION RESEARCH
Research strategy
investigation of social
partnership for
policy development

Method for capacity
building and improvement
of the effectiveness of
social partnership
ACTION RESEARCH

- Re-interpretation is most effective through the exchange of ideas and opinions with other participants (who are in the same situation).
- Every time the group meets there must be an evaluation of the results achieved.
- Every participant must be given an assignment which is deeply rooted in reality, but the assignment must be relatively complex and unstructured. There must be no definite or tested approach to the problem beforehand.

Learning is a social process supported by mutual encouragement. The project is the central activity of a learning programme. However, not all projects have good learning potential. The most appropriate projects share various characteristics.

1. They must be rooted in reality and the project host must be interested in getting the problem solved.
2. Participants must feel responsible for the subject matter and be both willing and forced to take risks, so that they really feel obliged to work seriously with the project.
3. There must be possibilities for action, from which follows that there must be resources for action.
4. The problem must be complex and appear to the participants as real and relevant, which in turn means that the task must:
   - be open and with no set answer;
   - be relevant for the future;
   - be action-oriented;
   - be solvable by several people;
   - entail realistic responsibility;
   - be beneficial to others.

As the central method of work for Torinet, the ETF will use the action research method, expecting that it will lead to two main achievements:

- enhanced ownership of partnership-based policy making and increased governance effectiveness;
- improved institutional capacity.

Partnership does not exist *per se*, regardless of written agreements or regulations. It only materialises itself through social action, such as in projects. These projects are then the core of social learning.

Social partnership must not be limited to formal meetings and half measures taken through double or 'flexible' standards, bendable to the interests of one 'partner' or an 'external' player. Such half measures will only lead to inefficient hybrids.

A CASE OF GOOD PRACTICE: ROMANIA

One concrete example of capacity building through action research in social partnership concerns Romania, which joined the European Union in 2007. In Romania, capacity

building of multipartite bodies created regionally and locally (at county level) served to prepare these institutions for their new responsibilities in locally matching the VET supply with labour market demand. The problem-solving approach was key here because, even today, matching supply to demand is a hot issue where social dialogue among multiple actors is essential for finding solutions.

In Romania, since 2000, Regional Education Action Plans and Local Education Action Plans have been produced by eight Regional Consortia and 42 Local Development Councils. These multipartite bodies are networks of relevant institutions with wide-ranging responsibilities that cover business, social and economic regional and local development. Part of their work covers labour market and education and training policy development and implementation. They represent both governmental and civil society institutions, including trade unions, employer organisations and NGOs. Their role in education and training spans from initial and continuing VET to secondary and higher education. Higher education is included because of its contribution to regional development and because of the potential for business to take advantage of the full vertical complexity of skills, while offering learners a broader career perspective. From the perspective of education providers this broad cooperation is critical for planning supply based on an early and locally informed anticipation of skills.

These networks were formed through the administrative appointment of the members. With the support of the National VET Centre in Bucharest the empowerment of their members was organised and delivered.

Capacity building of national, regional and local practitioners and policymakers was recognised as crucial. Therefore, as a prioritised first step, early interventions targeted specifically at the social partners were implemented.

Organised as action research, the development of the regional consortia and local development councils progressed in stages. Planning responsibilities were introduced early on. Monitoring and evaluation of results were brought in at a later stage. In line with the principles of action research, the rationale behind this staggered development was that it is important not only to formulate a project theme for the network, but equally relevant to plan realistic actions, achievable ones, that motivate and sustain work continuity.

All members of the network, social partners included, had the chance to work together by using an action research methodology. The problem-solving approach was essential for improving the learning process. Capacity building based on a formal theory of communication or negotiation would have been unlikely to motivate partners in the same way.

CONCLUSIONS

There still is demand for research and usable knowledge in education policy making which is not being met as well as it could be. For example, many observers have called for a reinforcement of so-called evidence-based policy making and for improved links between research and education policy making (OECD, 2007).

Torinet and its institutional membership should contribute substantially to improving the links between evidence creation and its use, between the producers of intelligence and policymakers, by increasing the relevance of formulated and adopted policies to the wider needs of citizens and communities.

The Torinet networks are the learning platforms that create evidence and knowledge to inform policies. They contribute to policy analysis and to policy making processes. Their social learning is assisted by the ETF to empower their members and the networks themselves for improved effectiveness. Intensive information sessions on evidence creation were organised in 2012 with statistics as case studies. During this year, systematic observation will be maintained by the ETF to get a better understanding of what works and what does not work in each case. Action research will be centred on activities related to the Torino Process as the common project of the network.

The aim is to transform Torinets into autonomous institutions, continuing their public action at different decision making levels based on social learning.

This also fits in with the exit strategy of the ETF, investing in capacity building for policy analysis and policy making. As capacity for policy making is built up in the policy network, so the network should be increasingly autonomous in managing and delivering the further development of its own capacity. Once this level of autonomous capacity has been reached, this would imply a redefinition of the support role of the ETF for the network, reducing the level of support and even withdrawing from the network. The first attempt for the ETF to redefine its support role and progressively withdraw from the activities of one or more of the networks will be launched in 2013.

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4. FROM POLICY ANALYSIS TO POLICY FACILITATION, THE KEY IS CAPACITY BUILDING

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the changing role of the ETF in capacity building for policy development, with a focus on policy analysis and the facilitation of change processes in vocational education and training in the partner countries of the ETF.

It is important to clarify from the start that discussions about its specific role are not new to the ETF. Since its early days the ETF has been an agency with a unique role. It is neither a donor, nor an external reviewer or auditor. Instead it operates as a facilitator of learning and a broker of knowledge in specific country contexts to support human capital related policies, their development and their social and economic impact.

In 2003 the ETF officially embraced the policy learning philosophy to support countries in developing their human capital. Policy learning is a methodology for supporting country reforms which is built on the belief that 'systemic reforms of vocational education and training will only be successful and sustainable if policy development, formulation and implementation are firmly based on broad ownership and embeddedness in existing institutions' (Grootings, 2004).

Since then, the ETF has moved ahead by further elaborating the concept of policy learning to support VET reforms in the partner countries and by gathering evidence of the added value of the approach to achieve policy changes and to support change processes in vocational education and training.

In this chapter we will describe the experience of the ETF in developing its capacity building function and we will explain how this fits within the international debate on capacity development and policy facilitation.

THE ETF'S APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

The ETF is unique in its role as a facilitator of learning and knowledge sharing in the field of vocational education and training. This is explained by its mandate above anything else. The ETF mandate stipulates its specific field of work

and its expected impact on human capital development in the partner countries but does not refer to any role as a donor or technical assistance agency. It is also explained by its long-term approach: the ETF has been available to its partner countries for many years and it has been active in the same field since the start of its operations.

ETF support to capacity building takes place in a complex framework of actions and activities. It is important to clarify from the start what we mean by capacity building and what types of action define it. There is no doubt that capacity is key to change management but which capacity? And whose capacity?

When we think of capacity we refer to both knowledge and competences and skills (to manage change, to engage in dialogue, to negotiate, to communicate). Beyond experience with and knowledge of the specific thematic area that we are focusing on, both general types of capacity are indispensible.

As an example, when we work in the area of national qualifications framework (NQF) development, knowledge of both content and mechanisms are important. In terms of content, partners need to know what a national qualifications framework is, how it is developed, how a qualification is described, and so on. In terms of mechanisms, they need to know who should be around the table developing qualifications, how stakeholders can be involved in consultations, what type of feedback is needed from the market, and so on.

Both are important for coherent policy development, but both are also linked to the overall context within which these capacities are developed, such as the history of relations and powers of the country and other connected policy areas which can hamper or support policy change.

Therefore, we must work with a series of well-defined capacity building actions aimed at informing, sharing and discussing particular topics, or discussing implementation arrangements and modalities supporting NQF development in a particular context. But these actions can only lead to change when the country and stakeholders involved take ownership and leadership in using that capacity to inform the change. This can be a long-term impact of a capacity building action, as capacity needs to match with other important conditions.

In the next section we provide an example from the 2007 ETF Yearbook, where Peter Grootings looked into precisely this thematic area of work (NQFs) and used it to address a whole range of interesting questions about multiple areas and levels of knowledge and capacity, leading to a complex framework of action under the policy learning approach. This knowledge and capacity reach well beyond the thematic area and in some cases, what has been learned can be and will be used for actions that have no direct relation with the original thematic area. We will see later how this concept has led to a specific case in the implementation of a broader NQF dialogue in Tajikistan.

Example of a thematic area used to develop capacity at multiple levels

'Experience has taught that a discussion on NQF touches all key aspects of a country's VET system. It raises questions about the relation between VET and other parts of the education and training system and about its connections with the labour market: how to link different types of programme at different levels in order to establish educational pathways that result in qualifications that are relevant for the different types and levels of qualifications on the labour market?; how to ensure that employers trust the contents of recognised qualifications? It also leads students to relate qualifications to their own interests: given my current knowledge, what do I still need to learn to get the qualification that is required for the job that I want to have?; what can I do with my qualifications if I want to study something else? These discussions also have implications for how learning processes are organised, especially, but not only, in schools: they guide decisions on what needs to be learned, where learning can take place and how the results from learning can be monitored and assessed. Finally, they lead to considering how people can best be helped with learning. This is not just about providing access to learning opportunities (such as school networks, financial support and the development of e-learning infrastructures) but above all about the roles and responsibilities of teachers, trainers and learners themselves.

Thus, NQF discussions can give direction and coherence to national VET reform initiatives. This is of particular interest to countries where systemic (system-deep and system-wide) reforms are on the agenda and where VET has lost much of its relevance for employers and attractiveness for students (Grootings, 2004). For a start, they imply dialogue and cooperation between representatives from different sectors of education and the world of work. This is a necessary condition for any change to happen but it is also a guarantee that agreed changes are accepted and appreciated by key stakeholders. Since an NQF appeals to the fundamental interests of all major stakeholders in education and training, it proves to be relatively easy to engage them in such a dialogue. Obviously, that does not mean that there will be no problems and that developing a shared understanding and an agreed approach is something that can be quickly achieved. But it does have the major

advantage that the reform of vocational education and training is put in a wider labour market perspective than just the modernisation of curricula and the updating of educational infrastructures which are always the immediate concerns of the education and training community.

Moreover, discussing a national qualifications framework is not only about agreeing on new technical and methodological issues but also on identifying and balancing different interests and views. Thus it is a profound political process. Apart from questions as to 'how' to do it, there will always also be questions as to 'why' we should do it at all and 'what' we have to do in order to make it happen, that need to be addressed. Because discussing the 'why, what and how' issues concerning national qualifications frameworks directly impacts on key features of the education and training system that should produce the qualifications, this process is best seen as a joint learning process. An NQF cannot be simply established by decree. Stakeholders have to become acquainted with new views and approaches, and develop and agree on new roles and relationships among them (Grootings, 2007, pp. 19–20).

The key point made here is that the capacity to 'develop and agree on new roles and relationships among [stakeholders]' goes well beyond the thematic focus of the discussion (NQF) and hence can lead to a more general change in behaviour and relations. This has the potential to have an impact on other thematic areas of work which are not directly related to the 'content' of the dialogue. This is important for the ETF's policy facilitation work. Change can happen when both knowledge and competences and skills are sufficient to support it. Through policy analysis, the ETF must continue to monitor what capacities need to be supported in order to facilitate policy dialogue. It needs to work both within thematic areas and across skills and competences, using, for example, a thematic area to develop skills or competences that can support other parts of the change process.

THE TORINET INITIATIVE

Let us look at another example. In 2011, the ETF launched the capacity building initiative Torinet which has been discussed in the previous chapter. It came about as a direct spin-off of the 2010 Torino Process exercise which revealed a clear need to support partner countries in developing their capacity to use evidence as a basis for policy making in VET. As we will see later in this chapter, such support has a complex structure. Moving to an evidence-based policy making system requires not only technical knowledge and competences, but also a management and communication system and, for most of countries, a culture shift in the way evidence is created, communicated and used in the policy cycle.

So instead of the NQF development of the previous example, Torinet focused on gathering and using evidence to develop the broader knowledge and competences (capacity) that will benefit broader change.

The complexity of change processes and the different levels and types of capacity needed for change to happen may give the reader a flavour of the time necessary to switch all relevant factors (knowledge, competences, systems, culture) from a disabling to an enabling state.

In Torinet, countries have either focused on clarifying the concept of evidence and evidence-based policy making, or on exploring issues connected to the implementation of an evidence-based system. These different areas of focus illustrated the complexity of working with policy facilitation. In most of the countries the debate on evidence resulted in reflections on roles and functions, trust among actors, legal framework governance and transparency. These areas all relate to the overall performance of VET policies, extending well beyond the original topic of evidence for policy making. Improving trust, for example, can generate a shift in the entire approach, vision, implementation and review of VET policies.

So in Torinet, the ETF works on each thematic area within a much broader and more complex environment, where the real aim is not simply teaching partners how to do one or two things that may be overdue, but developing their ability to address far more generic problems with new knowledge, competences, cultures and indeed a new vision. Capacity itself becomes an enabling factor at multiple levels.

At this point it is important to clarify that 'while the ETF has a clear task named "capacity building" this must not be confused with the current international definition of capacity building which mainly refers to an individual dimension of capacity, and to a precise output achievable after a given intervention. ETF work emphasises the process rather than the product and hence, in this context it is more appropriate to talk of processes and outcomes' (Dorléans, 2010). The ETF uses the capacity building function as a process – a capacity development process within which capacity building actions take place. In all capacity related activities, policy learning is the ETF's guiding principle and method.

Some key principles of this policy learning approach are introduced below, taking examples from one particular Tajik case study. These principles frame ETF capacity development in its partner countries, paving the way for change processes.

POLICY LEARNING – THE ETF APPROACH TO POLICY FACILITATION

Policy learning as a process

Facilitating policy development is not a rush job. It is complex and articulated work, which entails a lot more than simple policy advice and should avoid policy transfer and policy copying. Engaging in such a process, a country could seek assistance in the identification, formulation, implementation, review or evaluation of its policies. At all stages there is a need for analysis and it is in the process of analysis that opportunities for change manifest themselves. To promote such change, the ETF uses the policy learning approach, whose fundamental principles are encouraging a sense of ownership, the context and the long-term perspective as illustrated in **BOX 4.1**.

BOX 4.1 THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF POLICY LEARNING IN PRACTICE

In its assistance to national authorities, and guided by its earlier experience with VET reform in transition countries, the ETF bases itself on three fundamental key principles which policy development must adhere to:

- fit;
- ownership; and,
- sustainability.

Fit refers to appropriateness to the specific country context in terms of its traditions, history, socio-economic situation, political environment and decision making processes. This implies that the relevant authorities cannot rely on identifying an example of best practice from abroad and copying this as no other system will have shared the same context. The reference ministry can learn from both 'good' and 'bad' international experience as a source of inspiration but will have to design its own policy, taking into account the unique context of the country. This does assume, however, a proper analysis and understanding of constraints and opportunities that the current VET and labour market situation offers.

Ownership refers to the importance of ensuring that policy is owned not only by the group directly involved in developing it, but by all stakeholders in VET. Without ownership any policy concept is doomed to remain a piece of paper.

Sustainability refers to the importance of basing policy and its implementation strategy on the availability of national resources and capacities. Donor funding will be necessary but the perspective should be to develop a nationally affordable system that can survive in the long term without external assistance.

Source: Grootings, P. and Faudel, H., ETF preparatory work on the VET reform process in Tajikistan, ETF, Turin, 2007.

In this context we can view policy learning as a process within which specific actions happen, such as capacity building, knowledge exchange, peer activities, coaching, and others.

The policy analysis, and within it the capacity needs analysis, sets the boundaries and answers questions that form the basis for a proactive move towards change. Just as in the Torino Process, this analysis is not conducted as an external review but in a participatory manner, among peers and respecting country ownership and context peculiarities. The ETF has often come across analysis that never led to the expected change or even any action. This could of course be the result of a lack of resources or other conditions not being met, but it could also be that the analysis was not embedded in the country's own perceived needs or its own institutions and system.

As mentioned in chapter 1 of this Yearbook, the Torino Process and the general ETF approach to assistance move away from more unilateral consultancy and towards participation in a learning approach where analysis and facilitation go hand in hand in a continuous cycle.

Processes have a long-term perspective. They often lead to unexpected outcomes. Processes are subject to continuous adaptation as learning and experience of those involved develops. Projects on the other hand have a short-term perspective; their outcomes are clearly defined. The OECD in 2006 defined capacity as 'the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully'. Since then many international organisations have either adopted (e.g. DG Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid and their guidelines to capacity development published in 2009) or developed similar definitions of capacity.

Here, it is important to clarify what we mean by outcomes in this context. If we launch a capacity building action we define a number of learning outcomes related to knowledge or a competence. These learning outcomes are the planned output of the capacity building action. From this, we can predict that the result of the capacity building action will be the implementation, through acquired knowledge, of an action within one specific policy area. This is predictable. What is not fully predictable is what effect multiple capacity building actions will have on the overall policy of a country. So, within a project (a single capacity building action) the outcome level is fully predictable. In a process that is made up of many contributing projects, the outcome becomes less predictable. But we can talk about change or policy development and, importantly, we can measure it with the right tools.

The ETF as a facilitator – not a 'transfer' agent

As follows from the key principles of policy learning, the ETF should not be seen as a teacher or as a knowledge dispenser but as a process facilitator. But what are the key features of a facilitator? At a conference, the difference would be clear to most: there are speakers who share their own knowledge with others and there are facilitators who make others speak and guide debates. Of course, a facilitator can also inform. If needed and requested, the facilitator can provide information, share knowledge, or guide others to the desired knowledge. But a speaker speaks first and then listens, while a facilitator listens first and then links those taking part in the discussion.

The latter compares to the role of the ETF in its capacity building function. It works as an 'intelligent link' within and among partner countries and between partner countries and the European Union. The ability to listen carefully, connect to required knowledge, cluster information and needs and provide guidance while respecting the needs of individual countries is key to the work of policy facilitation.

Often at the beginning of its work in a partner country, the ETF takes the time to formulate issues whereupon demands emerge. In **BOXES 4.2** and **4.3** examples are given from the School Development initiative in Central Asia, where the entire first year of work was dedicated to reaching agreement among stakeholders on a common vision for development. This first year of work not only

TABLE 4.1 PROJECTS AND PROCESSES

	Process	Project
Perspective	Long-term	Short to medium-term
Outcomes	Some outcomes may be unpredictable and unexpected	Outcomes clearly defined
Basis of work	Dialogue as a guiding principle, leading to definition of actions as part of the process, not necessarily beforehand	Results form the basis for project definition

helped to define precise needs but also increased the level of participation of stakeholders that had not traditionally been involved in policy decisions in the country. Capacity development focused on raising awareness, using and understanding the value of participation in policy making, and communication and negotiation among stakeholders. The learning led to a wide agreement on further actions to be undertaken.

At this workshop, the ETF was a facilitator. It did not enter the discussion or influence dialogue among the different groups, but simply enabled dialogue and directed the moves towards a decision on further actions. This definition of needs is often already a great step towards the development of capacity, both in defining the key issues – developing the ability to listen, engaging in dialogue – and in deciding the approach: whom to involve in what, how to provide evidence, etc. Across the ETF partner regions and countries it is interesting to note that, while thematic choices are quite similar, this approach

varies considerably, dependent on the capacity of the stakeholders involved and the specific demands of the country. The ETF sees a great value in this diversity which makes it possible to learn by exchanging experiences among countries.

A two-way communication process

As a facilitator the ETF employs a two-way communication process where adjustments to the work are continually made on the basis of dialogue. In the 2008 *ETF Yearbook*, Gérard Mayen wrote that not only partner countries learn with the support of ETF, but the ETF also learns thanks to partner countries. As in any two-way learning activity, a facilitating teacher learns from students and from other teachers by listening to their changing learning needs and methods. This learning developed by the ETF as an organisation has helped it to refine its policy learning approach.

BOX 4.2 THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE, BUILDING A COMMON VISION IN TAJIKISTAN

In late 2009, the ETF initiative allowed a broad group of stakeholders in Tajik VET to meet and discuss for the first time. These included policymakers (from the Presidential Office, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Energy and Industry, the Methodological Centre and the National Adult Education Centre), social partners (from the Association of Employers, the Federation of Independent Trade Union, the Centre for Science and Culture, employers from the private sector and NGOs), and directors, teachers and students from vocational schools (under the Ministry of Education) and adult training centres (under the Ministry of Labour).

The workshop and the discussion among participants were intended to validate the approach and activities that the ETF would roll out between 2009 and 2011 and to create a network for country ownership and implementation of the project.

BOX 4.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF TUYGUN KARIMOV, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FOR TOURISM, DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN

In Tajikistan, the implementation of the two ETF projects (Skills Development for Poverty Reduction and the National Qualifications Framework in Tourism) between 2005 and 2008 raised the importance of the role of VET for socio-economic development on the one hand and awareness of the importance of shared interests among the different stakeholders in VET development on the other.

With the new School Development initiative it became possible to exchange ideas, opinions, concepts and visions related to the future development of vocational schools in a lifelong learning perspective.

Participants at the national conference reached some common conclusions about the importance to:

■ recognise the relevance of vocational school development for lifelong learning;

■ identify the specific interests of stakeholders;

■ find incentives to support the active participation of social partners;

■ develop professional standards.

They showed the need to:

■ develop an integrated concept for reforming the Tajik VET system and for implementing the principle of lifelong learning;

■ create a special institution (committee or agency) to implement the principle of lifelong learning, develop professional standards and introduce new training programmes.

Source: ETF, School Development Towards Lifelong Learning 2010–2011: the journey, School Development project newsletter, 2011, p. 8.

In **BOX 4.4** an example from the NQF project in Tajikistan, conducted by the ETF between 2005 and 2008, shows how the impact of the NQF projects reached far beyond the actual (thematic) area of work. This impact contributes to the wider process of supporting VET development in the country, and its outcome cannot be fully predicted at the process design stage. While it can be argued that ETF process support to VET development can predict an improvement, the precise outcomes cannot be fully predicted.

The impact of the NQF project in Tajikistan is spread among different groups of actors. All of these have contributed to form a network of stakeholders involved in the debate around VET reform processes.

Later on in this chapter, we will see that similar things are happening in the Torinet initiative which was discussed in the previous chapter of this Yearbook. In this Tajik example, the NQF was the thematic focus of activity. In Torinet, this topic is evidence and evidence-based policy making which in a similar way generates a number of different actions undertaken by different groups of stakeholders in the involved countries.

MEASURING RESULTS

Can we measure the process of policy facilitation? Can we measure the capacity building function? Can we measure policy learning? Yes we can, if not in a simple and schematic way. We cannot, for example, gain knowledge on the outcomes of a process by counting the number of meetings organised or the number of participants at a meeting. This is not enough to fully capture what changes have been enabled and what outcomes have been generated.

It is important, however, that the process of capacity development is measurable, if only to gather evidence of what works and what does not. We need to provide adequate feedback to contribute to the two-way communication process and to shape initiatives so that capacity improvement can remain fully targeted.

Over the years, the ETF has carried out a variety of assessments of its operations, both as part of the initiatives themselves and using external evaluators. In **TABLE 4.2** some examples of evaluations of policy learning outcomes are mentioned.

BOX 4.4 THE ETF PROJECT ON NQF DEVELOPMENT IN TAJIKISTAN (2005–09)

This project started the debate on VET reform in the country, raising issues like skills' development, social partnership, social dialogue, recognition of qualifications, professional standards, and quality assurance.

In addition to the expected results, such as the production of the strategic document on an NQF for the tourism sector, the project in Tajikistan produced a series of unforeseen impacts as follows.

- The Association of Tourist Organisations of Tajikistan (ATO) was established to coordinate and direct the work of tourist organisations of the country, to promote the expansion of internal and external tourism, and to train staff.

- The Tajik Association of Tourism Based on Communities (TATOS) was set up as a result of the support of the working group and the Centre for Tourism Development, the Association for Tourism Development of Zeravshan and other non-governmental organisations working in this sector.

- The Association of Ecological Tourism, based on the community Association of Ecotourism 'Varzob', was established.

- The Association of Hostelry and Catering of Tajikistan (ARIOTT) was established.

- The National School of Tourism was established under the national foundation 'Silk Road – Road for Consolidation', with the active participation of employers who train initial vocational students to work in hotels and restaurants.

- A tri-partite agreement was signed among the Agency for Certification, Metrology and Standardisation under the Government of the Republic, the joint stock venture 'Hotel Complex Tajikistan' and the national foundation 'Silk road – Road for Consolidation' on cooperation in the sphere of initial VET in tourism and hospitality.

- The working group supported the establishment of the Centre for Adult Training under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

- Tajikistan became a member of the World Tourist Organisation.

- The Professional Lyceum of Tourism and Service was established in Dushanbe. It signed agreements with hotels and restaurants to have staff involved as teachers and to offer internships for students.

Source: Crestani, F., 'The NQF project in Tajikistan', note for the workshop on capacity development and the ETF work presented in Brussels, ETF, July 2011 (unpublished).

TABLE 4.2 MEASURING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

Factors that can be influenced by capacity building in policy-related work

Factor	Function	Result
Improvement of country communication processes	Communications	Improvement of communication with peers in other countries
Improvement of coordination, cooperation, trust	Relationship building	Improvement of cooperation and contribution to technical assistance provided by donors
Improvement of knowledge, mechanisms, policy cycle management	Institution building	Improvement of cross-institutional cooperation, harmonization of functions
Improvement in participation in policy cycle, creation of networks	Networks	Participation in international networks around thematic areas

International organisations and donors are also reflecting on the evaluation of capacity development. In 2010, the European Commission published a toolkit for capacity development providing analytical and evaluative tools that can be used in technical assistance. The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) has developed the so-called '5Cs' (for capabilities) framework to evaluate capacity development. In 2011, the World Bank developed an assessment tool for capacity development and other donors such as GIZ, the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, and the OECD are also working on this. The recent forum on Aid Effectiveness that took place in Busan (Korea) had capacity as one of the key topics on the agenda.

What all their tools have in common is the focus on context, on the involvement and empowerment of multiple stakeholders and levels of governance, on the identification of change agents and the long-term perspective which emphasises the processes that comprise different actions and projects. In these toolkits, there are many similarities to the approach and methods of the ETF.

In relation to the work of the ETF, external evaluators have identified four areas where the agency can track its contribution to improvement and change processes both within one country and between this country and other partner countries and the EU. These are: communication, relationship building, institution building and networks. Their context is explained in **TABLE 4.2**.

The request of external evaluators to emphasise the 'added value' of the ETF approach and to reflect on measuring, beyond more tangible results, what the initiatives have actually enabled is an interesting one.

In the School Development initiative, as well as in other ETF projects like the Learn project conducted in the IPA region between 2007 and 2009, the added value at the project level has been measured by collecting stories from participants and stakeholders involved in the process. This so-called 'narrative method' is a powerful tool for evaluating added value. It can capture the impact of capacity building processes on the individual. It can also track the institutional impact and the outcomes. Tracing frequencies in stories of participants is a valid method for identifying key factors of success or areas in need of improvement in a given approach.

BOX 4.5 gives some examples of stories collected among VET providers in Tajikistan targeted by the capacity building action in the School Development initiative and contributing to the policy facilitation process around school development in the country.

What is particularly interesting in this story is the school team revealing that the training has been an opportunity for generating ideas, enabling a change process to take place through shared knowledge but also by empowering the school team. These elements cannot be achieved through a 'knowledge sharing action' but only though a profound approach to capacity where competences are put at the centre of attention and learning paradigms are used in the process. In the case of the School Development work, the training, which was a result of the definition of needs in the first year, was based on a competency approach and developments were monitored with multiple tools, including reports of participants on the application of learning in their context, a review of knowledge acquired, and a continuous self-assessment of core skills, competences and technical knowledge. This made it possible to trace the feeling of improvement among participants. This 'feeling' is a form of empowerment. It is what generated the added value – the enabling ideas that made change happen in the schools involved in the training.

BOX 4.5 INTERVIEW WITH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE SCHOOL – MR NOZIMOV, MR KARIMOV AND MR RADZHABOV

How did you find the content of the training relevant to your school?

'After taking part in the seminars we have started a number of new activities. The training was very useful for us. We got many interesting hints for planning our activities in a more comprehensive way, taking into account new elements. In the past we used to plan activities but in a different way that was not really useful. This new approach, in particular to establishing working groups and meeting with students, parents and partners, gave us a new way of planning and an effective one.'

How did you find the content of the training relevant to your professional development?

'We appreciated the methodology and the assignments between the modules. It was good for us also to think about the way in which teaching is conducted. Hand-out materials and documents were also very useful as we could use them for other areas and independently.'

Is there something that was new for the team?

'For us it was the concept and experience of participation, in particular to see how things change when more people are involved in the decision making process. For us it was also new to involve partners so closely.'

What do you feel you have achieved?

'We have launched a new profession in the school: agronomist. We met partners for the first time to plan the activities of the school with them. They raised the issue of the lack of agronomists and told us that we focus too much on training machine operators for agriculture but that they lack agronomists in the area. We then developed a curricula with them, developed learning and teaching materials and asked for authorisation from the Ministry of Education. We had no problems to obtain the license for the new profession and we could start immediately with the new academic year. The teachers for this new area come from the partners themselves. We made agreements for a partnership for teaching in this new area.'

Would you like to share with us what was the conclusion of the work on social partnership?

'We have conducted a survey on labour market needs in the area (among small farmer enterprises). This was the first time for us. Now we have a better picture of the needs and how we have to change the activities of the school. We are now following up on results of this survey.'

Now that the new academic year will start what kind of activities do you plan in this area?

'We plan to start thinking about other professions. For example, through the survey we learned that there is a need to train people in the area of food processing.'

Has the training been useful in some respect on this subject?

'Yes, it has. These ideas have all been generated during the training. For us this was a very positive experience and gave us a lot of good material to work with.'

Have you made an attempt to apply the learning to other areas of work?

'The training material we got allows us to apply our learning in other areas, such as the teaching process.'

What is quality for you?

'When our students are knowledgeable and have the skills that meet the requirements of the labour market and therefore they can find good jobs very easily.'

Source: Transcript of evaluation mission interview, ETF 2011 (unpublished).

FIGURE 4.1 represents a comparison of self-assessment on core skills and competences at the beginning and at the end of the initiative. The distance between the first measurement and the second defines the added value of the capacity action. This tool is used in connection with quantitative evaluation tools such as questionnaires and an evaluation of the application of learning in real-life settings.

Qualitative assessments such as those presented above are of paramount importance when measuring a process dealing with complex factors, with human beings, and with complex levels of capacity, needs, political forces, etc. Together with qualitative evaluation methods and a better definition of learning and outcomes of capacity building actions, this type of evaluation should be fully integrated in the policy learning approach so that it can provide the ETF with a strong basis for monitoring the learning curve and the contribution to change of its work.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE ETF: BROKERING, FACILITATING, NETWORKING

The work of the ETF in the last years reveals some clear organisational learning developments.

FIGURE 4.1 **SELF-ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING DEVELOPMENT**

CORE SKILLS AND COMPETENCES
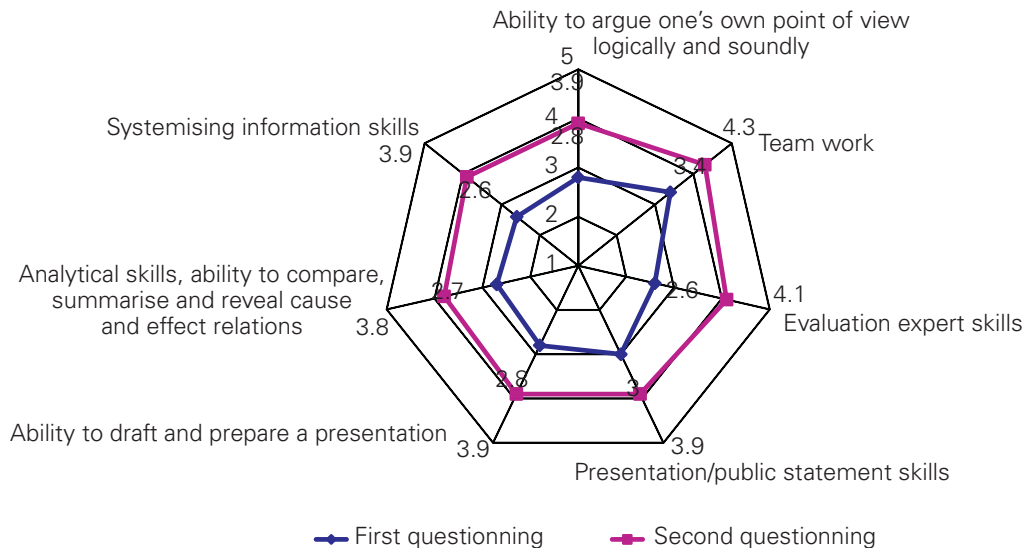
The Torinet initiative was launched in the countries[17] which took part in a first awareness raising seminar where a diverse group of stakeholders was invited to discuss the concepts of evidence and evidence-based policy making. They were asked to reflect on the creation, communication and use of evidence in the VET system. Most of the countries had selected a particular thematic area, such as quality, matching labour market needs or the transition from school to work for this reflection. Some countries found that their most immediate need was to focus capacity development on collecting evidence, while others focused on communicating evidence or using this evidence. For the first group (collection) an in-depth review on generating information and data from and for the VET system was set up. The second group (communication) discussed cooperation and functional coordination among institutions involved in the sector and defined common criteria for making available and using collected evidence. The third group focused on the use of available evidence for strategic decision making.

In all cases the ETF acted as a facilitator of the discussions. In some countries we developed exercises and group work that were used to get participants to apply what was presented by experts on the topic. In some cases the ETF developed a series of facilitating questions for the discussion among stakeholders in the country or provided tools to analyse the institutional context and guide the discussion on a particular topic. In Kosovo, a peer approach was used to target an identified specific need to support the capacity of the Pedagogical Institute in a particular thematic area.

In Torinet in 2011 it was noted that it is not only important to understand the targeted capacity but also to match it properly with the current stage of the policy cycle in a country. It is also important on the one hand to develop tools that have a sound methodological background while on the other hand allowing countries the freedom to contextualise and move away from the original set of questions. The tools provided need only serve as the primer for a process that may take a different direction.

This is not to say that the methodology is unimportant. Quite the contrary, in capacity development the aim and methodology are equally important. Even with the right group of stakeholders, a well-defined theme addressed by an inappropriate method will lose its potential for contributing to a change process.

The ETF has a lot of experience with a huge variety of capacity development tools and methods spanning from open discussion to more structured approaches. Tools such as peer learning, knowledge and practice sharing, group work, study visits, joint analysis and training have been implemented in different thematic areas and in different contexts. These methods now need to be intelligently linked so that the entire potential of new technologies, networks of knowledge and opportunities for learning are integrated in the policy learning approach. In a connected world where knowledge is widely available, it is important for the ETF to act as a broker of this knowledge and of international practice to support countries in their search through a vast knowledge area. But it is equally important to facilitate dialogue and integrate analysis and facilitation at all steps of capacity building work. Only if capacity remains at the centre of attention can the facilitation of policy dialogue provide the basis for change processes to be enabled and embedded in country-owned policy making.

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17 Belarus, Croatia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Ukraine.

CONCLUSIONS

Capacity as 'the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully' (OECD, 2006) is the moving target of a change process that involves individuals, organisations and societies. It is not to be seen as a gap that can be bridged conclusively but rather as a continuous matching of needs, context and purpose under the leadership of each country.

This chapter has explained how capacity is at the centre of policy analysis and facilitation and how capacity enables change processes to take place. It has also discussed how the ETF policy learning approach embraces capacity building and how policy learning can be looked at as a process, within which capacity actions take place. Examples of the policy learning approach have focused on the added value generated by the ETF's work in capacity building. This added value constitutes all that is not traditionally captured through a project approach. In order to quantify it, tools are needed to track, record and measure added value.

The ETF approach is close to what international organisations and donors call 'capacity development'. It has, however, a different and quite unique role and mandate in supporting VET developments in partner countries. Its role as a facilitator has gradually moved from knowledge sharing to operating as an 'intelligent link', where brokering knowledge and practice are still important but where the providing a methodological basis for the learning process in the countries is even more important.

Capacity development is a crucial condition for change. The method by which this capacity is developed is decisive in enabling people to start the process of change. Only a sound reflection on objectives conducted jointly with countries and a process approach can provide the basis for effective policy facilitation.

For the ETF, at the centre of all this is the policy learning approach where learning is targeted and measured both within each capacity building action and at the process level, with specific tools to track and measure change as well as the contribution of each action.

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'In the selective use of evidence, policymakers have avoided the complexities of theory and methodology. Instead they have often used social science results in simplified ways, to tell almost commonsensical stories consistent with the particular ways in which they want to frame problems. In this habit they are reinforced by journalists, whose methods of personalising issues by concentrating on the experience of individuals – story telling – makes the issues more vivid in the public mind, but [...]'.

The ending of the quote with the word 'but' is deliberate. As it indicates, the approach leaves a number of unresolved questions. These are discussed below.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS AROUND THE 'BUILDING BLOCKS' APPROACH

Building blocks or ingredients may be simple and useful tools to structure (or manage) evaluations, but as a general approach they leave a number of unresolved questions. Put simply: if the eight building blocks are the bricks, what then is the mortar holding them together? Can we provide a conceptual framework for grasping not only the parts (the building blocks) of the VET system, but also its historic roots and dynamic relationships? Are there different systemic logics behind the way building blocks are put together in different countries? How can we explore the inner driving forces of education systems that have developed over many years?

History

Following a structural-historical approach, analysis would start with an overview of existing practice, functions and structures as they appear to an experienced evaluator. Essential structures are then traced back to their origins and an understanding or explanation of the historical context in which the specific phenomenon evolved or was established is sought.

Let us look at an example. Described in a comparative, structural-functionalist manner, the broader Danish VET system may seem to be a wonderfully harmonic structure that consists of highly refined building blocks (Cort, 2002). But analysed historically, this VET system is a patchwork of political compromises reflecting what was achievable in different historical and cultural contexts of the last 100 years. How can we explain other VET systems in evaluations using this building blocks approach?

Change

The systemic logic behind the building blocks is also defined by the challenge of change. How do VET systems change and what are the driving forces behind change processes? Even if we manage to correctly describe and understand the building blocks in VET policy evaluations, we can never be certain that we have the capacity to predict change or to formulate the right intervention strategies to achieve change. Is there a strategic lever that affects VET system change? What is (empirically and theoretically) known about dynamic forces and catalysts for change, and what is the right balance between top-down (politics) and bottom-up (market) approaches? To satisfyingly answer these questions, the building blocks approach must be accompanied by a deeper insight into organisational and institutional processes of change.

Context

Yet another problem is the risk of preconception and a biased understanding of what makes a good VET system. It is not uncommon to see foreign consultants measure VET reform initiatives in one country against the advanced state of their own systems. The first question here is: are the building blocks *per se* culturally bound? The next question is: how can we make use of them in evaluations in a reasonably objective and transparent manner? One way around this dilemma is to explicitly formulate the values behind evaluations that use the building blocks approach.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Instead of methods derived from technical systems or management thinking, looking primarily at individual constituent parts, we need a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, in which the emphasis is on analysing phenomena as they appear to the experienced observer, and on establishing a genuine understanding of what is observed. The question is: which methods can we use to appreciate VET in any given country and what is the correct relationship between understanding and explanation?

Understanding and explanation are different ways of (re)cognition. Understanding is the more immediate experience or recognition of a phenomenon. Sometimes, if a phenomenon is difficult to understand, we need explanations of one or more of its constituent parts to fully come to grips with it. Related to VET, this would for example be a component of a VET system and its precise role within the whole system. Explanations establish some distance. On the basis of explanations, one may get to understand the phenomenon better or view it from a different perspective. To explain something is to state the causes behind the phenomenon under analysis. These may be external to the phenomenon itself. To understand a phenomenon is to give a reason for it, which is internal. Meaningful understanding requires a communicative community between the evaluator and what is being evaluated. Understanding a phenomenon, in this case a VET system, means that one can see (recognise, realise) how the elements fit together, and see the meaning of the overall phenomenon (intention, purpose, function), often in an immediate or even intuitive way.

The relationship between understanding and explanation is tricky. One form of recognition is not better or more correct than the other. The argument here is simply that we should reflect on these connections and deliberately seek to establish a continuous interaction between understanding and explanation.

The following are but a few examples of useful explanatory frameworks:

■ *economic, labour or social laws and other forms of legislation* – to determine the concrete conditions under which a phenomenon is active, for example, the conditioning factors behind VET systems, such as demography, trends in the labour market developments and broader education policies;
■ *functionalist explanations* referring to the totality in which the phenomenon to be explained is placed and a description of the precise function it serves – for example, the role of a national VET system for functions that have a broader relevance in society, such as qualifying, socialising or being a depository of young people;
■ *historical-cultural explanations* for the presence of different institutions and practice in contemporary VET systems – for example: why are there so many more independent VET providers (production schools, etc.) in Denmark than in Sweden?[18];
■ *structural explanations* of phenomena which can only be uncovered through in-depth analysis – such as the specific connections between economic, social and political systems that make VET system transition in many former communist countries very difficult;
■ *system-analytical explanations* showing how changes in one component will have a knock-on effect in other system components or in the total system – see the following discussion on internal and external consistency and non-university higher education as a determinant for the attractiveness of VET.

In summary, understanding and explanation feed into each other. Understanding is the point of departure for VET policy evaluations. Explanations are needed when we fail to understand.

Therefore, in parallel with refining the building blocks approach through explanation, we have to cultivate – individually and in a community of VET practitioners – a new attitude towards argumentation. We need a more open discussion practice. We shall come back to this issue later, which is central to VET system analyses and developments.

VET AS A (SUB)SYSTEM

In our effort to understand VET systems (or the context in which VET policies operate), it seems obvious that we have to apply some kind of system analysis. However, it is quite difficult (or 'as clear as mud', as Karmel (2011) phrased it) to define a VET system:

■ how is the system universe to be delineated?
■ what are the constituent components, parts, units?

■ which relationships exist between units?
■ what matrix dominates the interplay of units?
■ where are the boundaries of the system located?
■ which relationships (metabolism) exist between the system and its environment?
■ what is the prime mover or the strategic lever for change?

The set of questions is very complex and forms part of a broader scientific context. It is helpful to go back to the roots of system analysis and to analyse, from a theoretical standpoint, issues related to internal consistency and external consistency of VET systems and their consequences for VET reforms.

The meaning of the term 'system' is often confused. The most general definition was formulated by the founding father of the general system theory, von Bertalanffy (1950) after he had noticed that in physics, biology, psychology and social sciences it was no longer acceptable 'to explain phenomena by reducing them to an interplay of elementary units [building blocks!] which could be investigated independently. A system is a set of units with relationships among them; the word 'set' implies that the units have common properties – the state of each unit is constrained by, conditioned by, or dependent on the state of other units. The units are coupled. Moreover, the system as a whole has 'got something' which its components separately have not got. Systems may be concrete or abstract, systems may be 'open' or 'closed', and systems can be analysed on the principle of systems and sub-systems – systems within systems within […] ultimately a wholly general system. There are theoretical difficulties about this ultimate system: but the problems of supra-systems and sub-systems, levels and boundaries, etc., are generally manageable in a practical way'.

The German sociologist and philosopher Niklas Luhmann (1984) developed a general system theory of society, where the education system is a subsystem with its own logic, laws of motion, discourse, etc., and is even further differentiated.

Like other 'living' organisms, VET as a subsystem can be seen as an open system in a steady state. It depends on self-regulating mechanisms to maintain its boundaries and its continued existence within these boundaries. The steady state depends on a balance of inputs and outputs. The inputs are demands and support: support makes the system strong enough to process demands and to produce outputs in the form of qualifications. The VET system sits in an environment – the broader social system – which continually feeds back into the VET subsystem, signalling whether outputs produce good or adverse effects in this environment. A systemic approach to VET evaluation focuses on the analysis of relationships, communication channels, and responsiveness and adaptability, based on the fundamental understanding that changes in one component lead to changes in other components and the system as a whole.

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18   The explanation for this can be found in the legacy of Grundtvig and the free school and folk high school tradition of Denmark.

It is important to understand the specific logic of the VET system, to explore whether the system is internally and externally consistent, because this can help to define the next steps in the reform process, which is the central purpose of VET analyses.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSISTENCY

'Internal consistency' means that one part of the system correlates well with the other part(s) of the system. Changes in one part of the system, such as curricula, have an impact on other parts of the system (in this case teaching aids, teachers' skills, inspectors' skills, equipment, links with employers, etc.) and on the system as a whole. Two examples help to illustrate this.

Example 1

Donor projects have typically applied a pilot school approach. As a rule, the best institutions are selected. During the piloting phase they are granted good development conditions, i.e. they are freed from some of the difficulties they normally face. When it comes to the transfer and broad systemic implementation of pilot results, all real-world problems and barriers suddenly turn up again. The risk of barriers in the ordinary structure is always a serious factor to be reckoned with when mainstreaming VET reform (pilot) project results or translating these into policy. One other impeding factor in the model school approach is the fact that a number of elitist schools are given all the equipment, all the coaching, all the study tours, all the development assignments, etc., leaving other schools even further behind. So there is a risk of encapsulation. We have seen this in almost all countries where donors have supported pilot projects.

To comply with the principle of internal consistency, it is important to explore how it is possible to turn pilot results into systemic reform. Which pilot changes need to be integrated into a more coherent system-wide change strategy? Country leaders and donors alike are often asked to reflect on the interrelationships between various elements and aspects and on the fundamental question: where should one start (or continue) in order to trigger a development process that will lead to the desired outcomes?

Example 2

The reform of VET systems is more than a single act of establishing a new legal framework or designing new curricula. Broader curriculum reforms have typically been hampered by the relatively low level of teacher skills and competences, by the lack of appropriate materials and equipment, by the lack of change in the school environment and by inadequate management in general. A change in the logic of the system can only be achieved if the conditions for school managers and teachers and

their competences are favourable. Thus, curriculum reforms require a major pre- and in-service teacher training effort, as well as whole-school development projects to make VET reforms happen at school level. Since there are many people involved, a tremendous learning process is necessary, which needs to be facilitated and intensified through proper intervention and guidance.

By analogy, 'external consistency' means that the VET system correlates well with the contextual (external) systems in which it operates or which it serves. These include the higher education system, continuing education and training, the economy and the labour market, and society at large. VET system outcomes are generally expected to respond to their requirements.

In reality, however, there are a number of problems and tensions. Problems are, for example, linked to the fact that employers or the employment system are not always able to articulate their needs in such a way that the VET system can respond to them. Also, economic and social requirements may change at a speed that would make it very difficult for a slowly changing system like VET to follow.

Employers often require highly specialised people while (initial) VET systems should aim to maintain a holistic approach, training people for a broader range of jobs, rather than limiting their mobility and further learning by too narrow specialisations. This creates a classic tension. Tension also exists between the requirements of the higher education system, which calls for a high proportion of theory in VET and the labour market which often asks for readily applicable, practical occupational skills. This tension can be observed in many countries where VET students are, as a matter of course, prepared for progression into higher education rather than labour market entrance. It does, however, correspond to the aspirations of young people and their families, so in reality the tension is not so much between VET and higher education but between the expectations of society and the labour market. More tension can be found between the desire to develop a national qualifications system as a means to increase recognition and mobility on the one hand and employers' recruitment and training practices which are not qualification or merit-based, on the other. Tension also exists between the pedagogical logic of schools and the competence needs for employment, etc. The list of examples could easily be expanded.

It is recognised that VET by itself cannot solve economic or social problems – see, for example, Miegel and Nölke (1996), Hodgson (2001), Paquet (2001) and Grubb and Ryan (1999). The latter argues that:

'Education without suitable employment, and specific skill training without jobs requiring such skills may be valuable in their own right but they cannot enhance economic conditions. And so the other conditions necessary for education and training to be effective – the employment necessary, the capital required, the institutions that can give these arrangements some permanence – also need to be carefully understood,

and the most successful programmes carefully consider the nature of local employment.'

Nevertheless, for shaping VET system developments in the interests of external consistency, it is important to know the expectations of related external systems and translate them into VET reforms. Grubb and Ryan suggest above that 'local employment' be the main reference. While considering employment patterns especially in small countries, the term 'local' can easily be expanded to embrace a whole country.

The need for consistency pleads for some degree of cooperation between the actors and for some form of institutionalisation in order to first identify and then transcend their most immediate and specific demands. According to Durand-Drouhin and Bertrand (1994), this implies:

1. 'a framework for consultation among the various actors, which, at the national, local and/or sector level, guarantees some degree of continuity, coherence and consistency, especially between education systems and labour markets;
2. some kind of research and development structure, providing information and technical support to decision-makers; […] this includes […] the development and monitoring of labour force information systems, the development of learning theory and appropriate teaching and training methods, etc.;
3. clearly defined and agreed financing agreements which are a major element of the system regulation. This raises policy – or political – questions about the respective role of governments, enterprises and individuals […]'.

In the latter context, an important lever for governments to ensure external consistency is their decision on which VET programmes or qualifications get funded and which do not.

In the ETF partner countries, the identity of the various actors and the institutions to specify demands for VET are only just emerging. Adequate instruments are often lacking, a problem which is compounded by a more general lack of resources. But in one way or another, solutions to these problems will have to be found if countries' VET systems are to become more responsive.

APPLYING A SYSTEM APPROACH TO THE TORINO PROCESS

Now let us see how the analytical framework of the Torino Process reflects a system approach and the principles of internal and external consistency.

The Torino Process seeks to answer the following key questions:

- **Section A – Policy vision:** What is the vision for VET development and does that comply with broader national socio-economic development objectives?
- **Section B – VET in relation to economic competitiveness:** Do the skills offered by the VET system match those required by the labour market and economic development in general?
- **Section C – VET in relation to social demand and social inclusion:** Do institutions and the programmes and skills offered by the VET system, match the aspirations of individual learners, fulfil the needs of vulnerable groups, and address territorial disparities?
- **Section D – Internal quality and efficiency:** What further reforms are necessary to modernise the various elements or 'building blocks' of the VET system?
- **Section E – Governance and financing:** Are institutional arrangements, capacities and budgets adequate for bringing about the desired changes in the VET system?

Sections A, B and C are directly linked to ensuring external consistency.

Section A is about creating consensus among a range of social actors on the further paths of VET development, which should then translate into a shared policy vision.

Section B deals with demographic challenges, economic challenges, possible changes to the ownership of companies and related restructuring, the small or micro size of many enterprises, the need to boost job creation, self-employment and entrepreneurship, etc. It explores how these shape the current and future demand for (vocational and professional) skills. This section will require inputs in terms of demographic projections on the development of the (VET) student population in a five to ten-year perspective, as well as analyses into the demand for qualifications at national or sector level, including both basic and higher-level vocational qualifications.

Section C addresses the social demand and challenges from two points of view. First, it looks at the social demand by students and parents, e.g. the desire to continue on to higher education or other issues related to the status of VET and how that shapes the demand for vocational and professional skills. Second, it addresses social challenges from and VET responses to issues such as the perspective of disadvantaged groups and regions, the extent and nature of related problems, low levels of education attainment among the adult population, high inactivity rates, youth, female and long-tem unemployment, etc. VET can respond to these.

Sections D and E relate to internal consistency. The elements and the relationships between them, as covered in Section D, can be summarised in the following graph, which shows the entire VET delivery cycle.

FIGURE 5.1 VET DELIVERY CYCLE
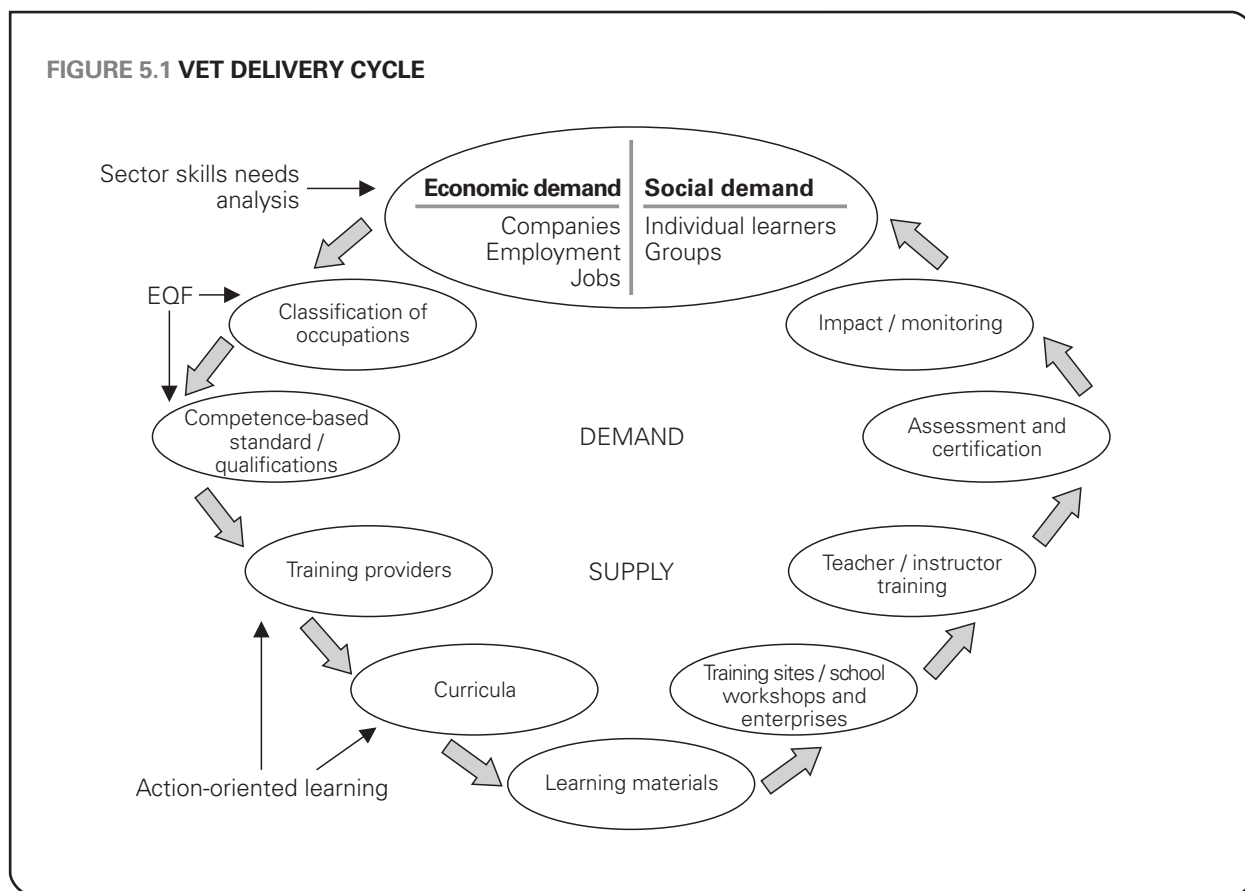
Based on an analysis of the economic and social demands (or which qualifications should be offered), the following questions, which Section D tries to answer directly or indirectly, are important.

- Through which network of institutions should qualifications be offered and in which locations (for supporting economy of scale)?
- How can relevant employers' organisations or individual employers contribute to VET in their sector?
- Which management and financing approaches should be followed?
- Which curriculum models and approaches should be followed?
- Which teacher skills, equipment and materials are required for each professional area and how can teacher training be ensured?
- How can progression towards higher levels of skills and qualifications for both young people and adults be ensured?
- How can transition to the labour market be ensured for young people or unemployed adults?
- How can disadvantaged people be supported to ensure their integration into the labour market and society?
- How can skills be acquired through non-formal or informal learning be recognised to help people progress with their education or job careers, etc.?

Finally, Section E deals with the policy framework as well as the governance and financing framework in which the VET delivery cycle is embedded.

At this point, however, we would like to introduce a note of caution: we are well aware that even the most refined framework can never reflect the realities of all contexts in countries as diverse as Uzbekistan, Serbia or Egypt to name but a few. In accordance with critical comments regarding the 'building block' approach and to comply with constructivist evaluation approaches, actors whose system is to be evaluated should get a stake in shaping the actual evaluation agenda. For this reason we encourage policy learning processes (see below) and allowing the analytical framework to be adapted to specific country conditions.

THE USE OF EVIDENCE

In the Torino Process we explicitly encourage the use of evidence (ETF, 2012). Evidential research – or *kaozheng* as it was referred to by 18th century intellectuals – is an old Chinese approach. One of the most famous books that set Paris atwitter in the 1750s was the *Encyclopedia or Reasoned Dictionary of the Sciences, the Arts and the Crafts*. The time was ripe for enlightened people who would look for reason and do away with the metaphysical thinking that had dominated intellectual life for centuries. The greatest wit of all, Voltaire, from his exile in Switzerland, challenged even what he labelled 'the infamous thing' – the privileges of church and crown. Voltaire knew where to look for more enlightenment: China. Chinese intellectuals had been challenging absolutism a century before. They would find a truly wise despot and rule in consultation with a rational civil service.

Confucianism, unlike Christianity, was based on reason, rather than superstition or legends.

Gu Yanwu, a Chinese low-level civil servant – just like Francis Bacon in England – tried to understand the world by observing the things that people actually did. Gu would travel to distant places and then fill notebooks with detailed descriptions of farming, mining and banking. Others copied him. Doctors facing large-scale epidemics in the 17th century started to collect case studies of sick patients, investigating possible causes of diseases, describing symptoms and looking for cures. Hence, *kaozheng* 'emphasized facts over speculation, bringing methodical, rigorous approaches to fields as diverse as mathematics, astronomy, geography, linguistics, and history, and consistently developing rules for assessing evidence'. *Kaozheng* paralleled Western Europe's scientific revolution since then. However, there was one thing *kaozheng* did not attempt to do: it did not develop a mechanical model of nature (Morris, 2011, p. 473).

Although the above dates back hundreds of years, it still holds parallels and lessons for our work in evidential research.

First, rather than speculating about them, we must aim to look for facts or other kinds of evidence to explain certain phenomena.

Second, such explanations must be based on an in-depth knowledge of the matter which can only be developed from close observation, often over longer periods of time, and consultations with the people concerned. There is no point in pretending that we can simply apply our models and ideas to every context and that we can make judgments without in-depth analysis and reflection. Facts alone, including objective (statistical) data, will not suffice. We need to put not only these data but all phenomena as they appear to the experienced observer in context, seek the causes behind them, interpret them, explain them, thus demonstrating that we have a thorough grasp of the issues.

Third, intellectuals of the past learned to see the advantages of getting to the root of a problem, discussing it with the relevant people and only then trying to solve it by testing theories against real results. Perhaps our malaise is that we draw conclusions and prescribe solutions too quickly, without testing them and judging their feasibility.

Fourth, there is no mechanical model. The engineer's toolbox is of little use in understanding social phenomena or systems.

Fifth, in our analysis, why should we not challenge convention and established institutions and look for the possible presence of Voltaire's 'infamous thing'?

To comply with these lessons, we have defined 'evidence' within the Torino Process in a broad sense:

> 'Evidence can take many forms, such as experience and evaluation of practice, the results of scientific

analyses, quantitative and qualitative research, basic and applied research, and the development of statistics and indicators. Education and training are part of the diverse cultural traditions and identities of countries and they interact with a web of other policies. In these circumstances, there can be no simple prescriptions about what makes good policy or practice. This makes it all the more important to know as much as possible about what works, for whom, under what circumstances and with what outcomes' (European Commission, 2007).

To establish a sound evidence base or, in essence, *knowledge base* requires highly experienced observers or teams of observers. The kind of multidisciplinary experience that is required for complex fields such as VET or labour market reforms develops only over many years of apprenticeship. One might argue that outsiders, given their preconceptions about different issues, can hardly get to the root of the problems or are not able to design appropriate solutions. It is the observed people themselves who are in the best position to provide meaningful explanations and advice. To solve this dilemma, the ETF has conceptualised what we call 'policy learning' processes.

POLICY LEARNING

Many assistance projects funded and undertaken on behalf of donors include some form of policy transfer or policy copying. They are based on the assumption that there is 'best policy practice' that is relevant for any other country and can therefore be easily taught by and learned from international consultants, or studied and copied by national policymakers. Practice is considered 'best' because it works with particular theoretical or ideological constructs, or because it has proven its worth in specific contexts. However, policies based on a transfer or replication of best practice have generally resulted in unsustainable policy proposals. The main reasons for this are that they generally do not fit in the wider context of the countries that adopt them and that real ownership among key national stakeholders is not achieved. There would be no commitment or even a possibility for anybody to make the policies work in practice after donor funding sources had dried out. As a result, the implementation of copied policies has only rarely achieved the envisaged results. Consequently, there is always a need to search for a deeper understanding of why and under what circumstances certain practice may be effective, and of practical issues that have to be addressed in developing and implementing them. In other words, to repeat the quotation from above, 'we need to know as much as possible about what works, for whom, under what circumstances and with what outcomes' (European Commission, 2007).

A new concept was needed, built on the belief that systemic VET reforms (or indeed any major reform) will only be successful and sustainable if policy design and implementation are firmly rooted in broad ownership and embeddedness within existing institutions.

Policy is all about visions for development and the ways to achieve goals. In the process of 'policy learning', relevant stakeholders develop their own policy solutions through active engagement in a learning environment. It is based on the understanding that there are simply no valid models but at most a wealth of international experience in dealing with similar policy issues in different contexts. Policy learning involves international comparison to develop a better understanding of one's own country and of current policy problems and possible solutions. It tries to inform policy development by drawing lessons from available evidence and experience (Grootings et al., 2006; Raffe and Spours, 2007; and Chakroun, 2007).

The concept includes:

- learning from past experience,
- learning appropriately from other countries,
- learning from local innovation.

(Grootings, 2008)

The concept has major implications for policy analysts or advisers and their cooperation with colleagues in partner countries, not least within the context of the Torino Process. Policy learning contrasts with the more traditional view of capacity development. The latter implies that local actors have certain 'knowledge gaps' and the external consultants just need to identify and fill these. In reality, we would argue, it is most often the other way round.

Effective policy learning should aim to accomplish a deeper understanding of policy problems and processes on the part of all partners involved. New policies need to be strategically linked to locally defined goals and outcomes and must be firmly embedded in the institutions and routines of a given country.

Policy learning – as distinct from policy borrowing and copying – encourages situated problem solving and reflection. There is, hence, a lot to be derived from learning theory, in particular from the concept of communities of practice where practitioners sharing common practice come together to seek solutions to common problems (see, for example, Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002; and Wenger and Snyder, 2001). The Torino Process explicitly encourages not just participation in a process that is pre-defined by the ETF, but a collaborative learning effort involving both local and international peers.

Policy learning is a truly democratic approach. It will not work in countries where decision making is highly centralised and where actors at lower levels of the system are not given a voice in the reform agenda. But as a result, such countries will miss out on important parts of their policy intelligence and will find it hard to get broad approval and support for implementing reforms designed at the top.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to design the ETF Torino Process in a way that it:

1. encourages countries to make informed decisions about VET policy developments and planning by searching for 'evidence', or a sound knowledge base, using available literature, indicators, surveys, projections, etc. and not least the wisdom of people;
2. adheres to a system approach, reflecting the principles of internal and external consistency;
3. leaves room, or indeed provides the basis, for reflections, consensus-building and democratic decision making processes by local actors, thus making the step from mere policy analysis to the development of policy and agreements about policy choices;
4. has the potential to inform not only national VET reform priorities, but also those of other donors, including the EU and the ETF.

A broad evidence base – or, in essence, knowledge base – is needed to be able to formulate meaningful policy proposals. This implies a deeper understanding of the policy problems and processes in question, of why the system ticks as it ticks or why certain actors behave as they behave, and of the fundamental logic and change levers in a given VET system. New policies need to be strategically linked to locally defined goals and outcomes and must be firmly embedded in the institutions and routines of a given country. This contrasts with the perception that policies could simply be borrowed or copied and that external consultants could just go and build the capacities of local actors to 'embrace' such imported policies. Instead, the Torino Process explicitly encourages not only 'the participation in' a process pre-defined by the ETF, but a collaborative learning effort involving both local and international peers. Such a joint learning journey requires readiness on the part of ETF actors, ownership and leadership by participating countries, a longer time horizon and considerable resources, which are however not yet guaranteed in all countries. But they would be essential to achieve the stated objectives of the Torino Process.

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6. UNDERSTANDING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS A 'SYSTEM'

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to contribute to a holistic understanding of VET systems and the evidence needed for innovation and reform in education and training. A holistic or comprehensive view of VET systems is supported by contributions from the social sciences and is necessary to better cope with the complexity of the environment in which VET is embedded: the labour market, the economy, technological developments, other education subsystems, etc.

This chapter looks at ETF experience and instruments in VET system assessment under the Torino Process[19], taking the Western Balkan countries as a point of reference.

The majority of VET systems in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Albania are still characterised by:

- their modest contribution to the employability of graduates (there is a mismatch between supply and demand) and to lifelong learning activities;
- the large number of poorly performing public vocational schools;
- a preference among students for general secondary education with a view to subsequent enrolment in higher education;
- a severe segregation between initial VET and continuing VET with only a small role for the latter;
- a lack of policies for social partner involvement in VET reform and the absence of effective governance models;
- a lack of coherence in education system reform and other sector policies of the countries.

Addressing such severe problems through innovation and reform requires a thorough understanding of the VET system's performance in the country.

After presenting the main reasons for the low performance of VET in the Western Balkan countries, this chapter will give some suggestions for improving the internal and external economic efficiency and effectiveness of VET. These 'building blocks' in VET system analysis require a close link with strong external (potential) drivers if they are to create sufficient evidence for reform and innovation. Evidence must be deduced from well-working or deficient relations between the system and its environment and not merely from the inner system logic of the VET system itself.

APPROACHES TO VET

Like all social systems, education systems have symbolic boundaries, operational codes[20] and specific communication that reinforces the boundaries and the system's very existence. In the social sciences, the so-called 'social systems theory' looks at how systems are different from and relate to the environment in which they operate (von Bertalanffy, 1950; Luhmann, 1984; Parsons, 1951). It also discusses the consequences for reorganising systems. This dynamic component, highlighting the tensions between systems and their environments, distinguishes the social systems theory from other analytical instruments used for VET system assessment.

Historical, hermeneutical, structural, functional and mere quantitative views on VET systems provide a lot of useful evidence for reform and innovation (Viertel et al., 2004), but in the perspective of systems analysis, VET reform as a social process that is constructed by different players is more concerned with the influences of external social groups and drivers of future change than with inner systemic issues. In our policy dialogue with the countries, we should distinguish between inner systemic innovation and broader (macro) reform of education and training. The latter requires real social action and dialogue among stakeholders.

VET reform as a social process also comprises the ability of a VET system to adjust itself to challenges and changes in its socio-economic environment. Because of this, the ETF must combine tools for system assessment such as analytical frameworks and indicators with qualitative methodologies of research. This is the only way to deal with the increasing complex and sophisticated relationships between the system and its environment.

All environments of specific systems are different and because systems develop along lines drawn by the system's tasks and boundaries within this environment,

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19 The countries were visited in 2010 and 2011 and interviews were carried out with national VET experts, social partners, employers, donors and decision-makers in ministries and VET centres. For more information on the Torino Process, see www.etf.europa.eu.

20 The main operational codes can for example be 'profit and loss' in commercial systems, 'legal and illegal' in the system of justice. These codes help to distinguish tasks where action is required and tasks where a system does not need to act.

all systems are different too. The environment which most strongly influences a VET system covers the labour market, the economy, technological and demographic developments (including migration), the socio-cultural aspirations of the general public, and other education sub-systems. All of these environmental components are potential drivers for change in VET. They, and not inner systemic constraints, are the main reason for VET system reform in Europe.

'Increasing Europe's competitiveness […] coping with population aging, reducing unemployment, tackling labour market skills needs and shortages and improving enterprises' economic performance are all key factors exerting pressures on VET, pushing for its modernisation' (Cedefop, 2009, p. 32). Hence, VET system reform is expected to contribute to the solutions of societal problems and not exclusively to cover mere education objectives.

These external drivers for change in VET systems can only lead to inner systemic innovation when the relations between the system and its environment are well designed and managed by VET experts at several levels of governance, including different civil society and government actors. These can integrate a diversity of objectives in VET systems beyond pedagogics, comprising social inclusion, employability and competitiveness.

The social systems theory takes into account the dynamic relationship between the VET system and its environment and highlights the high potential of this relationship for inner systemic change. An analysis of the consequences of coping successfully with its environment delivers a more comprehensive picture of the system and its performance than looking exclusively at the VET system itself and its different elements. It can also better reveal suitable evidence for action.

The view of education authorities on VET systems favours traditional approaches. They tend to focus on inner systemic components of education, such as resources, schools, curricula, teachers, textbooks, reporting procedures etc. This holds particularly true in most of the ETF partner countries. Such a perception has structural limitations. It does not provide a comprehensive picture and suitable evidence for policy development, innovation and change. Consequently, such approaches foster administrative reforms and actions 'which are seldom the result of an embodied set of knowledge or empirical evidence accumulated' (OECD, 2009, p. 251) and which would have taken into account the VET system's environment.

As the social system theory reveals, inner systemic developments are heavily dependent on external drivers. This is also a basic assumption in the ETF's activities in human capital development support. Only holistic assessment approaches which systematically include the relations between the system and the environment can reveal the consequences for VET reform and policy dialogue of country specific constraints and development strategies.

THE REALITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Are these approaches of social systems theory applicable to VET systems in the former socialist and communist countries of the Western Balkans? Here, 'VET still accounts for very substantial cohorts of young people in secondary education: 60–75% in former Yugoslav countries (although only 16% in Albania)' (ETF, 2011a)[21]. A first step to answering this question requires a closer look at the policies, structures and performance of the VET systems in the region.

■ Under communism, the population perceived the state as the only player in education and training, fully financing a VET system which cooperated with big economic conglomerates. Even today, policy design, financing and the implementation of VET, including governance, is still driven by the state. The other players from the demand side (employers, trade unions, learners etc.) are following rules rather than helping to set them. The same applies to the existing national VET councils. This socio-cultural heritage needs time to change, even more so because of a 'backward-looking mentality and lack of commitment […] particularly in public administration' at certain levels of the VET systems (Corradini et al., 2012). The private sector still lacks awareness and interest in staff training and more systematic engagement in emerging institutions such as VET councils, sector committees and local initiatives (Klenha, 2010).

■ The countries of the former Yugoslavia experienced both violent conflict and severe economic and social restructuring after independence. This widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The endless number of emerging small and micro enterprises in the Balkan countries is the result of this economic situation characterised by high unemployment[22]. There is no clear strategic socio-economic perspective which could create strong pressure and new forms of cooperation in education and training between the private sector and governments. Well-organised work-based learning, like in Croatia, and a strategic orientation of the private sector towards improved human capital development are the exception rather than the rule in such environments (Lui, 2009).

■ The fragmented structure and the low productive performance of such a survival economy stand in the way of long-term strategic development which would favour investments in VET-driven human capital development. And yet there is no doubt that the latter is necessary, as is best illustrated by the example of the fomer Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where, despite extraordinarily high unemployment rates, one third of the employers claim that hiring a skilled worker is difficult (World Bank, 2010).

■ This all has consequences for the demand side of education too. The main aspirations of learners in the communist period were turned upside-down in the new economic environment where recruitment barely

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21 The Western Balkans and Turkey chapter in this ETF report contains the most relevant figures about VET system and labour market developments in the region.

22 According to a USAID paper, the unemployment rates for Albania, Montenegro and Serbia ranged between 10% and 20% (2010), for Bosnia and Herzegovina 28% (2010), for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 31% (2010) and for Kosovo 45% (2009) (USAID, 2011).

follows certain functional criteria for competences or skill profiles, but imperatives of social networks, family responsibilities and a certain tendency to contract cheaper labour in order to increase profits. Relatively attractive salaries and sound employment opportunities for VET graduates are far from granted[23].

■ Under bleak economic circumstances, young people tend to postpone their entry into the labour market while the country really needs more vocationally qualified workers. Many young and unemployed university leavers would rather enrol in a second university programme than set up a bluecollar business and learn the required skills for 'dirty' crafts or industrial jobs[24]. This in spite of the fact that unemployment is often higher among the better educated (Emloyment Service Agency, 2009).

■ Such patterns are reinforced by an environment without economic incentives that demand sound middle-level qualifications (ISCED 3 and 4) required in all modern small enterprises and typically provided by VET. On the contrary, today even exporting enterprises in the region tend to rely predominantly on a high internal differentiation of tasks and functions which requires less complex skills but favours lower salaries. Even five-star hotels in Albania train their young waiters and cooks on the job in just six months. Hotel staff elsewhere in Central Europe need three years of apprenticeship in this area and would be so multifunctional as to cover nearly all skill profiles required in hotels. Needless to say, the mobility of the workforce is hampered by such narrow training profiles. So is the ability of the labour market as a whole to respond to sudden changes.

■ As long as education systems are effectively governed as monopolies they will continue to focus on internal processes and be unlikely to develop alternative strategies for problem-solving and sustainable innovation and hence for human capital development as a whole. The autopoiesis[25] of such systems reproduces their weak performance. Regulations and procedures (like new curricula, professional standards and qualifications frameworks) cannot solve systemic problems in skills development unless the relation between the system and the environment is significantly improved.

■ Due to the lack of social partner participation and the absence of sector committees etc. (Viertel and Nikolovska, 2010), skills needs are not systematically articulated by social forces and channelled into political

initiatives. In fact, the World Bank thinks that in only two former Eastern transition countries there is currently a realistic potential for complex regulatory constructs such as national qualifications frameworks (Russia and Croatia), because their social infrastructure is advanced enough to accommodate this kind of reform (Bodewig and Hirshleifer, 2011, p. 44).

■ In most countries, education systems are not yet able to substantially improve key conditions for quality[26], such as teacher education and further training, institutional culture, accountability, dialogue with the private sector, textbooks, management styles and learning methodologies[27].

■ Human capital development is driven largely by external forces, most notably the private sector and international donors. While these two forces are different, neither appear to have sustainable consequences for education and training systems. Companies develop in-house strategies for work-based learning or use targeted offers from outside to cover their skills needs in cooperative training modes. These contribute to in-house human capital development strategies in specific business areas but do little to improve the education system. Donor interventions tend to produce good results until external support is withdrawn at the end of a project. After that, the required resources can often no longer be mobilised by the system itself. Donor assistance risks creating artificial systemic structures and often ignores the need for changes in relations between the system and its environment while it is exactly these relations that could be key to mobilising sustainable resources from outside the system, such as in the private sector and in private households.

■ VET systems in the Western Balkans lost almost all of their capacity to connect to the challenges in their environment. As a result, they can no longer develop innovative action by using adaptive and flexible operational codes and systemic strategies to survive at a higher performance level.

This long list identifies the principal obstacles to VET system reform. The solution is usually found outside rather than inside the existing education and training system. ETF and donor approaches must systematically consider these external drivers of reform and innovation in education and training in the design of VET system assessment strategies[28].

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23 However, even in the booming construction sector of Montenegro, skilled workers are hard to find and recruitment strategies cover neighbouring countries. Even relatively high wages have no influence on national labour markets: school efforts for higher enrolment in brick layer programmes in the capital Podgorica failed recently because students look exclusively at VET programmes leading to white collar jobs despite evidence that their employment perspectives are modest.

24 Such socio-cultural preferences prevail even in a situation where Macedonian employers say that they will recruit 49.7% of new employees from secondary education but only 13.8% from higher education (Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, 2009).

25 The term 'autopoiesis' means self-production or self-creation and was brought into the social sciences from cell biology (see Maturana and Varela, 1998).

26 Serbia's PISA results reveal a performance level that is significantly below the OECD average and also lower than the performance of Croatia and Slovenia. It is estimated that between one and three years of additional education would be necessary in Serbia to catch up with these countries (Klenha et al., 2010).

27 The low quality of education was recently confirmed by a World Bank study looking at education and training in Eastern Europe (including the Western Balkan countries) and Central Asia (Sondergaard and Murthi, 2012).

28 The ETF's analytical framework for VET system assessment within the Torino Process refers strongly to such external systemic drivers (see www.etf.europa.eu) and designed building blocks for assessing external and internal efficiency and other issues such as governance.

INNOVATION IN VET – HOW CAN IT WORK?

In order to develop a deeper understanding of innovation in VET, it would be good to exclude traditional and mechanistic perceptions that view it as a system that is simply made up of different elements and the relations between them. A system-centred focus of assessment would underestimate the relations between this system and its environment, while these relations are crucial for the successful performance of VET and its external efficiency.

Approaches that analyse and describe VET systems from a more quantitative, functional and output-oriented point of view without reference to their specific national context and disregarding the relevance of education processes tend to de-contextualise it and sacrifice qualitative and hermeneutical approaches by putting more emphasis on indicators and empirical data.

There are many other reasons for approaching VET systems in a more holistic manner, one of these being 'the short lifespan of democratically elected governments [which] may result in "quick-fix" solutions [where] statistics and data may be de-contextualised' (Dunkel, 2009).

While there is no uniform model that can be applied for assessing evidence of VET system reform and innovation (Viertel et al., 2004, p. 227), one option is to combine analytical frameworks which include (quantitative) data collection with more comprehensive, qualitative and participative research strategies that take into account the socially and culturally biased environment which is so crucial for innovation and change. This requires strong and representative contributions from both within and outside the VET systems in the countries. In its framework for VET system and policy assessment, the ETF combines both elements. For strong qualitative inputs it uses interviews and focus/validation groups. Such groups comprise social partner representatives and other relevant actors from civil society.

Comprehensive assessments consider the (dynamic) relations of systems and the environment in which they operate. This environment consists predominantly of other systems, which may influence VET system operations if they are connected to the environment in an organised matter and if this connection is supported by internal codes of operation. Such assessments do not ignore operations within the system but relate these to the environment to improve self-organisation towards new challenges, self-referential operations and general autopoiesis.

It must be understood that all systems tend towards becoming 'operationally closed' and operations have the exclusive purpose of maintaining the existence of the system, regardless of whether the system's tasks are related to education, economics, financial issues etc. The term 'operationally closed' means that social systems stick predominantly to themselves in order to maintain their mere existence. If connectivity and operational codes of systems are not adequately organised and constantly adapted, systems might lose their capacity to adapt to changes in their environment. In the case of education systems, they would end up offering programmes that are irrelevant for employment. If an enterprise loses this connectivity it would go bankrupt because important changes in technologies, trends and markets could not be adequately inserted in its operations, products and services. In spite of poor performance, education systems, particularly those that are entirely state supported, do not necessarily go bankrupt, as we can see in a number of the ETF partner countries.

Hence, and paradoxically, systems must be 'open' to their environments in order to function effectively as operationally closed systems. Only closed systems which design their operations well can contact and act successfully in the environment while being operationally closed[29].

The ability of VET systems to adapt and reorganise themselves effectively and in an innovative manner depends heavily on how the system, as a learning organisation, perceives and responds to the challenges in the environment and adapts to these. In the case of VET, most purely school-based systems tend to underestimate these relations with their environment and have problems adapting rapidly to current developments in the modern crafts and manufacturing sector (Wallenborn et al., 2009). This is partly the result of academic aspirations and expectations of learners[30]. Without substantial influence and assistance from the outside world, school-based VET systems reproduce their self-organisation and the reasons for their weak performance in a vicious circle.

Qualification, curriculum and teacher reform can only be sustainable when the logic of the system connects the prevailing operational codes to the potential external drivers of VET systems. Moreover, new links between system and environment must be established to ensure efficient self-organisation of the system, based on more accountability of the involved institutions to the learners, the world of work and governments.

In the case of VET system reform the social partners can offer promising links to the environment. As long as (education) authorities develop stand-alone policies for VET without a governance mode that is based on the institutionalised involvement of social partners and other actors in civil society, the inner systemic perspective and education objectives will most likely dominate reform attempts and no or very little progress will be made in making VET more relevant to the outside world.

Self-referential operating systems demand good intervention strategies that are formulated outside the system and based on democratic values as well as on the

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29   In their contact with the environment they might even hide their main operational purpose. A car producer might say his vision and mission are sustainable and reliable cars. However, the main operational code of an enterprise is profit versus loss.

30   In Bosnia and Herzegovina the share of vocational contents in the three or four-year vocational education covers only 55–60% instead of 70% (Corradini et al., 2011).

commitment, participation and accountability of stakeholders. If these exist, implementation can continue in different parts of the system and capacity development measures can be supported by donors.

So what is required? First, a better understanding of the complexity of outside drivers and their potential and beneficial influence on any kind of training system. Second, VET systems that lack relevance for employment must be downsized into smaller but more flexible and effective systems. Supported by policies, these should develop relations to the different social partners and sectors of the business environment. There is already plenty of experience in the region (ETF, 2011b). Money saved by closing down VET centres that lack relevance to the labour market could be channelled towards better quality in multi-functional initial and adult training institutions or in general secondary education. Simultaneously, enrolment requirements for higher education should be made more demanding. Systemic stakeholder involvement must be formally approved and institutions such as national VET councils must either be created urgently or, where they already exist, given a precise and substantial mandate in particular to increase the attractiveness of VET.

Truly involving the environment in education and training is a long-term social process in which stakeholders such as social partners take over part of the responsibility for human capital development. This social process is essential and cannot be cut short with new regulations and policies, regardless of whether these are donor-driven or have their origins in national decision making. A dynamic VET system builds on this social dimension.

There are four strategic dimensions to the success of such social processes in reform and innovation all of which represent fundamental elements of the Torino Process analytical framework and policy debate.

- Participation and coherence: Effective relations between the system and its environment must be consensually agreed among the main stakeholders (OECD 2009, p. 205). These must be complemented by laws and regulations which promote the involvement (and accountability) of main players in national and regional VET councils and ensure coherence with other sector policies in the country.
- Governance: Extended and sensitive mechanisms for the self-regulation and self-organisation of VET systems require multi-level governance, involving actors in the national and local economies at different levels, VET experts from education institutions and learners in order to 'align governance, management, financing, and incentive mechanisms to produce employment relevant learning for all' (World Bank, 2011, p. 21).
- Inner systemic operations: To strengthen interaction with the VET environment, improved inner systemic

procedures and tools must be introduced, including sector committees, local partnerships, round tables and education and business cooperation committees (ETF, 2011b), preparing the ground for ongoing inner systemic innovation.
- Benefits from evidence: A close connection is needed to organisations and institutions which carry out (applied) research that is relevant for labour market trends or skill needs development and policy formulation (Cedefop, 2009, p. 33), including the consequences for curriculum development, further training of teachers and trainers and other elements of the system.

In these four dimensions, capacity development for the design and implementation of reform is a cross-cutting issue which the ETF is addressing through the Torinet initiative. But it requires awareness and commitment from the actors involved and this can only emerge in social processes and through updated relations with the environment.

PERSPECTIVES AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has highlighted some impediments for effective VET system reform. A better understanding of VET as a system should look almost exclusively at the context for VET reforms and innovations and at how VET systems and their elements should be connected to their environment as encouraged through the Torino Process. Research has defined 'reform' in VET as substantial changes to the institutional setting, performance and the instruments of governance. This goes far beyond new regulations and innovations that focus on already existing parts of the system (Rauner, 2009, p. 40).

It is important to distinguish inner systemic elements from external drivers, because reform that seeks more involvement of social partners and new forms of (multi-level) governance concentrates largely on these external drivers of VET in its search for a new division of tasks in the management of vocational education according to the principle of subsidiary: strengthening and concentrating strategic competences at the national level, and strengthening and concentrating operative management tasks at the regional and local levels (Rauner and Wittig, 2010).

The problem in the Western Balkans is, however, that such reforms require a culture shift that takes time to develop. It can hardly be influenced by short-term technical assistance projects which focus on improving inner systemic elements, such as new professional standards or curricula, teacher training, etc. The following table illustrates what time perspective we are looking at, although may differ in different country contexts.

TABLE 6.1 TIME HORIZONS FOR CHANGING DRIVERS AND VET SYSTEM ELEMENTS

Ten years and more	Norms, traditions, values, expectations and aspirations[31]
	General socio-economic development
	Social status and social reputation of VET
Three to ten years	Economic developments, (labour) markets, technologies, competitiveness
	Institutional awareness, capacity building and development
	VET policies, social partner involvement and win-win situations among stakeholders
	Leadership, political commitment, governance, resources
One to three years	Teacher (further) training reform
	Development of standards and qualifications
	Curricula
	Textbooks
	Refurbishment and other physical infrastructure

Components, which are more or less easily changeable (sometimes with technical assistance from donors), require the shortest time horizon. Relatively rapid progress in innovating different VET system elements, such as curricula, widely created the misunderstanding that technical intervention and copying solutions from elsewhere could solve problems in an uncharted and unfavourable environment. The term 'technical cooperation' still contains the misunderstanding that problems could be solved inherently in the system while ignoring complex but fairly unknown socio-cultural environments (Easterly, 2006) which determine the extent to which external drivers can influence VET system development.

Adams (2010) explained the relative success of the Mubarak-Kohl Initiative for the creation of an adapted Egyptian dual system by the fact that Egyptian-German cooperation went back 15 years. Here too, inner systemic adaption (curricular innovation, professional standards) was the easiest element, tackled through technical assistance. But the initiative became a success of its work on external drivers of the system, such as an enabling environment, support from top leaders (Mubarak and Kohl), the emergence of a vibrant private sector with new skills needs, strong leadership of the education authorities, win-win situations for all involved including employers organisations, learners, schools, teachers and enterprises.

Future research on VET systems and education policies must better recognise the influence of external drivers on systemic developments. As the history of VET in the transition countries clearly reveals, reform initiatives rarely originate in the system itself. In the early 1990s, the pressure on the political systems in these countries came from outside these political systems, and their internal systemic structures were no longer able to cope with these challenges. By the same token, VET systems must successfully integrate external pressure in internal operations if they want to survive their consequences.

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31 The children of former eastern German contract workers from Vietnam reveal how strongly cultural issues of Confucianism influence education careers. The Vietnamese students outperform even Germans in their quantitative enrolment rates per age group in upper general secondary education, despite growing up in very poor families that hardly speak German and have no resources for purchasing additional education services for their children (Spiewak, 2009).

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7. EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY: THE RIGHT CATEGORY IN EDUCATION?

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INTRODUCTION

Few would disagree that professional practice could be improved if policymakers had better access to a large body of knowledge, but in this chapter we will argue that the evidence-based practice movement may be overrated as an approach to dramatically improve education performance. The reasons for this lie in misconceptions of the nature of both research and practice. The advocates of evidence-based practice have too much confidence in the accessibility and availability of research findings and in the role that evidence is likely to play. They tend to treat practice as the application of research-based knowledge, neglecting the other factors which necessarily enter into play. We will discuss some of the problems related to a simplistic use of the evidence-based prescriptions in education by juxtaposing this approach to the realities of policy making in Kosovo and Southern Mediterranean countries.

WHAT IS EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING?

Evidence-based policy making has been defined as an approach that 'helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation' (Davies, 1999).

The movement for the enhanced use of research evidence in the professions started in medicine in the early 1990s. It has grown there and spread across a number of other fields, including education and training. But even in the field of health, where evidence is a matter of public safety, its use is not as straightforward as it would appear: 'Research results are seen as having highly varied roles in policy formulation, the most effective perhaps being to "change the terms of the debate" on a given issue, depending on the actors' political power of persuasion and their ability (using politics and lobbying) to keep the specific issue on the policy agenda over time and to implement the intended changes' (Almeida, 2006, p. 15).

We should note that the very phrase 'what works', which the evidence-based practice movement sees as the proper focus for research, implies a view of policy making as technical: open to objective assessment about what is and what is not effective. Before looking at the partner countries it is worthwhile looking at the OECD countries where the wind of evidence-based policy making originates.

Milani (2009, p. 36) says there is a 'lack of success' of evidence-based policy making in OECD countries and there are many reasons for this.

1. Short-term politics mean that there is no time to include current evidence-based policy making results in the practice of the political decision process.
2. There are no structural links between research and schools.
3. Research is misinterpreted by the media and politicians.
4. There is a lack of interaction between research, policy and practice.
5. Research results often do not fit into policy agendas or interests.
6. At school level, suitable mechanisms or incentives to feed evidence into classroom practice are lacking.
7. Teachers have to respond to immediate classroom needs and cannot wait for research results.
8. Present evidence-based policy making does not present sufficient classroom tools for them to play an important role.
9. Researchers and practitioners do not speak the same language and operate in isolation from each other.
10. Negative evaluation results can be interpreted (by the public and by politicians) as proof of bad policy.
11. Politicians often have their own specific ideas and are frustrated when evidence tells them that they are wrong.

Melina insists that 'the information readily available for policy making is often unsuitable, either because the rigorous research required for policy needs has not been conducted, or because the research that is available is contradictory and does not suggest a single course of action' (p. 35). Ben Levin (2009) emphasises that while governments are increasingly interested in stronger connections between research, policy and practice, political decisions about education policies are rarely the direct outcome of social science research. They are more often the result of conflicting pressure from different social and economic actors, such as employers, workers' organisations, special interest groups and the media. The impact of research is primarily felt in larger social and political processes.

With this in mind, is it realistic that the evidence-based policy making approach will succeed in EU partner countries? There are reasons to believe that this may be

very difficult, especially if we consider (as we do here) policy in the non-EU countries of the Mediterranean and the concrete situation for policymakers in Kosovo.

WHERE DOES THE EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING APPROACH COME FROM?

Since the 1990s, a trend has developed in the US to encourage a specific type of education research that is characterised by evidence-based results. With the Bush government's 2001 school act, *No Child Left Behind*, the preference for scientifically founded practice increased. In *No Child Left Behind* scientific research is defined in terms of 'rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge [that is] relevant to education activities and programmes'. This strengthening of research was followed up by the country's National Research Council in the report *Scientific Research in Education* (Shavelson and Towne, 2002, p. 1) which opens with an argument for education research: 'No one would think of getting to the moon or of wiping out a disease without research. Likewise, one cannot expect reform efforts in education to have significant effects without research knowledge to guide them'. The authors imply that education cannot just build on 'folk wisdom' – there is a need for 'rigorous, sustained, scientific research' (ibid, p. 12).

In some quarters the term 'evidence-based policy research' was adopted. It has been an OECD activity from 2007 (OECD, 2007). One of the founding fathers of OECD research in this field, Tom Schuller, realised that this concept can lead to unrealistic assumptions about the role of research and evidence, as if evidence supplies a platform on which policy is based in some simplistic linear process. Schuller now prefers the term evidence-informed policy research, which he defines as 'the conscientious and explicit use of current best evidence in making decisions and choosing between policy options' (Burns and Schuller, 2009, p. 58).

However, tendencies and mechanisms which are quite pervasive today in American education provide a scenario that cannot just be transferred to Europe. Neither in the EU nor in European governments and political-administrative systems are such unequivocal, centrally-taken decisions on prioritising evidence-based knowledge and the experimental design (the 'Golden Standard') preferred as the dominant research paradigm in education. Partnerships between researchers and decision-makers and dialogue about research results still seem to be the norm for influencing the formulation of educational policies on this side of the Atlantic. (Krogstrup, 2011, pp. 157–158).

Historically, evidence-based policy making is closely related to influential demands for transparent accountability that are characteristic of what has come to be called New Public Management (Hammersley, 2004).

It is assumed that research can ensure that the best is done by providing information about 'what works' and by documenting whether practitioners are actually following 'best practice'. Moreover research is believed to be capable of doing this because it is objective and explicit. What it provides is open to public scrutiny while professional experience is not. According to Hammersley, the demand for accountability seems to come from increasing recognition of the right of taxpayers to know that their money is well spent. The use of performance indicators has indeed proliferated in education policies in partner countries (e.g. MANFORME in Tunisia, and Charte de l'Education in Morocco). So, evidence-based policy making occurs in an environment where an accountability framework of some sort is in place.

Take the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Before the Arab Spring, no leader in the region was accountable to his people with the possible exception of Lebanon. Not that they were not elected, but elections were usually rigged. Once elected, leaders strived to cling to their position for as long as possible. Nepotism was widespread. The clan structure of society still allows the sharing of power and benefits among the dominant affluent families. This is, in fact, one of the main sources of the Arab revolutions.

Evidence-based policy making cannot unfold in a country without an accountability framework through which policy can be assessed. An accountability framework starts with functioning institutions. Indeed, in the context of New Public Management, policies should be judged by whether promised improvements in the public sector have taken place as measured by performance indicators. There is no lack of planning or objectives or even indicators but strong institutions are needed to follow up on the implementation. The many budget support activities that the European Commission is implementing in the region show that the public finance management systems, which are reviewed in the feasibility phase, are extremely weak in all countries. In other words, no policymaker knows exactly how much money goes into and how much money goes out of his/her sector and how exactly it is spent. The sector budget is a black box. The finance ministry is a world of its own whose link with sector ministries is weak. That is why more attention needs to be given to policy implementation and less to policy formulation where the forces at stake are out of control. To be workable, policy proposals should be aligned with local capacity and the domestic social contract. Opportunities to effect gradual change can enable major reforms over time. Major changes can affect the development trajectory – or fail to get off the ground.

In spite of these caveats, it would not be right to say that countries do not make use of some kind of evidence. They do. But this evidence is not research-based, so it is not evidence in the proper sense. It is a 'category mistake' to assume that policymakers make decisions on the 'best available' evidence. According to Ryle (1949), a 'category mistake' consists of discussing certain facts as if they belonged to one category when they actually belong to another (Majone, 2009, p. 24). The notion of

evidence has meaning in science because scientists are by nature 'evidence workers'. In the field of policy making, where several objectives are pursued simultaneously, it is easy to confuse means and ends, processes and outcomes. Such confusion – which may be quite convenient for those who control the decision agenda – is known as 'goal displacement' (Majone, 2009, p. 76). 'The tendency to confuse process and outcome is evident in the practice of measuring success in procedural terms rather than in substantive terms. Thus an agreement to proceed in a certain direction may be advertised as an achievement of historic significance, though many important issues might remain unresolved and ultimate success is far from being certain.'

EDUCATION POLICY IN TRANSITION COUNTRIES – THE CASE OF KOSOVO[32]

Kosovo offers an interesting case for looking at education and training policy making within the contested and politically charged environment of a post-conflict and newly established entity in the Western Balkan region. The urgency to manage reconstruction and planning of the education and training system had to go hand in hand with the Standards for Kosovo, a set of UN-endorsed benchmarks for the democratic development of Kosovo which covered eight key areas of development and included a particular focus on the protection of Kosovo's non-Albanian ethnic communities. Education and training was part of the package.

In 2003, the international community articulated a policy of 'Standards before Status', whereby it was decided that Kosovo's status would not be addressed until it had met these standards of good governance. In 2006, as the Kosovo Status Process[33] got underway, the government of Kosovo began to transform its work on the standards into the more demanding process of meeting the requirements for European integration as part of the Stabilisation and Association Process Tracking Mechanism (STM)[34].

Education and training policy making is relatively new to Kosovo. The accumulated institutional memory and knowledge in Kosovo governments (before and after independence) is weak and there has been a high staff turnover in the country's institutions.

In Kosovo, evidence-based education and training policy making must fully take into account the importance of the rather specific country context. For decades, the education and training system experienced deep crises and post-conflict traumas where the logic of first planning and then implementing evidence-based policies was overridden by a desperate need to tackle urgent issues,

such as getting young people into schools, reducing (language-based) teaching shifts from three to two (and ideally to one) and ensuring that all students have textbooks.

Consequently, the process of policy making has been rather ad-hoc, even more so because of the large number of international donors and aid agencies operating in the country. All of these have good intentions and a high level of commitment, but they have their own views on what to reform in the education and training sector and how to do it. Sometimes they offer different and conflicting advice based on their own models and priorities.

But the purposes and aims, organisation and implementation must 'fit' with the culture of the society in which the policy is enacted. The degree to which education and training policy can interfere in family matters and in issues that involve personal choices or that threaten relationships of power and influence is determined by the overall values prevalent in the Kosovo society.

The main characteristic of policy making in Kosovo is that it is not necessarily based on robust information (both quantitative and qualitative) and critical analysis. Evidence-based policy requires:

1. strong capacity in the use of methodological and analytical instruments;
2. strong *technical* capacity in Kosovo public administration;
3. a connection between policymakers, policy implementers and beneficiaries for the evaluation of policy impact;
4. good data collection instruments;
5. good access to information and established procedures for information dissemination;
6. good communication between the research community and policymakers.

Any successful policy will include all these elements as the constituent parts of a rational framework for policy making. But, as the experience of the Kosovo policy process proves, policy processes may often be more disorderly than intended.

In Kosovo, the tension between the need to resume schooling in 2000 using existing resources, institutions and curricula, and the urge to reform and modernise the education and training system to avoid reproducing the shortcomings of the past (Sommers and Buckland, 2004) still affects policy making today. The key drivers of education and training policies in Kosovo include: urgency, ideology (the values and beliefs of the ministers and their close advisers), international influences, constituency popularity (teachers' salaries etc.), pressure groups (majority versus minority), and personal agendas and

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32   So-called without prejudice to position on status, and in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence, hereafter 'Kosovo'.

33   See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_Status_Process [accessed June 2012]

34   In March 2003, the EU put into force and institutionalised the Stabilization and Association Tracking Mechanism (STM), as a key mechanism of dialogue between the government of Kosovo and the European Commission in the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process. This mechanism has functioned at political and technical dialogue levels, including plenary meetings of the STM (two or three times a year). In these meetings, jointly chaired by the highest authorities of the Kosovo government and the European Commission, the two partners discuss their achievements in fulfilling the European Partnership and completing planned reforms where education and training reform is high on the agenda.

experiences. It is only very recently that any emphasis on research and evidence has emerged at all.

In the period between 2000 and 2007 the country operated under intense pressure to meet the deadlines of the standards that were required for the declaration of independence in 2008. This put an extremely heavy burden on local institutions. They did not have the capacity to internalise the whole policy making process, let alone to generate evidence to support the different policy choices in the education sector. As a result, the public policy making processes were formulated in English (by the EU and by international monitoring agencies) and not embedded in the system itself.

This does not mean that policy making and implementation could not succeed, even along a disorderly and non-linear path. There is broad support for the idea that policy processes in the real world do not follow rational models. Solutions may precede the definition of problems, important players may have good reasons for solutions that have nothing to do with the declared strategic policy outcomes, external factors or institutions outside the VET or labour market sectors (such as the finance ministry or donor agencies) may impose a policy process. No single programme or policy can solve the problem without reference to other sectors, other internal and external factors and above all the country context and the institutional and organisational culture in Kosovo.

This is actually a common problem for social and education policy making all over the world and therefore not just of relevance to Kosovo. In educational science the instrumental view on the functions of research is based on the belief that policy-oriented research can be directly applied to policy decisions and practice. Research provides the facts which are then used to inform policy decisions. Carol Weiss (1977) has called this approach 'the engineering or problem-solving model', which can be illustrated as in **FIGURE 7.1**.

This instrumental position is based on methodologies from the natural sciences and assumes a linear development from basic research via applied research and development to the application of new technology. But Weiss (1987) and others have pointed out that the social sciences differ fundamentally from the natural sciences and as a result do not lend themselves to the linearity of this model. The model is also criticised for making naive and simplistic assumptions about how policy and practice

are determined. According to Weiss, the real impact of social research on the policy making process is not the direct application of research to policy but the way in which research over time shapes the way policymakers and administrators come to think about social issues. The impact is not always intentional but comes about as a result of long-term involvement with social science concepts.

Context matters

Some of these elements must be borne in mind when we (as EU and international advisers) speak about evidence-based policy making. Sometimes our theoretical approaches to policy making and implementation appear to be dogmatic in not accepting that the process of policy making can be *both* rational and non-linear. In the implementation process, what matters most is the fact that the different stakeholders (e.g. the principals or the teachers) have a tendency to resist change and to respond negatively to the design of the policy frameworks because they lack capacity or motivation. These stakeholders can be encouraged to support the implementation of new policy frameworks with a combination of incentives and sanctions. Also, any approach to evidence-based policy making should not overlook the importance of confidence building, collaboration, information sharing, credibility and most importantly, trust among different stakeholders in the system.

ETF work in Kosovo has provided enough experience for us to be cautious in assuming both rationality and linearity of the policy processes. Most policy making in Prishtina emerges from a less than orderly process, often conducted in an ad hoc and highly improvised way. Most of the time central reforms (such as those originating in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Prishtina) look very abstract from a municipal or school point of view. This complex process has to cope with, and sometimes resist, a range of vested interests of different stakeholders, including the political and technical influences exercised by national and international players.

Due to the lack of institutional capacity in the country, different donor approaches can sometimes hamper the consolidation of evidence-based policy making. Here a policy learning approach that develops national capacity in informing policy by lessons from available national and international evidence and experience is necessary.

FIGURE 7.1 THE ENGINEERING OR PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

| Definition of social problem | → | Identification of missing knowledge | → | Acquisition of social knowledge | → | Interpretation for problem solution | → | Policy choice |
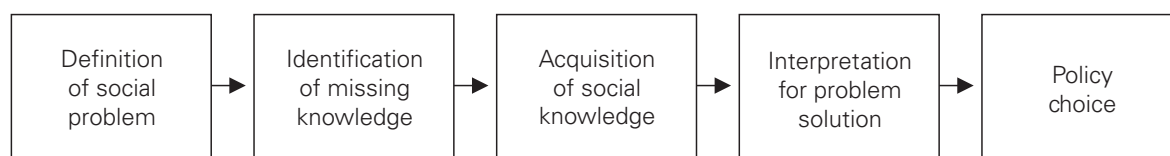
Source: Desjardin and Rubenson, 2009

Evidence-based policy in Kosovo: from research to action

Being a potential candidate country, Kosovo has undertaken initiatives to align its education and training system with EU practice. Education reform continues. New strategic documents and policy papers are still being drafted. But although the legal framework for strategic reforms is in place, almost all implementation lags behind the declared policy goals.

During the last decade, social and economic phenomena have been analysed intensely in Kosovo. Information and analysis have improved in quantity and in quality. There is now a Labour Force Survey and administrative information on the labour market and education and training has improved. Many studies (most sponsored and mentored by international organisations) have mobilised the research community and raised awareness among policymakers of what the problems or challenges are in education and training and employment policies. To a certain extent this awareness has led to the development of new policies which are yet to be fully integrated into national systemic solutions.

In recent years, reform carried out within the civil service has produced positive outcomes. The emphasis on training and development at the policy level has helped to enhance expertise and has stabilised institutional memory. The greater importance of informed policy making and evaluation has been acknowledged and is gradually given more importance in the day-to-day administrative practice of public policy institutions.

Still, there is scope for improvement. One of the most serious concerns is the issue of administrative capacity or the practical ability to 'translate' and implement policies and EU policy frameworks and legislation. Policy making in the country's public institutions remains weak. It continues to be affected by political interference, a chronic lack of adequate human resources, a high staff turnover and insufficient implementation and monitoring capacity. All of this continues to hamper the consolidation of a professional and independent civil service in charge of the policy making process.

Much more support is needed to enhance the functional capacity within public institutions. The development of a culture of policy monitoring (i.e. checking to what extent institutions actually do implement) is at an early stage. The problems are exacerbated because institutions lack the administrative capacity to produce the services required by new policy. Sometimes the problem is simply a question of supervision. If not enough people on the ground are adequately equipped to supervise and check standards and delivery, the allocated funds will be wasted.

The capacity and institutional culture of policy evaluation is not at the level of the declared strategic goals, so when Kosovo institutions have implemented policies they often do not know to what extent their policies have achieved their objectives. If they did not achieve or only partially achieved their objectives, the reasons why this happened are not systematically analysed either, which makes it difficult to redirect policies and measures towards the desired outcomes. Without monitoring and evaluation, policies may be failing without anyone knowing it. No sound evidence is provided to the public for any policy maintenance, succession or termination. This reality makes it imperative to further support capacity development in public institutions and research networks, but this cannot happen independently from capacity enhancement in public administration.

What next in Kosovo?

There is broad consensus on the importance of a skilled and confident research community for policy making and monitoring. In Kosovo, education research has been enhanced with the help of donors. Working relations with the government have improved and influenced the policy dialogue and reform process. However, the environment in which Kosovo's institutions, NGOs, think tanks, policy institutes and researchers operate changes frequently, requiring new skills and new attitudes constantly. This disrupts the process of building the required capacity.

It is therefore necessary to consider innovative ways of support, such as the 'pooled funding' approach of the EU's SWAp project[35] which in its first phase should focus on capacity building for central government (the sector ministry) and central agencies. Enhanced capacity in the sector can create the foundation for more effective aid. A key priority is therefore to institutionalise sector-wide approaches in Kosovo.

While education and training policy is a national affair and the government of Kosovo is the most important centre for policy making, the fact that some policies have their roots in international agreements, supra-national structures or international governmental and non-governmental organisations cannot be neglected. Kosovo is influenced by global policy making. The country is part of many regional and international agreements and platforms. It participates in many education and training policy networks. Consequently, its local education and training policies are influenced by those of the EU and other countries. A regional dimension to education and training challenges in South Eastern Europe is being promoted and supported by the EU. Such a regional approach to these challenges is justified because of the similarity of the social, political and economic problems shared and circumstances faced by these countries. The regional approach can also serve as an introduction to the Open Method of Coordination as used in EU Member States, for example in the field of social inclusion where beneficiaries are being prepared to use the tools and techniques that they will have at their disposal after accession.

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35   See www.eu.eduswap-ks.org/

THERE ARE OTHER FACTORS…

The case of Kosovo illustrates many of the factors which also set limitations in most other countries. Factors such as **experience**, **expertise** and **judgement** often constitute valuable human and intellectual capital and include the tacit knowledge that is an important element of policy making and may be of critical importance in situations where the existing evidence is equivocal, imperfect or non-existent. Beyond skills and infrastructure, capacity also covers less tangible factors. It is shaped by the levels and types of power and organisational ability of people and institutions. It reflects how people accept or resist the status quo and how institutions support or constrain a desire for change and the spread of information and open, critical debate.

This recognition takes us directly to a point of criticism against policy design as a technocratic fix, which assumes a well-functioning state and regulatory system while in reality, institutions are likely to be distorted by prevailing social and political forces.

Another key factor is **resources**: policy making and policy implementation take place within the context of finite resources (Davies, 2004, p. 5). This means that policy making is not only a matter of 'what works', but just as much of what works at what cost and with what outcomes (both positive and negative). Assessing this requires sound evidence not only of the cost of policies, programmes or projects, but also of the cost effectiveness, the cost benefit and the cost utility of different courses of action. This is exactly the kind of information which is not available in partner countries and it is the main reason why budget support initiatives often fail: they assume too much. In fact, they assume the existence of what they try to create.

Almost all employment policies in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries fail because of the weakness of their labour ministries. Most assessments underline that a lot of money is spent to no avail. The reason might be that policies are not resource-based and any policy which is not resource-based is doomed. This is why projects supporting improvements of national accounts, such as those initiated in Morocco, are so important. All policies and programmes require effective state capacity. Its determinants and drivers remain poorly understood. Many officials face hard trade-offs every day, working in difficult, uncertain and under-resourced circumstances and bearing responsibility for controversial outcomes. This is true at the frontline – for nurses and teachers – as well as at higher levels of policy making

The importance of **values** must also be underlined. Policy making always takes place in the context of values, including ideology and political beliefs. Political ideology is the driving force of policy making, and this is in no way made redundant by a commitment to evidence-based policy. The tension between values, ideology and beliefs

on the one hand, and sound empirical evidence on the other, is the very stuff of contemporary politics in open democratic societies and is unlikely to disappear because of the advent of evidence-based policy making. Indeed, evidence-based policy making can itself be seen as a political ideology, representing the case for empirical demonstration alongside more practical approaches to political discourse. Evidence can be used to justify all kinds of aims (e.g. the Iraq war and the weapons of mass destruction). It can even be used to forget about aims, such as in the financial crisis. Ideology is itself a fabric of evidence. Congressman Henry Waxman put it to Alan Greenspan[36] that 'you found that your view of the world, your ideology, was not right. It was not working'. 'Precisely', he replied, 'that's precisely the reason I was shaken because I had been going for 40 years or more with very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionally well.' (Rachmann, 2010, p. 110). Assuming that the future will be like the past, the core evidence of policymakers is: it never happened before and therefore it will not happen. The Arab revolution is a good example of the contrary.

Habit and **tradition** are also factors in which political institutions are embedded. Institutions are steeped in habitual ways of doing things that may defy rational explanation in the 21st century. Rituals and ceremonial procedures are actually deeply engrained in the fabric of political life.

Lobbyists, **pressure groups**, **international organisations** are other major influences, as are **think-tanks**, **opinion leaders** and the **media**. Evidence is not aloof from fashions as is shown by the history of development aid. Each sector of society has its contenders and produces evidence accordingly: the role of the state, the role of markets and the role of the private sector. Organisations and institutions tend to evolve at different speeds through phases and in patterns that shape their capacity. This may conflict with donor timelines and the need to show results. Optimistic goals may be set without considering baseline capacity (which is assumed to exist or to be quickly created).

Countries may attempt difficult tasks before they have the capacity to do so, which can actually slow the development of capacity. A better understanding of local characteristics and local power structures, and of appropriate designs and timelines can help avoid such missteps.

Pragmatics and **contingencies of political life**, such as parliamentary terms and timetables, the procedures of the policy making process, the capacity of institutions and unanticipated events (such as the Arab revolution) play an important role in ETF partner countries. While major changes present opportunities, policy making during transition periods can be complex. Vested interests can regroup, new actors can move into influential positions and organisational responses can be unpredictable. For example, the post-1990 'big bang' reforms in former Soviet Bloc countries yielded mixed results, illustrating the hazards of radical policy shifts in transitional institutions.

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36   Alan Greenspan was the chairman of the US Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006.

Features which influence policy making in government are presented below (**FIGURE 7.2**).

EDUCATION IS NOT ONE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES

As argued above, in education and VET the links between research, policy and practice are not quite as clear-cut as they are in the natural sciences. In the EU, policy has often run well ahead of research. It would be difficult to argue, for example, that the EQF or outcomes-based education planning is evidence-based (Cort, 2010). Many new macro-policies in education are actually based on politics and values (Levin, 2009). One could easily argue that innovation in education and VET more often comes from practice than from research.

There are some basic stipulations about knowledge and society that play an important role. Some scholars are of the conviction that the phenomena in education are already out there and we just have to use good empirical tools to identify, explain and evaluate them. Others point out that the world of education is a field that we have to create. The social-constructivist school argues that knowledge is something that is produced or constructed by individuals themselves on the basis of what is presented to them and to the extent that they decide to act on it. Knowledge is therefore something we create and becomes shared knowledge because we believe in it.

Much development work, also in ETF partner countries, is based on social-constructivist approaches. This is also the case for peer review, mutual learning and even the Open Method of Coordination as employed by the EU.

Evidence-based education is increasingly seen as the best way to ensure value for money. However, is organising education and teaching based on effect studies really the best way to do it? It has been argued that teaching must be research-based and that a sort of professional blindness must now be replaced by research in methods which can document the effect of practice – which then transforms itself into 'evidence-based practice'. But what is evidence-based practice? The short version is that it is the use of methods where the effect is developed and documented through systematic and experimental tests. This approach to educational (and social) work is relatively new but has become a movement within a very short time. Evidence-based practice was first introduced in health and medicine. Archie Cochrane was a pioneer who strove to systematise medical knowledge and in medicine the methodology is highly advanced. We now find Cochrane institutes all over the world. Within the social field corresponding Campbell institutes have emerged. Within education we see the same phenomenon in the What Works Clearinghouses. The fundamental basis of evidence is the natural science paradigm which claims that we can always measure the exact level of a given effect. Most would agree that this is indeed the case when the object of the intervention is a purely physical object.

FIGURE 7.2 **FEATURES INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING IN GOVERNMENT**

Experience

Habits

Values

Lobbying

Evidence

Events
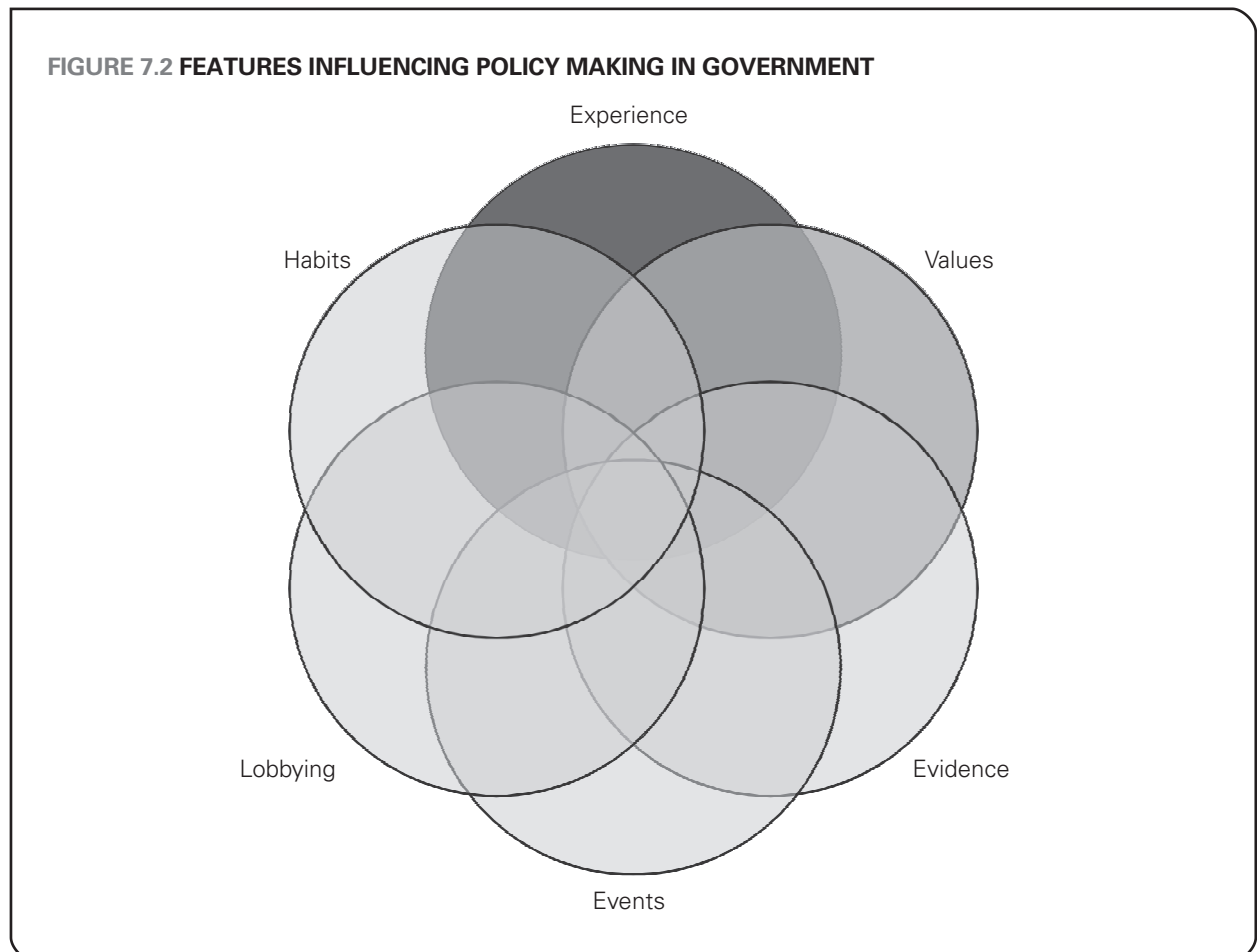
As Berliner wrote (2002, pp. 18–20) 'the important distinction is really not between hard and soft science. Rather, it is between hard and easy science. Easy to do science is what those in physics, chemistry, geology, and some other fields do. Hard to do science is what the social scientists do […]. We do our science under conditions that physical scientists find intolerable. We face the particular problems and must deal with local conditions that limit generalisation and theory building – problems that are different from those faced by the easier-to-do science'.

In education, the activity directly targets a living subject who reflects and where the intervention and effect depend on the intrinsic efforts of this subject. Here most humanistic researchers and practitioners reject the evidence movement. The resistance towards the evidence preoccupation is based on a fear that the outcomes of evidence-based prescriptions will result in 'cooking books' or a 'manualisation', where practitioners are told in detail what to do and where the personal professionalism may come under threat. However, this does not necessarily equal a fundamental rejection of evidence thinking. After all, who could be against making best use of available knowledge? There is a clear difference between a practice which builds on an exact diagnosis and a practice which builds on an interaction and on the subject's own efforts: there is 'dia-gnosis' relating to knowledge and 'dia-logos' which is about creating a new 'sense of meaning' between two parties in what is called the zone of professional autonomy. Here, a professional practitioner is needed to assess to which extent knowledge is relevant and adequate in the given context, and whether it really will have any effect in the concrete situation. This professional autonomy and dynamic interaction we also find in medicine, where it is called 'curative' in relation to a patient; 'empowerment' when a professional deals with a social client; and 'learning' when an educationalist is a practitioner. Practitioners should of course neither act in blindness, nor surrender completely to evidence as defined above and at no cost become 'manualised'. They must do something different: build up a highly solid professionalism which can integrate methodical expertise with a strong capacity for critical reflection.

THE ROLE OF THE ETF

It seems to us that some of the enthusiasm for evidence-based practice comes with not only an exaggerated estimate of the practical contribution that research can provide but also a misleading conception of the nature of policy making. Very often it is assumed that the latter can take the form of explicitly specifying goals and selecting strategies for achieving these on the basis of objective evidence about their effectiveness and then measuring outcomes in order to assess their degree of success (thereby providing the knowledge required for

improving future performance). While this model is not altogether inaccurate, it is defective in several aspects. Forms and fields of practice will vary in the extent to which they can be made to approximate this linear, rational model. Goal displacement allows a policymaker to pretend that the policy goes in the right direction, even if the outcome has not been reached.

Being an executive agency and not a regulatory one, the ETF does not 'feed' into a regulatory process, which is the case for other EU agencies. The Council conclusion of 2009 (EU 2020) mentions that the ETF provides evidence to feed European cooperation, which in the case of the ETF is only related to the external dimension of cooperation. The role of an executive agency is to support the implementation of EU policy. The kind of intelligence that is required is a definition of the terms of the problem. What is capacity building? What is policy making? What is decentralisation? What is governance? This is what can be understood as a policy learning function. In this sense, the role of ETF is closer to that of a 'knowledge broker' (Dobbins, 2009). A knowledge broker performs public knowledge translations and exchange strategies that on the one hand promote interaction between stakeholders, researchers and end-users, and on the other hand develop capacity for informed decision making. A knowledge broker provides a link between research producers and end-users by developing a mutual understanding of goals and cultures. A knowledge broker collaborates with end-users to identify issues and problems for which solutions are required. A knowledge broker supports access to research evidence and facilitates the identification, assessment, interpretation and translation of it into local policy and practice. Country intelligence (such as the Torino Process provides) does not consist only of evidence. It provides a narrative that presents the forces and the weaknesses at stake and promotes the integration of the best available information into policy and practice-related decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

A simplistic focus on evidence can be misleading. It gives credit to a fashion under the cover of science and it oversimplifies the process of policy making. Development thinking has to contemplate more systematically how different contexts matter and what makes some policies viable in some contexts but not in others. Much evidence used in policy making in partner countries is either less systematically gathered and appraised than the evidence-based policy movement would propose, or it is generated by expert opinion – or both. At the end of the day the notion of evidence is often so loosely defined in terms of the validity of information or data that anything (which is quoted from a source of sorts) goes. The ETF has a unique position as a knowledge broker whose role it is to clarify the terms of the debate[37]. No other agency has this mandate or the required expertise.

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37   See chapter 10 on the potential role of ETF as a clearing house for knowledge.

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8. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY IN PRACTICE – THE ROLE OF VET AGENCIES IN EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores policy implementation and institutional development drawing on specific cases of vocational education and training (VET) reform in selected countries of South Eastern Europe. It examines the contribution of new functional policy related agencies (VET agencies) to the development and implementation of modernisation policies in Albania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. It draws on policy development and implementation research as well as on ETF research reports covering the progress of reforms in the region and its work on policy learning.

While the region shares some characteristics with the countries of Eastern Europe, the two have some marked differences. Until 1990, three of the countries that are the subject of this chapter were republics of Yugoslavia. Their separation from that federation followed different processes with some countries achieving independence after conflict and others following a peaceful political process. An additional feature is that in the cases of the former Yugoslavian republics and territories, the drive towards independence was pursued on the grounds of re-establishing national political identities.

In other aspects, the countries of the region can be said to share some features of the situation of the former Eastern Bloc countries in the period 1989–2003. They are making a transition from state planned economies to a more market based economies and they are doing so in the context of their proximity to the EU which, through its external assistance programmes (the IPA programme[38] for this region) and enlargement process, exercises a centripetal influence on them.

This chapter discusses their experiences with the establishment of VET agencies and concludes that notwithstanding the similarities between the countries of the region, policy directions and priorities in each country are sensitive to local conditions. The chapter suggests that whereas evidence plays an important role in policy development, the realisation of policy is multi-faceted. It reviews these conclusions and their implications for the ETF's policy learning approach and the modalities of external assistance.

VET AGENCIES AS NEW INSTITUTIONS IN THEIR COUNTRY CONTEXTS

Institutions play an important role in policy processes. The ability of governments to establish and maintain institutions that effectively support new directions in vocational education and at the same time ensure implementation is a major challenge for the countries of the region. In recent years, VET agencies[39] emerged largely as a consequence of European assistance programmes to support VET policy implementation.

The National Agency for VET (NAVETA) in Albania was established in 2006 as a subordinate institution of the National Ministry of Education and Science 'to boost VET development in Albania according to European standards, following labour market demands and the country's social development needs. The agency is expected to ensure better social partnership and to develop and implement VET programmes'. In other words, it is expected to steer Albanian VET towards Europe with appropriate standards, transparency of qualifications and competences that are aligned with the European labour market.

In Montenegro, a VET agency was established in May 2003 as an independent public institution aiming at social partnership between the government, the Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Independent Trade Unions and the Employment Agency. It is supposed to contribute to the further development of VET for youth and adults – up to university level in all areas of work. The objectives of the Montenegrin agency are 'to develop vocational education and adult education, introduce quality systems, encourage partnerships and links between education and work, achieve lifelong education and introduce the European dimension in vocational education'.

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38 The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is the Community's financial instrument for the pre-accession process for the period 2007–13. Countries that benefit from the instrument are the candidate countries – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey; and potential candidate countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo.

39 VET agency in this chapter means newly established institutions like national VET centres, and/or equivalent institutions undergoing transformation to support VET reform.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, following legislation adopted in 2005, the National VET Agency was created as a specialised VET institution with major responsibilities for curriculum development, textbooks and teacher training. It aims to become a key link between education institutions and the labour market.

The VET agency in Serbia functions as part of a larger institution whose remit is to perform expert tasks in 'vocational education and training curricula'. The agency is responsible for VET curriculum development and activities related to the development, monitoring and quality assurance of vocational and adult education, vocational *matura*, final exams, and specialist and master craft exams. It has a key role in the development of the national qualifications framework in Serbia.

In each country, the VET agency is a new actor in the VET system and as such represents a degree of institutional change. They all share the challenge of needing to find their place in the existing and evolving institutional environment of their country. This is a recursive process with the environment exercising an influence on the VET agencies by setting the context for their positioning, while concomitantly, the VET agencies shape the context by fulfilling their objectives. The degree of equilibrium or disequilibrium achieved through this recursion shapes the effectiveness of each VET agency.

In addition, while each has a mandate to work on vocational education as a specific policy area, the scope of their work is quite broad, ranging from textbooks to finding and pursuing the 'European dimension of VET' in their country. This presents the agencies with a further challenge of managing and coordinating their priorities.

VET AGENCIES IN THE CONTEXT OF DIFFERENT POLICY APPROACHES

With the establishment of VET agencies, the expectations are that governments and responsible ministries will have an instrument to achieve the reforms they seek for their VET systems. There are two important sources of influence that shape the policy environment in which the VET agencies operate and consequently their institutional place. One is the country context and the second is the EU integration process. As far as VET is concerned, the latter has a common framework for all the countries. Between these sources of influence, VET agencies face pressure from different directions. Depending on its response to this, a VET agency can thrive or not.

In VET policy implementation the search for approaches that increase the probability of achieving policy objectives is also important. This search for approaches involves making effective use of experience, knowledge and evidence to meet the expectations and challenges of the VET reform environment.

It is possible to identify two different approaches to VET reform in the countries of the region. One approach follows a statutory introduction of legislation, standards, curricula and qualifications frameworks and procedures for their ongoing regulation. This is a planning and control approach to system reform. It follows a hierarchical understanding of the policy process.

The second approach focuses on resolving and mediating problems at points closer to where change is impeded and providing feedback on the effective relevance of the policy.

Understanding how these two approaches, i.e., the 'hierarchical' and the 'mediation' approach, affect how VET agencies deal with their specific challenges may clarify the influences on the agencies and the extent to which they find their place as a new organisation in their national institutional contexts.

The hierarchical approach

Hierarchical approaches to education reforms have been covered by a considerable volume of research (e.g. Odden and Marsh, 1988). These (generally top-down) models see implementation as a factor of the degree to which the actions of implementing officials, agencies and target groups coincide with the goals embodied in a series of authoritative decisions (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983). Almost as a rule, top-down VET reform approaches concentrate on legislation and regulation. They are guided by a belief that changes in the VET systems can be centrally driven and seen as a concrete goal that can be realised within a specific timeframe. In this sense, reform is also perceived as a concrete event with defined end points, not as a process of ongoing improvement.

This approach assumes that the goal of any reform and its implementation is generally its authenticity with respect to an original policy design. According to Matland (1995), this approach encounters much criticism.

First, the hierarchical approach tends to emphasise the language used in statutes and regulations both as its starting point and as the measure by which it is evaluated. This fails to consider the significance of compromises reached in earlier stages of the policy making process. Such compromises may include nuanced interpretations of objectives and concepts ultimately included as broadly defined terms in the legislation during the statutes' negotiation process. Such terms may become more narrowly defined in the implementation process in a manner that does not reflect the earlier nuanced interpretations. As an example: the concept of competence-based training may be broadly understood by legislators, but more restrictively understood by officials who implement the legislation.

Second, the hierarchical approach has been understood as considering implementation as mainly an

administrative process. As a result, the links between policy making, decision making and implementation follow a cascading process in which statutory objectives are rephrased into more detailed specifications at different levels of action. This provides an 'auditable trail' through which actions from the top of a hierarchy (i.e. the statute) can be traced to actions on the ground and vice versa. Following such a trail can result in evidence that can be used to assess a policy. However, whereas this can strengthen the justification for particular programmes and actions, it can also be slow to identify feedback obtained in the implementation process and respond to it (Matland, 1995). A related problem is that policymakers[40] may overlook stakeholders and ignore experience accumulated during implementation. The hierarchical approach may also overestimate the importance of government policies and programmes to the problem being addressed.

A key challenge in vocational education reform is that problems are frequently 'ill-structured', or so called 'wicked' problems, and there may be a diversity of possible policy solutions. Vocational education involves many stakeholders and as a policy area it encompasses many complementary elements. A non-exhaustive list would include teachers, schools, curricula, management, funding, teacher training, recruitment and pay, as well as teaching practice. Each element may affect the others. Dealing with the comprehensive package of objectives of the VET agencies' remits is likely to run into problems of managing the different elements in an integrated way.

The mediation approach

Alternatively, a mediation approach will generally examine the policy problems at different levels of government and the strategies followed by different actors (public and private) to address these problems. In this approach research on schools, local education offices and departments indicates that a realistic understanding of implementation can be gained by looking at a policy from the point of view of the target population and the service deliverers (Matland, 1995)[41].

This approach suggests that goals, strategies, activities and contacts of the actors involved in different levels of implementation processes must form a key part of the policy design in order to understand the extent to which the eventual achievement of policies is likely to reflect the original objectives. For example, the influence of policy on actions of different level officials and agencies must be evaluated in order to predict that policy's effect (Matland, 1995). However, some studies find that the mediation approach lacks sensitivity to the important role of policymakers and research suggests that there have been significant mismatches and indeed failures (Honig, 2004 and 2006). Over-emphasising localised interaction may underestimate the influence and relevance of central authorities and this is a problem.

AGENCIES IN THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The VET agencies of South Eastern European countries operate in environments in which there is a very sharp distinction between policy 'making' and policy 'implementation'. VET actors, particularly schools, are recipients of policy rather than contributors to it.

Development or reform is frequently perceived as a process which is similar to engineering in that it will be successful if properly managed from a technical point of view. In reality, local ownership is very important and VET reform initiatives are often short-lived because they do not fit the context which they are transplanted into. As a result, reforms tend to come and go with the donors and their agencies (Grootings and Nielsen, 2009). In terms of VET reform itself in EU enlargement countries, there are a number of problematic issues. VET reforms are always agreed on at a central level with the expectation that school-level actors, principals and teachers in particular, transform policy intentions and goals into real outcomes. In other words, policy is expected to translate into reality because the targets of the policy objectives adapt their behaviour to the policy signals. In reality, it takes time for this to occur. Operational priorities can be slow to change since existing practices and policies frequently have an advantage over innovations in that established ways of doing things are usually supported by accumulated habits and routines.

This vertical coherence between policy intentions and subsequent actions can also be negatively affected by similar horizontal constraints because related practice does not change in a corresponding way. New curricula may not be accompanied by teacher training and competence-based assessment may be adopted without the necessary training of assessors. Innovation therefore often stumbles on the continuation of activities and procedures related to priorities they served in the period before the reform process.

In addition to the relations between different levels of operation within each country's system, the VET agencies also operate in a policy environment in which there is significant international involvement. This includes a mix of different donors and technical assistance programmes. Such diversity often co-exists, interacts and, sometimes, competes with the country's own VET policy priorities. Although not technically part of the formal access requirements, vocational education reforms are perceived as a critical feature of the EU accession process. EU enlargement countries are generally under a lot of pressure to fundamentally transform their VET systems and adapt them to accession-related demands. They are expected to improve the attractiveness of VET, ensure vertical and horizontal mobility within the education system, develop qualifications frameworks and introduce learning outcomes, transparent qualifications, curricula

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40   In this chapter the term 'policymaker' is used in a wider sense to refer not only to those at higher levels of the hierarchy in the ministries, but also to those civil servants in middle managerial or expert level positions who are in daily contact with VET policy issues, and who, through their day-to-day responsibilities, have an influence on the policy process and help shape the policy design and implementation.

41   See also Payne, 2007 for a discussion of the interaction of different policy issues in VET and the use of the concept 'ecosystems' as a metaphor in policy delivery.

that better match the demand for skills and professional development of vocational teachers. This current set of policy perspectives from the European Commission is more comprehensive than that which existed in the 1990s and early 2000s even in the EU itself. In this respect, the institutions of South Eastern Europe have greater demands made on them in relation to their education policies than the countries that were involved in earlier enlargement rounds.

In monitoring the progress of VET agencies, the ETF has experienced that as institutions they are still fragile and adapting. They are still learning to deal with a broader range of stakeholders and developing the expertise which they need to cope with their tasks. They are frequently understaffed and not often provided with the financial and human resources necessary to deliver results commensurate with the objectives and expectations of the VET reforms.

The VET agencies are, in organisational terms, generally placed in between the ministry of education (they may report to other ministries as well) and vocational schools, with a limited level of self-governance and legal authority. Their operating environment tends to be closer to the hierarchical approach to policy making than the mediation approach. At least formally, the VET agencies tend to be a link in an institutional chain reaching from statutes to practice. The promotion and implementation of tools and schemes for the decentralisation of VET in the countries of the region have to be considered in this context. Historically they operated in a very centralised system and it has proven difficult to transform the resulting attitudes and culture. Often hardly any dialogue exists between those who design and those who implement VET policies. The empowerment of local agents, such as vocational schools, is likely to take some time and will require a cautious approach to decentralisation and reform activities. This in turn obviously has implications for the speed of the process.

This gap is problematic and may not only affect implementation but also undermine the development of effective and relevant policy. However, while difficult, the problem is not new and can be overcome. Similar problems were encountered in education and training reforms in the new Member States of Eastern Europe during their accession processes. It should also be remembered that many of these difficulties are not unique to transition countries.

As a result of observations and lessons learned during the earlier accession processes, the ETF has increasingly chosen to work with countries of the region using the policy learning methodology. The concept of policy learning refers to the progressive development of abilities (capacity) of governments, institutions and other stakeholders to learn from evidence and experience – local as well as international – and let this evidence inform policy development and its subsequent implementation. Under this approach, development and implementation are not separated but treated as two processes that can inform each other. Policy learning involves using feedback and comparisons both to better

understand one's own country and to better understand current policy problems and possible solutions, by observing similarities and differences within and across different national settings. Policy learning therefore seems to be a more effective way for governments and institutions to inform policy, drawing lessons from available evidence and experience (Raffe and Spours, 2007) and facilitating dialogue among different actors engaged at different levels of policy making and policy implementation processes.

FINDING A ROLE

While this process of policy learning can be difficult in the VET systems of the countries in South Eastern Europe, there are opportunities for VET agencies to strengthen their engagement with this approach and find a valuable institutional position as a source of experience and evidence in their systems.

The VET agencies in the region are becoming an important connection between the vocational education providers and the ministries in their countries (Nikolovska, 2011). They also offer a link between EU VET policy developments and the enlargement process. As such, they are potentially key actors in reform processes.

Both links may have a significant impact on how VET agencies can use evidence of, experience with, and knowledge about these processes to support their institutional position. This can help them to better manage implementation processes. They must improve the use of evidence, experience and knowledge in the VET policy cycle for two reasons.

The first is the lack of coherence in VET policies in the countries. Contradicting policies, competing agendas and the influence of administrative or political authority can contribute to inconsistent prioritisation and become a source of conflicting interventions in VET. The second is the need to acknowledge that all policy proposals put forward have significant implications for vocational schools and other stakeholders. Therefore the consistency between different policy measures needs to be carefully taken into account.

EU Member States and institutions use evidence-based policy and practice, including robust evaluation instruments, to identify which policies are the most effective, and how to implement them most successfully. Improving the use and impact of knowledge for developing policy and practice at the national level would improve the quality and governance of VET systems also in South Eastern Europe. The EC Staff Working Document *Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training* (2007) provides an insight into the nature, extent and future implications of evidence-based policy and practice within the EU education and training systems. In doing so, the paper identifies the 'knowledge continuum' as a central concept.

The knowledge continuum cycle is a way of looking at the interaction between the three communities (researchers,

policymakers and practitioners) and three important dimensions of evidence-based policy and practice:
(i) knowledge creation – the production of research-based knowledge relating to education and training;
(ii) knowledge application – the use of research and evidence by decision-makers; and (iii) knowledge mediation – the brokerage of such knowledge in terms of making it accessible and facilitating its spread. Mediation is the bridge between creation and application, without which successful knowledge management and use is impossible.

A number of challenges have been identified in relation to knowledge production processes in education and training. One major concern is their relevance and quality. Another is the (low) level of funding available for such research. This challenge is even more profound in education and training policy than in other policy fields, such as social care or employment policy. Strengthening the capacity of policymakers and practitioners to use education research and other evidence is not a straightforward process, as education evidence is so closely bound to its context and the research/policy/practice relationship is often influenced by political discussions (Ibid.).

Another challenge is linked to the mediation of knowledge. Mediation involves translating and disseminating knowledge through networks, platforms, websites and other media that can inform and influence policy and practice. Educational research, however, can often be difficult to access or comprehend. Although the spread of the internet has provided unprecedented access to vast amounts of information, much of this is not subject to quality control. This increases the risk that irrelevant or questionable material may be taken up in the policy making process, and valuable evidence may be lost in the 'noise' (Ibid.).

There are strong indications that VET systems around Europe will move their focus from initial 'schooling' towards lifelong learning, from input-based curricula to learning outcomes, and from teaching and the delivery of curriculum content to learning in which both teachers and learners take an active role. In South Eastern Europe, these external forces are to a great extent driven by the EU accession agenda. These trends bring not only challenges but also opportunities to VET agencies. Their response to reform is partially shaped by drawing on lessons learned not only by participating in the process, but also from taking part in different actions organised by the ETF and other EU and international networks.

Similarly, in developing and deepening their relations with stakeholders the agencies have increasing access to insights that can be valuable to the policy making process. In one way or another, evidence and knowledge are created from these links (particularly on how initiatives can be implemented on the ground) that can be useful in the reform process. However, the recent history of the VET agencies suggests that the degree to which this knowledge and evidence 'is fitted' to the context of the country's VET system is limited.

But all in all, in the context of knowledge and evidence there is potential for VET agencies to play a significant role. The process of policy learning in national VET reform is a process where several organisations, with different responsibilities in the system, meet in policy dialogue and are dependent on each other for achieving policy outcomes. In this policy learning situation, the parties bring their knowledge, experience and interpretations of reality into the discussions. The knowledge which is generated is important and has a significant impact on evidence-based policy and practice. Those that 'know' and have acquired experience in handling problems have power in the VET policy process, and this will affect how the VET policy process is framed.

The VET agencies sit in the middle of the knowledge continuum due to their position in the institutional environment. They can support the creation of knowledge, they can facilitate better knowledge application and they can be leaders in mediating knowledge about VET reforms. However, it is important that this is understood and appreciated as an active role as they are more than simply a 'conduit', for example in the enlargement process – a convenient means through which EU messages and initiatives can be transmitted. But they can help to translate knowledge from the context where it is generated (i.e. in EU policy discussions) and help to embed it into another context (i.e. their own policy and operating environment). Active networking with researchers, policymakers and practitioners can significantly influence the quality of the performance of the VET agency in the VET reform process.

Building consensus at all levels on the need to reflect on practice and reforms would help to create policies whose outcomes better match the objectives. By improving accessibility and developing trust among researchers, policymakers and practitioners it should be possible to make education policy and practice more responsive to the needs of the education system as a whole and to its users. Researchers will see their work used and policymakers and practitioners can share knowledge and experience and get better at using evidence (Ibid.).

CONCLUSIONS

Policy implementation is an ongoing, non-linear process that must be managed (Grindle and Thomas, 1991). It is not simply a dichotomy between a top-down and a bottom-up approach but often a combination of both. Key features may include informal networks which, operating locally, can play an important role in the process. Policy making and implementation require consensus building, participation of key stakeholders, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning, resource mobilisation and adaptation. New policies often reconfigure roles, structures, and incentives, thus changing the array of costs and benefits to implementers, direct beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. As a result, the role of VET agencies is likely to continue to be complex and difficult.

There are a number of critical elements in the process of policy development and implementation which must be identified in order to further shape the possible role that VET agencies can have in VET reform in accession countries. The more recent thinking is that institutions need to be considered from a systems and social perspective which recognises the dynamics and evolution of connections among various actors. From a change management perspective, there is a need to change the way in which reform-oriented institutions are developed: from a technical approach that fits mainly into planning and control into a collaborative approach that supports social interaction. From this follows that capacity building must go beyond individual organisations and institutions and cover broader systems and groups of organisations. It should address their ways of sharing and using knowledge in the reform process. It should also address multi-faceted problems that require the participation of various actors (Court and Young, 2006). Such an approach would assist VET agencies in staking out their own place in their institutional context and enable their experience with implementation to be fed back into policy development.

The need to make use of approaches that try to 'embed' new ideas into existing or reformed contexts has been extensively reviewed in the EU[42] where findings suggest that the incorporation and distribution of new knowledge and information in new territories requires specific forms of local interaction in order to achieve sustainable integration. Agencies – whether governmental or independent – need to be linked to the local context. There is, therefore, scope for VET agencies to position themselves as organisations through which information and evidence gathered in the EU can be given meaning and adapted to the local dynamics and practice of their country's education system. Conversely the agencies can also adapt their processes so as to fit better into their environments. This approach is more in line with the perception of VET agencies as mediators of policy, rather than as instruments of policy execution.

From an operational point of view, VET agencies may benefit from a stronger focus on evidence-based policy and practice. The critical task of the VET agencies is to become an active contributor to new approaches, to support knowledge exchange and to overcome barriers to knowledge application and creation. For the VET agency this implies developing links with and among policymakers, practitioners and researchers. More importantly, looking from the perspective of the 'knowledge continuum' these are dynamic links that can support the development of a sound knowledge base for VET reform. This is not an easy task and will require a significant amount of resources and development.

It is worthwhile further exploring the development of a culture of evidence-based practice within the VET agencies themselves. The starting point could be to emphasise formative assessment and ex- ante evaluations. Formative assessments can take different forms, but could specifically explore feedback processes, such as focus groups and questionnaires to stakeholders on how reform initiatives are being taken up and perceived in the areas where they are being implemented. Such an approach may not be difficult to add to their existing functions. It could strengthen the links between the agencies and stakeholders and help to build confidence and trust between the agencies and central authorities.

By undertaking ex-ante evaluations, the agencies could help to strengthen the evidence base for the effect of policies. They could undertake a prior assessment of any difficulties likely to be encountered by a policy before it is implemented. Such an assessment could consider organisational issues, resourcing issues (both human and financial), or coordination and management issues. The benefit of this would be to demonstrate the appropriateness of the policy to the relevant context and to give an indication of the time and resources that will be needed to implement the policy.

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42   See for example, the Eurodite project: www.eurodite.bham.ac.uk/WP2.asp

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9. DATA, BENCHMARKS AND POLICY INDICATORS AS TOOLS FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS AND FOR ADVISING NATIONAL POLICYMAKERS

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'When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the state of Science, whatever the matter may be.'
(Kelvin (Thomson), 1883 – published 1889)

'However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.'
(Cameron – often attributed to Einstein in a slightly different form, 1963)

INTRODUCTION

Two schools of thought dominate the discussions on evidence-based policy learning. Both of them are often summarised in eye-catching quotes. Lord Kelvin is quoted for saying that 'if you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it', and Einstein is credited for stating that 'not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts'. The Kelvin school is in the ascendency within education policy, with an increased focus in latter years on evidence-based policies. Indicators and benchmarks are in ever greater demand from policymakers, administrators and researchers. The Einstein school on the other hand is united around the belief that there is more to education systems than what can be tested and measured and that focusing on evidence diverts attention from the non-measurable aspects of education.

They both got it wrong though.

The Kelvinistas over-interpret Lord Kelvin, and the Einsteinians are, in fact, not quoting Einstein, but William Bruce Cameron. By falsely attributing their opinion to a more famous scientist (after all, who would want to openly disagree with Einstein?) the Einsteinians are invalidating their own claim that evidence is not important. Why disseminate fake evidence if evidence is not important?

It is, to be honest, stretching it a bit to say that the Einsteinians disregard evidence. In reality, the two schools often end up advocating different kinds of evidence. The Kelvinistas focus on quantitative evidence, whereas the Einsteinians insist on qualitative evidence. The rallying cries of both schools are misattributed and misquoted, and the insistence on one kind of evidence to the detriment of another kind of evidence is similarly misguided. We need a mixture of qualitative and quantitative evidence when assessing VET systems.

The ETF has a vision to make vocational education and training (VET) in the partner countries a driver for lifelong learning and sustainable development, with a special focus on competitiveness and social cohesion. It is therefore of crucial importance to the ETF and its partners that a solid evidence base is established, covering VET and its links with the labour market, and more broadly with national policies relating to economic development, social cohesion, entrepreneurship and innovation. This evidence base should cover both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

The interest in evidence-based policy making has increased in recent years. This has led to a renewed emphasis on quantitative indicators as part of a broader evidence base to support policymakers in formulating, monitoring and evaluating VET policies and the performance of VET systems. In 2010, the ETF launched a series of reviews of VET policies and systems in all of its partner countries known as the Torino Process. In order to complement its existing knowledge base of qualitative evidence, the ETF put in place a collection of VET policy and system indicators covering all of its partner countries. This chapter will discuss the findings and shortcomings of this quantitative data collection and draw some lessons for the 2012 round of VET assessments under the Torino Process.

Although the focus will be on quantitative indicators, it should not be seen as a rejection of the importance of qualitative evidence, which must continue to play an important role in all ETF analyses. Knowing what quantitative evidence is available to support analysis helps us understand how this evidence can be complemented

by qualitative evidence. This chapter should therefore be seen as a step towards the construction of a more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative knowledge base for ETF policy analyses.

THE PROCESS OF COLLECTING AND ANALYSING THE 2010 KEY INDICATORS

In 2010, the ETF key indicators were to be used as the basis for an assessment of the VET systems in all the ETF partner countries[43]. A theoretical framework inspired by the Copenhagen Process was created for these assessments so that it would be possible to identify indicators that (i) would assist the assessments, and (ii) were likely to be available. At the same time the ETF indicators needed to be useful for other, more specialised reports. After extensive consultations with labour market experts, country managers and education specialists, an extensive list of indicators for 2010 was finalised in December 2009. The list covers indicators on education and training, the labour market and public employment services (PES), as well as socio-economic variables to provide context.

Sources of and processes for collecting indicators

In order to minimise the workload for national authorities, an extensive search of publicly available sources was undertaken before requests were made for additional indicators. In practical terms this meant that the ETF's Statistical Team drew on information available on the websites of all the ministries of education and labour as well as all the national statistical offices of the partner countries to gather data and indicators. Databases were queried and yearbooks perused. In addition, international data sources were consulted to collect comparable data. As a general principle, when consulting the international data sources the team consulted the primary international source. Apart from national data, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been the main source for education data, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has been the main source for data on employment and unemployment. Data on gross domestic product (GDP) and population structures were collected from the World Bank. Data and indicators have also been gathered from the World Economic Forum on competitiveness and from the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Survey. However, international sources cannot provide data for all the indicators of interest and they are particularly weak on data for VET.

National data requests – getting the last data

After this initial phase, national authorities were contacted directly by the Statistical Team. Each request spelled out what data had been found during the first phase and what assistance was needed for a specified list of additional indicators. Depending on the national statistical infrastructure, one request might have been made to the national statistical office – this was the most common approach – or several requests might have been targeted at different authorities, i.e. education data were in some circumstances requested directly from the ministry of education while data on the PES were requested from the ministry of labour or directly from the relevant PES.

The resulting data were then consolidated at the ETF through extensive dialogue with the original data providers and cross-consultation with existing international data sources. Finally, the complete sets of indicators were used in the ongoing VET system assessments in the partner countries.

Limitations of the key indicators

It is important not to over-interpret indicators. No indicator is more reliable than its underlying data. We know that for several of these indicators important elements are missing or underrepresented. For example, many of the countries covered by this analysis have a large informal economy, but since reliable data on this are absent in most of the countries, no comparable indicator of the size of informal economies has been included. There is also a lack of robust data on the extent of private funding of education and training, including the cost of training to employers. But the absence of some indicators that would have been useful to analyse makes it even more imperative that the indicators that do exist are analysed properly, since the existing indicators occasionally serve as proxies for the missing indicators. An in-depth analysis of each country can be found in the Torino Process country reports that are available on the ETF website. These country reports also contain a vast amount of qualitative evidence that complements the quantitative indicators.

Main methodological issues

Several methodological issues that have an impact on the comparability of the indicators arise in all the regions. They range from differences in definitions to substantial variation in what is covered, owing to fundamental differences in how the education and training systems are organised.

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43   A small group of countries produced self-assessments of their education and training systems, which generally did not rely on the ETF key indicators. In Israel the national country team provided its own set of key indicators to the ETF and also included these indicators in the country report as an annex.

At the most basic level there may be differences within the data available from a given country based on the context in which the data are used. Population data can include refugees or other special groups in one context and not in another. For example, enrolment data may include recent arrivals from Iraq in neighbouring countries, but the population data will not include this group, thus leading to an overestimation of the enrolment ratios. To give another example, people of Palestinian origin are not always included in the data from neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, the treatment of such groups is rarely systematic, so it is essential that care is taken when calculating ratios so as to ensure that both the denominator and the numerator treat the population in the same manner. Exclusions of certain groups from an indicator should obviously always be clearly marked in a footnote.

A special case of the population problem arises when different age groups are used. One example is that of the age range used for labour market indicators. Countries typically use either the range 15–64 or the age group 15+ (15 years and older) as the basis for data related to their working-age population. The effect of using these two different age groups depends on the indicator in question. For employment rates, a country will appear to have a relatively low employment rate if the age group 15+ is used, as labour market activity generally declines rapidly after the age of 64. Similarly, since few people are likely to be unemployed and looking for gainful employment in the upper age ranges, unemployment rates are also likely to be relatively lower for countries using the age group 15+.

In many countries it is possible to obtain two sets of data on unemployment: one based on registered unemployment from public records and another from labour force surveys (LFS). The ETF key indicators are, as a matter of principle, based on LFS data, which means that the data rely on samples. Registered unemployment data often deviate significantly from the LFS data, although in other cases the two data sets display similar trends. The main issue relating to registered unemployment is that individuals often have secondary motives for registering as unemployed. In some countries unemployed people are eligible to receive certain social benefits, such as health insurance or subsidised heating, thus increasing the attractiveness of being registered. In other countries there are neither direct nor indirect benefits to being registered as unemployed so an individual may simply not find registering worthwhile. Since the number of registered unemployed people is often dependent on other variables, the trend in the numbers may not even mirror the unemployment trends shown in LFS data.

However, one important concern regarding LFS data is its regularity. In many countries LFS are conducted only once a year, and if the timing of such annual surveys is not regular, any differences from one year to the next may simply be caused by seasonality and not by real changes in the local labour markets. Changes in methodology also occur occasionally and these have a potentially negative impact on data reliability. In recent

years several important international classifications have been updated. The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC in UN parlance, similar to NACE in Europe) were both revised in 2008, which means that not all countries will be using the same classification. In general, however, these revisions are not expected to lead to dramatic changes to the interpretation of the data.

However, many countries do not use international classifications when publishing national data. As a result, there is a natural tension between the indicators obtained from international sources and those found in national sources. For example, when reporting to international organisations such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), countries with similar education systems do not always represent these national systems in the same way. Such differences in implementation may provoke misleading interpretations.

The coverage of indicators is another crucial aspect. There may be complete agreement between two countries (or groups of countries) on definitions, populations, age ranges, the regularity of surveys and the classifications, and yet no genuine comparability if the coverage does not reflect the realities of the systems that are being measured. Non-formal education and training is typically not covered by official data collections, and this leads to serious underestimations of the amount of learning that takes place in countries with large non-formal sectors. Several of the ETF's partner countries have large numbers of young people enrolled in non-formal apprenticeships and if these students are not counted, it may appear as if hardly any vocational training takes place in these countries.

Compliance with international standards and definitions is essential for comparing ETF partner countries with countries in the EU. However, non-compliance does not exclude comparison per se. As long as countries follow similar definitions it is possible to compare them. As will be demonstrated, there are several examples of countries that have chosen to follow a definition that differs from the international standards but is in agreement with definitions used in other countries. Data from a particular country that is otherwise not comparable because it does not comply with international standards can still be used in a comparative manner if the indicator is consistently calculated over time, as it should then be a faithful reflection of underlying trends.

Use of key indicators

Once they had been consolidated, the indicators were used, alongside qualitative evidence, first for the Torino Process country reports and later for the regional Torino Process reports assessing VET systems. For the regional reports, four regional tables with a selection of the latest available indicators and EU averages were produced to give regional overviews of main aspects relating to the VET systems and their contexts.

An analysis (ETF, 2011a) was drafted on the basis of the regional tables. This was published together with a technical annex describing the coverage and definitional compliance of all of the indicators collected in 2010.

In a situation where the indicators are not directly comparable, it is important that their analysis takes proper account of the footnotes in the indicator tables. These footnotes must clearly explain the caveats and the differences between what is desired and what is available. The contents of the footnotes often detail how there may be a break in a time series, e.g. because a new law has been introduced, or they may spell out how the indicator differs from the other indicators, and how the difference has an impact on the interpretation of the indicator. The quantitative analysis is thereby infused with a large element of qualitative evidence, which enriches the quantitative evidence.

AVAILABILITY OF KEY INDICATORS AND FUTURE REVISION

When we evaluate the overall availability of the 2010 ETF key indicators the following findings stand out (see ETF, 2011b for more details). Coverage was very good for economic and demographic indicators, and good for most of the labour market indicators. Data for VET indicators were harder to collect in a comparable format and data on unemployment by education level and information from public employment services (PES) also proved difficult to gather. The most important indicators from the 2010 data collection are listed in **TABLE 9.1**. A list of secondary indicators is given in **TABLE 9.2**. The principal indicators in Table 9.1 are generally available, as demonstrated in **TABLE 9.3**. The secondary indicators are of great importance for monitoring and evaluating VET systems, but are generally not (or only partially) available in ETF partner countries (see **TABLE 9.4**).

TABLE 9.1 PRINCIPAL ETF KEY INDICATORS FOR FUTURE DATA COLLECTION

Code	Principal ETF key indicators
ACT	Activity rates by education level and gender (%)
EMP	Employment rates by education level and gender (%)
UNR	Unemployment rates by education level and gender (%)
YUN	Youth unemployment rates (15–24) by education level and gender (%)
ATT	Educational attainment of population aged 15+ by age and gender
LIT	Literacy rates by gender (%)
ENR	Total number of pupils/students enrolled by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender
VET	Share of VET enrolment in upper secondary education level (ISCED 3) out of total enrolment in ISCED 3
PRI	Private education as a % of the total by education level and programme (VET and general)
GER	Gross enrolment rates by education level and gender (%)
EXP	Public expenditure on education as a % of GDP
GOV	Public expenditure on education as a % of government expenditure
STR	Student/teacher ratio by education level
GDP	GDP per economic sector (%)
PPP	GDP per capita (PPP)
POP	Structure of the population by age group (0–14,15–64,65+)
HDI	Human Development Index (score/rank)
PIS	Mean score of student performance on the reading scale (PISA)
COM	Global Competitiveness Index (score/rank)
BUS	Doing Business Index (score/rank)

TABLE 9.2 SECONDARY ETF KEY INDICATORS FOR FUTURE DATA COLLECTION

Code	Secondary ETF key indicators
ACE	Activity rates by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender (%)
EME	Employment rates by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender (%)
UNP	Unemployment rates by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender (%)
YUP	Youth unemployment rates (15–24) by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender (%)
GRP	Gross enrolment rates by education level, programme (general and VET) and gender (%)
EXV	Public expenditure on education by education level and programme (general and VET) (% of GDP)
GEX	Public expenditure on education by education level and programme (general and VET) (% of governmental expenditure)
STV	Student/teacher ratios by education level and programme (general and VET)
STU	Participation in VET by field of study (%)
APP	Share of apprentices in VET by gender and education level
DRO	Dropout rates by programme (general and VET) and gender in ISCED 3 (%)
COS	Cost per student by programme (general and VET) in ISCED 3
SAL	Teacher salaries (% of average) by education level
LLL	Percentage of 25–64 and 25–34 year-olds having participated in lifelong learning by education level and gender
ALM	Expenditure on active labour market policies (ALMPs) (% of GDP)

TABLE 9.3 gives an overview of the availability of the key indicators that are most readily available. Only 5 of the 20 indicators cannot be said to be readily available. Youth unemployment, education attainment of the population, public expenditure on education as a share of government expenditure, student/teacher ratios by education level and results from PISA can be obtained in fewer than half of the ETF partner countries. It must be added that the availability of PISA results naturally depends on countries having participated in PISA, which only 12 of the ETF partner countries have so far. The number of countries participating continues to increase with each round, so the availability of these data may yet increase. However, it should be borne in mind that obtaining and analysing the results is a lengthy process.

The remaining 15 indicators are available for at least half of all the countries, and this coverage is achieved even when the harshest possible method of assessing availability is used, namely strict compliance with the definition. This assessment of availability ignores the time perspective and simply assesses whether the indicator was available at some point in the period covered by the ETF key indicators 2010 collection. This is because if the indicator has been available during a particular year, it can justifiably be expected that it will be possible to collect it in subsequent years, as data surveys do not generally deteriorate over time.

The situation is quite different for the secondary indicators listed in **TABLE 9.4**. These are of great interest to ETF analyses, but unfortunately they are not available in more than one third of the countries at best. Availability does improve when viewed from a regional perspective, although there are a small number of exceptions: the student/teacher ratios by education programme are available in three out of five countries in the DCI region and in three out of eight in the IPA region; participation in VET by field of study is available in three out of seven countries in ENPI East; and expenditure on active labour market measures is available in three out of seven countries in ENPI East and in four out of eight countries in the IPA region.

Several of the indicators on the original list of key indicators for 2010 were available in only very few countries. The data needed to produce them are generally not available at country level. In some cases they come from LFS samples that do not allow a sufficient level of detail to be achieved. The problems mainly concern the limited information available on PES and their levels of registered unemployment. Data on employment by age groups, economic sectors and status were part of the original key indicators list, but judging from the use of the available data, this kind of data does not merit inclusion in a regular data-collection process. Education data are also problematic. It is extremely difficult to obtain meaningful

TABLE 9.3 PRINCIPAL ETF KEY INDICATORS 2010 – AVAILABILITY BY REGION

(only exact indicators are counted – no partial or proxy indicators have been included)

Indicator code	Regions (number of countries)				Total (29)	
	DCI (5)	ENPI East (7)	ENPI South (9)	IPA (8)	No	%
ACT	1	2	9	6	18	62.1
EMP	1	2	8	7	18	62.1
UNR	2	4	9	7	22	75.9
YUN	0	1	3	4	8	27.6
ATT	1	6	2	3	12	41.4
LIT	5	7	8	7	27	93.1
ENR	4	7	7	6	24	82.8
VET	4	7	7	6	24	82.8
PRI	0	3	7	6	16	55.2
GER	4	7	9	7	27	93.1
EXP	4	7	8	6	25	86.2
GOV	2	7	7	3	19	65.5
STR	3	1	2	6	12	41.4
GDP	5	7	8	8	28	96.6
PPP	5	7	8	7	27	93.1
POP	5	7	9	8	29	100.0
HDI	5	7	9	8	29	100.0
PIS	2	2	3	6	13	44.8
COM	4	6	8	7	25	86.2
BUS	4	7	9	8	28	96.6

data on completion rates and on the share of VET graduates who continue to higher levels of education. Such indicators can only be produced by information systems that follow individual students during and after their studies. Tracer studies can partially address this problem, but these are not carried out either systematically or regularly. Gathering data on teachers' income at different points in their careers and on their continuing training also proved to be problematic.

On the basis of this overview of data availability and the revised list of questions in the analytical framework underpinning the Torino Process 2012, a new list of key indicators has been defined. This list is part and parcel of the 2012 Torino Process Analytical Framework. Most of the indicators in Table 9.1 will in fact be collected annually by the ETF Statistical Team and analysed. The Human Development Index and the Doing Business Index will not be collected, as most of the Torino reports did not make use of them. The data are readily accessible on the web sites of the UNDP and the World Bank, so any analyst wishing to use the information will have easy access to it. The list of key indicators will vary a little from year to year, as the policy focus of the ETF may change and as data availability improves. Indicators cannot be allowed to remain static. When indicators become static, they are no longer responsive to changes in society and to the needs of policymakers. This has been expressed well by van der Knaap (2006): 'Carving policy objectives and performance indicators in stone does no justice to the dynamic nature of many policy processes [...] The challenge is not to shy away from freezing but to be constantly willing to let certainties unfreeze.'

TABLE 9.4 SECONDARY ETF KEY INDICATORS – AVAILABILITY BY REGION

(only exact indicators are counted – no partial or proxy indicators are included)

Indicator code	Regions (number of countries)				Total (29)	
	DCI (5)	ENPI East (7)	ENPI South (9)	IPA (8)	No	%
ACE	1	1	2	2	6	20.7
EME	1	2	1	2	6	20.7
UNP	2	2	1	2	7	24.1
YUP	0	1	1	1	3	10.3
GRP	0	2	1	0	3	10.3
EXV	0	2	3	0	5	17.2
GEX	0	1	1	0	2	6.9
STV	3	1	2	3	9	31.0
STU	1	3	2	0	6	20.7
APP	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
DRO	0	1	2	1	4	13.8
COS	0	2	3	0	5	17.2
SAL	0	2	0	0	2	6.9
LLL	0	0	0	2	2	6.9
ALM	0	3	0	4	7	24.1

This underlines the fact that the mutual dependency between policymakers and society requires the support, participation and collaboration of many interested parties, including statisticians providing the right indicators of performance. A substantial challenge is therefore to always and continuously reflect on the indicators upon which an argument is based. The ETF operates with a shortlist of indicators which can be considered as the baseline indicators for future ETF work. These indicators are the ones mentioned in Table 3.1, along with basic information on population and GDP growth. But we must remain alert to the possibility that these indicators need to change and be adapted.

FACILITATING NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

Throughout the existence of the ETF, partner countries have received support for capacity building. In the early years this was done primarily through support for national observatories. In recent years the support has taken a broader character. The ETF now supports the use of evidence and the creation of indicators in all partner countries. In 2011, a series of 15 workshops were conducted in eight partner countries to discuss the national creation and use of evidence. These workshops were conducted within the wider 'Torinet' initiative (see chapter 3). The workshops were open to a comprehensive range of stakeholders: national statistical offices, ministries of education and labour, VET providers, chambers of commerce and industry, employers and trade unions, as well as researchers.

Since the ETF straddles the boundaries between the labour market and education and training, indicators from all of these areas are combined in ETF analyses. This often goes beyond what a single ministry would focus on in a national setting. There is therefore a possibility for all the stakeholders to learn from each other through ETF events where, to the extent to which this it is possible, representatives from ministries of education and employment or labour are brought together with representatives from national statistical offices. In many cases the discussions taking place in countries have centred on a particular national problem, whether that be related to the labour market or to the education and training system.

In 2012, the ETF organised three regional workshops to discuss the constraints of the evidence for assessing VET and what can be done to overcome data gaps where certain indicators are lacking. Through these workshops the ETF particularly wishes to engage the national statistical offices and other technicians in the relevant ministries who often sit with complementary information that needs to be put together. One recent example comes from Serbia where national policymakers in the Ministry of Education and Sports realised the value of certain indicators through discussions with the ETF and initiated dialogue with the national statistical office to acquire the relevant data. Another example is the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), which possesses a great wealth of data that in many cases are not being used by other parties because they do not realise the data exist. Luckily, the PCBS is a very open and collaborative organisation, which is very willing to give free access to their information so researchers can explore the data fully. However, not all statistical agencies are as open and not every researcher will realise that surveys hide more information than what is published nationally.

CONCLUSIONS

The shortened list of key indicators for 2012 allows an analyst to interpret trends in VET systems within the overall socio-economic context and labour market developments. By shortening the list of indicators, it is hoped that the data will be easier to assess and that the task of analysing the data will be less daunting. Assessments of national VET systems will gain in credibility if the available quantitative data are used to support the arguments made.

Together, quantitative indicators provide a firm basis against the background of which qualitative evidence can be assessed. A complete analysis juxtaposes the picture derived from the quantitative evidence with the impressions stemming from the qualitative evidence and delivers a synthesis of the two. The Einsteinians and the Kelvinistas must make up with each other and learn to recognise that the other side also holds part of the picture in their interpretation of the available evidence. All good analyses will be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

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10. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN A TIME OF TURMOIL – THE ETF'S ROLE AS A KNOWLEDGE BROKER FOR POLICY LEARNING AND FACILITATION

Ian Cumming, ETF

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks again at the evidence-based policy puzzle, asking how it can be that we already know much about VET policy formulation and the VET policy life cycle, and yet we do not know how to make sense of this knowledge and take action. This is especially the case in new, changing conditions or translated and therefore unique contexts. The river of policy reform can always be re-entered, but each time the river's course takes a direction that foresight could not have predicted. It would seem that only experience and skill can guide us. This means we must come to terms with the truth that change does not behave in the ways we expect.

Change is a stranger to our fictions, our illusions of command and control, of planning and programming, implementation and measurement, launch and forget. Policy shifts and changes respond to undisclosed secrets and we can only make sense of it as and when they appear. It is then that we need to seek to influence change to our common benefit. This chapter charts a means of navigation for the ETF to reach its goals, even if the destination is unknown.

Part of the problem is related to knowledge – knowledge as evidence and evidence as a vehicle for the determination of action. How can we employ available but underutilised knowledge to find new ways of making sense of things, when we lack the wisdom of knowing how to act? So often the facts appear to have misled us into what, in hindsight, was clearly the wrong course of action. Or we act on one set of assumptions only to find that the world has disowned them the moment we started to act. Or that our own desires for where we want to go have changed. How and where can the ETF advance policy facilitation efforts in VET reform under such conditions?

Stepping back, we reflect on these apparent realities: the failure to respond to climate change; the ongoing global financial crisis; a collapse of confidence in our European economies, policies, politicians and markets; social and political turmoil in our partners' societies. How do these multiple crises relate to the bottom line of the ETF's work? How can we assist countries, through partnership, in pursuing stable and peaceful development by making the best decisions when building the skills of those who will need to work in the future? What knowledge does the ETF need to be in possession of? How should we make use of it? What should a new knowledge strategy lay down in order to provide policymakers and practitioners with tools and methods for evidence-based policy making that actually match the problem?

This chapter looks at how the ETF can achieve this goal by becoming a hybrid *knowing organisation* (Choo, 1998): both a clearing house or brokerage institution for knowledge on 'what works' in policy change within its expertise triangle of VET, EU policies and country knowledge, and at the same time a centre of expertise for the promotion and practice of peer learning and capacity building. It must become a learning organisation in the field of vocational education and training, which excels in promoting inter-organisational learning for countries.

The question then suggests itself as to how such an institutional vision for the ETF can be put in place and sustained over periods of turmoil both inside and outside the European Union? During times of hardship, including scarcity of human and financial resources? In moments of global change that require the ability to live with chaotic disorder but still find new and original ways to navigate to stability and order? There is one way and only one way: by striving to see things differently.

KNOWLEDGE AND POLICY – WORK IN PROGRESS

> 'In the new rules of wealth creation economic prosperity will depend on nations and companies being able to exploit the skills, knowledge and insights of workers.'
> (Brown and Lauder, 1997)

In September 2011, at the final conference of 'Knowledge and Policy' (Know and Pol), a major European Union social sciences research project funded through the Sixth Framework programme, one of the questions posed during the concluding remarks encapsulated the nature of the domain in which the ETF works.

The question was: 'How will the set of current global crises affect the ongoing adoption by governments of evidence-based policy approaches and the parallel

encouragement of the EU institutions for Member States to strengthen this development as a priority?' This question is valid for the ETF's partners.

The 'Know and Pol' project had been enquiring into the nature of evidence-based policy making in two major social areas, namely health and education (including training). Eight Member State universities presented their work in the two different domains. The key statements from the conference can be reduced to four.

The knowledge–policy relationship is complex but emergent. This means that concepts such as the 'knowledge economy' and 'governing through knowledge' will not disappear but will evolve in their meaning. The need and argument for more evidence and more knowledge to be used in policy is clear and ascendant. But how can this be achieved? The trust of the public in both politics and science together is not guaranteed. There is no simple way – a great diversity of knowledge claims exist with numerous and various knowledgeable 'informants': researchers, users, professionals, civil servants, and of course the media. Handling and making sense of knowledge is one of the crucial challenges.

Secondly, Europe is a Europe of 'knowledge*s*', plural and multiple, knowledge is socially constructed, it is about who we are, and this is true for our partners as well.

Thirdly, *policy as knowledge* manifests itself with knowledge itself becoming a policy instrument in its own right, a knowledge-based regulatory tool, a specific kind of knowledge: simplified, comparative, normative, positive and also with the tools of governing in the hands of non-governmental actors.

Finally, *policy as knowledge* emerges where we see the policy process as a learning process too, involving learning, enrolling, reflection, building new identities (Mangez, 2011), also at the regional (subnational) level (Healy and Verdier, 2009).

So what of the question asked? The answer from the panel emerged – unique, spontaneous and non-existent one second before. 'We can't know that'. Options followed, scenarios, possibilities, situations were presented, contrasted and debated. Agreement, disagreement, thought – human intelligence had been mobilised to a new problem, a question had set in motion that most human of processes: collective and social learning.

This reminds us how policy facilitation and policy learning also occur best. The question, obviously, has no knowable answer. Clearly, this coming period for the ETF and its partners will likewise not be a pre-charted navigation from Port A to Port B, with familiar routes for policymakers to look up in guides and charts where all the details are laid out and visible. The foreseeable (not the 'forecastable') future will probably be more familiar to us as a hiatus, as archaeologists call a period of disorder and chaos, potentially a fall, but certainly a time of change.

THE CASE FOR STIMULATING KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE

This is not to say there is nothing to be learned from the past or from today or that there are no maps to the territory of policy. One such map can be found in the EU-funded research project EIPEE – Evidence-informed Policy Making in Education in Europe. This project responded to an EU call to develop knowledge brokerage mechanisms between research, policy and practice. It set out to discover and exchange information on evidence-based policy development across a European network of 18 partners in 11 countries.

The project was articulated in five packages: partner participation, data collection and analysis, training curriculum and course development, international seminars, and website information systems. As such the project served as a practice model, but of greater impact was the analytical framework and its results concerning the actual state of play in Europe of evidence-based policy in education. Activities linking research to policy have subsequently been identified and used in raising capacity through deeper understanding, insight and cooperation. Equally important to the findings are the recommendations: develop actions that help to link research to policy; increase the focus on quality, relevance and availability; support knowledge awareness and skills capacity building to bridge between the production of research and its use in policy making; promote the use of evidence in policy; and increase the research capacity for generating and using evidence.

A second phase of this project will build on the progress made by developing knowledge bases of the policies themselves. In phase two, EIPPEE (with an extra P for Practice) will involve 35 partners from 23 different countries across Europe, and a further seven organisations from four countries outside Europe as international affiliates. It will be led by a central team at the EPPI-Centre, which is based at the University of London's Institute of Education. EIPPE will develop a new search portal offering access to research from across Europe. It will provide training courses and tailored workshops in research synthesis and evidence-informed policy and practice. EIPPEE will help others to do methodologically rigorous research by developing a framework and providing guidance and assistance in producing research proposals. It will explore the use of social media to enhance communication and facilitate collaboration between people interested in this area. It will explore the possibility of developing a set of indicators that can be used to self-assess work and develop good practice. Finally EIPPE will offer a free consultancy service for decision-makers in education in Europe to support them to use research in policy and practice.

So, answers are available in both the EU and in the international context. Even more than before, the ETF has a huge role to play as both an innovator and a knowledge broker, as a producer and as a consumer (the *prosumer* of Toffler, 1981) and also as the information agent or conduit

(Gladwell's *maven* concept, 2000). These roles need reflection now and action thereafter. Some of the answers to the puzzle lie in the past, in the experience of the ETF and its partners in the early 'observatory' days during the stage of its life where being a clearing house and information broker was the agency's main task. The national observatory instrument played its role in the successful accession of many of these future Member States and in the development of national and regional capacity in vocational training and labour market policy practice for countries where the foundations for knowledge, information, data and experience had either been swept away or had never really come into being in the first place. The national observatory process, so diversely interpreted across countries, territories and regions evolved differently in different contexts. As the ETF had always preached, every situation was unique, and so would every solution be. The only common factor would be the shared desire for learning. In the Southern Mediterranean region, physical observatories were less attractive. They were harder to render sustainable and frequently not desired locally. The observatory function developed a virtual format instead to match a virtual age of networking and distance learning. The common thread across all these interventions was the role of the ETF as an *agency*: an agent of change and an agent of information provision.

THE ETF AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Over the past decade, the field of knowledge management has been increasingly influenced by complex adaptive systems thinking. This is especially the case in human social contexts, which include governance, policy and development. This way of thinking focuses on understanding the nature of the problem and how this influences the determination of the means of action, and not the other way round. It relies on the natural sciences more than the pure mechanistic ones and seeks to be informed by the nature of human organisations. Snowden provides a valuable history and explanatory framework for the development of knowledge management. He introduces the new patterns of knowledge management practice occurring in organisations and societies (or policy life cycles for that matter). Snowden treats systems as complex ecologies where the role of the manager is similar to that of a gardener or a game warden – not a mechanic or a big game hunter. The consultant becomes a mentor or 'enabler' of descriptive self-awareness rather than the purveyor of prescriptions (Snowden, 2000).

This way of looking at knowledge management is not new to the ETF, which has been pursuing such an approach under the flag of policy learning and facilitation for most of its life and so it is right that the two should come together. Particularly the scope for approaches involving narrative in complex contexts is very promising and extensively reviewed in the literature (Browning and Boudès, 2005).

At the Torinet Governance of Evidence event in November 2011, ETF experts presented knowledge management models as described above, such as the Cynefin framework (Snowden, 2007–10) or the 'Knowledge Café' (Gurteen, 2011). During the workshop these concepts used as tools for VET policy life cycle development. Together, these two cases, among the many available, provided an example of applied sensemaking and interpretation (Snowden, 2000 and 2007; Choo, 1998).

The Torinet participants were shown how these could be brought to their own country work. One immediate discovery of great value was the power of tools like these in contexts of multiple stakeholdership, where meaning needs clarification and where knowledge sharing is understanding and partnership too. As Cynefin expert, Michael Cheveldave explained to general agreement: 'We need to radically rethink evidence-based policy under conditions of uncertainty, allowing constraint based self-organisation and emergent impacts. Unfortunately, outcome-based targets most often fail.'

Evidence-based policy practice therefore needs to look beyond good practice, big data and indicators. It must understand not only *what* to do or *how* to act but also how to make sense of the context of complex situations, multiple perspectives, shared stakeholdership and the diverse attribution of meaning. In other words: focus on the shared need among partners to find sustainable, lean and effective solutions, which are self-repairing and emergent – embedded and intelligent.

In order to perform this new role of both trusted knowledge broker, *prosumer* and expert information *maven*, the ETF must learn new skills itself. More precisely, as Abraham Lincoln said in his address of 1862, 'we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves […]' (Robinson, 2010). But how?

Some of the ETF's recent work hints at how its future evolution could be stimulated and developed within the founding principles of Policy Learning and Facilitation. This work includes the Learning Matters conference (Grootings, 2004; Grootings and Nielsen, 2009). The ability for the ETF to entertain peer policy learning as a trusted partner for countries and between countries has been a constant thread in ETF history and professional identity. It represents its most authentic self – an expert environment where experts feel comfortable to belong, and share their passions for human, organisational and social development.

Through the Torino Process and the concomitant Torinet professional network, and alongside further community building actions, the ETF can light a torch for countries to achieve a better understanding of their situations and, subsequently, to find enlightenment or epiphanies on how then to act. The establishment of shared learning platforms and communities, both remote and gathered, is one of the key elements in the ETF strategy towards evidence-based policy making (Zachary, 2010; ETF, 2010).

Recently, the ETF has invested resources in concepts, tools and methods related to this second wave of knowledge management. A strategy on how to proceed has been developed through common enquiry (exploring what has been done in the past or elsewhere) and policy learning (ETF, 2010). This has also included reflection on how to carry out the work and how to enhance work-based learning within the ETF itself. In the latter half of 2011 the extension of his work has begun towards ETF networks, projects and partner countries.

INVESTMENT IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

As we face accelerating crises and challenges, the importance of knowledge and making the best use of it remains paramount. This is true also in the realm of education and training policy development – not *despite*, but largely *because of,* the complex and multiple nature of the policy life-cycle. Across all policy phases, the need for makers and shapers to consult and share knowledge with, not only practitioners but all those involved and affected, is increasingly considered vital for the success of implementation. Participatory approaches, including knowledge sharing and cooperation, allow the best possible understanding and insights. They ensure the best form of adaptive decision making to occur when formulating action. Knowledge as policy itself is an emergent theme in the ETF's facilitation of policy learning.

Precisely for these reasons, the ETF is investing in a double-threaded approach to evidence-based policy development. The ETF promotes and stimulates the development of a culture of practice and an awareness of evidence *as* policy. This translates in practical terms to the creation and nourishment of communities and networks across ETF partner countries. These engage both parties in a process of knowledge sharing and mutual learning on the *why* and *how* of evidence in policy development. Torinet embodies this approach and has brought together a first set of ETF partner countries. This will extend to all partners and deepen as countries pursue more advanced applications and objectives. Secondly, to support this community of practitioners, the ETF is also developing its role as a knowledge broker. This means identifying, sharing and bringing together the details of ongoing European and international evidence-based policy achievements.

The ETF will pursue this by maintaining close contact with EU policy actions and projects concerning knowledge and evidence. It will develop internal expertise progress in evidence-based policy development across EU Member States and beyond. EU sponsored actions in particular will feed this enquiry. The ETF will act as a multiplier and intermediary, relaying information and also performing an analytical and meta-synthesis role.

The ETF is the lynchpin in this process, ensuring both intermediation and brokerage with the EU and international practitioner and research communities as well as with EU institutions and networks. In practical

terms, this translates to knowledge being delivered via events and through collaboration with the ETF's partners. Issues covered include:

- evidence and knowledge as policy: the why of evidence – usefulness and obligations;
- communicating research for evidence-based policy making: concepts and guidelines, generating interest;
- scientific evidence for policy making: supporting measures, surveys and questionnaires, facilitation;
- evidence-based policy research in education and training;
- evidence in the policy life-cycle: identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- the nature of evidence: indicators, benchmarks, comparison, input to research, qualitative, quantitative;
- the nature of evidence: complex, context dependent, expertise-informed, diverse actors and owners, consumers and producers, multilevel governance;
- evidence research: analytical frameworks, data collection;
- activities linking research to policy: systems, cross-European networks;
- recommendations for action: research linkages, awareness and skills capacity building, evidence of production-to-use, decision making for evidence, research capacity and generation.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF POLICY LEARNING

The contribution of ETF evidence-based policy development has a second thread: knowledge management itself. Increasingly, the process of expertise development for partner countries in evidence-based policy development does not only call for increased awareness of it and its application with, for example, the development of indicators, tools for quality assessment and so on, but the process also calls for new knowledge-related designs and practice for education and training governance itself. For good evidence-based policy development, partner countries need to develop knowledge strategies for their institutions and actors.

This is the second role in which the ETF can support a step-change. This means introducing, together with the work on evidence-based policy development, a second theme: knowledge management strategy and practice.

Again, the ETF can act as an intermediary in sharing approaches and methods for best dealing with the complex nature of policy where multiple stakeholders and multi-layered governance are present. Through national and regional workshops, the ETF can share its own experience in knowledge management practice while brokering that of others. This will not only be explanatory, answering why and what should be done, but also practical and descriptive, exploring how and when it could best be done. The ETF will showcase and apply the tools and methods of knowledge management whilst exploring

evidence-based policy development together with its partners. In this way mutual learning will be enhanced and strengthened. Where necessary, the ETF will initiate specific actions to demonstrate and accelerate knowledge management practice in policy institutions and across the policy life-cycle. Being part of a sustained network, these activities will serve as examples for others, both to learn from and reflect upon, but also to develop further and apply. Issues covered include:

■ knowledge economies and knowledge societies: the context;
■ knowledge management systems and strategy: sharing and understanding what works;
■ knowledge management as information: tools and approaches, good practice and case studies;
■ knowledge management as practice: tools and methods for complex problems and decisions;
■ knowledge management evaluation: impacts and outcomes, measuring the results;
■ knowledge management as a community: networks and practice.

KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

In 2011, the ETF has taken three steps towards the model presented above. They covered:

■ working with the countries as a knowledge partner;
■ introducing the learning network into the Torinet association of countries;
■ practicing knowledge management through the creation of professional networks.

Three very real examples of translating knowledge concepts into action are presented briefly here.

While 2010 was the year of consultation and consolidation of the strategy in the ETF's work on knowledge management, 2011 was the year for starting to put things into practice. A small Knowledge Management Team in the evidence-based policy making department of the ETF supports a number of 'knowledge pillars'. One is revisiting past results (events, publications, projects) to ensure that they are retrievable with current thematic priorities. Another is promoting the corporate services of an online library both as information but also as a place – 'The Hub' – where people can congregate and interact. A third is initiating a number of communities in using corporate social media tools for working *together*. A fourth knowledge pillar is providing expertise to projects and country work in the applied use of knowledge and sensemaking tools and methods. A final important element of the work is to ensure that the ETF shares and brokers both knowledge of EU evidence-based policy practice in training and applies knowledge management strategies and techniques together with its partners in a peer learning environment. This means working together with project and country teams in an integrated fashion but also

working in open, inter-organisational learning networks, as explored by Kurtz and Snowden (2007).

Torinet country work: Kazakhstan as a first example

ETF events in Kazakhstan in October 2011 illustrated how knowledge management can galvanise events. Two regional education and business workshops were organised in the cities of Atyrau and Ust Kaminogorsk, while a national workshop was convened in the capital Astana. The aim of the regional events was to channel input from the regions into formulating national policy for VET reform, a national priority identified by the 2010 phase of the Torino Process. Knowledge management methods were used to facilitate dialogue and reporting between one group of educationalists and another representing business. Not only was this process much faster than usual, but it also encouraged far more participation and interaction. Secondly, the ETF team shared knowledge in EU evidence-based policy practices and developments, using knowledge management techniques to share knowledge itself.

'Reporting and explaining was done in a very attractive way which guaranteed an exchange of opinions from one group to another', said the ETF country manager, 'I would definitely be happy to use such methods again and will be booking the Knowledge Management Team for next year's events too!'

On the clearinghouse dimension some partner country work will aim to identify the role of brokerage agencies and similarly will learn from other countries and activities, such as Serbia (Nielsen et al., 2011) and other EU Member States (Gough et al., 2011).

Torinet network learning – the role of knowledge in governance

As presented conceptually above, the ETF knowledge management strategy was put into action during the November 2011 Torinet conference in Turin. The topic 'Governance of Evidence' allowed the role of knowledge to be actively demonstrated by a team of lead experts brought into Torinet and guided by the ETF Knowledge Management Team in the development of key knowledge management presentations and exercises. In this way the ETF performed the role of knowledge broker, sharing research project knowledge concerning evidence in policy making (EIPEE, Know and Pol) and presenting some key knowledge management principles and practice. The role of conversation was presented and applied around a core Torinet question: how might we improve the effectiveness of policy making? The nature of complexity in the policy life-cycle was presented using the Cynefin framework (Snowden, 2007–10) including an exercise looking at the key terms and components of the policy system: thinking, acting and sharing.

Living knowledge – professional networks and practice

Also in November 2011, the ETF hosted a workshop for knowledge management practitioners from international organisations. This was held back to back with the Torinet event so as to allow ETF experts to meet knowledge management experts in both events. The intention of the workshop and its design for interaction was to allow the sharing of experience and practice in the development and implementation of knowledge management strategies in international organisations to cross over into the evidence-based policy work of the ETF. Participants presented and debated their institutional knowledge management strategies and highlighted what worked and what difficulties were encountered as a form of exchanging experience and network learning. The event now further nourishes ETF work as an online professional network.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The approach presented has now been consolidated in the 2012 workplan for knowledge management with continued country work and further presence as consultants, coaches and practitioners in the thematic, country and network activities of ETF operations.

What does the future hold? While sharing knowledge and expertise both as a practitioner and as a broker, the ETF inevitably increases its own capacity to perform in an expert role. The partnership of practitioners, country experts and policy actors results in a very rich and productive learning environment emerging from, and based within, the network itself. Consequently, the results can be considerable, despite the modest size of the resources available.

By thinking and doing things differently, for example through the application of complex systems thinking to education and training and the evidence-based policy lifecycle, the ETF achieves its objectives in the process of acting and sharing with its partners. It may even achieve true inter-organisational learning across countries, regions and cultures.

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11. THE USE OF WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the potential of web 2.0 tools to help develop policy in VET by investigating and presenting some of the tools and the underlying principles that shaped their emergence and current structure. The chapter will look at how those tools can be used in the Torinet initiative, which the ETF launched in 2010. This is a complex project so the analysis has been narrowed down to the following issues:

- the key objectives of the Torinet project and envisaged interventions in education policy development in VET;
- a general classification of relevant information and communication technology (ICT) tools and their integration in the work process through a policy learning approach;
- the application and benefits of some web 2.0 tools that could be used in Torinet;
- opportunities for applying a Learning Management System in Torinet.

WEB 2.0 TOOLS AND THE TORINET PROJECT

Torinet focuses on institutional structures and human capacity development in partner countries, as well as on sharing and developing tools and mechanisms that will increase the use of evidence in policy making for VET[44].

There are a variety of good reasons for investigating and introducing web 2.0 tools and possibly other learning tools. Some of these are listed below.

1. The Torinet approach can be broadly understood as a donor intervention but also more narrowly as a non-formal or informal training of policy development actors in partner countries. Training is organised as a combination of various instruments and activities such as conferences, workshops, paper and electronic publications, study visits, peer reviews, impact evaluations, policy assessments and less

tangible mediation of ETF experts in guidance and counselling. To some extent, the 'web of ETF policy learning interventions' is already interwoven with the use of ICT tools, but there is still potential for supplementing or replacing some of the current activities with online activities by using other learning tools or web 2.0 tools.
(Chakroun and Sahlberg, 2008)

2. The interventions under Torinet will be based on a policy learning approach. This approach is rooted in educational science and based on the concept of active learning, the results of which are to be applied in policy reform. The approach rests on the application of new learning theories which argue that learners are more successful in acquiring, digesting, applying and retrieving new knowledge, skills and attitudes when they have been actively engaged in these processes (Grootings and Nielsen, 2009, p. 274). Web 2.0 tools are widely used by the education communities of developed societies. Their possible benefits to the teaching and learning process are broadly recognised, as is their potential to open up new learning opportunities and avenues (OECD, 2010). Learning activities based on a concept of active learning can also be organised in an online environment. Those who design and guide such events at the ETF should have the same knowledge and skills as described in education technology standards for teachers[45].

3. A large number of participants are involved in the project but potential policy learners are carefully selected. They can include government officials, school managers, local experts and social partners. These targeted participants are highly diverse in terms of prior knowledge, experience, attitudes, values, interests, decision making power, etc. The participants also come from different cultural backgrounds and different institutions. This contributes to their heterogeneity and fits the aim of engaging as many actors who are involved in the reform of national VET systems as possible. Their diverse starting situations need to be responded to with a rich variety of learning environments. This will ensure better results during the system-wide and system-deep reforms which partner countries have

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44   For more information on Torinet, see www.etf.europa.eu

45   See for example NETS standards on the fundamental concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes for applying technology in educational settings at www.iste.org.

embarked on or will embark on. The ETF and other experts involved will also need to engage in learning activities themselves.

4. Learning tools can be used for large numbers of participants but also for smaller groups of targeted participants. These tools must provide optimal solutions that diminish time and space barriers and possibly some social barriers, save funds, contribute to quality, etc. Nevertheless, the application of any tool for any learning event should first be checked against very important background conditions. For example, do the participants have access to technology and technical support? Which key resources should be made available online? Who will benefit from flexible learning events supported by technology? Can we really save funds and increase the number of participants? Can we expect higher levels of motivation from the participants? Will the quality of policy learning suffer?

5. The ETF needs to formulate its own list of questions based on the nature of the work together with tried and tested models for selecting and using technology (for sections model, see Bates and Poole, 2003, p. 172).

6. The project stresses the need for continuous and knowledge-rich communication with a large number of participants. Several large interwoven networks are foreseen: a network of ETF experts, a network of partner country experts and possibly regional networks of experts complemented by international expertise. In this context, the word 'expert' refers to individuals involved in any community of practice that works with evidence-based policy development in VET. Face-to-face network exchanges can also function online. Some of the prerequisites for successful online interaction are the level of motivation of each of the networks to actually network, the level of digital skills and the overall facilitation and moderation of the designed activities. It is worth examining if and how each of the planned face-to-face events and activities can be complemented and enhanced with, or possibly fully replaced by, technology.

7. Sustainability should be promoted by foreseeing replication mechanisms that are as financially independent as possible. The importance of efficient actions in general must also be stressed. These are in part foreseen by Torinet's intention to map, develop and share tools and materials on evidence-based policy making in VET which will become accessible after the project ends. The online environment offers great storage space with easy access to collected and structured materials. The potential of online learning tools and particularly web 2.0 tools for this purpose is tremendous. The well-structured storage of information and data, particularly if collected and structured by the participants themselves, can help many in their search for information and data relevant to the VET sector. Having in mind that the targeted participants typically have very little spare time, the preparation of a series of audio podcasts[46] and short

policy briefs on the subject of evidence-based policy making for VET could be a good investment.

8. There is a need to promote the acquisition of skills which involve the confident and critical use of ICT. The introduction and use of online learning tools in Torinet could help to improve the digital competence of the participants. The benefits are manifold: the successful combination of active learning approaches and online learning tools could represent a good teaching model for policy learners and would lead to additional learning besides the selected subject matter. Designing and facilitating policy learning events or other events would be easier if short tutorials on active learning and selected online tools were published prior to the event and made available to all participants, together with technical support. The tutorials could be presented as a mix of hands-on activities (e.g. a one day training event covering selected learning management systems or two hours training in using Twitter) and a list of sources for self-directed learning on the Internet[47].

9. As illustrated above, there is a lot of potential for embedding web 2.0 tools in the activities of Torinet and in particular in helping to establish non-formal learning environments.

A CLASSIFICATION OF ICT TOOLS THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR EDUCATION

With the very dynamic development of ICT tools (software applications and web services) used for education purposes, they can already be grouped according to different criteria. It is possible to distinguish between two groups of tools based on their general and education purpose.

- The first group are basic tools that have found application in education. They are widely used programmes across all sectors of modern societies: word processing software, spreadsheets applications, presentation media, etc.
- The second group may be labeled as learning tools, among which we can distinguish those that are designed for wider use and have found application in education, and those that are specifically designed for formal education settings. These are instructional tools.

The first represent various software applications for audio and video conferencing, for creating, viewing and sharing documents, for creating, editing and publishing photos, for making audio and video recordings, etc. Web 2.0 tools or 'open access' social media also belong to the first group. The second group of learning tools is intended for preparing and managing education content in a formal education setting, and they are secured by authentication

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46 A podcast is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically for download. The user can access, check for updates, and download any new files in the series. The audio podcast is suggested due to the fact that it is the proven cost effective way of delivering educational content for those subjects that do not require visual presentations.

47 The good examples of free professional development resources for online learning are COFA Online Gateway (http://online.cofa.unsw.edu.au) and Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (www.merlot.org).

and can typically only be accessed by teaching staff and students. These are 'Learning Management Systems' (LMS) and sometimes referred to as 'Content Management Systems' (CMS) or 'Virtual Learning Environments' (VLE).

Some tools have more than one function. Tools also constantly change as new functions are added. Many of the existing and emerging tools can be integrated with other tools to serve a specific purpose.

The *Directory of Learning Tools* published by the Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies[48] provides an overview of more than 2000 tools available for learning and working in education and the workplace. The classification they offer could serve as the starting point when discussing selected Web 2.0 tools. Thus the learning tools could be generally grouped into:

■ instructional tools,
■ social and collaboration spaces,
■ web meeting tools,
■ conference and virtual world tools,
■ document and presentation tools,
■ blogging, web and wiki tools,
■ image, audio and video tools,
■ communication tools,
■ personal productivity tools,
■ browsers,
■ players and readers.

Recently the directory prepared a section on social learning tools in the classroom. However, one should be aware that the changes and developments in this field are very dynamic and call for constant updates.

In this chapter we will only present a basic and shortened overview of learning tools, namely Learning Management Systems and some Web 2.0 tools.

Based on the criteria of the use of the Internet and its services, primarily the World Wide Web, tools can be divided into two groups: 1.0 and 2.0 tools for learning (eLearning 1.0 and eLearning 2.0). It is interesting that the dividing line between old and the new Web can be said to correspond to the old and new pedagogic paradigm. Web 1.0 typically refers to static web presentations with multimedia content (primarily text and images) which are interconnected by hyperlinks and intended for passive viewing. Although the initial idea of the Web was to have the strong editing functions it has today, the terms Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 were coined to draw a line between the periods when a relatively small number of people was able to publish on the web and the current state where a large number of people is able to do so (Anderson, 2007).

If we draw the analogy with education, one could say that there are 'teachers 1.0' and 'teachers 2.0'. The first refers to the teacher-centred approach in learning where students are only seen as learners for whom content is selected and delivered. The second refers to the learner-centred approach and calls for active learners who construct knowledge by gathering and synthesising information. The evolved teacher is expected to be the designer and facilitator of student-centred learning. The use of Web 2.0 by the new teacher could, in theory, bring us to a win-win situation, since all applications allow users to engage in participatory information sharing, interacting and collaborating within the online environment. It is clear that technical boundaries are few if any if the technology is already available[49].

Nevertheless, the tools themselves should never serve as a starting point for planning and organising online-supported or fully online-run learning events. The selection of tools and their application should always be part of the wider education planning process.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND TORINET

There is already a great deal of research which shows the successful application of learning management systems in education organised as distance learning. A meta-analysis of 50 study effects found that, on average, students in online conditions performed modestly better than those learning the same content in traditional learning environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). A large proportion of online learning is still managed through the formal education institution's central hub of learning and teaching activities, that is, through their learning management systems. On the other hand, online learning is very much developed in non-formal settings and used by companies for so-called corporate e-learning. But the share of online learning is growing in both settings and many believe that it is the most promising market in the education industry (Allen and Seaman, 2010). Learning management systems still have major advantages in that they provide an institutionally secure environment, enable the management of learning and integrate with administrative systems. Designers are therefore looking for ways to integrate web 2.0 tools with learning management systems (Mott, 2010).

The ETF Torinet project already has a good tradition of organising corporate in-house learning activities through so-called 'Learning Platforms' whose purpose it is to systematise, strengthen and communicate ETF experience, lessons learned and approaches to capacity building and evidence-based policy making. Using learning management systems for this purpose could be a way of developing a culture of online sharing and learning. Learning management systems allow education content to be created for a variety of education programmes. They add a variety of ready-made education materials, teaching methods, registration procedures, and tools for monitoring and evaluating a large number of participants. They may also facilitate various forms of synchronous and asynchronous communication, as well as a range of activities in which the main emphasis is on the active role of users and their participation in creating content.

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48 See more at: www.c4lpt.co.uk

49 In this chapter we are not tackling the issue of the 'digital gap' which also needs to be considered when speaking of the use of technology in education.

Capacity building workshops in partner countries are excellent opportunities for using learning management systems. There are many benefits. For experts and participants involved in the workshop, access to information can be improved through electronic books, scripts, tools and articles. Experts from the education policy field can be invited and the learning experience can be made more flexible. Also, the communication and information skills acquired by participants working in the learning management system environment can be beneficial *per se*. Such experience can, at a later point, be shared further into the VET sector.

Since the market for learning management systems is under constant change, every institution should have a clear policy regarding the application of online learning and what system(s) it prescribes or supports. Currently the most used open source learning management systems in New Zealand schools are Ultranet, KnowledgeNET and Moodle. The commercial Blackboard and open source Moodle and Sakai have the highest market share in higher education in the United States[50]. The decision on learning management systems is crucial because the process of switching to another system is time consuming and demanding. It requires moving content, retraining staff, etc. A decision taken by the ETF to use, for example, Blackboard or Moodle is even more crucial, since it will potentially affect large number of participants in partner counties (among which are decision-makers) and possibly later shape their decisions on which learning management systems will be recommended for use in vocational schools.

The learning management system used by ETF staff for learning and sharing doesn't necessarily need to be the same as the one used in partner countries. What is even more important is that the system used in partner countries should be installed and administrated locally to ensure ownership and further use and also to support the development of skills for its application. If the level of ICT use in the partner country is still low, the introduction of online learning should be considered premature. Experiences show that countries with scarce resources tend to use free software such as Moodle.

Another important aspect is the preparation and design of workshops as active learning events. If activities within the project are designed as active learning events, an online environment can contribute in many ways. If an activity is based on traditional behaviourist and cognitive approaches, the online environment will still contribute but the full potential of the combination between the online environment and active learning will not be achieved.

So first it is necessary to examine the content of the workshops and its compliance with the learner-centered paradigm. The second step is to analyse which activities are best performed face-to-face, and which could be moved online and for what reason. Various tools and lists of questions exist to help make such decisions. Online learning depends on the characteristics of the actual process of teaching and learning, on the learning styles, the characteristics of the group, teaching methods in use, teacher approach, etc. Nevertheless, the blended learning approach is strongly recommended because of the potential benefits it may bring (Bates, 2001). The approach is widely used by the education community as it combines the advantages of face-to-face activities with the advantages of online activities.

WEB 2.0 TOOLS AND TORINET

Web 2.0 technology has been widely accepted and is used across the world. The key to the success of Web 2.0 is that it no longer treats users as passive recipients of information but rather as active contributors to web content. Users of Web 2.0 application have the opportunity to create and customise media content for their own and professional purposes. Professionals included in Torinet can benefit from the multiple advantages that this technology provides, but only if the activities are designed around other principles, such as active learning, the involvement of targeted and dedicated participants, the selection of relevant topics that match the developmental milestones of individual countries and their actual policy agendas, and dedicated time allocated to all involved for interaction, collaboration and reflection. Factors that can boost the motivation of participants should also be carefully considered.

The complexity of designing meaningful learning activities while using Web 2.0 tools should not be underestimated. This complexity is not a result of the nature of tools themselves, but more of the need to design problem-based and task-oriented activities that actually fulfil a professional need and motivate participants.

As has been the case throughout the history of education technologies, too much hope and excitement followed the emergence of these new technologies. In 2001, the OECD wrote that many e-learning activities in post-secondary education and training have failed because they did not accurately take into account the initial investments necessary to develop high quality e-learning products and the need to adapt these to the demands of students or clients. A more recent OECD report on the education potential of Web 2.0 tools points in the same direction. It shows that educators often fail to use new learning tools effectively in schools and raises concerns about whether or not Web 2.0 technologies are used to their full potential, even in relatively well-resourced, high-tech classrooms (OECD, 2010).

Bearing all of this in mind, we can discuss some of the starting points of Web 2.0 usage within the Torinet project.

At least five groups of tools can be distinguished that have the potential to contribute to the variety of ongoing activities, regardless of educational and cultural settings[51].

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50 See more information on the use of LMS in schools in New Zealand at: www.minedu.govt.nz

51 The chapter doesn't investigate the level of the ICT infrastructure development in partner countries, although this should be taken into consideration when planning online events and activities.

These are:

- communication tools,
- collaborative tools and environments,
- online productivity and organisation tools,
- social networking tools,
- media sharing tools[52].

In the elaboration below, most attention will be given to those tools that have higher educational value for text content, such as communication tools, collaborative tools and environments, and social networking tools. This is based on the notion that the work of government departments, committees, research organisations, think-tanks and social partners on policy development for VET are predominantly text-based. The main characteristics of the selected tools are explained and one example of their possible use in the Torinet project will be given. The example will combine the characteristics of a tool, its use in a policy learning and active learning approach, and its relevance for education policy development in VET. It is worth noting that many tools can be combined and that some of the tools allow for others to be embedded or linked for the quick exchange of information. Moodle, for example, can embed Twitter, wikis and blogs. Tweetdeck can pool information from Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Communication tools

Web 2.0 technologies offer numerous solutions for two-way asynchronous and synchronous communication. Some of the communication tools that may be used are: blogs, Skype, MSN, Twitter and Oovoo.

A **Blog** (short for Web log – 'record on the web') is a type of online diary that is typically initiated by one person. Blogs are written on different topics, with comments or news about the topic. A typical blog contains text, pictures and links to other blogs, web pages and other media related to the topic. An important feature of many blogs is the opportunity to interact with visitors who can read posts and leave comments. Another feature is that blogs are expected to develop over time, so that a chronological order of a described feature or development can be tracked. On the Web it is possible to find a great number of blogs on education policy[53]. Before the emergence of the digital culture we may assume that a similar type of communication took place in the school staff room. Now it is possible to track and access ongoing communication about education related issues at any time.

This information could also be valuable for education policy analysts, decision-makers and other stakeholders in education. Since the number of available blogs related to education policy continues to increase, the question is how to select valuable information. A solution to this could be to follow only rewarded or ranked education policy blogs and to follow blogs of well-known education policy experts[54].

USE OF BLOGS – EXAMPLE

Within the Torinet project a number of blogs could be initiated and planned over a certain period of time, e.g. over two or three years. Participants of the envisaged learning event could be invited to create a blog on effective national education practice in VET that took place in the last five years. The information could be presented in the form of a survey using blogs, images or video. Time should be dedicated to revisiting blogs during face-to-face workshops in order to keep the activity alive. Participants could also be asked to comment on the overall structure or purpose of the blogs of other participants. ETF experts could comment on blogs. The best blog could be chosen through a participant vote and presented to decision-makers and a wider community in the form of a website, video, text, or presentation, or a mixture of other chosen tools that fit the characteristics of the information-sharing and learning environment. The activity should be designed with an emphasis on using and communicating knowledge that addresses issues in real-life contexts in a way that allows facilitators and participants to learn together and that intertwines teaching and assessment. Formative assessment is promoted through the assessments of blogs.

Skype is well known for its feature of enabling free voice and video calls over the Internet. It also has additional services such as instant messaging, file transfer, video conferencing, etc. Audio and video conferences can be organised as stand-alone events or complementary to face-to-face events. In some cases, meetings can be scheduled online to overcome time and distance barriers. The advantage of virtual face-to-face meetings for creating bonds and raising the comfort level amongst team members should be kept in mind. However, communication can be delayed and problems with data transfer quality (lag) may occur, depending on the quality of Internet access. Nevertheless, the tool has the potential for organising meetings while saving time and cutting travel costs. In the framework of Torinet, Skype can also transfer of tacit knowledge[55] through peer learning and expert interviewing exercises.

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[52] The classification used here only offers a basic overview of some of the most popular tools or at least those known to the author. It is not exhaustive and does not cover the full range of web 2.0 tools that can be used in education.

[53] Education policy blog examples: www.edpolicythoughts.com and www.schoolsmatter.info

[54] http://educationpolicyblog.blogspot.com

[55] Tacit knowledge has been described as 'know-how', as opposed to 'know-what' (facts), 'know-why' (science), or 'know-who' (networking). Tacit knowledge is integral to the entirety of a person's consciousness, is acquired largely through association with other people, and requires joint or shared activities to be imparted from one to another. The concept of tacit knowledge was introduced by Michael Polanyi in his 1966 book *The Tacit Dimension*.

USE OF SKYPE – EXAMPLE

Participants of the envisaged learning event could be offered the opportunity to conduct structured Skype interviews with ETF staff, local and international VET policy experts, selected representatives of public authorities, social partners or textbook author(s) in a subject relevant for policy development. Interviewing is the most commonly used technique to capture pertinent, tacit knowledge. The aim of this exercise could also be to produce a record of the knowledge in audio or video. Interviews can be combined with workshops to establish needs, purpose and commitment from a group of participants because interviews need advance planning for organisational issues and for defining the format and length of the interview, formulating questions, etc. The activity should emphasise knowledge construction by gathering and synthesising information and developing the skills of inquiry in online environment. It aims at capturing tacit knowledge by communicating with experts that are geographically far away from each other.

USE OF TWITTER – EXAMPLE

In the field of VET policy making, Twitter can be seen as a tool that enables access to information shared by decision-makers, education policy analysts, employers, unions and other relevant institutions that already post on Twitter. Participants in a Torinet learning event could be asked to set up a Twitter account or several accounts, for example one for the training session, another for other issues relevant in VET policy, training and learning fields, or one to find information on EU VET policies, trends in the economy, etc. The participants who tweet may also benefit from it, as they can reach other experts not working in their organisation and thus find like-minded practitioners to share experience with in the community of followers. The facilitator can organise a discussion event on Twitter by announcing the chat and inviting participants by using agreed 'hashtags' (#)[56]. The activity should be designed to allow a constant and quick overview of brief snippets of information on new initiatives and inputs from the selected institutions and experts.

Twitter is a micro blogging tool that offers the space for sending short messages up to 140 characters. All messages in Twitter are public and can be accessed by anybody without restrictions. Twitter applies principles of 'following'. Anyone can 'follow' anyone and view their messages posted chronologically in a 'stream'. To maximise its potential, Twitter users should make a wise choice on whom to follow e.g. by carefully reflecting on which experts, authors and institutions can contribute to their professional work. Twitter is an excellent tool for sharing quick ideas, links and articles. It can be used as an important parallel channel for learning events.

Collaboration and community building

The most prominent feature of Web 2.0 technology is its capacity to provide a software environment that is suitable for collaboration and community building. Its applications contribute to information sharing too. With regard to community building, collaboration among multiple users naturally leads to the development or enhancement of bonds among collaborators. The following tools are only examples of what can be chosen to support collaboration and community building in Torinet.

Wiki software is a tool for creating and editing content on the Web. Wiki is a Hawaiian word for fast or quick. A Wiki site can be accessed by multiple users and edited if necessary, in accordance with defined rules. Users can work on joint projects, collect articles, links, videos and dictionaries, describe situations, write reports and create libraries of information. The tool is useful for collaboration,

editorship and data compilation (Bozarth, 2010). The most famous Wiki application is the Internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), a global encyclopaedia that is entirely written and edited by its users. Wikipedia's ambitious goal is to compile the sum of all human knowledge into a Web-based, freely accessible encyclopaedia. There are free Wiki sites such as www.wikispaces.com and www.pbworks.com for those interested in starting new wiki pages.

USE OF WIKI – EXAMPLE

The ETF can use a Wiki system for evidence-based assessment of VET and policy progress in partner countries. The assessment should represent the result of a cooperation of ETF experts and partner country representatives. The tool can be used for editing and be complemented with face-to-face meetings. The activity should be designed as the cooperative learning of remote participants over a certain period of time. It could also serve as a model for hosting policy paper developments. After setting up a password-protected account on a selected free Wiki site or on a selected commercial version (e.g. Microsoft's SharePoint), the administrator can approve users and set their access level to viewing or editing. The participants of ETF learning events can also be encouraged to contribute to the content of VET topics on Wikipedia.

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56 The 'hash tag' is a symbol (#) followed by a word used to organise conversation around a keyword, topic, or event in Twitter.

Google docs is one of the free Web-based services offered by Google. A large variety of documents can be created and edited online by selected users. Through Google mail, the owner of a document invites those with whom he or she wants to share a given document. The documents (either created in Google docs or uploaded) can be edited and presented to multiple users in real time and, if necessary, downloaded. One of the important features of Google docs is that more users can edit at the same time, which is suitable for small groups of people working collaboratively and intensively on one document.

USE OF GOOGLE DOCS – EXAMPLE

Participants of the learning event may be divided into groups and asked to prepare an overview of key changes of the policy environment that may affect policy decisions in VET. They could prepare short documents and a presentation, working in real time. The time frame should be precisely defined: for face-to-face collaborative work, for online meetings, for the whole activity and for the final version of the documents to be presented and discussed. The work in Google docs could be supplemented with other communication tools, such as Skype. The activity is designed as a collaborative learning activity in interdisciplinary fields. It should be relevant to changes in the economy and society that inspire the VET vision. It could serve as a model for any collaborative work on written documents in organisations.

Organisation and information management

The success of each project or activity relies on the systematic organisation of factors that are relevant to it. Emerging Web 2.0 technology provides flexible and user-friendly tools for managing large amounts of information relevant for work activities. Numerous tools are currently available on the Web. Several are listed here that might be useful in everyday work routines: Google Calendar, Doodle, Evernote, Basecamp, RescueTime and Time Glider.

Google Calendar is a planning tool for any kind of business. It allows users to add multiple events in a user-friendly spreadsheet outline. This tool can send reminders via email or text messages on cell phones. Google Calendar can be used as a personal planner and as a tool for group planning. Its basic idea is that any person's calendar consists of a number of different calendars: a private one, a work one, a shared one or a family one. People who set up a calendar can invite others to share that calendar and even give them editing rights. The combination of these different calendars, some private, others public, makes up a person's entire diary. Of particular relevance here is that multiple users can use and edit the same calendar.

USE OF GOOGLE CALENDAR – EXAMPLE

The events, workshops and meetings planned within Torinet can be scheduled in Google Calendar and accessed by all or selected participants. The only prerequisite is that users have a Gmail account or any other email registered with Google. Google calendars can be shared according to the principles generally applied in the Torinet project.

Doodle is a tool aimed to help scheduling meetings or any other appointment. The tool is very simple to use, free of charge and does not require any prior registration. Scheduling meetings for more than two people may sometimes require a lot of time. By using Doodle, scheduling becomes an easy task. Doodle can potentially speed up the entire process of getting people together. By creating a Doodle pool, it is possible to have an overview of slots of free time for each participant.

USE OF DOODLE – EXAMPLE

In case that the ETF expert needs to maintain contacts with a network of partner country experts (representatives of different institutions) and plan for meetings, workshops and other events over longer periods of time it is worthwhile investing in establishing a Doodle pool. When each participant in the timetable indicates availability for a meeting, the ETF expert can schedule time on the basis of the overlaps.

Social networking tools

These tools are Internet sites where individuals can register, enter their personal information and interact with selected people worldwide. These sites offer a structure for exchanging data such as text, images, audio and video files and offer services including discussion fora, chat facilities and events. Some of these tools are: Facebook, MySpace, Ning, Posterous, Live Spaces and LinkedIn.

Facebook is a very popular social networking tool and is widely used to maintain social contacts in the form of friendships. Privacy has often been an issue with Facebook as there is no clear distinction between personal and professional domains. From an education standpoint, however, it can definitely be seen as a learning tool. It enables building an online learning community, particularly through the options of the Groups or Pages. Facebook continually develops its functionality so that it can replace entire Learning Management Systems such as Moodle and Blackboard or be used complementarily to enhance collaboration and provide a social space for richer communication. The functions available in content and learning

management systems that are usually grouped as resources and activities are also available in Facebook. The documents needed for learning (presentations, videos or just links to documents stored elsewhere) can be uploaded to a Facebook page and activities (discussion, real-time chat, video calls, messages, events) can be organised.

USE OF FACEBOOK – EXAMPLE

A community of practice (CoP) on the 'Role of VET in Europe 2020' could be hosted on Facebook as a group[57]. The selected participants could be invited to join a group or a 'fan page' without having to set up a 'friend' relationship with the facilitator of this activity. Another option is that the CoP can be opened to all experts interested in working on this topic. The facilitator can post messages (on the page 'wall' or through private messages), create an event, invite participants to a live chat, host discussions, and post video, documents or presentations. The success of the learning activity organised as a blended learning or a fully online event depends on the facilitator who will need to keep members informed about relevant content and activities, as he or she is the one that should provide multiple opportunities for members to contribute. The work of the Community of Practice does not depend on the selected tool – in this case Facebook. The critical success factor lies in the ability of its members to recognise the benefits of their collaborative work and the appreciation of the possibility to share and create new knowledge. The work of Communities of Practices involves self-selected and voluntary group participants and will endure as long as they have an interest in building and exchanging knowledge. It is based on agreement on their purpose and working modalities, roles and responsibilities (UNDP, 2004). The activity is designed in order to use a social software infrastructure for accelerated and facilitated network development and to support new forms of learning communities. The tool allows initiating many CoPs and networks of experts that would potentially work in the specific area of interest.

Media sharing tools

These are tools which allow users to create collections of different media and share them with others on sites that offer audio, image and video hosting. Examples of such tools are: Flicker, Picasa, Youtube and the dedicated versions for the education community: Teachertube and for universities iTunesU and Delicious.

Flickr is a website for online image sharing that makes it possible to upload and organise images using tags, search and find images related to particular topics, and download images if permission has been assigned by the owner. The images can be stored both as private and as public. A user uploading an image can set privacy controls that determine who can view the image, form groups, etc.

USE OF FLICKR – EXAMPLE

The participants of a learning event may be asked to form a group and collect and share images on Flickr as part of a wider discussion on new approaches to vocational school architecture. They could search for images on movable furniture, flexible walls, specialised training sets and other innovations applied in education institutions which have proven to contribute to better learning outcomes. They can collect and post images of vocational school buildings, looking for their main characteristics and current state while preparing for investment in (or fundraising for) modern teaching and learning technologies that will provide the best educational experience for vocational students. The activity should be designed to facilitate collecting evidence on vocational schools buildings that can complement other sources of information used by the project participants.

This short overview of some of the tools and examples of their possible application in Torinet could be further discussed and elaborated by the ETF Torinet team if a decision is taken to work on delivering policy learning events (trainings) online. Embedding Web 2.0 in a policy learning strategy can encourage participants to engage in continuing communication and provide additional support for creating and sustaining new learning and transforming this learning into VET policy and practice.

SUMMARY AND FURTHER STEPS

Prior to taking a decision on embedding Web 2.0 tools and any other learning tools in the policy learning process, an overview of the entire set of needs and requirements should be prepared. This should then be assessed against the potential of online learning tools. Some of the issues are:

- The expectations of the policy learning approach in the area of evidence-based policy making. The question could be: can we achieve this learning outcome with the help of this (or another) tool in a more efficient way than in a face-to-face environment?
- The type of intervention. Which tools are most suitable for which type of intervention?

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57   Other topics could also be selected based on a needs' assessment conducted in partner countries.

■ The result of an analysis of recognised barriers in the work of the ETF that should be overcome with the help of technology, for example to save time, to establish closer links with targeted participants, to involve larger numbers of participants, to save funds, to increase access, to improve quality, etc. What is the priority?

■ The general ETF policy on the use of ICT and learning tools, including social media, not only for information and dissemination through an external communications unit but also for the purpose of implementing policy learning events.

We will finally argue that there is a potential for using new technologies in a powerful way in the work of the ETF. It could offer added value to its work. A discussion will be needed on issues of planning and modality. Should learning events be organised as web-supplemented, blended or mixed models, or could they be fully online?

There are many other related issues which should be further investigated. Some of the topics that can be further explored and discussed are:

■ to consider the ETF's contribution to existing information databases, for example by preparing and publishing movies, podcasts and documents on iTunesU, as recently done by UNESCO Education[58];

■ to explore the potential of alternate reality games for social change and possibly to design an online educational game for a large number of participants as a policy learning event[59]. There is agreement among researchers that learning does take place in games and that they have undeniable power to teach (Boskic, 2011);

■ to carry out a review of the main characteristics and good examples of online communities of practice;

■ to assess the training needs and available expertise of ETF staff in the area of distance education, education technology, social media application, etc.;

■ to develop an ETF policy on corporate online learning and the application of online learning in the work activities and events of the ETF;

■ to formulate a set of questions that will identify the e-maturity level in partner countries as a prerequisite to introducing online learning tools.

The challenge for the ETF is to further explore the potential of education technology in facilitating policy learning, to develop in-house expertise and to contribute to the body of research evidence that points to the successes and failures of applying technological solutions to the huge policy learning needs in ETF partner countries.

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58 See more at: http://bit.ly/nMbKTF

59 See more about the World Bank Institute's Online Game, EVOKE at: http://bit.ly/kc96C

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12. ACCOUNTABILITY: MEASURING INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

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'The Statue of Liberty on the East Coast (that has become a symbol of Liberty and Freedom) should be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast […] Freedom, however, is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibleness. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibleness.'
(Frankl, 1959, pp. 209–210)

INTRODUCTION

This Yearbook looks at how the ETF assesses VET system developments in partner countries by using evidence-based methods to analyse systems and policies. But how does the ETF measure its own performance? The orientation towards new public management[60] in public institutions emphasises performance measurement based on an assumption that measurement – based on data – supports political decisions and hence evidence-based policy. Performance measurement has become increasingly time-consuming and costly for public institutions and may sometimes – due to its focus on inputs, processes and outputs data – detract from the correlation between intervention and effect. This has provoked some criticism and increased demand for evidence-based knowledge which reinforces the focus on impact. This chapter will present the strategies and methods that the ETF uses to monitor its performance to ensure accountability, quality, transparency, and added-value. The chapter argues that the Torino Process offers a new option for the ETF to measure the impact and added-value of its activities.

THE ETF – AN EU AGENCY

A number of specialised and decentralised EU agencies support the EU Member States and their citizens. These agencies answer a desire for geographical devolution from Brussels and the need to cope with new tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature. As a decentralised agency, the ETF was set up to accomplish a very specific technical task: to contribute, in the context of the EU external relations policies, to improving human capital development in its partner countries[61].

The EU contributes to the economic development of third countries by providing the skills necessary to foster productivity and employment and supports social cohesion by promoting civic participation. In the context of the efforts of these countries to reform their economic and social structures, the development of human capital is essential for long-term stability and prosperity and in particular for achieving socio-economic equilibrium. The ETF makes an important contribution to improving human capital development, in particular education and training in a lifelong learning perspective. In order to guarantee full autonomy and independence, the ETF's founding regulation establishes that it should be granted an autonomous budget which comes primarily from an EU contribution. Nevertheless, as an EU agency, the ETF works within its field of expertise and has no power to adopt regulatory measures. It must also ensure that its work is based on sound information and expertise, with transparency and scientific competence essential requirements.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The core of the institutional performance of decentralised agencies like the ETF is a combination of responding flexibly to specific and differing requirements, while making accountable use of public resources and ensuring that the results achieved represent value for money.

The mechanisms in place to ensure accountability for the actions of EU agencies include reporting and auditing, stakeholder involvement and communicating results. The management of the agencies must also respect the basic standards of good stewardship to mitigate possible risks. Coherent evaluation policies should also be in place[62].

These mechanisms imply different dimensions of accountability:

■ administrative: reporting on the use of resources with respect to compliance rules and results achieved with respect to annual objectives set out in annual work programmes;
■ managerial: improving organisational performance by developing and promoting tools and professional expertise, and by advocating an effective working environment;

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60 New public management broadly denotes the government policies, since the 1980s, that aimed to modernise the public sector and render it more effective. The basic hypothesis holds that a market oriented management of the public sector will lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments, without negative side-effects on other objectives and considerations.

61 Regulation (EC) No 1339/2008.

62 COM(2008) 135 final.

■ political: ensuring the relevance of programmes to the needs of their final beneficiaries expressed by the relevant stakeholders and corroborated with evidence.

The final outcome of using these accountability mechanisms is a documented and substantiated response to the question of what is the value-added. In the case of the ETF, this is its overall impact on the development of human capital in its partner countries.

ADDED-VALUE

We can consider three main uses of the value-added concept. All of them have implications for the ETF and therefore its performance-based management should indicate how added-value has been generated in these three dimensions.

Added-value in the context of subsidiarity

As a general principle of EU law, the EU may only act (i.e. make laws) where the action of individual countries is insufficient (subsidiarity). This principle was established in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at EU level.

There are different criteria that determine those areas where the EU should and should not act, one of these being the so called 'benefit criterion', according to which the action must bring added value over and above what could be achieved by individual or Member State government action alone.

In this respect, Art. 4.4 of the consolidated version of the Treaty[63] gives the EU the competence to carry out activities and implement a common policy in the areas of development cooperation and humanitarian aid; however, the exercise of that competence should not prevent Member States from exercising theirs. Title V of the Treaty develops the general provisions on the EU's external action and specific ones on the Common Foreign and Security policy.

In the field of education, vocational training, youth and sport, Art. 6 of the Treaty limits the EU's competence to carrying out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. Art. 166 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU reiterates the supporting and supplementing character of VET policy (while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of VET) and Art. 166.3 explicitly mentions that both the EU and the Member States should

foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of vocational training.

The ETF regulation incorporates these provisions in its own text (i.e. Art. 1 defining the EU external relations policies and the type of assistance in human capital development)[64]. What is important is that in this first understanding of added-value in relation to the principle of subsidiarity the ETF should be able to report on the benefit criterion: i.e. how the ETF, in the field of VET in the context of EU external relations, brings added value over and above what could be achieved by individual or Member State government action alone. To do so, several aspects must be considered.

In its stakeholder coordination function, the ETF seeks to (i) support the participation of its Governing Board members (representatives from each EU Member State) in its activities; (ii) disseminate information and encourage networking and the exchange of experience and good practice between the EU and partner countries and amongst partner countries in human capital development issues; and (iii) engage in dialogue with the Commission and other relevant EU institutions and bodies.

The ETF also develops partnership arrangements with other relevant bodies active in the human capital development field in the EU and worldwide. This cooperation helps to create synergy between the action taken by different international organisations or the Member States themselves in the partner countries in the field of human capital development. In addition, the ETF supports the work done by the EU Delegations and the European Commission in terms of coordinating Member State support to individual partner countries in human capital development.

The ETF principle of action on policy learning encourages reflections on national and international experiences and places a country's own context and needs at the core. Policy learning involves using comparisons to better understand the country's current policy challenges and possible solutions, by observing similarities and differences across different national settings. Peer policy learning therefore appears to be a more effective way for governments to inform policy by drawing lessons from available evidence and experience. Recent work (ETF yearbooks 2004–08) suggests that policy learning – as distinct from policy borrowing and copying – encourages situated problem solving and reflection. New policies need to be strategically linked to goals and outcomes for national education systems and must be firmly related to concrete national policy priorities as well as anchored in specific country institutional contexts. As we have seen elsewhere in this Yearbook, effective policy learning should aim for a deeper understanding of policy problems and processes than what is provided by a simple search for 'best practice'. The ETF 'Torinet' project, for example, operationalises the

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63 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (2008/C 115/01), OJEU, 9.5.2008

64 In particular the Regulation states that 'since the objective of this Regulation, namely assisting third countries in the field of human capital development, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore be better achieved at Community level, the Community may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Regulation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve that objective' (OJEU 31.12.2008, L354/84).

policy learning concept by developing the ability to (i) learn from past national experience; (ii) learn from other countries; and (iii) learn from local innovation projects (see chapter 3).

To sum up, the ETF ensures added-value in this first meaning of subsidiarity by involving Member State representatives in its activities, supporting the coordination of Member State work in the partner countries and adopting a policy learning approach that enhances horizontal cooperation among Member States and partner countries and partner countries themselves.

Added-value in terms of the *agencification* of the EU policies[65]

In recent years, using agencies to implement key tasks has become an established way in which the EU works and agencies have become part of the institutional landscape. Most Member States have also taken a similar path of using agencies to bring a different approach to precisely defined tasks[66].

There are various reasons for the growing use of agencies. They can help to ensure a focus on core tasks by providing the possibility to devolve certain operational functions to outside bodies and they support the decision making process by pooling technical or specialist expertise. Agencies perform a range of important tasks across a spread of policy areas. Significant resources are now devoted to agencies. As a result, clarity about their roles and ensuring accountability as public bodies has become increasingly important[67]. Within the EU administrative framework calls for a common understanding between the EU institutions of the purpose and role of agencies have increased. At present, this common understanding is lacking. The establishment of agencies case by case – on the basis of proposals from the Commission to be agreed by the European Parliament and/or the Council of Ministers – has not been accompanied by an overall vision of the place of agencies in the EU. The lack of such a global vision generates many ad-hoc questions on the *raison d'être* of individual agencies, with a potential to distract them from focusing on the work they are requested to do and eventually affecting their overall effectiveness.

The European Commission believes that agencies can bring real added value to the EU's governance structures. At present, however, this potential is being held back by the lack of a common vision about the role and functions of agencies. The Commission has therefore involved the

European Parliament and the Council of Ministers in a dialogue on the place of agencies in European governance and the key issues facing agencies. The need for agreed clear lines of accountability to govern agencies' actions is at the core of the debate[68].

The ETF must be accountable in this respect, demonstrating the added value for the EU of having a centre of expertise supporting the development of human capital in the partner countries, in the context of the EU external relations policies. This added-value can also be assessed compared to the modality of intervention in other sectors (e.g. outsourcing technical assistance to consultants on a project basis and following the standard procurement rules for service contracts).

An external evaluation contracted by the European Commission in this inter-institutional dialogue framework on the agencies (which included a short chapter on the ETF) examined this issue:

'Both founding texts and recast decision do not provide an explicit justification for the creation of an agency against other possible alternatives, namely relying upon the Commission's internal expertise possibly complemented by external experts. Two main reasons [...] lie behind the existence of an agency in this specific policy area:
- the necessity of independence, vis-à-vis particular national interests as well as the authority of the Commission – the legitimacy of an independent organisation facilitates the acceptance of interventions in countries outside the EU;
- the need for credibility, achieved through the lack of commercial interest, and granted by the frequent evaluations that characterise the EU agency system.

At present the ETF provides tailored support to third countries to help build their capacity to design vocational education and training reforms. This contributes to achieving the objectives of several EU policies (enlargement, neighbourhood, and development aid) in a way which is consistent with internal education and training policies. The same kind of support is delivered by EC internal experts, sometimes with the support of external experts in other policy domains, such as trade, transport, or rural development.

Considering this point, the main alternative to the ETF would be a mix of internal and ad hoc external expertise.'

(Ramboll et al., 2009, pp. 146–153)

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65 There is a growing interest in public management research in the developments of the last 20 years whereby regulation based on central command and control from the top has been weakened in favour of more regulation by autonomous regulatory agencies. See for example, Christensen and Lægreid (2005).

66 COM(2008) 135 final sets out the Commission's input. The Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2008, the European Council conclusions on the Court of Auditors report, 25 September 2008 and the European Parliament resolution (P6_(2005)0460) following the study of Jann (2008) are also important.

67 See Andoura and Timmerman (2008): 'European agencies have proven to be useful, if not indispensable instruments in European governance. The technical or scientific expertise incorporated and used by European agencies to assist the Commission and Member States in the increasingly complicated European regulatory system is the principal argument in favour of such independent decentralised bodies. Furthermore, European agencies bring some flexibility to EU governance. On the one hand they possess a certain operational flexibility, while on the other the creation of new agencies provides the Commission with a more flexible response capability compared to working out new legislation.'

68 See the conclusions of Andoura and Timmerman (2008, p. 28) article: 'Irrespective of the outcome of the institutional debate [...] there seems to be a tendency towards continued "agencification" in the EU. Although the advantages of decentralised, autonomous agencies in European governance are clear, this should not distract us from the issues of accountability, legitimacy, decentralisation, subsidiarity and proportionality linked to the agencification process and the heterogeneity of the current system of European agencies. In order not to lose the benefits of European agencies, continued efforts should be made to address these issues in a proactive manner for new agencies and in a reactive way in order to remedy the current situation.'

Feedback from stakeholders provided through different mechanisms (stakeholder satisfaction surveys, project evaluations and other informal feedback through country stakeholder relations management) almost unanimously agree that the quality of ETF support is very high, even amongst those who do not participate directly in ETF activities, and that its services and reports are useful or very useful for their respective countries. Despite the fact that, compared to other modalities of support, the ETF does not bring money to the partner countries, it has often been pointed out that the expertise provided (in the form of reports and analyses, direct advice, facilitation of discussions or capacity building measures) is worth more than other interventions with higher budgets that are usually spent on hiring consultants. The policy learning approach presented in the previous section is a clear source of added-value in this respect.

A recent external evaluation commissioned by the ETF (after the field work interviewing a number of local stakeholders) concludes the following on the question of added value: 'The ETF is both an awareness raising engine as well as a platform for bringing stakeholders together to set reform priorities in the design and development of complex education reform processes in partner countries. In the field of E-TVET reform there is an appreciation by stakeholders in partner countries that in comparison with other donors, the ETF understands what needs to be done. Its pool of expertise, its flexibility and responsiveness and its dissemination of good practice are key elements of the value added generated by ETF interventions in partner countries.' (Integration, 2010)

The ETF's added value comes from its neutral, non-commercial and unique established knowledge base consisting of expertise in human capital development and its links to employment. This includes expertise in adapting the approaches to human capital development in the EU and its Member States to the context of the partner countries. It also covers:

- comparative knowledge and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of different vocational education and training and employment policies and strategies for implementation and reform;
- knowledge of partner country contexts and their policy needs and priorities for implementation;
- understanding of EU external relations policies, priorities and instruments in human capital development and the capacities to fit them to the context of partner countries.

The ETF combines these elements to provide tailored advice to the European Commission and partner countries on how to achieve sustainable reform. This advice embeds human capital and employment policy in the overall economic and social development strategies of the partner countries in line with EU external relations priorities. In comparison with other types of support

received by the countries (i.e. technical assistance provided by outsourced consultants) the unique features of ETF intervention offer greater added-value.

Added-value in the context of donor interventions

The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement among over 100 ministers, heads of agencies and other senior officials. It commits countries and organisations to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) was drawn up in 2008 and builds on the commitments agreed in the Paris Declaration[69].

The EU Code of Conduct on the Division of Labour in Development Policy[70] is in line with most of the principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda, and presents a set of concrete measures to enhance complementarity among donors. In the Communication, 'complementarity' is an organisational concept whereby donors act in complete and balanced unison. Complementarity starts with coordination, but goes much further: it implies that each actor focuses its assistance on areas where it can add most value, given what others are doing. Hence, complementarity is the division of labour between various actors to ensure an optimum use of human and financial resources.

Comparative advantage and added value are defined as follows: 'Complementarity should be based on the comparative advantage of donors in supporting partner governments. EU donors should make full use of their comparative advantages to (i) enhance the division of labour; (ii) concentrate activities; and (iii) develop delegated cooperation. Comparative advantage can also be found in sub-sectors or niche themes within sectors. Examples could be inclusive education within the education sector […]. In addition to its role as a donor, the Commission has a recognised added-value, in **developing strategic policies, promoting development best practices, and in facilitating coordination and harmonisation […], as well as in the external dimension of internal Community policies**' (p. 7).

This different dimensions of this definition of added-value are explicitly formulated in the ETF mandate, mid-term perspective, work programmes and in the Torino Process objectives and methodology.

In addition, the characteristics of the ETF as a centre of expertise, with its triangle of internal expertise[71], positions it well for adding value to the EU external policies, as indicated below.

- The Torino Process and other ETF work programme activities contribute to developing strategic policies,

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69 http://bit.ly/AvgX

70 COM(2007) 72 final.

71 The ETF considers its expertise as a triangle: thematic expertise in human capital development, knowledge and experience in its partner countries and knowledge and skills on the EU external relations policies and instruments.

promoting development best practices, and facilitating coordination and harmonisation.

- Its policy analysis role adds to the relevance of different donor and actor interventions.
- The mid-term objective of supporting countries to develop their capacities in evidence-based policy making, helps to increase efficiency by targeting donor interventions and using local systems.

IMPACT

The ETF regulation stipulates that every four years the European Commission should conduct an external evaluation of the implementation of the regulation, the results obtained by the ETF and its working methods in light of its objectives, mandate and functions. The Commission presents the results to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee. The ETF must also take all appropriate steps to remedy any problems that come to light in the evaluation process[72].

The external evaluation of the ETF's activities covering the period 2002–05 was carried out in 2005. The final conclusions and recommendations were the subject of a Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament adopted, on 19 December 2006[73]. The evaluation confirmed that the ETF's work is of good value and concluded that the Commission and the EU Delegations have a positive perception of the ETF's provision of expertise in VET. The evaluators also addressed a series of recommendations that required action. The findings, conclusions and recommendations were taken into account in the preparation of the recast regulation in 2008 (No 1339/2008).

The evaluation report assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of the ETF's activities from the point of view of its work at partner country level. Four in-depth country studies looked at the efficiency and effectiveness of ETF activities. Although the evaluators found it challenging to assess the specific results and impacts achieved given the nature of the sector, the scale of activities and the range of different stakeholders, the report concluded that ETF had been efficient and effective in its contribution to VET reform in the partner countries. To address the different recommendations in the evaluation, including those referred to measuring results and impact, the ETF prepared an action plan and reports regularly on progress made[74].

The intrinsic difficulties in assessing impact is a recurrent observation in external relations projects and even more so in the field of vocational education and training. This is in part due to the fact that VET reforms typically take time (from five to ten years) before any real impact can be assessed (taking into account the identification and feasibility analyses, decisions on the way the reform is

shaped, implementation of the reform from defining the architecture of the system to curriculum reform and teacher/trainer training, piloting of the reform, mainstreaming and the fact that some training paths take several years). In addition, a number of local stakeholders (different ministries and public agencies, social partners and other civil society representatives) and donors (international, multilateral and bilateral) are involved. This makes it difficult to isolate the contribution of single operators (in this case the ETF).

As an example, the European Parliament commissioned a study in 2006 in the Area of Development and Cooperation, which included a section on impact assessment. The report said that: 'Impact is defined as the capacity for a certain project to achieve results beyond the narrow boundaries of the project, through various positive feedback mechanisms (imitation, economic multiplier, etc.). Together with cost effectiveness, **impact assessment appears to be the Cinderella of evaluation studies**, at least as far as quantitative aspects are concerned. […] Under these conditions, impact evaluation inevitably takes an intrinsically qualitative attitude, focusing on aspects such as the behavioural changes possibly induced by technical assistance projects, greater awareness among entrepreneurs of the benefits resulting from the use of business support services or the emergence of a regional identity' (Economisti Associati, 2006, pp. 26–27).

The report also analyses the problems in measuring the overall impact of aid activities, as follows:

> 'Practical problems mainly relate to the lack of comprehensive and updated statistical indicators. In many developing countries statistics […] are extremely weak and sometimes non-existent. Furthermore, when they do exist, these statistics are collected and/or published at rather long intervals, and they may have more historical than operational relevance. This statistical gap can be filled by conducting dedicated surveys, but requires resources that are not always available.
> Methodological problems are of three orders. First, it is often difficult to establish a clear causal link between aid activities and the evolution of certain phenomena, as other forces are normally at play. While a counterfactual situation can be established fairly easily for a specific project or a cluster of projects, this is often not feasible (or, rather, requires a significant amount of work) for an economy as a whole. Second, the exercise may well turn out to be rather futile in the case of countries where the importance of aid flows is limited, compared with the size of the economy. Third, even when the impact of aid activities can be measured and is meaningful, in many cases it is difficult to establish the contribution of individual donors (the so-called "attribution problem")' (Ibid., p. 27).

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72   Art. 24.2 and 24.3 of Regulation 1339/2008.

73   COM(2006) 832 final.

74   Most of the recommendations from the Court of Auditors Special Report 5/2008, as well as the specific reports from the Internal Audit Service also led to the drawing up of an action plan. This practice is extended in the case of the ETF to external evaluations commissioned by the ETF on certain projects and programmes.

From an analytical perspective it may be useful to distinguish between the assessment of results and the assessment of impact, and to make a distinction between internal and external results. The assessment of internal results focuses on the extent to which the expected results in a project or a programme have been achieved. External results refer to the progress experienced in a policy area where the project or programme intervenes. Impact would then be the relationship that can be established between the achievement of internal and external results.

The external evaluation of the ETF in 2011 concluded that:

'Longer-term impacts of ETF actions are hard to discern as clear causality cannot be established given the ETF's mandate of non-binding interventions as a centre of expertise. Given that, the ETF was shown to add significant value in human capital development at EU and partner country levels, and to contribute significantly to the development of policy in the field. The types of intervention that added the most value over the longer term were in the areas of capacity building and provision of information and knowledge. The ETF was central to the human capital development policy process as a whole and added value by strengthening ties between stakeholders in the area. The main findings in the area of impact and added-value is the crucial importance of the long-term involvement of the ETF in partner countries in order to have an impact. Lengthy involvement with partner countries improves communication between the ETF and stakeholders, deepens knowledge and information transfer and allows the iterative development of specific policies over time. It is therefore vital that ETF interventions in partner countries (and with relevant EEAS/EC personnel) are ongoing and continuous in order to achieve impacts and add value.' (PPMI, 2012)

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

The ETF regularly assesses the achievement of results. Following the external evaluation published in 2005, the ETF elaborated a number of Corporate Performance Indicators to measure the achievement of objectives in several areas of the work programme mostly through quantitative indicators. These indicators were divided between core business and administration and support. The first type assessed the achievements of projects by measuring the different (internal) results in the form of outputs. The typology of outputs followed the functions defined by the regulation. The other indicators measured the use of resources (e.g. budget execution, human resources and use of facilities and infrastructure). For each indicator annual targets were defined at the planning stage, allowing for quarterly monitoring on progress. This informs the baseline for quarterly reports to support decision making on possible mitigation measures in case of deviation from targets.

THE TORINO PROCESS

For several years now the ETF has analysed and followed-up on progress in the implementation of VET reforms in the partner countries although until now this has not always been done consistently across all the partner countries and regions.

A fundamental shift in this respect took place with the launch of the Torino Process. Inspired by the Copenhagen Process, the Torino Process is a participatory review of vocational education and training (VET), carried out by partner countries with ETF support in line with an ETF-designed methodology. The Torino Process was launched for the first time in 2010 and is repeated every two years. The exercise is in line with the ETF's strategic objectives and aims to provide a concise, documented analysis of VET reform in each of the partner countries. It covers key policy trends, challenges, constraints, as well as good practice and opportunities, in order to:

■ support evidence-based policy making, with a view to improving the contribution of VET to sustainable development, competitiveness and social cohesion;
■ inspire the design of the ETF's support strategy to the partner countries;
■ inform the ETF's recommendations to the European Commission for EU external assistance;
■ contribute to the enhancement of the accountability of donors and beneficiaries.

It also provides an opportunity for partner countries to take EU developments and policies in education, training and employment into consideration during their reform processes. The ETF intends to ensure the sustainability of the Torino Process by empowering countries and reinforcing national institutions so that they can implement the review process themselves. The process is designed around a country-led 'policy learning approach', whereby countries are able to learn from reform initiatives being implemented elsewhere. At the same time, the ETF is building and exercising intellectual leadership in international development issues.

As the country analyses are repeated every two years, they not only support the identification of further development needs but also provide indications on the progress made since the previous round. This progress will be the basis on which to assess the external results of ETF interventions and the relevance of sustained support, not only by the ETF but by the EU at large and other international donors.

Once this reporting system is consolidated, it will be possible to determine any links between the activities actually implemented within the ETF work programmes and the progress made by the countries and this will be the baseline for the identification of the impact of the ETF intervention in the mid or long-term.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Following the approval in 2010 of new policies for planning, monitoring, evaluation and risk management and the creation of a new process development function, the ETF has been reviewing its different performance and quality management practices and tools, with a view to improving them and developing an integrated performance and quality management system.

Some elements are already in place to measure performance, but they need to be better articulated and complemented with other features to make them into a consistent, integrated and comprehensive performance and quality management system. It should cover different levels, from operational to top management, as well as different policy and functional areas in the ETF. The quantitative measurements already in the corporate performance indicators are now complemented with assessments on the quality of the results and processes, and the identification of areas for continuous improvement.

The ETF is developing two main layers of its performance and quality management system: one on the implementation of the work programme, and another at management level on the assessment of policies and corporate management functions. Existing practices in risk management and the use of the internal control standards can be consolidated with a qualitative assessment on corporate policies and broad processes. The ETF has also examined the feasibility and conditions for obtaining a quality management certificate, taking into account practices in other EU agencies. A work plan was prepared for the second half of 2011 which already put into practice some elements including a road map to build a complete performance and quality management system over the coming years.

CONCLUSION

As an EU agency, the ETF requires a combination of operational autonomy to fulfill its mandate as a centre of expertise and a solid system of accountability to the EU citizens and institutions. While the three EU institutions discuss the agencies and their future, the ETF is developing its performance and quality management system with a particular focus on added-value and impact, in terms of contributing to human capital development in the partner countries.

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13. METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS – REQUIREMENTS OF PRACTITIONERS AND THE CLAIM FOR EVIDENCE

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INTRODUCTION

In policy as well as in international consulting and cooperation there is an increasing demand for instruments and tools that aid VET experts, policymakers and advisors to take stock of the state of VET systems and their development.

This trend comes along with the ongoing debate on sustainability in international and development cooperation and the growing urgency for international donors and agencies to provide evidence for the success of their interventions. The result has been a mind shift in international cooperation from a mere input and output orientation towards increased attention for the impact of interventions (OECD, 2005). With this mind shift the notion of evidence-based policy making has found its way into the discourse on international cooperation and advisory services in VET.

We can observe two overarching trends.

■   *Increasing demand:* there is increasing demand for instruments that help policymakers and advisers who make decisions about VET systems because of the increasingly recognised impact of VET on the development of societies and economies.
■   *Rising expectations:* the quality that is expected from the instruments that are being used in order to justify political decisions has also increased over recent years. This is especially true for the overarching desire for a policy that should be based on 'hard' evidence, as raised originally by statisticians and quasi-experimental research in the medical sciences.

This chapter asks to what extent the increased demand and the call for more evidence in this sphere are mirrored by the existing inventory of methods and to what extent evidence can be applied to analyse VET systems.

THE STATUS OF INSTRUMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN VET

In order to get a comprehensive overview of the field, the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) convened an international expert conference in Königswinter in December 2009[75]. It was based on a call for papers that was globally disseminated. BIBB wanted to bring together experts and researchers from international and national organisations that develop or use tools for the formulation of policy interventions. Through a blind review process, contributions to the workshop were selected on to their scientific quality and their contribution to the following questions:

■   How do we know what is needed for the further development of a VET system?
■   Which measures are in place for VET system analysis?
■   What indicators and benchmarks are in use for controlling the 'status quo' or development towards certain targets?
■   What mechanisms are in place for peer review and peer learning?
■   Why is one approach chosen instead of another?
■   Which results are to be expected and how can we monitor them?

The methodologies presented came from backgrounds as diverse as industrialised nations (such as the UK and Austria) and those developing VET systems (including Oman and Montenegro). Contributions broadly fell into three different categories: systems level reporting and monitoring, measurement approaches for certain sub-aspects of VET systems (such as competence tests and tracking instruments) and participative methodologies (such as peer review and peer learning). In some cases,

contributions presented combinations of different approaches.

In addition, organisations working at an international level, such as the OECD, Cedefop, the ETF and GTZ, attended. They presented their approaches to VET system assessment and the contextual conditions, mechanisms and standards to which they have to adhere in their practical work, such as programme-based approaches and the principles of the Paris Declaration.

Given the big demand and the high expectations that had been raised over the preceding years, the result of the call for papers for the conference was rather daunting. The inventory of tools and instruments for monitoring and evaluating VET systems was commendably concise. A number of instruments that do not fulfil the criteria of rigorous, evidence-based policy appeared to be in use. Has this come about because of a failure of the respective instruments? We believe not. We can only speculate and have identified a number of reasons that might explain this situation. These reasons can be clustered into two sets: one related to requirements of international development cooperation in VET and one related to the notion of evidence-based policy.

REQUIREMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN VET

This section presents some requirements that, according to experience and the contemporary dialogue in international development cooperation, constitute the special demands marking advisory processes in VET. The following items are to be understood as an experience-based selection of some general tried-and-tested requirements in international cooperation (Kusek and Rist, 2004). They are also in accordance with the five principles that were formulated in the Paris Declaration (OECD, 2005).

1. Diversity of contexts

Due to the diversity of projects in terms of their objectives, their complexity and their environment, there is no one-size-fits-all system for monitoring and evaluation in VET projects. One of the principles of the Paris Declaration is 'alignment'. In VET and a programme-based framework this does not only entail aligning the conceptions and targets of countries and donors, but also bridging the differences between different donor conceptions of VET and its role in economic and social development (Thomas, 2009, p. III).

2. Fixing the baseline

The complexity of the reforms in many countries and the diverse hidden agendas of the policy discourse on VET make it extremely difficult to determine the state and progress of VET systems. But change can only be measured by comparing it to the situation before project intervention. Thus, baselines are highly relevant and very useful. Conducting a baseline study as early as possible can help to identify existing monitoring structures and assess the availability and reliability of data. The experience gathered can also be used to establish realistic values for indicators and to adapt and match the monitoring and evaluation system of the project to local conditions.

3. Dealing with complex and dynamic result chains

Despite the recognition that VET has experienced in international cooperation and development aid, often the complexity of a VET system is barely taken into consideration. In international development cooperation common linear causal models tend to lead to very limited explanations. They are simplifying relations to the perspective of the observers and their internal logic of the intervention. Bearing in mind the growing complexity of impact chains, it became obvious that the 'models run the risk of overestimating the influence of interventions while at the same time they not attribute enough importance to the influence of context factors, or even ignore them' (Horn, 2011, p. 3). This can be linked to an observation called the micro-macro paradox which refers to the fact that at the micro-level of a project, most of the evaluations showed positive results, whereas on the macro-level almost no positive impact or proven record of success was traceable (Caspari and Barbu, 2008, p. 2).

4. Cost-effectiveness

Due to the financial situation and the lack of sophisticated experience in many countries it is good practice to develop a monitoring and evaluation system that is flexible (to the demand of the partner) and cost-effective. Cost and efforts need to be kept in due proportion. Labour market and education statistics as well as national or sector reports offer readily available data. More difficult or costly data can be collected together with strategic partners so as to spread the burden of costs. Some additional reflection on the order and combination of methods that will be used to collect, process and interpret data pays off.

5. Developing ownership

After the Paris Declaration, the principle of ownership became an important goal in development cooperation. It is therefore recommended to integrate the partner in the development of a project's monitoring and evaluation system from the very beginning. This strengthens the capacity of the beneficiaries and makes them aware that monitoring and evaluation are closely linked to quality assurance (providing an instrument of control to the public management) and helps to legitimise interventions in the VET sector. It can also reveal reliable input for future steering decisions.

CHALLENGES TO EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN VET

The challenge still remains to find the most appropriate methods and instruments for the evaluation of outcomes and impact of international interventions in vocational training. In this regard it is helpful to distinguish possible impact from input, throughput and output. In a simplified model, a result chain can be sketched as follows:

Input → Throughput (activity) → Output (product) → Outcome → Impact

While a direct link between output and outcome can be described, the relation between outcome and impact is of such an indirect nature that it is sometimes difficult to evaluate. Impact concerns changes resulting from an intervention. They can be intentional or unintentional. They can be positive or negative. In order to specify and assess impact (i.e. change) the whole system of intervention needs to be consulted. Interventions to modernise a given VET system impact might, for example, result in a positive impact on enterprise performance. In order to make links realisable, specific concepts on the different levels were developed and made operationally feasible, such as the effectiveness of vocational training institutions on the meso-level and the employment success or employability of graduates on the micro-level (Horn, 2011, pp. 82, 93). However, the problem of measuring indicators along a modelled result chain is aggravated by the fact that even countries that possess well-developed and structured VET systems do not necessarily have well-developed VET research infrastructures with methodological tools that can be used to depict such result chains.

Despite a shared desire for VET research and respective instruments to make progress, the impression is that the notion of evidence-based policy might not be fully adequate to the complex reality of international cooperation in VET. The above-mentioned requirements illustrate the potential pitfalls when trying to identify relations between input and impact.

Conceptually, the term evidence-based policy is rooted in evidence-based medicine as it has developed in medical research and has become a major concept in medical practice and treatment over recent years. The basic idea is that any medical treatment should be based on robust scientific evidence which has been generated through research that follows the rules of randomised controlled experiments. In this understanding the evidence that evidence-based medicine builds on is not merely factual knowledge about the state of certain objects (such as indicators in social statistics) but it is knowledge about causal relationships between objects. For methodological reasons this has to be based on a large set of randomised cases. Otherwise statistical procedures that can identify such causal relationships are not feasible. The strength of such research for practice is that the resulting knowledge

can be linearly applied: there is proof that this or that treatment of this or that disease leads to positive results in comparison with not applying this treatment. In addition, the observed effect can be ascribed to one specific treatment and it can be excluded that it results from other factors that might have an influence (Schuller, 2008).

There is a range of pre-conditions that have to be fulfilled for applying this paradigm. These are in strong contrast to the above-mentioned five requirements of international cooperation in VET. They will be sketched here in the same order.

- Research approaches that lead to truly evidence-based results need a clearly defined and developed line of cause and effect. This needs to be aligned with the reality that is to be assessed. However, such structures are often only an outcome (and not an impact) of international cooperation.
- Measuring a development needs a fixed baseline of assessment. However, the framework for a baseline assessment needs to be open for qualitative developments that might appear within the course of the overall intervention.
- Therefore, given the focus on development, certain qualitative developments will not be visible when we just continue to report through a grid or a model that was once fixed. Hence, any model needs to be open for amendment.
- The development of research approaches that fulfil the criteria of evidence-based policy making is extremely costly.
- An expert paradigm on the necessary knowledge and instruments to assess change and reform needs to be balanced with a participative approach that is based on an understanding of shared ownership.

EVIDENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Of course the problems of the term 'evidence-based' in its original meaning have not been overlooked. Different concepts that are more appropriate have been derived from the original idea. For example a scale that marks the rigour of a research paradigm has been introduced in order to make a distinction between different degrees of quality of evidence and its robustness and scope (Schuller, 2008).

Another concept that was developed in the application of the notion of evidence-based policy making is the term 'brokerage agencies'. Such agencies support the process of matching between research, its results and policy formation and decision making (Schuller, 2008).

At least for the world of international cooperation in VET, a distinction may have to be made between the different forms of knowledge that enter advisory processes. We propose a preliminary model of clustering methods and instruments based on the distinction between evidence and experience. One could claim that evidence and experience are equally important sources in international VET cooperation policy formulation. **TABLE 13.1** illustrates the distinction.

To advance and improve the processes and the knowledge base of international cooperation it is necessary to rely on both sources of knowledge but applying this distinction to the development of methods and instruments as well as to the processes of capacity building is still a pending task.

POSSIBLE WAYS AHEAD?

What can we do to respond to the increasing demand and the rising expectations that we mentioned at the start of this chapter?

Organisations and centres of expertise, of which the BIBB and the ETF are just two examples, could take a stronger role in the further systematisation of knowledge available in the field. They can play the role of 'brokerage agencies' in international cooperation in VET and as such enhance the sustainability of interventions. In terms of the two different types of knowledge, expertise and evidence, they would have to not just collect and disseminate research approaches, methods and results but also instruments, examples, cases and *stories* that could aid the advisory process.

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TABLE 13.1 MODEL OF METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

Policy derived from…	Evidence	Experience
Knowledge base	objective, scientific methodologies	subjective, capacities of people
Knowledge content	knowledge about causes and effects under certain circumstances	knowledge about cases and stories of success and failure in variety of contexts
Knowledge nature	describing and explaining	understanding and interpreting
Knowledge structure	developed and established standards and rules for the development of knowledge	lack of standards and systematisation
Time mode	ex-post policy (treatment) analysis, iterative	synchronous – sequential
Main focus in the advisory process	well-delineated problem	controlled reflection during implementing reform on different levels
Mode of action	clear sequence of assessing and evaluating and applying	practical implementation and reflection
Ownership	applying knowledge that has been generated by someone else	knowledge that was developed in a process of learning and participation
Adequacy	when there are established social structures and established methodologies	when the social situation that is to be captured is extremely dynamic

14. EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY LEARNING – THE ETF CONTEXT

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BACKGROUND

The use of evidence in policy making is a current topic both for the ETF's partner countries and for European and international organisations. The OECD published its comparative study *Evidence and Education: Linking Research and Policy* in 2007. In the same year, the German EU Presidency organised the symposium 'Knowledge for Action: Research Strategies for an Evidence-based Education Policy'. The European Union supports the EIPEE network which is dedicated to the same topic. The Council of Europe designed its own system of evidence for social cohesion and citizenship, while UNESCO has been using indicators and benchmarks related to education for all for more than ten years now.

As for the ETF, between 1995 and 2008, it promoted the use of evidence in relation to policy learning, mainly through its network of national observatories, the observatory function in the non-EU Mediterranean countries and the national policy reviews.

The Torino Process, launched in 2010, aims at building capacity in partner countries to deploy evidence-based policy making. For the ETF, this involves new roles and opportunities, as well as challenges and possible risks.

WHY EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY?

The most commonly used argument to support the use of evidence in policy making is the following: decisions are more effective if they are taken with a sound knowledge of their context and after having foreseen and analysed their expected consequences. The more complex the field of public policies, the higher the need for relevant data acquired from various sources of knowledge.

Decisions need not be made on the basis of evidence. They can also be made on the basis of convictions – ideological, religious, personal or customary. A person, an institution or a group that wields power can decide without taking the advice of experts, typically because they do not have a culture of evidence or because they do not have the necessary tools and institutional capacity to produce and analyse it. However, their decision making strategy implies a considerable risk: the reference framework is limited to personal experience and policy measures are enforced through bureaucratic arguments.

Evidence-based policy is an attribute of democratic societies. Instead of a leadership based on enlightenment and inspiration, evidence-based policy promotes pluralism, social dialogue, the awareness of one's own limits and the habit of using rational arguments.

The recourse to evidence is a way of making public decisions legitimate – an expression of caution and of trust in expert knowledge.

In order for evidence-based policy to exist, three conditions must be met (Little and Ray, 2005, p. 10).

- Policymakers should be aware of the need for information and should trust the evidence provided by specialised sources.
- Various types of evidence should be available, up to date and appropriate.
- Public institutions and various stakeholders should be capable of incorporating evidence into policy and practice.

Partner countries experience with these three conditions varies. The activity of national observatories and the use of key indicators showed that the political will exists and that there is a general openness towards evidence-based policy but actual results are very heterogeneous. The results of the 2010 round of the Torino Process reiterated that there are some constraints and some limitations to the use of evidence in policy making.

- Data related to VET and human capital development are not always relevant and adequate.
- Research in some key fields of human capital development does not receive enough support.
- Evidence on some qualitative aspects (quality of services, the social valorisation of learning, skills match, access and equity) is often limited to systemic indicators and general data.
- The evidence produced by research and other sources of systematic knowledge is not promptly incorporated into decisions.
- Too much time passes between the production of knowledge and its social use.
- The effort involved costs more than borrowing and transferring know-how from abroad.

■ Policy making and knowledge production structures each follow their own separate tracks without the necessary communication channels.

■ The cultures of evidence, collective negotiation and public accountability are not consolidated.

■ Under pressure, more often than not policymakers resort to using just their own institutional information, without waiting for other inputs whose use would require time, resources and specialist competences.

WHAT IS EVIDENCE?

In everyday speech, as shown by Davies, Nutley and Smith (2000, p. 2), evidence means:

■ the support for a belief;
■ the means of proving an unknown or disputed fact;
■ an indication;
■ information in a law case;
■ a testimony;
■ a witness or witnesses collectively.

In public policies jargon, evidence means any form of argument, proof or data which can help people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects (Gerston, 2004, p. 24). It is a piece of knowledge, deemed to be believable and sustainable because it is produced by professionals and obtained by objective means.

Such information can be obtained from the following *sources* (Weiss, 1992, p. 8):

■ research findings;
■ statistics (both national and international);
■ evaluation reports;
■ stakeholder consultation;
■ expert knowledge (e.g. provided by think tanks or professional associations);
■ economic or demographic modelling.

Due to the diversity of these sources, evidence actually means several *forms of information*:

■ statistical indicators;
■ descriptors of performance;
■ behavioural and empirical data;
■ case studies;
■ historical and comparative data;
■ critical comments;
■ reference frameworks;
■ scenarios;
■ concepts, models and theoretical statements.

Most of these primary forms of knowledge can be used as such in policy making (e.g. statistical indicators, scenarios or comparative data) but it is vital to be able to relate this generic knowledge to the actual problems on the policy agenda and to translate them into the pragmatic language of decision-makers.

In other situations, such as programmes which are multi-sectoral or cover a large problem area, evidence takes the form of a meta-analysis or a data configuration from multiple sources. Policies that are dedicated to human capital development typically use this type of evidence, which aggregates a wide variety of information.

EVIDENCE FOR POLICY LEARNING

Policy learning has been at the core of ETF activity ever since the early 2000s. Unlike policy borrowing, which involves the passive and unilateral reception of know-how developed in another context, policy learning implies the active participation of partner countries, knowledge sharing and mutual enrichment (Freeman, 2006, p. 6).

The review carried out in the 2008 ETF Yearbook, *Policy Learning in Action* shows that policy learning means learning how to design and implement policies based on evidence, knowledge and experience. As stated by Peter Grootings (2004, p. 3), policy learning is a process of ownership and capacity building, a way of involving governments and other stakeholders to find and implement themselves the most effective policy measures.

While policy learning already enjoys wide support and has become the one of the hallmark concepts of the ETF, there is still some confusion about a number of operational aspects concerning the way in which the collective learning process takes place within governments and among institutional actors. The discussion about evidence-based policy can be useful in this respect.

In policy learning, evidence plays the role of a learning support, similar to any kind of new stimulus, information, environmental change or experience in individual and social learning. By using evidence, governments and public institutions acquire a new insight, a new capacity to solve the problems they are facing. The organisational action thus becomes more legitimate, more rational and closer to real life.

Policy learning is more than the sum of learning by individual policymakers. It concerns the change of 'interpretative frames' (Jachtenfuchs, 2000, p. 25) or the collective schemes of problem-solving which any institutional actor uses in order to accomplish its organisational mission.

Evidence can be used in policy learning in two ways (Leeuw, Rist and Sonnichsen, 2000, pp. 193–202):

■ according to the stages of a *policy cycle* (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), where evidence is cycle-specific, although artificially segmented: the focus is on the capacity of policymakers to choose the right data for the right people at the right time;

■ taking into account the *governmental decision making process,* which implies addressing the questions: who provides information within the organisation, who

receives the information, in what form is the content of what was sent, and under what circumstances does any collective learning occur?

Both approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages hence the ideal would be a mixed approach that combines the cycle-specific evidence and the involvement of institutional actors as both providers (and filters) and users of information.

THE ROLE OF THE ETF: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

As a staunch supporter of policy learning, the ETF has a particular interest in promoting evidence-based policy making. The Torino Process not only provides the opportunity for a systematic and concerted policy review exercise, but it is also a joint learning and capacity building process.

In practical terms, it is expected that the new focus on evidence-based policy learning will create the following *opportunities:*

■ Policymakers from partner countries will have the chance to form a culture of evidence and decision based on arguments and collective negotiation. They will learn how to use knowledge and cooperate with professionals inside and outside government structures.
■ The ETF will use its experience as a policy learning provider, mainly in the management of policy networks (for instance, national observatories), in the use of specific interpretative frameworks (such as NQFs and key indicators for VET), and in building peer learning teams and policy learning platforms.
■ All participants will have the opportunity to explore new forms of collective learning which can be used in various contexts of social change. Analysis of the relationship between evidence and organisational learning will lead to a better understanding of the way in which institutional actors act and of the way in which governments and various stakeholders develop their capacity after having absorbed the expertise and knowledge.

There are also some *risks* to the use of evidence in policy learning, especially in the given context. These risks concern both the contents of the evidence and its influence on policy making.

■ Access to evidence should be guaranteed for *all* social actors. If knowledge is available only to leaders and some decision-makers, then evidence risks becoming a political weapon or a consumer good that is monopolised by an elite.
■ The recourse to evidence risks exaggerating the importance of rational choices in policy making. Actually, policymakers can have their own political agenda and can make different decisions to those showed by the evidence. Some authors (Lindblom) think that policy making never takes place in the form

of the sequences described in social science textbooks. They are more eclectic and depend on subjective factors. Therefore, instead of speaking of 'evidence-based policies', we should perhaps be more cautious and limit ourselves to 'evidence-influenced' or 'evidence-aware' policies (Davies, 2000, p. 11).
■ The use of evidence risks remaining merely an instrumental exercise. Learning from experience is compatible with pluralism, public accountability and collective negotiations – all issues that are specific to democratic societies. The risk is to reduce the culture of evidence to learning how to use various tools (indicators, surveys, behavioural data), without absorbing the underpinning values.

The ETF can bring an essential contribution to evidence-based policy learning in partner countries. In order to do this, besides its traditional functions, it must emphasise its role as a *broker of knowledge*, acting as a mediator between knowledge production and its effective use in the public sphere – between research and decision making. This role is necessary because knowledge production and policy making have different, sometimes contradictory objectives, languages and products. The former aims at producing information, without necessarily dealing with its social use. The latter aims at solving a practical problem, based on which it sets its own policy agenda. Both seek knowledge but for different reasons. In order to bring into harmony the two dimensions or to make them converge, specialised mediators or brokering agencies are needed to translate knowledge into the pragmatic language of policies and to make decision-makers receptive to evidence and scientific arguments.

This brokering role can be fulfilled within a *policy network* with the participation of policy and decision-makers, experts in education and training, specialists in communication and knowledge management (including lobbyists and organisational learning experts). Such a network should have participants from both the partner countries and the ETF. This ad-hoc structure should focus on specific problems, look for the necessary information, transform it into the appropriate tools and evidence, and convene policy learning encounters (for instance, peer learning events) with the participation of responsible stakeholders from partner countries. The ETF as a knowledge broker should not seek to develop relationships with individual policymakers, but rather develop *communities of practice* to which everyone can bring their own experience and expertise.

More specifically and tangibly, the following common activities could be developed:

■ selecting and transforming knowledge into evidence (for instance, choosing relevant information to cope with a specific policy issue);
■ sharing and disseminating the knowledge and resulting evidence within the policy network;
■ interacting with policymakers from partner countries and organising policy learning situations (for example: stakeholder workshops, structured debates, teamwork or policy forums);

■ building confidence and mutual trust between knowledge providers and users (for instance by designing in partnership a policy agenda, a monitoring system or joint policy reports, by sharing information and responsibilities, and through dialogue on shared values and areas of common interest);
■ validating evidence, so that it can be used in similar policy contexts (for example: by means of methodological guidelines on how to use specific concepts, indicators or data from national surveys).

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15. PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES – THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter I report on some important results of our last VET and culture conference hosted by the ETF in Turin. Our network is a long-existing loosely-tied system. It operates on the basis of voluntary participation, mostly of academically engaged people who discuss topics related to VET, lifelong learning and the relationship between work and learning. Most participants come from the Nordic countries, Germany, Switzerland and Austria but other countries that are represented include Australia, the UK, the US and Canada.

Three key topics dominated the agenda of our Turin conference: evidence in VET, VET reform from the perspective of an 'intellectual agenda', and the quest for quality in VET.

EVIDENCE IN VET

The first aim of the conference was an exploration of the term evidence. Lorenz Lassnigg (Austria) started with a critical assessment of this concept. The relation between VET policy and evidence is tricky. A first element is the production of evidence. Lassnigg discerned a broad epistemological range of meanings, from radical constructivism and the more or less consequent abolition of the idea of causality on the one extreme, to a renaissance of the classical academic ideals of experimental proof of causal relationship on the other. Examples of the former are distinctions and re-entries in systems theory, or the various versions of cultural practice theories. On the production of evidence, he referred to a model of the research cycle proposed by Cook and Gorard – a model that relates different kinds of research practice to different functions of the use of research in a very subtle way (Cook and Gorard, 2007, p. 44). The model comprises a continuity of six stages of research practice that build on each other and run through two distinctive sub-cycles before coming to full use in the implementation of results or 'mainstreaming' at stage seven. The stages i–iii subsume *descriptive* practice of analysis and conceptualisation. They are (i) evidence synthesis, (ii) the development of ideas or artefacts, and (iii) feasibility study. Stages iv–vi represent *causal*

analyses. These are (iv) prototyping and trialling, (v) field research, and (vi) definitive testing. The final stage (vii) 'mainstreaming' includes dissemination, impact assessment, and monitoring.

If we take a pluralist approach to the production of evidence, we might expect that the range of epistemological positions should be realised in a research system. However, as Lassnigg put it, looking at the Austrian example we can see that research at the second stage is altogether missing.

Also an analysis of the concept of learning outcomes raised the question as to the extent to which European and national policies have been accompanied by the production of evidence. At the European level there are, in contrast to the ideal of evidence-based policy, strong indications that processes have been started without any evidence. Instead of critical assessment and research the policy process has been based on so called 'advocacy research' (Michael Young). As another network member from Denmark, Pia Cort, has shown, policies have too often been advocated and implemented without supporting evidence. As an example, the implementation of the EQF itself has not been based on empirical evidence but on policy itself. The framework was estimated as a powerful instrument for change in education and training systems which should largely serve to reduce the power of providers in the system.

In Lassnigg's view, the Austrian experience with developing a national qualifications framework showed further complications with evidence-based policy and practice. During the preparatory period, the process was strongly supported by commissioned research projects situated at the stage of the development of ideas and feasibility studies. Time pressure from the EU made the Austrian authorities omit some stages. They started right away with a political consultation process. Small-scale studies around this process lacked resources and were also under considerable time pressure. They can clearly be situated in the category of advocacy research. The results of academic research were not taken into account and the idea to create a learning outcomes-based qualifications framework was adopted by the Austrian authorities.

BOX 15.1 THE RESEARCH NETWORK 'INTELLECTUAL AGENDA'

VET as a pedagogical issue – VET in education discourse

Has VET lost its unique role as a common shared understanding? e.g. anglophone countries no longer speak about VET or 'VocEd' but about Career and Technical Education (CTE) in order to avoid the negative connotation of VET as a 'second choice' education. What is the accepted term in your country? Are there any shifts?

The official term 'human resource development promotion' (shokugyo noryoku kaihatsu sokushin) was introduced in Japan. In order to avoid any negative connotation of VET, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare placed VET in the context of lifelong learning in 1985.

VET as a concept

In research and policy the term 'vocational' has lost its appeal. The same is true for 'education'. Much more common are concepts like 'work-based learning' and 'learning for jobs'. How is the situation in your country? Do researchers avoid writing about VET?

Since the late 1990s, in several countries (like the US and Japan) researchers have started to use the term 'career education'. Not all school leavers could find jobs in enterprises and therefore they had to try to find opportunities to get VET outside these enterprises, while VET used to be largely enterprise-based in Japan (Ito, 2011, pp. 185–215).

VET and learning

VET is seen as a smooth way of learning and acquiring practical knowledge. VET still offers a chance for more practically oriented youngsters. Does this statement fit your country?

In Japan this is not the case, most young people want to attend universities. In 2010, 54.3 % of all senior high school graduates went to universities and colleges (Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training, p. 66).

VET as a holistic approach

VET includes subject-based skills and general knowledge. New qualification and competence approaches marginalise general knowledge and lead to a fragmented modularised supply. Do you observe similar developments in your country?

In most countries, general knowledge is very important in the transition from school to work.

VET in the wider education landscape – VET and the education system

VET is more and more just a specific orientation or part of the education system and no longer a clear-cut pathway for youngsters. Does a gap between the general and vocational streams of education still exist in your country? Is VET decreasing or will VET colonise the whole of (higher) education through a 'vocationalisation' of education? In which direction are VET and VET student numbers moving? And is there indeed something like a 'vocationalisation' of other areas of the education system?

In most countries there still is a wide gap between the vocational and academic tracks.

VET, occupations and industries – VET, technology and production

VET seems to be more or less a provision for skilled work based on handicraft technologies and is much less suitable for computing and service. Do you agree with this statement?

In Japan, skilled work is closely connected to computing in most occupations, especially in large-scale enterprises where the computerisation of production is very advanced.

VET and enterprises

For enterprises the need and willingness to rely on VET has been reduced due to globalisation and to other avenues of recruitment (such as bachelors). Do enterprises still recruit apprentices and are they willing to offer places for practical learning?

Since the late 1980s, Japanese enterprises have been recruiting increasing numbers of bachelor-level graduates at the expense of senior high school leavers (Sachiko Imada and Shuichi Hirata, 1995, p. 33).

VET and efficiency

VET is expensive while it only affects a few students or apprentices. It could be more efficient to offer a school-based supply, supplemented with adult education. This statement fits countries where the 'dual system' plays an important role. However, perhaps in your country apprenticeship is planned to be strengthened?

In a lot of countries, such as Canada, China, UK, Ireland, Italy and Finland, endeavours can be observed to strengthen dual apprenticeship. In Japan, the government is trying to strengthen formal vocational training in public training centres because of the high unemployment rate among young people.

VET and its potential of adaptation and change

The openness to change among VET stakeholders is not the same in all countries. VET itself tends to strive for more hybrid forms of learning in order to be more adaptive to social and economic demands. Is this statement true for your country?

In a lot of countries, hybrid qualifications have been or will be developed.

VET as a social and political issue

VET and social prestige

Parents and youngsters prefer the academic track because it offers a wider range of options. VET is seen as inferior to other education pathways. Does this statement fit for your country?

This is true for most countries.

VET and knowledge

VET seems no longer to respond to the needs of the 'knowledge society', which is based more on scientific knowledge than on experienced knowledge. Do you find any indications for this?

In Japan, enterprises have started to send employees to master and doctoral programmes at universities if they need more scientific knowledge.

VET and equity

VET is the part of a tracked education system that fortifies stratification in society. Are there debates about this issue in your country?

Stratification of the Japanese society is rather driven by the phenomenon of elite universities and medical faculties.

VET and the welfare regime

VET plays an important role in societies were there are strong unions and a long tradition of partnership whereas in liberal economies occupations and regulations are not so important. Do you see any indications for this in your country?

In Japan, VET has always been a matter of the enterprises themselves. Unions are generally weak.

The future of VET

The legitimacy of VET is an important element for its further development. Does VET feature prominently in the public and research debate in your country?

In Japan today VET is seen as a means to enhance social equality. VET is justified as a part of lifelong learning and as a security against unemployment.

The aim(s) of VET

In many countries, VET was historically a phenomenon to integrate working class youth and equip them with skills for their work life. Today, however, skills and competitiveness are the only dominant notions left. Do you observe a shift related to the aims of VET in your country?

In Japan the enterprises' in-house training never had the aim of integrating working class people, but creating good members of the enterprises. Japanese enterprises always wanted to have high-power employees. Achievement, skills and competitiveness have always been the most important aims.

VET and ethics

VET was responsible for an educated workforce and for social virtues. Nowadays the classic virtues of the educated workers have lost their relevance. Do you agree with this statement?

Social virtues are still very important in the in-house training of Japanese enterprises. The problem is that a lot of young people no longer find jobs in enterprise.

The 'ideology' of VET

VET culture is a non-elitist culture and one of social partnership. VET ideology praises the practical and manual work. Does this approach lose relevance?

In Japan, VET culture has developed into a corporate culture or an enterprise culture. However, before 1985 there was still a craftsman ideology of VET. Therefore, craftsmen tended to send their children to vocational senior high schools, and not to academic senior high schools, even if the children had very good academic records.

Although the system is not based on learning outcomes in most of its parts, the consultation paper included a table which made proposals for the allocation of the Austrian formal education and training programmes to the levels of the EQF. Only two stakeholders (the Confederation of Industry and the universities of applied sciences) opposed this procedure. Other than theirs, no critical questions about the model were forwarded during the consultation process. The lack of representation of important stakeholders in the management of the process was criticised and some general questions about a feared impact of the framework on more fundamental aspects of the system were brought up. During the process, negotiations about the positioning of education and training programmes were started and after some political power play the university sector successfully opposed the plan to create a comprehensive qualifications framework. As a result this basic aspect has been changed by proposing two sectoral frameworks, one for higher education institutions and one for VET institutions.

This Austrian case, depicted by Lassnigg, unveils another relationship: that between policy and practice. We might draw a distinction between research geared towards policy and research geared towards practice. If we distinguish between the producers and the users of research, policy gets an important position as a commissioner of research and as a gatekeeper of its use. The question arises as to the conditions under which 'best evidence' can be produced. This might depend on the governance system, which allocates powers in the system but also among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

THE 'INTELLECTUAL AGENDA' OF THE VET AND CULTURE RESEARCH NETWORK

In order to get a comprehensive overview on VET reform, Philipp Gonon and Anja Heikkinen developed a grid which can accommodate a range of important aspects of VET and which can be deepened through research. In this so called 'intellectual agenda' of the research network, we identified three central questions.

- What is happening to VET and VET research?
- Where is the agency and ownership in VET and VET research?
- How is VET and VET research being negotiated?

We focus on these issues with a critical, cross-cultural and historicising approach. In the first question (what happens to VET and VET research?) we discerned three separate stages. The first step is to identify VET as a pedagogical issue by asking questions that should give a comprehensive picture of a country. The second is about VET, industry and occupations and the third focuses on VET as a social and political issue.

In **BOX 15.1** I refer to the conference paper of Mikiko Eswein (Germany/Japan) who asked these questions for Japan.

PEDAGOGICAL QUALITY IN VET

A third outcome of this conference was its debate about pedagogical quality in VET.

The research paper of Gabriele Molzberger (Germany) focused on socially disadvantaged youth and the increasing number of young adults in Germany that leave the vocational education system without a full qualification. It asked how research into quality in VET in this so-called transition system is possible. Since quality is a term derived from the economic sphere and from organisational theory, the meaning of *pedagogical* quality is ambiguous. The impact of quality management is often uncertain (Gonon, 2008). Additionally, the organisational logic of standardisation coincides neither with a pedagogical logic of subject orientation nor with case intervention appropriate to the individual needs of young people categorised in the logic of the system as 'underachievers'. Based on a series of field studies and expert interviews, Molzberger and her team found that education providers in the field of VET for socially disadvantaged young people would appreciate European quality standards. At the same time, practitioners wish higher compatibility with existing local means of quality assurance and a reduction of bureaucracy. Interviewees also stressed that not all worthwhile pedagogical work is (ac)countable.

In this situation, the definition of quality standards becomes ambiguous from a scientific point of view. Pedagogical quality standards cannot be defined along the criterion of whether they are true or false. 'Pedagogical quality is not the reference point of the scientific objectivisation, but represents a specific mode of the adoption of the quality concept' (Neumann and Honig, 2006, p. 195 [own translation]). Consequently, research in pedagogical quality in VET must not certify 'good' practice as such, but needs to observe how it is generated in practice. Research beyond evaluation and best practice dissolves the question of what pedagogical quality is into questions about the conditions of its realisation.

From this point of view the research question rises as to *how* VET providers and practitioners can produce evidence for high quality in vocational education settings.

CONCLUSION

The research presented or research perspective of some papers of network members delivered at the conference shows that neither 'advocacy research', as often conducted for policy purposes, nor practical hints for practitioners in implementing vocational education programmes are at the core of the network. Nevertheless one should not stress or deepen a gap in academic research in VET, but just make the projects more accessible for politicians and practitioners and enter a critical dialogue within the triangle of research, practice

and policy. In this sense the conference was a great success.

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16. KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND POLITICAL DECISION MAKING: THE CONTROVERSY OVER MODE-1 AND MODE-2 RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the evidence base regarding political decisions on education and the effects of education reforms have become of fundamental interest to politicians. We are seeing increased political demand for evidence of what works in education. This raises a question about what kind of knowledge politicians and policymakers find valuable for decision making.

This chapter aims to answer the question: how can research inform policy about political decisions on education? The answer is found within an ongoing debate about the relationship between research and practice – in this case specifically *educational* research and *political* practice. This chapter will emphasise the production of knowledge and how different ways of knowledge production result in different kinds of knowledge.

The chapter takes its departure in a sociological conceptualisation of modern society as functionally differentiated. This implies that the distinction between state and society as introduced by Hegel, is substituted by contemporary semantics about a growing differentiation of functional systems that each maintain their own function. Among these, the state or the political system is just one functional system. Subsystems work interdependently as is seen in the growing demand for education research that can advise political practice (OECD, 2003 and 2004). In this respect, 'What works?' has been *the* guiding question to education research.

SOCIETY AS FUNCTIONALLY DIFFERENTIATED

Before I come to the distinctions between different ways of producing knowledge in society and different forms of knowledge, I need to explain the conceptualisation of society in contemporary sociological theory. Today, society is seen as differentiated in a number of systems such as economy, politics, science, art, law, education, health, etc. Each of these handle their specific function (Luhmann, 1997). Two sets of concepts are used to describe the individual systems. One is function, performance and reflexivity. The other is media, code and

programme. Generally speaking each system maintains its *function* in relation to society as such, its *performance* in relation to other systems and its *reflexivity* in relation to itself (i.e. to its function and performance). Systems specify their function with respect to their own success criteria (media and code) and their own developed activities (programme). Functionally differentiated systems have developed their own descriptions of their identities. Such descriptions are named theories of reflexivity. Reflexive theories are theories produced within a system for the system.

Science, politics and education

Our interest here is centered on the scientific, the political and the education systems.

The *system of science* constitutes itself as the form of communication which has as its function the production of new knowledge and as its performance the contribution of new knowledge of relevance to other systems. Its theory of reflexivity deals with theories of science – nowadays especially epistemology. The symbolic generalised media of communication is truth, the code connected to this media is 'true/false', and the programmes that tell how the code can be applied to the media are related to research methodology. Education research is a subsystem in the system of science, and constructs from its own excerpts of reality its image of education.

The *system of politics* has the function of enabling collectively binding decisions and its performance consists in transforming such binding decisions to the functional differentiated systems of society. Its theory of reflexivity is nowadays based on concepts and considerations of democracy. The symbolic generalised media of communication is power, to which it applies the code 'power/opposition', and programmes like ideologies and political programmes.

The function of the *education system* is education (upbringing, teaching, *Bildung*) and its performance has traditionally been to provide the rising generation with knowledge and competences of importance and value.

Today its purpose is not only restricted to the rising generation but includes the full course of life in a lifelong learning perspective which emphasises that the ability to learn also has to be learnt. Learning to learn is not the aim of the education system but a theme of reflexivity related to its function and performance. The full course of life has become the symbolic media of communication, which is connected to the primary code 'mediable/not-mediable' and the secondary code 'better/worse'. The programmes of the education system are curriculum theory as well as curricula.

Education science, politics and education are three totally different occupations and have different sets of criteria: the researcher is committed to truth, the politician to holding himself and his party in position, and the educator to producing good student outcomes. **TABLE 16.1** is meant to give an overview of the above explanation.

THEORY AND PRAXIS

What can be seen now is that theory can be found in the system of science as well as in society's other systems, but as two different kinds of theory. The system of science is in the particular position that it produces theory as in 'new knowledge', but all systems produce and use theory in the meaning of theory of reflexivity.

Theories of reflexivity are theories of praxis and praxis technologies. In science, such technologies aim to produce true (not false) knowledge, in politics at obtaining more (not fewer) votes, and in education at getting better (not worse) student outcomes. Reflexive theory must be able to explain praxis in a way that makes it possible to intervene in it in order to make the performance better and therefore it covers *what works* and *best practice* questions.

Scientific theory differs from reflexive theory by being able to restrict itself only to explaining and perhaps also understanding a phenomenon. It does not necessarily tell about how to intervene. The theory of science has to live up to the criteria of science – demands on methodology, theoretical anchoring and clear use of concepts, while

reflexive theory just needs to be expedient for the system. Scientific theory is evaluated against concepts like validity and reliability while reflexive theory is evaluated on whether it works or is socially robust (Nowotny et al., 2001, p. 179). Scientific theory has the ambition to generate general results, while reflexive theory aims at intervention in specific, local conditions in order to solve concrete problems. Such differences are, as I see it, similar to those used to distinguish between what has been called mode-1 and mode-2 research as two different means of knowledge production.

Mode-1 and mode-2 research

Mode-1 research corresponds to traditional scientific knowledge production while mode-2 research is described as a new way of knowledge production. Mode-2 can be seen as an attempt to reformulate the distinction between basic research and applied research as modes of research that are in a competitive relationship with each other in the sense that mode-2 is ousting the old mode-1 paradigm. The concept of mode-2 research is presented as a kind of research that is more in accordance with the modern society's demands for knowledge production than mode-1 research. Because mode-2 advocates are seeing developments in science as running parallel to societal development, they not only talk about mode-2 research but also about a mode-2 society. A mode-2 society, they say, has transferred the post industrial knowledge society to a risk society, a society characterised by insecurity (Ibid., p. 17). According to those advocates, mode-2 research gains ground due to an increasing demand for interaction between science on the one side, and society's other systems such as politics and education on the other side. This implies that the previously strong boundary between science and society's other systems erode.

As a criterion for good mode-2 research, 'socially robust knowledge' is introduced (Ibid., p. 117). Mode-2 research has renounced science's true/false code for the benefit of the *'what works'* code of reflexive theory. If 'what works' *works* expediently in the actual, local social context, it is summarised in the criteria of social robustness.

TABLE 16.1 THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN SCIENCE, POLITICS AND EDUCATION

	Media	Code	Programme	Function	Performance	Reflexivity
Science	Truth	Truth/false	Theory and methods	New knowledge	Relevant new knowledge	Theory of science
Politics	Power	Power/ opposition	Party programmes Ideologies	Enable collective binding decisions	Transform collective binding decisions	Democracy
Education	Course of life	Better/ worse	Curricula	Education	Learning	Professional knowledge

It does not then seem meaningful to see mode-2 as a competing research paradigm to mode-1. Mode-2 is not a new paradigm but another word for research and development activities and action research which are ways of knowledge production that are particularly suited to generating reflexive theory and knowledge *within* society's functional subsystems. This is how mode-2 obtains its strength and legitimacy – not as an alternative to scientific research but as a specific approach to the production of knowledge that is targeted at the need of individual functional systems for knowledge about what works better than something else in an expedient way without being engaged in considerations on strict scientific criteria.

The distinction between mode-1 and mode-2 research is illustrated in **TABLE 16.2**.

The relationship between theory and praxis in science, politics, and education produces itself as a relationship between the individual system's function and performance on one side and on the system's theory of reflexion on the other. It is recognised that theory on politics and education is produced within the system of science as well as in the respective functional systems but scientific theory is not always directly useful in and for praxis. Reflexive theory, on the other hand, is not directly useful for research because the two forms of theory are constructed from different premises and relate to different systems (e.g. science and politics) with different preferences and criteria (codes). Theory and knowledge of

reflexivity gets its legitimacy from the code 'instructive/not-instructive' due to the fact that it offers a contribution to the optimisation of the systems' function and performance.

From **TABLE 16.3** it becomes clear that three different forms of knowledge are at work here:

- praxis knowledge as the form of knowledge developed by practitioners in each of society's different realms on the basis of experience;
- reflexive knowledge or professional knowledge as a form of knowledge developed witin the systems when reflecting on how to improve praxis;
- research knowledge as a result of research praxis.

Knowledge is produced not only in science but also in society's other functional systems. They embody a knowledge production of their own so to speak. These different forms of knowledge are not to be considered hierarchical; they are different in maintaining different functions but they are not superior to each other.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Scientific research and relevance

Scientific research (mode-1) is characteried by its preoccupation with finding true answers to research

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TABLE 16.2 DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MODE-1 AND MODE-2 RESEARCH APPROACHES

	Mode-1	Mode-2
Name	Theory of science	Theory of reflexivity
Purpose	Explaining, understanding	Intervention
Criteria	Scientific theory and methodology	What works
	Validity and reliability	What is expedient
Ambition	Generalised knowledge	Contextualised knowledge

TABLE 16.3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE IN SCIENCE, POLITICS AND EDUCATION

	Science		Politics		Education	
	Educational policy research		**Political decision making**		**Educational intervention**	
Research praxis	Theory of reflexivity	Political praxis	Theory of reflexivity	Educational praxis	Theory of reflexivity
Research knowledge	Theory of science	Political praxis knowledge	Political professional knowledge	Educational praxis knowledge	Educational professional knowledge

questions. For this reason, the system of science maintains an ongoing debate on what can be understood as truth. Truth as a scientific criterion is not questioned, but the concept of truth (be it correspondence, coherence, falsification, viability, social robustness, etc.) is debated. Science is a functional system that produces new knowledge by systematically eliminating errors.

It is worth noting that it is not science itself that determines whether or not its research results are to be seen as a usable performance. This is determined by society's other functional systems (politics, education, etc.) or more specifically by the practitioners in those systems. One way of improving the relevance of research results is to reconsider the relationship between function and performance in a communication strategy, which is not only occupied with knowledge production but also with reflections on how the produced knowledge is made visible for the consumers of knowledge.

Another way, which does not exclude the first, reflects the relationship between function and performance already when decisions about research themes are taken. This is the idea in the concept of use-inspired basic research, so-called Pasteur research (Stokes, 1997, p. 13). Use-inspired basic research is characterised by the fact that it attempts to expand the boundaries of knowledge and understanding, inspired by practical issues, and that it makes observations about the applicability of research results. Pasteur research is neither development work governed solely by use-inspired goals without an interest in the development of a general understanding of the phenomena it deals with, nor basic research, governed solely by the search for new knowledge or understanding without any thought for practical application.

The concept of use-inspired basic research has found resonance at the OECD which regards it as an efficient means of bridging the gap between research and practice. Use-inspired basic research is considered to be one of the most important strategies for countries to strengthen the relevance of education research that can be instructive for practice. The challenge for education research, it is said, consists in balancing 'blue sky' research (research with little practical application) with research that thoughtfully and rigorously addresses contemporary education problems (OECD, 2003, p. 27).

Theory of reflexivity

The political system, the education system and other functional systems in society try through different forms of development activity to generate and implement reflexive knowledge in their practice.

In the field of political reflexive theories, the adaptation of the education system has at all levels – individual (pupil/student), interaction (class/group), organisation (school/institution) and society (nation) – led to comprehensive assessment activities, not least in international comparative studies (OECD, IEA, etc.). The purposes of these are to produce information about the education systems that the systems are unable to

produce from within. Together with different kinds of benchmarking, the results of such studies have already had and will continue to have a strong impact on political decisions. Results of international comparative assessment studies have become an important reflexive mechanism for policy making.

Similarly, there is increased focus on what kind of teaching methods can lead to better student outcomes. This interest tends concentrate on the characteristics of good teaching and how it can be described. However, concurrently with the abandoning of the notion of one good (the best) teaching method, the notion of 'best practice' has gained widespread currency. Best practice is not a practice based on scientific or normative conceptions, but rather a standard produced by the education system itself, based on experiences that have the potential to be generalised.

Reflexive theory and knowledge is typically produced in three different ways: development activities, action research, and mode-2 research.

Education development activities are closely connected to a desire for reform, and are then directed at changing an already known practice. Changes more than mark a difference to a relatively stable practice; they also value practice which involves normative questions about what is better in a moral or ideological sense. Development activities are in other words influenced by different considerations such as whether or not the intervention is practicable (works/does not work), usable (useful/useless), produces knew knowledge (true/false) or is politically acceptable (power/opposition).

Action research can be described as a strategy for the production of research knowledge as well as reflexive knowledge, but most of all it is occupied with generating knowledge in and from practice. Today, action research has developed in many ways and paradigms, such as for instance practice research, action inquiry, cooperative inquiry, collaborative inquiry, pragmatic action research, community action research, etc. Common to all of these approaches is a normative ideal of participation and democracy in the research process, an ideal which often takes precedence over the interest in change and knowledge production.

Mode-2 research is, in short, characterised by its orientation towards the solution of problems in specific contexts of practice. Mode-2 research activities are steered by concrete problems and not by the researcher's free choice. Mode-2 research is directly applicable, to a higher degree than mode-1 research. This approach is oriented towards finding solutions more than producing new knowledge and it makes a point of involving both researchers and practitioners in the process.

From an epistemological perspective mode-2 is taking its starting point in the assumption that knowledge in the new mode-2 society has changed its character from reliable knowledge to socially robust knowledge. Socially robust knowledge is defined as relational and process-oriented knowledge. The transition to the

criterion of social robustness does not need to be seen as a compromise with the conditions that usually have been valid for the production of reliable knowledge. If socially robust knowledge is to be held reliable, it must be sensitive to a broad range of social implications and applications (Nowotny et al., 2001, p. 199).

Mode-2 research abandons sciences' 'true/false'-code in advantage of the code 'works/not-works' of reflexivity theory, if what seems to work works expediently in the concrete social context. Social robust knowledge is contextualised knowledge that can only be evaluated in a given context. Mode-2 research is to be seen in line with development activities and action research, which – like these ways of generating knowledge – is especially well suited for the production of theory and knowledge of reflexivity in society's different functional systems.

CONCLUSION

Mode-2 research is not to be considered as a better approach to producing knowledge than mode-1 research. It would seem better to see it as a complementary approach. Scientific research (mode-1) on the one hand and research and development work and action research (mode-2) on the other hand contribute to the production of knowledge in different but equally important ways.

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17. EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY: IMPORTANCE AND ISSUES FOR DEVELOPMENT COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on the concept of evidence-based policy making in education and training. It has become popular among policy communities, government departments, research organisations and donor organisations. Other chapters in this Yearbook have dealt with this in considerable detail.

Evidence-based policy making in education and training can affect reform outcomes in developing countries even more strongly than in post-industrial countries. Using evidence in the policy cycle has a promising potential as a contribution to economic development and poverty reduction because the starting point is so different. Many Western countries have already used evidence of some sort in policy development for decades, with the current debate calling for a more structured way of doing this. Many developing countries have hardly ever used evidence so the difference made by adopting an approach of informed policy making, monitoring and evaluation can make a substantial difference.

However, introducing such an approach is not without challenges. Generally, the economic, social and political environments are less regulated, making it difficult to introduce and sustain the procedures and institutions that are necessary for gathering and using knowledge and evidence. The capacity for operating such procedures and institutions is obviously lacking too. Finally, not only are human resources hard to find. Money is too.

Of particular relevance to developing and transition countries is the fact that even if evidence is introduced in policy making, it will be always be far from the only factor affecting its results. The people and personalities involved play an important role and so do politics and the demands of those who back the reforms, be they national pressure groups or international donors.

However daunting some of these challenges may seem, they must not stand in the way of introducing a policy making approach that uses evidence as one of its main sources of inspiration. In fact, if carefully planned, such an introduction could even be used to *overcome* some of these challenges. The policy learning approach of the ETF is based on this assumption.

TRANSLATING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXTS

Translating European progress in evidence-based policy to a developing country context is dangerous. First of all because there is no single European model, but more importantly, because there is no single 'developing country' target model. Each country has its own specific problems. Some of these may be similar to the challenges faced in OECD countries, others are wholly different. Let us first look at a few of these.

'First, some developing countries often have a more troubled political context. There are many places with limited political freedom or no democratic spaces. There may be less public representation, weak structures for aggregating and arbitrating interests in society and weak systems of accountability. Although the number of 'democratic' regimes[76] has more than doubled, from under 40 to over 80 between 1976 and 1999, many developing countries remain undemocratic and many countries have deficits in these areas, even if they are seen as democratic in form.'
(Hyden, Court and Mease, 2004)

'Second, at an extreme level, some developing countries are characterised by conflict – whether civil war or low intensity conflicts – which make the idea of evidence-based policy limited in application. While conflicts today are fewer in number than 10 years ago, they remain relatively common (particularly in Africa).
Third, developing countries tend to be more politically volatile. Political volatility tends to have a negative impact on the use of evidence in policy processes. In addition to general democracy contexts, some other specific issues are relevant here. Academic freedom is a critical context issue for evidence-based policy. Similarly, media freedom is also a key factor for communicating ideas into policy and practice. Also, civil society plays a part in most political systems – it is where people become familiar and interested in public issues and how rules tend to

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76   Gurr et al., (2001): 'Democracy is defined as a political system with institutionalised procedures for open and competitive political participation, where chief executives are chosen in competitive elections and where substantial limits are imposed on powers of the chief executives.'

affect the articulation of interests from society. Key issues here include the conditions under which citizens can express their opinions, organize themselves for collective action and compete for influence. There is also much evidence to suggest civil society is an important link between research and policy.'
(Sutcliffe and Court, 2005)

Such issues greatly impact on the use of evidence. In a democracy, the freedom to gather evidence and its accessibility will typically be better than in an autocracy, let alone under dictatorship. In a democracy there will also be more demand for evidence. Accountability is a key characteristic of democratic government and accountability requires the production and communication of evidence to prove the effectiveness and efficiency of government to the electorate – demands that obviously are different in a less democratic scenario.

So in many ways, one could argue that the true challenge is not the introduction of evidence-based policy but rather more generally an issue of political context. In most of the ETF partner countries, this political context is improving, in some cases because of an exploded popular demand for accountability, and this in itself increases the need for evidence. Some African and Latin American countries (e.g., Chile and Tanzania) have explored ways of using evidence that are critically adapted to their own context and in the work of the ETF, such examples are worth exploring, in addition to examples from the EU. It is not a matter of whether models from developing and transition countries can be better copied than models from the EU. None can or should be copied. But developments in developing and transition countries can perhaps offer learning input that models from the EU cannot.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The pressure to build policy on evidence is unlikely to decrease in the years ahead. This applies to EU countries as well as developing and transition countries and in all countries it will present another set of challenges.

First of all, progress must be made towards developing a culture where evaluation and monitoring are the norm rather than the exception. Rather than a culture in which everything is monitored and evaluated, this refers to a culture where feedback systems that collect evidence and use it to improve performance and effectiveness are considered par for the course.

Related to this and equally critical is the need to develop the institutions and networks that not only produce and process evidence but that can also ensure that this production and processing of evidence can move from being an activity to becoming standard practice that is embedded in all policy processes.

Both of these issues require capacity to work. Without adequate capacity, information cannot be meaningfully collected, converted into evidence and used as such in policy processes. While this need is huge in some of the ETF partner countries, one cannot expect it to ever be satisfied. There will continue to be a need for learning, and capacity development should take this into account. It should not only develop capacity among stakeholders, but also develop the skills to further improve this capacity: just like anyone else, those involved in policy making should be prepared to learn to learn.

Finally, and quite relevant to the work of the ETF, mixed approaches should be practised in gathering evidence. Neither basic research nor anecdotal evidence alone can answer all questions of the policy cycle. Quantitative research should go hand in hand with qualitative research. Statistics should supplement narrative information and vice versa. This too has implications for capacity development.

CURRENT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN HUMAN CAPITAL POLICY MAKING IN EGYPT

Recent political developments have made it clear that the demand for accountability has also gained considerable momentum in Egypt. On the subject of evidence-based policy, the current position of Egypt has shown some considerable strengths in recent developments, but also some weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Strengths

An observatory was established at the Information Decision Support Center (IDSC) as a multi-lateral network that involves the organisations' stakeholders in labour market, education and training development. Governmental, private and civil sectors are represented. It operates as a processing unit between the data producers and all the beneficiaries, including decision-makers, employers and job seekers.

The design of a national qualifications framework was supported by the ETF under the MEDA-ETE project. Its implementation would greatly enhance the position of VET. So would the application of similar principles for accreditation and quality assurance for all vocational training institutions.

Three Human Resources Development Sectoral Councils have been established. All have participation from the private sector. Since 2006, enterprises have started to play a more active role in reforming education and training. This is reflected in the considerable representation of private enterprises in the board of education and training councils, established by the government of Egypt with the objective of enhancing the quality and relevance of education and training in three main sectors: industry, building and construction, and tourism.

The first of these training councils, the Industrial Training Council (ITC), was established within the Ministry of Trade and Industry by Ministerial Decree 553/2006. It aims at enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of existing training projects, especially those directly related to the ministry. It tries to improve their efficiency, link them to the real needs of the different industrial sectors, and maximise the use of available resources.

The second is the Building Skills Development Council (BSDC). This was established in 2008 by Prime Ministerial Decree 440/2008. It is chaired by the Minister of Housing and composed of the Minister of Education, Minister of Manpower and Emigration, representatives from the Social Fund for Development and from private and public enterprises in the building and construction sector. The Building Skills Development Council has the mandate to develop the training strategy for the sector, follow up on the implementation of this strategy and endorse related plans and budgets.

Finally, the National Council for HRD in the Tourism Sector was established by Prime Ministerial Decree 1650/2010. It has considerable representation from the private sector through the five tourism chambers and the Egyptian Tourism Federation. As the name indicates, it aims at enhancing the quality of human resources in the tourism sector.

The impressive representation of businesses on the boards of these councils, coupled with the mandate of these councils to reform human resources development within their relevant sectors, should allow the business sector to play an important role at systemic level.

As regards the governance of the overall system, the only formal overall body where business and education come together is the Supreme Council for Human Resources Development (SCHRD), a ministerial council chaired by the Minister of Manpower and Emigration which, on paper, is the highest formal authority in charge of human resources development policies.

Weaknesses

Much still needs to be learned and capacity must still be developed in these new institutions. So far the output from the three sectoral human resources development councils and the observatory has been quite weak.

While there may be new forms of cooperation in the policy planning phases, the stakeholders are still not nearly as well connected as they could be. Especially on implementation issues, closer collaboration and more dialogue is needed.

One critical weakness is the extent to which reform is supported by external donors. This has had negative consequences for the sustainability of some initiatives. This is an issue that must be borne better in mind when foreign support and intervention is planned.

Finally, there is indeed no true culture of evaluation yet and the need for evidence-based policy is not universally recognised. This requires a shift in culture that needs cannot be addressed through a single external project or activity. It can be supported by external partners but must otherwise be developed from the ground up and have its roots in the country itself.

In short, in Egypt today there is a lack of:

- clear strategies,
- ownership,
- leadership,
- coordination,
- accountability,
- transparency,
- performance management,
- resources (manpower expertise, tools, etc.),
- institutional mechanisms.

THE ROLE OF THE ETF

The main mission of the ETF is to help transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy. It can encourage the introduction and development of evidence-based policy approaches in its partner countries in a number of ways:

- assist in the development of an evaluation culture at the central level of power and help to build capacity on both the demand and supply sides of human resources through seminars, workshops, international expert support, study visits for national staff, peer reviews, etc.;
- cooperate and coordinate with other international donors to introduce the evidence-based approach as a main part of their funded projects, with clear indicators to be realised in each phase of the project as a precondition for the continuation of the next phases;
- provide technical assistance during the phase of implementation, especially of pilot projects, to enhance the creation of national capacity through on-the-job training for continuous sustainability;
- carry out two studies in the area of TVET – the first should look at existing relevant research centres and their efficiency and previous participation in the evidence-based policy making process, if any; the second should produce a survey for the strategies and policies approved and announced by the government and document which of these have not been applied and why not;
- assist in establishing a national task force of expert stakeholders in the area of research from the different parts of the evidence-based policy process.

But there are major obstacles and a lack of capacity in developing countries. The following are the risks that this approach may face:

- the absence of accessible administrative data and periodic evaluation surveys;
- the technical quality of data and its reliability;

■ the funds needed for creating an evaluation culture and for implementing the policy;

■ the more general scarcity of resources.

To mitigate these risks, the ETF should assist in building the national capacity and do what is within its power to promote and support the development of an evaluation culture in Egypt.

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CONCLUDING CHAPTER

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INTRODUCTION

Does it make sense to compare VET systems from different world regions, with their huge variety of traditions, values and structures? Does it make sense to identify common patterns of VET system developments for the 31 ETF partner countries? And does it make sense to identify lessons learnt, if any, from the ways in which diverse VET policies have tried to cope with the economic, social and political challenges faced by all countries in a globalised world?

We would argue that yes, this is a meaningful exercise because of three closely related factors:

1. the recent global economic and political changes affect education policy making almost everywhere;
2. the sharp focus on skills and competences is a key factor in international competition;
3. the increased need to learn from each other in VET system reforms – the processes involved in development and implementation, the role of drivers and barriers, the relationships among the main actors, the knowledge bases used and the procedures and criteria for assessing progress and outcomes.

It is against these factors that this concluding chapter will assess future scenarios for the ETF's Torino Process. It will briefly sum up common patterns of challenges and obstacles from the preceding chapters and will draw some lessons from the experience since 2010.

Looking ahead, the chapter will formulate five initiatives which can strengthen the double impact of the Torino Process: reviewing and capacity development. Finally, we will discuss how the ETF can use the Torino Process to facilitate sustainable reforms of national VET systems.

GLOBALISATION AND THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION POLICY

In the last three decades, national economic control has been eroded by globalisation and neo-liberal policy choices. Regionalisation (and the development of regional markets) is largely a product of, and driven by, globalisation.

The dynamics and effects of globalisation are also the prime movers for societal change in all partner countries today. They include deregulation and the free movement of capital, the spread of the internet, international outsourcing and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The continuous flow of people, ideas, capital and goods intensifies global interdependencies and creates a global knowledge-based economy.

Globalisation presents opportunities but also poses challenges. In most economies the demand for a highly educated workforce will increase, while the demand for low-skilled workers will decrease. A major challenge is therefore to ensure a higher level of education and training and to make everyone able to keep pace with new demands. This is the reason why VET reform in EU countries needs to be sustained throughout the next decade. The EU VET policy framework and priorities have been formulated in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European policy documents on cooperation in education and training, *A New Impetus for VET* and *New Skills for New Jobs*.

Globalisation has also had an impact on education policy studies. The economic impact of education and the subsequent focus on human capital development have moved to the heart of policy making agendas. In recent years, the tension between global and local interests in transition countries has revived a focus on *policy borrowing* and *policy learning*.

Some common strands of discourse run together in all countries. In almost all ETF partner countries it is possible to identify three levels of influence driving policy formation and the debate feeding into it:

■ globalisation;
■ EU education policies (such as the Lisbon objectives, the Copenhagen Process, the Bologna Process, and the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination);
■ national interests and cultures.

In all countries there is a need to focus on the mechanisms through which these strands of policy discourse are analysed and then transformed into practice in the national VET system.

THE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE

EU VET and employment policies are formulated so as to respond to the need for stronger human capital development strategies. High income economies cannot compete on production prices with low income economies and this challenge increasingly also affects ETF partner countries. The competitive advantage needs to build on other factors than labour costs. Investment in

skills through education and training is increasingly seen as critical for improved competitiveness.

This understanding of the contribution of human capital to development needs to be better articulated among policymakers and stakeholders in all ETF partner countries. Capacity development through the Torino Process is a good launch pad for new VET policies and human capital development that can deliver adequate competences for economies that are shifting towards services, knowledge, new technology and innovation, while at the same time taking into account the challenges of modern demographics and climate change.

TRANSNATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AS DRIVERS OF VET REFORMS

Not so many years ago education and VET policies were based on national priorities without much comparison with other countries and without inspiration from international organisations. Berube and Berube (2007) find that three distinct stages of overarching education values have had a strong influence on education reforms (including VET) since World War II:

1. progressive education (addressing the 'whole child' and his/her development);
2. the equity reform movement (pursuing education for all);
3. the excellence reform movement (pursuing education for competition).

The authors identify 1993 as the launch of the ideology of competing nations. In 1993, both US president Bill Clinton and European Commission president Jacques Delors observed that nations compete with each other and that education plays a key role in this competition. All nations are interested in education and training. They want more effective and efficient education systems (better and cheaper), they want to be more competitive and they want to be among the best performers. Finally, they want more and better jobs and more welfare for society. This last stage of education thinking has greatly increased the commitment to transnational comparisons.

Such international comparisons are relatively new. In 1995, the OECD published a detailed analysis of the full range of key issues raised by a systematic evaluation of educational policies and strategies to help clarify the overall practices in this field. Here the conclusion was that 'the evaluation of national systems is still predominantly a "connoisseur's" approach' (OECD, 1995, p. 21). However, since the late 1990s, comparative studies of international education performance have been vastly expanded. All nations are aware of the challenges, and to

an extent they compete with each other over which country is most successful in different comparative assessment programmes, such as PISA[77] and TIMSS[78], PIRLS[79] and ISSUS[80].

The EC Open Method of Coordination (more on which later) also plays an important role here. European countries, social partners and the European Commission are working more closely than ever towards a shared policy agenda to inspire developments, reforms and common tools for vocational education and training. Policy debates on VET in the EU have significantly intensified since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy.

Andreas Schleicher of the OECD writes in *The Lisbon Council Policy Brief* that the countries which have most successfully implemented changes have something in common:

'[…] they have all shifted policy away from control over the resources and content of education toward a focus on obtaining better outcomes. They have moved from "hit and miss" teaching practices to establishing universal high standards. They have shifted from uniformity in the system to embracing diversity and individualising learning. They have changed from a focus on provision to a focus on choice, and they have moved from a bureaucratic approach towards devolving responsibilities and enabling outcomes, from talking about equity to delivering equity. Most importantly, they have put the emphasis on creating a "knowledge-rich"[81] education system, in which teachers and school principals act as partners and have the authority to act, the necessary information to do so, and access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change.'

Such change brings about severe challenges for strategic leadership, governance systems, financing mechanisms and professionals in education. Two major policy elements can be found in a number of countries (Ball, 1999). One is the insertion of the 'market form', which subjects education to competition. The other is 'performativity', which seems to lead to a control system based on a so-called 'non-interventionary form of governance': the market decides what is necessary and 'standards' are defined to tell institutions about 'good behaviour'. Governmental steering at a distance through multilevel governance is becoming a policy trend also in ETF partner countries.

The development of human capital is also an essential factor in the transition process. In their drive to reform, transition countries are expressing a growing interest in policy developments in EU education and training linked to the Lisbon Strategy and in the diverse paths taken by EU Member States. The recommendations made and the instruments deployed in the wake of the Copenhagen

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77 Programme for International Student Assessment.

78 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

79 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

80 The International Survey of Schools at Upper Secondary School Level.

81 Knowledge-rich means (in this context) that both national prescriptions and professional judgements are informed.

Process have raised particular interest. These developments also enjoy the backing of European assistance and partnership programmes.

Indicators have been developed to monitor progress within the EU and in individual countries. Regular monitoring of progress using indicators and benchmarks is an essential part of the Lisbon Process. It exposes strengths and weaknesses and serves as a tool for evidence-based policy making at European level. These indicators are also relevant for measuring the progress of reforms in vocational education and training in transition countries.

In 2002, the Copenhagen Declaration[82] introduced a new form of governance called the Open Method of Coordination. This added a number of new features to transnational governance in VET. It established a common discursive framework for European VET, transnational networks (technical working groups), continuous monitoring of the policy process (the Copenhagen Process) and consultation with relevant national stakeholders. The aim is to modernise VET in Europe through a coordinated process of mutual learning that should lead to the development of common European instruments. The Open Method of Coordination assumes that the context and problems confronting the different countries are similar and that common approaches can be found. The eventual target is a common European VET space.

The Torino Process is inspired by the Open Method of Coordination and informed by the Copenhagen Process, but it is different in two critical aspects: its methodology and its focus on capacity development through policy learning.

METHODOLOGY: COPENHAGEN AND TORINO

Copenhagen Process

■ One common, agreed political and policy agenda

■ Member States' systematic participation

■ Established institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities in VET

■ Policy review, reporting exercise with the overall purpose of comparing policy developments

■ Questionnaires

Torino Process

■ No common policy agenda

■ Participation by invitation

■ Diversity of institutional arrangements and often weaker capabilities

■ Policy learning and capacity building exercise for evidence-based policy making

■ Collective, face-to-face discussion and policy dialogue guided by the ETF

The mechanisms put in place through the Open Method of Coordination demonstrate that learning does not simply 'happen'. This is why the Torino Process places so much emphasis on facilitating capacity development, on the governance dimension of evidence-based policy making through the Torinet activity, and on identifying potential 'institutional homes' for creating, disseminating and using evidence in VET policy making (see chapters 1–4 and 8 above).

KEY FINDINGS OF THE ETF YEARBOOK 2012

1. Support to analysis as a basis for VET policy making is firmly rooted in the 'DNA' of the ETF. Since its start in 1995 and going back to the days of the National Observatories it has developed evidence-based analytical frameworks, carried out country reviews, employed the 'building blocks' approach (chapter 5), made human resources development reviews, etc. With the Torino Declaration of 2003, the elaboration of policy learning as the main facilitation methodology for VET policy development became the strategic vision (chapter 2). With the new Torino Declaration of 2011, the evidence-based approach to policy making in ETF partner countries was added.

2. ETF involvement in evidence-based policy matches the current discourse in the international community on the topic such as that in the OECD, the G20 and the EU 'family'. In fact, the approach is specified as ETF territory in the European Commission Communication *A new impetus for European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy*. It states that 'evidence-based policy making will continue to be supported through the research, expertise and analysis of Cedefop and the ETF as well as statistical evidence provided by Eurostat' (p. 11).

3. Its activities in evidence-based policy can therefore be considered as the natural next phase in the evolution of ETF work. This new phase takes systemic policy learning to a higher level. It has the potential to bring together a broad array of tools: policy learning, a systemic approach, capacity development for stakeholders, knowledge management, the link between policy formation and policy implementation, documentation of added value and the impact of ETF interventions and the systematic facilitation of support to policy development networks in partner countries (chapter 3).

4. The 2010 round of the Torino Process was a first attempt to bring together a number of these issues. The response from stakeholders in the partner countries, from the EU and from international organisations encouraged the ETF to continue the process (chapter 2). In 2012 this work will be repeated, with the ETF trying to balance continuity and improvement. The 2010 experience was a snapshot that established a baseline. Continuity will allow us to start assessing trends in reform: where are the countries moving, how and why? The first

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82   Copenhagen Declaration on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training.

improvement is related to national visions which seem to fit poorly into their socio-economic context and in which only limited participation is foreseen from stakeholders outside the government. The second improvement is the refined focus on quantitative evidence needed for policy analysis (chapter 9). The third improvement is the explicit convergence between policy analysis and capacity development for evidence-based policy making networks. This is the target of interventions in selected countries under the Torinet activity (chapter 3), but it is also the aim of capacity development for evidence providers, especially national statistical experts (chapter 9). The fourth improvement is the 2012 emphasis on policy analysis as *a process*. Consequently, the Torino Process will be much more than the final report. The fifth improvement is to encourage countries to carry out the national review as a self-assessment (rather than as an ETF assessment) to reinforce the social learning of the initiative.

5. One key value of evidence-based policy is its systemic approach. This is an essential dimension for policymakers. The systemic approach has different aspects that force policymakers to consider the broader impact of their policies. It considers both the desired and the less desired impact of change (chapters 5 and 6). The systemic perspective fixes the analytical focus on:

   • a coherent view across VET, education subsystems and lifelong learning, whose linkages are often very fragmented in partner countries;

   • interaction between VET systems and their environments: their economic and social context, the forces of globalisation, the financial crisis;

   • different levels of governance (i.e. the Moscow region has carried out the Torino Process, an example that will now be followed in Tunisia);

   • comprehensive participation of and interplay among stakeholder groups that can really drive change in the system (such as policy leaders and decision-makers), VET agencies (chapter 8) and local practitioners;

   • the full cycle of the policy chain – connecting policy analysis with implementation and evaluation of policy performance, outcomes and final impact;

   • the analytical approach also extends to identifying change and innovation in the VET system. What factors can or do generate sustainable change? What is the capacity for change in the short, the medium and the longer term? How can progress be measured? (chapters 5 and 6).

6. The empowerment of policymakers and stakeholders for change can be enhanced through capacity development. This is the role of the Torinet project (chapters 1 and 3). The first round of the Torino Process documented that the capacity to act on available data is critical for learning. The cycle of evidence creation, mediation and use (the 'knowledge continuum') needs to be strengthened in the partner countries. Tools must be developed that reinforce policy learning and the delivery of results. Any long-term strategy requires short-term results.

Another challenge is to find ways to overcome the vast distances in terms of place and time that are a result of the huge geographical spread of ETF partner countries. The ETF needs to create new ways of communication through more efficient channels that can engage policy actors in capacity building. New interactive ICT solutions (such as social media) may provide good learning platforms (chapter 11).

7. Globalisation runs parallel to a trans-nationalisation of education, which has changed the landscape of education policy making processes. There has been a shift from the collection of data with a strictly national purpose towards internationally comparative data. The latter have come to play an important driving force for national policy making. This international dimension is a key aspect of the Torino Process: the EU policy process that has come out of the Copenhagen Declaration also draws on continuous reporting. The Copenhagen Process acts as a stimulus for evidence-based approaches and helps policymakers to appreciate 'what works'. Although ETF partner countries must be aware of the risk of policy copying (or of what Hargreaves (2003) calls 'an outbreak of education epidemic'). On the other hand, given the diversity of the EU and partner country contexts the Copenhagen Process is also a valuable source of inspiration for policymakers.

8. Although the Torino Process is essentially a process for national policy learning in partner countries, it is also of value for transnational learning among these countries. What works where? What lessons can be learned? What patterns and trends can be identified in VET reforms? Within the geographical clusters (South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia) there are good opportunities for mutual learning. Much can be learned by looking across the garden fence – sometimes even more from differences than from similarities.

9. What is the role of 'evidence' in the process? Evidence as a concept is strongly associated with scientific research methodologies, as can be seen in the ongoing and passionate discussions in education and evaluation research communities (Krogstrup, 2011). But this is not the way the concept is used in either the European Commission Staff Document of 2007 or in the ETF Torino Process. The ETF uses a broader understanding of evidence, which builds on a broad definition of the concept (chapter 14) and different forms of knowledge production (chapter 16). Evidence helps to measure change in VET systems and progress in policies. Quantitative (chapter 9) and qualitative (chapter 7) evidence are both needed in equal measures to inform policy learning in partner countries. But this role should not be overplayed. Evidence is only useful when the provided knowledge is included systematically in the policy cycle. So it too must be part of a systemic approach involving interaction among the three distinct communities: researchers, policymakers and practitioners (chapter 16), and the three dimensions of knowledge-based policy and practice: knowledge creation, knowledge application and knowledge

mediation (chapter 8). Knowledge management and the brokering of knowledge will need to be focal points for the ETF if it is to support this knowledge continuum (chapter 10) with evidence at the heart of the system, possibly inspired by adaptations to the earlier ETF Observatory model. The ETF will need to reflect on strategies to stimulate learning networks that link evidence and policy and can also act as capacity enhancers exploring, for example, the potential of interactive social ICT networks (chapter 11).

POLICY LEARNING AND THE TORINO PROCESS

'Policy' is concerned with visions for development and ways to achieve goals, such as the transformation of political goals into concrete action. 'Governance' is the set of instruments or technologies through which political steering takes place and policies are implemented. The policy learning concept has two elements: 'policy' as defined above, and 'learning'. The concept was developed as an answer to the argument that VET reforms in transition countries (and indeed any major reform in any country) will only be successful and sustainable if policy development, formulation and implementation are firmly based on broad ownership, fit into a local context and are embedded in existing institutions. The concept of policy learning came out of a critical discussion on more traditional approaches to policy transfer and policy copying. It calls on the active engagement of national stakeholders in developing their own policy solutions. If the ETF's Torino Process is viewed from the perspective of the ETF policy learning approach, we can ask to which extent this process may help countries to help themselves.

The ETF launched the Torino Process in 2010, offering interested partner countries a framework and technical support to support progress in their VET systems. The exercise, repeated every two years, is to empower countries and reinforce national institutions so that they can implement it through ETF-guided self-assessment. For comparability purposes, it is based on a common methodology.

The Torino Process probes the entire VET system in a participatory, analytical manner. Its main objectives are: (i) to reinforce evidence-based policy making in partner countries; (ii) for the ETF to serve as a basis for planning; and (iii) for the ETF to support the delivery of EU assistance. The analysis is designed as a tailor-made country-led review process with broad participation of all stakeholders in the VET system. The analytical framework that supports its methodology has a double target: VET system assessment and VET policy cycle analysis. In agreement with partner countries, four key guiding principles steer the Torino Process: (i) country ownership, (ii) a participatory approach, (iii) a holistic assessment (the

analytical framework targets the VET system and its environment), and (iv) evidence-based assessment. Partner countries themselves can decide on the preferred implementation model – either a guided self-assessment or an ETF-led participatory approach.

The analytical approach of the Torino Process can best be described as a form of 'development evaluation'[83] that seeks to undertake evaluative activities in a way that can also positively contribute to the development of policy. This approach offers participants a voice in shaping the evaluation agenda. The ETF considers it important that those directly involved in the system at different levels are able to see the contribution that evaluation can make to their future development.

The approach also involves an active feedback policy. The ETF tries to provide feedback on a regular basis throughout the review process. Key elements in developmental evaluation are utilisation and implementation. Experience shows that unless early decisions are made about how the outputs are to be used, follow-up action cannot be taken for granted. The ETF therefore builds implementation and utilisation into the design of the Torino Process in the countries as much as possible.

All ETF partner countries have to find national solutions in a European or even global context. In EU VET policy processes there are good possibilities for shared learning but the real work has to be done at home through national priority setting and policy decisions. So policymakers and practitioners at all levels have to develop the capacity to become 'policy interpreters' because there is a variety of models, measures and practices open to achieve the same goal. There is a need to develop capacity to translate goals into nationally preferred practice and to manage the internal processes of the policy cycle. In short, efforts to intensify the organisation of policy learning platforms and to establish meaningful policy learning for key actors and stakeholders will be key to enable country responsibility for own VET policies.

'Policy learning emphasizes not simply the involvement but rather the active engagement of national stakeholders in developing their own policy solutions, and is based on the understanding that there are no universally valid models that can simply be transferred or copied from one context to another.' (Grootings and Nielsen, 2005, p. 11)

If we use this as a yardstick to assess the Torino Process against the policy learning approach, the Torino Process may certainly stimulate the development and consolidation of a sound policy culture and environment, based on accountability and ownership of national policymakers and stakeholders. It may lead to a more reflective policy making process where creativity and local capacities are properly mobilised and international experience and results valued. It is one valuable instrument among others.

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83   The evaluation field has developed into a science and in a ground-breaking work Hanne Kathrine Krogstrup (Aalborg University) analyses the waves of development in evaluation. The first wave is the classical 'The Experimental Society' in the 1960s based on the experimental design and the randomized controlled experiment to measure causal links between intervention and effect. The second wave is responsive evaluation in the 1970s as represented by the Tavistock Institute. In the early 1980s the field is dominated by the third wave, the audit and evaluation movement responding to requirements of New Public Management. After 2000 the pendulum of history swings back to the assumptions of the 1960s that effect evaluation and evidence-based knowledge can contribute to make public interventions more effective. According to Krogstrup, a fifth wave close to the Torino Process is emerging under the headline of 'participatory innovation' (Krogstrup, 2011, p. 38).

PERFECTING THE TOOLS IN THE ETF APPROACH TO VET SYSTEM EVALUATION

Evidence and knowledge

New concepts are never neutral but have an impact on how we think. Only a few years ago terms with 'quality', such as quality control, quality assurance and quality auditing, expressed the dominating assumptions about how to improve the public sector. These terms appear to become gradually replaced by new notions expressing the demand for performance measurement, the documentation of impact and evidence-based policy and practice. These terms are not very transparent but quite popular expressions. When complex concepts are reduced to such expressions they risk losing all meaning and content.

The definition of evidence-based policy used by the ETF in the Torino Process is taken from the European Commission Staff Document (2007) *Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training*. It reads as follows (p. 5):

> 'Relevant evidence can take many forms such as experience and evaluation of practice, the results of scientific analyses, quantitative and qualitative research, basic and applied research, and the development of statistics and indicators. Education and training are part of the diverse cultural traditions and there can be no simple prescription about what makes good policy and practice. This makes it all the more important to know about what works, for whom, under what circumstances and with what outcomes.'

This definition is very broad and almost universal. The main assumption in evidence-based policy is that decision making processes can be based on knowledge with interventions operating without due focus on their context. The reasoning is that this is the basis on which politicians must take the necessary policy decisions. Then it is up to the implementation chain to enact this knowledge into relevant interventions.

The question as to what evidence is and under which conditions knowledge can be defined as 'evident' is hotly debated in research communities all over the world. Disagreement is generally based on basic (pre-scientific) stipulations about science and therefore the definition of evidence is not neutral but charged with values and preferences. 'This debate is rooted in philosophical differences about the nature and reality and epistemological differences about what constitutes knowledge and how it is created.' (Christie and Fleischer, 2009) The debate flared up even further after the random controlled experiment was declared the 'Golden Standard' in US research in 2003 (chapter 7).

Nobody questions the need for policy based on knowledge about its impact. The main problem is that 'evidence' suggests a kind of neutral objectivity which the social and educational sciences do not possess. Human behaviour is not the same as behaviour in physics. Human activity and interactions are conditioned by reflexivity and the meaning that human beings construct in time and space while interacting with each other. The randomised controlled experiment has not been declared the 'Golden Standard' in Europe. Empirical studies show that partnership between researchers and policymakers and an ongoing dialogue about research results are the best ways to impact policy formulations.

The problem with using terms such as 'evidence-based policy' is that the concept is so steeped in value discussions that the profile and connotations of the Torino Process could easily be misunderstood. It is interesting that the European Commission Staff Working Document steers clear of this risk by talking about 'knowledge-based policy and practice' instead. This is also the terminology proposed by Professor Jens Rasmussen in chapter 16 of this Yearbook, where he replaces the evidence discussion with a discourse on different types of knowledge production.

Developing research capacity for evidence-based VET policy evaluation

In most EU countries, VET research is not very strong compared to other fields of education. The situation is even worse in ETF partner countries. The existing knowledge support structures in former socialist countries vanished in the transition process, partly due to a lack of resources, partly because of a low priority of VET in education, and not least because of the perceived ideological bias of educational research institutes (Grootings and Nielsen, 2009). In the regional Torino report on Eastern Europe (2011) this was underlined as a serious challenge for VET policy development.

Research is crucial for evidence-based approaches to VET reform and is needed if countries are to take full responsibility for the Torino Process. An OECD study (OECD, 2009, pp. 11–16) on systemic innovation in VET points out the policy implications for VET systems. A systemic approach includes five basic components:

1. clear policy to support VET research into policy and practice;
2. a framework to sustain both top-down and bottom-up innovations;
3. a unified knowledge base which includes VET research evidence, lessons drawn from national development projects, and links to international knowledge bases;
4. concentrated efforts to synthesise and disseminate new knowledge on effective VET policies and practice;
5. capacity building (structural and personal) to achieve these components.

These policy guidelines are very close to the philosophy of the Torino Process (chapter 9). However, the research base is emphasised more in the OECD recommendations.

Also for the ETF it is necessary to strengthen the links with VET research communities. Therefore the Foundation hosted the 18th Conference of the VET and Culture Research Network from 31 August to 3 September 2011 (chapter 15). The conference was organised to build bridges between research and policy. The distinctive nature and purpose of the policy community on the one hand and the academic research community on the other (and therefore the tension between the two) was recognised. The differences between the two cultures often lead to a 'research-policy gap' in which there is a serious mismatch between the work of researchers and the agendas of policymakers and practitioners.

There is a distinction between different types of VET policy research: research of education policy and education research *for* policy. The former tends to be ad-hoc, conceptual, backward looking and critical, whereas the latter tends to be forward looking and concerned with solutions to practical problems. The ETF's role is always to focus on concrete development and to be practically involved in facilitating VET reform processes while at the same time continuously developing the knowledge base through increased collaboration with research communities involved in both types of research. Both Philipp Gonon (chapter 15) and Jens Rasmussen (chapter 16) propose ideas for closer cooperation between VET research, policy and practice.

The VET and Culture Research Network is open to new participants from partner countries. Working out country positions in relation to its intellectual agenda could be a good introduction to it. An example can be found in chapter 15, where Japan is placed along six dimensions:

1. What happens to VET and VET research?
2. VET as pedagogical issue
3. VET, industry and occupations
4. VET as a social and political issue
5. Where is the agency and ownership in VET and VET research?
6. How is VET and VET research being negotiated?

This exercise alone would already be quite helpful in strengthening country capacity to formulate national visions for VET reform.

Refining national visions on VET reform

The methodology of the Torino Process is a unique approach measuring developments against formulated national visions for VET system development. The approach has five components:

■ policy vision,
■ VET in relation to economic competitiveness,
■ VET in relation to social demand and social inclusion,
■ internal quality and efficiency,
■ governance and financing.

The starting point of the analytical framework is the question: what is the vision for VET development and does it comply with the broader socio-economic development objectives? Indeed, the purpose of the entire review process is to develop a common understanding of possible ways forward in VET policy and system development by determining the current situation and the vision for VET in the country.

But in all 2010 Torino Process reviews, this vision is clearly the weakest part so the ETF needs to strengthen the capacity of countries to formulate their own visions and goals. The identification and formulation of national visions must be better articulated in the next round. This is not so easy. Methods to extract clear statements from key stakeholders about where the country is now, where it is coming from and where it wants to go will need to be refined. The reviews cannot just build on traditional analytical frameworks and questionnaires but should start from an open invitation, letting countries themselves formulate what the issues are. More narrative approaches would probably be useful in the next round.

Capacity building in partner countries

The Torino Process is not just the review process and its resulting report that is published every second year. It also takes the main messages from the reviews to facilitate capacity development for policy making in partner countries through the Torinet initiative.

According to the World Bank Institute's *Capacity Development Brief* of May 2010, we can define 'capacity' as the ability of leaders, organisations, coalitions and society at large to catalyse institutional change for development goals. The code word here is institutional change, and capacity building refers neither to individual skills, nor to a passive focus on training. On the contrary, capacity development concentrates on a domestic *collective* capacity for change and is fundamentally perceived as a *country-led* and *country-owned* process of change – in full accordance with ETF policy learning. Practitioners often become inspired and learn more when they see how their peers have solved comparable development problems. Connecting practitioners to other practitioners who have addressed similar VET development problems offers a great opportunity for knowledge and experience sharing. The idea is that they will learn from peers rather than from ETF staff or from foreign technical assistance.

Essentially, Torinet works with multi-stakeholder coalition building in partner countries. It facilitates learning networks in the partner countries which link stakeholder groups according to their institutional roles and responsibilities. This learning network approach is essential not only for promoting policy learning but also for reinforcing awareness of the specific contribution which each actor plays in the policy cycle, for promoting social dialogue and for ensuring the sustainability of the investment in capacity building. This approach can be effective *within* countries, but also *between* countries, as

encouraged through the Copenhagen Process among EU Member States.

The ETF can facilitate such peer learning between partner countries by supporting mutual learning platforms in three ways:

1. function as a knowledge broker to connect the right practitioners with each other and structure the learning activities;
2. help to finance, or find sources of financing for such peer learning;
3. disseminate lessons from country-to-country exchanges – the ETF might see itself as a facilitator that can connect to the best sources of knowledge, to sources of finance, to content delivery partners and to agents of change.

The ETF has already done much work in this area so it is only a question of enriching Torinet with the tools it has developed. Our experience since 2002 with policy learning activities such as peer reviews, peer learning, mutual learning, communities of practice and horizontal learning network strategies should now be mobilised to catalyse collective capacity development for change.

Targeting the national policy leaders, the real 'movers and shakers' in VET policy making

One question that needs more attention is: 'Who is the client?' Target groups for the Torino Process, which is designed to be participatory, include parliamentary committees, policy leaders, social partners, school managers, teachers, national, regional and local authorities, individual employers, researchers, civil society, etc. A very wide audience which is essential for creating awareness, building shared ownership, mobilising coalitions for change and setting new reform agendas in the countries.

However, some VET policy protagonists are more influential as 'movers and shakers' in reform processes than others – those policymakers who can genuinely influence the education policy agenda and push forward innovative VET strategies. The ETF launched a successful pilot exercise targeting ministers responsible for education and/or employment in May 2011 at the Torino Process conference (see chapter 2). As testified in the conference declaration, policymakers show a keen interest in appraising entire national VET systems and seeking information and peer exchange on how best to manage and innovate their systems. In future Torinet activities it would be worthwhile renewing the focus on such policy leaders in partner countries.

Although most partner country ministries of education have limited research capacities, they are increasingly trying to learn about 'what works' in order to be able to demonstrate the reasons for their decisions. The use of evidence-based knowledge is one way of showing commitment to the common good. However, as analysed by Ben Levin, the realities of politics make this very difficult (2009, p. 50):

> 'There is [...] never enough time to think about issues in sufficient depth. Senior government leaders, both politicians and civil servants, work under tremendous time pressures, in which they are expected to make knowledgeable decisions about all the issues facing them with limited information, within very short timelines and without major errors. This is impossible but this is nonetheless what we expect from our leaders. The result is that important decisions are often made very quickly, with quite limited information and discussion. This is not because politicians necessarily like making hurried and uninformed decisions, but because this is what the office requires. [...] In terms of their attention and ability to act, governments face a huge mismatch between what is desirable and what is possible.'

In real policy making situations, the challenge of how, when and to whom to channel knowledge-based or result-based monitoring and evaluation information into the political system becomes crucial. Empirical findings show that evaluation knowledge has greater impact if offered to policymakers in the initial phases of a political decision process, before 'serious political fighting starts' (Pollitt, 2006, p. 59). This enables evaluation data and assessments to become a shared knowledge foundation for decision-makers rather than being used as ammunition for fractions in the policy process. Policymakers primarily acquire their knowledge from senior civil servants, other politicians and organised interest groups – not from long and complicated evaluation reports – and this requires the production of succinct summaries. Evaluation knowledge needs 'advocates' in an organisation, insiders who can carry the results into the political arena (Pollitt, 2006). Knowledge only has impact if actors make use of it. Reviews from the Torino Process should not be expected to convert politicians and civil servants. Their function is to inform policymakers. Approaches which concentrate on interaction and partnerships between researchers, policymakers and practitioners are shown to be more effective in building bridges between evidence and policy (Patton, 1997).

Establishing learning platforms for sharing consolidated knowledge from the Torino Process reviews among senior policymakers and key civil servants from partner countries may therefore be an important next step for the ETF. This would help to stimulate collective capacity for change by inspiring and empowering transformative leaders. Policy leadership is of central importance in building such collective capacity in order to mobilise resources, people and coalitions to push forward new VET policies.

A learning platform for policy leaders could have many forms: one effective model is the Torino Process conference in May 2011 (see chapter 2), while another could be to a structure like the European Commission's (DG Education and Culture) regular meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVT).

CONCLUSION: THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE ETF

What is the ETF's role in evidence-based policy making? The experience from the first round of Torino Process's country reviews and the follow-up with Torinet sets out a full agenda for the ETF which will require considerable development work.

A demanding to-do list could look like this:

- Develop the policy learning intervention strategy and strengthen the ETF expertise triangle of VET and labour market expertise, EU policy frameworks and country insight, placing increased emphasis on country knowledge so that policy advice is designed to better fit its context.
- Stimulate improvements in policy analysis – increasing partner country ownership and capacity for self-assessment over time.
- Move gradually away from externally driven analysis to in-country dialogue on innovation. Three priority fields need further consideration: (i) the challenge of change, (ii) systems thinking, and (iii) sustainability as the way forward. Stimulating national visions for VET reform is particularly important.
- Make optimal use of policy analyses to prioritise work with countries and as inputs to EU interventions as well as inputs to ETF thematic work.
- Provide opportunities, mechanisms and tools to create learning networks and enhance partner country capacity for learning and social dialogue throughout the policy cycle. Knowledge management methodologies offer a potential way forward for country thematic work. Social media, electronic networks and e-learning can be used to overcome space and time limitations. Furthermore, the efficiency and effectiveness of policy learning methodology can be improved.
- Improve the identification of innovation and creativity at different levels in VET systems and use insights on innovation to stimulate measured change in the system.
- Stimulate evidence mediation and act as an intermediary agency and as a broker of knowledge. Trust is an important element in this process (see chapter 14). Respond to the need to provide support in assessing the quality of evidence available – a fundamental prerequisite for informed policy making.
- Use the Torino Process review approach to assess progress in VET reform over time – make use of the regular reporting cycle with a dual commitment to short and long-term results to measure the impact and added value of ETF interventions (chapter 12) as well as to identify long-term trends at national level.
- Promote inter-institutional learning on evidence-based operational approaches to capacity development with the inter-agency group, donors, regional development banks and also NGOs. The EU/ETF should strive to remain at the forefront of learning in this field.
- Maintain a sense of proportion in VET system and policy analysis and continuously try to strike the right

balance between evidence-based analysis and creativity. The role of evidence should not be exaggerated. The ETF needs to continuously strike a balance between its ex-post evaluation and measurement with the future oriented creativity of foresight and 'spotting trends'.

This Yearbook has provided a good platform upon which to analyse and reflect on where we are now and where we need to go next. However, the Yearbook is neither the end nor the beginning of the end of reflections on measuring VET system and policy progress – it is only the end of the beginning of a very long journey. As the political demand for instruments to carry out result-based monitoring and evaluation of VET system performance is ever increasing, it would be seem obvious to collaborate with other institutions in this development field.

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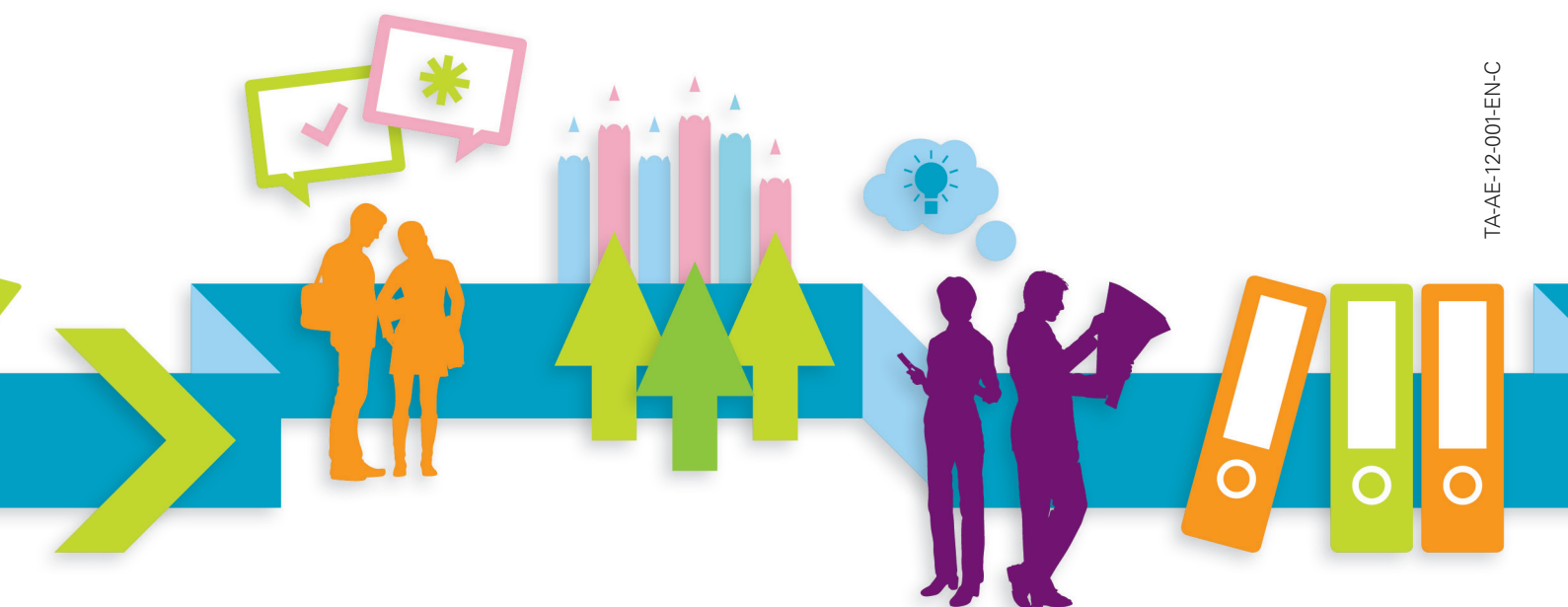found on the ETF website:
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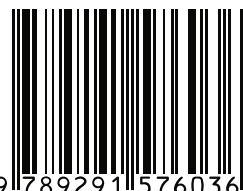**T** +39 011 630 2222