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Summary of the synthesis and meta- evaluation report

Technical and Vocational Training, 2011

Imprint

As a federally owned enterprise, we support the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

The publication presents former GTZ/DED/InWEnt activities; due to the change of the company's name, these will be referred to in the following as GIZ activities.

Published by:

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The views and gradings are solely those of the authors.

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Contracted company:



CEval Consult GmbH

Place and date of publication

Saarbrücken 2012

Summary

This report contains the findings of the synthesis of the independent evaluations¹ conducted in 2010 and 2011 by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It also contains the findings of a meta-evaluation of evaluations in the same thematic area conducted by external experts on behalf of GIZ and its predecessor organisations GTZ in 2010-2011, InWEnt in 2004-2010 and DED in 2011.² GIZ commissioned CEval Consult GmbH to conduct the synthesis and meta-evaluation study in October 2011. Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) provided the funding. The study was done between November 2011 and March 2012 by Prof. Reinhard Stockmann (team leader and meta-evaluation) and Dr Stefan Silvestrini (synthesis).

¹ 'Independent evaluations' are used to assess development measures and are steered by GIZ's Corporate Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation which commissions independent research institutes and consulting companies with their implementation. Every year since 2005, GIZ's predecessor organisation, GTZ, had between 15 and 30 development measures evaluated on behalf of and with funding from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

² All development measures that were the subject of the respective evaluations were funded by BMZ.

The objectives of the study were to analyse the findings of the individual independent evaluations with respect to their generalisability and transferability to future projects. It also aimed to identify recurring strengths and weaknesses, as well as factors determining success and failure, and to establish a conceptual framework. Furthermore, insights were to be gained into the results of BMZ-funded development cooperation in TVET, into shifts in the underlying approach and implications for the integrated programming of GIZ instruments. The various methods applied in the evaluations also underwent a comparative assessment. The synthesis focussed on an analysis of the project's objectives and areas of activity. It also looked at the assessment of projects according to the DAC evaluation criteria, of cross-cutting issues, compliance with the principle of sustainable development, as well as the technical assessment of projects and the methodological approaches employed in evaluation. In contrast, the meta-evaluation focused primarily on subject matter-related questions, such as the development of the effectiveness and sustainability of BMZ-supported cooperation in the TVET sector, the degree to which results were scaled up, the cooperation between predecessor organisations or the correlation between fragility and results. The synthesis

comprised of 11 independent GIZ-commissioned interim, final and ex-post evaluation reports, along with an independent ex-post evaluation commissioned jointly by GTZ, CIM, InWEnt, DED and KfW. The meta-evaluation looked at another 11 evaluation reports by BMZ (1), DED (1), InWEnt (7) and GTZ (2), as well as two meta-evaluations of InWEnt programmes.

The majority of the projects analysed as part of the synthesis aimed to adapt TVET services to the demands of the private sector and labour market. Other focal areas included improving infrastructure and organisation of training institutions through financial and material support, and capacity building of teaching and management staff. Three projects limited their support to a single institution. Consequently, activities were geared primarily to trainees and staff in companies and training centres.

In most of the projects no major conceptual changes were made in the course of implementation. In the period under review, however, there was a slight tendency in the portfolio to shift the focus of activities towards the system level.

The results of the final and ex-post evaluations partially differ significantly, with the latter arriving at poorer results and more diverse findings.

The following were identified as major success factors for projects in the TVET sector:

- ✓ In terms of relevance:
 - learning content has to be in line with actual market demands, suit the conditions on site and the skill level of target groups, as well as the pedagogical capacities of training centres;
 - measures have to be in line with partners' capacity-building needs;
 - objectives have to be in line with the partner country's sector policies and poverty reduction strategy; strategic partners have to prioritise the project;
 - project concepts have to comply with BMZ's sector strategy on TVET and with international standards;
 - relevant economic sectors have to be selected;
 - the centres supported have to occupy a key position in the country's TVET system;
 - practice-oriented vocational training has to be increasingly relevant in the partner country's education system;
 - high unemployment rate amongst the target groups.

- ✓ In terms of effectiveness:³
 - participation of target groups in project design;
 - ownership and commitment of partners;
 - cooperation is transparent and based on mutual trust, and communication is culturally sensitive;
 - sufficient flexibility of the project concept;
 - collaboration between partner facilities and German training institutions;
 - the programme team is motivated, able to ensure staff continuity and has adequate room for initiative;
 - active participation of private-sector stakeholders in project planning;
 - the project possesses pilot character or a unique selling proposition that sets it apart.

- ✓ In terms of impact:
 - consistent approach;
 - flexibility, sufficiently long time-frame, appropriate follow-up (suitable follow-on or transition measures);

- recognition of the entire value chain; development and implementation of cross-sectoral and cross-qualification training concepts;
- inclusion of women in value chains;
- opportunities for target groups to translate enhanced qualifications into economic benefits and opportunities for income generation;
- participating companies recognise the economic potential of better qualified staff and are able to utilise these;
- training centres are recognised, interlinked and assume a role-model function;
- harmonisation of partners' organisational objectives with the goals⁴ of German development strategy (poverty reduction, conflict prevention etc.).

- ✓ In terms of efficiency:
 - coordination between and complementarity with contributions of other donors in TVET, labour market promotion and education;
 - cooperation between German implementing organisations, particularly with financial

³ To avoid redundancies, we will restrict reference to DAC criteria to new, i.e. hitherto unmentioned aspects.

⁴ This refers to the intended overarching development-policy results.

- assistance by KfW is good, and potentials for synergy effects are harnessed;
 - consistent financing framework with transparent resource allocation;
 - generation of spill-over effects (non-target groups benefit from the measures);
 - geographical restriction of activities to a realistic and manageable area of intervention;
 - acquisition of external funds; projects generate sufficient income to cover costs without external support;
 - involvement of partners to ensure financial viability and to transfer knowledge in regard to fundraising and income generation;
 - timely start of projects and appropriate timeframes for implementation.
- ✓ In terms of sustainability:
 - comprehensive exit strategies;
 - recognisable economic benefits on the side of partners to induce intrinsic motivation for continuing and furthering innovations;
 - staff continuity on the side of partners;
 - stable and cooperative relationships with private sector stakeholders;
- early diversification and professionalisation of training services;
 - integration of training services in national curricula; accreditation and certification of newly launched training programmes;
 - marketing of training concepts at the political level;
 - clear and effective communication of programme successes towards partners;
 - stable and/or stabilising political, social and economic framework conditions;
 - effective cooperation between strategic and operational partners.
- Factors that inhibit success are essentially the negation of the above-mentioned success factors. In addition:
- ✓ With regard to relevance:
 - too much of a regional focus, low supraregional/national relevance;
 - poor adaptation to regional specificities;
 - consideration of regulatory framework conditions.
 - ✓ With regard to effectiveness:
 - poor geographical mobility of target groups;
 - dominance of strategic partners;

- insufficient training and employment opportunities.
- ✓ With regard to impact:
 - insufficient diffusion of results to partners and lack of execution of multiplier role;
 - measures are not scaled up enough;
 - inadequate recognition of systemic approach;
 - lack of binding agreements with partners on scaling-up and necessary political reforms.
- ✓ With regard to efficiency:
 - operational and infrastructural resources provided are not in line with partners' technological level;
 - human resource intensive, especially in respect to international long-term experts;
 - lack of continuity amongst programme staff;
 - fluctuation of teaching and management personnel;
 - delays (e.g. due to administrative obstacles).
- ✓ With regard to sustainability:
 - lack of capacity to continue innovations independently and to develop them further;
 - lack of capacity to maintain equipment provided;
- donor-orientation of partners;
- intervention approach incompatible with TVET system in the partner country.

The BMZ-funded support for TVET after the millennium is oriented towards the MDGs and aims to contribute to economic reforms and establish free market economies. By stepping up cooperation with the private sector, strengthening networking and its labour market orientation, and by employing a multi-level approach the partner organisation's problem-solving capacities are to be enhanced and broad results achieved.

Not all aspects of TVET-related policy and strategy papers are reflected in the project concepts. Nonetheless, shifts in focus can be observed.

In project practice there is a substantial gap between the propagated areas of support and actual implementation. Only in rare instances – partly due to a lack of interest on the side of partners – do the evaluated TVET projects demonstrate strong non-formal elements that are geared to the poorest segments of the population. Unrealistically long results chains are required to prove there is any pro-poor link. Since most TVET projects focus on typical male occupations in the manufacturing industry, they tend not to be

particularly gender sensitive. Given that the multiplication of results is often weak, positive effects in terms of improved employment is limited almost exclusively to direct beneficiaries. In spite of the multi-level approach, the scale of the projects' impact is mostly restricted to the horizontal dimension (i.e. there is no cross-level diffusion of results). Most of the projects do help raise problem-solving capacity, however.

Irrespective of the many deficits identified by the evaluations examined, the GTZ evaluation reports testify to the generally high level of effectiveness and to a good or at least satisfactory impact. Only sustainability does not fare so well, also showing a considerably greater variation.

Often times, the gradings presented in the GTZ evaluation reports are not convincing, as they often lack consistent empirical evidence. In view of missing regulations for evaluations, similar scenarios result in different gradings. This undermines the results' validity and reliability.

The programmes implemented by InWEnt generally exhibit positive results at the individual level. Results at the institutional level are however much rarer.

Sustainability is hardly ever assessed in any of the evaluation reports. This would be difficult since they are all final evaluations, whereas ex-post evaluations are required for assessing sustainability.

Projects supporting single training institutions with modest expectations were more sustainable than projects that employed a multi-level approach to achieve broad-scale results and systemic change. Generally speaking, projects with a very broad profile – in terms of the number of expectations to be met – were generally less sustainable than projects whose mandate more tightly delineated. Possibly, the concept of supporting economic reform and free-market development and the 2005 sector concept, along with the MDG-oriented Program of Action 2015, led to TVET projects being overloaded with demands that could realistically not be met.

Only very few of the evaluated projects were intended to contribute to conflict reduction. The evaluations could not definitely prove whether or not the projects had succeeded in doing so. In only one case was there evidence that the fragility of a state had impacted negatively on project implementation.

The evaluation reports point to a lack of systematic needs and stakeholder analyses, as well as a general lack of ex-ante evaluations during project planning and implementation. Criticism is also levelled at the lack of exit strategies and follow-up measures.

In the evaluation reports cooperation between the various stakeholders and

cooperation between various German implementing organisations is found to be good, while cooperation with other bilateral donors is regarded as having scope for improvement.

No project attained sustainability without 'ownership'. When projects strive for system change, ownership is not only required by partner organisations involved in implementation, but also at the political level. Otherwise, there can be no diffusion or multiplier effects and thus no broad-scale results.

Besides 'ownership', a strong organisation needs a functioning organisational culture, sufficient financial and adequately trained human resources, along with the technical equipment to fulfil its mandate. The evaluated TVET projects intervened in regard to these variables to varying degrees:

- The projects contributed little to the establishment of functional management structures.
- Projects have always improved the situation with regard to equipment. However, follow-on costs and challenges arising are often not considered.
- Most TVET systems are (in part dramatically) underfunded, and establishing local fundraising and

income generation mechanisms only rarely works.

- The projects did significantly improve the qualification of staff members, although this did not always automatically actually strengthen the institutional set-up. A well-trained and dedicated staff body is a critical parameter for project success and sustainability.

With regard to broad-scale results, we need to distinguish between project types:

- In projects that focused on supporting individual training institutions in order to enhance their offers, results were essentially limited to the institutions themselves.
- The majority of the projects evaluated aimed at improving the practice-orientation of training by striving for broad-scale results through reforms in the TVET system. If by this we understand not only horizontal diffusion that measures quantitative diffusion, but qualitative (vertical) diffusion too – covering systemic and institutional embeddedness – then at the most only one project has managed to come anywhere near achieving this objective. In several projects even horizontal diffusion

was not possible or only to a limited extent. The third project type examined specifically targeted marginalised youth and former GAM fighters in Indonesia. These projects were linked to peace building and conflict-reducing measures in the respective countries and did not have any systemic components. The scale of their results was limited to the horizontal dimension. In contrast, the Promotion of Adult Vocational Training and Employment project in Bulgaria is one of the few that was also able to achieve systemic effects.

When looking at the findings of the synthesis and meta-evaluation closely so as to identify core factors for project success and sustainability, these would be:

- *flexible project steering* that responds to dynamic and changing framework conditions and the permanent increase in knowledge over time;
- political, social, cultural and economic conditions that are able to link up with project interventions and innovations (*system compatibility*);

- partner organisations that have effective organisational structures and who are willing to reform, whereby *ownership and qualified and dedicated personnel* are indispensable elements.

In comparison to the results from the 1990s

- TVET projects nowadays have to satisfy much tougher conceptual demands. New or intensified aspects include: poverty reduction, gender, economic development, free-market economy, private-public-partnerships, and linking up with instruments of labour market promotion.
- In reality, however, the projects implemented over the last ten years are much closer to their pre-millennial predecessors than the policy documents suggest:
- A direct focus on poverty, the advancement of women and a focus on the informal sector remain scarce.
- As in the past, hardly any baseline studies, let alone ex-ante evaluations are conducted. However, project planning and implementation have become more flexible and more results-oriented and more multi-level approaches

are used. Hands-on results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, exit strategies and follow-up concepts are often still lacking.

- In terms of *broad-scale results*, in particular at the vertical level, the projects from the two pre-millennial decades examined as part of the meta-evaluation were not less successful than the recently evaluated projects. The reasons for this include a lack of ownership, low system alignment and inflexible project steering.
- Institution-building projects (not to be confused with projects from the 1970s and 1980s which promoted technical schools and colleges) that enhance the problem-solving capacity of an overarching technical facility or institution were conducted in the previous millennium, too. And they, like now, also generated high internal sustainability in places (better performance capacity), but achieved little in the way of broad-scale results (which was actually not intended at the systemic level).
- The projects targeting conflict reduction do not have a direct equivalent, which means that it is not possible to make a comparison.

- If we compare today's success factors with those from before, it is hard to discern any striking differences.

Conclusions

- The recent TVET-related sector papers and the MDG-orientation (Program of Action 2015) have led to an overloading of German, BMZ-funded support for vocational training.
- The projects reviewed focused particularly on support for training institutions and for the trainees directly. Companies, institutions at the systemic level and other relevant actors in TVET were targeted to a much lesser extent. The little consideration given to strategic and political stakeholders is also an indication of deficits in the implementation of a multi-level approach.
- Projects focussing on single training institutions with limited demands to be met were more sustainable than projects that used a multi-level approach to achieve broad-scale results and systemic change.

- In many projects, harmonising qualifications and labour market demand is a set objective. For the most part, these demands are defined in collaboration with a small number of stakeholders. Representative analyses that verify this (presumed) demand are not on hand in most cases, however.
- At the level of higher aggregated results, virtually all projects aim to reduce poverty. At the same time, most of the projects are geared towards improving formal training offers. Only a very small number relate explicitly to the informal sector in which pro-poor results are most likely to be achieved. Thus, the verifiable contribution made by the projects to poverty reduction is low.
- The cross-cutting issue of gender equality assumes a subordinate role in TVET projects. Only few programmes possess interventions specifically oriented towards improving gender equality. The programmes' gender-specific results are accordingly weak, as is their benefit for female trainees.
- The considerable differences in the results arrived at in final and ex-post evaluations are an indication of a systematic correlation between evaluation type and findings. Particularly conspicuous is the great variation of individual gradings and the on average considerably more differentiated and sadly also poorer findings for project sustainability. This leads to the conclusion that it is only really possible to assess sustainability after a certain period of time has elapsed following completion of projects, while sustainability assessments in final evaluations must be regarded as forecasts.
- The relatively frequent repetition of factors determining success and failure and the substantive redundancies produced thereby indicates that the DAC criteria are not suitable for structuring the findings of evaluations.
- Capacity development is an integral component of TVET projects. However, their actual capacity development-related results are not monitored sufficiently. Standardising monitoring is not realistic owing to very different framework conditions and the multi-faceted nature of the projects. The major factors that restrict success were identified as: a failure to fully integrate

innovations into the existing teaching curricula; high staff fluctuation; inadequate alignment of technical infrastructure to partners' needs and a lack of resources and/or financing models for maintenance of technical infrastructure provided. In contrast, success factors included real partner involvement and transferring income-generation knowledge and skills.

- In German TVET projects, international donor coordination is generally limited to individually organised exchange. German projects are not systematically involved in other bilateral and multilateral projects. For the most part, this means that the potential for synergy is not harnessed. Furthermore, there is a risk of competition between agencies for partners which can considerably curtail the results and sustainability of Germany's contribution to the TVET sector.
- None of the projects examined adequately documented the results it generated. The key deficits of results-based monitoring include: absence of indicators at the outcome and impact level; poor quality of indicators; changes to the

indicator system in the course of implementation; inadequate reporting on the overall programme; lack of use of control/comparison groups. The large number and scope of the deficits point to a fundamental lack of understanding with regard to the aims and functioning of results-based monitoring.

- Project success and sustainability are influenced by a range of factors that are intertwined and that can be categorised as follows: framework (system) conditions; project planning and implementation; lead executing organisations and their target groups. Since not all of the factors potentially required for project success and sustainability are always on hand, it is important to know which ones are absolutely essential.
- When comparing the success factors from studies conducted of projects from the 1990s with those from the synthesis, no significant differences can be detected.
- The studies from the meta-evaluation point to a fundamental methodological problem that raises doubts about the validity and reliability of the gradings and heavily restricts their comparability.

On the one hand, there exist almost no reliable monitoring data, and on the other hand, most evaluations employ simple study designs and – despite statements to the contrary – do not employ a comprehensive multi-method approach. The upshot is that in many cases the available data is inadequate. This applies in particular to final evaluations by InWEnt, for which the experts were given very short periods of time on-site. On top of this, gradings made in the individual evaluation reports

are very subjective, so that the same or similar situations are evaluated differently.

- The study designs and respective approaches used in the individual evaluations are not always presented with sufficient transparency. In particular, the methods and field instruments used are not explained in each case. In contrast, in some instances individual statements by interview partners are cited in reports, thus violating the rule of anonymity.

THE CONCLUSIONS GIZ HAS DRAWN FROM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Management's response to the evaluation synthesis and the meta-evaluation on vocational education and training

BMZ and GIZ did not agree in all points on the findings and recommendations of the meta-evaluation on vocational education and training. However, these different viewpoints led to an in-depth dialogue, both within GIZ and between GIZ and BMZ. They also initiated a learning process in which both parties reflected on their own actions and identified their respective positions more clearly. The 'controversial' recommendations (in a positive sense) thus allowed a consolidated stance towards future vocational education and training projects/programmes to be adopted within German development cooperation.

Continued focus on systemic change
One of the findings of the meta-evaluation was that vocational training projects designed to promote institutions had a more sustainable effect because their ambitions were restricted. In contrast, projects that intended to achieve broad impact and systemic change using a multilevel approach received much poorer ratings. This did not prompt evaluators to recommend that the multilevel or broad impact approach be abandoned, but they did conclude that many of the projects/programmes had goals that were too ambitious. GIZ believed it wrong to conclude that only projects/programmes that promote individual institutions should be implemented. Even a project/programme that is less successful when measured against its broad

expectations may have a greater systemic impact in the final analysis than one that is 'successful' because its objective was much less ambitious.

Therefore, GIZ does not draw the conclusion from the meta-evaluation that it should redirect its focus back to the micro or organisational level, even if it does appear easier at a superficial level to build institutional capacities by working with just *one* partner. Rather, GIZ upholds its ambitious objective of achieving systemic change. However, the task to be tackled when formulating objectives for future projects/programmes is to reduce the gap between expectations and actual opportunities for putting them into practice.

Appropriate response to complexity

Another recommendation resulting from the meta-evaluation was: *'The projects/programmes are overloaded with all kinds of (sector) strategies. They should refocus their efforts on the core area of vocational training'*. This questions the increasing complexity of vocational training projects and programmes and the ambitious demands they are asked to meet. Vocational training is expected on the one hand to reduce poverty, and on the other to modernise and reform the economy. Even if this criticism is justified to some extent, GIZ draws a different conclusion. Vocational training, with its relevance both to economic and education systems, and to local and regional labour markets, is by definition a complex area. The sector strategy paper *Technical and Vocational Training and the Labour Market in Development Cooperation*, published by BMZ in 2005, was also seen as a big step forward in development cooperation. It specifically addressed the theme of training in the informal sector and placed vocational training within the context of economic development and the labour market. Focusing more strongly on the conditions for vocational training in the individual setting was an important step. In future vocational training projects/programmes, GIZ therefore sees its task as intentionally addressing their

complexity by offering courses that are adequately funded and run over an appropriate project term, for example. To achieve sustainable results, between 10 and 12 years are required to bring about systemic changes in vocational training.

Capture initial conditions more exhaustively

One criticism is that many projects and programmes do not carry out detailed analyses of partner structures and systems. This finding is based on evaluated projects and programmes that were planned a good 10 years previously. Since then, much has been done in this area. For example, new instruments have been introduced that make it possible to collect basic information on a future project/programme together with the cooperation partner. Analyses of the socioeconomic setting and the donor community are now part of the standard appraisal process before starting a project or programme. Increasing use of capacity assessment and mandatory gender analyses provide a better baseline for planning a project/programme. Collecting baseline data at the start of a programme is an important part of results-based monitoring and should be performed in all cases.

What is GIZ doing in response?

Even if GIZ does not agree with all the findings of the meta-evaluation, in future it will bear in mind some of the recommendations when planning and implementing vocational training programmes. For example:

- **Vocational training projects/programmes will be embedded to an even greater extent in the local donor community.** To better harmonise the activities and approaches of international cooperation and thus to reduce costs for partners, GIZ's vocational training projects/programmes must be more strongly coordinated with those of other

donors. Initial steps in this direction have already been taken in Vietnam, Kosovo and Namibia, and efforts will also be expanded in other partner countries.

- **Training in the informal sector will be stepped up.** Since 2011/2012, some components in projects/programmes in Afghanistan, Ghana, South Africa and Togo have placed more direct emphasis on basic skills in the informal sector, e.g. for manufacturing and selling products on local markets or providing simple services in the informal sector.
- **Sustainability will be strengthened: the issue of funding for vocational education and training will be firmly anchored in projects and programmes.** Vocational training is generally underfunded in partner countries. Adequate funding must therefore be given greater emphasis as a key criterion when appraising projects and programmes right at the start of the planning phase. Sustainability cannot be ensured if no viable funding models for vocational training are found that are shared to an appropriate degree by the state, industry and trainees. To achieve better long-term results, better arrangements must be made before the end of a project or programme for the transition from joint responsibility to the partner institution taking on sole responsibility.
- **Ensuring equal access to vocational training courses and the labour market for men and women** continues to be a mandatory requirement for GIZ, even if the general aim of training and placing women in professional fields that are traditionally reserved for men has not been met. Here too, success can only be achieved step by step, for example by initially selecting professions that are not traditionally a male preserve. In

China, for instance, good experience has been gained in the construction industry with interior design courses for women, or with web design courses in the IT sector. Although gender equality objectives are a key priority, it is important that projects and programmes not lose sight of the employment opportunities offered by traditional women's occupations.

Improving the quality of monitoring and evaluation

GIZ agrees with most of the meta-evaluation's findings regarding the methodological quality of evaluations. It will take into account the recommendations evaluators made in relation to these findings when further developing evaluation systems and instruments.

However, the expectations that results monitoring needs to meet have increased

in recent years, and rightly so. The meta-evaluation does not yet reflect gradual improvements in this field, nor was it possible for it to do. The Competence Centre for Vocational Education and Labour Market in particular has made significant efforts to take the issue of 'results' into account to a greater degree. These efforts can be summarised as follows.

- Guidelines have been produced on monitoring and measuring results in the area of vocational education and the labour market.
- Guidelines on the results-oriented monitoring of the role vocational training and employment play in social integration have also been published.
- Staff have received training and advice has been provided to projects and programmes; these measures are ongoing.

