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INDUSTRY-LED SKILLS AND  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



# Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STRENGTHENING NATIONAL TVET POLICY: DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CEG</b>	Careers Education and Guidance
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>EBP</b>	Education- Business Partnership
<b>ESIDA</b>	Georgian education infrastructure agency
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUVEGE</b>	EU project Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia
<b>GCCI</b>	Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
<b>GGF</b>	Good Governance Fund (UK)
<b>ISWD</b>	Industry-Led Skills and Workforce Development Project (of MCA-Georgia)
<b>KfW</b>	KfW German development bank
<b>LMI</b>	Labour Market Information
<b>MCA-Georgia</b>	Millennium Challenge Account – Georgia
<b>MCC</b>	Millennium Challenge Corporation
<b>MESCS</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
<b>MESD</b>	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
<b>NCEQE</b>	National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>NEET</b>	‘Not in employment, education or training’
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NTPDC</b>	National Teacher Professional Development Centre
<b>NVETC</b>	National Vocational Education and Training Council
<b>PFI</b>	Public Finance initiative
<b>PICG</b>	Programme of Improvement Competitive Grants
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Sector Partnership
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>QAF</b>	Quality Assurance Framework
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprise(s)
<b>SSC</b>	Sector Skills Council
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance
<b>TNA</b>	Training Needs Analysis
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>VNFIL</b>	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development (ISWD) Project is a \$16 million MCA-Georgia initiative carried out under the Compact signed between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Government of Georgia in July 2013, implemented between September 2014 and March 2019. Intended to address gaps between the needs of the labour market for skilled workers and the supply of citizens with technical skills required by companies through investments in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the project included an emphasis on supporting skills development for occupations for which there is a strong labour market demand, with a focus on those requiring competence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

During the first three years of the project, it included a technical assistance component aimed at strengthening national policy and industry engagement in the Georgian TVET sector through support to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS) and its agencies. Technical assistance areas, agreed annually with MESCS, included the following:

- Promoting business engagement in TVET: This included supporting MES in developing and implementing a new Public/Private Partnerships approach in TVET, developing a new Sector Skills Council concept, and supporting Education/Business Partnerships with a focus on sourcing/using labour market information to inform TVET program planning and development, and improving career information for students;
- Increasing the quality and attractiveness of TVET: This included supporting MESCS in updating the national TVET strategy and action plan, with estimated costs and recommendations for improving the TVET financing model, supporting implementation of the new TVET branding platform, including a communications action plan, completing the TVET Quality Assurance Framework (self-assessment/monitoring, validation of occupational standards/programs, authorization, internal/external verification of assessment), providing capacity building support to delivery of modular qualifications programs (incl. competence-based assessment) and supporting development and implementation of career education and guidance in schools and colleges;
- Supporting lifelong learning and adult education: This included supporting validation of non-formal & informal learning as a pathway to TVET qualifications and an adult education policy review.

Although the technical assistance support to MESCS has now ended, the project is continuing a number of activities aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the results of the technical assistance provided and identifying further steps necessary to continue the TVET modernization process.

Part 2 of this paper sets out a brief analysis of the current state of TVET system development.

Part 3 of this paper includes 11 short briefing notes covering specific areas that should be targeted in the continuing process of developing a TVET system that matches international good practices.

## **2 THE TVET SITUATION IN GEORGIA**

### **2.1 Background to TVET in Georgia**

In all countries, TVET plays a crucial role in developing the skilled workforce needed at all levels of the economy in order to sustain economic and social development, whilst also providing learning and career advancement opportunities avenues for young people and adults. However, if TVET is not modernized in line with changing economic and societal needs or adequately funded to fulfil these purposes, it is frequently blamed for economic under-performance and for skills gaps between vocational qualifications and occupational needs, and its popularity suffers accordingly. In many post-socialist countries, their TVET systems fell into disrepute during the early years of transition, and it is a major challenge to adapt them to meet the new circumstances of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

For several years, the need to develop a strong and world-class TVET system has been recognised as one of the top priorities and challenges for Georgia's government. However, efforts to implement an effective system of skills development to meet labour market demand has been hampered by the fact that a majority of young people choose to enter higher education rather than TVET, reflecting the higher social status commonly associated with university-level qualifications as well as a significant gap in salary levels between those with higher education and those with TVET qualifications. This reflects the fact that even employer attitudes tend to under-value TVET in Georgia.

Despite having a high proportion of well-educated citizens and a population with a comparatively high level of literacy, the country's economic competitiveness is seriously threatened by the absence in its workforce of a sufficient number of people with right kind of technical skills needed by industry. The creation of high-skilled jobs requiring university level qualifications is rather limited whilst, at the other end of the labour market, there is an exceptionally high share of self-employment in subsistence agriculture. The greatest need for TVET development is in occupations with a high content of technical skills.

Despite a shortage of people with the needed skills, there is a high level of youth unemployment (30% of the 18-24 cohort) particularly in urban areas, and academically well-qualified young people are often forced to take jobs far below their expectations as a result of over-education. However, large pockets of disadvantaged and vulnerable people, especially in areas far away from those experiencing economic growth where there are considerable numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) should be of concern to policy makers, especially as entrance tests for TVET necessitated by a shortage of places at TVET colleges can result in young people who would benefit from vocational education being turned away. In general, however, young people with intermediate general or tertiary education are more affected by unemployment than those with TVET qualifications.

There are some signs that Georgia's recent trend of improved economic performance is not being sustained, as evidenced by the country's fall from 59<sup>th</sup> to 67<sup>th</sup> position between 2016 and 2017 in the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum, reflecting the fact that other countries are improving their performance faster than Georgia and a conclusion that a shortage of technical skills in Georgia's workforce is seriously hindering the nation's economic development and competitiveness.

This danger is recognised by the Georgian government, and the country's TVET strategy since 2013 has prioritised needed reforms directed at increasing the quality, relevance and attractiveness of TVET through measures including a more active engagement with the private sector in both provision and funding. It should be noted that SME development is becoming an increasingly important factor in Georgia's economy and is being supported through initiatives to improve entrepreneurial learning.

TVET participation remains low (accounting for less than 10% of students in upper secondary education), although the government has ambitious plans to increase participation, through an expansion both of initial TVET provision (through modular qualification programmes) and of TVET provision for adults (including short courses), the latter being intended to redress the problem that lifelong learning in Georgia is at a very low level (0.42%). However, although increasing, spending on education and TVET in particular still remains quite low. TVET provision is mainly concentrated in Tbilisi and other major population areas and there are whole parts of the country where TVET provision is not available.

It is clear that the TVET system needs to be expanded, through the establishment of new TVET providers, satellite operations of existing TVET providers or the organisation of TVET programmes inside other educational institutions, to reach parts of the country, communities and potential learners that the TVET system does not at the moment have the capacity to reach.

This need is widely recognised and is increasingly linked with the concept of 'centres of excellence' whereby specially resourced institutions could play a leading role in TVET development at regional or sectoral level.

However, there is considerable concern at government level that, despite considerable efforts to improve the quality and relevance of TVET provision, TVET is not the popular choice of a majority of young people. The message that new industry-relevant TVET programmes will provide pathways to well-paid in-demand occupations and enhanced employment opportunities is still not being heeded by many of them, although it should be noted that a significant proportion of students in TVET colleges have completed upper secondary education or even higher education and have enrolled in TVET to obtain qualifications that will qualify them for employment.

One of the problems with the image of TVET is that, for educationally ambitious learners, it has tended - until very recently - to be seen as a dead-end, and pressure on students from both general education teachers and parents to aspire to high level qualifications has had the effect of steering them away from TVET provision. For a majority of students, key decisions about their education which will profoundly affect their career opportunities are made by others, especially by parents, without any individual career advice or guidance. Gender stereotyping in the choice of courses and careers remains very common, and there is a need for active measures to encourage girls and young women to train for non-traditional occupations, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) – related occupations.

Thus, a lack of knowledge about the TVET system on the part of parents and general education teachers is still a major stumbling block to TVET system expansion. To correct this problem, TVET legislation is currently being changed to provide TVET graduates with new opportunities to progress into higher education if they wish, and TVET is currently going through a re-branding process to raise its image, inform the public, and popularise TVET qualifications. The development of higher level

TVET qualifications for occupations requiring advanced levels of skills and knowledge will also help to raise the status of TVET, especially if delivered through short cycle university programmes.

There is a need to continue with measures aimed at enhancing the quality and relevance of TVET programmes to make them more attractive to learners, and promoting the benefits of TVET, including increased employability, to the general public, employers and potential students.

## **2.2 The direction of current TVET reforms**

An amended VET Law in 2010 set in process a number of needed TVET reforms, while legislation on education quality enhancement, also in 2010, has provided a basis for establishing a quality assurance regime in TVET and a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). However, to provide a legal basis for further reforms in the TVET system, a new VET Law was adopted by Parliament in September 2018. The issuing of related regulations under the Law will provide a framework for the implementation of further reforms and modernisation of TVET in Georgia.

The VET Development Strategy for 2013-20 set out a roadmap for a more coherent and holistic approach to TVET, aimed at increasing quality and providing greater flexibility. Key areas of TVET development as foreseen in the Strategy are supported by international donors, who have provided both funding and technical support through a coordinated Strategy Implementation Action Planning process. The impact of Georgia's Association Agreement with the European Union (June 2014) has helped to focus TVET reforms on aligning Georgia's TVET system with European best practices and has provided an additional impetus to the TVET modernisation process.

In general, it may be noted that the direction of TVET reform processes is broadly in line with developments in Europe and other advanced countries.

Due to substantial donor-funded investments in infrastructure, equipment, TVET programme development and technical assistance to support policy modernisation, the gap between Georgia's TVET system and the mainstream of systems of more highly developed economies in Europe and elsewhere has been considerably narrowed.

This has required – and still requires – considerable institutional and human capacity building throughout and at all levels of the TVET system.

Thus, we can see that Georgia's reformed TVET system now includes essential features common to almost all advanced TVET systems, including:

- The development of a labour market information system (LMIS) including various indicators as a basis for informing the TVET system about employment trends and skill needs - based largely on labour demand surveys, the LMIS is now the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. Labour market data may be supplemented by specific information gathering activities undertaken by TVET providers and others, including skill surveys with employers at local or sectoral level;
- The emergence of a modular TVET system delivering industry-relevant TVET qualifications, based on learning outcomes derived from occupational standards, including competence-based assessment, and driven by the overall requirements of an 8-level National Qualifications Framework (NQF) developed and implemented in line with EU practices;

- Steps towards achieving greater linkage between general and vocational subjects in initial TVET in order to create greater relevance and reinforce practical applications of curriculum content;
- An emerging provision of work-based learning delivered in enterprises involving at least 40% of the programme devoted to practice, within the frame of education/business partnerships between TVET colleges and employers as a step towards a European-style apprenticeship model;
- Measures to make TVET qualifications more accessible to adults, including the implementation of arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning as a pathway to qualifications of the TVET system – developed since 2014, the measures have been piloted and partially implemented but full implementation across all TVET qualification levels has only now been made possible through the passing of the new Law on Vocational Education and Training;
- A modernised approach to the pre-service and in-service training of TVET teachers (under the responsibility of NTPDC), within the frame of a systematised approach to career development, including training to deliver modular standards-based TVET programmes and deliver competence-based assessment in conjunction with instructors from enterprises delivering work-based learning;
- A TVET quality assurance framework (under the responsibility of NCEQE) including validation by sector representatives of occupational standards and TVET modular framework programmes, the authorisation of TVET providers and programmes, internal and external verification of assessments and self-assessment and external monitoring of TVET providers, although full implementation will require further legislative amendment;
- The introduction of career education and guidance, both in TVET colleges and in general secondary education schools, to help students identify appropriate career opportunities and courses – implemented in TVET colleges by professional career managers and supported through education/business partnerships – and supported by destination/tracer studies designed to provide information about employment destinations which have been carried out since 2014.

Key building blocks of a modern TVET system have already been developed but are at varying stages of implementation. In all the areas listed above, it will be necessary to ensure sustainability through continuation of work that has already started, which may require further donor support.

### **2.3 Private Sector Engagement in TVET**

One of the key features of TVET developments in Georgia has been the strength of the emphasis placed on effective engagement with the private sector. The Georgian TVET system includes an unusually large proportion of private TVET institutions and this is set to continue in the longer-term development of the system. Although private colleges have long complained of the absence of a “level playing field” in terms of funding, it is planned to extend voucher funding to students enrolled at private colleges, thus redressing a long-standing inequality and potentially enabling institutions to expand their provision. However, the vision of MESCS for involving the private sector in TVET goes far beyond integrating private colleges more closely in public TVET provision.



Since 2015, MESCS has actively pursued an approach that aims to include public-private partnerships (PPP) in TVET development. The PPP strategy presumes a sharing of investment and benefits between public sector institutions and private sector entities and its implementation has generally followed three directions – shared investment in new TVET education and training facilities, moves to fully or partially out-source the management of public TVET institutions to the private sector, and securing a shared investment and cooperation of private sector companies in the delivery of work-based learning, carried out within enterprises in partnership with TVET institutions. The PPP approach is likely to be of increasing importance in the long-term development of the TVET system.

Business engagement also extends into TVET system governance, as the 2010 VET Law has supported development of an embryonic European-style social partnership system based on a National VET Council, a consultative body for TVET policy discussion and debate. All major TVET system developments have been discussed by the NVETC, with a number of Thematic Working Groups established to work on and prepare recommendations on some key issues in TVET system development. However, the NVETC has been criticized as top-down and ineffective because it is a largely reactive body rather than one that proposes or initiates policy discussions of its own. It has no secretariat of its own, and is effectively managed by the VET Development department of MESCS. At least part of the problem is that there is no sector or regional social partnership structure below it. As a result, its deliberations concern broad-brush national policy TVET issues and a mechanism for feeding points upwards from grassroots level is lacking.

At present, the sector committees that validate occupational standards and new TVET modular qualifications are neither independent nor part of the social partnership structure, because they are established by, and dependent on, the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), an agency linked with MESCS. However, MESCS and NCEQE have agreed in principle that independent Sector Skills Councils should be established (possibly by augmenting the functions of sector committees) in order to provide a more strategic approach to skills anticipation and development at sector and regional level, based on: sector and regional skill surveys; sector and regional skill development strategies; and standards and qualifications development at sector level. However, there will need to be a long-term implementation process on the basis of a step-by-step approach.

All TVET providers are encouraged to develop effective education/business partnerships involving collaboration with local employers, which provide a basis for developing/adapting programmes, planning student numbers, organising work-based learning placements and internships, providing career information for students and, sometimes, developing targeted and tailor-made training programmes for employees. In some cases, this has led to direct involvement of companies in the affairs of providers, sometimes including the provision of equipment or materials to support practical training.

Continued strengthening of engagement with the private sector will be essential to further development of the TVET system, including development of PPPs, establishment of effective sector level TVET arrangements (which may also be based on a PPP approach) and further developing education/business partnerships across the whole TVET system.

## **2.4 Institutional and financial capacity**

Georgia's TVET system is quite centralised, and TVET policy development, planning and coordination including implementation of the TVET strategy action plan and social partner engagement is provided by the VET Development Department of MESCS, which falls under the responsibility of a Deputy Minister for Vocational Education. The department is quite small in relation to its responsibilities and its capacity is stretched to the limit in exercising its functions. Specialised functions are carried out by public agencies linked with the Ministry, namely:

- NCEQE, whose functions include authorisation of TVET providers and programmes, quality assurance framework and management of NQF implementation. However, NCEQE's functions extend beyond what one would normally expect of a quality enhancement agency as it also coordinates the development of occupational standards, TVET programmes and qualifications. This has given rise to some concerns about possible conflicts of interest between its support to TVET development and its quality assurance functions and NCEQE is concerned to ensure that, in the longer term, standards and programme development should, as far as possible, be undertaken by Sector Skills Councils which should be independent of NCEQE and supported by some other institution;
- NTPDC, which is responsible for both pre-service and in-service TVET teacher professional development but has staff resources and capacity that are very limited in relation to the scale of the challenges involved in upgrading the pedagogical skills of TVET teachers and supporting the introduction of new learning and assessment practices throughout the TVET system;

All further donor interventions in the TVET sector should include continued capacity building for these agencies, both in terms of strengthening their institutional capacities and in terms of developing the human capacities of their staff.

For TVET providers, TVET capital and infrastructure investment is made through ESIDA - the education infrastructure agency. The administrative costs of public TVET colleges are met from the MESCS Budget. Authorisation fees charged by NCEQE must be met by the TVET institutions themselves.

The marginal costs per student are covered by voucher funding, calculated on a module by module per capita basis. At the moment, only the cost of students in public TVET colleges is covered through the voucher system, and public TVET programmes in private TVET colleges and in higher education institutions are fee-based. However, there are plans to extend voucher funding to cover all students in all public TVET programmes. The current voucher system has been criticised as unnecessarily inflexible and the introduction of programmes with a high content of work-based learning in enterprises has to calls for a sharing of voucher income between TVET colleges and their work-based learning partners.

It should be noted that the not insignificant cost of validating non-formal and informal learning may ultimately be borne by candidates themselves, unless sponsored by their employer or other organisation. Unless this issue is addressed, the number of candidates for qualifications gained through validation is likely to be small.

In addition, there have been some calls to include an element of performance-based funding, to reward high-performing TVET institutions, maybe also including an element of outcome-based

funding to encourage efficiency in programme delivery and eliminate wastage caused by post-enrolment dropouts. Viewed from the perspective of the planned expansion of TVET provision, coupled with a likely increased diversity of TVET courses to meet different needs, increased quality assurance and a need to cover the costs incurred by sector skills councils charged with carrying out essential TVET system functions, the challenges for TVET financing are likely to become ever greater.

For these reasons, it may be concluded that continued TVET system development must include a thorough review and reform of TVET financing arrangements.

### **3 DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS FOR SPECIFIC TVET INTERVENTIONS**

Eleven short briefing papers on specific areas of TVET development are set out in the following pages.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.1 Public-private partnerships as a basis for industry engagement in TVET**

#### Contextual background

The ISWD project was approached in 2015 to assist MESCS in developing a public-private partnership (PPP) concept for TVET. A PPP involves a contract between the public and private sector parties under which the private sector party provides a public service, manages a public asset or delivers a public sector project and assumes substantial financial, technical and operational risk. In return the private sector party is either wholly or partially financially compensated by the Government or is otherwise able to generate income from charges to users.

PPPs commonly represent a co-financing approach based on a sharing of investments and returns. The two most common motives for establishing PPPs are: a need to harness the expertise and efficiencies of the private sector in delivering certain facilities and services traditionally procured and delivered by the public sector and/or a need to make major capital investments without the need for the government to borrow or incur serious financial risks.

PPPs are usually used as a mechanism for obtaining private sector involvement in operations, professional or support services and in infrastructure investment for the public sector.

Although it is common in TVET to refer to “supply side” and “demand side” when referring respectively to providers and employers, PPP initiatives tend to blur these distinctions and there is an implicit tendency in Georgian TVET policy for employers also to become providers, for example of work-based learning.

#### TA provided by ISWD

In mid-2015, the project assisted MESCS by substantially drafting the Concept of Public-Private Partnership in the Vocational Education and Training Sector of Georgia, which remains the main basis of PPP policy for Georgia’s TVET sector.

Besides ad hoc advice at various times, in 2015 and 2016 the project assisted MES by drafting requests for ideas and expressions of interest that could be used by MESCS to gauge the level of interest from industry in developing a PPP approach. Specific areas identified by MES for potential PPPs were: establishment of new TVET provider institutions on a co-funding basis; out-sourcing the management of TVET public colleges to the private sector; establishing work-based learning programmes on a PPP basis. The requests for ideas were not publicly used by MESCS, but it is understood that the contents were used in discussions with potential private sector partners.

PPP was one of the workshop themes at the first TVET Conference organised by MCA-Georgia in cooperation with MESCS in 2016, and other areas of ISWD-provided TA including the Sector Skills Councils concept also contained recommendations for industry co-funding through a PPP approach.

The MCA-Georgia Programme of Improvement Competitive Grants (PICG), which funded 10 large grant projects organised by TVET providers in partnership with international or Georgian companies has been identified as a significant example of PPP in practice because of the significant co-funding provided by mainly private sector entities. Following the success of PICG, grant schemes with industry co-financing requirements are being developed by other donors, including the EU, and are

expected to play an important means of providing a decentralised mechanism for securing TVET system investment and support.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

PPP continues to be a central plank of Georgia's approach to VET and is regarded as a major vehicle for securing private sector involvement and co-financing of TVET system expansion and modernisation, with some successes achieved so far. However, the potential benefits to industry need to be tangible, and large investments will take a significant period of time before tangible results are achieved. PPP or PFI (Public Finance Initiative) initiatives in other countries usually involve long-term investments that may be hard to sell to Georgian companies. Nevertheless, progress is beginning to be made and it is becoming clear that PPP projects on a modest scale are viable in the Georgian situation. The PPP approach in TVET should be proactively promoted to Georgian industry, with good practice examples used wherever possible to raise awareness of potential opportunities and benefits. Above all, there is a need for a high-level political commitment to promoting this key area of government strategy.

To date, comparatively few Georgian employers are yet involved, and employer consultations by the ISWD project and for development of the TVET communications strategy have shown that a majority of Georgian employers still know little about what TVET has to offer and comparatively few have shown an interest in becoming involved. From this perspective, the prospects for developing a strong PPP approach are distinctly long-term and may be linked with a number of other initiatives and approaches including developments in social partnership including TVET strategies at a regional and sector level, local building of education/business partnerships, and specific work-based learning developments and will depend on the effectiveness of TVET communications.

The principle of PPP is being promoted across all areas of the Georgian public sector, and PPP is seen as an important vehicle for achieving the modernisation and reform of Georgia's TVET system. A PPP Law has been enacted and a PPP Agency established under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. Government policy requires all ministries including MESCS to develop and implement PPP plans, for which they need to establish appropriate coordination arrangements.

The UK-funded Good Governance Fund (GGF) has launched a project to take forward the PPP in the TVET sector, and its first phase includes an analysis of international good practices in Operate and Maintain PPPs in TVET and their applicability to Georgia, development of an action plan (roadmap) for outsourcing some functions relating to the management of TVET institutions and preparation of PPP tendering procedures. It is understood that a second phase of the project will seek to support MESCS in developing and piloting Operate and Maintain PPP initiatives.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.2 Sector Skills Councils and the importance of a sectoral approach**

#### Contextual background

In order to provide a role for industry representatives in TVET qualifications development, the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) currently establishes Sector Committees, of which there are 11. Their role is to validate occupational standards and new TVET qualifications developed by working groups established by NCEQE. They are neither independent bodies nor part of the social partnership structure, but NCEQE is looking for a way of making them independent.

Independent Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) exist in many countries where they carry out important tasks that need to be carried out in TVET at a sector level and there is now a proposal to establish SSCs in Georgia, possibly by augmenting the functions of sector committees and removing them from NCEQE control, in order to provide a more strategic approach to skills anticipation and development, through sector skill surveys and preparation of sector skill development strategies, and the development of standards and qualifications at sector (and probably also at regional) level, and to fill the current gap in the social partnership structure.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The project prepared a Concept Paper on the Long-Term Development of Sector Skills Councils in Georgia, setting out examples of SSCs in other countries, defining the role and functions that they should fulfil in Georgia's TVET system, and examining options for institutional and funding models, the latter including an annual grant, project-based funding or a combination of the two, with income generation and cost-sharing options also considered. The paper also concluded that finding an alternative support and coordination mechanisms independent of NCEQE would be a major challenge, but would be essential for implementation of the proposed model.

The paper was presented to the National VET Council in 2017, where it received positive feedback and a recommendation to continue working on the model including ongoing discussion with TVET stakeholders. It was also handed over to MESCS and NCEQE, following which the project subsequently suggested a road map based on a step-by-step approach, assuming that the proposed SSC model would have to be fully implemented over time.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

The proposals have been broadly accepted by MESCS and NCEQE, and the latter has suggested that the possibilities of collaborating with the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) might be considered as a possible solution to finding an alternative host organisation for the SSCs. Because an alternative possibility, which depended on establishment of a new national skills agency recommended in a report on institutional reorganisation, prepared for MESCS with EU support, no longer appears to be an option, an approach involving the GCCCI is probably the most viable one.

The next step envisaged in the implementation roadmap should be involve piloting the model in different sectors in order to refine the model and, if necessary, to develop variations on the model applicable to different sectoral circumstances. Now that ISWD TA has been completed, it is hoped that other donors supporting TVET development in specific different sectors may include this as an element in their work plans. Such piloting may provide an indication of the extent to which it may be

possible to build on the existing sector committees when establishing SSCs or whether it would be better to start from scratch when establishing them.

Following piloting, the following will be required:

- Agreement on the final model (role, functions etc.) to be implemented across Georgia's TVET system, which may include an element of flexibility, for example in relation to the relative sizes or complexity of different sectors and governance arrangements for different sectors;
- Propose and agree on an umbrella body or host organisation to provide coordination and support to SSCs;
- Identification and agreement on an appropriate funding model in the frame of the policy on PPP in TVET, including, which should may include an element of co-financing from the sector;
- Preparation of a new regulation (to replace the current regulation on sector committees of 2015) to provide a legal basis for implementation of the agreed final model, including funding arrangements;
- Develop and agree arrangements for integrating them into the social partnership structure including a mechanism for SSC representation on the NVETC;
- Capacity building activities to support SSC implementation on a long-term basis.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.3 Reinforcing industry links through education/business partnerships**

#### Contextual background

Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) provide a means of linking businesses and their employees with schools and colleges in a mutually beneficial way. Usually formalised by memorandum of understanding or contract, EPBs provide a means of developing practical cooperation, which may be used in different ways, for example in helping providers to identify businesses' skill needs in order to plan, develop adapt or target industry-relevant learning programmes, provide useful careers information to students, introduce students to the world of work, develop collaborative internship or work-based learning programmes etc. EPBs can also be useful for enterprises, for example by ensuring that TVET providers are aware of their needs, supporting the recruitment of TVET graduates etc. Indeed, they are usually only interested in joining partnerships if their investment in time and resources brings some benefit back to their businesses, and this is a reason why EPBs are often difficult to sustain.

The EPB approach promoted by ISWD emerged from various TA activities, including assisting TVET providers in sourcing and using labour market information from employers, involving local employers in career education and guidance activities, developing mutual learning and cooperation between college teachers and workplace trainers in work-based learning programmes, etc. As such, the approach underpinned the TA provided across a number of intervention areas of the project.

#### TA provided by ISWD

Assistance and capacity building training was provided to TVET providers (mainly directors and careers managers) on developing EPBs, with the aim of helping them to identify partners, opportunities and ways of collaboration and to formalise an EPB through agreement/ memorandum of understanding. Support included:

- Guidelines for setting up Education and Business Partnerships covering aims/benefits, main steps (Getting started - Identifying partners - Laying the foundation for the EBP - Implementation and management - Monitoring and evaluation), good practice information;
- Capacity building training packages and materials for college directors and career managers;
- Capacity building training for representatives of public and some private TVET providers, including a briefing workshop for 15 TVET college directors, and two rounds of training for career managers and teachers (each 30 participants)

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

EBPs are widely used in Georgia but are often of limited scope. The active involvement of employers is essential, should not be confined to the recruitment of the best students on the completion of TVET courses, and should involve meaningful contributions to college efforts to increase the relevance of programmes to industry needs. Next steps should include:

- Development and implementation of more comprehensive EBP models, including EPBs at sectoral level (which may involve sector skills councils or sector associations);
- Linking specific EPBs with planned initiatives to develop, pilot or implement public/private partnerships in TVET.



- Circulation of EBP guidelines to all TVET providers, with periodic updating to reflect identified best practice examples;
- Using EBPs more effectively as a means of up-dating TVET teachers' industry-related knowledge;
- Providing means for companies to derive some tangible benefits from EBPs, for example through joint activities that enable company staff to develop their skills and competences in a cost-effective way;
- Promotion of EBPs in all new TVET initiatives, with further capacity building support provided to maximise opportunities and benefits of EBPs.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.4 Centres of Excellence in TVET**

#### Contextual Background

Centres of Excellence are sometimes promoted in VET reform initiatives in other countries as a vehicle for supporting improvement of VET provision and effective implementation of VET reforms. They are usually intended to act as a catalyst for VET development activities at a regional or sectoral level, providing a means of decentralising VET development activities. One of the advantages is that key functions can be shifted from the centre to organisations in different regions or sectors which are able to mobilise the close and active involvement of enterprises and other communal players.

Usually based in either existing or new VET institutions, Centres of Excellence serve both as leading providers of vocational education and training and as service providers for others. The concept assumes that specially resourced VET institutions each sit at the centre or hub of a network or cluster of satellite institutions, to whom they provide assistance and support by cascading information and expertise. In this way, they can offer tailor-made advisory, training and coaching services to other VET institutions and client organisations, whilst at the same time performing an important coordination role.

Allocated targeted resources to develop their capacities, Centres of Excellence can assume a leading role in important VET development activities, including the piloting and application of new concepts and approaches. Their responsibilities may include research and development activities relevant to the needs of VET system development, carried out either independently or on behalf of a sponsoring agency or ministry. They are usually discipline-based, which enables investment in expensive equipment for training purposes to be concentrated in highly resourced specialist facilities that provide training for staff and students from other institutions rather than distributing the equipment more thinly around institutions in different places. This approach can build up a level of expertise and capacity in a particular vocational area that would not otherwise be possible, whilst also helping networked schools and colleges lacking specialised equipment to organise courses that they would not otherwise be equipped to provide.

Centres of Excellence are often closely linked with other institutions such as sector skills councils. Commonly they conduct regional or sector skills studies to identify the need for VET programmes and qualifications, develop curricula, programmes and qualifications, and may sometimes take on the role of regional or sectoral assessment centres or play a role in the implementation of VET quality assurance frameworks.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The ISWD TA did not specifically include activities focused on the Centres of Excellence concept. However, the Team Leader worked closely with experts from the EU VEGE project and from KfW to develop ideas about how a workable Centres of Excellence concept might support the TVET reform process in Georgia. The idea of 'centres of excellence' was also implicit in the concept paper on sector skills councils.

### Current state of progress and way forward

The term 'Centres of Excellence' is increasingly used in relation to new initiatives to expand TVET provision in Georgia through investment in new or improved TVET institutions, especially in relation to the creation of entities that have the capacity to match high international standards, and it is clear that a 'centres of excellence' concept would help to provide a useful focus to TVET reform initiatives. However, because a commonly accepted Centres of Excellence concept has not yet been elaborated, there is a risk of the term being used or interpreted by different players in different ways.

It should be recognised that every new TVET facility founded through international donations or Georgian public, private or shared PPP investment should by its very nature be 'excellent', but there is a danger that, if such newly founded institutions are referred to as 'centres of excellence', the achievements of already existing institutions including those that have received substantial previous investments may be obscured. There are already many 'excellent' TVET providers in Georgia, and all providers should indeed be striving to achieve 'excellence'.

The term 'centre of excellence' should, however, be reserved for institutions that meet certain criteria or conditions that distinguish them from other providers. Because of this, it is clear that there is a need for a clearly defined 'centres of excellence' concept. It is understood that the EU VEGE project may have taken a step towards this by preparing a short draft, which could be built upon in development of a more comprehensive concept that could be used to provide a strategic approach to guide TVET development in Georgia.

Georgia is quite a small, though geographically diverse, country and, whilst specialised TVET providers are delivering good results, it is difficult and probably unsustainable to resource and maintain a wide regional access to all kinds of TVET courses. In this context, an approach that concentrates specialised functions (such as curriculum and materials development, teacher and assessor support etc.) within specific institutions and provides a means of sharing services (such as enrolment, access to specialised equipment, teaching resources etc.) between and across clusters of other institutions seems to make sense. This will be especially important where there is a need to meet new or emerging labour market needs or in regions and localities lacking a dedicated TVET institution where, to provide needed opportunities and achieve an increase in TVET participation, TVET courses have to be provided through schools or other institutions that have more limited experience than more long-standing TVET institutions.

It is therefore recommended that:

- A 'centres of excellence' concept paper should be prepared, setting out a workable approach to guide the further development of existing TVET providers and decisions on investing in the development of new TVET facilities;
- The concept should be closely linked both with the development of sector skills councils and with specific mechanisms established to coordinate PPP initiatives in the TVET sector, as well as with proposals for donor support to the establishment of new TVET institutions;
- The concept should be discussed and agreed with TVET stakeholders including the National VET Council, and should be embedded in – and used to enhance – the VET Strategy and Action Plan.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.5 Popularising TVET – the importance of effective TVET communications**

#### Contextual background

It is a matter of considerable concern that, despite the importance of TVET and the country's significant investment in TVET, it is not the chosen educational pathway of a large majority of young people who lack understanding of the potential benefits, and the ISWD project was therefore invited by MESCS to assist in developing an approach to increase the popularity of TVET through activities focused on: raising awareness about the meaning of TVET, adequately formulating its image and increasing its attractiveness.

A branding exercise carried out for MESCS with EU support emphasised a need to promote opportunities for employment or self-employment by transforming attitudes towards TVET as the main provider of a competent work-force for the labour market.

The role of ISWD was to develop a TVET Communication Plan including a strategy for communicating key messages about TVET to targeted groups and a campaign strategy for 2018-19.

#### TA provided by ISWD:

The ISWD project engaged consultants to develop the Communications Plan in close collaboration with representatives of MESCS. The consultants' report defined strategic objectives and marketing goals, provided an analysis of target groups (including communication channels and incentives), set out a branding plan, elaborated a communications strategy focused on changing public perceptions of TVET and communicating incentives, and set out a detailed campaign plan for the first year of implementation including media and campaign events. It also included a media analysis and a plan for evaluating results.

The report was accepted by MESCS in mid-2018 and its implementation is on-going.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

It is clear that, until very recently, TVET communications represented a major weak point, reflected in the generally low esteem and limited appeal of TVET in public perception. The Communications Plan represents only the first step in what is expected to be a long process, probably sustained over several years, of changing public attitudes. However, its success will be crucial to achieving the government's ambitious TVET system objectives, including a large expansion of TVET provision and a better qualified workforce to meet industry's needs.

Further actions should include:

- Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the TVET Communication Plan, including an impact analysis related to branding and public perceptions of TVET;
- Preparation of TVET campaign ideas and plans for 2019/20 and beyond – this activity may be out-sourced to a competent PR company on the basis of a request for proposals and project-managed by staff of MESCS;
- Capacity building at all levels in the TVET system (for MESCS, NCEQE, NTPDC, TVET providers) to improve the effectiveness of TVET communication activities.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

### **3.6 Career education and guidance**

#### Contextual background

Career education and guidance (CEG) is essential to orient young people towards the world of work, help them to develop and realise their ambitions, and support them in planning future career paths and identifying appropriate learning pathways leading to their chosen careers. One of the reasons why so many young Georgians end up academically well qualified but without employment, is that key decisions about their education and career expectations are made (often by their parents) without the benefit of realistic information and informed guidance. Such guidance should be provided by a professionally qualified careers advisor and should be supported by accurate and informative career guidance materials.

Although an essential element in the country's education and training system, CEG in Georgia remains at a very basic level, and the ISWD intervention on career education and guidance was requested by MESCS to support development of careers education in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of education and to improve and modernise the delivery of CEG in TVET colleges.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The starting point was a concept paper for the development of lifelong vocational counselling and career planning services in Georgia, identifying a number of challenges including the limited capacity of teachers and career managers and a lack of effective management and coordination, and setting out a vision and approach for development of a more effective system of careers advice in schools and colleges including a need for collaboration between educational institutions and businesses.

The main focus of the TA was on developing the capacities of Career Managers in TVET colleges and career coordinators in secondary schools, and included:

- Toolkit on career education and guidance, including an explanation of career decision making theory and its application, lifelong guidance models, and practical guidance on planning, implementing and evaluating CEG, together with quality guidelines;
- Good practice guideline on collection of career destination statistics;
- Training packages focused on supporting the transition of young people from school to the world of work, including a focus was placed on STEM-related career paths;
- Four rounds of CEG training with about 90 participants, two courses on training of CEG trainers with 53 participants and two workshops with about 30 participants.
- Model job descriptions for college careers managers, with an accompanying self-assessment questionnaire and guidelines for use in staff development;
- Piloting of student destination statistics collection and analysis in 3 TVET providers, together with good practice guidelines;
- Advice to Tbilisi State University on the professional development of career managers and career coordinators, in the context of their plans to develop a masters' degree in CEG in partnership with a UK university.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

Basic training and extensive materials have been provided to help teachers in schools to work systematically with their pupils on CEG and to support TVET college career managers in helping their

students to transition into the world of work. All materials have been handed over to the VET Development Department of MESCS. It is hoped that the MESCS will take further steps to support the continuation of support to CEG in schools and colleges, building on the results of what has been achieved so far. The following continuation activities should be considered:

- Overall management, coordination and support to CEG in schools and colleges: Effective coordination, supporting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that CEG is implemented effectively and consistently across Georgia's education and training system should be established under the leadership of MESCS and, for TVET, this may be provided through the Vocational Guidance and Career Development Planning Division;
- Management and coordination of CEG at school/college level: All institutions to have a clear policy for providing CEG, including appropriate allocation of staffing and resources, plans for using education/business partnerships to develop industry collaboration on CEG, anticipation and alleviation of risks and evaluation. In addition, directors should ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of CEG issues, and that their CEG policy is effectively implemented within their institutions;
- Career information literature and resources: further development of careers libraries in educational institutions, including up-to-date and computer-based information about occupations and labour market demands, supplemented by comprehensive lesson plans to support their effective use in CEG classroom activities;
- Further training and capacity building: Where careers education lessons are delivered by subject teachers, they should be trained in careers education and guidance processes. Appropriate training and on-going continuous professional development should be introduced and put into place at institutional level, for example linked with the recruitment of new staff, and the career managers trained by ISWD may be used to deliver or coordinate such training through a cascade approach;
- Professionalisation of careers guidance provision: To professionalise and increase the status of career managers, advisers and counsellors, a postgraduate master's level degree course should be developed and career guidance professionals should be encouraged and supported in taking the qualification. The university department providing the qualification could be well-placed to also organise ongoing professional development activities;
- Student destination statistics: To provide a better picture of the employment destinations of TVET graduates and to contribute to CEG information in schools and colleges, the current tracer studies should be extended and further developed, with greater standardisation between the approaches of different institutions. There should be an emphasis on effective use of destination statistics as well as on data collection, for example in marketing and recruitment and in providing careers information.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

### **3.7 Developing a new model of TVET financing**

#### Contextual background

Late in the third year of the ISWD project, MESCS requested project support related to TVET financing in the context of mid-term up-dating of the VET Strategy Action Plan and some assistance was provided during the final 6 months of the TA component.

However, it is clear that the long-term needs and challenges of TVET development will require a much more thorough and far-reaching review of financing arrangements, including an examination of different financing models used in other countries and development of a new model of TVET system financing to meet the needs of Georgia.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The TA provided to the MESCS by the ISWD project was highly specific and quite limited in scope. It included:

- Cost estimates for a range of new TVET programmes, including those developed with MCA-Georgia grant scheme support, on a module-by-module basis in order to determine the value of vouchers to be provided to cover the costs of participating students;
- Revised cost estimates for VET Strategy Action Plan implementation during the remaining period of Action Plan implementation;
- Cost estimates related to implementation of the new Law on VET, as part of the information provided during the draft Law's process through Parliament;
- Development of some ideas for introducing greater flexibility into the existing TVET voucher scheme, related to its proposed extension to include students on public TVET programmes in private colleges and universities and the possible impact of work-based learning programmes.

In addition, the project provided ad hoc cost estimates to NCEQE related to budgeting for changes in QAF procedures and the introduction of VNFI, and suggested some alternative mechanisms for funding development of sector skills councils.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

As noted in Section 2 of this document, the existing financing system is challenged from a number of directions, including the need for expansion of TVET provision, a need for new TVET infrastructure spending including the establishment of new TVET providers in other parts of the country, the introduction of new quality systems and forms of TVET delivery including work-based learning, a desire to link funding more closely with institutional performance and results, and the possibility of out-sourcing various functions including management of TVET institutions.

Existing funding mechanisms include infrastructure funding through ESIDA, funding of TVET institutions' administration costs by MESCS, voucher funding of students on authorised programmes in public TVET colleges, core funding of NTPDC and NCEQE, supplemented by fee income covering accreditation and authorisation costs. Implementation of key policy objectives, e.g. development of effective institutional arrangements and sector level, social partnership etc. is hampered by a lack of finance.

There is a need for a fundamental study of funding needs and alternative funding models in order to develop a TVET financing model appropriate for supporting the further development and reform of Georgia's TVET system. The study should take the policy on public-private partnerships fully into account and the opportunities, potential risks and benefits of private financing initiatives should be clearly identified. It should also identify areas of work that should be core-funded from the State budget and other areas in which there may be possibilities for income generation or self-financing from fees and charges. Different funding models should be examined, with the aim of maximising the ratio of costs to benefits of TVET investments and a need to reward achievements, which may involve an element of performance- or outcome-based funding.

The aim should be to produce a comprehensive set of recommendations for a new financing model appropriate to delivering the necessary expansion and modernisation of TVET in the medium-to long-term.

It is considered likely that further international technical assistance may be required to deliver the required funding model, and this issue should be considered not only by the appropriate authorities in Georgia but also by international donors.



## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

### **3.8 Teacher professional development for competence-based training and assessment**

#### Contextual background

Promotion of – and support to – competence-based training and assessment was a key element in the ISWD TA component. It was linked with the development of new modular TVET qualification programmes based on occupational standards introduced since 2015, and is a critical pre-requisite for the widespread implementation of work-based learning which is one of the current key priorities of TVET system reform.

Developing the pedagogical skills of teachers accustomed to more traditional approaches to teaching and examinations is one of the major challenges in modernising TVET systems. Because support to TVET teachers' professional development is also supported by other donors, it was necessary to very clearly define the areas to be supported by ISWD, and it was agreed that capacity building in competence-based training and assessment would be the central element in the ISWD-provided assistance to NTPDC in its development of new professional development programmes for TVET teachers.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The TA started with a thorough situational analysis of teachers' training and development in Georgia, which led to the identification of the most relevant capacity building interventions that should be made within the available resources of ISWD.

NTPDC was assisted in carrying out a training needs analysis (TNA) with 830 teachers of the public TVET colleges, to identify their existing capacities and additional training needs to plan and organise learning and assessment activities for both vocational and general competences, develop an appropriate learning environment, effectively use different resources, implement inclusive education etc. The findings were used by NTPDC to plan a range of activities for developing the capacities of TVET teachers, within the scope of its modular training and development package for teacher professional development.

This was followed by a more tightly focused TNA with 230 TVET teachers which was used for preparation of a 3-day (15 hour) development of training materials and the drafting of a 3-day (15 hour) training module for teachers on Competence-Based Assessment, which was subsequently piloted in conjunction with TPDC.

At the request of NTPDC, a short TNA training package based on the approach used in the above was developed for use by the Centre in training for use in training of trainers training.

Training packages and materials were developed and piloted including:

- Two modules in competence-based training and assessment aimed at TVET teachers and workplace trainers, which sought to develop mutual learning within a continuing professional development (CPD) context, piloted with groups of teachers and trainers from construction and information technology;
- A three-day module and supporting training materials in planning and delivering competence-based assessment, piloted and subsequently implemented by NTPDC;

- Various capacity-building trainings and workshops developed and implemented in conjunction with NTPDC including: planning competence-based assessment; training of trainers training on competence-based assessment; implementing competence-based assessment etc. delivered to and piloted with NTPDC staff, NTPDC teacher trainers, NTPDC consultants, groups of TVET teachers etc., in total attended by over 170 participants, and the various training packages and materials were all handed over to NTPDC for continuing use in their teacher professional development programmes;

Besides the training modules, packages and materials, a Guideline on Competence-Based Assessment was also developed, including methodological guidance, practical cases and exercises for TVET teachers.

#### Current state of progress, and way forward

The effective implementation of competence-based training and assessment is challenging in all countries implementing outcomes-based TVET qualifications systems, and assessment in particular is often the weakest link in the chain, yet it is critical to the effective delivery of qualification programmes through work-based learning. Georgia is no exception but a good start has been made. However, the progress needs to be sustained so that quality may increase over time. QAF external verification piloting revealed weaknesses in qualifications assessment that need to be addressed, from a lack of detailed assessment requirements in module specifications to the selection of inappropriate assessment instruments by assessors and to deficiencies in the implementation of assessment in programme delivery.

NTPDC faces a major challenge in terms of developing teachers' competences in delivering competence-based training and assessment in both pre-service and in-service training, the latter including professional up-dating in subject-related matter as well as pedagogical skills. There is a need for a close level of cooperation on this with NCEQE to ensure that the training matches the NQF and qualification delivery requirements. Continued work on developing competence-based training and assessment may include:

- Mass training and re-training of TVET teachers and trainers, using the modules, training packages and materials developed by the ISWD project which, over time, should be up-dated and extended;
- Steps to improve the status and rewards of the TVET teaching profession in order to attract new blood, including personnel with recent industrial experience;
- Greater business involvement in the planning and delivery of TVET programmes including work-based learning organised in partnership between TVET providers and companies, which will require company personnel to develop appropriate pedagogical and assessment skills;
- Systematic professional up-dating within CPD of teachers' knowledge of industry-related requirements which may include knowledge-sharing in the context of education/business partnerships (EPBs), networks or clubs bringing teachers from particular professional areas together for information sharing purposes, and/or specific training and work experience provided in companies and delivered by trained trainers from industry;
- Developing a mechanism for use by NTPDC for monitoring and evaluating the quality of TVET teachers' CPD activities.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

### **3.9 Adult learning and qualification opportunities**

#### Contextual background

The need to provide learning, qualification and re-qualification opportunities for adults is now one of the highest priorities of Georgia's TVET system, providing a way of up-skilling the workforce and meeting labour market demands. The existing scale of Georgia's adult learning provision and lifelong learning opportunities for adults is extremely limited and far below norms in European and other advanced countries. Qualification opportunities for adults are important in providing second chances, for example for those returning to the labour force after career breaks or other absences from the labour market, and for those who are unemployed or at risk of losing their employment because of changes in the demand for their skills.

Adult learning provision in Georgia is diverse, but largely informal, which has tended to limit the scope for government intervention. However, concern about the low adult learning participation rate, the scale of the NEET ('Not in Employment, Education or Training') problem, and the extent of skills mismatch in the Georgian economy has brought adult learning up to the top of the MESCS TVET agenda. In 2018 a new adult education division was established within the Ministry's VET Development Department to lead development of new initiatives to promote and deliver adult learning in accordance with the country's needs.

#### TA provided by ISWD

In the third and final year of the TA component, the ISWD project undertook a number of activities to assist MESCS in developing a new approach to TVET-focused adult learning. These included a situational analysis of the existing state of adult learning provision and a survey of (mainly large) employers to identify the extent of their provision of training and development opportunities for employees and assess their interest in cooperating with MESCS and TVET providers in expanding opportunities for adults not in their employment including the provision of work-based learning.

Although the TA component came to an end in March 2018, the results of the information gathering were used in the preparation of a Concept Paper on Adult Learning Priorities, prepared at the request of the MESCS VET Development Department late in 2018 in order to provide a vision for the future development of adult learning, a framework for medium and long term policy development and the formulation of specific initiatives including development of short training and retraining programmes for adults.

#### Current state of progress and way forward

The concept paper warned against over-formalising or regulating adult learning provision beyond including certification from authorised adult learning programmes in the NQF, but recommended that MESCS to:

- Create an environment that fosters development and expansion of a market for adult learning provision;
- Intervene, where necessary, to ensure the development of adult learning provision in priority areas, and actively support the development and implementation of programmes.

New programmes for adults will usually be short, of up to 6 months, or equivalent if organised on a part-time basis, based on innovative and flexible delivery arrangements including distance learning. The views of sector bodies and employers should be taken into account to ensure labour market relevance. For inclusion in the NQF, both the programme and the provider should be authorised by NCEQE but authorisation procedures should be based on simplified criteria specific to adult learning programmes. Programmes should be quality assured, to ensure acceptance and recognition of certificates.

A lack of financial resources is one of the principal barriers to mass adult learning participation and appropriate financing support should be provided. Various options should be explored, including:

- State funding based on an extension of the VET voucher system for programmes meeting defined priorities, for targeted groups such as NEETs and for priority regions;
- Scholarships for internships providing work-based learning opportunities or educational grants to support learners with limited financial means;
- Incentives for individuals who are self-financing their own learning, for example through personal tax allowances to offset the cost of training for recognized VET qualifications;
- Incentives for companies to invest in workforce development, for example by allowing offset the cost of specified types of employee training to be offset against taxation liabilities.
- Public/private partnerships involving a sharing of investment in adult learning provision with private sector partners.

To increase lifelong learning participation, the adult learning policy should be supported by an effective and well-targeted communications strategy. There is also a need for guidance and support, including collaboration with intermediary organisations within local communities to disseminate information and establish first contacts with potential adult learners, especially those coming from an environment that is not conducive to encouraging learning. Consideration should also be paid to entrance requirements, which usually need to be more flexible than the requirements that have to be satisfied by those progressing into VET courses directly from school.

Priorities and funding should reflect the aim of achieving an annual incremental increase in participation rates towards meeting the European Union's 2020 adult learning targets. The setting of priorities and targets should be planned in consultation with relevant stakeholders including local authorities, social partners and civil society organizations, and should especially encourage the development of effective education/business partnerships at a sectoral or regional level as a means of ensuring a shared, partnership approach to adult learning development and implementation.

Next steps should include:

- Review of the VET Strategy Implementation Plan, with additional activities relating to adult learning included as necessary;
- A stakeholder consultation process, including individual consultations and discussion at the National VET Council. This may include establishment of a new Thematic Working Group of the National VET Council, inclusive of all adult learning stakeholders, responsible for advising MESCS on all relevant matters pertaining to adult learning development in Georgia;
- A detailed roadmap setting immediate, medium-term, and long-term objectives and indicators for implementation of the adult learning policy, with progress reviewed annually to measure progress towards meeting its objectives.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.10 Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)**

#### Contextual Background

In 2010, a regulation was issued, allowing TVET providers to validate learning achievements from outside the formal TVET system, thus enabling candidates to have their prior learning recognised towards the award of whole qualifications or as credits or partial qualifications. However, its impact was very limited and there is evidence that it was mainly used by TVET providers to introduce tests as a means of providing access to Level 4 courses for young people who had not previously achieved Level 3 because they had instead been studying in general or higher education. In 2013, the European Training Foundation launched a project to develop a concept for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in line with EU and particularly EQF practices.

The Georgian VET Strategy 2013-2020 provides an overall context for development of the VNFIL concept and approach, and in 2015 MESCS requested the ISWD project to support piloting and implementation of VNFIL according to the recommendations of the ETF-supported concept paper.

#### TA provided by ISWD

The TA provided by the ISWD project targeted NCEQE and also provided support to a VNFIL Thematic Working Group of the NVETC, established to review the recommendations of the concept paper and support preparations for VNFIL implementation. The TA included:

- Preparation of a Concept Paper for the Implementation of VNFIL in Georgia, which provided a review of the current situation, defined the pre-requisites for VNFIL implementation, identified a number of issues and challenges to be addressed, and set out an implementation approach, mainly based on portfolio assessment, with recommendations. After agreement with NCEQE and the TWG, this concept paper was used to provide a basis for VNFIL implementation;
- Development of a paper for NCEQE on options for funding VNFIL implementation;
- Development of a Manual on VNFIL, covering the 4 stages of VNFIL: IDENTIFICATION of the individual's competences, DOCUMENTATION of the individual's learning outcomes with supporting evidence, ASSESSMENT through an evaluation of the evidence presented, and CERTIFICATION confirming the individual's achievement of the learning outcomes. The manual contained detailed guidance on assessment including different assessment methods. It was agreed with the TWG and NCEQE as a basis for supporting VNFIL implementation;
- A Job description for the new role of VNFIL advisor was developed, defining required skills and competences as well as their duties and responsibilities;
- A small-scale pilot of VNFIL assessment in two occupational areas. A guideline for the monitoring and evaluation of piloting was also developed;
- Support to NCEQE in drafting a revised regulation to support VNFIL implementation;
- Capacity building activities including intensive VNFIL training for 45 managers and QA managers from public and private TVET colleges, and two information workshops on VNFIL for TVET providers;

In addition, 2 small grant projects focused on VNFIL were funded through the ISWD Strengthening TVET Provider Practice component.

### Current state of progress, and way forward

So far, VNFIL has been implemented only in a limited way, mainly because of a lack of resources. However, the system (documentation, procedures, support materials, training packages etc.) has been fully developed and is ready for wider implementation. In addition, many organisations have expressed themselves as interested in becoming involved.

It is hoped that NCEQE will now be able to build on what has been done, in the context of the priority now being paid to adult learning in Georgia's TVET policy. It is recommended that implementation should be on a step-by-step basis including:

- Revision of the VNFIL regulation in accordance with the new Law on VET, which allows the scope of VNFIL to be extended from Level 3 to the other levels of the TVET system;
- Review and modification of authorization procedures to ensure that TVET providers meet specific requirements related to VNFIL;
- Extension of VNFIL piloting to include piloting at all four VNFIL stages, fully based on the VNFIL Manual and including quality assurance of VNFIL assessment using the internal and external verification procedures of the TVET QAF;
- Further work on financing of VNFIL, including development and agreement on a financing model;
- Further development of VNFIL to be carried out involving partnerships between TVET providers and business, sector or social partner organisations, with the latter progressively playing a larger role in the process over time in line with their increasing capacities;
- Development of appropriate information, advice, guidance and signposting mechanisms, and targeted awareness raising activities implemented for different potential players in the VNFIL process including potential applicants and employers.
- Capacity building to develop human and institutional capacities for VNFIL at all levels of the system.

## **DEVELOPMENT BRIEF:**

### **3.11 TVET Quality Assurance (QA)**

#### Contextual background

A robust and effective system of quality assurance is essential to ensure the integrity of the Georgian TVET system and the recognition of TVET qualifications. Quality assurance is essential to ensure that TVET programmes are delivered to required standards and meet the expectations of industry.

Components of a TVET Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in line with EU systems and practices were initially developed with EU support but, despite some piloting, key aspects of the QAF still awaited implementation at the time the ISWD project started in 2014. Their importance was only partially appreciated, individual components had not been integrated into a coherent workable system, and important gaps remained, including a lack of any means of quality assuring assessments for vocational qualifications. The ISWD intervention was intended to support NCEQE in completing the QAF.

#### TA provided by ISWD

Following a comprehensive situational analysis of TVET QA, a feasibility study for quality assuring qualifications assessments was carried out, providing a basis for development work and capacity building. The proposed QAF model and an action plan for introducing and implementing it were agreed with NCEQE and the Quality Management Thematic Working Group of the NVETC. Cost estimates for the implementation of new QAF components were also provided. The QAF model developed by the project was based on a cycle made up of the following components:

- Revised arrangements for institutional self-assessment, coupled with improved arrangements for monitoring institutional performance;
- Revised authorization arrangements (as separate rather than combined procedures) for TVET institutions and programmes
- New arrangements for internally and externally verifying assessments for TVET qualifications.

In addition, the project proposed revised arrangements for validation of occupational standards and modular framework programs.

Throughout the TA, the need for an integrated approach was stressed because the QAF can only work if all its components are implemented in a coherent way. Training packages were developed and piloted to support QAF piloting and implementation, and internal and external verification procedures were piloted. The results included:

- Situational analysis report on the QA requirements of TVET system, a feasibility study report on quality assuring qualifications assessment, and an action plan for QAF implementation;
- Comprehensive guidelines on: revised QAF, external and internal verification, self-assessment, authorization (institutional and program based); competence-based assessment;
- Training packages on: revised QAF; external and internal verification; self-assessment, authorization; competence-based assessment in TVET;
- Five rounds of QAF-related training delivered to approximately 120 participants.

### The current state of progress, and way forward

The QAF is now being introduced within the wider frame – and as an integral part – of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) implementation. It should also be noted that the latter may include additional measures associated with quality assurance of the NQF itself, to be developed with EU support.

Despite revision and development of regulatory and methodological documentation, capacity building, piloting, and intensive cooperation with beneficiaries, the external verification of TVET qualifications assessment may require amendment of the Law on Quality Enhancement as well as implementation of the new Law on VET. Full implementation of all components of the QAF still requires the drafting or revision of relevant regulations.

Full and effective QAF implementation should be considered as a long-term process. It will take time to develop the necessary capacities and embed a common understanding of concepts and deeper QA culture throughout the TVET system, and the responsible institutions lack resources. It is hoped that NCEQE, with MES support, will continue on the path to QAF implementation that has been begun.

Next steps should include the following:

- Drafting or amendment of regulations, e.g. providing a legal basis for full implementation of external verification procedures;
- Review and refinement of QAF documentation in the light of implementation experience;
- All new TVET initiatives to take account of QAF requirements, for example when introducing new kinds of qualification, diversifying learning pathways or incorporating qualifications from non-formal provision into the NQF;
- Additional capacity building for staff of NCEQE and TVET providers, focused not only on methodological and procedural aspects, but also on strengthening the QA culture in TVET;
- Full QAF integration with the NQF in the frame of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), with QAF guidelines and procedures included in the comprehensive NQF documentation that is being compiled with EU support.