

FORMAL AND INFORMAL VET IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

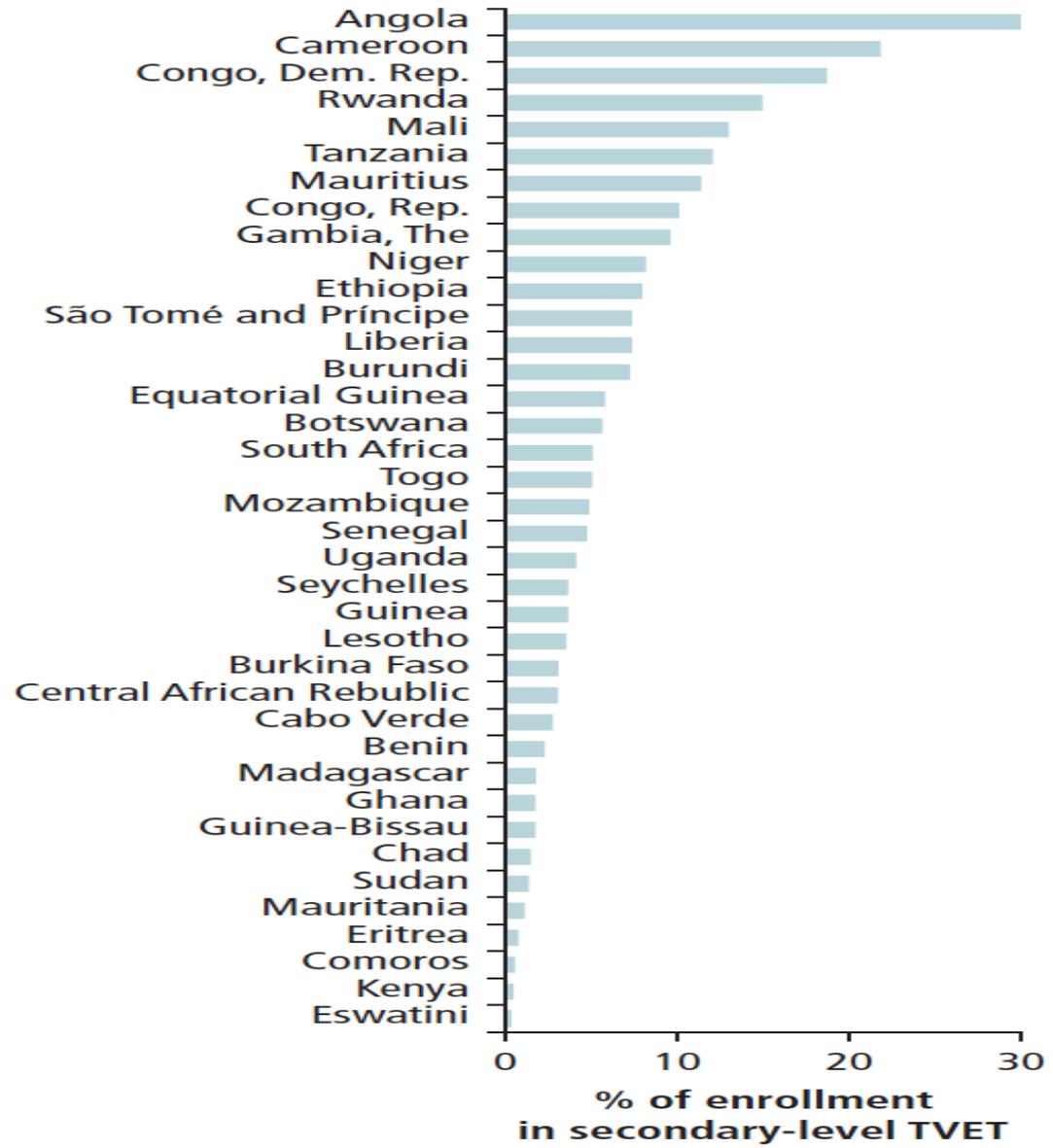
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Setting the context

- The dual vocational education and training (VET) system has attracted international interest and there have been many attempts to replicate it, with varying success
- In many Sub-Saharan countries, VET has an inferior status and there are high levels of contestation between social partners, making the conditions sub-optimal for introducing dual approaches
- While there are good reasons for embedding dual VET approaches into VET systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, experience has shown that this requires extensive and context specific approaches.

High variation in secondary-level TVET enrolment



Source: Arias, Evans, and Santos, 2019



Conceptual Framework

This table below emphasises the interconnection between VET and the economy and provides a typology of how this relationship currently manifests, depending on the context of the country concerned

While the framework distinguishes between formal and informal VET distinct systems, they do in fact operate on a continuum from the very formal to the very informal, with variations depending on particular context of the country concerned.

It is also common for there to be parallel systems of formal and non- & informal VET within a particular country, and the intersection between the different (sub-)systems will also vary from country to country.

	Economy	Formal Economy	Informal Economy
VET			
Formal VET		Formal apprenticeships	Upskilling of young people and adults through shorter trainings
Non- & Informal VET ¹		Work-based and company - specific training	Informal (“traditional”) apprenticeships

Formal Apprenticeships in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Formal apprenticeships are a small fraction of the formal VET systems, with restrictive access for disadvantaged youth
- MSMEs tend to be less involved in formalized and structured apprenticeship training.
- Employers that do participate play a limited role in standard setting and quality assurance, serving more as sites of training delivery
- Dual apprentices are gaining increased attention across the continent

Work-Based Training in the Formal Economy

- The provision of workplace-based training appears to be very low, although there is limited data available
- Workplace-based learning in the formal economy is most likely to happen in larger firms and particularly in companies that export products
- Governments have also sought to use workplace-based learning (also termed “internships”) as an active labour market programme, targeting unemployed youth
- While workplace-based learning is perceived to be a key to successful employment outcomes, it is unlikely to lead to an increase in employment where the conditions for private sector growth are not conducive.

The Role of Formal VET in the Informal Economy

- The emphasis on wage employment in a small formal sector context is a critical shortcoming of VET policies and systems given the dominance of the informal economy as a major employer of youth.
- The delivery approaches adopted by formal VET providers are also not conducive for training for the informal economy.
- The link between formal VET and the informal economy is tenuous, thus undermining the potential contribution of formal VET to upskilling young people that have no access to apprenticeships or qualifications.

Informal Apprenticeships

- Informal apprenticeships and informal training in general are dominant across the region, but informal or “traditional” apprenticeships are particularly evident in West African countries.
- Informal apprenticeships mainly attract young people with low educational achievement, and have a number of weaknesses:
 - Recruitment is often done through cultural, ethnic or religious ties
 - There is high variations in the structure of apprenticeships, in terms of the contract, length, quality and completion requirements.
 - Underpinning knowledge is not adequately provided due to the lack of access to classroom training.
 - Unlike West Africa, trade associations in Southern and Eastern Africa have little role in informal apprenticeships
 - There is little formal recognition of skills acquired by informal apprentices

Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships

Various countries in the region have taken steps to upgrade informal apprenticeships, including:

- Providing formal recognition for trades
- Integrating informal apprenticeships into national TVET system
- Introducing dual apprenticeships
- Voucher programmes to support upgrading of craftpersons and apprentices
- Skills levy systems to fund apprenticeships

Why upgrade apprenticeships?

- Addressing decent work deficits
- Provide access to classroom instruction
- Create systematic assessment and recognized certification
- Bring formal TVET closer to workplace training in MSMEs (dual training)
- Strengthen MSMEs through skills and business upgrading
- Strengthen quality of workplace learning
- Productivity gains for MSMEs
- Promote equitable access to apprenticeships
- Enhanced structure provides basis for more effective planning and funding

Upgrading vs. Formalisation of Informal Apprenticeship

- In the economic context of Sub-Saharan Africa, the informal sector is important for achieving scalable opportunities for skills development and employment.
- Given the central role informal apprenticeships play, it makes sense to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the informal apprenticeship rather than restricting its role through forced formalization. This could include:
 - having shared intelligence on local labour market demand,
 - proper selection and matching of candidates to the workplace role,
 - more structure to the apprenticeship with clear objectives for learning and outcomes,
 - a coherent and well-planned curriculum, including good quality assessments,
 - formal recognition and certification of competencies,
 - effective governance and quality assurance through key social partners,
 - sound statistical data on performance and labour market outcomes.
- Introducing these elements into informal apprenticeships will bring them closer to the definition of a quality apprenticeship as defined by the ILO.

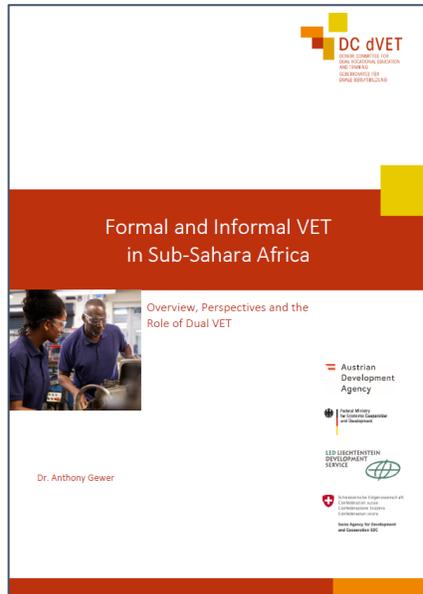
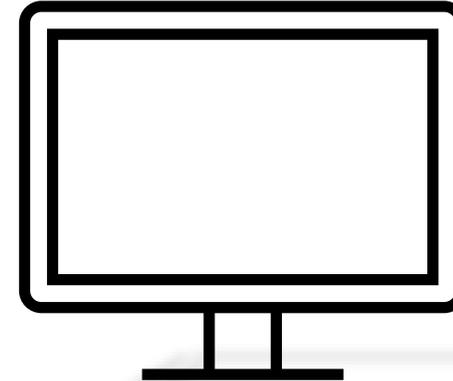
Bridging Formal VET and Informal Apprenticeships

- Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have formal VET systems operating alongside informal apprenticeship systems
- Creating links between these systems can introduce the conditions for dual approaches.
- For formal VET, it increases the pool of recruits and offers more direct insight into the demand for skills across the informal economy.
- Offers more young people opportunities to formalise their knowledge, achieve recognition, and progress to further studies and higher qualifications.

Creating Conducive Conditions for Apprenticeships

- Getting MSMEs on board – necessitates the role of industry/trade associations, enterprise development to support growth and the possible use of incentives
- Flexible Learning Pathways – conditions for dynamic movement between workplaces and TVET institutions, with the scope to build competencies and specialisations over time based on individual pathways
- Funding Mechanisms - reprioritising of public funding to support both formal VET and informal apprenticeships, which could take the form of
 - direct grants (for institutional and workplace training),
 - vouchers to individuals which can be used to select the training programme and providers, or
 - training funds, including skills levies, which are typically financed by companies (through a dedicated tax) with support from donors and government.

Publication & Webinar Recordings



MSMEs & Dual VET in Subsharan Africa & Implementing Dual Apprenticeships: Lessons from South Africa: Webinar materials (video, slides). Zurich 2021.

www.dcdualvet.org → Resources → DC dVET Events → [Webinars](#)

DC dVET/ Dr. Anthony Gewer: Formal and Informal VET in Sub-Saharan Africa – Overview Perspectives & the Role of Dual VET Zurich 2021. Available in English and French (soon)

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