

SWAZILAND: Building Skills for High-Priority Sectors

Country Context

The Kingdom of Swaziland is one of the smallest African countries. Its economy is fairly diversified: agriculture, forestry, and mining account for about 9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); manufacturing (importantly, textiles and sugar-related processing, metal works and light manufacturing) represents roughly 41 percent; and services, particularly government services, constitute about 46 percent.

While the Swazi economy was one of the fastest growing in the world in the 1980s, growth has slowed down significantly in recent years. The economy is still recovering from the 2011 fiscal crisis and the government is working to put in place policies to stimulate economic growth. The government and development partners have adopted several promising initiatives to improve productivity, including schemes that help overcome coordination problems among smallholders and facilitate irrigation access. Sectors such as mining, tourism, food processing and manufacturing have been identified as potential areas for growth and foreign investment.

Swaziland is expected to undergo a demographic transition over the next two decades. Working-age population growth will outpace population growth and the dependency ratio will fall. While countries can benefit tremendously from such a demographic shift, this will not automatically translate into higher economic growth or an increase in the employment rate for Swaziland.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

Provisional estimates by the Central Bank of Swaziland and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development indicate that real GDP growth

was 1.9 percent in 2012 and 2.8 percent in 2013, following a contraction of 0.7 percent in 2011. These GDP growth rates will need to increase for job creation to keep pace with the number of new entrants and current job seekers in the labor market. The unemployment rate has risen from 38 percent in 2007 to 40.7 percent in 2010. According to the UN Swaziland 2012 survey, out of 1,334 interviewed households, 7.3 percent had at least one member who had lost a job during the past 12 months, 4.4 percent of households had experienced wage cuts, 4.9 percent had reduced business operations, and 4.7 percent had been informed that one member would lose a job or experience a wage cut. If this situation is left unaddressed, it could perpetuate a vicious cycle of high unemployment, high poverty and low growth.

Whereas most existing enterprises in the country do not demand highly trained or educated workers, skills shortages may be limiting investment in new sectors that have growth potential. Pro-active skills development is therefore very important in anticipation of new jobs being created.

Key Messages

- One of Swaziland's key challenges over the next two decades is to productively employ a large working age population.
- Key sectors that could drive Swaziland's future economic growth include tourism, food processing, manufacturing and mining. For the workforce to meet the skills needs of these sectors, the current technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system needs to urgently be aligned with labor market demand.
- The private provision of TVET plays a significant role in skills development in the country.
- The Ministry of Education and Training is prioritizing plans for improvement of TVET to ensure smooth economic development for the country.
- As the size of the working age population increases relative to dependents, Swaziland could reap a demographic dividend if it makes key investments in human capital today.

Skills Development through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

TVET PROVISION TODAY

At present, there are about 70 TVET institutions in Swaziland. Twenty-seven of them are public, 29 are private and for-profit, and 14 are run by NGOs, churches and communities (private but non-profit). The TVET institutions collectively employ 767 trainers and offer 415 training programs in 60 subject areas to 6,881 trainees (of whom 56 percent are females). Fifty-five percent of the training programs are short-term (less than 12 months) and many of them are vocational. The general completion rate is around 80 percent. Subject areas include sewing, farming, carpentry, business management, and computer programming and education.

Given the fact that only a third of the institutions are public and enroll about a third of the total trainees, the private provision of TVET plays a significant role in skills

development in the country. Graduates who completed their training from the private, for-profit institutions seem to have a better chance of finding a job than those from the public or non-profit institutions.

With a youth population (age 15–24) of roughly 314,000 and secondary school enrollment of about 90,000, the current TVET system caters to very few people in Swaziland, and is far from sufficient in terms of meeting the needs of the country's economic recovery and growth. Only about a third of the 70 institutions consider themselves at the tertiary level (post secondary education).

KEY AREAS FOR POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Recognizing the need to upgrade the skills of both the growing youth population and the current labor force, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) of Swaziland and the World Bank jointly examined the country's current TVET provision and produced a report which has illuminated the following potential areas for policy intervention to improve the TVET system.

Geographical Fragmentation. Swaziland has four administrative regions—Hhohho, Lubombo, Manzini, and Shiselweni. The differing populations and socioeconomic conditions of each region have shaped their TVET institutions in terms of size, infrastructure, financing, operations, training methods, quality and outputs (Table 1). This has resulted in a fragmented system without enough central coordination and with huge variation in quality among its providers.

Low efficiency, especially of public TVET providers.

There is great variation in institutional size and trainee-trainer ratio among the TVET institutions. Public institutions collectively have more trainers for fewer trainees (6:1) than the for-profit (13:1) and non-profit (11:1) private institutions. Enrollment in public TVET institutions has declined in recent years, from 2,858 in 2007 to 2,482 in 2013 (down by 13 percent); yet the number of trainers increased from 297 to 411 during the same period (up by

38 percent). The public system serves only about a third of the total trainees, but supports more than half of the total trainers. These suggest that most public TVET institutions in Swaziland are performing under capacity.

Lack of strong quality assurance mechanisms at both national and institutional levels. The quality of TVET depends on admission procedures, trainer qualifications, curriculum design, training methods, quality assurance mechanisms, governance and professional affiliation. Most private TVET institutions have a quality council or committee to oversee the quality of their training programs and the development of new programs. But only less than half of the public TVET institutions have established such quality control mechanisms. Forty-nine institutions report a relationship with at least one professional association but it is unclear as to whether these TVET-affiliated professional associations have the capacity to provide their respective qualification standards and guide quality improvement.

Insufficient public investment in TVET. Besides salaries of trainers classified as civil servants paid for by the government, investment in TVET in Swaziland is limited. The operating costs of most institutions are largely covered by tuition fees and donations. International experience shows that TVET provision is costly, yet 76 percent of TVET institutions claim they do not receive any subsidies. Appropriate government investment and close partnerships between the public and private sector are needed for TVET to have a positive impact on national economic development.

Skills-to-labor market gap. Skills development—through a TVET system well aligned with labor market needs—is a critical strategic element of Swaziland's economic recovery. Yet there is little alignment between what the current TVET system provides and what the labor markets need specifically to supply growth sectors with mechanical, electric, electronic and food processing technicians. For example, in 2013, mechanical engineering was the only one in the top 10 TVET

programs with a large number of trainees; hardly any of the TVET institutions offer training related to food processing and hospitality, but there is considerable overlap with 20 institutions offering computer programming and 19 institutions offering fashion design courses. A 2008 review on public TVET provision conducted by MoET highlighted the challenges facing Swazi companies in finding appropriately-skilled mechanical, electrical, electronic and computer technicians. The review also revealed the low quality of training received, in that many TVET graduates had to receive retraining or skills upgrading once they were employed. In short, many TVET graduates are not ready for the job market and TVET provision is driven by supply rather than demand.

STRENGTHENING THE TVET SYSTEM

The TVET system in Swaziland will remain resource-constrained for a while. But efforts could be made to improve efficiency in the current TVET system. For one, the trainee-trainer ratio could be increased. A sustainable financing model must be identified through research into the variation in tuition fees and salaries across the regions. Development of public-private partnerships could be beneficial for funding of TVET, on-the-job training and curricula development. Breaking down TVET into two parts, one for vocational education and one for technical education/training, with different target groups and different qualification requirements, may help make improvement policies more effective.

While the National Qualifications Framework is still being developed, some work on quality improvement could be initiated in the meantime, for example, capacity building programs on quality assurance. With the increased availability of technology and demand for more marketable skills, the modality of TVET instruction and learning has evolved in the past decade. Investigating currently-used modalities could provide useful information for the improvement of curriculum design and instructional effectiveness.

Government Efforts to Improve TVET

VISION AND MISSION

MoET issued several national policy documents such as *The National Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Skill Development (TVETSD) Policy and Strategy* (May 2010), *The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010-2022* (November 2010), and *The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy* (April 2011), outlining a vision and mission for the country's TVETSD system and plans for its improvement.

MoET would like to “develop a quality, relevant, and sustainable TVETSD system as an integral part of the social and economic strategy for the Kingdom of Swaziland” through “the provision of a market-driven, quality technical and vocational education and

training system in the context of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) through competency based education and training, cognizant of prior learning for all, inclusive of the socioeconomically disadvantaged, unemployed, special target groups, and incorporating gender sensitivity.”

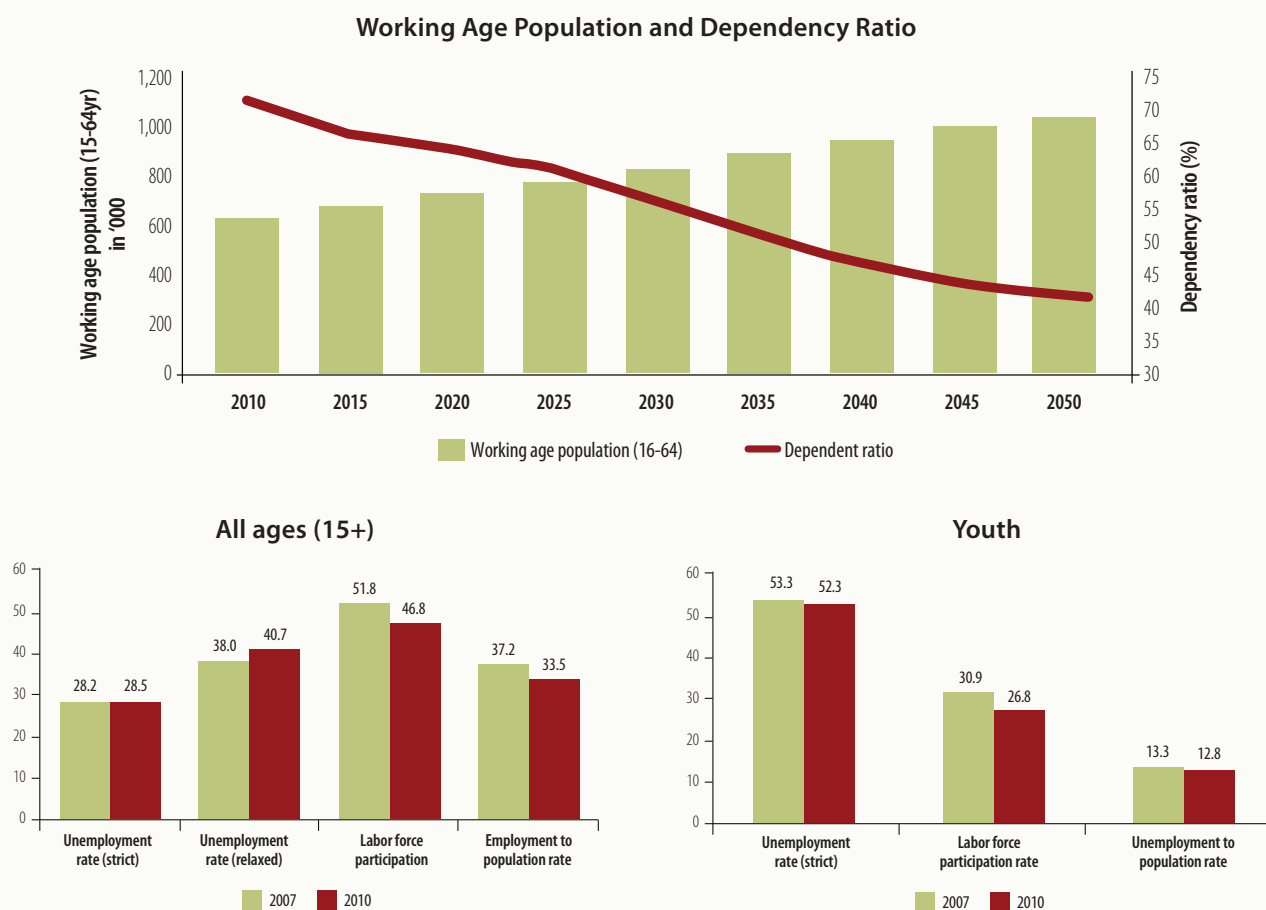
PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

These are the main elements of the MoET strategic approach towards the upgrading of TVET:

- A competent and employable work force equipped with skills to address the diverse social and economic development needs of the individual and the country.
- An effective governance and management system with clear roles and responsibilities, accountable to the national Assembly through MoET.

- An internally efficient system with mechanisms for portability of qualifications articulating diverse forms of provision, including the formal, non-formal and informal, having provisions for flexible exit and entry to both academic and skills related pathways.
- A system that is accessible in terms of equitable distribution and participation to all individuals needing skills for employability in the formal sector.
- A financially sustainable system funded through diverse sources that include the government, employers, end users, fees, donations and income generation activities by the providers. The funding disbursement should be accountable and must benefit different types of learners.

Figure 1. Labor Market Indicators



To achieve these development strategy goals, MoET has reached out to development partners for technical assistance. For example, the European Union has been providing support for

the establishment of a national qualification framework. The World Bank has assisted MoET in assessing the current state of the country's TVET provision. As the government works

towards implementation of the strategies, additional support will help MoET align the TVETSD improvement plan with the national socioeconomic development agenda.

Table 1. Distribution of Institutions by Region and Type

Type of Inst.	Region				Total
	HHOHHO	LUBOMBO	MANZINI	SHISELWENI	
Public	8	6	9	4	27
Private	12	1	13	3	29
Others	4	3	5	2	14
Total	24	10	27	9	70

Source: Assessment survey conducted jointly by the World Bank and MoET, May 2013

Table 2. Number of Trainees and Trainers by Type of TVET Institution

Type of Inst.	Institutions		Trainees			Trainers		
	No.	%	No.	%	% female	No.	%	% female
Public	27	39%	2482	36%	44%	411	54%	68%
Private	29	41%	3322	48%	68%	255	33%	38%
Others	14	20%	1077	16%	45%	101	13%	39%
Total	70	100%	6881	100%	56%	767	100%	54%

Source: Assessment survey conducted jointly by the World Bank and MoET, May 2013

Table 3. Top 10 Programs with Largest Number of Trainees in 2011-2013

	2011	2012	2013
1	Business Management	Business Management	Education
2	Computer Programming	Education	Business Management
3	Education	Computer Programming	Computer Programming
4	Mechanical Engineering	Mechanical Engineering	Mechanical Engineering
5	Secretarial	Dress and Fashion	Civil Engineering
6	Sewing	Accounting & Finance	House Wiring and Electrical Work
7	Dress and Fashion	Information Technology	Information Technology
8	Accounting & Finance	Secretarial Work	Catering
9	Medical	Civil Engineering	Association of Accounting Technicians
10	Civil Engineering	Catering	Decoration

Source: Assessment survey conducted jointly by the World Bank and MoET, May 2013

MORE ON THE TOPIC

- Rapid Assessment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Swaziland. World Bank. April 2014.
- Assessment Survey conducted jointly by the World Bank and MoET. May 2013.
- Policy Note on Skills and Direct Foreign Investment in Swaziland. World Bank. 2010.
- The Education System in Swaziland. World Bank. 2010.

