

A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth

International Labour Office

This feature article was originally published in the report [A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: A G20 Training Strategy](#) under the "Key messages" section.

Introduction

Equipping the workforce with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow is a strategic concern in the national growth and development outlooks of all G20 countries. Together, G20 leaders have pledged to support robust training strategies to meet the challenges of fostering strong, sustainable and balanced growth in each country and globally.

The globalization of markets is accelerating the diffusion of technology and the pace of innovation. New occupations are emerging and replacing others. Within each occupation, required skills and competencies are evolving, as the knowledge content of production processes and services is rising.

A major challenge in all G20 countries is simultaneously to enhance the responsiveness of education and training systems to these changes in skill requirements and to improve access to training and skills development.

Many G20 countries have used training and retraining in their responses to the employment challenges arising from the global financial crisis of 2008. Lessons learned since that time are being applied more widely.

Ultimately, each country's prosperity depends on how many of its people are in work and how productive they are, which in turn rests on the skills they have and how effectively those skills are used. Skills are a foundation of decent work.

A strategic framework for skills development

The cornerstones of a policy framework for developing a suitably skilled workforce are: broad availability of good-quality education as a foundation for future training; a close matching of skills supply to the needs of enterprises and labour markets; enabling workers and enterprises to adjust to changes in technology and markets; and anticipating and preparing for



the skills needs of the future.

When applied successfully, this approach nurtures a virtuous circle in which more and better education and training fuels innovation, investment, economic diversification and competitiveness, as well as social and occupational mobility – and thus the creation of more but also more productive and more rewarding jobs.

Good-quality primary and secondary education, complemented by relevant vocational training and skills development opportunities, prepare future generations for their productive lives, endowing them with the core skills that enable them to continue learning.

Young women and men looking for their first jobs are better prepared for a smooth transition from school to work when they are given adequate vocational education and training opportunities, including in-work apprenticeships and on-the-job experience.

Working women and men periodically need opportunities to update their skills and learn new ones. Lifelong learning for lifelong employability captures the guiding policy principle here.

Sustaining robust training policies and systems

Robust training policies and systems are grounded in the characteristics and institutions of each country. Nevertheless, a number of common building blocks can be identified. A good skills development system will be able to: anticipate skill needs; engage employers and workers in decisions about training provision, including in specific sectors; maintain the quality and relevance of training; make training accessible to all sectors of society; ensure viable and equitable financing mechanisms; and continuously evaluate the economic and social outcomes of training.



To keep training relevant, institutional and financial arrangements must build solid bridges between the world of learning and the world of work. Bringing together business and labour, government and training providers, at the local, industry and national levels, is an effective means of securing the relevance of training to the changing needs of enterprises and labour markets.

Institutions to sustain the involvement of employers and workers and their representative organizations are critical to keeping training relevant and ensuring that training costs and the gains of productivity improvement are shared equitably.

Maintaining a close connection between training policies and employment policies creates an effective bridge between the worlds of learning and of work. Policies to improve skills combined with policies to sustain growth and investment, facilitate job search, and support entry and re-entry into the labour market can lead to more and better jobs.

Many benefits derive from making training and skills opportunities broadly accessible to all

women and men. Special measures can help overcome the difficulties some groups face in accessing skills – for example, people with disabilities, members of minority groups, those in need of a second chance.

Sharing knowledge and experience

There is plenty of scope for continuing and deepening exchanges of knowledge and experience among countries on training and skills development policies and systems. It is particularly valuable for countries to share their experiences in dealing with the more difficult challenges of maintaining the relevance of education and training to the world of work, and in moving from policy principles to application.



There is also scope for taking a close look at the interlinkages between skills policies, training systems and development, reviewing how knowledge and experience of training strategies and policies can help low-income countries address their growth and development challenges.

Further resources

ILO Publications

ILO. 2011. [*A skilled workforce for strong, sustainable and balanced growth : a G20 training strategy* \(pdf 870.96 KB\)](#) (Geneva).

ILO. 2011. [*Final report : Global Dialogue Forum on Vocational Education and Training \(Geneva, 29 - 30 September 2010\)* \(pdf 567 KB\)](#) (Geneva)

ILO. 2010. [*A skilled workforce for strong, sustainable and balanced growth : proposals to G20 leaders for a training strategy as per their request in Pittsburgh \(September 2009\)* \(pdf 274.82 KB\)](#) (Geneva).

ILO. 2010. [*Accelerating a job-rich recovery in G20 countries: Building on experience* \(pdf 542 KB\)](#) (Geneva).
• [Français](#) (pdf 561 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 597 KB)

ILO. 2010. [*Employment policies for social justice and a fair globalization* \(pdf 1.55 MB\)](#), Report VI, International Labour Conference, 99th Session, Geneva, 2010 (Geneva).

ILO. 2010. [*Upskilling out of the downturn : global dialogue forum on strategies for sectoral training and employment security* \(pdf 480.57 KB\)](#) (Geneva)

- [Français \(pdf 365.28 KB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 190.63 KB\)](#)

ILO. 2010. [*Weak employment recovery with persistent high unemployment and decent work deficits - An update on employment and labour market trends in G20 countries*](#) (pdf 1.59 MB) (Geneva).

- [Français \(pdf 243 KB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 242 KB\)](#)

ILO. 2009. [*Labour market policies in times of crisis*](#) (pdf 699 KB) (Geneva).

ILO. 2009. [*Recovering from the crisis : a global jobs pact*](#) (pdf 93.22 KB) (Geneva)

- [Français \(pdf 105.47 KB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 107.50 KB\)](#)

ILO. 2008. [*Conclusions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development : International Labour Conference, 2008*](#) (pdf 207.07 KB) (Geneva)

- [Français \(pdf 221.56 KB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 225.97 KB\)](#)

ILO. 2008. [*Skills and productivity in the informal economy*](#) (pdf 639.25 KB) (Geneva).

ILO. 2008. [*Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development*](#) (pdf 1.20 MB) (Geneva)

- [Français \(pdf 1.56 MB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 1.36 MB\)](#)

ILO. 2007. [*Employment and social protection policies from crisis to recovery and beyond : a review of experience : an ILO report to the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting, Washington, D.C., 20-21 April 2010*](#) (pdf 819.19 KB) (Tokyo).

ILO. 2007. [*Recommendation 195 : recommendation concerning human resource development : education, training and lifelong learning*](#) (pdf 112.75 KB) (Tokyo).

ILO. 2006. [*Quality, relevance and equity : an integrated approach to vocational training*](#) (pdf 596.19 KB) (Geneva)

- [Español \(pdf 395.13 KB\)](#)

ILO Websites

[Global Jobs Pact](#)

[ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory. Employment promotion](#)

[ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory. Skills development](#)

09 March 2011

[Employment promotion](#)

[Skills knowledge and employability](#)

[Decent Work](#)