

# Technical and Vocational Education in Eritrea



By Simon Woldemichael

National development is secured by an effective exploitation and utilization of both human and material resources toward the improvement of the lots of a nation. The Government of Eritrea has given top priority to the production of high-quality human capital capable of mastering and exploiting available resources for socio-economic development of the country. In this regard, technical and vocational education in Eritrea aims to producing skilled technicians in order to meet the demand for labor and improved productivity. The various technical and vocational schools established throughout the country offers multifaceted services that can be used to achieve quick desirable changes in the country's socio-economic progress and human resource development. Vocational education is perceived to be more applied and less esoteric than general academic education.

In the previous edition of Eritrea profile, an article by Dr. Fikrejesus Amahatsion was dedicated to explore Eritrea's potentials for development. Among many factors the author pointed out that "Eritrea's greatest resource and most precious asset, by far is its people." It is believed that the promotion of technical and vocational education would enable an individual to be better and productive citizen for a sustainable development in Eritrea. The government has

been making considerable investment in training and education to empower the human element in the development process of the country.

Eritrea national policy on education makes great emphasis on technical and vocational education as an integral part of the national development strategy. National Policy on Education (2003) has identified strategies to develop technical and vocational education including the construction of new vocational training schools and upgrading the status of the existing centers. In the past decades, considerable progress has been made to promote the provision of technical and vocational education in Eritrea.



Ten centers of training were established in different parts of the country. Asmara Technical School, Denden Commercial School, Halay Technical School in Asmara, Donbosco Technical School in Dekemhare, Hagaz Technical School in Hagaz, Maihabar Technical School in Maihabar, Wina Technical School in Nakfa, School of Business and Commerce in Sawa, Building School 01 and Building School 02 both in Sawa are currently in active operation. These centers of training are absorbing thousands of students who have completed grade ten and upon completion of secondary education based on performance in the secondary education certificate examination. Besides, technical and vocational training centers that provide intermediate training were established in Adi Halo and Assab.

According to the Education Sector Development Plan 2013-2017, the target for technical and vocational education is to admit about 20% of students who complete grade 10 to vocational high schools (2013: 8). The overall objective for technical and vocational education is “to broadening coverage and expanding the quantitative output of skills to meet economic requirements”. As a result of the interventions made by the government to expand technical and vocational education, enrolment as well as the number and percentage of graduates has increased. Access and equity of technical and vocational education are given utmost importance by the government. The participation of females in technical and vocational education has also increased over the years. For example, among the recently graduated 1,200 students of the Center for Vocational Training in Sawa, 544 were females.

The vocational and technical courses include auto-mechanics, drafting, electricity, electronics, metal-work, wood-work, plumbing, refrigeration, animal science, soil and water conservation, machinery, building and construction, survey, secretarial science, material management etc. These areas of training constitute the major aspect of technical and vocational education in Eritrea. The duration of the training is mostly two years.

The government has long recognized that investments in education contribute to the common good and enhancing national prosperity. Currently, Eritrea is improving in human development which is imperative for economic development. One important component for human development is technical and vocational education. Technical and vocational education seeks to equip individuals with capacities, skills, knowledge and understandings in a specific vocation to enable individuals become productive citizens. Eritrea’s strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth foresees increasing people’s knowledge, skills and competence as one of the main growth engines. Vocational education plays a central role in the country’s response to the ongoing development projects. Notwithstanding their limited capacity, Eritrea’s technical and vocational training centers are working to endow young men and women with the right mix of skills and competence so as to prepare them for the ever changing world.

The ten formal institutions and the temporary centers of training established throughout the country are perceived as the solution to improving the opportunities of youths who lack the resources, skills or motivation to continue with higher education. Indeed, these centers of training provide useful skills to prepare for youths' entry into the labor force and improve their chances of a successful professional career. Technical and vocational education plays a great role at empowering young people. By giving practical skills it encourages them to be active and productive members of the society. Technical and vocational education is considered as one of the most effective ways to helping the youth achieve their fullest potential.



Education, training and lifelong learning are fundamental to creating greater opportunities for decent and productive work for women and men. National Policy on Education (2003) stated that “Education in Eritrea is a fundamental human right and a lifelong process by which all individuals are given opportunities to attain their potential as all rounded citizens.” The development of a competent and skilled public is considered as a pre-requisite for national development objectives. Multifaceted knowledge is necessary especially in times of dramatic and profound changes. In this case, technical and vocational education must give people the necessary competence and self-confidence, providing the individual with the foundations to innovation and creativity necessary to national development.

National Policy on Education (2003) identified Eritrea's greatest asset is its people. Thus revitalizing citizens with relevant education and training is the one way by which the overall socio-economic development of the country is attained. Technical and vocational education must equip Eritrea's workforce with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of the future. The technical and vocational institutions along with the institutions of higher education are expected to produce young men and women who believe that they can produce desired effects by their individual and collective actions. Hence, constant update of contents is required. Furthermore, they need to enable students not only to understand but also apply their knowledge in the most effective way.

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