

Summary of the Benin report on the E/T continuum

Introduction

The Constitution of Benin (1990), the National Education Framework Act (2003) and the Ten-Year Plan for the Development of the Education Sector (PDDSE 2006-2015) all stress that education is the key way to train and develop people, and it must be accessible to all. However, it is impossible to achieve such an objective without developing an education/training continuum, which requires efforts by all stakeholders in the education system, including the world of business and other government departments.

1. Basic data on education among the population

Benin's population rose from 6,769,914 in 2002 to 10,008,749 in 2013, representing an annual increase of 3.52% over this period.

- **Pre-school education:** the attendance rate is still low but it has been increasing, from 11.9% in 2012 to 14.7% in 2015;
- **Primary education:** the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) rose from 114.5% in 2010/2011 to 124.8% in 2015. This indicates that the number of available places in the system can in principle ensure that all Beninese children of primary school age receive an education;
- **General secondary education:** the GER almost doubled in the lower secondary education (from 30.7% in 2000-01 to 62.9% in 2010-2011) and it more than tripled in upper secondary education (from 9.6% to 32.6% over the same period). However, a relatively high proportion of the country's young people have no access to upper secondary education;
- **Higher education:** the number of students per 100,000 inhabitants increased from 480 in 2000/2001 (42,054 students in all) to 1,080 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010/2011 (141,869 students in all), representing an annual increase of over 15%;
- **Literacy:** The literacy rate is 38.5% for adults and 65.5% for young people. It is twice as high in cities as in rural areas. The number of literate people rose between 2011 and 2015, though not at a regular rate;
- **The completion rate and the transition rate from primary and secondary school:** analysis conducted for the government's national education report (RESEN) for 2011/2012 revealed a primary school completion rate of 64.3%. This represented a decrease, as it had been 68% in 2006/2007. However, data on secondary education shows that there has been a significant improvement, with access rates in the third grade (14-15 year olds) having increased from 29.8% in 2006/2007 to 40.8% in 2010/2011. In upper secondary education, the access rate in second grade (15-16 year olds) rose from 18.5% in 2006/2007 to 29.9% in 2010/2011. The access rate in the final grade rose from 12.6% to 19.5% over the same period;
- **The transition rate to higher education:** the number of secondary school graduates quadrupled between 2003 and 2012, with an examination success rate of 33%.

2. Basic data on technical and vocational training

In 2011, there were 50,000 students in TVET (of whom 20% were in public establishments), compared to 699,100 students in general secondary education. They thus accounted for 7.15% of the total. 90% of those in private TVET establishments are on courses in the field of

administration and management science, because the cost is lower. There is clearly an underinvestment in courses leading to jobs in industry and services.

4,400 apprentices did dual apprenticeship schemes leading to the CQP Vocational Qualification Certificate in 2012. The total number depends on the availability of funding from FODEFCA, the Continuing Education and Apprenticeship Development Fund. 4,682 apprentices did reformed traditional apprenticeship schemes leading to the CQM Occupational Training Certificate in 2016. There is also an experimental scheme providing post-basic education combining work experience and centre-based training (the FPAPEB).

3. Causes of the lack of continuity between education and training, and possible ways to remedy the problem

Although significant progress is being made in the field of education, the poor quality of training and lack of educational achievement continue to be the most worrying problems. A majority of students drop out of education before completing the level they are in, and schools fail to provide all learners with the basic knowledge required. This lack of continuity affects all levels of education, including TVET. While measures have been taken under the PDDSE, for example primary school has become free, and lower secondary school fees have been waived for girls, these advances have not bridged the huge divide affecting disadvantaged children.

However, there are educational opportunities for the 700,000 children who are out of school or who leave school early.

- The dual training system is for children in CM1 and CM2 grade (aged 9 to 11) who have performed poorly at school. More than 6,200 youngsters obtained a CQP Certificate between 2004 and 2015;
- The CQM course is for those do not attend school or who have dropped out. 18,060 apprentices obtained the CQM between 2013 and 2016.
- Alternative education (EA) teaches children who not attend school or who have dropped out to read and write to facilitate their access to vocational training.
- Accelerated educational alternative (AEA) is for the same target group, and enables them to obtain primary school certificate or a CQP Certificate in three years.
- Other measures are to develop the skills of secondary school leavers.

The most effective way to make up for the lack of continuity is to boost learning achievements at both basic education and secondary education level on the one hand, and to develop TVET curricula and schemes leading to the CQP Certificate on the other hand.

4. The continuum between education and lifelong learning

The Benin Government strives to provide those in the formal and informal education system with an opportunity to acquire a minimum set of knowledge and skills, in particular through vocational training.

The TVET curriculum reform of 2013 aims to offer everyone an opportunity to acquire the technical and vocational skills they need for their chosen occupation or to enhance their employability. It supports schemes to upgrade the skills of craftsmen as well as continuing education courses in public and private training centres for employees. Vocational training schemes include post-basic education dual training courses, short apprenticeships (1-6 months), short initial vocational training courses (3-6 months), non-formal training courses in agriculture and training in business start-up centres.

Two other areas are essential for the creation of this continuum: the establishment of a national qualifications framework (NQF) to recognise all skills acquired through different schemes, and the development of adult literacy training as part of TVET reform. This is particularly important, because only 50% adults who have spent 3 years in education are literate, while the figure is 90% for those who have spent 6 years in education, and 100% for those who spent have 8 years in education.

5. Developing the continuum by recognising all forms of lifelong skills acquisition

Such recognition would be impossible without schemes for the accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL). A consultation framework on the introduction of APEL in Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal was established in 2010. The results of an APEL pilot project in the F&B/restaurant sector will serve as a basis for its long-term development. Two initiatives are planned in this area: one to encourage Benin businesses to launch sectoral schemes, and another to involve vocational training stakeholders in the establishment of a NQF. This will offer a systematic means of validating and accrediting all vocational training courses.

Conclusion

The ideal way to develop the education/training continuum in Benin may be summed up as follows:

- All students should be able to enter TVET after the third grade (end of lower secondary education);
- Children who have dropped out before the third grade should be able to do a dual or reformed apprenticeship scheme;
- For those who have lost their initial level of education, literacy schemes should be organised to enable them to return to initial education or do vocational training leading to the CQM, CQP, AQP qualifications, as part of an NQF that accredits previously acquired skills.