



Skills beyond School

The OECD review of postsecondary vocational education and training

WHY SKILLS BEYOND SCHOOL MATTER

Increasingly countries look beyond secondary school to higher institutions of learning to provide the skills needed in many of the fastest growing technical and professional jobs in OECD economies. The same sector plays a very important role in re-skilling and upskilling adults and offering second chance education. Higher unemployment following the economic crisis has underlined the significance of these tasks. Some countries have met these needs through a special tier of institutions – community colleges in the United States, *Fachhochschulen* in some of the German-speaking countries, polytechnics in Finland, TAFEs in Australia – but vocational programmes are also housed in diverse postsecondary institutions. Nearly everywhere, the expansion of these programmes has been a major driver in the broader growth of tertiary and other forms of postsecondary education.

WHAT THE OECD CAN OFFER

Skills beyond School, the new OECD policy review of postsecondary vocational education and training, will provide policy advice to countries on how to address these challenges. The review, selected by OECD countries as a priority new initiative for 2011-12, will look at policies and practices governing the preparation of younger people and adults for technical and professional jobs. Key policy challenges include responsiveness to labour market needs, alongside inclusion, access, finance, governance, teaching quality, integration with workplace learning, articulation with other sectors of education, and qualifications and assessment. It will build on the success of *Learning for Jobs*¹ – which examined vocational education and training policy through 17 country reviews and a comparative report - and form part of the horizontal OECD *Skills Strategy* linked to PIAAC and other initiatives across the OECD. It will also draw on the OECD review of tertiary education.²

HOW COUNTRIES CAN PARTICIPATE

Countries will be invited to participate, mainly through the option of an individual country policy review of their postsecondary vocational education and training system. A voluntary financial contribution from participant countries will be requested. Based on background material prepared by the country, the review will involve two visits by an OECD team, culminating in a report covering the strengths of the country system, including innovations and reforms of general interest and significance, analysis of the main policy challenges, and OECD recommendations designed to assist policy development. It will be designed to draw on experience from other countries to support advice given to the reviewed country and statistical comparisons.

All OECD countries, including accession countries will be invited to participate. The whole exercise will conclude with a comparative report, synthesizing key policy messages for all OECD countries.

NEXT STEPS

A detailed proposal will be submitted to the OECD Education Policy Committee and the OECD Group of National Experts on Vocational Education and Training and initially discussed at the Leipzig meeting of the Group of National Experts on 27 September 2010, and developed under the guidance of OECD countries. In the meantime interested countries are encouraged to make their interests known to the OECD team.

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¹ www.oecd.org/edu/learningforjobs

² www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review