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AlmaLaurea Working Papers - ISSN 2239-9453

ALMALAUREA WORKING PAPERS no. 8

September 2011

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other stakeholders in the Mediterranean countries:
phenomena in slow development.**

by

Gérard Mayen

European Training Foundation

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Website: www.almalaurea.it | E-mail: pubblicazioni@almalaurea.it

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International Conference on
“Human Capital and Employment in the European and Mediterranean Area”
Bologna, 10-11 March 2011

**Cooperation between education systems, business and other stakeholders in the
Mediterranean countries: phenomena in slow development.**

by

Gérard Mayen*

Abstract

Many countries worldwide reinforce their education and training systems' capacity to respond to the pressures of globalization and the challenges of the knowledge society. Closer cooperation between business and education is one of the tools for providing learners with new skills and competences for work. In the Southern region of the Mediterranean however, knowledge available on the current forms and modes of cooperation between the education and economic sectors, and the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders is limited and fragmented. Among the challenges they face, these countries suffer from the pressures of some of the fastest growing populations in the world, a large informal sector and economies run by very small and medium-sized enterprises. In the region social partners (employers and employees) play very diverse but limited roles in VET policy and decision-making according to local situation.

The article will look at the different contexts in which cooperation and partnership in VET and Higher Education are activated in eight countries of the region (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia).¹

For the purpose of this article, the term education includes secondary vocational education and training (VET), post-secondary non-tertiary and tertiary education, including public and private institutions. The term business covers any entity with economic activity regardless of its legal status. This can include multi-nationals, public and private companies and small and medium sized enterprises (SME), micro-business and actors in the informal economy. Social partners (employers' and employee organizations) are considered as key stakeholders representing business environment.

After shaping the situation, the paper will look at identifying and reflecting on policy or strategically driven approaches to cooperation. In this context, cooperation and partnership is considered in a very broad sense, meaning any kind of relevant policy provision and/or formalized or non-formalized interaction between an education/training provider and a business organization. Finally the paper will suggest policy recommendations for policy makers, social partners and civil society which may facilitate the development of partnerships leading to practical solutions benefiting to the new entrants in the labour market.

* ETF Senior specialist, e-mail: gma@etf.europa.eu

¹ The present article is based on the content of an ETF study prepared in 2010 on the role of social partners in VET in the Mediterranean region (Mayen, 2010) and a study under finalisation looking at the processes of cooperation between education and business in the region (Mayen, 2011)

Both studies have been elaborated as a joint effort and follow a study design, consisting of desk research, data exchange with partner institutions and country specific reports about in one hand the role of social partners in VET and in the other hand the state of art of education and business cooperation in all eight countries. During an intensive consultation proce

ss on country level, facilitated by the ETF, the main national stakeholders (representatives from relevant ministries, social partners, the education system, businesses and the civil society) discussed the state of play and provided recommendations for its improvement.

In those studies more in-depth analyses of policies, structures and functions can be found.

Abbreviations

B.A	Bachelor of Arts
BOT	Board of Trustees
CGEM	General Confederation of Moroccan Employers
EBC	Education and Business Cooperation
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ENPI	European Neighbourhood Partnership Initiative
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETP	Enterprise Training Partnership
E-TVET	Employment and Technical Vocational Education and Training
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIAC	Inter-professional Assistance Council (Groupement inter professionnel d'aide au conseil)
HE	Higher Education
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resources Development
ICT	Information and Computer Technologies
MAI	Manufacturers Association in Israel
MKI	Mubarakh Kohl Initiative
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PPP	Private Public Partnership
R&D	Research and Development
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UAF	Federation Support Unit (Unité d'Appui aux Fédérations)
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UHES	Upgrading the Higher Education System
UTICA	Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation

1. Executive summary

Economies of the southern Mediterranean region are predominantly made up of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that can account for more than 95% of businesses in a given country. The countries' economies are also characterised by a vast informal sector, which however does not necessarily need to be an obstacle to education and business cooperation like in Morocco or Egypt. At large all the economies are largely vulnerable to external factors leaving large segments of the population extremely exposed to economic and social risks (ETF, Bardak, 2009). All countries of the region are undertaking efforts to modernise their human resource development (HRD) systems with a view to bring them in line with national and global economic requirements. Education and training systems throughout the region are generally driven by public authorities. In no cases do private and social partners have a leading role in terms of determining VET or HE policies. Most of the countries do provide in their legislation or strategies a framework for education and business

cooperation. However, even where this is the case, it happens very seldom that action plans or formal mechanisms for implementing and evaluating such cooperation underpins such legislation or strategies.

In general, we have observed that there is a certain level of reluctance on the part of government actors to leave more responsibilities for the design of and, in fact, the decision about policies to partners from the business world. Only in a few countries this is, to a certain extent, the case in VET and less frequently in HE, where academic studies continue to be held in high esteem.

Employability of youngsters, male and female is one of the crucial challenges for the next decennials in countries driven by an important demographic booming. The low level of salaries offered by the labour market in particular for basic occupations, combined with a higher job security in the public sector, leads to the fact that families and their children tend to opt for higher education (HE) rather than vocational education and training (VET). HE is more likely to lead to the desired white-collar jobs and public employment. The same applies to businesses: they often disregard VET as low-level education. However, this has serious consequences on education and business cooperation, in particular in VET.

Examples of education and business cooperation both in HE and VET do exist in all of the countries. It takes different forms and is at different stages of development. In general, however, initiatives remain, by and large restricted to pilot projects, as hardly any deliberate mechanisms and means exist to single out successful examples and mainstream them. Few companies train or cooperate with training providers in other ways. According to the UNESCO science report (2010) “in the majority of Arab countries, H.E education is succeeding only in producing bureaucrats with little innovative capacity to meets the needs of the private sector “. The situation is estimated to be even worse for companies operating in the informal sector in a context where public training services fail to meet their demands. Generally speaking little is done to bring together civil society, employers and education and training providers to look at policy and implementation mechanisms which would reform education, higher education and training systems in order to facilitate the access of the young generation to labour market.

As regards HE, three countries have been taking constructive steps towards involving businesses and their representative organisations as partners, namely Israel, Morocco and Tunisia. In Israel one major driver has been the high level of investment in research and development (R&D), which presents the highest level in the world. In the other two countries, the ongoing modernisation of their economies and societies, partly modelled on the example of France and influenced by massive EU donor support, has played a decisive role.

Education and business cooperation in VET in Tunisia, Morocco, Israel and Egypt ranges from national or policy consultation to local or implementation levels, while in Jordan initial steps have been taken to involve employers more consistently in policy-making, as well as to include references to cooperation in the legislative framework under development. In Syria, Lebanon and OPT cooperation is rather restricted to local initiatives.

Several factors potentially boost cooperation. On the economic side, this includes the presence of multinational companies and technological advancements in industry. On the education side, apprenticeship schemes are by default structured ways to organise cooperation and continuing training could be organised with the support of businesses.

One may say that correlation exists between political vision and economic priorities but efforts of cooperation are not equally distributed, advantage being given to sectors where employers are well organised and dynamic and animated by interest not only limited to money making but investment in human resources for the future. This is equally valid to VET and HE sectors.

In a limited number of countries, methodologies and approaches initiated by the EU Member states such as the Bologna process and the European Qualification Framework are closely looked at and to some extent have served as model to move the education, higher education and training systems forward.

The article suggests a series of recommendations to stakeholders acting at national and Mediterranean level to foster the cooperation and partnership between education and business at regional level.

It is recommended for countries of the region to revisit their human resources development strategy in a holistic way covering all strands of the education and training systems and ensure that cooperative mechanisms between education and business are in place at all levels to deal with life long learning principles.

Quality labour market information and researches are needed to design appropriate training policies and priorities. Together with transparent funding mechanisms based on contribution from business it should help supporting the implementation of evidence based policies looking at providing qualified jobs to new entrants and supporting continuing training of workers.

Reinforcing capacities of all parties involved in cooperation between education and business should be considered as a key priority. Several approaches may be implemented ranging from peer to peer mutual learning at national and international level (with support of Donors), pilot initiatives at regional level, partnership at economic sector level, to specific capacity building initiatives of institutions from private (employees and employers) and public (HE and VET) origin. Special attention should be made in teaching education and training staff through direct immersion in enterprises and inviting enterprise staff to contribute to teaching activities.

EU initiatives and programmes contributing to a better cooperation between education and business are considered successful. Participation of Mediterranean countries in HE (Bologna) and VET (Copenhagen) processes and facilitated access in EU programmes for training and education would reinforce mutual knowledge and exchange.

2. Context

The economies of the 8 countries of the southern area of the Mediterranean region analysed in this report (namely Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Occupied Palestinian Territories) are characterised by large differences in size, population and economic and social development and to some extent commonalities as regards the evolution of demography and overall youth of the population. The size of population ranges from 4.3 million of inhabitants (Lebanon) to 80,4million (Egypt)². The global monitoring report 2010 of the World Bank considers 1 higher income country (Israel), 1 upper middle income (Lebanon) and the 6 others may be considered as lower middle income countries. One of the commonalities of the 6 lower income countries is the existence of a large informal sector, an economy geared by small and medium enterprises and a rapid demographic progression (all countries have fertility rates ranging from 2,1 for Tunisia to 4,6 in OPT). Similarly all countries show high percentages of youth population with the group under 15 ranging from 24 % (Tunisia) to 44% (OPT), which questions the capacity of the local labour markets to absorb all of them in the coming years.

Some of those economies are at their early stage of openness to free market (Syria) while others have already initiated their transition as global market players (Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon). Additionally in Mashreq and Maghreb sub-regions history, geography and culture have also impacted in the way each country have been developing socially and economically. We can summarise in saying that in all Maghreb countries administration and mechanisms gearing education and training are developed with a large number of similarities with French model. In Mashreq region a clear differentiation occurs with some countries being closer to Anglo-Saxon (Egypt, Jordan, OPT) or American (Israel) models. Central administration and planning in Syria still keeps a strong role notwithstanding the country's recent move from centralism to free economy. Lebanon and OPT economies are still very fragile due to recent conflicts and respond in different ways to the economic changes.

² Population reference Bureau, World population data sheet 2010

Apart of the noticeable case of Israel a new phenomena is appearing in all countries so called the “educated unemployment”. Mostly due to structural reforms, governments are downsizing their public administration which was considered by students (amongst which a large part of the female cohort) and families as attractive environment due to stability of employment and social advantages which compensate low salaries. This new context, the academic content of VET and HE streams and the lack of attractiveness of private sector have contributed to push large cohorts of educated youths (but not qualified according to the labour market) in the informal sector, small family businesses and/or in under qualified jobs.

3. Policies

Most of the countries in the region are engaged in reforms of their entire education (including Higher Education) and VET systems to cope with the rapid changes of the economy and the need to keep social cohesion in countries where youth and women unemployment is becoming a deep common feature. Based on strategic vision expressed by the governments the reforming process is very often supported by Donors (Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco) under the leadership of one or more Ministries (mainly Education, Higher Education and Labour) with significant efforts from public finance. In other countries where strategies have not been finalised (OPT, Lebanon, Syria) pilot activities are undertaken to respond (still with donor support) to specific needs. So far none of the country has set-up a comprehensive database and information system to collect information linked to education and business cooperation and/or social partnership. Apart the cases of Tunisia and Morocco Trade Unions are mostly not considered as partners in policy design and implementation.

4.1 Higher Education and post secondary-VET

Some HE laws make reference to cooperation between Education and Business (Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco). The general trend of Higher Education strategies is to make reference of the need to initiate and/or boost cooperation between Education and Business but none of the countries of the region has implemented structured and systemised mechanisms/frameworks for implementation. Commonly all education and training systems are driven by public authorities and there is neither example of even limited leadership by private sector in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) nor formal mechanisms of evaluation of cooperation in any of the country of the region.

While examples of cooperation and or partnership are witnessed in all countries they very often stay at the level of pilots. It appears that when national strategies are in place they are not often supported by action plans and formal mechanisms for the implementation of cooperation and decision-making processes are lacking to mainstream the successful pilot cases. Some countries have set-up legislative tools to provide a framework for cooperation but there is still reluctance from governments to share responsibilities in decision making and implementation with an enlarged number of stakeholders.

It seems that more active initiatives are taken on a large scale in the field of vocational education and training rather than at secondary and university level where academism still stays as the rule. Moreover in countries where continuing training systems have been initiated cooperation between education, business and civil society are likely to happen more frequently. It obviously appears as well that countries investing more in Research and Development (R&D) are the ones where cooperation between business and higher education is successfully happening.

In VET, in some countries the cooperation is active at several levels ranging from policy making to implementation (Tunisia, Morocco, Israel, Egypt) while in others cooperation is limited to implementation of public private partnership responding to ad-hoc requests from economic sectors (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, occupied Palestinian Territories).

In some rare countries of the region this cooperation takes a formal shape by the involvement of

social partners (meaning employers and employees officially engaged in tripartite bargaining) who may take a leadership role in policy and implementation of part of the education and training system. In other cases cooperation takes the form of private-public partnership which largely depends of the organisational capacity of the institutions formally representing employers at sector level. In fact most of the initiatives remain at pilot level and decision-making processes are lacking to mainstream the successful ones.

Correlation exists between political vision and economic priorities but efforts of cooperation are not equally distributed, advantage being given to sectors where employers are well organised and dynamic and animated by interest not only limited to money making but investment in human resources for the future. This is equally valid to VET and HE sectors.

In a limited number of countries, methodologies and approaches initiated by the EU Member states such as the Bologna process and the European Qualification Framework are closely looked at and to some extent have served as model to move the education, higher education and training systems forward.

In Israel cooperation is driven by a high investment in Research and Development (best achiever worldwide) reaching 4.74 % of GDP (2007). In Tunisia under the influence of the Bologna process cooperation between business and HE was initiated to launch “professionalised B.A and masters“ and the mechanisms in place have benefited of the model initiated some years before in VET. In Morocco engineer schools have a long experience in developing curricula based on expressed needs from enterprises. In other countries cooperation is made on an ad’hoc basis or is at very early stage of investigation and more often happen at post secondary TVET (Syria, Jordan, Egypt, OPT). Very rare examples of cooperation are identified at tertiary level where academism still stays as the reference model.

4.2 Vocational Education and Training

Laws for Education and VET are promulgated in all countries but the implementation of the reform takes different shapes according to local situation. Generally speaking (i) management of the public education and training systems still remain very much centralised in all countries (ii) VET systems are moving from a supply to a more demand driven direction. Decentralisation has taken place in Egypt with the education sector as a pilot. Budget management is now at local level with direct implication in management of schools. In countries where strategies include a life long learning vision and a competitive apprenticeship and continuing training system (Morocco, Tunisia, Israel) contribution of business and more widely all social partners in decision making and management is identified and implementation is effective and regulated. In other countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, OPT) involvement of business in VET is linked to the needs expressed by some priority sectors for local economies (hi-tech, tourism, industry, construction, ICT, etc) which do not find qualified workforce on the labour market and turn to VET governance bodies to develop adequate training to feed their needs (Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon). This is translated through projects based on private-public partnership. Training schemes in less active sectors are lagging behind as regards modernisation of curricula.

5. Structures/methodologies/approaches

5.1 Higher Education and post secondary-VET

Governance

As concerns governance of Higher Education, the presence of business sector is still very rare at decision-making level, but presence of employers’ representatives is noticed in advisory boards of some universities.

In Egypt the Higher Education Enhancement strategy (2008-2012) supported by the World Bank is translated through the implementation of 6 major projects concerning funding, quality assurance, technical colleges, faculty of education and ICT. A clear message is passed by the authorities to foster cooperation but implementation is still at pilot level.

In Israel the National Council for Research and Civilian Development under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Technology provides all stakeholders with a macro-view of research and development. Cooperation occurs mainly through student's internship and promotion of research and development (R&D) initiatives. Nevertheless this cooperation is not embedded in a national framework and is implemented according to local agreements.

In Jordan the law for Higher Education provides some autonomy to Colleges and Universities to initiate cooperation with private sector. Professional associations are not bound with any formal agreement with the Ministry in charge of Higher Education.

In Lebanon the Higher Council of Higher Education is the governing body for HE. Professional associations are invited when it comes to discuss related subjects. Some private universities have a board of trustees which may include representatives from industry.

In Morocco the reform initiated in the early 2000's has given more autonomy to Universities. Governing boards of Universities include representatives from chambers of commerce and are habilitated to decide upon setting up of new programmes in line with regional needs. Within the universities special committees support the implementation of partnership with business and regulation of student's internship.

In Syria the Ministry of Higher Education and the Council for higher Education highlight the need of investing in HR and the duty for universities to provide competent workforce to meet the demand of the labour market. So far this intention is not translated in formal cooperation with business at university level. Limited examples of cooperation are identified in the framework of donor supported projects.

In Tunisia the recent law for Higher Education (2008) has been established to answer the problems of integration of graduated youths in the labour market. Contribution of business sector is looked at and frameworks for cooperation have been established on the basis of models experimented successfully in VET. A convention was signed between UTICA (the employer federation) and the MoHE in 2005 together with 16 sector conventions which provide a framework of action for E&B cooperation. This has led to the setting up of 41 professionalized B.A developed together with professional associations ("co-diploma").

Financing

Tunisia appears to be the only example at regional level where financing facilities are offered both at VET and HE level through the Vocational training tax offering support to enterprises efforts in organising student's internship. No evidence was found in other countries that incentives are in place to facilitate the contribution of business sector and enterprises to contribute to Higher Education programmes.

Capacity of business sector to engage in cooperation

In a large number of countries unless local and sector initiatives, social partners are not equipped to influence higher education environment to engage in a more demand driven approach.

In Higher education as already mentioned, only Tunisia has set-up a framework for intervention of business at national level, which leads to the development of the co-diplomas (Bachelors and Master) and has formally adopted a National Qualifications Framework for higher education and started implementing it. In Morocco historically the Engineer's schools have established close link with professional associations and together with the relevant ministries have established mechanisms where intervention of business is made at the early stage of conception of the scheme. Only a limited number of graduates benefit from this elitist system. In Israel close cooperation between universities and business is included in the Research and Development strategy developed by each university. A commercial entity being developed inside the university initiate contacts with

close enterprises to sell their innovation. Another element is the setting-up of technological incubators supported by the state with a high financial investment from private sector.

In Egypt at the level of pre-university education and HE a recent decision from the MoE and MoHE to set up School's and Technical Colleges boards of Trustees (BOT) is a first attempt to provide education bodies with independent managing units. BoTs include representatives from local business and communities. They are responsible for policy development, strategic decision-making and governance.

In Jordan one project to set-up an incubator in Irbid University went successfully with support of the EU.

Syria has initiated with support of the EU UHES programme methodologies for regular training needs analysis.

5.2 Vocational Education and Training

Governance

In VET several countries have set-up governing systems directly involving business representatives but in all cases under leadership of the public authorities.

In Tunisia and Morocco several coordinating and advisory bodies are in place at national, sector and local levels where government and social partners (including business representatives) are represented via a tri-partite set-up. Nevertheless the role of social partners is mainly consultative at decision-making level. Direct operational involvement is rarely witnessed. Within a transparent framework of intervention, memorandum of understanding have by signed between employers, trade unions and government which regulate the roles and responsibilities in VET policy design and implementation. The introduction/reinforcement of apprenticeship (in Tunisia) and continuing training (in Morocco) have provided the conditions for innovative partnership. In Jordan, the setting-up of a Council for Employment and TVET in 2008 provides a platform where business is represented formally by the Chambers of industry and Commerce that still search the best way to play an active role in policy making.

In Egypt, in a complex environment where 26 ministries are involved the Supreme Council for Human Resources Development is the highest authority in charge of formulating HRD policies. Private sector representatives are full members of the Council which meets very rarely. But real partnership occurs at the level of HRD Councils established in 3 main sectors: industrial, construction and tourism.

In Israel Ministry of Education runs secondary and post secondary education and Ministry of Industry trade and labour operates a technical vocational training at secondary level. The Manufacturers association which represents the entire manufacturing sector is the primary contact point with public side.

In Syria the governance structure of the entire VET system is under the responsibility of the VET Council (under the Ministry of Education) which includes 11 ministries involved in post secondary VET but with no formal representation of private sector. Damascus and Aleppo chambers of Commerce and Industry participate to the National Apprenticeship Committee and have signed agreements for carrying joint initiatives with tertiary education and VET sector. This project is still at an early stage of development.

In OPT the Higher Council for TVET (2005) chaired in rotation by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education and Higher Education is composed of 16 members with equal representation of public, private and other relevant bodies. Its mandate is to define TVET policies, establishing policies and strategies overseeing the implementation of the strategy and securing financial resources. In reality this council does not function effectively in absence of a regulatory environment.

In Lebanon where a large part of universities are private, no overall governance system fostering Education and Business is in place. Only a Ministerial Decree named "organisation of joint

projects” provides a framework for cooperation between public and private sectors. It is applied in 23 schools and through agreements with NGO’s.

Financing

Few countries have set-up financial mechanisms which redistribute collection of taxes from enterprises to serve education and training purposes and/or offer incentives to enterprises to take a role in education and training. Generally speaking, apart private universities or colleges, financing is insured by the state budget.

Tunisia appears to be the only example at regional level where financing facilities are offered both at VET and HE level through the Vocational training tax offering support to enterprises efforts in organising student’s internship

As concerns VET, a tax for vocational training exists in Morocco that mainly focuses on re-training of working staff. This tax mainly supports initial public vocational training at secondary and post secondary levels while the law stipulates that 30% of the collected funds should be dedicated to continuing training. Complex procedures hamper small, medium and very small enterprises to access to this financial tool which mainly benefit to big enterprises. Through the existence of training contracts, 70% of the costs engaged by the enterprises to re-train staff may be reimbursed. Social partners are heavily engaged in the tripartite strategic management of the public vocational training system. Employer sectoral associations (GIAC) presently financed by the above mentioned tax, redistribute support to the enterprises in their training planning and implementation efforts. A recent initiative looks at reforming the financing of the continuing training system to better benefit to small, medium and very small enterprises. If agreed by the partners CGEM will be in charge to implement it under the strategic supervision of the tripartite governing body for VET.

In Jordan a TVET Fund is in place. It was collecting 1% of enterprises benefit. Its reorganisation planned to provide private sector with majority in the board and in-depth role in management. A government decision has stopped this process (03-2010) and enterprises are no longer contributing, resources being mainly coming from collection fees of migrant permits. The Governance setting has then been changed with no longer a decisional role for private sector.

In Egypt, in the absence of a tax system, some sectors have initiated training programmes together with the relevant ministries. Enterprises mainly contribute to the salary and student transportation (Moubarakh-Kohl initiative). A framework of cooperation was signed between a large regional enterprises (Americana, Arab contractors) together with relevant government entities have initiated training programmes in the fast-food and construction sectors.

Capacity of business sector to engage in cooperation

Cooperation requires from each party a clarification of vision, the elaboration of a strategy for intervention and adequate resources to support implementation. To become operational cooperation requires as well a number of formal agreements between parties to set-up the framework for cooperation.

It is worth noticing that only a minority of employers association in the region have set-up the above-mentioned elements to influence education and training decision-making and contribute to the development of qualifications closer to the need of the labour market. While this may happen in sectors with a high potential for economic development, this rarely happen in “traditional” sectors which miss powerful sector associations.

In Tunisia and Morocco as already mentioned, employer federations play a direct and influential role in policy making through elaborated frameworks of partnership with government entities in charge of vocational training. UTICA (in Tunisia) and CGEM (in Morocco) have elaborated vision, strategy and provide internal resources to deal with education and training. Interestingly, Tunisia is developing special units to support sector federations in their new role of implementers of vocational training (UAF) and capacities are as well devoted to higher education in the setting-up of co-diplomas (B.A and Masters).

In Morocco 9 advisory units (GIAC) linked to priority sectors are in place to support enterprises (mainly SMEs) in their training requests and functions. The existence of structured continuing

training and apprenticeship systems offers the conditions for a well organised partnership where business, together with trade unions play a direct managing role.

In Jordan recently the Chambers of Industry and Commerce have initiated plans to clarify their role in vocational training and assigned limited human resources to follow-up on the issue. In the absence of an entrepreneur's federation, only some sectors (hospitality, pharmaceutical) have initiated (through donors supported projects) to play a role in vocational training.

In Syria, Chambers of Damascus and Aleppo have engaged efforts to contribute to the setting-up of the apprenticeship project that mainly serves the interest of big companies.

In Egypt in the framework of the TVET reform programmes supported by the EU 12 enterprise-training partnerships (ETP) have been set-up with a majority of private sector representation of chambers and relevant sector federations in the board.

In Lebanon there is an attempt to develop a training scheme together with sector representatives (agrofood).

Intervention of business in training needs analysis, curricula and qualification development, examination and guidance and counselling happens in mostly all countries with a large diversity in the way this contribution is conducted. Rare examples of national up-dated information system able to provide both business and education with relevant vision of labour market needs was identified in the region. Rarely governments and business are equipped with sector tools such as observatories to inform and forecast about labour market needs. Some attempts are witnessed in privileged and structured sectors in Israel, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria and Jordan.

In countries where apprenticeship schemes and/or continuing training are in place (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia) this provides a framework for cooperation. In Morocco and Tunisia this is highly regulated by a number of agreements and structures and embraces the entire VET system, even if the vitality of the employer associations is a key factor for success of initiatives. In other countries the mechanisms in place may be limited to some economically active sectors and respond to less structured framework. In Egypt intervention of business sectors happens through the ETPs through the EU supported TVET reform programme and the MKI dealing with dual system. Activities range from identification of priority occupations, development of training packages, development of occupational profiles and training of trainers.

In Jordan public-private agreements have been signed in a limited number of sectors and the VTC (one of the public VET provider) has signed a number of memorandum of understanding with professional associations. The newly set-up Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance has set-up a number of sector committees to discuss the establishment of new qualifications.

In Israel the Manufacturers association contributes closely with the different educational and training governmental services in apprenticeship and secondary system delivery. Activities range from twinning of schools and enterprises to training of trainers.

In Syria the apprenticeship is the leading example where employers from the Chambers have contributed at all stages of the elaboration of the scheme. But so far this project seems to be on hold mainly due to the absence of pathways for students leaving the scheme.

In Lebanon the existing framework does not allow for an in-depth involvement of business.

6. Relevance of European policies

In the context of the Union for the Mediterranean, several initiatives have been initiated with support of the European Commission, the Euromed Ministers of Labour and social partners and the European Economic and Social Committee which foster the importance of social partners as active players in VET policy and decision making. This creates a positive environment and provides a potential platform to discuss education and business cooperation in the context of a globalized economy.

6.1 Higher Education and post secondary-VET

As concerns Higher Education in the region none of the countries are signatories of the Bologna Declaration. Nevertheless the interest shown by some countries in the Bologna process have

directly impacted the way policies have been conducted during the last years. In 2009/2010, the Bologna cycle structure for the Bachelor and Master levels is fully or extensively implemented in most institutions and programmes in Israel, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia³. In Tunisia the move towards the establishment of the co-developed professional Bachelors and Masters involves business. Elaborated frameworks of cooperation have been established between the Ministry of Higher Education and the main employers association and its sector federations. In Morocco, a cooperation agreement with the EU has been signed in Science and technology in 2003 and the Bologna principle of three-cycle degree structure has been included in the law. In OPT a Higher Education Reform experts team working under the umbrella of the Tempus office was established to promote the Bologna process within the Tertiary Education Institutes.

In Egypt the Tempus programme is recognised as one of the promoter of cooperation between business and HE. In Morocco 25% of Tempus projects include the business world as a relevant stakeholder.

Pilot steps have been undertaken with a selected number of universities in all countries except Syria to develop a set of indicators encouraging mainstreaming of entrepreneurship in University curricula which may contribute to the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise.

6.2 Vocational Education and Training

Through important programmes initiated by the EU a number of concepts existing in EU countries have been introduced such as demand-driven systems with business involvement, guidance and counselling, sector observatories, financing of VET, gender issues in vocational training, social partnership. In the 90s the EU has initiated to support the process of reform of VET in Tunisia and Morocco. In the 2000's this support has been enlarged to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. New concepts have been introduced according to the evolution of the globalisation of economy such as apprenticeship schemes, qualification structures, the role of enterprises in training.

In VET the most visible impact of EU is the initial steps taken by some countries to start working on the elaboration of national qualifications framework taking as a working reference the approach in place in the EU. Some countries are likely to adapt their frameworks with the European one (EQF) namely Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan. Pilot activities are initiated in tourism and construction in those countries with support of ETF. In Egypt and Jordan, the establishment of national entities dealing with qualifications development is a first step towards the setting up of national qualifications frameworks. However representation of employers from the different economic sectors should be strengthened.

7. Challenges

A number of common challenges exist regarding cooperation between education and business in higher education and VET.

7.1 At policy level

The overall challenge both at VET and Higher Education lies with **the capacity of all partners at all levels to re-establish trust and agree on mechanisms for implementation of structured policies for cooperation**. The definition of roles for each stakeholder needs to be elaborated. Countries where education and business cooperation is more developed are those who have defined frameworks where roles and obligations of all parties are clearly established. By tradition education related matters are fully under government responsibility and the rare educational field in which business is active in is VET apprenticeship (through large but under regulated presence of students in working placement) and/or continuing training. In absence of regulated agreements concerning research and development, Universities are rarely linked to business environment and academism stills stays the rule even in technical colleges.

³ State of play of the Bologna Process in the Tempus countries of the Southern Mediterranean (2009/2010)

No regional platforms are identified where VET, HE and business may discuss about options, policies, and success stories of cooperation. The absence of such structures limits the awareness of stakeholders, the dissemination of good practices and the setting-up of mechanisms for cooperation.

Accordingly there is **no monitoring mechanism, no data available and no benchmarks to measure successful cooperation both at national and regional level.**

Public authorities must develop their capacity to closely work with business environment in developing policies and strategies for Education and Business cooperation. In the rapid movement pulled by the globalisation of economy HE, education and training systems can not evolve (with regards of the high level of investments needed) without the acceptance of a role for business not only at policy level but as well at implementation level. Efforts should be dedicated to **initiate decentralisation process** at all levels namely national, regional and local.

At the same time this evolution requires **adequate funding mechanisms (offering both contribution from and incentives for enterprises) and lighter bureaucracy** including devolution mechanisms allowing for cooperation at local level. **These mechanisms should offer the same kind of services to universities and VET providers.**

Revisiting national policies for education and training with a life long learning vision is another challenge in the region. The educational systems rarely offer pathways from VET to Education and Higher Education in most of the countries of the region. So far VET is still not recognised as an option by individuals, enterprises and authorities to offer decent perspectives for integration into the labour market. The low esteem of the VET system may be linked to the structure of the societies where informal sector and family business represent the way economies are moving (apart the case of Israel). Traditional organisation of the society is based on stratification where movement between social classes is not easy.

At the same time a large cohort of University students faces increasing problems to enter into the labour market in absence of employability capacities as requested by the labour market.

Generally speaking **education and training for entrepreneurship is weak** in most of the countries of the region at all levels of education systems. A real challenge is to develop the understanding of the concept as a key competence at all level of education and training systems in all the countries⁴ and engage enterprises to play an active role.

7.2 At implementation level

The capacity of academic, educational and training staff to deal with this new context and to cope with changes appears to be a key element for success. Efforts should be put to train professors, trainers, teachers, deans and school managers to deal with their new roles in a cooperative environment. **Local level (schools, universities, enterprises) is the place where initiatives should be allowed and supported by simple mechanisms.** Based on high commitment of people from both education and business such framework should allow for monitoring mechanisms allowing for exchange of information and awareness of success stories at regional and national levels.

Business partners need to come to the discussion table with public authorities with elaborated vision of what education and training policies are about in a globalisation of economies. They may take the lead to in developing new attitudes of different players. In absence of a clear vision, structure and means the business environment is not able to influence the radical process to move from supply to more demand driven systems. In addition the structure of the economic sector where informal and family business is prominent hampers these small and medium entities to play a direct role by lack of proper representative bodies. **Reinforcement of internal capacities of**

⁴ Report on the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for enterprise, European Commission, publications office, 2008

sector federations and national business associations to deal with education (including HE) and training is at stake for competing sectors.

With even more than in VET sector, HE systems are confronted with a need to deeply revise their structures, working practices and academic curricula , find cooperation mechanisms with the business sector and accept enterprises to play an active role as a place for learning. Investing in applied Research and Development at sector level may contribute to boost cooperation in a win-win situation both for enterprises and universities.

8. Recommendations

The recommendations of the present paper are geared towards policy makers and business authorities at national and regional level and donor's community active in the region. Considering that life long learning systems are key elements in modern economies to face the rapid economic changes, unless specific indication all following recommendations are valid for Higher Education, VET and business stakeholders which are encouraged to start their cooperation in building common projects.

Generally policies regarding Human Capital development are developed separately by the Ministries in charge. **It is recommended placing the overall responsibility to set-up national lifelong learning policies at the level of the highest governmental body (more likely Prime Minister office or when existing Human Resource Higher Council) with support of a dedicated platform steered jointly by government and social partners.** This would ensure coherency between the different policies and ensure that effective cooperative mechanisms are in place to deal with the principle of life long learning principles.

Limitations in the availability of structured LM and HRD information (including education and business cooperation) at national and regional level calls for a **better use of existing collection mechanisms and the development of more appropriate ones to identify needs of LM and design appropriate training policies and priorities.** The development of a selected number of indicators integrating formulation and design of education and business cooperation including evaluation and control is suggested.

Efficient cooperation between education and business requires availability of dedicated funding. This will require revisiting of current financing mechanisms in place. **Transparent mechanisms to manage the redistribution of taxes collected by public authorities to the enterprises and workers for the benefit of human resources development needs to be elaborated in each of the countries** of the region to serve both VET (including continuing training) and Higher Education (in particular to boost research and development activities). Co-management of these funds between stakeholders is the pre-requisite for a success of such an initiative.

Valuable initiatives exist of cooperation between education and business in the EU MS as well as in partner countries both at HE and VET levels. **Sharing experience with others and elaborating projects together is a successful approach largely tested in the EU** through the implementation of a series of programmes since the early 80s. Involvement of European institutions from both sides in the process would ease a **peer-to-peer process focusing on re-establishing trust and developing easy-to-handle methodologies for environments where funding and resources are scarce both for Ministries and employer's associations.**

Accessibility to EU programmes on Education (i.e LLL programme and new initiative Youth on the move) should be eased for partner countries institutions from the region. The opportunity should be offered to involve country teams with both public and business representatives. Monitoring of national authorities of such projects may ease streamlining success stories in the national policy. Simultaneously **participation of Mediterranean countries in the Bologna (H.E) and Copenhagen (VET) processes** would raise them awareness about EU policies and activities

linked to education and business cooperation. As reciprocity this would allow EU member states to exchange and initiate supportive activities to partner countries.

Education and business cooperation may play an active role to boost leading economic sectors. As a pilot initiative it is proposed **to set-up a regional project concentrating in Research and Development in one leading economic sector in order to analyse the conditions for success and provide a set of tools and methodologies looking at facilitating the involvement of business and universities** (i.e policies for management of intellectual property, frameworks for knowledge transfer, qualifications and curricula development, examination implementation, etc.). This multi year project should include a large dissemination phase.

Taking into consideration the limited resources available in private sector in research and development fields, **pilot projects to explore how TVET and HE institutions may become service providers for private and public companies should be implemented with support of business associations**. Priority should be given to sectors with high potential for development with possibility to largely mainstream positive results.

Generally speaking capacities of all stakeholders involved from both education and business sides is considered weak to conduct a real and systemic reform of HE and VET. Donors should pay special attention at **supporting the role of employer's associations, trade unions and sector federations to reinforce their capacities to deal with human capital development at operational level**. Indicators to measure involvement of business in education, higher education and training matters should be elaborated at strategic and operational levels as part of the monitoring tools of projects and programmes. Local level (schools, universities, enterprises) being the place where initiatives should be allowed and supported by simple mechanisms, when designing supporting programmes in education and training, **efforts should concentrate to support local initiatives involving partnership and cooperation between civil society and schools**.

Simultaneously, countries of the region are encouraged to launch special training and capacity building initiatives where government and enterprise staff are working together to elaborate common working methodologies. **Quick win approaches have to be looked at, mainly at local and/or sectoral level with involvement of convinced and dedicated promoters of education and business partnership**.

For both VET and HE, special attention should be given to **train teachers, trainers, professors by direct immersion in enterprises. As reciprocity technical staff from leading enterprises should be called to deliver training in universities/VET institutions during teaching staff absence**. As concerns Higher Education improvement is needed in preparing students to the labour market and reforming teaching and learning methodologies. These initiatives would benefit from getting support from international Donor's community.

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