



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
2030

Asia-Pacific Overview: Sustainable Development Goal 4

TARGET

4.4



1. Defining Target 4.4

Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

This target puts an emphasis on the quantity and quality of learning opportunities, utilizing a wide range of education and training modalities, in order to equip youth and adults with the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. In responding to the fast-changing demands of the labor market, not only work-specific skills but also high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution need to be developed.

Key expected achievements under Target 4.4:

- **Linkage:** TVET skills by youth and adults should be driven from and linked with the labour market. For this purpose, TVET curriculum should be developed based on the labor market analysis for a particular industry.
- **Development:** A diverse and broad set of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills which is still at the stage of conceptual development are required, and must be defined and appropriately developed, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **Outcomes:** To guarantee better TVET outcomes, especially employment opportunities for decent work and start-ups, education of transferable skills, integrative efforts of TVET and entrepreneurship or TVET and higher education are expected.

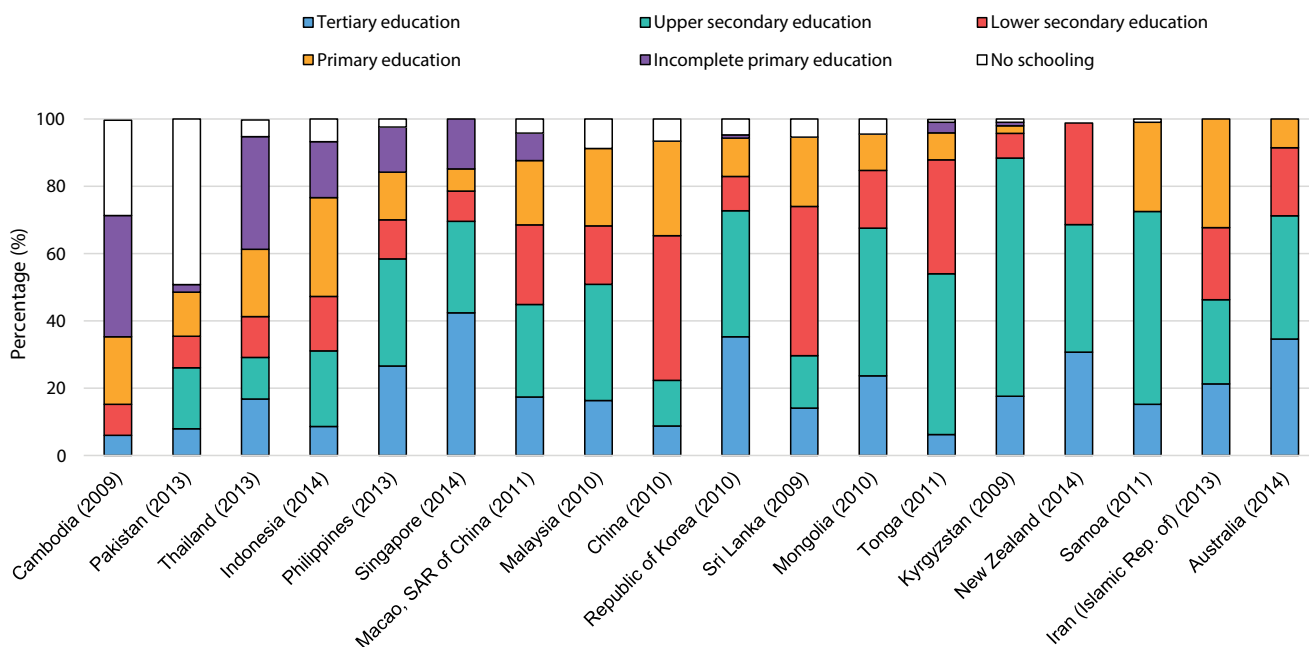
2. Regional and Sub-regional Overview: Target 4.4

The region is home to two countries where more than half of the adult population has no education or did not complete primary.

In nine of 18 Asia-Pacific countries where data are available, more than 15 per cent of the adult population (age 25 or older) have only completed primary education. Very low levels of education attainment are found in three countries in the region, where more than a quarter (25 per cent) of the adult population have no education or did

not complete primary education (see Figure 1). In two countries, this share reaches more than 50 per cent of the adult population. The proportions of the adult population having completed tertiary education range from 6 per cent to 42 per cent.

FIGURE 1: Distribution of the population age 25+ by highest level of education completed (%)



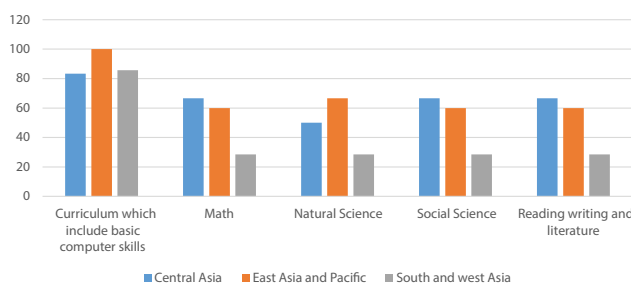
Note: The data are sorted by ascending order of the proportion of the adult population with at a minimum, primary education. Post-secondary and non-tertiary education is included in upper secondary education, except for Cambodia and Samoa where it is included in tertiary education. Tertiary education covers short-cycle tertiary, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral.

Source: Created by UIS-AIMS, UNESCO Bangkok, UIS Data Centre, accessed in September 2016.

Except for a few exceptions, within countries, the level of education with the highest shares is secondary education (10 countries with upper secondary and an additional two countries with lower secondary completed). This is also true for high income countries. It is notable that in 14 countries there are higher shares of upper secondary completers than lower secondary completers.

Recognizing ICT as one of the critical skills for decent work, there is growing attention in improving ICT knowledge and skills of the population in different countries and also in using ICT for improving instruction. All countries in East Asia and Pacific and 86 per cent of the countries in South and West Asia have specific objectives or subjects on basic computer skills at the upper secondary level. More than 60 per cent of the countries in Central Asia and East Asia and Pacific use ICT-assisted instruction to teach math, natural science, social science, reading and writing and literature; this does not apply to natural science in Central Asia at the upper secondary level. However, less than 30 per cent of the countries in South and West Asia have ICT-assisted instruction for the mentioned subjects.

FIGURE 2: Percentage of countries with ICT included in curriculum and developed ICT assisted instruction for various subjects



Source: UIS Data centre accesses in October 2016

Issues and Challenges

- » **Lack of comparable data:** Although Target 4.4 is closely linked with skills for employment, decent job and entrepreneurship, and also ICT skills and digital literacy are essential for decent work and daily life (UNESCO, 2016). Comparable data on those skills and employment opportunities are still limited in Asia and the Pacific.
- » **Insufficient ICT skills development:** A big number of countries incorporate the development of basic technical ICT literacy skills into the curriculum, with much less attention to training beyond basic ICT literacy. More advanced ICT skills would promote more sophisticated media and information literacy, such as interactive and critical use of media as well as constructive online participation and content creation.
- » **Insufficient investment, capacity, and political will:** Various issues related to financial support, infrastructure, technical skills, and leadership and coordination abound that inhibit efforts in harnessing the full potential of ICT in TVET.
- » **Uncertainty in skills demand:** Defining and anticipating the skills needed for the decent work and entrepreneurship for member states would pose the great challenge as those skills requirements are specific to job opportunities which are diverse across all industries and countries.
- » **Bias in perception of TVET:** The TVET enrollment rate is relatively weak considering the important effects of TVET on national economic development, possibly due to the perception by the public that TVET is inferior to general education. Strengthening and expanding TVET policy and programmes aligned with national economic development plans across the Member States, together with the policy of perceptual changes about TVET will be enormous challenges for TVET the stakeholders.
- » **Creating opportunities for trainees to put skills and knowledge to work:** The creation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities followed by capacity building for specific skills and high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills are critical not only for the youth and adult trainees but also for the incumbent employees.

3. Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

- » **Ensure attainment of fundamental skills such as functional literacy for the least educated:** Approximately 15 per cent of the adult population (age 25 or older) have only completed primary education. For them, TVET may not be a very effective skill development tool unless they are educated and upgraded to functional literacy.
- » **Align TVET strategies to the economic trends and national socio-economic development plans:** Access to TVET and employment is highly affected by national and global economic contexts, as well as socio-economic development plans, and thus, the priorities of Education 2030 must take into account these contexts.
- » **Advocate for greater appreciation of TVET:** Although TVET plays an instrumental role in developing an industry, TVET enrolment rates are relatively low for most developing countries. The role of TVET in economic development needs to be emphasized. The perceptual change regarding TVET needs to be followed up with policy.
- » **Ensure strong coordination and accountability:** A strong coordination and accountability system should be in place, linking TVET needs and employment opportunities to the development of industries in countries and the strategies that are needed to turn national and regional commitment into results.
- » **Improve availability and quality of TVET data:** The lack of data and data management systems in countries in general and specifically in the area of entrepreneurship, serve as a major barrier for evaluating the impact of SDG 4 – Target 4.4 strategies and monitoring progress.
- » **Define decent jobs and entrepreneurship in light of the national contexts:** The definition of decent jobs and entrepreneurship in developing countries needs to be redefined and different from developed countries as the developing countries have different stages of industrial development depending on national economic development strategies.

- » **Harness the potential of ICTs:** The immense potential of ICTs need to be harnessed in TVET programmes to expand access to TVET through open education resources (OERs), open and distance learning (ODL), massive open online courses (MOOCs), to improve the quality of teaching and learning through ICT-supported pedagogical strategies via interactive and multimedia content, simulations, augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), expert networks and collaboration tools.) towards contributing to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and transversal skills that are needed in the changing workplace.
- » **Strengthen knowledge-base for effective TVET for evidence-based policy making:** There is a need to expand and enrich the evidence base on the use of new technologies in TVET via rigorous research and impact evaluation.

4. Global and Regional Documents Linked to Target 4.4

- The 2015 Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
- Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All, UNESCO 2016
- Qingdao Declaration (on ICT and Post-2015 Education)
- Asia-Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015 (Bangkok Statement)

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