



VVOB Paper
*Transforming
TVET Governance -
The Case of Ecuador*

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Content

Content	1
Colophon	3
Abstract	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1. Conceptual framework for analysing TVET transformation in Ecuador	5
1.2. Importance of the case	5
2. TVET for sustainable development	7
2.1. <i>Buen Vivir</i> – Ecuador’s answer to “sustainable development”	7
2.2. Securing TVET’s place in the <i>Buen Vivir</i> agenda	8
3. Transforming TVET governance	11
3.1. Improving the evidence base	11
3.2. Involving stakeholders in policy development	13
3.3. Expanding partnerships	13
4. Conclusion	16
References	17

Colophon

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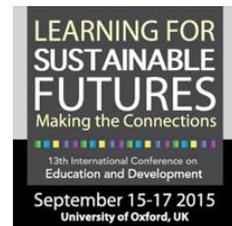
Transforming TVET Governance – The Case of Ecuador

Authors

- Maud Seghers, *Education Advisor, VVOB*
- Evelien Masschelein, *Programme Manager Ecuador, VVOB*

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Handelsstraat 31
1000 Brussels
Belgium

T • +32 (0)2 209 07 99

F • +32 (0)2 209 07 98

E • info@vvoob.be

www.vvoob.org

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Abstract

Written from the practitioners' perspective, this paper examines the reform of Secondary Technical Education in Ecuador – a reform that is embedded in the broader political agenda of *Buen Vivir*, the Ecuadorian government's answer to mainstream sustainable development discourse. As a touchstone to “test” the Secondary Technical Education reform, the paper uses the conceptual framework that emerged from the 2012 Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and specifically the metaphor of the three lenses for analysing and guiding the transformation of TVET systems recently developed in *Unleashing the Potential: Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training* (Marope et al., 2015).

The authors agree with Marope et al. (2015) that in the long term the governance of TVET transformation towards sustainable human development may be even more important than the content of the reforms. Hence, particular attention is paid to the recent process of Secondary Technical Education policy formulation and implementation as a means to understand how TVET governance is changing in Ecuador. The paper notes concerted efforts to improve the evidence base, involve stakeholders in policy development and expand partnerships for implementation as noteworthy features of the policy process. However, it also shows that from the early stages onwards, there has been a tendency to narrow down the *Buen Vivir* agenda to a predominantly economic narrative. To ensure this is balanced with equity and environmental sustainability concerns, the paper calls for a further broadening of stakeholder participation and the creation of new types of partnerships.

1. Introduction

1.1. Conceptual framework for analysing TVET transformation in Ecuador

The past few years, the transformation of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has received considerable attention from policy-makers and scholars worldwide. As the United Nations (UN) moved from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), interest in the topic increased. Not only do the SDGs hold the promise of systemic transformation and dignified lives for all, they have also put skills – including technical and vocational skills – squarely back on the development agenda. If TVET is to make its proper contribution to sustainable development and prepare learners for decent and sustainable work, it, too, needs to transform. But how?

The question was central to the 2012 Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training – *Transforming TVET: Building Skills for Work and Life* – that took place in Shanghai in 2012 and to the Shanghai Consensus that came out of this meeting. Since then, leading specialists have refined the messages and analytical framework developed in Shanghai. A recent UNESCO publication uses the metaphor of three interlocking lenses to propose an integrated conceptual approach for analysing as well as guiding the transformation of TVET systems: the economic growth lens, the social equity lens, and the (environmental) sustainability lens.

Space does not allow us to elaborate on the details of these three lenses here; for those, we refer to Chapter 4 of *Unleashing the Potential: Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training* (Marope et al., 2015). For now, readers may want to keep in mind that each lens highlights the contribution that a transformed TVET system could make to sustainable development. Together, they promote TVET as “the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development” – a vision that goes back to the 2004 Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2004).

We use this conceptual framework as a touchstone to “test” the reform of Ecuador’s *Bachillerato Técnico* (BT) or secondary technical education (STE) that we have been actively involved in since 2011. As such, authoring the paper occasioned critical reflection on choices made, just as it generated deliberation on potential future developments. Conversely, analysing the case of Ecuador incited discussion about the pathways to TVET transformation proposed in Shanghai.

1.2. Importance of the case

Personal involvement aside, we would argue that there are compelling reasons to study the case of Ecuador. For one, the recent reform of the country’s STE is part of the much wider political agenda of *Buen Vivir*. *Buen Vivir* can be read as Ecuador’s answer to mainstream sustainable development discourse and, as the next section highlights, it implies transformative shifts in state – society – market – nature relationships that go beyond the propositions made in global fora such as the Shanghai Congress. Therefore, we can expect the case of Ecuador to push against the conceptual and normative boundaries of the three lenses and integrated approach proposed by international experts and policymakers.

In addition, Ecuador provides a particularly interesting laboratory to assess the transformation of TVET governance, which is the topic of this paper. In many circumstances, improving TVET governance is the most important necessary condition for successful TVET reform. Some specialists go as far as arguing that the governance of the transformation process towards TVET for sustainable human development is “perhaps even more important in the long term than the content of the reforms”

(Marope et al., 2015: 190). Part of the *Buen Vivir* agenda is to consolidate democratic governance and encourage the active involvement of individuals and collectives in major decision-making. The STE policy process has created multiple sites for stakeholder involvement, thus allowing us to gain special insight in the benefits and challenges this entails.

2. TVET for sustainable development

2.1. *Buen Vivir* – Ecuador’s answer to “sustainable development”

Across Latin America the discourse of sustainable development resonates deeply with indigenous cultures and recent political evolutions. In Ecuador it is echoed in the notion of *Buen Vivir*, itself rooted in the worldview of the Kichwa (*Sumak Kawsay*), which describes a way of doing things that is community-centric, ecologically balanced and culturally sensitive. *Buen Vivir* is not easily captured in other languages, and the associations provoked by its English pendant – Good Living – do not necessarily do justice to the vision that is behind it.

The Ecuadorian constitution embraces the concept of *Buen Vivir* since its reform in 2008. Subsequently, it informed both the *Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir* (PNBV 2009-2013) or National Plan for Good Living and its follow-up version (PNBV 2013-2017). Since then, it guides the government in its efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality while envisioning radical changes in the country’s economic matrix.

Good Living is the style of life that enables happiness and the permanency of cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equality, equity and solidarity. It is not the quest for opulence or infinite economic growth.

(SENPLADES, 2013: 14)

Buen Vivir constitutes a significant departure from the neoliberal outlook of the Washington Consensus, which shaped the dominant development paradigm of the past. What is more, though, *Buen Vivir* entails a profound critique of mainstream sustainable development discourse of which the Shanghai Consensus and the SDGs can be considered hallmarks (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). For instance, the economic perspective on TVET described in *Unleashing the Potential*, continues to put forward sustained economic growth and wealth accumulation as end goals. Normatively, these ambitions do not sit well with *Buen Vivir*. Even more, *Buen Vivir* also goes beyond the emerging discourse of the green economy that forms an integral part of the environmental sustainability lens for (re)orienting TVET transformation. Proponents of the green economy may acknowledge the need for a better balance between humans and their natural environment, but they usually still start from the idea of humans as an ontologically superior entity that “utilizes” nature for the satisfaction of human needs and wants. To this end, economic growth should continue, albeit in a low carbon, energy efficient form. *Buen Vivir*, on the other hand, inspired a constitution that frames humans as an integral part of nature and gives nature the right to exist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and processes (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). The conceptual rupture with “business as usual” is so fundamental, that some refer to *Buen Vivir* as “post-development” or as an alternative to development (Escobar, 2012).

Nevertheless, the PNBV 2013-2017 does translate the abstract notion of *Buen Vivir* into concrete socio-economic solutions (Ruttenberg, 2013). The national development plan contains two strategic pillars – the strategy for the eradication of poverty and the strategy to transform the productive structure – each broken down into a set of ambitious public policy objectives. These 12 objectives range from fostering social and territorial equity and cohesion in diversity (Objective 2) to improving the capacities and potentialities of the citizens (Objective 4), promoting a healthy and sustainable environment (Objective 7) and guaranteeing stable, just and dignified employment in its diverse forms (Objective 9). As [Figure 1](#) illustrates, the practical way to reach these objectives is then laid out in sectoral policies.



Figure 1: Coordination of the National Participatory Planning System (Source: SENPLADES, 2013: 28)

The depth and breadth of transformation that is envisioned by the Ecuadorian government no doubt challenges the outlook of the SDGs or the Shanghai Consensus. But it also poses a challenge for implementation. How *Buen Vivir* can be put into practice, and to what extent, are questions that have no definitive answers yet. The process of transformation is relatively young, multi-faceted, and ongoing. To lift a corner of the veil, this paper examines the formulation and implementation of one specific sectoral policy: the sectoral policy for secondary technical education.

2.2. Securing TVET's place in the *Buen Vivir* agenda

The place of TVET in the government's *Buen Vivir* agenda was not a given. It had to be carved out. The Ministry of Education outlined the contours in the *Plan Decenal de Educación* (2006-2015). This Ten-year Education Plan was opened up to broad national debate and approved by national referendum in 2006. Predating the constitutional reform, however, the Plan did not cite *Buen Vivir* yet and its eight policies paid little attention to TVET. A few years later, in 2011, the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural* (LOEI) did take *Buen Vivir* as its frame of reference. But it, too, placed a strong focus on general education. The LOEI extended basic education to 10 years, followed by a three-year common core *Bachillerato General Unificado* (BGU). Besides the common general education courses, which constitute the majority of the curriculum at this stage, students can opt for courses in *Bachillerato Técnico* (BT) or *Bachillerato en Ciencias* (BC). Afterwards, graduates that followed BT can opt for an additional year of practical specialization in a priority economic sector, called *Bachillerato Técnico Productivo* (BTP).

Geared towards the vision of a knowledge society driven by innovation and advanced technology, the original intent of the BGU was to provide all secondary education students with equal opportunities to enter into higher education. However, this way the position of secondary education *vis-à-vis* the world of work became less tangible. Stronger integration of TVET into general education policy also led to a decrease in the number of technical hours in the curriculum. TVET suffered what could be called benign neglect within the large-scale education reform that the Ministry had embarked on. To remedy this situation, the Sub-Secretariat for Education Foundations and the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB), a partner to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education for nearly 25 years, embarked on a process that culminated in the formulation of a sectoral policy for STE. Preparations started in 2013, leading to the validation of the *Propuesta de Política Pública para Bachillerato Técnico* (short: *Propuesta*) in 2015.

The process followed the guidelines in the *Manual para Formulación de Políticas Públicas Sectoriales* of the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES, 2009). This manual calls for a two-fold justification of each sectoral policy. There has to be evidence that a policy is needed; and linkages need to be established with one or both of the two strategic pillars of the PNBV – the strategy for the eradication of poverty and / or the strategy to transform the productive structure. While the next section treats the evidence base that was built, here we take a closer look at how the contribution of the *Bachillerato Técnico* to the implementation of the two strategies was demonstrated. Basically, this involved identifying those objectives, policies and goals of the PNBV the realization of which STE could justifiably be instrumental in.

Figure 2 gives an overview of all the linkages with the PNBV included in the *Propuesta*. Viewing these linkages through the three lenses for analysing the transformation of TVET and holding them against the broader *Buen Vivir* agenda, we note some interesting tendencies. With the luxury of hindsight, we would also contend that the conceptual associations that were established are as significant as those about which the STE policy remains silent.

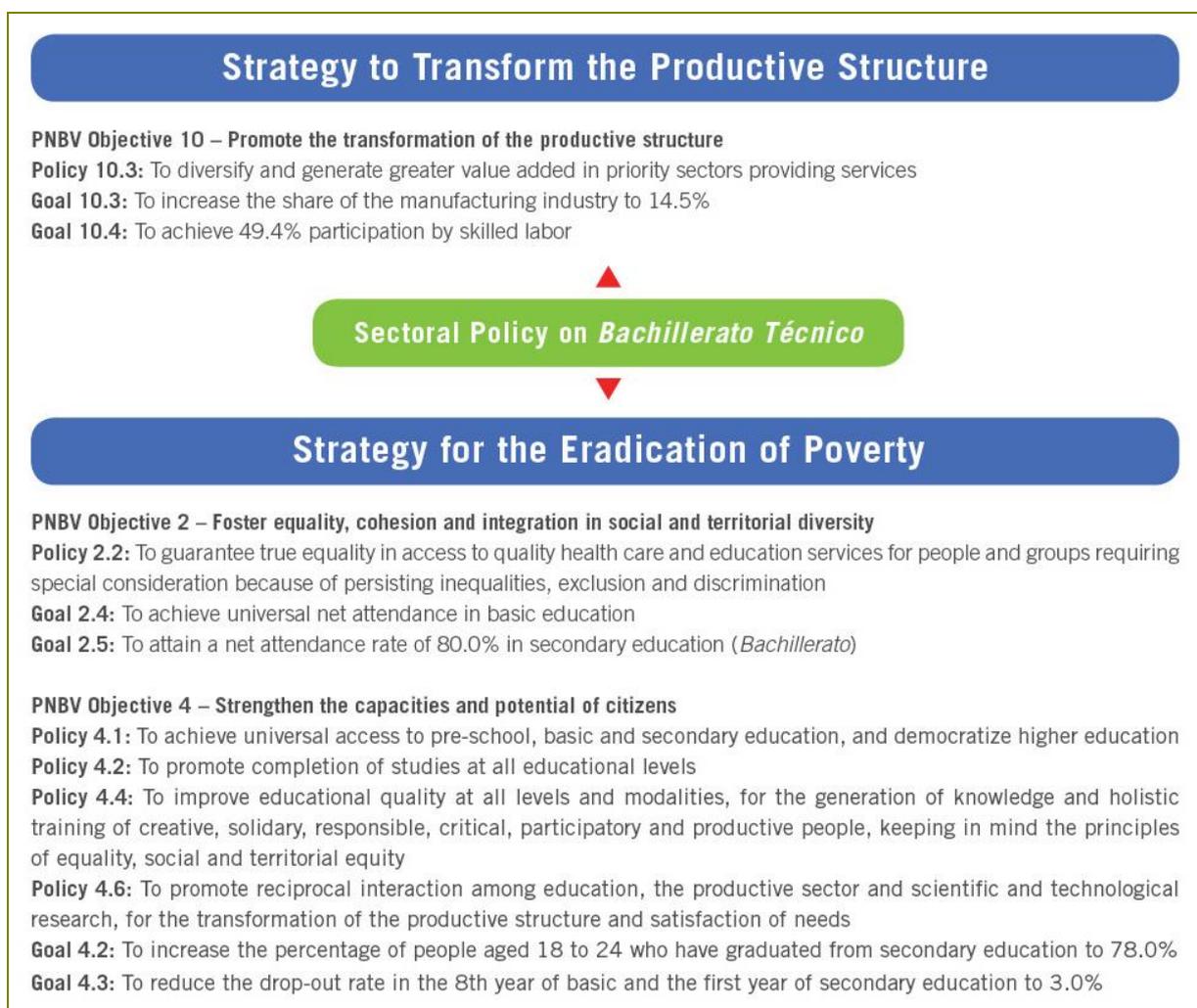


Figure 2: Linkages between STE and PNBV 2013-2017 in *Propuesta de Política Pública para Bachillerato Técnico*

The economic lens directs our attention to the linkages with PNBV Objective 10 and Policy 4.6. The explicit reference to the PNBV’s call for “reciprocal interaction among education and the productive sector (...) for the transformation of the productive structure and the satisfaction of needs” clearly evokes economic demands for “responsive” TVET systems. Indeed, it almost appears to be shorthand for the economic perspective’s mention of “building stronger bridges between the TVET system and

the world of work in order to match skills provision with the current needs of labour markets, and to anticipate their future ones” and of “questions regarding the extent in which TVET responds to the needs of individuals and communities” (UNESCO, online). The fact that the *Propuesta* does not explicitly refer to PNBV Objective 9 to explain its *raison d'être*, seems to be an innocuous oversight. This objective guarantees stable, just and dignified employment in its diverse forms and embraces policies and goals that are quite relevant, such as strengthening vocational education and training in coordination with the world of work and increased productivity (Policy 9.5), reducing youth unemployment by 15.0% (Goal 9.3) and achieving 21.0% of workers trained (Goal 9.6) (SENPLADES, 2013: 77). These issues are indeed addressed in the *Propuesta*, just not in the chapter that explains the links to the PNBV.

The equity perspective's concern with tackling social inequities and exclusion is reflected in the connection that is made between the *Bachillerato Técnico* and PNBV Objective 2, which is to foster equality, cohesion and integration in social and territorial diversity. The link to Policy 2.2's guarantee that education services be made accessible to people and groups requiring special consideration because of persisting inequalities, exclusion and discrimination is no far cry from the notion, highlighted through the equity lens, that TVET should promote the skills of all learners, irrespective of gender, class, ethnicity, age or other social characteristics. The emphasis on the universalization of access in Policy 4.1 and the principles of “equality, social and territorial equity” that guide Policy 4.4 are likewise noteworthy from an equity point of view.

At the same time, links to *Buen Vivir* objectives, policies and goals that call for strong sustainability are absent. Strong sustainability, which ultimately acknowledges the rights of nature (Barry, 2011), may permeate the PNBV, but the STE policy does not explicitly include the environmental dimension of the *Buen Vivir* agenda. The *Propuesta* does not pick up that at least one PNBV policy offers a pertinent starting point for a reflection on the matter. Under PNBV Objective 7, to guarantee the rights of Nature and promote environmental sustainability globally, Policy 7.4 seeks to promote the generation of bio-knowledge as an alternative to producing commodities for export. By not articulating these conceivable linkages to environmental sustainability, the *Propuesta* reconstructs and narrows down the *Buen Vivir* agenda. The planned revision of the STE policy at the end of 2016 could provide a useful opportunity to revisit and integrate the concern for environmental sustainability.

This is important because sectoral policies offer concrete handles to line Ministries when they deliver programs and services to the public. At least in part, the way in which *Buen Vivir* is put into practice depends on the way in which the agenda is taken up in sectoral policies such as the *Propuesta* and the linkages that are either established or overlooked when the formulation of these policies is justified.

3. Transforming TVET governance

3.1. Improving the evidence base

The formulation of the STE policy not only had to be justified in terms of its importance to the PNBV. Amidst the many priorities that the government faces, the need for particular policy attention to STE also had to be justified on the basis of evidence about the sector's present situation. Evidence, in other words, can trigger the need for a policy. It is not without reason that the Shanghai Consensus called on governments to "reinforce frameworks and instruments to improve the collection of quantitative and qualitative evidence relevant to the formulation of the national policy agenda" (UNESCO, 2012: 4).

At the same time, it is well known that TVET data are globally weaker than general education data. Simon McGrath and Rosemary Lugg's quip about "the unbearable lightness of VET data" (McGrath & Lugg, 2012: 700) certainly applied to the case of Ecuador, when the Sub-Secretariat for Education Foundations and VVOB started on their journey. Available education data were not disaggregated for TVET and (even) about the supply-side of TVET little was known. It was decided to undertake an in-depth TVET census in Zone 4, one of the largest educational zones of the country. To be precise, the census only looked at formal three-year STE – *Bachillerato Técnico*, in other words – which explains why, afterwards, the *Propuesta* does not cover the entire TVET sector either.¹ Data were collected on the characteristics of schools, STE supply, school leaders, teachers and students.² The findings were telling.

In terms of preferred trades, 67% of the students could be found in only four disciplines – accounting, accounting and administration, ICT, and agricultural production; less than 5% of the students were in tourism; and less than 10% in an industrial trade. This in a region with a beautiful coastline with plenty of tourist attractions, a major port and one of the largest oil refineries in the country. A closer look at the gender disaggregated student data also showed a clear distinction between "male" and "female" professions.

The most populated trades are not necessarily the best equipped, it turned out. Only 67% of the schools that offer accounting and 69% of those that offer accounting and administration indicate having related equipment, for instance. The situation of schools offering agricultural production seems better: 91% signal the presence of equipment. But when the census dug deeper, quality issues were revealed: only 27% of the workshops for agricultural production met the criteria for being considered in "good" condition, an additional 46% is in "fair" condition and 27% is "poor". Sections like air conditioning maintenance or kitchen operations are quite well equipped, though they attract only a tiny fraction of BT students in Zone 4.

About the situation of the teachers, the following was brought to light: 57.4% of the technical teachers in STE have a temporary contract, versus 48.1% of their colleagues who teach general subjects; 54.3% of the technical teachers have enjoyed higher education in a technical discipline, but do not

¹ Besides the formal BGU, the LOEI also recognizes "extra-ordinary" education that aims to provide adapted programs to early leavers of education and training, allowing them to obtain the level of basic and then secondary education. "Extra-ordinary" education also includes a vocational strand.

² The following data were collected: School – General data // Type of school – public, private, ...; *Bachillerato en Ciencias* also offered or not; time of day classes are held; follow-up systems of graduates; availability and quality of infrastructure and equipment; TVET supply // no. and type of TVET programs offered; opportunities for workplace learning and type of enterprises that offers workplace learning to students; School leaders (*rector* and *vice rector*) // Characteristics: m/f; age; level and type of diploma; type of contract; how they entered the profession; Teachers // No. of teachers; characteristics: m/f; age; level and type of diploma (technical & pedagogical); type of contract; no. and type of courses / modules taught; Students // No. of students (m/f) per type of TVET program; entrance / completion / drop-out rates.

possess any pedagogical diploma; and 8.3% of all STE teachers have no higher education diploma whatsoever, neither technical nor pedagogical. Young, male teachers lack qualifications more often than their female colleagues.

The STE census had two immediate effects: it set in motion the process for formulating an STE policy; and it inspired the integration of student and teacher-related data in the databases of the Ministry, so that by now such data have become available at a national level. Having justified the need for an STE policy, the team of the *Sub-Secretariat for Education Foundations* and VVOB embarked on a broader analysis of the state of affairs of STE – the so-called “diagnostic phase” as per the *Manual para Formulación de Políticas Públicas Sectoriales*. To complement the STE census, additional evidence was collected through the *Archivo Maestro de Instituciones Educativas* (AMIE), stakeholder interviews in Zona 4 (see 3.2), existing national and international studies, etc.

Parallel to this diagnostic phase, a second study was conducted – it, too, inspired by the evidence that had come out of the STE census. The data on the spread of the student populations across the different trades on offer in Zone 4 had heightened suspicions of a serious disconnect between the supply of and demand for skills. For the Ministry of Education this was a matter of great concern. It was no secret that Ecuadorian youth face high levels of underemployment and unemployment, as well as precarious working conditions. Despite enjoying an increasing number of years in education, the jobs that Ecuadorian youth occupy are often low skilled (ILO, 2013, 2015). It was also known that in Ecuador more employers report that workforce education is the main constraint to operations than in countries with a comparable pro capita gross domestic product (Lyon et al., 2012). This suggests skills mismatches, which could be tackled – at least in part – by improving the relevance of TVET supply. The PNBV connected this to the transformation of the productive matrix and the need to overcome dependence on natural resource exports: “In Ecuador, constructing this new economic system must necessarily entail a change in the way people train for production and achieve insertion in the world” (SENPLADES, 2013: 49).

To gain a better understanding of the situation, a methodology was designed to examine the disconnection between supply and demand. The methodology involved comparing the census data on STE supply in Zone 4 – and particularly the data on the spread of students over the different trades as a proxy of STE graduates’ skills – with the best available data on labour market demands. These “best available data” were of two kinds: primary data collected through interviews with 200 businesses purposefully sampled from the National Census of Economic Activity; and secondary data on demand for technical education drawn from the National Population Census (MINEDUC & VVOB, 2013). Because different data were used the two gap analyses yielded slightly different findings. In essence, though, they pointed in the same direction on several major issues.

For instance, both revealed insufficient supply of graduates from industrial sections, such as construction, furniture making and car mechanics; and both uncovered an over-supply of ICT and administration-related skills. When it comes to agricultural production, the gap analysis using interview data showed an over-supply and the one using secondary data from the National Population and Household Census does not. In this case, the latter was considered more reliable. Agricultural enterprises were underrepresented in the sample of businesses that were interviewed for the first gap analysis, because many are informal and cannot be found in the National Census of Economic Activity from which the sample was drawn.

The STE census and the gap analyses clearly provided the Ministry of Education with more solid evidence on which to base sector policy priorities. This, however, brings us to the next question, and that is, to what extent this evidence yielded *actionable* insights? In what way does this improved evidence base help the Ministry of Education ensure improved STE supply and better services? These “true” insights, we would argue, have to be created and developed, preferably in collaboration with those parties that have a stake in the implementation of the sector policy at hand.

3.2. Involving stakeholders in policy development

The 2012 Shanghai Consensus calls on governments to strengthen TVET governance by “creating, as appropriate, approaches and frameworks that involve representatives of enterprises, workers, learners and civil society, including young people” (UNESCO, 2012). Citizen participation is certainly high on the agenda of the Ecuadorian government, as is the notion of bringing educational services closer to citizens and aligning them more closely with local cultural and economic realities (Bellettini et al., 2015).

The *Nuevo Modelo de Gestión Educativa* or New Model of Educational Management launched in 2010 involves the deconcentration process from the Ministry of Education to nine zones, 140 educational districts and 1,117 circuits. This new management model affords new opportunities for citizen participation in policy development. More so, the *Manual para Formulación de Políticas Públicas Sectoriales* explicitly foresees stakeholder involvement in all stages of the process, from the diagnostic phase to formulation, validation and appropriation. In the case of the *Propuesta*, which has just passed validation, stakeholder participation has been particularly strong in the diagnostic phase.

First of all, interviews were held with key staff from a number of so-called coordinating Ministries (i.e., the Ministries of Strategic Sectors and of Knowledge and Human Talent), as well as several social and productive sector Ministries (i.e., the Ministries of Economic and Social Inclusion, and of Labour Relations), plus the Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. This way, coherence with other policies was ensured and issues for further inter-ministerial cooperation could be identified, such as the development of a national qualifications framework to encompass the entire TVET sector.

TVET policies require more than inter-ministerial dialogue and cooperation, however, as Marope et al. (2015: 190) point out; “they also call for inputs from employers, workers, entrepreneurs, providers, students and others.” As the STE census data had been collected in Zone 4, it was decided to hold stakeholder workshops and follow-up interviews in the two provinces of this zone – Santo Domingo de los Tsachillas and Manabí. The workshops invited BT students, parents, teachers, school leaders and civil servants from the zonal and district levels. Employers and entrepreneurs did not participate in these workshops, as their insights were being collected in the context of the gap analyses that were carried out in parallel.

The workshops not only confirmed the findings of the STE census, they also allowed the policy team to sharpen the priorities of the STE policy. Three priorities could be identified; the last of which is directly attributable to the stakeholder workshops that were held:

- Rationalize the supply of STE, taking into account its relevance to local productive dynamics.
- Increase the quality of STE supply to facilitate labour market entrance and the creation of entrepreneurial projects – this by ensuring the presence of trained teachers and school leaders as well as adequate infrastructure, workshops and equipment.
- Improve STE management systems at all levels, bearing in mind criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

3.3. Expanding partnerships

Dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the productive sector in fact predated the national STE policy formulation process. Since 2011, ties had been increasingly strengthened, especially at the local level. In the nine largest cities of the country (one per zone), there had been meetings with the local Chambers of Commerce and Production, followed by zonal conferences where employers and technical secondary schools exchanged information on topics of common interest. These contacts have grown into close collaboration on the conception of occupational profiles – the basis of the

competency-based curriculum that is designed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. However, the STE census also suggested a need to expand the collaboration with employers on very practical issues situated at the micro-level of institutional planning. For instance, the census revealed a lack of opportunities for students to engage in appropriate workplace learning while still in training: 38% of STE schools in Zone 4 reported not being able to find sufficient companies for workplace learning for their students. Strangely, the census also found that 25% of all companies offering traineeships were car mechanic workshops, while only seven schools in the zone offered this section. This, too, testified to the difficult transition from school to world of work that Ecuadorian youth face.

As good rapport with the productive sector had been built over the previous years, these findings encouraged discussion on new types of partnership between district- and zonal level staff from the Ministry of Education, STE schools and employers. In 2014, representatives from the Regional Technological Centre (RTC) in East Flanders (Belgium) were invited to feed the discussion with examples of tried and tested approaches. The Flemish RTCs are provincial entities that stimulate public-private partnership between schools and businesses in specific areas such as infrastructure and equipment, student apprenticeships and internships / refresher courses for teachers – all issues of high interest to the Ecuadorian stakeholders. The exchange proved very inspiring: three priority issues were identified – improving technical equipment; improving educational production units; and workplace learning – as were the various types of alliances that would allow stakeholders to work together on these issues in a cost-efficient manner. Beyond expectation, STE schools also found ways to work together to mutually re-inforce specific trades, for example by sharing equipment and human resources. [Figure 3](#) below gives a schematic overview of the various modalities that were established.

In the course of 2014 and 2015, several pilot projects started, with districts, STE schools and employers working together. Three sections received priority attention – metal construction; agriculture and livestock; and electrical installations. In this first stage, two modalities have proven particularly popular: mobile equipment and relocating training. Thanks to collaboration with enterprises such as Indura and Tecnimetro for metal construction, Tecnoban, Universidad UTE and Asogan for agriculture and livestock, and Schneider Electric for electrical installations, more than 2,000 students have already or will soon enjoy better quality STE and close to 100 technical teachers have or will benefit from continuous professional development opportunities.

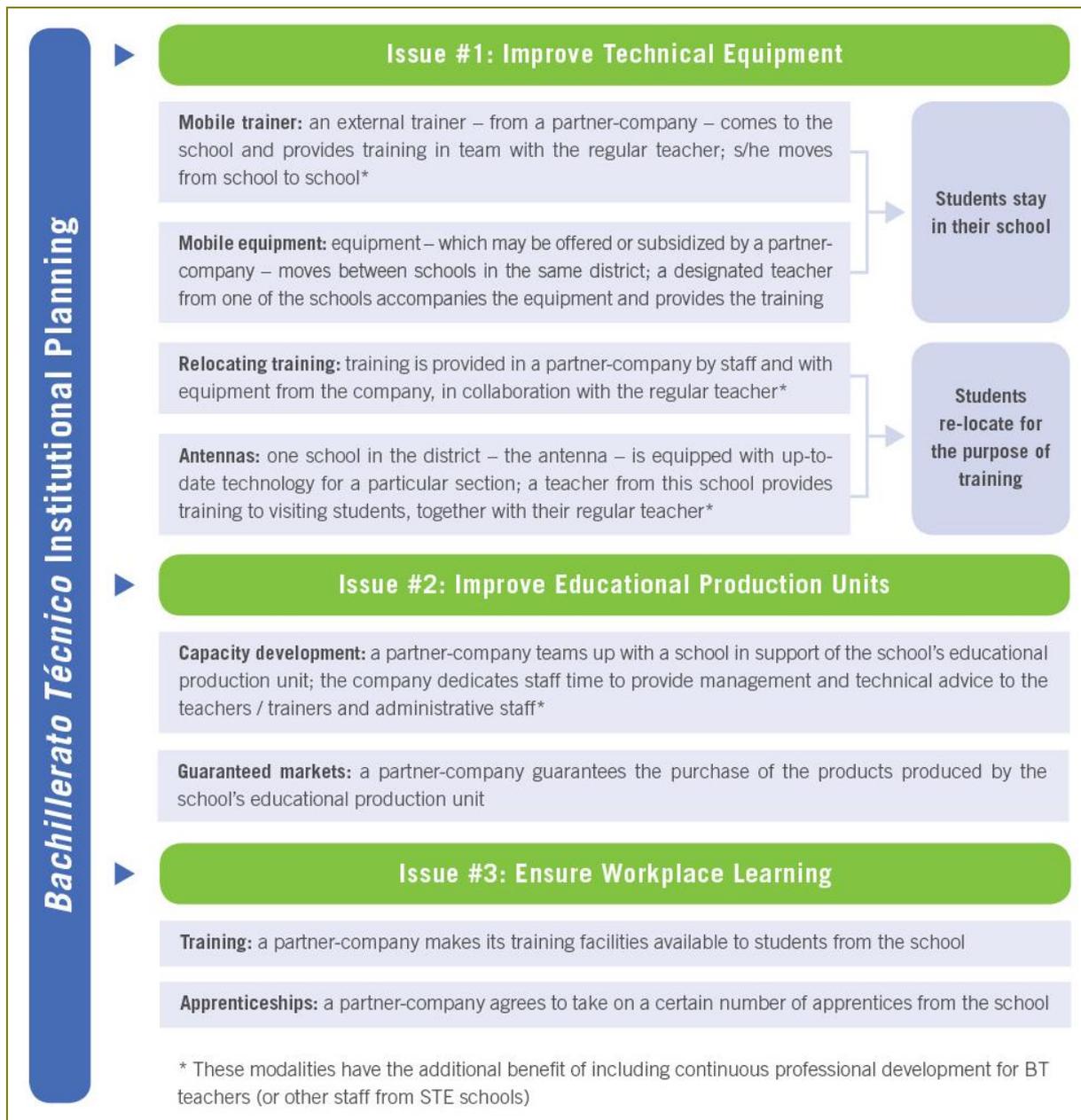


Figure 3: Modalities for Public-Private Partnerships in STE

At the same time, this expansion of partnerships does confirm our finding that in the area of STE reform, *Buen Vivir* has become a predominantly economic agenda.

4. Conclusion

Ecuador's *Bachillerato Técnico* reform provides an interesting case to hold against the framework for TVET transformation that emerged from the Third International Congress on TVET. The reform is embedded in the broader political agenda of *Buen Vivir*, which challenges key points of mainstream sustainable development discourse captured in the Shanghai Consensus, such as the advisability of continuous economic growth and wealth accumulation and the real loss involved in exploiting nature for this purpose. Concurrently with this tendency to interrogate mainstream sustainable development, *Buen Vivir* poses a challenge for implementation. It promises deep and broad transformation that requires long-term commitment and skilful systemic change management in the meantime. For this reason, it has been particularly interesting to investigate the aspect of governance as part of the BT reform.

The past few years have seen major strides forward: the evidence base for policy-making has been broadened and strengthened in a systematic manner; stakeholder involvement has improved; and partnerships for policy design and implementation have been expanded. We also note, however, that these advances have been made while the *Buen Vivir* agenda was narrowed down to a predominantly economic narrative. This is reflected in the type of data that is collected to feed the BT policy process as well as in the type of stakeholders that are invited to the table, the priorities set, and the type of partnerships that are established to implement the BT reform.

In a sense, this is to be expected. After all, a lot has been accomplished and only so much can realistically be changed over the course of a few years. But the snapshot of the first few years of Ecuador's BT reform in this paper is an early warning as well. To make sure the economic perspective does not become the unique perspective, it is important to further open up the policy process to a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. environmental agencies, representatives of disadvantaged groups) and to forge new partnerships that move the *Bachillerato Técnico* from "skills for work" to "skills for work and life".

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