26 BRIEFING PAPER

Preventing migration with vocational education? Understanding the migration – vocational education nexus

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Contents

Index of Figures

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Education Monitoring Report
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MISMES	Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PPP	Public Private Partnership
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD / US$	US Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Abstract

In many parts of the world, migration has become a controversially debated issue and a policy priority. Indeed, also development policies are increasingly including efforts to prevent migration with foreign aid. Education and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) are a part of the toolkit. Yet, while political attention is high, research on the potential role of education and TVET in mitigating migration pressure is scarce. Existing findings suggest that higher levels of education might be among the major drivers for emigration rather than the opposite.

Keywords: International migration, TVET, education, development

1. Introduction

In many parts of the world, migration has become a controversially debated issue and a policy priority. Growing migration flows have also had an impact on the international development community with development policies increasingly referring to migration. Specifically, recent years have seen the booming of 'tackling the root causes' policy approaches in an effort to impede migration by means of foreign aid policies. Education and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) have been identified as an essential part of the toolkit.

Policy discourse in donor countries commonly points to TVET's key role in enabling income-generating employment, economic productivity and growth as the basis for improved livelihoods and decreased motivation to emigrate. Often, however, this policy discourse responds to the internal political climate prevailing in donor countries, rather than to robust research findings on the complex relationship between TVET and migration.

Indeed, while political attention is high, research on the potential role of education and even more so of TVET in mitigating migration pressure is scarce. However, existing findings suggest that higher levels of education might be among the major drivers for emigration rather than the opposite. Likewise, within the academic community, a sceptical approach prevails with regard to the effectiveness of both migration and development policies that are targeted at reducing migration flows.

This briefing paper aims at summarising the existing academic and policy debate with a view to encouraging further research and to strengthening a more knowledge-based discussion on this controversial topic. Eventually, we would like to draw attention to the key question of whether and if so how TVET can support a constructive interplay of migration and development policies.

First, we will discuss basic concepts of migration, education and TVET as well as how they relate to each other. We will secondly summarise the academic discussion on drivers for migration focusing on education and TVET and present some key lessons derived from policy practice. Conclusions will sum up.

2. What do we mean by "Migration"

To date, there is no internationally agreed and legally binding definition of who a migrant is. The IOM (International Organization for Migration) distinguishes between an inclusivist approach that views the term "migrant" as an umbrella term covering all forms of movements. This stands in contrast to a residualist approach that excludes those who move due to wars and persecution. Migration as defined by the IOM means „the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State"[1].

Since migration is a multidimensional phenomenon, the academic and policy literature usually works with classifications of migrants. Frequently, it defines different types depending on (a) destination (international or internal); (b) duration; (c) reasons (e.g. economic, political, ecological); and (d) choice (voluntary or forced) (Waldinger 2015, quoted in Wedekind et al. 2019: 7).

However, in recent years such classifications have been increasingly questioned, since categories are often overlapping. Instead, the term "mixed migration" is used to designate various and changing groups of migrants[2]. In the same vein, some researcher have moved

[1] See: https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#Migrant
[2] See: http://www.mixedmigration.org/about/

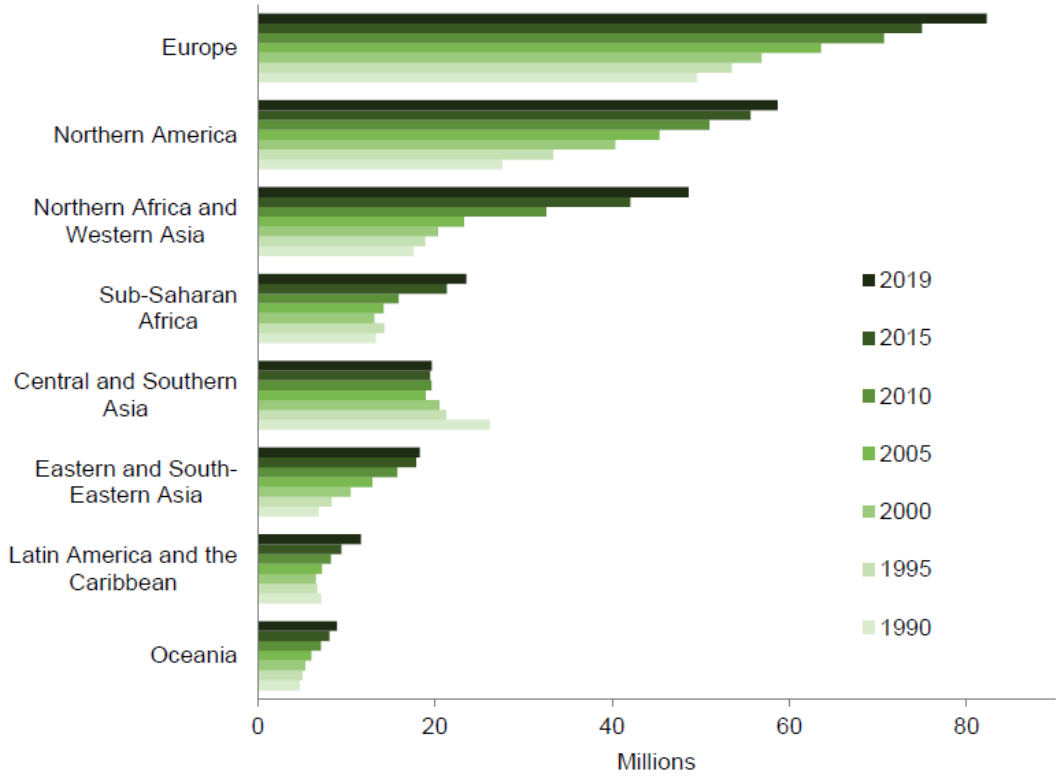
beyond classic dichotomies such as forced versus voluntary migration in an effort to draw attention to the processes of migration that might include changing motivations of undertaking and continuing emigration processes (Mixed Migration Centre 2018: 80).

Since the political discourse focusses on international migration from the South to OECD countries without clearly distinguishing between asylum seekers and labour migrants, this paper will apply a broad definition of migration in analysing mainly international migration in a South-North direction.

According to UN data, there were an estimated 272 million international migrants in 2019 (UNDESA 2019: 3; IOM 2019: 3). 52 per cent of these were male and 74 per cent were of working age (20-64 years). In 2019, India had the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.5 million), while the USA remained the top destination country for international migrants (50.7 million). The global refugee population amounted to 25.9 million in 2018 (IOM 2019: 3). As for labour migration, there was a slight decrease of the share of females in the last years with 58 per cent male vs 42 per cent female of the 164 million migrant workers around the world in 2017. In 2013, the share had been 56 per cent versus 44 per cent, respectively (ibid.: 34).

Since 2013 the number of migrant workers in high-income countries has slightly decreased, while it increased in upper-middle income countries. Contrary to conventional perceptions, a significant share of international migration occurs between countries in the South and the Gulf region (Northern Africa and Western Asia), which experienced the largest relative increase since 1990 (UNDESA 2019: 6).

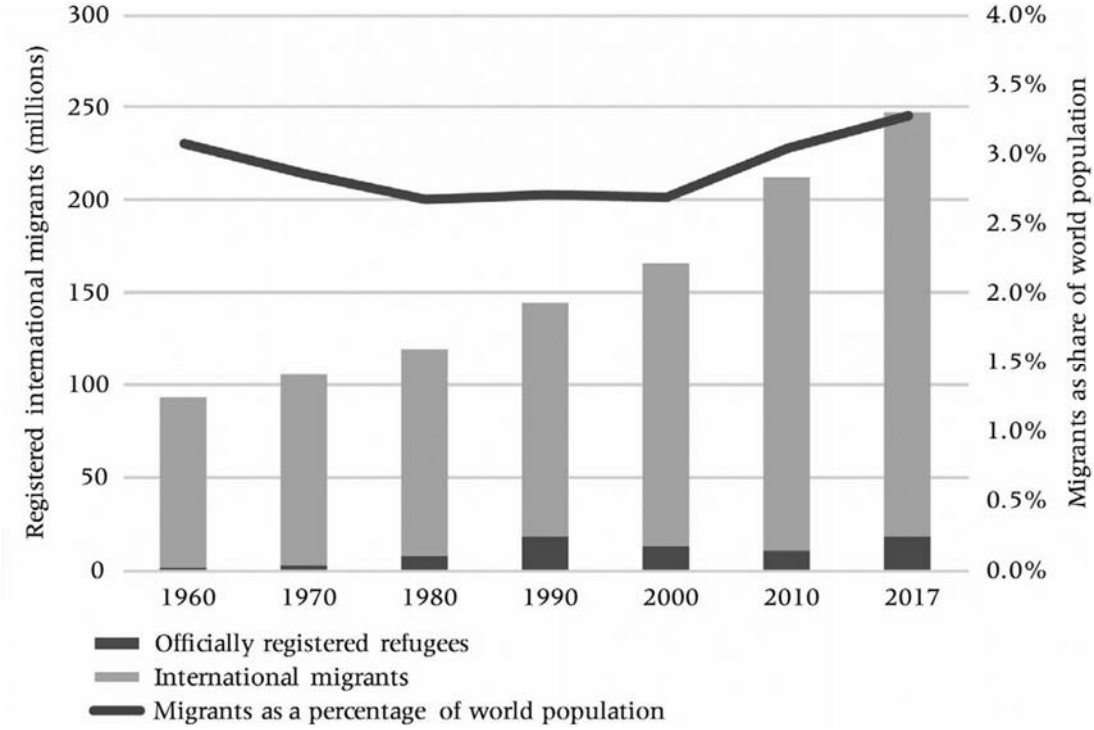
Figure 1: Number of international migrants by region of destination, 1990-2019 (in millions)



Source: UNDESA 2019: 6

However, de Haas et al. (2019) refute the common belief that migration has accelerated and diversified with globalisation. Conversely, they point to a relatively stable number of international migrants between 1950 and 2017 of between 2.7 and 3.3 per cent of the world population (de Haas et al. 2019: 888), as set out in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: International migrants and registered refugees, as a percentage of world population, 1960-2017



Source: de Haas et al 2019: 888

In addition, they emphasise that patterns of international migration reflect the asymmetric nature of economic globalisation processes over the past decades rather than of globalisation per se. Coming from increasingly diverse non-European countries of origin, international migrants have concentrated in a relatively small number of countries in North America, Europe and the Gulf region. In terms of immigration policies, de Haas at el point to increasingly selective patterns privileging skilled and wealthy migrants as well as those from regional blocks, while maintaining barriers for low-skilled migrants and asylum seekers (de Haas et al. 2019: 893).

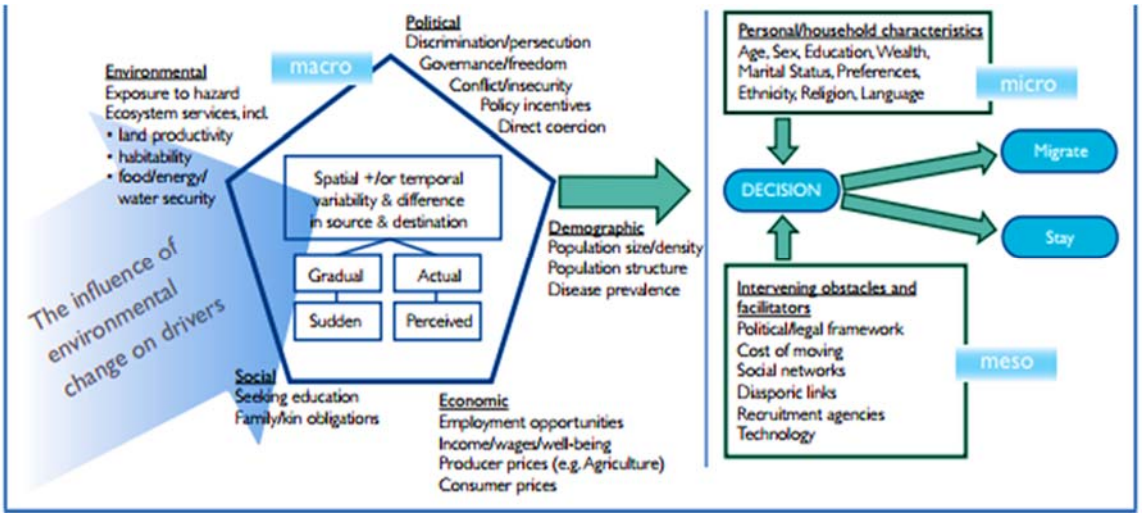
Migration mitigation policies usually aim at tackling the presumed root causes of migration. Following Faist (2000, quoted in Wedekind et al. 2019: 7; see also Kuhnt 2019), theories on these root causes can be classified into macro-, meso-, and micro-level theories (see also Kuhnt 2019). Macro-level theories discuss structural phenomena such as push and pull factors. These include economic (e.g. employment), political (e.g. war or persecution), environmental or social factors. Micro-level theories analyse migration decisions from the perspective of an individual person. Drivers include education, gender, age, wealth, marital status and others. Meso-level theories aim at bridging the preceding levels focussing on the relational dimensions of migration (e.g. networks).

Recently, a number of researchers have started to underline the importance of nuance in analysing migration and its causes (e.g. de Haas et al. 2019; Mixed Migration Centre 2018).

This is part of a more general effort to add to an understanding of migration as a constituent part of human development rather than as a problem. Concepts such as migrants' "aspirations" and "capabilities", rather than the classical terms "push-and-pull" factors, facilitate a more complex picture of migration processes (de Haas 2014). Similarly, these authors argue that terms like "migration determinants" misleadingly suggest linear causal relationships between structural factors and actual migration processes, disregarding both the key role of human agency and the often mediating role of contextual factors (Czaika/Reinprecht 2020: 4).

It becomes apparent that migration is a multi-causal and multi-dimensional phenomenon. A multiplicity of factors at different levels and the various ways of their interaction shape individual decisions to migrate as set out in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Migration as a multi-causal and multi-dimensional process



Source: Black et al. 2011: 5

3. Development, education and migration

Since the 1940s, academics and policy makers have nurtured the idea that development cooperation can be a tool to reduce migration flows from poor into rich countries (Clemens 2014: 1ff). This belief has continued to influence the US and EU aid and trade policies. For instance, the North American Free Trade Agreement stirred expectations to significantly reduce Mexican immigration into the USA. The European Union's migration policy has increasingly followed the idea of accompanying traditional security policies with development policies aimed at deterring migration (ibid.).

Policy efforts were stepped up in recent years due to increased immigration flows and growing political pressure to prevent them. The 2015 European Agenda on Migration (European Commission 2015) assigns an important role to development cooperation. At the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration, the EU member states agreed upon the establishment of an „EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa"[3]. In 2016, the Partnership Framework with Third Countries

[3] See: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en

followed (European Commission 2016). Both initiatives aim at managing migration flows and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displacement with funding provided by the European Development Fund (Funk et al. 2017).

This policy shift has been controversial. Critics fear that using development cooperation tools for migration policy objectives might undermine development principles such as poverty reduction (ibid.). However, the new policy focus is also reflected in the bilateral development policy of EU Member States[4] and will arguably remain influential throughout the coming years.

Many of these policies and programmes include education and TVET components. For instance, the EU Emergency Trust Fund refers to TVET and skills development under its strategic line of action "greater economic and employment opportunities"[5]. TVET also plays a key role in German development cooperation targeting migration[6].

In terms of the relation between migration, education and TVET, relatively little systematic research has been done so far. In the policy field, major actors both in education and migration such as the IOM or UNESCO, while implementing a vast variety of projects, have not developed systematic approaches (UNESCO 2018: 7). In recent years, however, systematic thinking about the relationship between education and migration has gained more prominence. The UNESCO dedicated the Global Education Monitoring Report 2019 to the topic of migration, displacement and education, drawing attention to the educational needs of migrants and refugees with a view to leaving no one behind. The GEM Report 2019 (UNESCO 2018) stresses the complexity of interaction between education and migration. Education impacts migration as much at it is affected by it (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Selected examples of the relationship between education and migration

		Effects of migration/displacement on education	Effects of education on migration/displacement
Origin	Migrants	• Migration leads to education provision challenges in slums. • Education systems need to adjust to the needs of populations moving in seasonal or circular patterns.	• The more educated are more likely to migrate.
	Left behind	• Migration depopulates rural areas and challenges education provision. • Remittances affect education in origin communities. • Parent absence affects children left behind. • Emigration prospects disincentivize investment in education. • New programmes prepare aspiring migrants.	• Emigration of the educated has consequences for development of affected areas, e.g. through brain drain.
Destination	Immigrants and refugees	• Educational attainment and achievement of immigrants and their children usually lag behind natives. • Refugees need to be included in national education systems. • Refugees' right to education needs to be ensured.	• Migrants tend to be overqualified, their skills not fully recognized or utilized, and their livelihoods altered. • Internationalization of tertiary education prompts student mobility.
	Natives	• Diversity in classrooms requires better-prepared teachers, targeted programmes to support new arrivals and prevent segregation, and disaggregated data.	• Formal and non-formal education can build resilient societies and reduce prejudices and discrimination.

Source: UNESCO 2018: 6

[4] For instance the German Special Initiative on Forced Displacement „Addressing root causes – reintegrating refugees, see: https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchtursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche_politik/index.html

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/strategy_en

[6] The Special Initiative on Forced Displacement includes a strong TVET component. In addition, German Development Cooperation runs several other programmes, see: https://www.giz.de/en/ourservices/54734.html

On the other hand, education has also been included into the international migration agenda. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration contains important commitments on education (see Annex I). These include adequate provision of education to migrants, using education as a tool for empowerment and against discrimination as well as investments in skills development and mutual recognition of learning. Interestingly, commitment 18 refers to the creation of conducive conditions for people to live sustainable lives in their own country. This shall be achieved by investments in entrepreneurship, skills development, education and TVET, among others (United Nations General Assembly 2019).

The underlying assumption of these commitments, which are reflected in many development programmes as described above, is that investments in education and TVET will lead to employment, income generation and improved livelihoods, which in turn will reduce pressure on people to leave their home countries. The assumption of a linear causal relationship between education and development, mainly in terms of income generation and productivity, but also with reference to improved health, democratic attitudes, female empowerment and others, has informed education policies in bi- and multilateral development cooperation since decades. This stands in contrast to an academic debate which points to a far more complex relationship between education and development (e.g. King et al. 2007; McGrath 2012; for an overview see Langthaler 2013). Indeed, a number of scholars emphasise mixed and context-dependent effects of investments in education in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction, democratic attitudes or peace and conflict resolution (e.g. Bonal 2007; Colclough 2012; Seitz 2004).

4. TVET – a complex and fragmented field

If general education is far from interacting in a straightforward way with development, TVET is an even more complex and fragmented field.

There is no single definition of TVET, but the understanding about what TVET means is highly context-related and evolving over space and time. As McGrath (2012: 624) points out, "(i)n the broadest sense, VET is conventionally understood as encompassing the myriad forms of learning that are primarily aimed at supporting participation in the worlds-of-work, whether in terms of (re)integration into work or increased effectiveness of those currently defined as being in work". However, he also stresses that any definition of TVET is problematic due to the complexities of defining work.

While general education systems in Europe have developed a certain degree of convergence throughout history, European TVET systems are based on very diverse traditions that continue to shape these systems until today. This results from the fact that TVET systems are strongly intertwined with different forms of social organisation of work[7].

In the Global South, formal TVET systems are mostly inherited from colonial times (Oketch 2007). While they continue to be based on the respective colonial powers' TVET approaches, global TVET policy toolkits, such as National Qualification Frameworks, or reform proposals framed by political interests of donor countries substantially influence contemporary TVET policy making in the Global South (McGrath 2012). At the same time, non-formal and informal traditions of vocational education exist in many developing countries, such as informal apprenticeships in Sub-Saharan Africa or in Afghanistan. These continue to be alive mostly in the informal economy (Oketch 2007; Eichhorst et al. 2012). Consequently, TVET as a system or sub-sector is often highly fragmented. Collective understandings and imaginaries of what constitutes vocational education combine diverse, often contradicting dimensions.

[7] See Brockmann et al. 2011 for a discussion of different European approaches to TVET.

In addition, formal TVET suffers from a low prestige in many countries in the Global South. Often, students and their families consider it as last resort, particularly when there is no access to further academic education. TVET systems are often underfinanced and fragmented, struggle with infrastructure and teacher education and are often insufficiently linked to the labour market. This leads to little or irrelevant practical training and, consequently, low employability of graduates (Oketch 2015, 2007; OECD 2018; Eichhorst et al. 2012).

Unlike the political discourse, the academic debate on TVET and development is less convinced that TVET provision in developing countries necessarily leads to economic growth, employment and rise in income. In particular, it is doubted that TVET is the remedy for mass unemployment. Rather than a technical, TVET is considered a highly political issue (Alla-Mensah et al. 2019: 161).

In terms of the relation between TVET and migration, the academic debate in educational sciences is only incipient. However, while available findings are scarce, it is deemed unlikely that increased TVET provision might lead to reduced emigration pressure. Rather, TVET might help to facilitate increased opportunities for regular migration (Wedekind 2020). This will be further developed below.

5. TVET to prevent migration – what does the literature tell us?

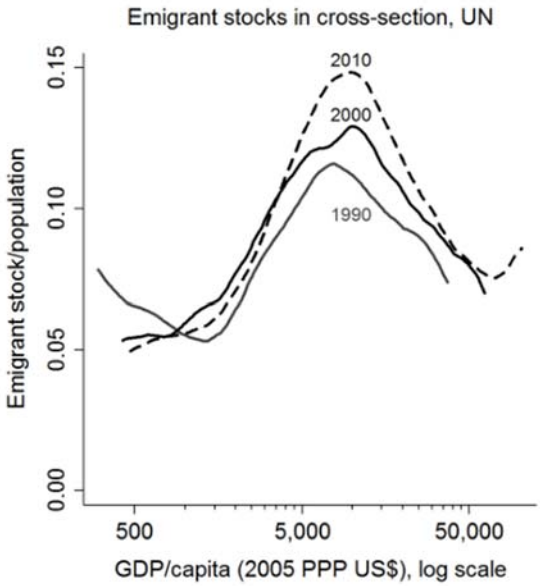
In the educational sciences, research on migration focusses on receiving countries and mostly deals with issues of migrants' integration into receiving societies through TVET, questions of accessing national education and TVET systems and recognition of prior learning (e.g. Wedekind et al. 2019; Alla-Mensah et al. 2019). Research on the particular role of TVET as a driver for migration in countries of origin is scarce, with the exception of a recent study by van Diemen (2019) discussed below.

By contrast, in the economic sciences the impact of development on migration has been an object of study since the 1950s[8]. Pushed by the political agendas in the EU and Northern America, research on the drivers of migration has substantially increased in recent years[9] and increasingly employs interdisciplinary approaches. Much of this work addresses education as one variable in trying to explain the relationship between development and migration. This does, however, not apply to TVET, which is hardly ever a subject treated in migration studies.

Most of the economic literature is based on quantitative analyses of large data sets in trying to identify push-and-pull factors as explanatory determinants for migration. With regard to education, findings from the economic literature arrive at different, often contradicting conclusions. There is a broad consensus[10] on the phenomenon of the "mobility transition" or "migration hump" that was first developed by Wilbur Zelinsky in the 1970s (Zelinsky 1971). The mobility transition is an inverted U-shaped statistical curve indicating that emigration rates increase with real income per capita and only drop after a tipping point has been reached (see Figure 5). As Clemens (2014) points out, analyses of emigrant stock data throughout the second half of the 20th century show that for countries with an income per capita between USD 600 and USD 7,500, an increase in this income leads to enhanced emigration rates. As per capita incomes grow above this level, the pattern reverses. For upper-middle and high income countries, the relationship is negative, i.e. in these countries higher income leads to lower emigration rates.

8 See Clemens 2014 for a short overview.
9 For a recent literature synthesis see Czaika/Reinprecht 2020.
10 See for example Clemens 2014; Magali et al. 2018; de Haas 2007; Schöfberger/Venturi 2016; Clemens/Postel 2017; Dao et al. 2018.

Figure 5: The mobility transition



Source: Clemens 2014: 7

Based on these findings, any attempt to increase levels of income in countries of origin, e.g. through development cooperation, would only lead to more emigration from those countries until they reach the threshold of about PPP USD 7,000. Even assuming the most optimistic growth rates, it would take decades for poor countries to arrive at a negative relationship between increased levels of income and emigration (Clemens 2014: 9; see also de Haas 2007).

There are several theoretical hypotheses to explain the phenomenon of the mobility transition. The most common explanation is that increases in income per capita increase the ability of people to pay for the costs of migration. Demographic explanations point to falling rates of child mortality before rates of fertility fall. This youth bulge can lead to rising unemployment despite economic growth and increase emigration pressure. However, some authors questions the significance of demographic factors for migration processes (e.g. de Haas et al. 2019). Structural change due to enhanced growth rates, in particular the decline of the agricultural sector, can lead to increased migration mostly from rural to urban areas. Yet, it can also enhance international migration. Another hypothesis puts forward rising inequality patterns in the distribution of increased income that act as a driver for emigration. This seems to apply in particular for inequality patterns at community level, rather than at national or international level (ibid.). In addition, changes in immigration barriers play a role. Usually, high-income and highly skilled workers, students or investors more easily obtain immigration visa than their low-income and low-skilled counterparts (Clemens 2014: 10-15; Dao et al. 2018: 90).

In the absence of specific data on TVET, two factors emerge from the above discussion on potential migration drivers that could be used as proxies to analyse the relationship between TVET and migration, i.e. general education and employment. We will briefly discuss both in the remainder of this section.

As the previous theoretical hypothesis suggests, education opportunities both in countries of origin and in destination countries are considered drivers of migration (e.g. Clemens/Postel

2017; Dao et al. 2018; Migali et al. 2018). Opportunities for professional training and further education in destination countries appear to substantially drive high-skilled migration, such as health professionals, while better educational opportunities for oneself or one's children at destination seem to be one driver among others for mostly internal, but also international migration (Czaika/Reinprecht 2020: 16).

As for education in countries of origin, empirical findings point to a lower emigration rate among low-skilled persons than among the better skilled (Dao et al. 2018; Migali et al. 2018). This is confirmed by a recent UNDP study based on extensive interviews among African migrants in the EU (UNDP 2019). Reasons for higher emigration rates among the better-educated include greater ability to finance migration, to gather information and to respond to economic opportunities, better networks and language skills as well as higher aspirations (UNESCO 2018: 38; de Haas et al. 2019: 895; UNDP 2019).

However, there are also divergent findings. In her literature review, Browne (2017) identifies security, livelihood und economic prospects in the countries of destination as main drivers for migration rather than educational opportunities. De Haas et al. (2019: 898) in drawing on different studies suggest that public spending on social services and protection (including public education) in countries of origin can have ambiguous effects. While higher levels of social security may improve standards of living and thereby decrease aspirations to migrate, enhanced access to services can also provide additional resources to finance migration.

A micro-level study by van der Land and Hummel (2013) analyses the impact of education on rural-urban migration flows due to environmental degradation in West Africa. Contrary to their expectations, the authors could not identify higher emigration rates among the better educated. They did, however, observe that motivations for and expectations from migration changed with increasing education levels. While the less educated tended to migrate to the cities in search for work, those with higher education levels did so in order to gain access to further education and TVET opportunities. Even though the authors could not identify any effect of education on the tendency to migrate, they stress that education had a significant effect in reducing people's vulnerability to environmental degradation, regardless of whether they decided to stay or to leave for the cities.

Ambiguous conclusions prevail also with respect to the relation between migration and development policies. As Migali et al. (2018: 50ff) emphasise, since migration drivers are mostly structural, policies might be little effective in reducing migration flows, rather they should have an active role in shaping them (see also Biffl 2016). A number of authors share this general doubt with respect to the effectiveness of policies for reducing migration flows (e.g. Clemens/Postel 2017; Funk et al. 2017; Kuhnt 2019). By contrast, other authors point to positive effects of development policies depending on their sector focus. Education is often included in these analyses.

For instance, Lanati and Thiele (2018a, 2018b) present findings that confirm the emigration-mitigating effect of social service provision. They contend that a negative relationship between migration and development cooperation can be observed, by analysing migration flows rather than migrant stocks. According to them, the sector focus of ODA (Official Development Assistance) funds is decisive for their effect on migration. Improvement of social services (including education) show a statistically significant negative impact on emigration. However, with this effect being very small they underline that only unrealistically high increases in ODA could generate perceivable reductions in migration flows. Consequently, they generally advise against using development cooperation as a migration prevention tool.

Dustmann and Okatenko (2014) also state the potential of improved social services at local level for reducing emigration pressure, while Gamso/Yuldashev (2018a, 2018b) suggest that development cooperation best be concentrated on the improvement of governance, in

particular in rural areas. By contrast, they found no discernible impact of economic and social forms of aid on migration.

Using employment as a proxy for TVET, most literature points to unemployment and unsatisfactory remuneration in the countries of origin as one of the main drivers of migration (Czaika/Reinprecht 2020; Clemens/Postel 2017; Migali et al. 2018; Mixed Migration Centre 2018; Kuhnt 2019). However, there are also opposite dynamics in the case that unemployment leads to poverty, which in turn reduces the propensity to emigrate (Czaika/Reinprecht 2020).

Clemens and Postel (2017: 12) emphasise that although statistically emigration is higher at higher levels of youth unemployment, it would be inadequate to assume that assistance for youth job creation will necessarily reduce emigration rates. In fact, this might be the case in poor countries with very low growth rates, while in growing economies it may not be the case. Similarly, according to a recent UNDP study, 34 per cent of the unemployed interviewees indicated that the prospects of better jobs and earnings in their countries of origin would not have discouraged them from emigrating (UNDP 2019: 33).

Even if we assume that youth employment opportunities can, under certain circumstances, help to reduce emigration pressure, this does not say anything about TVET's effectiveness for increased youth employment, as is often mistakenly assumed in policy discourse. Literature on the effects of TVET on employment rates in the Global South is scarce and points to weak and fragmented data availability. As for formal TVET systems, most studies conclude that these rarely lead to increased employment rates in countries of the Global South. However, they could potentially do so, if it was not for their low quality and lack of prestige (OECD 2018; Oketch 2007, 2015).

By contrast, employment effects seem to be better for non-formal skills or job training programmes (OECD 2018; Kingombe 2012 for Latin America). Kluve (2016) and Kluve et al. (2017) confirm positive effects of active labour market policies, of which skills training is usually an important component, on employment in countries of the Global South. However, McKenzie emphasises that this positive effect is modest in many cases and rarely sustainable over time (McKenzie 2017: 7-8). Its significance for the creation of large-scale employment opportunities is doubtful (Clemens/Postel 2017).

An important immediate employment effect is assumed for informal training, such as traditional apprenticeships especially for young people with low levels of education. However, the lack of formalisation and certification limits graduates' ability to access further education or formal employment. While wages in the informal economy appear to be considerably higher for trained workers than for untrained, they tend to be lower than for formally trained, in particular over time (OECD 2018: 21-22).

In terms of migration, it might be assumed that the positive effects of non-formal and informal training on employment will have little impact on emigration decisions of potential migrants, since the trainees mostly belong to disadvantaged groups that have limited possibilities to migrate. By contrast, for the young and highly educated, formal TVET does not appear to offer sufficiently attractive career prospects in their countries of origin to prevent them from emigrating.

A recent micro-level study confirms that low quality and lack of prestige hamper the potential effect of TVET on emigration decisions. Van Diemen (2019) analyzes the impact of TVET on rural-urban migration processes in Northern Uganda. She points out that even though TVET opportunities and increased income did not prevent young people from migrating to cities, this was mostly due to the negative perceptions of TVET among the rural youth. These perceptions changed, however, in some cases when young farmers had experienced a positive impact of TVET on their livelihoods. The author concludes that improved quality and information on TVET could potentially alter youth' migration decisions.

In a 2015 report on “Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective” (MISMES), the ETF (European Training Foundation) points out that skills development interventions could potentially have an important role in managing successful migration processes, but they tend to be only a minor part of all MISMES investment compared to interventions of job matching, placement and recognition of qualifications (ETF 2015: 8). As an important prerequisite for their effectiveness, TVET interventions have to be well integrated into national policies and well connected to labour market strategies in countries of origin (ibid: 55). The report goes on to recommend skills partnerships between countries of origin and destination as a promising tool of successfully managing regular migration processes to the benefit of all involved parties, but also points to their relatively high costs (ibid: 33-35). Skills partnerships that combine targeted TVET interventions with regular migration opportunities are also considered an effective tool to foster circular migration and return migration of the highly skilled[11].

Diverse findings from the implementation level, e.g. from return and reintegration programmes, tend to confirm that the potential impact of TVET on livelihoods is often hampered by low quality, lack of prestige, difficult political-economic settings and incoherent support strategies[12]. Lessons of experience emphasise that returnees or potential migrants rarely perceive TVET and skills development alone as key interventions to secure their livelihoods. By contrast, the better TVET is integrated into coherent approaches, complemented with labour market and income generating assistance as well as other skills development components (e.g. basic literacy), the more likely it will have an impact on beneficiaries’ life and mobility decisions.

6. Concluding remarks

As the discussion in this Briefing Paper has shown, the existing knowledge base on TVET as a driver of migration remains weak and inconclusive, and is thus insufficient to sustain any major policy decisions. Nevertheless, some indicative conclusions might be drawn from the academic discussion.

First, specific data on TVET as a driver for migration is missing. For a quantitative comprehension on TVET-migration relationships, one can use general education or youth unemployment as a proxy. As for education, it is statistically observable that higher levels of education acquired in the countries of origin tend to encourage rather than discourage individual decisions to emigrate. While data is missing, one might assume that this applies also to formal TVET. As for youth unemployment, the existing evidence is mixed. While unemployment or unsatisfactory work do represent main drivers for migration, there is also evidence that prospects of better jobs and earnings in the countries of origin do not always prevent emigration. This points to the necessity of gaining a much better qualitative understanding about migration processes conceived of as complex, multi-causal and multi-dimensional phenomena and on how TVET relates to the multitude of individual, structural as well as contextual factors that shape them.

Second, conceiving of TVET simply as a statistical variable, based on the assumption of TVET’s contribution to income and employment, might lead to reductionist conclusions. Indeed, TVET has failed throughout decades to deliver on these expectations in most countries of the Global South. This again points to the necessity of developing a more relational and qualitative approach in order to gain an understanding of the complex

[11] See also Clemens 2017 as well as Clemens and Gough (2017) on the concept of ‘Global Skill Partnerships’.

[12] The conference “Understanding the migration-vocational education nexus”, held on January 21, 2020 in Vienna discussed these issues. See: www.oefse.at/veranstaltungen/rueckblick/veranstaltung/event/show/Event/understanding-the-migration-vocational-education-nexus-constraints-and-potentials/; See also Langthaler/Gündüz 2020; GIZ 2018; Ahmad 2018.

relationship of TVET to livelihoods and incomes, as well as to the social organisation of work and to patterns of inequality in a given context.

Third, the effectiveness of TVET in securing livelihoods appears to be a key factor for its impact on broader decisions of life and mobility. At the level of project implementation and policy design, this calls for integrated approaches that intertwine TVET with employment, income generation, social security and other interventions. At the system level, this calls for the improvement of TVET systems in terms of the quality of learning as well as of their relevance for employment, social equality and inclusion. These are far from being merely technical issues. TVET systems are embedded in the particular political economy of countries and framed by both colonial legacies as well as asymmetric processes of economic globalisation.

Fourth, as the concept of the mobility transition suggests, policies aimed at preventing migration are expected to have limited success. By contrast, the academic discussion emphasises that policies should target the shaping of migration processes in a constructive way rather than their prevention. TVET is expected to have a potential for facilitating skills partnerships or other forms of circular migration that benefit all involved parties.

Fifth, the discussion on the relation between TVET and migration is only at an early stage. Further research is required to gain both more data as well as a more nuanced understanding of the processes and interrelations between different factors. This calls for interdisciplinary research approaches and more fundamental research to further develop theoretical and conceptual bases that could provide coherent findings for knowledge-based policy development.

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ANNEX I

Selected education-related excerpts from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Objectives and commitments	Actions
OBJECTIVE 2. Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin 18. We commit to create conducive ... conditions for people to lead peaceful, productive and sustainable lives in their own country.	e) Invest in human capital development by promoting entrepreneurship, education, vocational training and skills development programmes and partnerships ... with a view to reducing youth unemployment, avoiding brain drain and optimizing brain gain in countries of origin.
OBJECTIVE 15. Provide access to basic services for migrants 31. We commit to ensure that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services.	f) Provide inclusive and equitable quality education to migrant children and youth, as well as facilitate access to lifelong learning opportunities, including by strengthening the capacities of education systems and by facilitating non-discriminatory access to early childhood development, formal schooling, non-formal education programmes for children for whom the formal system is inaccessible, on-the-job and vocational training, technical education, and language training, as well as by fostering partnerships with all stakeholders that can support this endeavour.
OBJECTIVE 16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion 32. We commit to foster inclusive and cohesive societies by empowering migrants to become active members of society and promoting the reciprocal engagement of receiving communities and migrants in the exercise of their rights and obligations towards each other.	i) Promote school environments that are welcoming and safe, and support the aspirations of migrant children by enhancing relationships within the school community, incorporating evidence-based information about migration in education curricula, and dedicating targeted resources to schools with a high concentration of migrant children for integration activities in order to promote respect for diversity and inclusion, and to prevent all forms discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance.
OBJECTIVE 17. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration 33. We commit to eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants.	c) Promote independent, objective and quality reporting of media outlets ... including by sensitizing and educating media professionals on migration-related issues and terminology. g) Engage migrants, political, religious and community leaders, as well as educators and service providers to detect and prevent incidences of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination against migrants and diasporas and support activities in local communities to promote mutual respect.
OBJECTIVE 18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences 34. We commit to invest in innovative solutions that facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skills levels.	a) Develop standards and guidelines for the mutual recognition of foreign qualifications and non-formally acquired skills. b) Promote transparency of certifications and compatibility of National Qualifications Frameworks. c) Conclude ... mutual recognition agreements. e) Build global skills partnerships amongst countries that strengthen training capacities of national authorities ... with a view to preparing trainees for employability. g) Engage in bilateral partnerships ... that promote skills development, mobility and circulation, such as student exchange programmes, scholarships, professional exchange programmes and trainee- or apprenticeships. j) Develop and promote innovative ways to mutually recognize and assess formally and informally acquired skills.
OBJECTIVE 20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants 36. We commit to promote faster, safer and cheaper remittances by further developing existing conducive policy and regulatory environments.	f) Provide accessible information on remittance transfer costs by provider and channel, such as comparison websites, in order to increase the transparency and competition on the remittance transfer market, and promote financial literacy and inclusion of migrants and their families through education and training.

Source: UNESCO 2018: 8

Annex II

Overview of key literature on education/TVET as a driver for migration

Publication	Key messages	Methodology
Ahmad, Ali (2018): Refugees returning to poverty, unemployment and despair. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation. Vienna.	Returnees rarely perceive TVET and skills development alone as key interventions to secure their livelihoods. By contrast, the better TVET is integrated into coherent approaches, complemented with labour market and income generating assistance as well as other skills development components (e.g. basic literacy), the more likely it will have an impact on beneficiaries' life and mobility decisions.	Qualitative interviews
Browne, Evie (2017): Evidence on education as a driver for migration. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.	Rather than educational opportunities, security, livelihood und economic prospects in the countries of destination are the main drivers for migration.	Literature review
Clemens, Michael (2014): Does development reduce migration? IZA Discussion Paper No. 8592.	The empirical economic basis confirms the concept of the migration transition, i.e. for countries with an income per capita between USD 600 and USD 7,500, an increase in this income leads to enhanced emigration rates. As per capita incomes grow above this level, the pattern reverses.	Literature review
Clemens, Michael/Postel, Hannah (2017): Deterring Emigration with Foreign Aid: An Overview of Evidence from Low-Income Countries. GLM/LIC Synthesis Paper No. 8	Rising education levels tend to raise emigration. An increase in youth employment can modestly reduce the potential for surges of emigration in the short term. Among countries that remain poor, but manage to get youth into jobs, migration rates are likely to fall, but not in countries that develop a dynamic and growing economy.	Literature review
Czaika, Mathias/Reinprecht, Constantin (2020): Drivers of migration: A synthesis of knowledge. IMI Working Paper 163.	Lack of education opportunities for oneself or one's children in sending countries is a driver for migration. Profession training and education to advance one's career are main driving factors for high-skilled migration. Employment opportunities in receiving countries are primary drivers for labour migrants, but also effect other groups of migrants. However, unemployment is often associated with a decrease in emigration propensity due to poverty constraints.	Literature review

Dao, Thu Hien/Docquier, Frédéric/ Parsons, Chris/Peri, Giovanni (2018): Migration and development: Dissecting the anatomy of the mobility transition. In: Journal of Development Economics, 132, 88-101.	Emigration increases with development, because the proportion of college graduates in the native population increases and it is this group that has the highest propensity to emigrate abroad.	Evaluation of competing theories of the mobility transition curve by decomposition of emigration rates into several components, and quantification of each driver in explaining the curve. Based on data from OECD database on Immigrants in OECD countries 2000, 2010.
de Haas, Hein (2007): Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration. In: Development and Change, 38(5), 819-841.	Increases in wealth, but also improved education, infrastructure, security, access to media and other information sources tend to stimulate migration because they raise people's aspirations as well as their actual capabilities to migrate.	Literature review
de Haas, Hein/Czaika, Mathias/Flahaux, Marie-Laurence/Mahendra, Edo/Natter, Katharina/Vezzoli, Simona/Villares-Varela, María (2019): International Migration: Trends, Determinants, and Policy Effects. In: Population and Development Review, 45(4), 885-922.	Development tends to be initially associated with increasing emigration, because access to resources – such as money, knowledge, and others – tends to give people the capabilities and aspirations to migrate. Labor demand in destination countries is arguably the most important force driving international migration. The effect of origin-country social protection on migration is ambiguous. While higher levels of social security may decrease migration aspirations, enhance access to resources can endow families with capabilities to migrate.	Quantitative analyses of databases on bilateral migration flows, migration policies and visa requirements, and mixed-method comparative regional case studies.
Dustmann, Christian/Okatenko, Anna (2014): Out-migration, wealth constraints, and the quality of local amenities. In: Journal of Development Economics, 110, 52-63.	Contentment with various dimensions of local amenities, such as public services and security, decreases out-migration intentions.	Quantitative analysis based on the first wave of the GallupWorld Poll (GWP) (2005-2006), a survey conducted in 129 countries.
Gamso, Jonas/Yuldashev, Farhod (2018a): Targeted Foreign Aid and International Migration: Is Development-Promotion an Effective Immigration Policy? In: International Studies Quarterly, 62, 809-820.	Governance aid does reduce emigration rates from developing countries, while economic and social forms of aid have no discernible impact on migration.	Cross-national time-series analyses based on a dataset of 101 low-and middle-income countries' emigration rates between 198-2010.

Gamso, Jonas/Yuldashev, Farhod (2018b): Does rural development aid reduce international migration? In: World Development, 110, 268-282.	Investments in agricultural sector capacity building will lead to reductions in emigration from developing countries.	Quantitative analyses based on data from 103 aid recipient countries (1995-2005) (source: AidData and Institute for Employment Research).
Kuhnt, Jana (2019): Literature Review: Drivers of Migration. Why Do People Leave Their Homes? Is There an Easy Answer? A Structured Overview of Migratory Determinants. DIE Discussion Paper 9/2019.	The evidence suggests that there is an initial positive sorting with respect to education for the first movers but, as migration costs are reduced with increasing networks, less-skilled migrants also decide to move. Overall, better economic opportunities elsewhere and/or the lack of them in the region or country of origin have been shown to be important driving factors for rural-urban and international migration movements.	Literature review
Lanati, Mauro/Thiele, Rainer (2018): The impact of foreign aid on migration revisited. In: World Development, 111, 58-74.	In contrast to previous literature, empirical results point to a robust negative relationship between aggregate aid received and emigration rates, which can be attributed to the dominance of the public services channel over the budgetary constraint channel. These contrasting results are most plausible explained by the use of migrant flows rather than migrant stocks as the dependent variable.	Quantitative analyses of data from 26 donor countries and 141 aid recipient countries (1995-2014) (source: OECD international migration database).
Migali, S./Natale, F./Tintori, G./ Kalantaryan, S./Grubanov-Boskovic, S./ Scipioni, M./Farinosi, F./Cattaneo, C./ Benandi, B./Follador, M./Bidoglio, G./ McMahon, S./Barbas, T. (2018): International Migration Drivers. A quantitative assessment of the structural factors driving migration. European Commission JRC Science for Policy Report.	The unemployed are more likely to make the decision to move abroad when compared to those already employed. Highly educated individuals also tend to be more likely to prepare to move than those holding lower levels of education. Existing studies considered tend to conclude that policies have a less prominent role affecting the overall scale of migration when compared to other migration determinants, such as economic and other drivers. Rather, policies act primarily as a device for shaping migration flows The quantitative approach adopted in this study does not provide an exhaustive explanation about all drivers of migration What is needed, therefore, is the incorporation of more nuanced qualitative analyses.	Quantitative analyses of various datasets e.g. UNDESA and World Bank statistics on the stock of migrants, UNHCR data on stock of refugees and asylum applications; GALLUP World Poll for individual intentions to migrate.
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2019): Scaling fences: voices of irregular African migrants to Europe. New York.	Available studies suggest that a majority of Africans who migrate internationally are better educated than their peers at home. There has been an increase in migration particularly by college-educated women from developing countries to developed countries. Earning, or the prospect of earning at home, was not a factor that constrained the decision to migrate for two thirds of respondents.	Analyses of interviews of 3,069 adult African migrants in 13 European countries, who had arrived through irregular means.

van der Land, Victoria/Hummel, Diana (2013): Vulnerability and the role of education in environmentally induced migration in Mali and Senegal. Ecology and Society, 18(4), 14.	Results show no significant relationship between people's migration experience or propensity for migration and their level of education, for men and for women. However, motives for migration differ considerably depending on the amount of education received, suggesting that migration constitutes a livelihood strategy, particularly for the lower educated.	Interdisciplinary and mixed method research in rural and urban areas in West Africa using a survey (905 people), qualitative interviews and participant observations.
van Diemen, Frederieke (2019): In search of the 'better life'. The position of TVET, employment possibilities and migration in the livelihood strategies of youth in Gulu, Lira and Nwoya District, northern Uganda. Master Thesis. Radboud University Nijmegen.	Results confirm that low quality and lack of prestige hamper the potential effect of TVET on emigration decisions. Even though TVET opportunities and increased income did not prevent young people from migrating to cities, this was mostly due to the negative perceptions of TVET among the rural youth. These perceptions changed, however, in some cases when young farmers had experienced a positive impact of TVET on their livelihoods. The author concludes that improved quality and information on TVET could potentially alter youth' migration decisions.	Case study of the position of migration, vocational education and work in a decision for certain livelihood strategies of youth in northern Uganda using qualitative interviews.