Skills for green and just transitions
What challenges for VET?

Presha Ramsarup
Director
Centre for Researching Education and Labour (REAL Centre)
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Argument:

The education and training system response to environment and sustainability has been inadequate, ad hoc, fragmented, reactive and inefficient.

Hence as VET continues to embrace the transition to a greener economy there is a need for a stronger theorisation of a green economy and a deeper understanding of the substantive, transformative and systemic change needed in the green transition.
Framing TVET

• Because of its close connections with employment and the world of work, there have been more politics around VET priorities and approaches than with education more generally.

• The UNESCO TVET Strategy 2016-21 conceives of three pillars for a new approach to TVET:
  – *Fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship*
  – *Promoting equity and gender equality*
  – *Facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies.*

• Recent studies by Spours (2018, 2020) argue for VET to be conceptualised and developed as connecting living–working–learning
Greening as a means to address the defining challenges of the XXI century

Jobs are **Green** when they help reduce negative environmental impact and lead to environmentally, economically and socially sustainable enterprises and economies.

There are NO jobs on a dead planet!!
Defining green is a difficult task

Questions that must be addressed in defining green include, but are not limited to:

- Is being green the same as being environmentally friendly?
- Does it include just products and services that are environmentally friendly?
- What about environmentally friendly production processes?
- Environmentally friendly can be a continuum, so how green does a product/process have to be to count? If a product is environmentally friendly but it is packaged, delivered, and marketed in an environmentally unfriendly way, is it still green?
- User of the product? Eg. Detergent

Three types of green definitions:

- The **social justice/worker-centered definition**, which makes green contingent on the job quality and its potential to address poverty and related social problems;
- The **renewable energy and energy efficiency (RE/EE) definition**, which defines green as activities in the sectors related to creating renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency, also known as clean energy; and
- The **broad environmental definition**, which defines green as anything relating to environmental protection and quality.
Supporting the Green Transition

- Dominant Practice Thinking About – Greening Work within traditional conceptions of production and consumption
- Green Jobs NOT homogenous concept
- Tendency to see green jobs as a ‘one size fits all’ encompassing notion

Core green jobs

Emerging specialisation in existing occupations

- Significant changes to the tasks and skills required that enable specialist job roles
- Possibilities for greening aspects of a job, greening occupational tasks that ultimately support greater sustainability and sustainable value

Traditional jobs not regarded as green

- Possibilities for greening aspects of a job, greening occupational tasks that ultimately support greater sustainability and sustainable value
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses related to the Green Economy (Faccer et al. 2014)</th>
<th>Four discourses of the Green Economy (Death 2014)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformative Discourse</strong>: incorporates critical perspectives calling for a more radical review of society’s economic and broader developmental objectives.</td>
<td><strong>Green Revolution</strong>: radical, revolutionary transformation on economic (and hence social and political) relationships to bring them in line with natural limits and ecological virtues.</td>
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<td><strong>Reformist Discourse</strong>: diverse agendas for a green economy, with an emphasis on the right combination of actions and long-term planning to achieve environmental benefits as well as stronger economic growth.</td>
<td><strong>Green Transformation</strong>: explicit focus on social justice, equity and redistribution (including intergenerationally) where economic growth is a means rather than an end.</td>
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<td><strong>Incrementalist Discourse</strong>: defined by a broad acceptance of the prevailing macro-economic paradigm and a focus on greater use of market-based tools to drive a green economy transition.</td>
<td><strong>Green Growth</strong>: green markets provide economic opportunities representing a recasting of the relationship between environment and economics with an emphasis on new markets, new services and new forms of consumption.</td>
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<td><strong>Green Resilience</strong>: essentially reactionary and cautious with an emphasis on environmental scarcity, climate change and resource depletion and the need to implement technological solutions to build local self-sufficiency / resilience.</td>
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**Green skills** are the abilities, values and attitudes people need to build and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society (Cedefop, 2012).

**Green skills** are the technical skills, knowledge, values and attitudes needed in the workforce to develop and support sustainable social, economic and environmental outcomes in business, industry and the community (Australian Green Skills Agreement, 2009)

**Green skills** can be defined as the skills needed by the workforce, in all sectors and at all levels, in order to help the adaptation of the products, services and processes to the changes due to climate change and to environmental requirements and regulations (OECD, 2014)
Specific green skills for new occupations (new skills)

Topping up skills for greening existing occupations

Use of new greener technologies and processes

Level of Generic green skills

Positive attitude towards sustainability; green mindsets

Typology of Green Skills

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Source: Kwauk, C (2020) *Work in progress do not cite without author consent.*
The conceptual challenges that hinder the green transition is that ‘Green’ is notoriously ‘fuzzy’. It is used in normative ways that make it very difficult to define its meaning, it is treated as a homogenous construct without clear differentiation, it remains a socially constructed concept, intangible and often unobservable as its demand remains latent.
VET Response: Some lessons from research to consider
SA Skills policies do not adequately address the need for green skills (ILO, 2010)

"Where is the just transition?" (NUMSA, March 2019)

No Green Jobs without Green Skills!

Co-evolution of skills and education systems and economic, political and!!!!!!!
Educational and occupational progression

- Learning pathways into green jobs, enterprise development and more sustainable job options at entry and technical levels are unclear, ad hoc and fragmented – fragmented offerings of courses and qualifications
- Educational and occupational progression needs to be more fully mapped for intermediate skill work (occupational families, streams of work, what are the feeder jobs? Where can people transition to?)
- There is a dominance of an aspirational discourse and little clear sustainable actualisation of green streams of work at entry levels

- Overwhelming access points at levels 7-8;
- Environment is seen as a specialisation;
- Requires a postgraduate entry point
skills to transition is a slow, long term endeavour, that requires multilevel engagement with hidden structures and mechanisms, including history and power relations present, as often socio-economic lock-ins have deep historical roots.
Green Skills: Use iterative, multi-level methodology

Macro level analysis of drivers of skills demand
  • National policy and economic analysis
  • National and international regulatory frameworks, environmental risk identification

Sector, system & landscape level analysis
  • New technology and development planning, industrial strategy analysis
  • Cultural-historical social trends analysis

Meso level analysis of Occupations and Skills
  • Value chain analysis, sustainability ‘hot spots’, associated occupations
  • Skills needs analyses for new green jobs and greening existing jobs

Skills Supply - Training and Education
  • Mapping qualifications, learning pathways, articulation opportunities, providers
  • Curriculum analysis in relation to skills needs analysis

Micro-level analysis - Transitioning into Work
  * Tracer studies, career stories and vignettes (individual case studies)
Re-framing VET systems towards sustainability

• We need more than current narrow approaches within VET which remain at the level of greening institutions or to add discrete new modules or programmes such as photovoltaic installation in VET curricula.

• There is hence a need for a VET model that takes equity and environmental sustainability objectives into account, and which questions normative ideas of production that are central to VET framing.

• Such a model involves a wider framing of economy, beyond the dominant productivist, growth and market-based model, it introduces sustainable production and consumption, and far-reaching feminist de-growth and other ecological economics concepts for shaping work and learning, and VET systems.

(Fien et al. 2013; McGrath and Powell, 2016; Pavlova, 2014; Pavlova and Chen, 2019; Rosenberg et al. 2016; Ramsarup et al. 2017)
“the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and values necessary to industrialise the earth are not necessarily the same as those that will be needed to heal the earth or build durable economies and good communities based on principles of equity and sustainability”

(David Orr, 2004)