

## Work History

Mr. Iwamoto is Director of the Division of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education - UNESCO. In 1977, he joined the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Japan where he held a number of key positions relating to higher education planning, legal affairs, social education and cultural affairs.

In 1998, he was appointed to the post of Director of the Technical Education Division in the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In that capacity, he designed programmes to popularise science and technology studies and careers among secondary school students and to improve engineering education at the university level to make it more fitting to the needs of industry. He also promoted the introduction of an accreditation system in the Japanese engineering education system.

In September 2001, Mr. Iwamoto joined UNESCO and was appointed Director of the Division for Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education.

He has attended numerous international meetings and symposia including UNESCO's International Conference on Higher Education in 1998 and the 47th Council of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education in 2001. He made an intervention on Secondary Education and conducted sessions on the occasion of the UNESCO-APEID International Conference on Education, as well as International Conference on Secondary Education Reform organized by the Omanese Government and UNESCO in 2002, etc.

## Abstract

### *Fluidity and adaptability*

It is my great pleasure and honour to make a presentation at this conference. I am also pleased to know that many participants are agreed on the importance of a holistic approach to the education system, as higher education does not exist in a vacuum, but is a part of the wider process of education.

I am sure we are all agreed that the nature of work is changing rapidly. The popularization of information and communication technology (ICT) and the forces of globalization have hastened this transformation in the character of work. Yet, there is limited understanding of this transformation in the popular perception. Many still expect to have a job for life. The harsh reality today is that the products of higher education find employment opportunities diminishing. Therefore people need to change the way they think about work. More young people need to think seriously about self-employment. Those who combine technical innovation with an entrepreneurial spirit are observed thriving in the work place.

The priority of priorities for UNESCO is "Education for All". The Dakar Framework of Action sets out six objectives. Among these, goal 3 insists on a lifeskills-based approach. We can divide this into psycho-social skills, such as communication skills, and technical skills. This approach should also apply to technical and vocational education.

Therefore the challenge is not only to keep education abreast of the rapidly evolving demands of the labour market, but also to provide pathways for career progression based upon lifeskills. The changing demands of the workplace need to be matched by flexible education programmes. Short Term Vocational Higher Education (STVHE) is clearly such a pathway. STVHE programmes are an imperative for both developed and developing countries, either as the sole higher education experience or as a process of adaptation to the world of work after a more academic higher education. Indeed, one of UNESCO's normative instruments in this field, the *Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education (2001)* states that continuing education should offer possibilities for personal development and professional advancement by providing flexibility and continuous entry, exit and re-entry points. It further states that continuing education should permit the updating and renewal of knowledge and practical abilities as well as enable individuals to adapt to technological changes in their occupation or to enter another occupation.

For many years UNESCO has advocated lifelong learning. Education needs to be perceived as a continuous process. In this context, STVHE can play a role of connection with higher education and in-service training (recurrent education). I believe that in the future, our society will be one in which workers come and go between the education system and the workplace.

What should be the guiding principles in implementing STVHE? The most important features must be demand-driven, flexible programmes. STVHE should cater to the constantly evolving needs of the labour market by offering flexible curricula. Courses need to be commenced or terminated in resonance with the world of work. Institutions should not insist on students 'completing' their diploma. Modular courses should allow learners to exit and re-enter as their skill levels permit. Exiting should not be perceived as 'dropping out'. The status of STVHE graduates needs to be enhanced with better salaries, social advantages and membership in professional associations.

Teachers have an especially crucial role in implementing STVHE. They need to adopt an entrepreneurial approach. Teachers who are also actively engaged in industry should be rewarded with better remuneration. Professionals from industry should be invited to teach and evaluate. STVHE staff should be given the same status (i.e. academic titles and promotions) and benefits as university staff.

Assessment is another vital area in the implementation of STVHE. It needs to be competence-based and preferably carried out by professionals in industry rather than by full-time teachers. Accreditation and validation of STVHE should be an integral part of the higher education system and subject to regular internal and external assessments and quality assurance. Regional recognition of STVHE should be promoted, especially in countries with high labour mobility.