

## History of UNESCO-UNEVOC in Canada

In April 1998, the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba established a UNEVOC Centre. While being a TVET-oriented network, it reflected the Canadian trend of addressing TVET issues as 'skills' issues, as shown by, for instance, its International Conference on TVET, held in October 2002 on '*Developing Skills for the New Economy*'. The UNEVOC Centre played an advocacy role for technical and vocational education and provided opportunities for Canadians to participate in the development and improvement of technical and vocational education in Canada and internationally.

Since then, other UNEVOC Centres have been set up in Canada: the *Centre des études collégiales* (Centre for College Studies) in Baie des Chaleurs and the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culture at Centennial College.

Canada did not have a Pan-Canadian UNEVOC centre able to respond to the expectations of the international network and was losing out on opportunities 1) to provide a coordinated Canadian contribution to international discussions on skills development within UNESCO networks; 2) to rally all decentralized actors and foster cooperation between Canadian institutions involved in TVET and skills development at the national level; and 3) to support pan-Canadian, international and multilateral cooperation based both on Canadian expertise and on important cooperation networks already developed by Canada with partner countries.

The following principles have guided the current process in putting in place a pan-Canadian UNEVOC centre

a) Canada's participation in UNEVOC should be enshrined in a reliable structure; b) this structure should place skills development and TVET at the core of its vision, mission and activities; c) when assessing its capacity to undertake a UNEVOC responsibility, this structure should take into account not only all UNESCO's requirements, but also its own organizational autonomy for decision-making and action, in order to adapt over time to contextual changes that may have an impact on its functioning.

UNESCO's Member States were invited to establish a coordinating UNEVOC Centre that would act as a focal point for the UNEVOC international network. A number of member states have since established UNEVOC Centres.

Given that the lack of a Pan-Canadian UNEVOC centre limited Canada's ability to contribute to skills development and improvements to TVET and to influence international policies and strategies for TVET development and innovation, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU) encouraged ACCC, following consultations with interested parties, to establish a *Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Knowledge Centre* in Canada.

It should be noted that international relations in education are the responsibility of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) which is the official spokesperson for Canada. As a UNEVOC Centre, ACCC shares information with CMEC in areas of mutual interest; it also continues its involvement with the Education Sectoral Commission of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

## **ACCC's Involvement in TVET**

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is the voice of colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps, university colleges and universities with a mandate for providing TVET in Canada. A national organization with voluntary membership, it was created in 1972 to represent colleges and institutes to government, business and industry, both in Canada and internationally.

As a national organization with voluntary membership, ACCC advocates on behalf of its members and promotes colleges and institutes as the lead providers of training for advanced skills development and applied research to support socio-economic development. ACCC works with its members and supports them to act as catalysts of innovation and collaboration. It recognizes the diversity of its member institutions (urban, rural, Anglophone, Francophone, First Nation, offering bachelor degrees, polytechnics, institutes, colleges, cégeps, university colleges) in the services they offer; it organizes forums to develop common strategies and interests and brings members together around best practices.

ACCC is 130 member colleges and institutes, a network of 60,000 professionals, 1,000 campuses in urban, rural and remote communities; 1.5 million learners, national and international partnerships; and 40 years' experience in program development, knowledge-sharing; institutional capacity development, networking, research and advocacy. It is not surprising that it is a pioneer and focal point for TVET development in Canada.

ACCC also has extensive experience in coordinating support to training institutions, employers and employee associations and government efforts to improve TVET systems. Over the past 40 years, ACCC has developed leading edge international expertise in capacity-building and skills development as a result of over 700 projects undertaken in some 90 developing countries. Through its pan-Canadian and international programs and networks, ACCC's interventions build on Canadian expertise in TVET and have helped a number of developing countries to strengthen their TVET systems.

## **ACCC's Contribution to the UNESCO-UNEVOC Network**

As the Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Knowledge Centre, ACCC has the following responsibilities:

- It offers a new platform for members to share their expertise, research and news with an international audience;
- It works with other UNEVOC and UNESCO groups and networks on activities in North America;
- It engages with other members of the Education Sectoral Commission of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO related to its international networking activities, among other things;
- It plays a liaison role with other centres from the UNEVOC network and between international TVET centres and Canadian centres in the UNEVOC network;
- It participates in the evaluation of proposals to establish new UNEVOC centres;
- It receives requests and decide on appropriate actions as an international centre of the UNEVOC network;
- It provides expertise on UNESCO-TVET-UNEVOC to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, to CMEC, to federal institutions and other concerned parties;

- It identifies and proposes Canadians expertise for international experts meetings and other TVET-related initiatives organized by UNESCO;
- It promotes the work of UNEVOC centres in Canada and monitors their progress;
- It promotes exchange and collaboration between UNEVOC centres in Canada and internationally;
- It hosts a Canada-wide database of best practices in TVET;
- It undertakes research related to TVET.

Internationally, thanks to the support of CIDA, the funder for the Education for Employment programs in Africa (Senegal, Tanzania and Mozambique), in the Caribbean and in the Andean region, the Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre will be aligned with the Shanghai recommendations: enhancing the relevance of TVET; expanding access and improving quality and equity; adapting qualifications and developing pathways; improving the evidence base; strengthening governance and expanding partnerships; increasing investment in TVET and diversifying financing and advocating for TVET. The Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre:

- Supports identifying funding for international cooperation initiatives;
- Encourages regional, trilateral and international cooperation on TVET;
- Promotes TVET normative instruments, norms and frameworks;
- Publicizes best practices and innovations in TVET and international development;
- Supports ministries of education in their TVET reform programs by establishing sustainable partnerships which contribute to improving and implementing national policies for aligning education with employment needs; the provision of institutional services for employers, employees and the self-employed and increasing employability;
- Facilitates knowledge sharing through research, workshops, publications and international conferences;
- Mobilizes the know-how of its members and resources to improve TVET systems in developing and emerging countries;
- Develops partnerships with professional organizations and funding for its international development initiatives through its extensive involvement in the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics for which ACCC hosted the World Congress in May 2012.

### **ACCC's contribution over the past year in highlighting Canadian colleges and institute's knowledge and know-how within UNESCO-UNEVOC**

- ACCC has had a seat on the Education Sectoral Committee of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU) for several years;
- On March 11, 2011, ACCC provided an overview of TVET in Canada at the first meeting organized by the CCU on the topic of TVET.
- In May 2011, ACCC took part in a meeting in Paris with the head of TVET at UNESCO and the director of UNEVOC international. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and was intended to present Canadian colleges' work in TVET.

- In October 2011, as follow-up to the meeting in May 2011, ACCC contributed to the writing of UNESCO's World Report on TVET, with the support of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and its Canadian and American partners.
- In March 2012, during a conference on TVET organized by UNESCO in Montego Bay, Jamaica, ACCC made a presentation of the topic of new possibilities for regional partnerships within the EFE-Caribbean.
- In May 2102, a representative of ACCC attended the UNESCO 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress on TVET in Shanghai.
- In September 2012, ACCC and existing UNEVOC centres participated in the meeting of UNEVOC Coordination Centres, held in Bonn, Germany, with the aim of planning for a forum on the role of the UNEVOC network in transforming TVET for a sustainable future.
- In October 2012, ACCC officially become the Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre.
- ACCC participated at the launch of the UNESCO World Report in Ottawa (October 2012) and Dar es Salaam (November 2012).
- In November 2012, ACCC and other centres attended the Forum on the role of the UNEVOC network in transforming TVET for a sustainable future.
- In December 2012, the CCU organized the first meeting of the North America centres to decide how to contribute to the Shanghai recommendations and to set realistic objectives for the European and North American sub-networks.
- In January, February and March 2013, ACCC invited the local UNESCO offices and UNEVOC centres to attend the Education for Employment Forums held in Senegal and Mozambique.
- In February 2013, ACCC discussed with the UNESCO office in Paris the possibility of working with them on TVET in the Caribbean. ACCC also suggested that UNESCO sit on the Program Steering Committee for the CARICOM-EFE.
- In March 2013, as part of the EFE Africa (Mozambique), ACCC agreed to support the UNEVOC Centre – Mozambique to improve its website and its visibility.
- EFE Tanzania has liased with UNESCO Dar es Salaam in the development of Key Performance Indicators for TVET institutions in Tanzania. UNESCO is providing complimentary funding to support the development of a database to capture and analyze the information gathered through the KPI Pilot activity.

Planned: The UNESCO-UNEVOC director will attend the next ACCC Conference in June 2013. A meeting will also be held with the participating UNEVOC Centres from Canada, the United States, the Caribbean as well as the Andes.

### **Benefits for ACCC Members**

- A new platform for ACCC members to share their know-how, research and innovations with an international audience;

- An opportunity to exhibit Canadian colleges and institutes' experience in UNESCO-UNEVOC's two priority sectors: Greening TVET and teacher education and training;
- The possibility to share their points of view on the UNESCO-UNEVOC e-Forum or to post their ideas on the ACCC Pan-Canadian UNEVOC Centre page;
- The possibility of being a contact point for other UNEVOC centres around the world;
- Access to information on trends in education from UNESCO's networks.