

# Market orientation Market analysis Market surveys

A manual for vocational training  
providers



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## Foreword

You have received this manual from MISEREOR. Why?

It is because MISEREOR seeks to provide its partners with methods and tools that can help to make vocational education and training more effective. The success of vocational training is demonstrated by the level of employment among graduates. The greater the training institution's familiarity with the market or its ability to estimate it, the higher the number of graduates who will be able to find a job or become successfully self-employed.

A market orientation in vocational training therefore means gearing training to market demand. Any form of market analysis or market survey in vocational training aims to identify what skills and abilities the market wants or what services and products the market needs; this information can then be used to improve the employment prospects and earnings of graduates.

### **Market analysis as a requirement – burden or opportunity?**

Nowadays, market orientation in vocational training is not only expected but required.

The word 'market survey' crops up in all recent programmes and in evaluations of vocational training projects. Many people are alarmed by this, because a 'market survey' sounds time-consuming and expensive. Others may ask just what 'market' means and how such a 'study' is to be conducted. If you represent a technical school that provides formal initial vocational training, you may be making comparisons with business and industry and thinking that you need an expert for a study of this sort. If, on the other hand, you run a small centre that offers non-formal training, you may be asking yourself how or why you are supposed to conduct a market survey when there are only a dozen businesses in your town and most of your graduates are or will become self-employed tradespeople.

So these days everyone claims that a vocational training provider must know the market. People seem to assume that everyone knows how market analysis works.

But there are not many vocational training schools and centres that know much about market analysis. And how can they be expected to know, since a school is not usually either a company or a marketing centre? This manual sets out to offer assistance and to show MISEREOR's project partners how training can be geared to the market.

You should not be coerced into investigating the market, nor should it be a burden. View it as an exciting journey of discovery – one that will deliver interesting and useful insights that will help you make vocational training for your target groups *even more employment-oriented*.

## Not all markets are the same

We'll start with a few tips on potentially misleading terminology and some notes on the differences between different types of 'market survey' that may be important to you and that you should therefore be familiar with.

The 'market' is often equated to the 'labour market'. However, the term 'labour market' belongs in the industrial context and is normally taken to refer to the supply of jobs. This is too narrow a definition for people working in poorly industrialised countries or areas in which there are very few jobs.

Advice based on knowledge of the formal labour market (i.e. on contact with industry or with major companies) is almost always inappropriate for trainees on vocational training courses who will later become self-employed, because the market knowledge needed to enable graduates to become self-employed is significantly different. In the context of self-employment it is necessary to be familiar with the situation of local service providers and producers and the needs of consumers and the local community.

Viewed in more general terms, too, a market survey involves more than simply analysing *where* there might be jobs for graduates and *how many* jobs there might be. Rather, it must take account of the fact that there are different objectives and different types of vocational training providers. There are differences depending on whether the aim is to improve an existing vocational training scheme or introduce vocational training in new areas. Differences also arise according to whether the aim is to provide vocational training for 'young people' in general or whether training is aimed at specific target groups, such as women, people with disabilities or particular ethnic groups. The relevant 'market survey' may be completely different in each case, because the questions to be answered are different.

This manual sets out to explore these differences and details so that *you* have something that is actually useful, or at least as useful as it can be, in *your* context.

However, it is not a set of instructions that can be systematically worked through; nor is it a list of the 'best procedures in *every* case', because that does not exist. The tools described here are building blocks tailored to different situations. They are designed to help you understand the market better so that you can use the information obtained for your vocational training programme.

In other words:

There is no such thing as 'the' market survey or 'the' standard procedure; there is only ever a set of procedures and tools that can be used to obtain specifically needed information and hence answer a quite specific question.

## **What a market orientation can do**

Before describing the methods and tools that can be used to conduct market surveys, we shall present **seven examples from the field** to illustrate the purpose of considering the market and the benefits that can result.

The situations involved vary widely and so highlight differences in the meaning of the terms ‘market analysis’ or ‘market relevance’.

### **Example 1: Guaranteed employment through cooperation with businesses**

A small school in Mauritius trains young people from a socially disadvantaged ethnic group and young people from better backgrounds who have failed at school. Despite the difficulties faced by the target group, the school has an extraordinary record: 100 per cent of its graduates have found work. What is the secret of this success? In relation to the difficult young people themselves, the secret lies in a well-thought-out skills-based training system that uses modern teaching methods. But the reason for the high employment rate is that the school has made contact with businesses that now work with the school and provide support for the trainees as part of their corporate social responsibility activities. The businesses then take on ‘their’ sponsored trainees as workers.

One of the things that this demonstrates is that even the weakest trainees (some have not even completed primary school) are able to move into good jobs: the school’s graduates can be found in workshops that handle cars of luxury brands such as Porsche and Alfa Romeo.

### **Example 2: Market-oriented optimisation creates work for girls**

A large vocational training centre in Cambodia that had previously trained only boys wanted to offer vocational training courses for girls and – as is usually the case – thought of courses in dressmaking. With an eye on the textile industry in the free trade zone, sewing machines had already been purchased. However, an external consultant suggested that the college should also explore the market in other areas that might be of interest to girls. As a result, the centre investigated market potentials and employment opportunities for women in the fields of catering and the hotel trade, tourism, goldsmithing (an ancient craft in which women were also engaged), graphic-design (the idea of a teacher at the centre), the construction sector (the head of the construction department at the school was a woman) and the NGO sector. This revealed that there was significant market potential for girls in graphic-design. It was recommended that girls should be trained in this area rather than as poorly paid seamstresses for the foreign textile industry, especially as women were being trained as seamstresses all over the country. The result was that NGOs and businesses queued to snap up the graduates straight from college. Of the 20 girls on the first graphic-design course, 19 found well-paid jobs (one was married and pregnant). Meanwhile the textile industry had moved lock, stock and barrel to the free trade zone in Vietnam, the neighbouring country.

**Example 3: Contacts ensure a high employment rate in a rural setting**

A training centre in Uganda is notable for the fact that it imposes no restrictions on prospective trainees. It has programmes for street children, vocational training courses for women, and further training modules for people working in skilled crafts and trades. Even people who cannot read or write are accepted: initial vocational training is then adapted to their level of education. The verified employment rate among the predominantly self-employed graduates is very high at 90 per cent. This is remarkable, because the centre is in a small town in a rural region. The secret of its success is that the director of the centre maintains close contact with the entire local area. The 'labour market' is regarded as comprising not just businesses but the entire economic sphere, including the skilled craft and trade sector and local authorities. As a result, the needs of local people and the potentials of the market are identified and influence the vocational training courses that are offered.

A similar procedure is adopted by a mobile training programme run by an organisation in Bangladesh: before a vocational training programme is planned, discussions are held with representatives of local government bodies, youth organisations and local businesses.

**Example 4: Researching the needs of the community and the local market**

A small technical school in a remote location in the north of Haiti was training young people as fitters, bricklayers and electricians and also offering dressmaking courses for women. However, there was a problem in that only about a third of the trained young people found work and many migrated to the USA. The training strategy appeared to be geared neither to the needs of local people nor to those of the market – for example, there was only one student training as an electrician because the district had no electricity. An external consultant was therefore asked to help adapt the training strategy to local needs. Graduates were surveyed and meetings were held with members of the local community, including the village decision-makers, women, young people and some agricultural producers. The discussions revealed that there were two areas that were particularly important to local people and the local market: the water supply and vegetable growing. Because the village was situated on a plateau, water was a major problem generally, and the villagers lived by growing vegetables: they were an important source of supply for the capital, yet their production methods urgently needed improvement. The recommendations on market-oriented vocational training highlighted the need to teach the technical skills required to improve and secure water supplies (building wells, cisterns, pipelines) and professionalise vegetable growing.

**Example 5: Curricula and employment – the multi-faceted results of a systematic, market-oriented approach**

Before a new course is introduced, a vocational training institution in India conducts a feasibility study, which involves seeking the opinion of businesses and working people engaged in the type of activity covered by the new course. This makes it possible to identify technical requirements, establish contact with possible employers and assess the employment opportunities for future course leavers. The study also explores the existing range of courses in the particular area and what need there is for additional courses. This feasibility study then serves as a basis for drawing up the curriculum for the new course. Experts in the relevant field, state stakeholders and businesses are involved in this process. The first year-group to take a course is evaluated in detail as a pilot group and if necessary the curriculum is then adjusted. In addition, networking with employers provides a means of obtaining feedback on the performance of the graduates who are taken on. This networking is also used to encourage employers to be open to working with people from disadvantaged population groups (such as members of lower castes, women, Muslims) and to consider employing them.

### **Example 6: Boosting profits in skilled crafts and trades by gearing further training to the market**

The instruction offered by a non-formal training institution in the Democratic Republic of Congo included training in carpentry. The school is in an area that is rich in minerals. When coltan was discovered there, many land owners became suddenly wealthy and started to want upholstered furniture for their prestigious living rooms, but local craftspeople did not have the knowledge required to make it. The school's director brought in a trainer from a neighbouring country and started running vocational training courses in making upholstered furniture, thereby generating orders and income for local craftspeople.

### **Example 7: Innovative training as a result of market observation**

Like the school in Mauritius (example 1), the training centre in the Congo that has just been mentioned has undergone lengthy reform of its vocational training system and it provides an excellent example of the usefulness and importance of a broader understanding of the 'market'. It also demonstrates how market-based public-private partnerships work. The town is situated on a large lake on which there is busy shipping traffic. However, there were frequent accidents in which boats sank, many people died and cargoes were lost. Having become aware of the importance of a market orientation, the director of the centre started to wonder who trained the people working on these boats. He made contact with boat owners and with the port authorities and soon created a training programme for people – whether sailors or senior captains – working in inland shipping. The accident statistics show how important this has been: since the course was introduced there has been a significant reduction in shipping accidents.

These examples show how useful and important market relevance can be. They also show that 'the' market should not be seen as one-dimensional and that 'market relevance' may in one situation require cooperation with businesses while in another it may call for a market survey and in a third market observation may be all that is needed.

This brings us to the first step that you and your vocational training institution need to take: this involves identifying your position within the geographical and business setting and from this determining your objectives and plan of action.

## **Who are you and what do you want to know about the market?**

It is worth starting by pinning down in as much detail as possible just where you and your vocational training institution stand: Who are you? Where do you stand? Where is your centre or school located? What sort of school is it? Who are your target groups? What do you want (or where do you want to go) and what do you need?

Why is it necessary to ask yourself all these questions at the outset? The answers will help you select from the following tools the methods that are right for your institution – the ones that 'fit' you. Things that are possible or necessary in a city may be irrelevant in a rural setting, and information that does not need to be obtained when training boys may need to be examined particularly carefully when training girls.

## Tool 1: Position analysis

Look at the following categories and decide where your projects or problems fit it. The tool will then show you which tools may be useful or relevant to you.

### A. Geographical location/setting

Where is your centre or school located?

A1	Metropolis/city
A2	Large town
A3	Small town
A4	Rural area

### B. The aim of training

What have you mainly been training students for in the past? It will of course never be possible to place all trainees in the same category, but most schools and centres can nevertheless state roughly how the majority of their former trainees are working.

B1	Aiming at wage employment: the <i>majority</i> of graduates look for a job
B2	Aiming at self-employment: on completing their training, the majority of graduates become self-employed
B3	Mixed form: the numbers in the two categories are roughly equal (i.e. the ratio is 50/50 or 40/60)

### C. Target groups

What are your target groups, or for which target groups do you think market research is needed?

C1	General target group (no special characteristics)
C2	Difficult target groups, especially disadvantaged young people/ adults (e.g. marginalised young people, street children, ex-combatants, prisoners, prostitutes)
C3	Particularly girls/women

### D. What do you or would you need from a market analysis?

D1	Are you planning <u>new</u> vocational training courses and wanting to know what courses should be offered?
D2	Do you want to know whether the vocational training courses that you <u>already offer</u> are meeting a <u>genuine</u> market need?
D3	Do you want to find out where the market is <u>heading</u> so that you can be innovative – i.e. so that you can include forward-looking vocational training courses in your existing programme?
D4	Do you want to find out where there are work opportunities for <u>particular target groups</u> ?

## Example

An example will show how diverse the appropriate approaches may be for schools in different positions and different categories. Let us look at how two schools have positioned themselves.

	A1: Metropolis	A3: Small town	B1: Aiming at paid employment	B2: Aiming at self-employment:	C1: General target group	D2: Market demand for existing training
School 1	X		X		X	X
School 2		X		X	X	X

Although the two schools basically want the same thing – namely, to find out whether the vocational training courses on offer are really in demand on the market and hence whether they guarantee good work opportunities – different methods of market analysis will be appropriate.

**School 1 in the city** wants its graduates to find jobs: it will endeavour to make contact with a wide range of companies and businesses and ask them whether the school's graduates have a profile that is in demand or what would cause employers to take on more of these trainees.

**School 2 in a small town** is faced with a situation in which there are not many jobs and so the majority of graduates become self-employed. In this case the 'market' that needs to be studied falls into two parts. Firstly, the skilled craft and trade sector needs to be questioned to find out whether additional workshop are likely to be profitable or whether supply may exceed demand. Secondly, consumers need to be asked how they rate the existing range of services (because even if there are many workshops they may be delivering low-quality or restricted services).

**A vocational training centre must therefore consider 'market demand' in terms of what is appropriate to its profile and setting.**

Demand in a city setting differs from demand in a rural environment, and the things that consumers want from a self-employed metalworker will differ from those wanted by a plant construction company. The distinctions are not always absolute: in the example above, some students who attended School 1 will no doubt become self-employed and some who attended School 2 will manage to find a job. But is important to know the determining characteristics of the environment in which your school or training centre operates and to be aware that a 'market survey' can take different forms.

## Market demand

Before we describe the various methods that can be used to analyse or explore the market, it is worth considering the subject of market demand, since this is the key issue.

### What does 'market demand' mean?

Put simply, market demand means that there is someone who **wants exactly what** you as a school or centre **are providing**.

And what you are 'providing' are **graduates who have a particular skill**.



It now looks as though what graduates can do is homogeneous and identical to demand – but that is not true.

- If it is case of **paid employment**, an **employer** wants your graduates to be able to do exactly what he needs **in his business** or what the relevant **sector** needs in its businesses.
- If the situation is more likely to involve **self-employment**, **consumers** also want what your graduates can do, but here they place far greater emphasis on the recent graduates **personal initiative**, which is what enables them to provide a particular **range** of products or services or offer something **new**.
- In the case of ‘the’ **population**, the **local community**, the **district** or the **village**, the ‘demand’ **may** in the first instance be not for a specific service but for the **solution to a problem**: only later will this crystallise into the provision of a service.

This situation is seldom seen in vocational training, because training focuses on common occupations and on placing graduates in work, but not on *working with* former trainees to *help shape* the economic or social environment. This means that socially or environmentally oriented jobs are often completely overlooked, especially as there is not usually any ‘active market demand’ for them.

### Some illustrative examples:

The ‘**environment**’ is neither an employer nor a market stakeholder; it simply cannot articulate its need as an expression of the demand for a service (such as waste management). And the people generating the waste are certainly not thinking of paying someone to dispose of their waste. Waste management does not turn into a type of work until bold and resourceful local people in many places have started to offer such services – and only then do many generators of waste recognise the need for management.

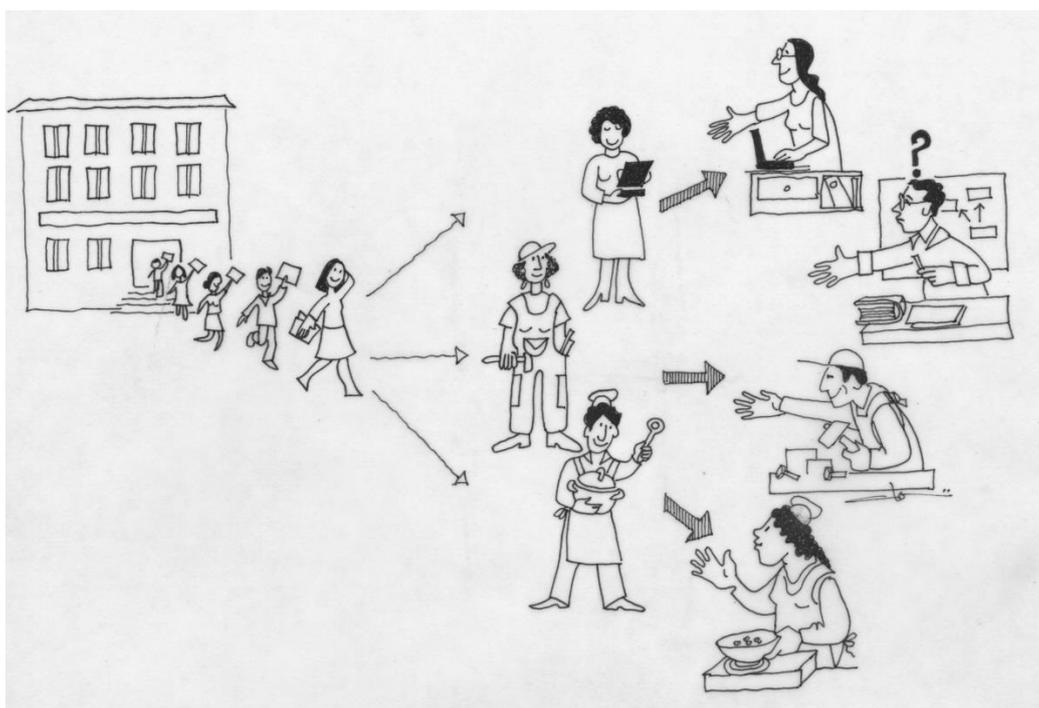
Similarly, **old people** who have lost their family ties in the expanding cities are not ‘active consumers’ who are going to ‘demand’ services that are important to them. The ‘social market’ will not come into being until someone hits on the idea of offering appropriate services to the elderly or their relatives.

A third and final example: the training centre in the Congo mentioned earlier as Example 7 was asked by the **local authorities** whether it could also train fire fighters. This came about because the school had already attracted attention in the region on account of the innovative and atypical vocational training courses that it offered. It would normally be highly unusual for it to occur to anyone that training fire fighters has anything to do with vocational training. Yet efficient and well-trained fire fighters and/or disaster specialists are extremely important for the population.

These areas of activity may not be 'profitable' in terms of work – or at least not straight away – but that does not mean that they could not become so in time, and in any case they make important contributions to public welfare.

In reality, therefore, the picture outlined above is often quite different, because training institutions cannot always state clearly which 'market' they are producing their trainees for. There are probably only a few that can claim clearly that the majority of their trainees are destined for paid employment or that 100 per cent of them will become self-employed. There are also vocational training centres whose programmes cover a number of vocational training courses: for example, they may train lathe operators, carpenters and hairdressers. The market for each of these training sectors will clearly be different.

In reality the above picture looks more like this:



**Demand** can therefore come **from the formal economy** in the form of demand for workers (such as lathe operators), or **from the (often informally organised) skilled crafts and trades** themselves (e.g. demand for carpenters or directly **from the population** (e.g. demand for hairdressers)).

These are the standard situations, but there are also mixed forms (the joiner may also be in demand as a company employee) and other types of demand in addition to those outlined above (public welfare, innovation).

It is not possible to rely on the needs of the private sector (companies) unless this type of labour market actually exists: in many places it does not or it is very small.

A fact that is often overlooked is that ‘market demand’ can include the direct needs of the population; the smaller the place in which graduates are working, the more frequently is this the case.

The seven examples cited earlier can be allocated to these different ‘market demand’ scenarios as follows:

Example	Demand from the private sector = companies	Demand from organisations (as employers)	Demand from the public sector/public welfare	Demand from skilled crafts & trades and agriculture	Demand from the population (consumers, community)
Mauritius	X				
Cambodia	X	X			
Uganda			X	X	X
Haiti			X	X	X
India	X			X	
Congo (skilled crafts & trades)				X	X
Congo (shipping)	X		X		X

### What do these different forms of ‘demand’ mean for you as a vocational training centre?

They mean that you must know exactly **WHAT** you need to find out from an analysis of demand and what you must **LOOK FOR** in order to make your vocational training courses as effective as possible at getting people into work.

If the majority of your school’s graduates find a job upon completion of training, you can focus on exploration of the labour market. If most of your former trainees are self-employed, you should give precedence to a market analysis of your local business environment.

The task is most difficult if you are just setting up a vocational training centre or if your centre is planning to offer new vocational training courses: in these situations you will in principle have to review the entire market.

### Summary of procedures for getting to know the ‘market’

As you will already have noticed, this manual started not by looking at how the market can be studied but by exploring market ‘demand’. This is logical and it is also an important consideration to keep in mind, because any criteria for a survey of the market in the field of vocational training are based on the fact that you must know or discover what the market wants

– that is, what potential employers on the one hand and consumers on the other want, need or are looking for – in other words, what they are ‘demanding’.

Any method of procedure *follows* this demand, always in a manner appropriate to the individual case. All the following tools are relevant to one method or another and represent procedures that are tailored to the specific issue.

The ultimate aim of every market survey is **information gathering**.

## Tool 2: Information gathering tools

We start by listing various information gathering tools and procedures, with comments on:

- potential **sources of information**
- what you can **expect/obtain from these sources**, and what pitfalls there may be
- what **methods** can be used to obtain information from these sources

Source of information Individuals, categories of people, institutions	What you can expect from this source of information (potential information gain)	Possible problems, pitfalls or risks
<b>You yourself as a vocational training centre</b>	Vocational training centres very often have a ‘scholastic’ orientation; market-oriented thinking is fairly rare. Organisations that offer vocational training have very good intentions but often they are just unfamiliar with the market.	Only trust your own judgement of the market if you/your institution are close to the market (i.e. have concrete contact with market activities) or you have on your staff people with business experience or at least people with a good ‘feel’ for the market.
<b>People (acquaintances, friends) close to you (as manager, director, head or person in charge)</b>	If your acquaintances and friends include businesspeople (self-employed entrepreneurs in various sectors), their tips and judgements may be very useful.	The preceding comments about yourself and your school apply equally to them.
<b>Your former trainees who are practising the occupation for which they have trained</b>	Informants in this category are very useful, because their assessment of the market is based on practical experience. Trust is often a hallmark of relationships with former students, which means that you obtain true information, especially about financial aspects (profitability).	The information that you obtain from these informants relates only to the specific craft or trade in which they are involved. A particular pitfall arises if your former trainees report problems with the craft or trade in question (e.g. they describe it as not profitable), but these problems are due not so much to the particular craft or trade as to personal circumstances or less-than-ideal vocational training (e.g. insufficient practical training, poor teaching of skills, special features of a difficult target group). You may sometimes learn more from former trainees about the quality of their training they received than about the market as such.
<b>Entrepreneurs</b>	Entrepreneurs are naturally the first people to turn to as potential employers of graduates. In addition they are often useful people to talk to, because their view of the market is completely different from that of vocational training centres.	If you contact entrepreneurs for an assessment of the market (i.e. not just about jobs), you should take care that their assessment does not just reflect their view of their own business.

Source of information Individuals, categories of people, institutions	What you can expect from this source of information (potential information gain)	Possible problems, pitfalls or risks
<b>Practitioners of skilled crafts and trades</b>	They are in principle also a 'first port of call', especially for questions about the profitability of the skilled craft/trade.	The problem here is that practitioners of skilled crafts and trades often have a great distrust of surveys. As a result, statements about their view of the craft or trade and about profitability cannot always be trusted.
<b>Traders</b>	Traders are often completely ignored as contacts in the context of development cooperation projects because they are reputed to think only of their own profit. They are nevertheless a very useful source of information because they have a feel for 'what is going on' – in other words, what is in demand. They should always be considered as a source when products are the issue.	Because – for the reason stated – traders rarely come into contact with projects or training centres, they often do not initially understand why they are being approached.  Like practitioners of skilled crafts and trades, they also become distrustful when questions touch on issues of money and earnings. However, when asked for an assessment of marketability they are often very happy to provide information.
<b>Craft and trade associations</b> (guilds, chambers)	If they exist in your country or where you live, they are often a valuable source of information on the perspectives of individual crafts and trades and on the market as a whole. Like the individual practitioners of crafts and trades, they are insiders and they are in addition more easily accessible, because questions here concern the craft or trade as a whole and not their personal business.	There may be a risk that they 'talk up' a trade because they want to keep it in the market, but this assessment may not be objective in terms of the actual market situation.
<b>Chambers of trade</b>	In some situations and contexts chambers of trade can be worth contacting for their assessment of the market.	Chambers of trade tend to focus on the formal market; they are not usually the right point of contact for information on the local economy and small craft and trade businesses.
<b>Ministries,</b> e.g. ministries of employment, industry, trade, agriculture	In some situations and contexts ministries, too, can be worth contacting for their assessment of the market.	Because ministry staff are officials and civil servants, it cannot always be assumed that they are the most knowledgeable source of information on market activities.
<b>Statistics</b> (economic data)	Statistics on sectors of the economy and on employment are available in some countries and can yield valuable information.	The statistics are often outdated, not always reliable and often cover only the formal sector.
<b>Consumers</b>	They are definitely the most useful and valuable source of information on the products and services of skilled crafts and trades and small businesses.  They are the focus of any market survey in industrialised countries but not of surveys relating to development cooperation projects. Remarkably few vocational training institutions think of consulting consumers.	Probably the only problem here is that you need to survey quite a lot of people to obtain a representative picture.  This means that you need either to use a questionnaire (which presupposes that there is someone who is competent to design it) or to conduct interviews (which requires interviewers with a certain level of training).
<b>Market or sector studies</b> by NGOs or other organisations/ institutions	NGOs are often another useful source of information. Sometimes international organisations or national institutes have conducted studies of the very vocational training courses or trades that the school offers or plans to offer – but the school knows nothing about them. Contacting an organisation or two can therefore be extremely worthwhile.	Even though one should in principle be able to trust studies because they usually claim to have been conducted scientifically, there is no harm in looking at how they have been run.

The methods that you can use to access this information are mainly those used in sociological studies:

- interviews, surveys, one-to-one talk
- focus groups meetings, workshops, round tables
- questionnaires
- observation, site walks, e.g. counting workshops, observing consumer behaviour)
- documentation (statistics, studies, internet research, journals)

### Some basic principles for good interviews



The most important attitude in an interview is **impartiality**. Find out what people really think, what they really mean.

#### **Impartiality means a neutral approach.**

This involves the following:

- **Your opinion on the issue is irrelevant** in the interview. You are not questioning someone in order to have *your* opinion confirmed but to find out what *he or she* thinks.
- **No assumptions!** If you haven't completely understood something, ask clarifying questions; don't interpret things in your own way.
- Treat **everyone you interview with respect**. It is essential that you treat everyone you interview with the necessary respect, regardless of their social status; only then will they also respect you and be willing to provide (truthful) information.
- **The clearer the question, the clearer the answer.** When interviewing people from the private sector, avoid using project-work jargon and formulate your questions as precisely as possible.

## Different questions to be answered call for different methods of studying the market

So far we have seen that there are different 'markets' (i.e. different forms of demand for workers or services) and that market surveys therefore also differ according to whether the majority of graduates will find work in the formal labour market or whether they will become self-employed.

The summary in the previous section outlined the various sources of information and what we can expect from them.

The examples that now follow illustrate how *varied* the methodological approach can be, depending on the objective and the questions to be answered.

Situation/project type	Question that renders analysis of the market necessary	Method, procedure and scope
<p><b>Classic situation</b></p> <p>A school is planning employment-oriented vocational training for young people in an urban setting.</p>	<p>Here there can be a whole range of directions that a market survey can take:</p> <p>(1) Do you want to know what occupations vocational training should be provided for in <b>future</b>?</p> <p>(2) Or should it be an analysis of whether vocational training is currently being provided in the '<b>right</b>' occupations?</p> <p>(3) Or do you particularly want to know what occupations can be offered to <b>girls</b>?</p>	<p>With regard to (1): This study would be the largest in scope, because it needs to analyse the market as such and all the sectors.</p> <p>With regard to (2): This is mainly about demand and need in the occupations for which training is being offered. Particular aspects that will need to be considered are employment and profitability in these occupations.</p> <p>With regard to (3): Here there is some <b>overlap</b> between a <b>market survey</b> and a <b>sociological study</b>: What jobs are carried out by women, and which <i>could</i> be carried out by women? What barriers are there?</p> <p>The <b>work setting and working conditions</b> in the jobs in question would <b>also</b> need to be investigated (e.g. whether late working hours are usual in the jobs in question, whether employers would continue to employ pregnant women, whether there are occupations in which sexual harassment may occur, etc.).</p> <p>For all occupations that <b>are not typical girls' occupations</b> it is necessary to discover whether potential employers would employ girls at all.</p>
<p><b>Classic situation with market awareness</b></p> <p>Two vocational training centres want to know whether the vocational training they provide is sufficiently 'market-oriented'.</p> <p>One school is a formal one that issues diplomas, the other is a non-formal one that issues a simple certificate.</p>	<p>Both are vocational training centres and they want to provide training in the same trade, but the 'market' for each (the purchasers of their 'product' – graduates) is different.</p> <p>In the first case the aim is <b>employment in the formal sector</b>, so the question is whether businesses and employers are satisfied with the abilities and skills of the graduates.</p> <p>In the second case there is a greater emphasis on <b>work in the informal sector</b>.</p>	<p><b>It is essential that both schools consult their graduates.</b></p> <p>The school that hopes that its graduates will find paid work in the <u>formal</u> sector must direct its questions at employers and businesses.</p> <p>The <u>non-formal</u> school, by contrast, must set its sights mainly on the informal sector; it needs to discover whether its trainees can find work in skilled craft and trade workshops and/or how <b>profitable</b> the occupation in question is for a <b>self-employed</b> person.</p> <p>The methods used may be simple or complex, depending on the setting. Simple methods are observation and informal questioning of crafts- and tradespeople. More complex methods involve analysing statistics, counting workshops, systematically questioning crafts- and tradespeople and questioning consumers about their satisfaction with the services of existing businesses.</p>

Situation/project type	Question that renders analysis of the market necessary	Method, procedure and scope
<p><b>Classic situation but training that is 'untypical' of vocational training centres (non-technical)</b></p> <p>An institution would like to focus on training social workers</p>	<p>The meaning of 'market' here differs from its meaning in relation to technical occupations. You must know or find out who wants or might want social workers.</p>	<p>Here a market survey must find out whether organisations/institutions are aware of the possibility of employing <i>qualified</i> social workers. A market survey of this sort involves <b>innovative elements</b> that will vary <b>according to the context</b>: Who apart from the classic 'purchasers' might have a need for such services - municipalities? schools? families?</p>
<p><b>Situation that is atypical in terms of training, market and target group</b></p> <p>An organisation is planning training and work for a difficult target group (e.g. people with physical or intellectual disabilities, ex-militiamen, prostitutes, former street children)</p>	<p>It is necessary to find out whether or to what extent the local market accepts people with these special characteristics or this particular 'past' as workers or producers.</p>	<p>Studies of this sort can never be just pure 'market' studies – they <b>always have a sociological component</b>, which means that they must accurately investigate social 'inhibition thresholds' and occupational requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would businesses/workshops/institutions employ people with disabilities or former street children?</li> <li>- Would the target group cope with the requirements?</li> <li>- How do potential customers view it?</li> <li>- What supporting measures would be required?</li> <li>- What must/could be done to promote acceptance?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fairly atypical situation for vocational training centres, but 'classic' for NGO projects.</b></p> <p>An organisation in a rural milieu wants to train women to produce various fruit juices for the market.</p>	<p>In relation to the market for these products it is necessary to know such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- whether juices are well received by consumers</li> <li>- what forms (fresh, bottled) would have the best prospects</li> <li>- what type of consumer (social class, purchasing power) might buy it</li> </ul>	<p>The methods used here may range from a <b>simple investigation to a thorough, comprehensive survey</b>:</p> <p>If juices are already on the market, the investigation will focus on the form, content and quality of the product by comparison with the competition.</p> <p>If juices as such are 'new' to the market, the study will need to focus on consumers' habits and whether a product of this sort is well received.</p>
<p><b>Situation that is atypical for vocational training centres</b></p> <p>The aim is to explore new trends and employment opportunities in order to offer innovative vocational training courses.</p>	<p>The purpose here is to identify market niches and trends or 'unstated' needs.</p>	<p>A <b>proactive exploration of trends</b> requires people who have a well-developed feel for the market and are able to identify trends in society.</p> <p>Classical market 'studies' are of only limited usefulness.</p>

These examples have perhaps helped to illustrate the extent to which the approach adopted in a market survey depends on the questions to which answers are being sought, which in turn are determined by the context, the aim of training, the nature of the problems and the target group.

In combination with the methodological approaches that this manual provides, the individual tools can be assigned to the case types as follows:

- **Tool 3 – Objective: Work (wage employment) in the formal sector**  
You are a vocational training centre in a city. Your target group consists of average young people with no special characteristics. The aim of your vocational training course(s) is to enable qualified trainers to find work (mainly wage employment) in the formal labour market. You want to improve your trainees' employment prospects in the formal labour market or provide new vocational training courses for the same target group – courses that will also be specifically aimed at the formal labour market.
- **Tool 4 – Objective: Work (wage employment) in the informal sector**  
You are located in the same city, but in a poor township. The young people in your target group come from this disadvantaged milieu and have so far been working mainly in small skilled crafts and trades. You want to know whether and to what extent your graduates are likely to be able to find wage employment in this setting.
- **Tool 5 (also 6b) – Objective: Work (wage employment) in the informal sector, focus: girls in 'men's jobs'**  
You have been training boys as joiners, automotive mechanics, electricians or metalworkers and are wondering whether girls could also be trained for these jobs and whether they would be able to find work.
- **Tool 6a – Objective: Self-employment in the informal sector, clear market**  
Your school is in a small town or rural area in which jobs are rare. Most of your graduates become self-employed. You want to know whether the vocational training you are already offering is still lucrative or whether you might not be better advised to offer different training.
- **Tool 6b – Objective: Work in the informal sector, complex setting**  
You are in a city with complex market activity. Your school is in a poor district. The young people in your target group come from this disadvantaged milieu and have so far been mainly self-employed. You are wondering whether you should offer a different type of vocational training that might perhaps lead to wage employment in the city.
- **Tool 7 – Objective: Identifying profitable areas of work in the informal sector**  
You are planning a vocational training centre in a setting that suggests that work in the informal sector is the appropriate aim (small or medium-sized town, relatively poor township in a city), or you are already located in such a setting. You want to know what jobs or occupations you should provide vocational training for or what new branches of vocational training you could add to your existing programme.
- **Tool 8 – Objective: Innovative training courses**  
You would like to be innovative in your vocational training and offer something that represents a new occupation or service in your setting.

## **A market survey in the formal labour market**

As we saw at the outset, the 'labour market' refers to the supply of jobs. If you want to know whether the vocational training courses that you offer or any new ones that you might be considering are in demand on the labour market, you must make contact with employers.

What form does such contact take and what is the content and objective of this consultation?

If your graduates are snapped up by businesses – more or less as happened in the example of the girls in Cambodia who were trained in graphics and design – then you know already that the vocational training you offer is 'right' for the market.

But if not enough of your graduates are finding work, you will try to find out from potential employers what other or additional skills and competences you need to be teaching and how you can improve your curriculum or training programme.

What might this look like in practice?

**Example: Adding diesel engines to the vocational training programme**

A vocational training centre in Guinea that (among other things) trains motor mechanics is located in a rural area where there are few opportunities for its graduates to find work. However, the region is also a mining area. The director of the school therefore contacted the mining company and asked what need for skilled workers it might have. The company used a lot of trucks and other heavy vehicles, all of which were powered by diesel engines, and it needed motor mechanics who could repair them. The school and the company therefore agreed that diesel engine maintenance would be included in the motor mechanics’ curriculum. The company provided the school with some old diesel engines that could be used in practical vocational training.

**Tool 3: Identifying labour market demand**

Concretely, you can seek out individual companies and ask appropriate people in each company about the skills and competences they are looking for in the particular areas of work in which you provide vocational training. Another approach might involve inviting companies to a ‘round table’ so that you can collect sector-related information from a large group.

The table below lists some of the advantages and disadvantages of the two options.

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Contact in the company</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You acquire a feel for the <u>areas of work</u> within the company .</li> <li>- You are likely to obtain more detailed information.</li> <li>- The contact is more likely to develop into cooperation.</li> <li>- Companies are keen to be ‘partners’ of a centre so that they can use the relationship for CSR.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More time and effort required.</li> <li>- The company may have a one-sided specialisation and not be representative if you are looking for an overall impression .</li> </ul>
<b>Round table</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You obtain an overview of the particular <u>sector</u>.</li> <li>- The information will be more objective because it has a broader basis .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Businesspeople are very conscious of efficient time management and are not always prepared to give up their time for others.</li> <li>- In some contexts, company representatives are only prepared to take part in round tables if considerable prior effort (see above) has been put into acquiring them as ‘contacts’ and partners.</li> </ul>

Here again it depends on **WHO** you are and **WHAT** you want.

At a *large* school that produces a considerable number of graduates each year and has a certain level of resources, a round table will probably be more appropriate. For a *small* school, contact with individual companies may be sufficient.

If you want to introduce *new* vocational training courses, the round table is essential.

Incidentally, a round table or regular dialogue with stakeholders from the private sector saves you much of the work involved in a 'market survey' because the information comes directly to you at your premises. There are also schools that have representatives of the private sector on their administrative board; this is another way of staying continuously informed.



### **Two pitfalls in dealing with companies**

Make sure that you are talking to the right person in the company! When contacting big companies, people are often referred to the head of HR, who may not always be the right person to talk to about technical matters.

If you are a non-formal vocational training centre that cannot award state diplomas but that definitely provides training of a quality corresponding to such a certificate, do not be discouraged by this 'shortcoming' (see next section).

### **The qualified supply: stimulating the demand for workers**

It is often said that 'stakeholders in the formal labour market only take on graduates as workers if they have an official certificate'. Sometimes this is true, sometimes it is not. There are non-formal vocational training institutions that have such a good reputation that companies employ their graduates *even without a diploma*.

And there are often companies that for reasons of prestige and as part of their corporate social responsibility activities are keen to acquire a social veneer and are therefore open to trainees who have completed non-formal vocational training. The example from Mauritius described earlier is a case in point.

However, the majority of non-formal vocational training institutions are convinced that there are no opportunities for their graduates in the formal labour market. In many places they try to get round this by driving up the standards of vocational training so that they can award certificates. The result is often that weak target groups drop out because they do not meet the entrance requirements for vocational training of a higher standard.

However, there is another solution. 'Market relevance' – particularly in the labour market and taking account of the fact that in many countries too much importance is attached to an educational diploma – can sometimes also mean *confidently placing* the trained young people who are your 'product' if they have the necessary specialist quality.

This means that you 'steer' an existing demand for workers towards a supply that the market (the companies) have ignored: your graduates.

A market survey is in essence a marketing tool: you set out to get to know the market in order to adapt your product or service.

If you already have a ‘product’ (in this case skilled workers) whose *skills* are in demand on the market but the workers *themselves* are not specifically in demand, you can reverse the approach and bring the ‘market in offered workers’ closer to the companies.

Here is an example of the usual response and how things can be done differently.

**Example: The trained ‘supply’ for an existing demand**

In Madagascar there are two vocational training centres that train disadvantaged young people but, because they are non-formal, do not award state-recognised diplomas. However, at both centres the vocational training system is very good and the young people have excellent practical skills. The director of Centre A contacted various companies in an attempt to find jobs for his graduates, but was discouraged by the comment that the trainees ‘didn’t have a diploma’ – a comment made by the *HR departments* that insisted on formal appointment conditions.

In Centre B the corresponding person encountered similar reservations among the companies, but he reacted differently. He sought discussions with the *managers* themselves and described the skills of his graduates in detail by referring to the curriculum. This won the managers over and as a result some 70% of the centre’s graduates find work. This is a particular success, because the trainees are former street children or juvenile offenders.

## **Variants of the market survey in the skilled craft and trade setting of the local market**

The majority of the vocational training institutions supported by Misereor are non-formal ones. They work with marginalised or disadvantaged target groups and operate locally at district level or in rural settings. It is of course possible for graduates to find jobs, but these jobs tend to be in local micro businesses or workshops. Many or even most of the trainees become self-employed, usually practising a skilled craft or trade or running a small business in the broadest sense, including retailing.

In *this* context a ‘market survey’ takes on a different meaning and calls for different methods. But here, too, you need to know – as mentioned above (Tool 1) – who you are, what the aim of vocational training is to be and who you want to reach. In this instance, who you are has a lot to do with your target group (which was categorised in Tool 1 as C1-C3). What you want or could be looking for in relation to the market is categorised roughly as D1-D4.

## **Tool 4: A market survey of job prospects for graduates in the informal sector**

Tool 4 directly follows Tool 3, because it is also concerned with identifying **labour market demand**. However, the difference is that Tool 4 deals mainly with the informal market – i.e. with workshops or small businesses as ‘employers’. This ‘market survey’ therefore differs in many respects from Tool 3, even though at first glance the two seem identical.

Small skilled craft and trade businesses usually operate under precarious conditions, offering **jobs under what are often extremely poor conditions** – very low wages and little job security (often only jobs for day labourers or piece work).

Why might you nevertheless want to explore this ‘labour market’ and get to know it? There are at least two possible motives:

- One is that **not all** graduates have the potential or the opportunity to become **self-employed**, so they need to find a job by some means or other, however badly paid it may be.
- The second motive is that even **temporary jobs are a good ‘practice’ or transition strategy** for anyone who later intends to become self-employed. If you are prompted by this second motive, you do not need to conduct a market survey, because these dynamics develop in the market by themselves. But what you can do for your graduates is encourage them to regard even poorly paid jobs as a ‘springboard’ for later self-employment and to use them pragmatically.

The more important motive is the first one – especially if you know that a good proportion of your graduates will probably not be able to become self-employed.

**If this proportion of trainees in your target group who are *not* suited to self-employment is high,** you will need to find out whether the **proffered vocational training** provides them **with job prospects on the local labour market and how good these prospects are.** This means finding out two things:

- (1) what proportion of businesses are recruiting workers at all (rather than just offering day-labourer jobs)
- (2) how often and for what reason these businesses recruit new workers



### **Model for a market survey of this sort**

Let us assume that you are training joiners and that your centre is situated in a large town (population of approx. 50,000 – 100,000) that has ten districts. You could of course design a questionnaire and have interviewers roam the streets with it, but this would be labour-intensive and expensive. There are simpler ways of doing it. Seek out the largest joinery workshop in each district. At each you then not only ask the above-mentioned questions but also enquire how many other joinery workshops there are in the district. The proprietors of somewhat larger businesses usually have a good overview of the competition. This will tell you roughly how many businesses there are likely to be overall and enable you to compile samples. Let us suppose that there are around 50 businesses in all and that there are three districts that have between five and ten businesses while all the remainder have fewer than five. In this case you could contact four businesses in each of the three districts in the first group and two in each of the other seven districts. With relatively little effort you would then have surveyed half of the businesses and already acquired a good overview.



#### **Note**

The concentration on two questions enables you to conduct the survey in the form of a relaxed conversation. If you avoid writing down information during the conversation you will learn more, because there is little that the proprietors of small businesses

fear more than covert state control, which they often suspect of being behind such questioning.

You can draw important conclusions from the details in the second question – whether the businesses are recruiting because the business is growing or because workers are leaving. If the business is recruiting because it is growing, that says something about future prospects and indicates that these businesses are well worth considering as employers. If the demand for workers is the result of rotation – that is, it arises only because workers keep leaving the business – this may be of relatively minor significance with regard to temporary employment for your graduates but it means that there is not necessarily a prospect of long-term jobs.

The fact that in this example around half the existing businesses were questioned does not mean that this figure is a benchmark for surveys: what is feasible in a small place or medium-sized town is not necessarily appropriate in a city. You do not need to tour half the city to obtain robust results. The two rules of thumb below may help.

Rule of thumb 1: The more familiar you are with the market activity or the more experienced you are in dealing with market surveys, the smaller the number of businesses you will need to contact, because you will get a feel for the validity of the information relatively quickly. If you have less experience or if you deploy interviewers, then – depending on the context – you may need to target a somewhat larger number of businesses (at least ten), as in the above example.

Rule of thumb 2: When you start to encounter repetitions in the responses to the questions you put to businesses, this indicates that the information is probably representative.

## **Tool 5: A market survey in the informal sector of job prospects for girls in ‘men’s jobs’**

If your vocational training centre has trained only boys as joiners, motor mechanics, electricians or metalworkers but you are wondering whether it would also be possible to train girls – or if some girls have specifically enquired about this – you can add this **gender component** to a survey like that in Tool 4 if you are conducting such a survey anyway for existing vocational training courses.

If there is a certain level of interest both on your part and from girls, you could also conduct a *separate* gender-oriented survey.

### **Model for a market survey of this sort**



In this case it would make sense to assemble a small group of business proprietors in various ‘male’ trades for a sample survey. You will probably frequently encounter surprise, caution and doubtful shaking of the head, because the majority of occupations in the skilled crafts and trades are still unequivocally male domains and are regarded as such. But there are sometimes also surprises, as the following example shows.

The main questions that need to be asked aim to discover (1) the *main reasons* why crafts- and tradespeople and business proprietors do *not* believe that girls can do good work and be

successful in the craft or trade in question, and (II) whether there are business proprietors who would employ girls.

Even a survey conducted in such an unstructured and informal way can yield important information: you can find out which ‘male’ trades would most easily accommodate girls, you can get to know individual business proprietors who would be prepared to take on girls, and you can discover what stereotypes would need to be worked on (e.g. through your school’s public relations work) in order to pave the way for girls in male-dominated trades.

**Example: A vocational training centre ‘discovers’ girls in male occupations**

A vocational training centre in a medium-sized town in Benin wanted to train girls in ‘male’ occupations. A study conducted by external advisors was designed to find out what girls thought of this and whether skilled craft and trade businesses would employ girls at all. To the great surprise of the two investigators, they discovered that in each of the skilled crafts and trades considered – automotive mechanics, metalworking, joinery, electronics – there were already girls who had completed a workplace-based apprenticeship on their own initiative. They were even more surprised to find that the master craftsmen who had trained these girls (and then often retained them) welcomed the prospect of training girls in these crafts and trades.

All of them had overcome their original prejudices and attested that the girls often actually worked better and more thoroughly than the boys.



**Note**

A study of whether girls might find entry into ‘male’ occupations only makes sense if there are *indicators* that girls are interested in working in these areas. This will vary widely depending on the milieu and country. In many countries girls are not interested in such occupations.

However, this sometimes changes very suddenly – as examples from Rwanda and the DR Congo have shown – if female trainers (role models) are working in the ‘male’ occupations.

**Tool 6: A market survey of the employment prospects of graduates, especially with regard to self-employment**

This market analysis is one of the more challenging tools to use, but you as a vocational training centre will be able to manage it.

The initial situation is typical of many regions in that the majority of graduates will end up being self-employed. Why is a market survey useful or necessary in this situation?

**A market analysis is useful in this situation if you want to check whether a current vocational training programme matches the demand or if you are considering offering a particular new vocational training course.**

The **core question** in both cases will be: **is the occupation in question likely to be financially viable for the graduates?**

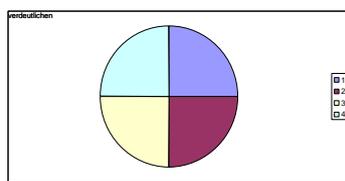
Many vocational training centres are of the opinion that a joiner or welder is ‘always needed’ in the market. There are centres in small towns that have been training joiners and welders with

stoic resolution for more than 50 years. They don't ask what happens to those who have been trained.

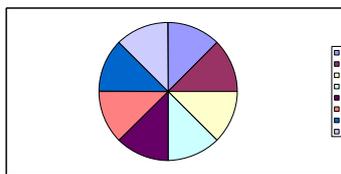
Of course at first glance it seems obvious that there are occupations that are 'always needed', but *how lucrative these occupations are – or perhaps no longer are – for practitioners* can make a big difference.

In terms of crafts- and tradespeople, any market is like a big cake, against which are set a certain number of consumers. The consumers' expenditure on the products and services on offer represents the revenue of the crafts- and tradespeople.

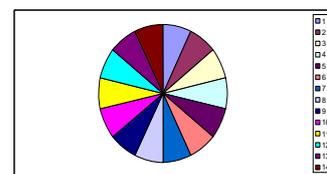
If the number of consumers and their purchasing power remains roughly constant, this means that **the more people there are practising a craft or trade, the smaller the share of the cake that each will have**, as the diagrams show.



A small number of players in the same craft or trade



A larger number of players



Many players in the same craft or trade

This means that a vocational training centre can of course carry on turning out joiners, welders or dressmakers for ever, but **what life prospects** are they being given if at some point the market is going to be saturated?

**How can you tell whether a particular skilled craft of trade in your setting is still sufficiently lucrative for your graduates and what other opportunities there might perhaps be?** Depending on the setting, this may be relatively simple or require a multi-stage approach.

### Tool 6a

#### Example of a simple procedure

You are the director of a centre or organisation in a small town and you want to provide vocational training to single mothers so that they can feed themselves and their children. You know that these women will not leave the town to work elsewhere – that is, all those you train will stay in the town. You are wondering whether you should continue to train women in tailoring as you have done in the past or whether it would be better to train them in hairdressing, which you think might bring in more money. Your town is not big and in a couple of hours you can tour it with an eye on these two types of trade. When you do this you notice that most of the hairdressing salons are very busy; in the tailoring workshops, by contrast, there is often no one but the proprietress herself and there is also not much fabric hanging up as there would be if the shop had a lot of customers. You repeat this tour a couple of times on different days and at different times and observe that the picture does not change significantly. To be quite sure, you call in at some of the workshops and salons and chat to the proprietresses about their work. The seamstresses that you trained yourself in the past are questioned in more detail. Because these women know you, they give frank and honest answers (which is important when it comes to questions about income – an issue on which strangers may not always tell you the truth). In the end you discover that your hunch was right and that the women's income from tailoring would be small, while hairdressing is flourishing.



Obviously an approach of this sort is only possible if it is easy to get an overall view of the market in question.

Things will be different if you are in a city. There you will need to use a multi-stage and methodologically more sophisticated method of obtaining and checking information.

## **Tool 6b**

### **Example of a multi-stage procedure in a complex setting**



Let us assume that your vocational training centre is in a relatively poor township of a big city, or in a slum. Your target group is marginalised young people from this setting and in this case you want to find out whether existing vocational training in electrics should be continued or whether it would be better to switch to refrigeration.

You start by looking at the existing vocational training course and consult your former trainees, nearly all of whom are or were self-employed: many have clearly abandoned their line of work because they did not have enough to do. Those who are still working tell you that they find very little work in their township because most people prefer to call in self-made electricians who carry out repairs and installations very cheaply. But sometimes your former trainees go into the city to look for work, and there they are asked whether they install alarm systems or whether they are familiar with industrial electrical systems. However, they have not been trained in these areas.

You make a small interim assessment. After this initial survey it seems to you that there is little point in continuing to pursue electrics as a prospective occupation to be practised in the young people's immediate environment. You now consider whether you should instead offer a more modern specialisation in alarm systems or industrial electrical systems. However, it seems to you that the market for alarm systems is still very small, because alarms are only installed by rich households and your graduates, working as self-employed electricians, would not be able to sustain their position when dealing with this social class. Furthermore, you do not have the equipment needed to provide vocational training in industrial electrical systems, especially as demand in this field increasingly involves the maintenance of electronically controlled machines.

You now turn to the idea of refrigeration technology. You know that very few people in your poor township would require the services of a refrigeration technician. If you offer vocational training in this field, your graduates will have to be prepared to work in the city centre or in the industrial quarter, which involves long journeys to work and hence considerable expenditure on transport. You now ask your prospective trainees whether they would be willing to move away from their familiar environment for work. A few say that they would go anywhere, even if it meant sleeping in the workplace warehouse, but the majority tell you that they would only do self-employed work near where they live but that they would also accept a job in the city if it were sufficiently well paid so that the transport costs did not eat up all their wages.

You decide to pursue your idea of refrigeration technology and you commission two of your staff to ask around in the city. You have come up with a dual strategy for them. One of their tasks is to visit various workshops (which will be easily spotted by the refrigerators on the street) and talk to the proprietors about the nature and scope of their work. Their other task is to stand outside supermarkets and ask customers how quickly they can get hold of a refrigeration technician when their refrigerator breaks down or their air conditioning is no longer working; they will also ask how satisfied people are with these services.

After a while your staff have collected enough information and they report that the majority of the refrigeration technicians they consulted are not responding to requests to repair refrigerators or service domestic air conditioning units: in recent years there has been an increase in maintenance orders from industrial companies and they prefer these companies as customers because they are financially stronger. This information is roughly in line with what your staff

found out from consumers, most of whom said that they were satisfied with the quality of the service they received – if they could get hold of anyone in the first place. Sometimes they had to wait for two or three days and in the heat that was not very pleasant.

It therefore looks as though there would be a need for this service on the market and a demand that is not being adequately satisfied. You do a little research into how many vocational training centres in the city offer training in refrigeration technology and are surprised to discover that there are only three. The decision seems to be becoming clearer.

You now ask yourself whether your graduates would be able to set themselves up as self-employed people in the city. But you quickly rule that out, because your prospective trainees have already stated that they could not imagine doing that. You also know that becoming self-employed would require not only the necessary capital but also the skills needed to run a small business, which only a few members of your specific target group would have. You rethink your approach and wonder whether you should consider the labour market in the city as an alternative to the self-employment in the township that you have focused on so far. You therefore send your staff out again with instructions to visit workshops in the city and enquire specifically whether they would employ workers and roughly what they would pay them. This further survey reveals that the workshops in the city are indeed looking for workers and that wages are reasonable.

Your decision is therefore made. In order to focus in even more detail on job prospects for future graduates, you send your staff out a third time. They are instructed to discover or negotiate two things. First of all, they are to ask whether the businesses in the city would be prepared to offer practical placements for your trainees (you know that this often leads to the trainees later being taken on). The second question is one that only occurred to you at the end: how would it be if in future you also offered vocational training to girls? Would refrigeration technology be suitable for them? Would businesses actually take on girls?

Your staff come back with the information that almost all businesses are prepared to offer practical placements, although some of the smaller businesses wanted to be paid for this. In response to the question about girls in this job, about a third of the proprietors were hesitant but the others stated that they would be prepared to give it a go. In one workshop the proprietor told you that he had once actually employed a girl who had learned the trade in a neighbouring country. He had been highly surprised to find that she was actually better than many of his male workers.



### **Summary of the methodology for more complex market surveys**

If a market analysis is needed in a setting in which it is not easy to obtain an overall view, a multi-stage procedure is required. This not only involves a variety of stakeholders but must often also be conducted in several stages.

- **Your own target group** is an important source of information in two respects:
  - former trainees: for information on the market situation (demand, customers, sales, competition)
  - trainees: for information on the compatibility of their ideas, wishes and skills with the market in question
- **Practitioners** of the skilled craft or trade in question are a key source of information in many respects:
  - as potential employers: for information on job prospects, work placements and other forms of cooperation

as providers of information on the market situation (with regard to the future self-employment of graduates): to discover what consumer demand is like, how much competition there is and how profitable the particular skilled craft or trade is

- **Consumers** are an important source of information that can be used to double-check information from other sources (on the availability and quality of services), to identify both purchasing power and other needs, and to compare markets in geographical terms (certain skilled crafts and trades may be available in one area but not in another)



**Note: Women practising skilled crafts and trades may be ‘invisible’**

If the aim is to discover whether women may be active in the market in certain occupations, in some sociocultural contexts it is often necessary to look very carefully.

**Example: The invisible female shoemakers**

In a survey in the mainly Muslim north of Cameroon, the aim of which was to design new vocational training courses for girls, the female international expert suggested finding a woman who had dared to set herself up in the exclusive male craft of leatherworking. The female local expert in the multi-person team refused to carry out this research, arguing that she had lived in the city for more than 20 years and had never seen a woman in this craft. When the research was eventually conducted, it revealed that a large number of women were engaged in making shoes – but always within the walls of their homes.

## **A market survey in connection with planning a vocational training project or expanding the vocational training programme**

In the previous sections we have considered how one can find out whether the *existing* vocational training schemes provide job prospects for graduates and whether these jobs are sufficiently lucrative for self-employment to be sustainable. The examples that involved new vocational training courses were cases in which particular options had already been identified as possible ‘new’ subjects for vocational training.

How do things work if the aim is to launch a **completely new vocational training programme**? If you want to expand **the range of courses** but don’t know what subjects to add? What branches of vocational training do you select, which do you decide on and on what criteria do you base your decision?

The final broad tool in this manual therefore shows how you can proceed in order to **select from everything that is going on in the market the areas that are in demand** and are at the same time feasible for you as a vocational training institution, and to do so **with an open mind**.

## **Tool 7: Methodology for a market exploration in connection with planning a new vocational training project**

Re-assessing a market in order to determine what job opportunities it offers is a particularly difficult task. It requires:

- good observation ability
- an open mind
- a feel for the market situation
- some knowledge of how the market 'works' (market mechanisms)
- analytical ability that does not always accept the 'obvious'
- the patience to carry out a process systematically in several stages

### **In a market exploration we want to find out:**

- What are **economic activities** in a particular setting that is yet to be more clearly defined (the setting might be, for example, an entire small town, a large township in a metropolis, or a rural area)
- **what goods, products and services** are being offered
- what **demand** there is for these goods and services or what demand there might be for new and as yet unknown ones.

Once you have this information, you can then start to evaluate it to determine whether you can or should provide vocational training, and if so in what areas.

The most important thing in an exploration of this sort is that you **free yourself from the point of view of a 'provider' of vocational training!**

Having a clear view involves **impartial observation**. As a first step you should register **all the types** of economic activity that you see without immediately categorising or judging them and without straight away assessing whether you could provide vocational training for them. Impartiality also means not immediately pigeonholing certain activities with comments like 'that is a proper job – the other one is just tinkering'.

Even if the ultimate aim of this market survey is to identify the skilled crafts, trades or activities for which you could provide vocational training, this point is the last that you should evaluate when conducting a market exploration.

First you must gather information on the **market situation** and do it as impartially as possible.

The following example of a market survey based on a FICTIONAL market shows you step by step how you can proceed in several stages in order to investigate a new and complex market setting.



**Once again, because it is so important:**

**An open approach is essential to EXPLORATION.**

It is best to forget that you are a trainer or the director of a vocational training centre. Instead, see yourself as a businessman looking for a lucrative field of activity or as a consumer who want to find out what the market can offer him. If you cannot do this, then seek the support of someone who can.

**Market exploration is like an expedition into the largely unknown territory of economic activity.**



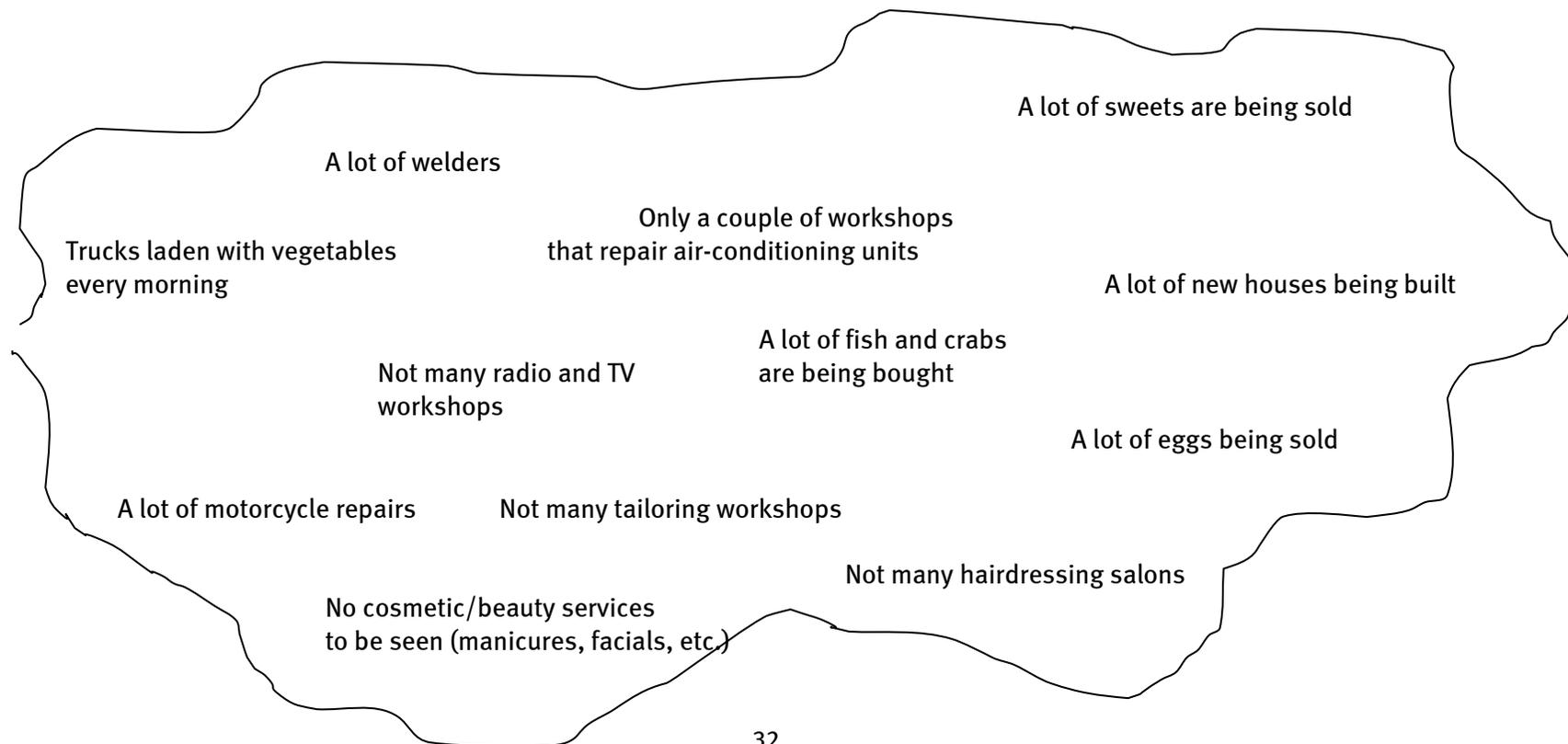
## Example of a broad market survey that you can conduct yourself

### A step-by-step visualisation based on a fictional market

#### First stage: NEUTRAL observation of ALL economic activity in your town or city

What activities take place (even if they don't have a specific name)? What is being bought and sold? What services are being offered? Where have new businesses or workshops been set up? Have old ones disappeared? Etc.

**The following diagram is a purely FICTIONAL example.  
You will of course produce a 'market map' of the REAL economic activities in YOUR town or city.**



## **Second stage – initial assessment and enquiries**

What activities or areas look lively, active, busy? What looks forward-looking? What could represent business opportunities? What looks less likely to be of interest, because it is less active or less in demand?

In our fictional market you can already answer some of these questions because you have enough knowledge or can quickly collect the necessary information:

- Vegetables are being delivered because no one grows them in the town.
- The construction sector is booming. It so happens that you know the president of the town bricklayers' association: he has often grumbled to you about the fact that as a result of migration from the neighbouring country there are simply too many bricklayers in the town who cannot find work despite the building boom.
- The high consumption of fish and crabs is evidence of high demand, but you know from the media that breeding fish and crabs requires considerable investment. A lot of money is needed to become self-employed in this field.
- Not many tailoring workshops are visible, but you know that a lot of women work as dressmakers at home.

You now ask yourself some questions:

- You have seen a lot of workshops that repair motorbikes, but they don't seem to be very busy.  
**Does that mean that there are too many workshops?**
- By contrast, things looked quite different for the welders and metalworkers: they were all very busy.  
**Does this mean that there is more demand in this area than is being met?**
- Why are there so few hairdressing salons? **Is there no demand?**
- What is behind the small number of workshops for air-conditioning systems and radio/television sets?  
**Are there really so few? Are they not needed? Or have you not seen all of them?**
- No cosmetic/beauty services – what does that mean?  
**Is there no market for them or might that be a new market opportunity?**
- Eggs are being sold everywhere; that indicates that demand is high.  
**But who are the producers?**
- Similarly with the confectionary. It is being sold everywhere, so is actually being consumed. You know that there are women in the town who make confectionary. **Are there already enough confectionary producers?**



### **Third stage – checking genuine demand**

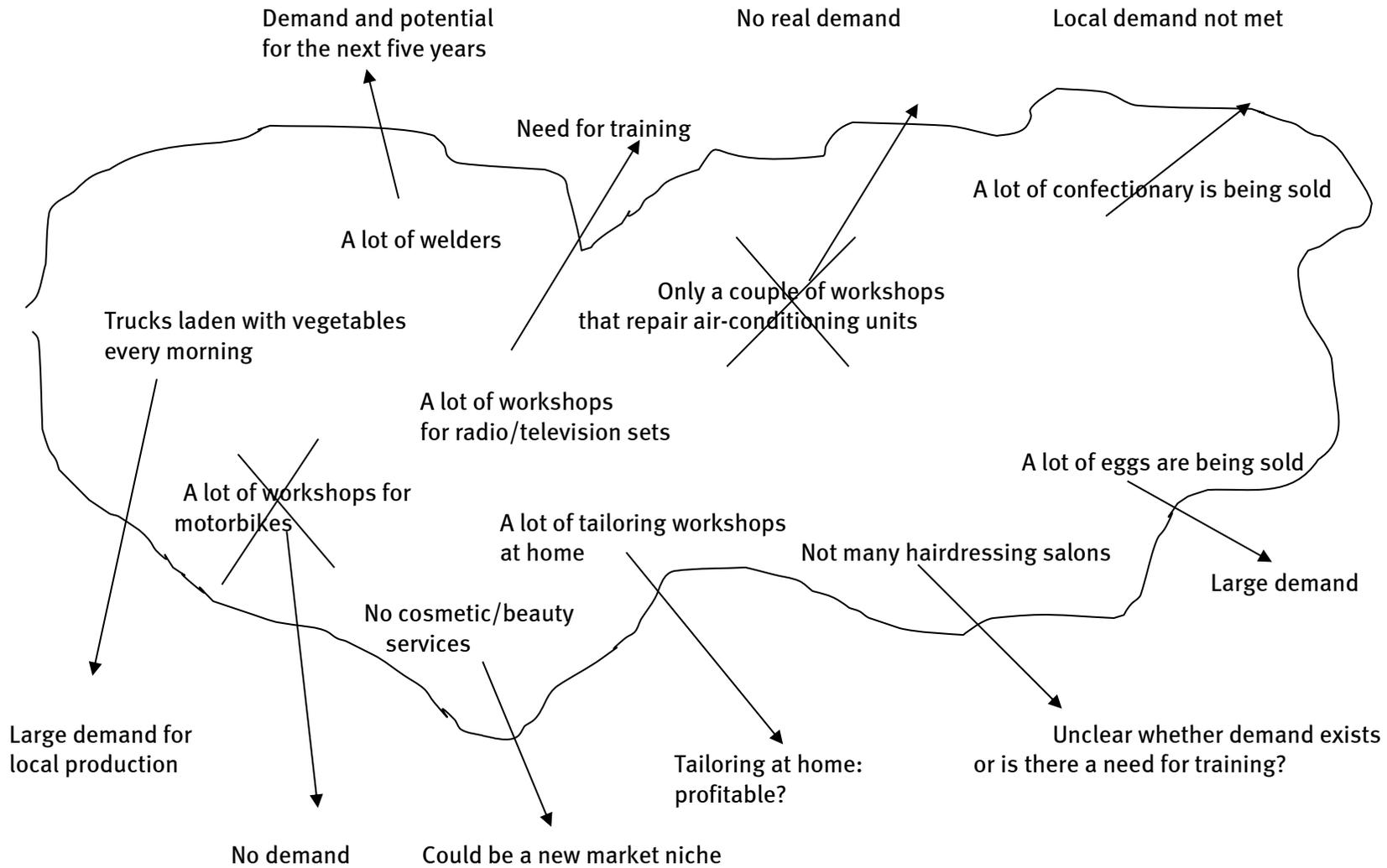
This is where you **deliberately** check your observations and impressions **in discussions with businesspeople, practitioners of skilled crafts and trades, trade associations or other stakeholders** in order to discover the actual situation with regard to market demand.

You now obtain the following information: it partly answers your questions and partly narrows down your search for information or makes it more concrete:

- The **corporation of motorcycle mechanics** tells you that there are far too many motorcycle mechanics in the town and that **competition** in this trade is therefore very fierce.
- The **shop owners** who sell **eggs** say that demand for eggs is very high and that the local egg producers are unable to **meet this demand**.
- **Traders** report that there used to be large-scale local production of **vegetables** but that 80% of the demand for vegetables is currently met **from other regions**.
- The situation with regard to **confectionary** is similar: **the female producers in the town** make **only two types** of confectionary; everything else comes from other regions.
- Various **tradespeople** in the **metalworking sector** say that despite the large number of welders and metalworkers in the town there is **enough work** for all of them. You have learned from some **builders** that there will be **growing demand** for welders and metalworkers over the next five years because the government is planning an extensive office-building programme.
- After some **more detailed research** you have eventually found out that there are after all **far more radio and television workshops** than there seemed to be. They are simply well **hidden** because the owners are afraid of excessive taxes. From **consumers** you learn that the problem in this trade is not the availability of services but their **quality**.
- **Air-conditioning technicians**, on the other hand, confirm that there are indeed not many workshops, because **demand is not high**. **Builders** added to this information by pointing out that air-conditioning units are often maintained by the companies that sold them as part of their **after-sales** service.
- Your follow-up research into **cosmetic and beauty services** has revealed that some of these services are provided in hairdressing salons. From **conversations with women** you have also learned that **services provided by trained practitioners** would be very much welcomed by a broader range of women.
- Contact with **hairdressing salons** has not revealed much about demand. The few hairdressing salons that exist in the town were busy, but you **were not able to discover** whether or not the **demand is already being met**. It was clear from some **conversations with women** that new fashion trends are emerging. These could be a new source of demand.
- **Tailoring** was not easy to assess. The majority of women do indeed **do this sort of work at home**. Some **dressmakers** that you visited told you that they have ‘plenty to do’, so the **demand** seems to be there. However, in view of the large number of women working in this trade it is hard to say **what income prospects** tailoring provides.

On the basis of the information that you have obtained, you now exclude two of the trades – motorcycle repair and air-conditioning technology – because they do not appear to offer good prospects of work.

Your 'market map' now looks like this:



Your market survey has now led to the following conclusions:

**Demand** for the following trades or production processes is **confirmed**:

- Welding/metalworking
- Vegetable growing
- Egg production
- Confectionary manufacture

There is also a specific need for training in radio/television technology.

**However, further research is needed** to answer the following questions on which you have not been able to obtain enough reliable information:

- Might there be a demand for services in the beauty sector?
- Is there unmet demand in the hairdressing trade or only a need for training?
- Tailoring needs to be looked at more closely in order to find out what the situation is with this trade.

This means that you must investigate the activities/trades of **cosmetics/beauty, hairdressing and tailoring** more thoroughly.

**This could be approached as follows:**

- Cosmetics/beauty: **More extensive questioning of (potential) consumers** – You ask quite a large number of women about how much they already spend on such products and services, what they would think of such a service and what other needs they have.
- Hairdressing: **More extensive and focused questioning of practitioners** – You visit quite a large number of hairdressing salons and focus your enquiries on how busy they are and what hairdressing knowledge/skills they already have.
- Tailoring: **Comparative survey of demand and the profitability of the trade** – You need to compare what women are doing at home (How regularly? How many customers? What sort of orders?) with the activities of dressmakers in the town.

Your results might look like this:

- Cosmetics/beauty: The majority of women **confirm** that **demand** exists.
- Hairdressing: Your enquiries have revealed that the **salons are not as busy as they could be**. So there are already enough salons: the need is for **training**.
- Tailoring: Your thorough research has revealed that the women who do dressmaking at home do not really see it as a business; instead, they regard it as extra income. The few dressmakers in the town who conduct their **trade as a business** told you that they are **barely able to cope with the high level of demand**.

The 'market survey' as such is basically now ended because your aim was to find out whether there is any demand. The fourth step that follows is part of the planning phase.

#### **Fourth stage – selection for a vocational training programme**

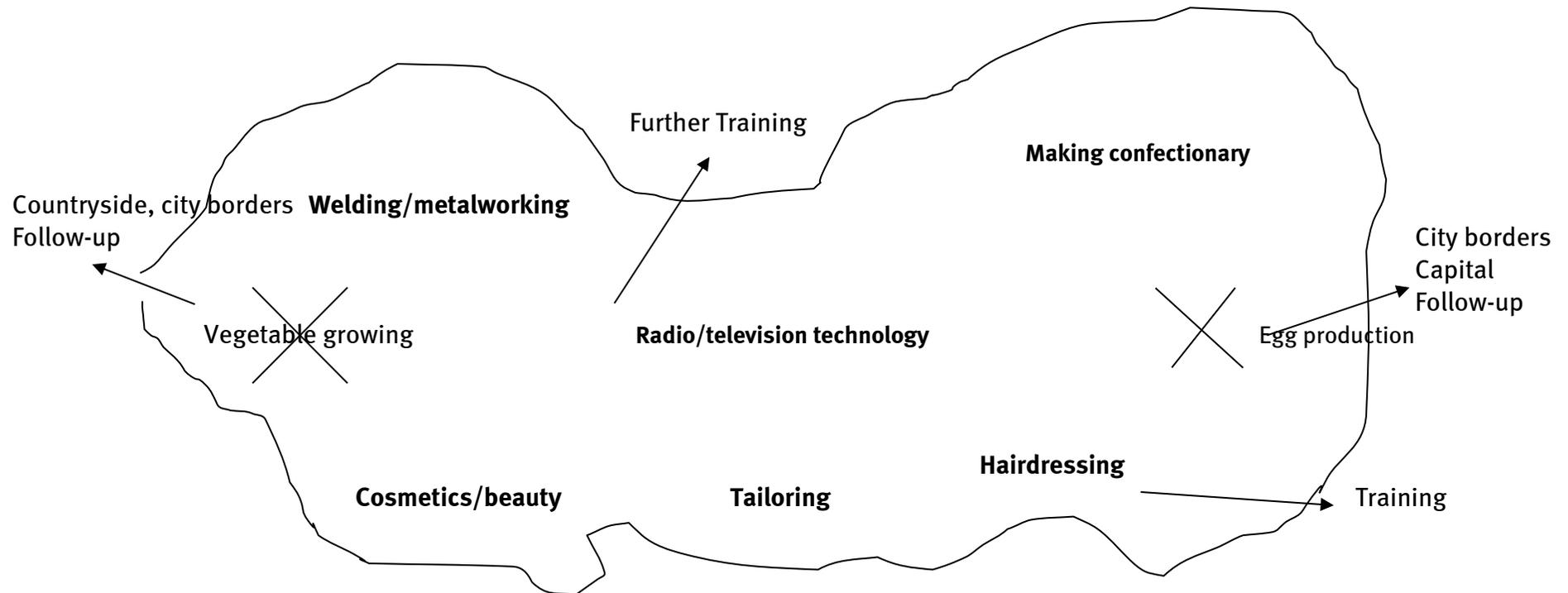
The task now is to examine the remaining trades and activities to see **whether you in your capacity as a vocational training provider could and would want to provide initial or even further vocational training** in these areas. This involves considering your institution's resources (premises, capital, availability of trainers, etc.) and any relevant state regulations (such as hygiene rules). You also need to review whether in the case of a productive business your future trainees could easily become self-employed.

This check might look like this:

- **Welders and metalworkers:** easy to train. Becoming self-employed requires capital for the welding equipment, but that can be acquired through start-up assistance or through an association. In addition, job prospects appear good. This vocational training is therefore promising and feasible. You add it to the short-list.
- **Vegetable growing** would also be easy to organise, and it would be a form of vocational training that generates income for women. The problem is that growing vegetables needs land and is thus only possible in distant locations on the edge of the city. The distance will in any case be a major problem for proper follow-up of the vocational training. You will have to drop vegetable growing.
- **Egg production** has the same problem as vegetable growing. Furthermore, you have discovered that the investment needed is much higher than you thought. This makes self-employment difficult. From the point of view of vocational training, this activity must also be ruled out.
- **Making confectionary**, on the other hand, is feasible. It requires little capital and can easily be taught. It is a trade of interest to women, who are one of your important target groups. This vocational training is added to the short-list.
- The various **cosmetic/beauty services** can also be easily taught and do not require much capital – a promising type of vocational training that is also added to the short-list.
- You also consider **tailoring** to be a possibility since it is a good type of vocational training for professional self-employment and it leads to a true trade.

**Two trades need further training rather than vocational training:** radio and television technology and hairdressing.

With regard to **vocational training**, your 'map' is now smaller:



## The final result of your market survey with regard to vocational training leading to employment

Having investigated the market to the best of your ability, you have discovered that **four vocational training courses** offer trainees a prospect of **work and income**:

- welding/metalworking; making confectionary; cosmetics/beauty services; tailoring

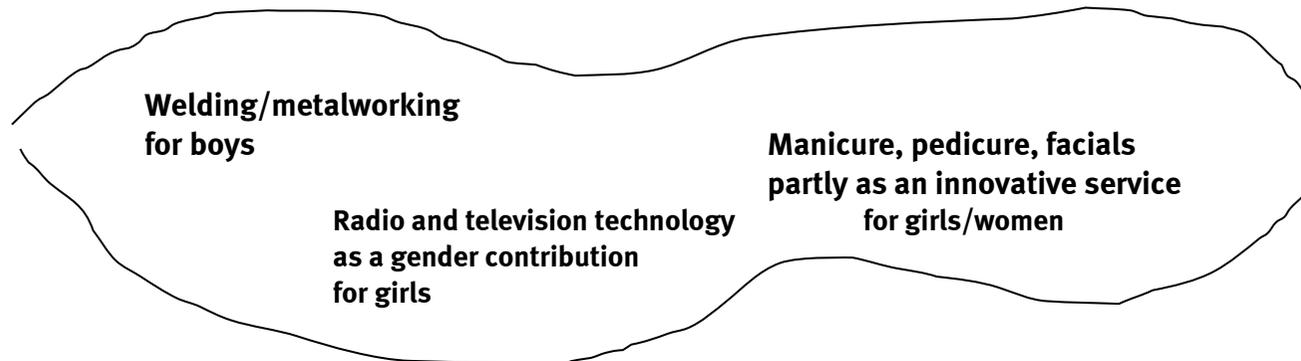
You will offer **two training courses** as **further training** for tradespeople:

- radio and television technology; hairdressing

**For various reasons** you may be able to offer **only three and further vocational training courses** and you have to make a final selection, this time **based on your resources and objectives**. Your choice might be based on the following reasoning:

- Welding as the only trade for male trainees
- From the three options for girls/women you will perhaps choose the one that seems to be most profitable (tailoring), the one that is most innovative (cosmetics/beauty) or the one that is easiest to organise (confectionary)
- And finally it occurs to you that you could be progressive and provide high-quality vocational training in radio/television technology for girls instead of providing further training for men in this area.

Your selection might finally look like this:



### **Please note!**

All these explanations, including the analyses, choices and comments, are **PURELY EXAMPLES** intended only to better illustrate the methodology and procedure.

In terms of trades and activities, the market that you are faced with **IN REAL LIFE** may be completely different and hence lead to completely different conclusions and decisions.

## **Market survey for innovation**

In reality, most vocational training institutions and organisations content themselves with offering classical and well known vocational training courses. Really new courses that have previously been available only occasionally or not at all in the country in question are rare. There are no doubt a number of reasons for this. One such reason is that people and organisations simply get stuck in their ways; another is that course organisers want to be certain that their trainees will find work and in the case of a vocational training course in a completely new field the likelihood of finding work can naturally only be guessed at and rarely guaranteed.

In other words: **being innovative requires courage and a particularly good feel for the market situation – in particular for emerging trends, but also for devising solutions to social problems.**

It is beyond the scope of this manual to explore the full range of innovative possibilities. Nevertheless, two projects have already been described – the example from Cambodia (graphics & design) and the example from the Congo (shipping) – that were not in accordance with standard points of view.

To close this subject, a couple of thoughts on the subject of innovative vocational training courses will now be added. This is partly in view of the fact that this manual is directed at organisations that operate predominantly in the non-formal vocational training sector.

**Non-formal vocational training is particularly good at enabling innovation.**

This statement may surprise you, but it is entirely logical. As mentioned above, innovation is initially always a sort of experiment, because demand can only ever be guessed at by using indicators. To a certain extent, therefore, the market must be tested. Formal vocational training systems, however, can rarely afford to conduct such experiments, because they operate on the basis of a fixed structure (teachers, equipment, curriculum) and they are designed to offer vocational training to entire cohorts of young people rather than to small groups that might find work in places such as niche markets. Experimental innovation is rarely possible in such a context. Non-formal vocational training institutions, however, can function as service providers with a limited remit, which means that they can cater for niche needs. They are therefore well placed to offer new products or consider creative ways of solving problems.

## **Tool 8: Ideas for innovative market surveys**

On account of its creative and proactive nature, innovation relates mainly to self-employed work, or in relation to the formal labour market it may in some circumstances represent an affordance or possibility for action. An innovation must of course always be based on a market requirement as otherwise it would never be successful, but often this need has not yet been expressed in concrete demand but is present only latently, in the form of a wish or need or frequently simply as a problem. The shipping example from the Congo was a latent problem of this sort – a problem that had not been expressed in any concrete demand but that was nevertheless in urgent need of a solution.

**The basic requirements for creative, innovation-oriented market research are:**

- ❖ the ability to **free oneself from routine thinking about vocational training and work**
- ❖ the ability to recognise **trend changes in society and trends in new needs**
- ❖ the ability to recognise **unsolved social or technical problems and convert them into market opportunities for employment**

**The ‘tool’ for innovative market surveys is basically this set of skills.**

In addition there is a skill that you need to possess in connection not with the market survey but with the consequences of this creativity. Lateral thinkers are often laughed at, and that is something you may have to put up with. Innovation and creativity are always about moving into *new territory* that often seems highly unconventional at the outset and thus quickly attracts criticism.

New ideas are of course easiest to realise in cities, because there is naturally greater diversity of supply in cities and consumers there come into closer contact with all sorts of new trends. Sometimes these new trends are ‘imported’ from Europe by a small upper class. On other occasions new things simply travel from a continent where they are common to another where they are a complete novelty. And then there are also ‘innovations’ that are not in themselves new but that are ‘invented’ as a new field of activity for particular target groups.

**Some examples and key thoughts on how new needs and innovative fields of activity can be identified.**



In reality new needs and new market opportunities are almost always discovered by people with entrepreneurial flair – in other words more often by entrepreneurs than by schools. But occasionally there are examples of innovation among providers of vocational training.

### **Thinking outside the box**

In Benin the bishop of a region in the interior of the country was wondering how new occupations could be opened up for girls. He had noticed that there were numerous tailoring workshops but nobody who was trained to repair sewing machines. Because most of the tailoring workshops were in any case owned by women, why not also train girls to carry out the repairs? This gave rise to an innovative vocational training course for girls that also broke down gender stereotypes.

In Uganda, too (Example No. 3 on page 6), the director thought outside the box. He had noticed that in his area people were always looking for bands that could play on festive occasions. He therefore set up an additional vocational training course in music. The trained musicians always had plenty of bookings, providing them with an income that might otherwise – at first glance and especially in a rural setting – seem somewhat unrealistic.

### **Reversing points of view: an important tool for creativity and innovation**

The following two cases show how the points of view of particular target groups and their handicaps were turned round in order to create ‘new’ areas of work – one with and one without a link to vocational training.

In many countries transport is a key factor in both economic and domestic life. Transport is closely linked to mobility. In principle this would exclude people with physical disabilities from activities that require mobility. The members of an association of people with disabilities in Goma, in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, saw this quite differently: they hit on the idea of using their

wheelchairs as a means of transport, which enabled them to become extremely busy 'micro entrepreneurs'. This example not only demonstrates how points of view can be reversed: it also shows that not all effective forms of work need to be preceded by vocational training.

From Phnom Penh in Cambodia comes another example of a creative link between a 'handicap' and an alternative perspective. An organisation there trained blind people as masseurs – turning a 'handicap' into a 'competence', because tactile skills are particularly well developed in blind people. Customers appreciated this too, with many of them preferring to visit the blind masseurs' salon rather than an alternative.

### **Taking advantage of new trends in changing times**

There are activities and occupations that are only 'innovations' in a particular country or on a particular continent: elsewhere they may be nothing new at all.

For example, vocational training courses in cosmetics and beauty in Africa traditionally view women as the potential consumers, and the courses often cover only manicures and pedicures. But treatments that promote well-being are becoming popular in the big cities of Africa, and cosmetics and beauty is no longer of interest only to women.

In Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire a resourceful woman discovered that men were also enquiring about beauty treatments. She opened a salon and now is always fully booked. In Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a nun is training girls in health massage (something that is nothing new in Asia but is fairly unusual in Africa) and she has set up a massage salon that is doing well.

### **Society's changing values: new social problems call for new services**

There are aspects of reality to which people prefer to close their eyes. One such aspect is the breakdown of the extended family as a result of modern lifestyles. For example, an organisation in Ghana that is involved in vocational training noticed an apparent increase in the number of old people in the capital, Accra, who were poorly provided for. People began to wonder whether vocational training courses in the care and nursing of the elderly should be offered. It was fundamentally surprising and for many people almost inconceivable that something of this sort should ever be needed in Africa, because the continent is noted for its concepts of the extended family and family ties. So how can it be that elderly people who have always been socially integrated are suddenly no longer being provided for? The answer lies in the changing times and in changing values – changes that in this respect are clearly now affecting Africa.

### **Creative 'links' as an answer to social problems**

Another example that at first glance may appear just as 'strange' as music or care of the elderly in Africa is training as a response to violence against women.

Many countries have been in crisis mode for years, with violence against women an everyday occurrence. Has this ever led vocational training institutions to consider training girls to provide training in self-defence? Safety and the protection of women and girls is not just a latently present need; as an 'indicator' it is actually highly visible, but what is lacking is the creative leap, the idea or even just the courage to convert the problem into a schema of 'market need – demand – vocational training'. Vocational training courses in this area would actually be extremely cheap, because apart from a trainer and an empty room little else in the way of equipment and facilities is needed. It might remain an income-generating measure for a small number of young women who satisfy the need and demand of some girls and women in the district. But perhaps one day such training courses will exist in every district in large cities. This would provide young women with an income that would be no worse than the income from the usual types of small business practised by women – and it would help many 'service users' to avoid traumatic experiences.

All these examples are intended as **thought-provoking ideas**; at this point they cannot be more than that because for the majority of vocational training institutions they are quite distant prospects.

**Nevertheless: Societies of the future will be service societies.**

**It is a general finding of recent times that there will in future be a growing need for creative solutions to problems.**

**This is also connected to market demand and employment.**

Within vocational training there is currently much discussion at international level of ‘market-oriented vocational training’, but all too often only in relation to employment in the formal production system. Vocational training has not yet made the link between social problems and ‘market-oriented’ answers to them.

Finding these answers involves widening one’s outlook: providers of vocational training must move away from the picture that they have of the market and also from narrow ideas of what constitutes an ‘occupation’. This requires intuition and often means that you need to be something of a visionary.

## **Conclusion**

This manual has provided you with some examples, instructions, tools and ideas for observing, analysing and investigating the market in order to offer vocational training courses that are even more successful at getting people into work.

**But the most important tool involves developing a FEEL for the market.**

Tools and methods are things to call on when you see a specific opportunity to investigate something. This means that years may go by before such an opportunity arises. But market-aware thinking and a feel for the market will enable you to notice things without explicitly having to go looking for them. In other words, you remain on the ball with much less effort.

## Market relevance as an everyday affair

This manual has dealt only with the methodology of market surveys, although issues relating to the monitoring or planning of vocational training have crept in in some places. Yet the market is in principle closely linked to all areas of vocational training. Market relevance is an aspect of candidate guidance (vocational counselling), the selection of applicants (profile and skills), curriculum design (market demand), the selection of trainers (practical experience), practical work placements (businesses as partners) and follow-up of graduates who are now self-employed (skilled coaching). This means that market relevance must be taken into account in all aspects of the planning of vocational training.

But it is important not to forget that the market is neither one-dimensional nor static. It is subject to constant and sometimes extraordinarily quick change. A market survey is always just a sort of 'snapshot' of economic activity. To keep up to date, constant observation of the market is at least as important as a market survey at a particular point in time.

If you have good links with private-sector stakeholders, this observation happens by itself; the importance of business contacts or round tables with business representatives has already been outlined in previous sections. Here are some tips for getting closer to the market in other ways.



### Tips for getting close to the market with minimum effort

- **Do all you can to get a feel for the market.** This can sometimes be more important than knowing how to use particular tools.
- **Be curious.** If you see a 'market survey' as a chore that you have to complete, you will always have a narrow focus and you won't actually discover a great deal.
- **Take off your vocational trainer's spectacles that focus on 'professional profiles' and look at the market activity in your town with different eyes.** Ask yourself the sort of questions about the various economic activities that a tradesperson would ask.
- **Get talking to businesspeople and tradespeople.** If you are at the hairdresser's or the car repair workshop or in a restaurant, chat to the proprietors about what they do. This will teach you a lot about the market.
- **Take on a person** at your school or centre who **has business experience** or at least entrepreneurial flair.
- **Subscribe to a business or economic affairs periodical for your school** or ask a colleague to read the business section of the local newspaper thoroughly and note useful information. These are sources that will keep you constantly provided with up-to-date information and also enable you to identify new trends.
- If you are one of the many vocational training centres that offer **courses in business management or entrepreneurship**, make them more dynamic. Instead of teaching trainees the ABC of bookkeeping, have them observe, analyse and discuss the **actual business activity** in your town. This develops the young people's skills and also provides the school with information.
- **Once a year, meet up with your most successful ex-trainees.** Such meetings of former trainees are frequently organised by schools, but not always with the aim of using them as a source of information for the institution.

- Remember that the **general public are also part of the ‘market’** and that services may therefore also be required by consumers and the community.

## If a market survey calls for ‘sacrifices’

What should you do if a market survey has consequences that you fear?

Perhaps you basically just wanted to know how your existing vocational training courses could be improved, but you discovered from your survey that the market no longer has any need for the vocational training you are offering. In your economic milieu there is simply no need for any more joiners or electricians or motor mechanics, but you have a fully developed vocational training course in that field with trainers that you have employed, a complete curriculum and a fully equipped workshop. What is to happen to all of that if you are now to start training television technicians or hairdressers because the market wants them?

Recommendations for such tricky situations are rarely provided, perhaps because vocational training centres rarely dare to think a market survey through to what they see as this ‘bitter end’. It is not that school directors or the relevant institutional bodies do not recognise the problem or do not ask themselves whether the vocational training courses that they provide lead to work and whether the work is lucrative for the graduates. The issues are recognised, but people don’t know what to do with a finding that may turn out to be unwanted. One could say that a market survey that uncovers too much truth is not exactly welcome. As a result, many people close their eyes to the facts and prefer to take the risk that their graduates will not find work or will migrate.

But the problem could be solved, although it requires flexibility and a willingness to try new things:

- **Curricula are not set in stone** – they do not need to remain unchanged for centuries.
- **Equipment can be sold, hired out, leased.**
- **Permanent staff** is perhaps the greatest problem, but there are solutions to this too. Schools do not usually regard making staff redundant as socially acceptable (especially if they belong to church-based institutions), but it is often possible **to assign the person a different function, deploy them elsewhere in the institution as a whole or transfer them to another school.** Some might even be happy to receive a severance payment and become self-employed (and because schools often have a good technical reputation, they are bound to find customers quickly).

If you discover that the vocational training that you offer does not result in your trainees finding work, have the courage to address the consequences.

**In this case you should sacrifice the vocational training course and not the young people.**