

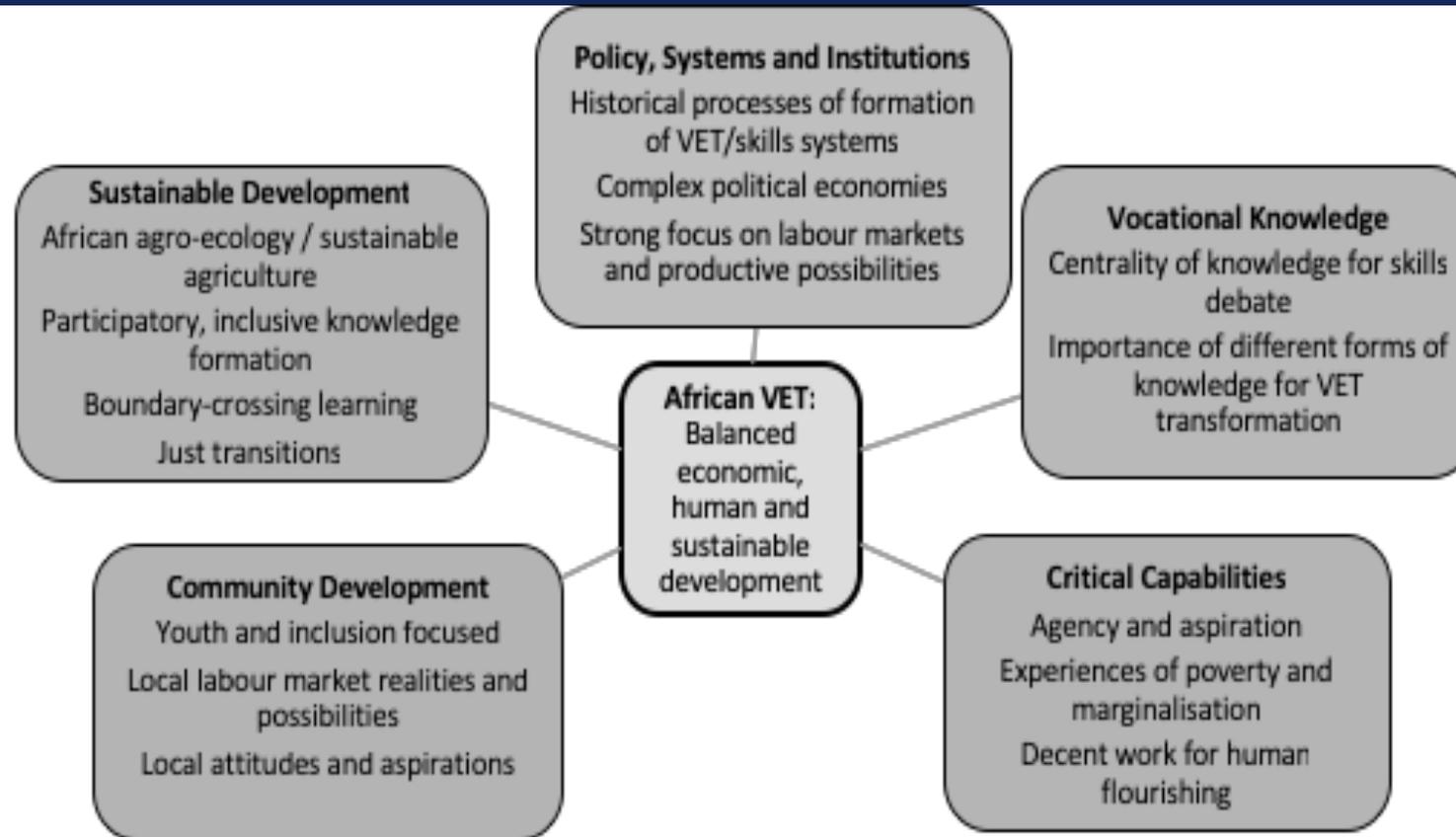
Vocational Education and Training for African Development: Reviewing the Past; Imagining the Future

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Purpose of the Presentation

- ❖ What literatures can point to ways in which VET can be theorised in relationship with economic, human and sustainable development in Africa?

Overview



Policy, Systems and Institutions

- ❖ Longstanding VET tradition of **political economy of skills**
- ❖ Skills formation systems are a product of **historical processes** in political economies that are characterised by both conflict and consensus
- ❖ Need to think of how VET is shaped by and responds to **labour market realities** and **productive possibilities**
- ❖ Challenge of extending the political economy of skills tradition to new contexts
- ❖ Challenge of developing a multi-scalar approach to skills formation system research

Vocational Knowledge

- ❖ Arose out of wider “new” sociology of knowledge c.50 years ago
- ❖ Problem of thinking about skills without thinking about **knowledge**
- ❖ Dangers of **competency/outcomes based** approaches
- ❖ Need for **subject- and discipline-based curricula** as the basis for meaningful work as well as the **broader frame** within which practical skills and knowledge are located

Critical Capabilities

- ❖ Draws on Sen and the human development and capabilities approach but with a *stronger concern* with **balancing structure and agency**
- ❖ Need to see the effects of **multidimensional** poverty on learners
- ❖ VET and work are means to the end of human flourishing – learners are not only interested in jobs and work
- ❖ Importance of thinking about **work** broadly
- ❖ Focus on supporting learners identification and achievement of aspirations

Community Development

- ❖ Arising out of Freirean **radical adult** education tradition
- ❖ Focus on how youth are often excluded by formal education system and formal labour market
- ❖ Importance of addressing **negative societal attitudes** towards vocational learning
- ❖ Importance of **local knowledges** and freeing these from dominant knowledges
- ❖ Need to think about what are the **productive possibilities within communities**, especially in rural areas

Sustainable Development

- ❖ Linked to wider **education for sustainable development** tradition
- ❖ Formal VET systems have ignored the centrality of **agriculture and natural resources management** to African development
- ❖ Centrality of **knowledge** question – important knowledges have been *marginalised* by colonialism and extractivism
- ❖ Need to focus on **skills for just transitions** rather than narrow green skills

Conclusions (1)

- ❖ Not attempting to offer a single theory but open up possibilities for **new theorisations for new times**
- ❖ We need more critical understandings of how VET is supporting **individuals, communities, firms and countries** to find new ways of becoming *more productive* at the same time as delivering on *decent work, sustainable livelihoods and just transitions*
- ❖ This requires better conceptualisations of economies and labour markets at different **scales** and in different **settings**, including rural and informal urban, as well as industrial

Conclusions (2)

- ❖ We need to look more into how individuals and communities **form aspirations** about how productive work **supports** better lives and what **place** vocational learning can play in this
- ❖ They also point towards the necessity of understanding how attitudes of learners, parents and employers are **shaped** both by economic signals and by their **perceptions** about the value of different forms of learning, knowledge and qualifications
- ❖ They raise important questions about how both VET's current status and potential to play a **transformative role** are **dependent** on issues of knowledge and learning



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Thank you

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