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A particularly important area of work and employment consists of those occupations which centre on the application of technical and vocational skills to the world of work. It is estimated that world-wide some 80% of all occupations are of this type (UNESCO-UNEVOC & UNESCO-UIS, 2006).

This special edition is in response to the resolutions arising out the 2009 UNESCO General Conference of UNESCO's 193 Member States where a major resolution was passed to promote the reform and strengthening of TVET systems and the capacity of Member States so developed to equip youth and adults with knowledge, competences and skills for the world of work.

The 2009 UNESCO General Conference identified TVET as one of three priority areas to be focused on by UNESCO in its various programme activities. This includes: teacher education; development of adult literacy; and linkages with lifelong learning.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has fuelled phenomenal economic growth in some countries and fallen short of expectations in others; while globalization is prompting governments to take renewed interest in this branch of education, still perceived by some as second-class. The purpose of this double, special edition is to explore key aspects of the current development of TVET in various countries.

Although this special issue of the *International Journal of Training Research* is a large, double issue, it is clearly beyond the scope of this volume to examine all, or even most, of the trends, issues and challenges currently facing TVET worldwide at the current time, which have been referred to above. However, this Special Issue does address some of these matters, and the authors of this special issue refer to issues and concerns in their various countries from different regions of the world.