



## 6<sup>th</sup> Report

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

AND

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**An examination of the state of technical or vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.**

THIRD SESSION (2022/2023) 12<sup>TH</sup> PARLIAMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# 6<sup>TH</sup> REPORT

**OF THE**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**ON**

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONAL  
PROGRAMMES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING THE DEVELOPMENTAL  
GOALS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.**

**Date Laid in the HoR:**

**Date Laid in the Senate:**

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website:

**The Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration**

**Contact the Committee's Secretariat**

**Telephone:** 624-7275 Extensions 2277/2284/2283, **Fax:** 625-4672

**Email:** [jcsspa@ttparliament.org](mailto:jcsspa@ttparliament.org)

## THE COMMITTEE

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Dr. Paul Richards  
**CHAIRMAN**

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Mr. Esmond Forde, MP  
**VICE-CHAIRMAN**



Mrs. Penelope Beckles, MP  
**MEMBER**

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Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP  
**MEMBER**



Mr. Rohan Sinanan  
**MEMBER**

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Mr. Roger Munroe, MP  
**MEMBER**



Mr. Avinash Singh  
**MEMBER**

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Mr. David Nakhid  
**MEMBER**

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## Committee Mandate and Establishment

- 1.1.1. Section 66 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago declares that not later than three months after the first meeting of the House of Representatives, the Parliament shall appoint Joint Select Committees to inquire into and report to both Houses in respect of Government Ministries, Municipal Corporations, Statutory Authorities, State Enterprises and Service Commissions, in relation to their administration, the manner of exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.
- 1.1.2. Motions related to this purpose were passed in the House of Representatives and Senate on November 13 and 17, 2015, respectively and thereby established, *inter alia*, the ***Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration***.
- 1.1.3. Standing Order 91 of the Senate and 101 of the House of Representatives outline the general functions of a Committee of this nature. They are as follows:
  - a) “To examine Bills and review all legislation relating to the relevant Ministries, departments or bodies or as may be referred to it by the House;
  - b) To investigate, inquire into, and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration and operations of the assigned Ministries, departments or bodies;
  - c) To study the programme and policy objectives of Ministries, departments or bodies and the effectiveness of the implementation of such programmes and policy objectives;
  - d) To assess and monitor the performance of Ministries, Departments and bodies and the manner of the exercise of their powers;
  - e) To investigate and inquire into all matters relating to the assigned Ministries, Departments and bodies as they may deem necessary, or as may be referred to them by the House or a Minister; and
  - f) To make reports and recommendations to the House as often as possible, including recommendations for proposed legislation.”

## **Powers of the Joint Select Committee**

1.1.4. Standing Orders 101 of the Senate and 111 of the House of Representatives outline the core powers of the Committee which include *inter alia*:

- to send for persons, papers and records;
- to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the Senate;
- to adjourn from place to place;
- to report from time to time;
- to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's or Sub-Committee's order of reference;
- to communicate with any Committee of Parliament on matters of common interest; and
- to meet concurrently with any other Committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports.

## **Membership**

1.1.5. The Committee comprises the following members:

- |                             |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Dr. Paul Richards        | Chairman      |
| 2. Mr. Roger Monroe, MP     | Vice-Chairman |
| 3. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP     | Member        |
| 4. Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP    | Member        |
| 5. Ms. Penelope Beckles, MP | Member        |
| 6. Mr. Rohan Sinanan        | Member        |
| 7. Mr. David Nakhid         | Member        |
| 8. Mr. Avinash Singh        | Member        |

## **Change in Membership**

1.1.6. The following changes were made to the membership of the Committee:

- (i) Mr. Avinash Singh was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Ms. Allyson West with effect from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- (ii) Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP with effect from November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Secretariat Support**

1.1.7. The following officers were assigned to assist the Committee:

1. Mr. Julien Ogilvie - Secretary
2. Mr. Brian Lucio - Assistant Secretary
3. Ms. Rochelle Stafford - Researcher
4. Ms. Nicole Brown - Researcher



## ABBREVIATIONS

ASTI	Advanced Solutions Technical Institute
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CHINS	Children in Need of Supervision
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MALF	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
MoE	Ministry of Education
MIC-IT	MIC Institute of Technology
MiLAT	Ministry-Led Academic Training Programme
MYDNS	Ministry of Youth Development and National Service
MYPART	Military-led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NESC	National Energy Skills Centre
NETD	National Engineering Technician Diploma
NTA	National Training Agency
OJT	On the Job Training
SYSP	Specialized Youth Service Programme
TTNVQ	Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
YDAC	Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres
YTEPP	Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme
UTT	University of Trinidad and Tobago



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1.1. At its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting held on November 16 2022, the Committee agreed to conduct an examination of the state of technical or vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee agreed on the following inquiry objectives:

1. **To examine the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago;**
2. **To assess whether TVET programmes are aligned to meeting the country's developmental goals; and**
3. **To evaluate the strategies and measures that are being adopted by the State to sustain and promote the enrolment of young persons in TVET programmes.**

2.1.2. The Committee acquired both oral and written evidence based on the objectives listed above. Oral evidence was received during two (2) public hearing held with various stakeholders (*See Appendix I and II*) on November 16, 2022 and February 03, 2023. The Committee also conducted focus group sessions with students from various TVET institutions in Trinidad and Tobago to assess their experiences with TVET in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.1.3. Some of the significant issues highlighted during the inquiry were:

- i. A general 'diminished' perception of TVET among the public;
- ii. Lack of awareness of TVET programmes especially among the youth;
- iii. Drastic reductions in resources for most public institutions which provided training in TVET negatively impacting program offerings;
- iv. Despite interest in TVET courses, there is a notable decline in enrolment numbers at major TVET institutions;
- v. There is a general lack of empirical research data to determine what programmes are needed for development and diversification for Trinidad and Tobago; and alignment of program offerings to strategic development policies and plans.

- vi. The lack of continuous data and the ambiguity on the alignment between TVET/skills training and jobs highlighted the need for stronger collaboration among training institutions, relevant Ministries and employers to ensure that the skills set obtained respond to the economic needs of Trinidad and Tobago;
  - vii. A notable percentage of students do not always secure jobs in the area which they obtained their certification;
  - viii. COVID-19 impacted the delivery of many TVET programmes due to their inherently practical approach and in the areas where courses could have been conducted online, some students faced challenges and were not able to access the software that was needed in some cases; and
  - ix. Whether an enabling environment exist to expose students/ graduates to the entrepreneurial opportunities available within the TVET sector TVET programmes.
  - x. Lack of training in business courses to enable graduates to effectively open and maintain their own business establishments.
- 2.1.4. The Committee looks forward to reviewing the Minister's response to this Report, which becomes due, sixty (60) days after it is presented to the Houses of Parliament.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- A. Consideration should be given to expanding course offerings to include more part time classes or hybrid classes especially for working students. The Ministry of Education can consider funding the expansion of these part-time and hybrid classes especially at the major public TVET institutions such as YTEPP and MIC-IT.**
  
- B. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should indicate how it plans to assist with the upgrade of infrastructure and labs at government-assisted TVET institutions.**
  
- C. The Ministry of Education should strengthen collaboration with other key industry partners (such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Planning and Development to assist with data on labour gaps and development goals. This will impact course development and curriculum modification to meet the specific needs of Trinidad and Tobago and ultimately contribute to the broadening of TVET programme scope locally.**
  
- D. The MOE should examine the evolving areas for potential TVET programs. Evolving arenas such as A.I. and Coding should be introduced to meet the evolving job markets and opportunities.**

### **OBJECTIVE 2: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- A. Market research and labour gap assessment data is needed. If institutions are unable to conduct this research independently, the Ministry of Education should assist with harnessing and coordinating the necessary resources and supporting arrangements to facilitate such research. These studies should be published to assist**

persons with making informed decisions regarding the potential costs and benefits of participating in TVET. The Committee agrees with the NTA's recommendation of the need for increased efforts for continual research, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and industry needs.

- B. Career maps pathways based on TVET qualifications should be published and marketed. This executed through collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, the Ministry of Trade and Industry as well as key educational institutions.
- C. Entrepreneurial training should be mandatory and be a part of all programmes (as a module). As part of this module, students should be exposed to the steps for starting and maintaining their business. This should also include identification and support with sourcing start-up capital.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- A. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with its key training institutions should embark on a more strategic marketing and communication campaign of TVET. This should give specific consideration to each target demographic starting at primary school. Specifically, for the youth, special emphasis should be placed on publishing content regarding possible pathways and opportunities to employment by choosing TVET certification.
- B. The Ministry of Education should consider having specific scholarships or bursaries for TVET, especially TVET programmes that are aligned to the country's developmental goals and labour market demands.

- C. As part of its Ministerial response, the Ministry of Labour should provide an update on its plans to promote faster assimilation of TVET graduates into the job market through collaboration with key training institutions in Trinidad and Tobago and the On the Job Training Programme.**
  
- D. There should be greater consultation and collaboration with the Private sector, in the types of TVET training programs available, to ensure better alignment with the requirements and needs of the Private and Manufacturing sectors.**



## INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) often refers to non-academic and practical training that assist with developing the skills and knowledge of persons working in different sectors of industry. TVET offers many opportunities, not only for personal development, but also for increasing job security and contributing to economic diversification and sustainable development<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.1.2 In many developing countries, TVET plays two major roles in national sustainable development. Firstly, one major role is the provision of training opportunities and career advancement avenues for secondary school graduates. Additionally, it assists in providing skilled manpower that is needed at different levels of society.
- 3.1.3 Locally, TVET is poised to be a major contributor to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago. The programmes offered are expected to be aligned to the country's developmental goals and requirements. Programmes and projects are supposedly prioritized with National Development Objectives that are in line with Vision 2030. Formally, TVET programmes are offered at secondary and post-secondary education levels. At the tertiary level, TVET programmes are offered by universities or other approved TVET providers<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.1.4 TVET programmes are primarily funded either through the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) and the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP)<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.1.5 Notwithstanding the availability of programmes and financial assistance, the TVET system still faces some challenges in its delivery, reception and overall perception by the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/show=term/term=Technical+and+vocational+education+and+training>

<sup>2</sup> [World TVET Database Trinidad and Tobago.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

public. There is need for an overall modernization of TVET at the national and institutional level.

- 3.1.6 Despite the potential for greater socio-economic development, TVET is still often considered 'lesser than' traditional academic training and its economic potential is oftentimes not fully embraced or maximized. **This Inquiry seeks to examine the state of technical or vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.**

## **Conduct of the Inquiry**

3.1.7 Prior to the commencement of the public hearings, the Committee issued invitations to specific stakeholders and requested written submissions based on the following objectives:

1. **To examine the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago;**
2. **To assess whether TVET programmes are aligned to meeting the country's developmental goals; and**
3. **To evaluate the strategies and measures that are being adopted by the State to sustain and promote the enrolment of young persons in TVET programmes.**

3.1.8 Evidence gathering for this inquiry included **two (2) public hearings** held with the stakeholders listed below on **November 16, 2022 and February 03, 2023**. A focus group was also held with students (current and past) of various TVET institutions on **Thursday January 19, 2023**. The following stakeholders appeared before the committee on November 16, 2022:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Youth Development and National Service

3.1.9 The following stakeholders appeared before the committee on February 03, 2023:

- MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT)
- University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)
- Advanced Solutions Technical Institute (ASTI)

3.1.10 **Focus group sessions** As a means of obtaining a more hands-on and realistic perspective on the TVET learning environment, the Committee approved the convening of focus

group sessions comprising past and present students of TVET educational programmes. The focus group sessions were conducted on January 19, 2023 and were administered by the Secretariat.

3.1.11 Subsequent to these public hearings, additional information was requested from specific stakeholders and was submitted accordingly.

3.1.12 The **Minutes of the Meetings** during which the public hearings were held are attached as **Appendix I and II** and the **Verbatim Notes** as **Appendix IV and V**.

## KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### OBJECTIVE 1: To examine the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago

#### **Quality of TVET Programmes in Trinidad and Tobago**

- 4.1.1 Based on information provided by the Ministry of Education, TVET programmes at the secondary school level were in keeping with regional and national standards and are continuously reviewed by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC).
- 4.1.2 Similarly, at the Post-Secondary Level, the quality of the syllabus was assessed by national and regional standards and international best practice. Programme curriculum is approved by the National Examinations Council (NEC) before implementation. Each institution may have additional boards or institutions that they are associated with, which provided additional checks and balances for the quality of programme delivered.
- 4.1.3 The NEC was established to oversee examinations, certification and related activities in respect to TVET training at the sub-professional level<sup>4</sup>. The Ministry of Education (MoE) stated that all revised and new NEC courses were developed by industry of specialists who have considerable knowledge of the required skills for persons to function in their respective occupational areas. Additionally, all other NEC courses required review to reflect modern industrial trends, codes and standards. These requirements, according to the Ministry, allowed for the assurance of quality curriculum being developed in the TVET sector.
- 4.1.4 The National Training Agency (NTA) is an “umbrella agency for effecting reform in TVET in Trinidad and Tobago.”<sup>5</sup> Part of the agency’s mandate is to co-ordinate and regulate TVET in Trinidad and Tobago. Based on a submission by the MoE, the NTA’s National Occupational Standards (NOS) of competencies set the minimum standard for knowledge and attitudes that are required from an employee for their specified occupational area.

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<sup>4</sup> [National Examinations Council \(NEC\) – Ministry of Education \(moe.gov.tt\)](http://moe.gov.tt)

<sup>5</sup> [National Training Agency \(NTA\) – Ministry of Education \(moe.gov.tt\)](http://moe.gov.tt)

These NOS are developed through consultations with industry experts, therefore programme curriculum is always designed in keeping with industry expectations and relevancy.

## **Accreditation and Recognition of TVET programmes in Trinidad and Tobago**

- 4.1.5 The NTA offers Centre Approval and Programme Approval Services.
- 4.1.6 Centres approved by the NTA have the capability to conduct training and assessments and award qualifications that are aligned to approved occupational standards i.e. Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ)/Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ).
- 4.1.7 Some institutions that offer TVET programmes such as YTEPP, UTT, MIC-IT are accredited by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). While some private TVET institutions are also accredited by the ACTT, many have partnerships and accreditation with international councils and institutions such as the Cities and Guilds of London Institute, American Welding Society etc.

## **Infrastructure and Equipment**

- 4.1.8 At the Secondary school level, the MoE reported that many of the schools built in the 1960s and 1970s still utilized old equipment and machinery which need to be replaced refurbished or upgraded.
- 4.1.9 In a submission from the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), it was mentioned that there were some challenges with respect to the access and sharing of labs, namely for mechanical workshops (to facilitate TVET), Electrical Labs and Food Labs.
- 4.1.10 During the public hearings, it was learnt that there were a number of closures of TVET institutions across the country over the past decade. For example, representatives from MIC-IT reported that previously, the institute operated twenty (20) centres throughout the country which catered to three thousand to five thousand (3,000 -5,000) trainees per

given year. Now, they operate with ten (10) centres and one thousand to twelve hundred (1,000 to 1,200) students full time at any given time. Considering this, MIC has closed approximately fifty percent (50%) of their centres in the past decade. Similarly, YTEPP has also reported a decrease in the number of centres, stating that they had approximately twenty six (26) centres and are currently down to eight (8).

## **Programme Availability**

- 4.1.11 There was a wide variety of TVET programmes offered at both public and private institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. Popular programmes varied based on institution and the availability of the programme offered at those institutions. Generally, popular programmes ranged from electrical engineering, agro processing, heavy machinery operations, and cosmetology among others.
- 4.1.12 While generally, TVET programmes were available to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, some programmes were targeted to the youth. For example, the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service (MYDNS) stated that some of their programmes have targeted age groups. For the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, the targeted age group is 15 to 25. The Youth Development Centres take persons up to age 35.
- 4.1.13 It was learnt that some programmes were used as intervention strategies for vulnerable populations in the country. According to the MYDNS, the MiLAT and MYPART are intervention programmes that offer courses in TVET. The CHINS programme (which is managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force) is also an intervention programme. Furthermore, while the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme (CCC) is also an intervention programme, it specifically caters to persons who are in most need for bridging the gap between leaving the secondary school system and employability through gaining a specialized skill.
- 4.1.14 Additionally, the inclusion of a TVET component in other intervention programmes, has been considered by other Ministries. In a submission provided by the Ministry of Social

Development and Family Services, it was stated that two programmes under their purview have been considered best suited for inclusion of a TVET component. These included the Social Transformation and Empowerment Programme Uplifting People (STEP-UP) and the Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development Programme. The submission explained that TVET is being embedded in the Education Pillar of the STEP-UP programme. Additionally, the SEED programme can provide funding for eligible persons who complete TVET training and wish to monetize their skills in the area of entrepreneurship.

### **Focus Group Findings Relevant to Objective 1**

- 4.1.15 When asked about their experiences and opinions about TVET programmes they were currently or previously enrolled in, all participants indicated their satisfaction. Participants spoke highly of the quality of teaching, the wide availability of programmes and the support received during their programme. In some cases, participants expressed satisfaction for the exposure to the industry professionals and have stated that it was an eye-opening experience.
- 4.1.16 In terms of scope, some participants stated that there should be some more consideration and options for persons who are currently employed. Some participants explained that while there is a wide variety of programmes, many of them are full time and there are limited part time options for the programmes in which they had an interest.
- 4.1.17 It was also mentioned that consideration should be given to the availability of programmes for 'mature' students (students who are closer to the retirement age). One participant indicated that there are many programmes they are interested in, however, there seems to be an age limit to enrol into certain programmes. The participant believed that there is a place for older students in TVET and thought that more programmes can be marketed toward this specific group.



4.1.18 Mention was also made of limited number of facilitators available for certain programmes. While overall teaching was deemed satisfactory and enjoyable, participants mentioned that limited facilitators in certain areas can curtail the scope of programmes offered.

## ***Findings***

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. There appeared to be sufficient systems and arrangements to promote quality assurances within TVET programmes. Quality is ensured by achieving centre approval and programme approval by regulatory bodies;
- ii. Many of the mainstream institutions that offered TVET programmes are accredited locally. In addition, many of these programmes are in collaboration with foreign based accredited institutions. Certification in these programmes allow students to work throughout the Caribbean;
- iii. Based on direct engagement via focus groups, current and past students appear to be generally satisfied with the quality of teaching at their respective institutions;
- iv. A reduction in funding has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of TVET programmes available at both government-assisted and privately funded. Additionally, there is a shortfall in qualified facilitators available to teach courses;
- v. The existence of out-dated equipment necessitates the replacement and refurbishment of older labs at some secondary and tertiary institutions;
- vi. While not all TVET programmes are intervention strategies, some are targeted as such. Some of these programmes are heavily marketed and may have contributed to a 'negative perception' of TVET;
- vii. While there was not any codified age barrier to registering for most TVET programmes, there was an obvious marketing strategy that was heavily youth-focused; and
- viii. Some prospective students may have considered leaving their jobs to pursue training as some programmes are only offered on a full time basis.

## **Recommendations**

Considering the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- A. Consideration should be given to expanding course offerings to include more part time classes or hybrid classes especially for working students. The Ministry of Education can consider funding the expansion of these part-time and hybrid classes especially at the major public TVET institutions such as YTEPP and MIC-IT.**
  
- B. Consideration should be given to expanding course offerings for interested students who are close to retirement age or who have retired. The Ministry of Education in partnership with organizations such as Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons can develop and market specific programmes targeted to older persons which can be hosted at various community centres around Trinidad and Tobago. In light of increased life expectancy and older persons remaining in the labour force past the current retirement age, skills development for this age cohort may become increasingly important in the near future.<sup>6</sup>**
  
- C. As part of its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should indicate how it plans to assist with the upgrade of infrastructure and labs at government-assisted TVET institutions.**
  
- D. The Ministry of Education should strengthen collaboration with other key industry partners (such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Planning and Development to assist with data on labour gaps and development goals. This will impact course development and curriculum modification to meet the specific needs of Trinidad and Tobago and ultimately contribute to the broadening of TVET programme scope locally. This can be considered an ongoing/long-term activity for all agencies involved.**
  
- E. The Ministry of Education should foster stronger public-private partnerships to assist with the identification and anticipation of skills needed through prospective studies or sector**

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<sup>6</sup> [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/unesco-strategy-for-tvet\\_2022-2029-discussion-document-en.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/unesco-strategy-for-tvet_2022-2029-discussion-document-en.pdf)

skills councils<sup>7</sup>. Consistent data collection and analyses are especially important for the creation of relevant programmes based on the labour needs of Trinidad and Tobago.

- F. The MOE should examine the evolving areas for potential TVET programs. Evolving areas such as A.I. and Coding should be introduced to meet the evolving job markets and opportunities.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245178.locale=en>

## **OBJECTIVE 2: To assess whether TVET programmes are aligned to meeting the country's developmental goals**

### **Labour Market Trends**

5.1.1 According to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), the NTA was engaged in 2019 to conduct a labour Market Demands Survey. Based on its findings, respondents within the business community recommended training should be offered in the following areas:

1. Upholstery;
2. Mechanical Engineering;
3. Electrical Engineering;
4. Refrigeration;
5. Plumbing;
6. Digital Printing; and
7. Woodworking

It is expected that building capacity in these areas will contribute to an expansion in output which can lead to greater employment opportunities and increased revenue generation.

5.1.2 Additionally, considering Vision 2030, feedback from the NTA and the business community indicated that the following should be prioritized in TVET training:

1. Robotics;
2. Artificial Intelligence;
3. Advanced Manufacturing;
4. 3 Dimension Printing;
5. Information and Communications Technology;
6. Green Technology;
7. Agriculture and Agro-processing; and
8. Maritime.

5.1.3 According to MTI, the 2019 *Labour Market Demands Survey* reported that there was some difficulty in sourcing highly trained individual to fill existing vacancies in the non-energy

manufacturing sector. These included **Mechanical Engineering, Digital Printing and Woodworking.**

5.1.4 It was also reported by MTI, in the **Labour Market Gap and Foresight Survey (2021) 12% of the responding companies applied for work permits to import foreign labour to fill existing vacancies** in the following areas:

1. Plant Management;
2. Quantity Surveyors;
3. Building Information Modelling (BIM) Technicians;
4. Maintenance Technicians; and
5. Specialized Engineering; and Technical Personnel.

5.1.5 Specifically considering educational institutions, it was observed that most institutions **do not have recent information on local labour trends, market students or job market assessments.**

5.1.6 MIC however, stated that they have capitalized on research that was done between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the TTMA who were looking for persons to fill human resource shortages within the manufacturing sector. It was through this collaboration MIC launched a new programme; the Mechatronics diploma programme (journeyman programme) to meet the demands of this sector.

## Programme Trends

5.1.7 Programme popularity varies slightly based on institution. However, there are specific commonalities observed across these institutions. **Some of the most accessed/pursued programmes include:**

**Table 1: Most Accessed/Pursued Programmes**

Mechanical Engineering	Music Production
Electrical Engineering	Editing and Advanced Camera Operations
Agro Processing	Cosmetology (Hairdressing and Aesthetics)
Fluid Power Hydraulics	Child Care Attendant

Heavy Machinery Operations	Fashion Design
Building Electrician Assistant	Jewellery Making <sup>8</sup>
Welding and Electrical	Patient Care Assistant
Fibre Optics	Television and Video Production
Skills for Automated Office	Bread, Cakes and Pastry Making

5.1.8 More specifically, The National Tracer Study 2022 of Participants in Skills Training conducted by the NTA outlined the most popular International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) fields completed between 2015-2019. The fields identified were similar to the general aforementioned programmes

**Table 2: Most Popular ISCED Detailed Fields Completed in 2015-2019<sup>9</sup>**

Level	Most Popular ISCED Detailed Fields
<b>Levels 1 and 2</b>	Hair and beauty services Secretarial and office work Nursing and midwifery
<b>Level 3</b>	Medical diagnostic and treatment technology Personal services not elsewhere classified (incl. Events Management/Planning) Transport Services
<b>Level 4</b>	Management and administration Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, manufacturing and construction Mechanics and metal trades
<b>Level 5</b>	Management and administration Secretarial and Office Work Nursing and Midwifery Domestic Services

<sup>8</sup> Dependent on the school. For example, this programme is popular and still offered at YTEPP, however this in addition to tailoring courses have discontinued at MIC-IT due to low demand.

<sup>9</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TbdRNeD4NacypwZe73qtZ3jBDGthO5He/view>

Level	Most Popular ISCED Detailed Fields
	Journalism and Reporting Library, information and archival studies
Level 'Other'	Accounting and Taxation Management and Administration
Level 'Unsure'	Hair and beauty services Secretarial and Office Work Medical diagnostic and treatment technology Nursing and midwifery Management and administration

5.1.9 It has been stated that the TVET syllabi for secondary schools **respond to the regional and local labour markets and educational demands**. Students can gain CVQs in CSEC TVET areas as well as CAPE Electrical and Electronic Technology (EEET) syllabus. The areas offered are identified below:

1. CSEC Industrial Technology;
2. CSEC Home Economics;
3. CSEC Tech Drawing;
4. CAPE Agricultural Science; and
5. CAPE Technical and Electronic Engineering Technology.

5.1.10 At the secondary school level, the most accessed/pursued programmes followed similar trends. These included:

**Table 3: Most Accessed/Pursued Programmes at the Secondary School Level**

CSEC	Technical Drawing, Agricultural Science, Food and Nutrition, Electronic Document Preparation and Management (EDPM)
CAPE	Building Mechanical Engineering Design (BMED)
CVQ	Regional Occupational Standards - General Cosmetology, Commercial Food Preparation and Electrical Installation

Ministry of Education submission dated November 01, 2022

5.1.11 Based on a written submission by the Ministry of Education, it was noted that at the post-secondary level, curriculum changes were aligned to the current and intended needs of local industry. Some of these include renewable and integrated technologies powered by IoT (Internet of Things) and remote management.

5.1.12 Furthermore, the Ministry of Education stated that all revised and new NEC courses were “developed by industry or subject specialists who have knowledge of the skills that are required for persons to function within their respective occupational areas within the labour market.”

5.1.13 The Ministry of Education provided information on the programmes that were least accessed/pursued at the secondary school level:

**Table 4: Least Accessed/Pursued Programmes at the Secondary School Level**

<b>CSEC</b>	Home Economics, Family and Resource Management, Clothing and Textiles and Fashion
<b>CAPE</b>	Electrical and Electronic Technology
<b>CVQ</b>	Tilapia Production, Tree Crop Farming, MVR cars and Light trucks, Photography and Light Motor Vehicle Repair.

*Ministry of Education submission dated November 01, 2022*

**Table 5: Least Accessed/Pursued Programmes at the Post-Secondary School Level**

At the post-secondary level, the least pursued programmes include:

Technical Drawing/Food Technology	Masonry
Cake making and decorating	Plumbing
Food Preparation	Tailoring
Garment Construction	Tilapia Production
Graphic Design	Tour Guide Escort
Grow Box Operations	Vegetable Production
Home Furnishings	
Lawn and Landscape Management	

*Ministry of Education submission dated November 01, 2022*



5.1.14 The Ministry of Education stated that some changes were made to the content of existing TVET programmes. These changes are more aligned to the requirements of the local labour market and are in direct response to the demands of employers and industry representatives.

5.1.15 Some of these changes at the post-secondary level include integration of job specific skills and digital skills such as coding and programming, CAD skills, IoT skills, green and renewable energy and the incorporation of solar technology into technical fields such as agriculture and electrical engineering.

## TVET Programmes for Trinidad and Tobago’s Economic Developmental Goals

5.1.16 The Ministry of Education identified TVET training courses provided in the Government’s priority areas over the period 2016 to 2020:

Table 6: Priority Programmes identified for the period 2016 to 2020

GORTT Priority Areas	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
Blue Economy	3	3	1	1		8
Construction	55	35	38	30	21	<b>179</b>
Creative and Cultural Industries	58	39	22	24	22	165
Digital Transformation	36	21	18	19	20	114
Energy Transformation	18	13	2	2	3	38
Financial Services	4	1	2	2	1	10
Food Security	60	53	48	46	38	<b>245</b>
Green Economy Management of Climate Change	7	1				8
Manufacturing	19	14	19	17	9	78

GORTT Priority Areas	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
Public safety and citizens security	30	29	8	8	6	57
Tourism	11	6	17	15	8	57
Grand Total	301	215	175	164	128	983

*Ministry of Education submission dated November 01, 2022*

5.1.17 The Ministry of Education stated that research conducted by YTEPP indicates that **74% of the courses they provide cover 11 of the priority sectors** included among the Government's developmental goals.

5.1.18 The Ministry of Education also provided a snapshot of skills shortages in specific sectors based on the National Training Agency's (NTA) Skills foresight report:

**Table 7: Skills shortages identified based on Sector**

Sector	Skill Shortages		Source
	Technical	Soft Skills	
<b>Hospitality and Tourism</b>	Content Marketing	Analytical Skills	Skills Foresight Assessment of the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (NTA, 2020)
	Digital Skills	Commitment to	
	Food and Beverage	Work	
	Operations	Communication	
	Foreign Languages	Skills	
	Graphic Design	Conflict Management	
	Hotel Operations	Customer Service	
	Website Design	Flexibility	
	Leadership		
	Multitasking		
	Problem Solving		
	Teamwork		
	Work Ethics		

Sector	Skill Shortages		Source
	Technical	Soft Skills	
<b>Renewable energy (Energy Sector)</b>	Renewable Energy Design (specifically Solar Design)		Skills Foresight Assessment Report - Industry Analysis and Skills Foresight on the Renewable Energy segment of the energy sector (NTA, 2018)
<b>Yachting Subsector (Maritime Sector)</b>	Marine Upholstery Canvas Work Sail Manufacture Sail Repairs Marine Stitching Propeller Servicing Marine Air-Conditioning Marine Fiberglass Usage Marine Woodwork		Skills Foresight Assessment - Yachting Sub-sector (NTA, 2018)
<b>Ship Repair and Dry Docking</b>	Mechanical Fitting Dry Docking Welding Electrical Engineering Pipe Fitting Mechanical Engineering Marine Surveying Electronic Engineering		Skills Foresight Assessment Report - Industry Analysis and Skills Foresight on the ship repair and dry docking segment of

Sector	Skill Shortages		Source
	Technical	Soft Skills	
	Naval Architecture Marine Travel Marine Engineering		the maritime sector (NTA 2017)

*Ministry of Education submission dated November 01, 2022*

5.1.19 According to the Ministry of Education, other gaps identified by YTEPP and MIC-IT are as follows:

1. Virtual Business – marketing, social media, customer service;
2. ICT- Smart grid technology, cyber security;
3. Disaster management;
4. Digital skills for tourism;
5. Agro-tourism – e.g. cocoa;
6. Supporting renewable energy;
7. Growing short term crops, livestock, fisheries;
8. High efficiency power generation and storage;
9. Construction, installation, maintenance, technology replacement – cooling, lighting, water and heating systems) high efficiency buildings;
10. Fleet transitions, EV charging stations; and
11. Agriculture (Seeds and seedlings, planning and production support and planting materials)

## Employment Availability

5.1.20 According to the National Tracer Study 2022 of Participants in Skills Training conducted NTA, of the four hundred and seventy-seven (477) graduates surveyed, 62% stated that they obtained employment or were promoted after completing their TVET qualification, while 38% were employed before completing their TVET course/programme<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> The National Tracer Study of TVET/Skills Training Participants 2022

- 5.1.21 More specifically, of those respondents who were employed, 58% got their job after completing their TVET course/programme while 31% percent were employed prior to completing the TVET course/programme they were enrolled in.
- 5.1.22 In their written submission, the Ministry of Education reported that tracer studies done by MIC-IT revealed an employment rate of between 70% -90% for graduates with over 50% employed in their field of study. It was reported this number increases to 70% at higher levels of study.
- 5.1.23 The top five (5) areas where trainees were employed are as follows:
- a. Business Services;
  - b. Hospitality and Tourism;
  - c. Engineering and Maintenance;
  - d. Construction; and
  - e. Education.
- 5.1.24 MIC stated that at level 3 and 4 of technical training, graduates had they see higher levels of employment in the field for the **NSDP journeyman programme.**
- 5.1.25 At the Second Public Hearing, MIC-IT reported that the response rate to their tracer studies was usually one-third of the trainee population. However, they collect 'anecdotal' information through feedback from industry partners who may have hired their graduates.
- 5.1.26 It was further explained that in an attempt to bolster this information, there was a national effort to help address all the gaps in current data regarding employment post-graduation.
- 5.1.27 In a written submission from the Ministry of Education, a tracer study conducted by YTEPP for 2014 to 2018 indicated that graduates did not necessarily attain employment in areas corresponding to their technical/vocational training at YTEPP but were able to find full time employment.

- 5.1.28 Internal tracer studies conducted by some educational institutions reported that most graduates find full time employment, albeit, in clerical or unrelated areas and graduates ultimately utilize the skills they have learnt to run a side business.
- 5.1.29 Despite the identified employment rates, the NTA study revealed that there was some disconnect between the training and employment since it took on average 12.1 months for persons to obtain jobs<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.1.30 Based on the tracer study conducted by the NTA, it was learnt that “34% of their sample of graduates were currently unemployed. Of those graduates, 46% were never employed since completing their programme.<sup>12”</sup>
- 5.1.31 36% of these unemployed respondents stated that “there were no available jobs due to the economic downturn.” The NTA report also found that **18.6%** of these respondents stated that there were “no available jobs in their skill area” and **17%** stated a “lack of work experience<sup>13”</sup> as the reason for their unemployment.
- 5.1.32 The study highlighted mixed feelings about the alignment of skills training with their current or most recent job. While 26% stated that their training/job alignment was matched, a similar proportion, 24% stated that “the match never occurred as they never used to skills attained.<sup>14”</sup>
- 5.1.33 For those employed, “almost equal numbers of graduates stated that there was alignment (42%) while 40% stated that their current or most recent jobs were not aligned to their TVET/skills training.<sup>15”</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TbdRNeD4NacypwZe73qtZ3jBDGthO5He/view>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

## **Entrepreneurship Opportunities**

- 5.1.34 It was found that some students/graduates had their own business in addition to their main job. Of the four hundred and seventy-seven (477) TVET sampled graduates, the NTA tracer study found that one hundred and twenty-three (123 or 25.8%) respondents had their own businesses<sup>16</sup>.
- 5.1.35 Of the graduates that had their own business, “62% had businesses that were related to their programme or course they were enrolled in. Additionally, 57% agreed that their participation in the TVET course/programme encouraged them to start their own businesses<sup>17</sup>.”
- 5.1.36 In light of many students starting ‘side businesses’ MIC-IT has developed an entrepreneurship programme which is now being introduced from level 1-4 in partnership with NEDCO through their B12 Start Programme to help students while in training to develop their business plans, register their business, etc.
- 5.1.37 For graduates who did not have their own businesses, it was learnt that 50% of these respondents stated that “lack of start-up capital was the main reason for them not owning their own business.” This was followed by “lack of Entrepreneurial skills (17%) and having inadequate technical skills 10%.”

### **Findings from Focus Group Sessions Relevant to Objective 2**

- 5.1.38 Participants stated that TVET training gave them the opportunity to enhance their skillset and broaden knowledge in areas that are internationally relevant.
- 5.1.39 They also stated that they were able to become marketable both locally and internationally through the certification they received. They believed that TVET will help to develop the country in a positive manner as more persons will be able to find jobs in various fields of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

work.

- 5.1.40 Most participants were already employed and sought certification for the field they are currently employed. Others hoped to gain employment after they have completed their programme.
- 5.1.41 Participants believed that there is great opportunity for mechanical and technically based fields (many persons are interested in these areas and they believe there is great demand for jobs in these areas) because the world is becoming increasingly technologically advanced.
- 5.1.42 There was general praise for TVET and participants believed that building a skill set through TVET helps them become self-sufficient.
- 5.1.43 Some participants stated that not all programmes offer entrepreneurial guidance training. Some were unaware of how to enter the market, how to strategically position themselves or how to get funding to start their businesses.

## ***Findings***

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. There is a lack of updated generalized job market assessment data specifically for the TVET related jobs.
- ii. There is need for better market studies and research as currently feedback on job market gaps is obtained from industry insiders and considered 'anecdotal information'.
- iii. Some areas that have been deemed important to or aligned with Trinidad and Tobago's Developmental Goals are the least pursued/accessed programmes. Some of the programmes observed fell within the "Food Security" and "Tourism" category.
- iv. Many of the TVET programmes that are available and popular are aligned to Trinidad and Tobago's developmental goals.



- v. The Committee noted that the Ministry of Education took into consideration the views of respective industries (in particular the manufacturing sector) and adjusted TVET programme offerings.
- vi. There are still some challenges in obtaining employment even after becoming certified in areas that are aligned to the country's developmental goals. However, the committee is cognisant that there may be several factors, which contribute to such circumstances. Including market forces and personal traits.
- vii. Low subscribed TVET programmes that are relevant to local development goals can be attributed to perceived job uncertainty and unawareness about the realities of that particular labour market.
- viii. It was found that despite some programmes being deemed important to these developmental goals, some graduates were still unable to find and secure jobs in the field of their qualification.
- ix. Limited marketing of TVET at the Secondary School level and career mapping specifically for TVET and its relevance toward local sustainable development goals may contribute to the youth either entering TVET subjects or programmes with unrealistic expectations or not entering Certification in TVET programmes are increasingly being used for entrepreneurial endeavours or as a 'side hustle.'

## ***Recommendations***

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- A. Market research and labour gap assessment data is needed. If institutions are unable to conduct this research independently, the Ministry of Education should assist with harnessing and coordinating the necessary resources and supporting arrangements to facilitate such research. These studies should be published to assist persons with making informed decisions regarding the potential costs and benefits of participating in TVET. The Committee agrees with the NTA's recommendation of the need for increased efforts for continual research, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and industry needs.**

- B. Career maps pathways based on TVET qualifications should be published and marketed. This executed through collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, the Ministry of Trade and Industry as well as key educational institutions.**
  
- C. Entrepreneurial training should be mandatory and be a part of all programmes (as a module). As part of this module, students should be exposed to the steps for starting and maintaining their business. This should also include identification and support with sourcing start-up capital.**

**OBJECTIVE 3: To evaluate the strategies and measures that are being adopted by the State to sustain and promote the enrolment of young persons in TVET programmes**

**Funding for TVET programmes**

- 6.1.1. The Ministry of Education stated that there was no specific allocation for TVET under the GATE programme as funding for TVET falls within the overall budgetary allocation for the programme. **GATE funding has totalled \$400 million annually over the past three years.**
- 6.1.2. The Ministry provided an outline of the total annual funding for GATE approved TVET programmes over the period 2019-2022:

**Table 8: Funding for GATE approved TVET Programmes**

Fiscal Year	Student Count	Value of Tuition Claimed <sup>18</sup>
2019-2020	895	\$21,780,880,00
2020-2021	1,207	\$30,599,475.00
2021-2022	762*	\$19,855,605.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,864</b>	<b>\$72,235,960.00</b>

- 6.1.3. Naturally, GATE funding fluctuates depending on the number of applicants, however, it was noted that changes to the GATE funding policy in August 2021 affected all students including those enrolled in TVET programmes.

<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Education stated in their submission that tuition claims are still being received from tertiary level institutions for fiscal year 2021-2022

- 6.1.4. Funding was a challenge for many of the tertiary institutions to sustain TVET programmes. During the Second Public Hearing, it was learnt that funding to UTT was reduced. UTT reported that funding is used largely for paying salaries and the University currently has a \$4 million shortfall. This reduction in funding negatively impacted their ability to hire staff required to further advance its TVET programme offerings.
- 6.1.5. Other institutions experienced a similar fate. YTEPP reported that allocations for its operations have also been reduced over the past five years and as a result, they are unable to service as many centres. While there is a demand for TVET programmes, the resources are not sufficient to meet the demand. Notably, YTEPP submitted that they are now operating eight (8) training centres compared its previous network of twenty-six (26) training centres.
- 6.1.6. Similarly, it was learnt that MIC-IT is experiencing these challenges. Over the last five (5) or six (6) years, funding was cut by fifty percent (50%). The institutes enrolment rate is down from in excess of four thousand, five hundred students (4500) persons per year to approximately one thousand, five hundred (1500).

## **Programme creation based on Labour Market Gaps**

- 6.1.8 In response to the findings of the *2019 Labour Market Demands Survey*, a new programme has been launched by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. New programmes are being developed based on the gaps identified for areas that are aligned to developmental goals in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, based on the findings of the 2019 survey, MTI in collaboration with TTMA and MIC-IT launched the Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood-Related Products Manufacturing Sub-Sector. This sub-sector contributes 0.02% to GDP, employs approximately four thousand (4000) persons and exports valuing an estimated TT\$24 million in 2020<sup>19</sup>. “The programme also aims to fill existing vacancies and skills gaps within the wood and wood-related products manufacturing sub-sector including Manufacturing/warehouse manufacturing, Upholstery making, Wood

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<sup>19</sup> <https://tradeind.gov.tt/new-apprenticeship-programme-for-the-wood-and-wood-related-products/>

Science, Hand tools and fabrication equipment, Drafting in construction or building materials related industry, Carpentry, Project Management, Machine Operation and automated finishing methods including UV curing<sup>20</sup>.”

6.1.9 Additionally, results from the Labour Market Skills Gap and Fore-Sighting Survey (2021) led to the development of the *Manufacturing Apprenticeship Programme*. This was launched in June 2022 to train over three hundred and thirty-five persons for jobs in the sector over a five-year period.

6.1.10 These programmes are in collaboration with other entities such as the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association (TTMA) and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTATT).

## **Preparation for the World of Work**

6.1.11 Demonstrating the extent to which TVET graduates are assimilated into the job market can be seen as a strategy to encourage further enrolment into TVET programmes. The Ministry of Labour (MoL) is currently in discussions with key institutions in Trinidad and Tobago for collaboration with the On the Job Training Programme (OJTP).

6.1.12 Internships with industry partners were often linked to certain programmes and it has been reported that this exposure prepares students for the World of Work. It was stated that it was through these internships that students were able to obtain employment. Additionally, high performing students may be recommended by the institution to industry partners for employment opportunities.

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

## **Social Support and Intervention through TVET**

- 6.1.13 It was reported by some institutions that there are support services for students pursuing TVET programmes/courses. Generally, these include counselling, academic advising, personal tutoring, personal and social development and financial aid.
- 6.1.14 Some programmes offer stipends to students. It was stated that while some may see stipends as incentives, it is a support system to assist persons with the necessities they may need throughout the duration of their programme.
- 6.1.15 On a larger scale, TVET is being used as an intervention strategy and the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service plans to increase the offerings of such programmes at youth developmental centres throughout the country.
- 6.1.16 New centres are being considered in areas that are in need of greater skills training for youth. In this regard, the Committee was advised that the criteria for selecting communities may include: the existence of a high number of vulnerable youth, densely populated communities, situated in a remote location or considered a crime 'hot spot'.
- 6.1.17 These youth development centres will be constructed over the next three years from 2023 to 2025.
- 6.1.18 The MYDNS stated that a variety of TVET programmes in the areas of Administration, Business and Entrepreneurial Development, Information Technology, Health Care, Cosmetology, Hospitality Industry and Media/Entertainment in addition to remedial literacy and numeracy (as needed) will be offered.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of TVET**

- 6.1.19 In response to the pandemic, many institutions transitioned to online/blended learning. The Ministry of Education reported that at the Post-Secondary Level, data collected from

37 TVET providers showed that 73% (27) transitioned to online/blended with most opting for blended learning while (7) transitioned their training online. 27% did not adopt online or blended learning modalities with 16% opting for various other methods and four (4) providers or 11% were unable to continue their programme delivery.

6.1.20 A blended approach was also taken at the Secondary School level. The Ministry of Education operationalized the School Learning Management System (SLMS) platform for online classes and assignments. Assessments were conducted virtually.

6.1.21 One of the main challenges faced was finding ways to work around the practical nature of some of the TVET programmes. While some instructors utilized software to simulate practical hands on experience, oftentimes such software was inadequate as a substitute to the physical practical activity.

## **Marketing and Promotion of TVET**

6.1.22 Most entities stated that their marketing strategies included social media posts across various platforms, traditional media (newspapers, radio and television), outreach programmes at community centres and through the school system.

6.1.23 The National Tracer Study conducted by the NTA corroborated these marketing strategies. It was found that 33.1% of respondents learnt about their programme through online sources such as social media or a website. This was followed by information from a friend (27.1%) and information through traditional media (19.7%) such as newspaper/radio and television ads.

6.1.24 There was general consensus that there are perception issues surrounding TVET. It was stated that many in the population still believe that TVET programmes are for those who are not academically inclined and they do not see it as a potentially lucrative endeavour.

6.1.25 There was also general consensus that the marketing for TVET needs to be revamped. Focus needs to be placed on TVET being a viable option for everyone as well as a greater promotion of TVET to younger persons starting at the primary school level.

### **Focus Group Findings Relevant to Objective 3**

6.1.26 One participant expressed concern that TVET programmes may seem expensive. They stated that some persons may believe that obtaining TVET qualifications is expensive since the revision of GATE funding and the removal of funding for certain programmes.

6.1.27 Participants also discussed their experiences about preparation for the World of Work. It was explained that not all programmes offer internships or opportunities to work with industry experts. While some institutions may offer job placement, participants believed that this is programme-based and not available for all TVET programme options. However, while job placement and internships were not universal offerings, newer enrolled participants stated that they are exposed to 'career enhancement' classes and life skill training, which teaches them how to prepare cover letters and resumes, confidence, gender sensitivity and other 'soft skills' which are also important for preparation for the World of Work.

6.1.28 While many of the participants were already employed, they believed that linking these programmes to employment opportunities will also be enticing to prospective students, especially younger prospects.

6.1.29 Participants generally expressed that they felt well supported by their teachers and by the administration of the schools in which they were presently or previously enrolled. They commended the overall helpfulness, understanding and enthusiastic nature of their instructors and overall stated that they had good experiences at their respective school.



6.1.30 Concerning their experiences during COVID-19, most students explained that they adapted quickly to blended/online learning but there was a challenge for some of the more practical components of the programme. Some participants stated however, that they are not entirely opposed to online learning as it also presented more flexibility for them to pursue their classes. They believed that blended classes will be inevitable post pandemic and suggested that the theory component of the classes can remain online but the practical will have to be in person. Many believed that there is opportunity for further development considering TVET blended learning.

6.1.31 Marketing and promoting of TVET was heavily discussed throughout the focus group sessions. Participants overwhelmingly believed that more needs to be done in the targeted promotion of TVET especially among the youth. The participants agreed that there is a stigma attached to TVET, but this can be resolved by the way it is marketed. Participants believed that more awareness needs to be raised about the benefits of TVET qualifications and the opportunities that exist by having the qualification. It was also mentioned that specific attention needs to be given to Tobago in terms of marketing as the approach is different to that of Trinidad.

## Findings

Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. Funding plays an important role in the sustainability of programmes and the promotion of the enrolment of students to the TVET sector. The general uncertainty about funding (through GATE) or financial aid through the respective educational institution does create some reluctance in persons to register for programmes. There is also the need for more strategic market approaches which are imperative to ensure that prospective students are aware of the scope of programmes that are GATE approved.
- ii. Overall reduction of funding and the shortfall in cash flow at some institutions negatively impacted on the expansion of TVET programmes at major institutions. For example, it was found that as a result of UTT's inability to hire staff due to the shortfall of financing, some

teachers had to 'double up' their services at work. However, while there is always need for more teachers, it was stated that UTT has adequate staff to carry out existing courses and programmes.

- iii. Similarly, the Committee learnt that while all MIC-IT's projects that have been outlined in the previous PSIP have been completed, current funding is still insufficient to fulfil the Institute's mandate. This funding is needed for technological development and adapting to the growing demands of the industry. It will also include additional infrastructural upgrades.
- iv. Challenges with funding also impact internal social intervention strategies that assist students with completing their programmes. Some of the programmes offered have stipends which accounts for a hefty part of the budget allocated to schools.
- v. While systems were generally in place for a transition of programmes to online platforms, a major challenge found was that trainees lacked the resources that were necessary to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included an inability to access the internet, specialized software and also some persons were unable to navigate the online platform and spaces.

There is room for improvement with regard to the marketing and promotion of TVET programmes especially when considering promotion of these programmes to the youth.

## ***Recommendations***

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

- E. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with its key training institutions should embark on a more strategic marketing and communication campaign of TVET. This should give specific consideration to each target demographic starting at primary school. Specifically, for the youth, special emphasis should be placed on publishing content regarding possible pathways and opportunities to employment by choosing TVET certification.**

- F. The Ministry of Education should consider having specific scholarships or bursaries for TVET, especially TVET programmes that are aligned to the country's developmental goals and labour market demands.**
  
- G. TVET programmes that have been identified as relevant to the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago should be aligned with mandatory internships, practicums or OJT placement with a track path to contract employment upon graduation. Students can opt out of the contract employment option if they so choose.**
  
- H. As part of its Ministerial response, the Ministry of Labour should provide an update on its plans to promote faster assimilation of TVET graduates into the job market through collaboration with key training institutions in Trinidad and Tobago and the On the Job Training Programme.**
  
- I. There should be greater consultation and collaboration with the Private sector, in the types of TVET training programs available, to ensure better alignment with the requirements and needs of the Private and Manufacturing sectors.**

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

Dr. Paul Richards  
**Chairman**

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP  
**Vice-Chairman**

Mr. Avinash Singh, MP  
**Member**

Mr. David Nakhid  
**Member**

Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP  
**Member**

Mr. Roger Monroe, MP  
**Member**

Mrs. Pennelope Beckles, MP  
**Member**

Mr. Rohan Sinanan, MP  
**Member**

October 11, 2023



## APPENDICES

### Appendix I – List of officials who appeared and provided oral evidence

Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
<b>Public Hearing Held on November 16, 2022</b>		
<p><b>Dr. Peter Smith</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Anil Ramnarine</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Patrice Parris Searles</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Urban Huggins</b></p> <p><b>Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Peter Fraser</b></p>	<p><b>Chief Education Officer</b></p> <p><b>Chief Executive Officer, MIC</b></p> <p><b>Chief Executive Officer, NTA</b></p> <p><b>Director, Funding and Grants Administration Division</b></p> <p><b>Manager of Research</b></p> <p><b>Curriculum Coordinator, TVET/TE</b></p>	<p><b>Ministry of Education</b></p>
<p><b>Mr. Farook Hosein</b></p> <p><b>Major David Benjamin</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Sean Ramrattan</b></p> <p><b>Ms. Jenine Benjamin</b></p>	<p><b>Permanent Secretary</b></p> <p><b>Director, Specialized Youth Service SYSP</b></p> <p><b>Director, Youth Affairs Division</b></p> <p><b>Project Monitoring Coordinator, Project Management Unit</b></p>	<p><b>Ministry of Youth Development and National Service</b></p>

Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
<b>Public Hearing Held on February 03, 2023</b>		
Ms. Candice Austin	Assistant General Manager Training, Student Support Ser- vices	
Mr. Ryan Deonarine	Manager – Quality Assurance	MIC Institute of Technol- ogy (MIC-IT)
Dr. Victoria Cunningham	Manager – Curriculum	
Prof. Stephen Joseph	Assistant Vice President, Un- dergraduate Studies	University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)
Dr. Barbara Constance	Assistant Professor, Centre for Education Programmes	
Mr. Rasif Ali	Senior Instructor- Mechanical Engineering, Manufacturing and Entrepreneurship Pro- gramme	
Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
Dr. Ancil Peters	Chief Executive Officer/Aca- demic Dean	Advanced Solutions Tech- nical Institute

Ms. Nicola Humphrey Dr. Maria Gomes	Recruitment Officer – Sales Executive	
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## Appendix II – Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**MINUTES OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,**

**HELD ON NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

**This meeting was facilitated via the Zoom video conferencing program**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Members of the Committee**

Dr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. Roger Monroe, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	Member

### **ABSENT/EXCUSED**

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member
Ms. Pennelope Beckles, MP	Member
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member

#### **Secretariat**

Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rochelle Stafford	Parliamentary Researcher
Ms. Nicole Brown	Parliamentary Researcher



## **CALL TO ORDER**

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and welcomed members present.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

2.1 The Chairman advised that the following Members asked to be excused from the day's proceedings.

- Ms. Pennelope Beckles, MP;
- Mr. Esmond Forde, MP; and
- Mr. Avinash Singh.

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY JUNE 22, 2022**

3.1 The Minutes were confirmed without amendments on a motion moved by Mr. David Nakhid and seconded by Mr. Roger Monroe, MP.

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

4.1 No matters were raised.

## **PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: 1<sup>st</sup> Public Hearing pursuant to an examination of the state of technical and vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.**

5.1 The Chairman indicated that later in the proceedings, the Committee will convene its 1st hearing with stakeholders pursuant to *an examination of the state of technical and vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago*.

5.2 Members were advised that officials of the following entities were expected to participate in the day's hearing:

- i. Ministry of Education; and
- ii. Ministry of Youth Development and National Service.

5.3 Members confirmed that they were in receipt of the following documents:

- i. Written Submissions from the entities listed above; and
- ii. Issues Papers prepared by the Secretariat on the Written Submissions from Stakeholders.

5.4 The Committee discussed the approach to be taken during the hearing.

5.5 The Committee reviewed a proposal from the Secretariat to conduct a focus group with graduates from the main TVET institutions highlighted in the Entities Profile document. The Committee agreed that:

- i. the focus group should be conducted at a date to be determined by the Secretariat; and
- ii. the sessions will be done virtually and privately.

5.6 The Committee considered engaging other stakeholders and agreed to write to:

- i. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries relative to technical/vocational requirements in the energy sector;
- ii. Ministry of Social Development regarding the Ministry's efforts to upskill beneficiaries of social welfare programmes to elevate themselves from social dependency; and
- iii. Ministry of Works and Transport relative to weaning persons off the Unemployment Relief Programme (short-term) to long-term technical/vocational skills

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Consideration of Work Programme**

6.1 The Committee agreed that the next Inquiry will be on:

- a. An examination of the regulation and administration of public and private early childhood care and education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Proposed Date and Agenda for Next Meeting**

7.1 The Committee agreed to next meet on Wednesday January 18, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. and convene its second public hearing pursuant to its inquiry into *an examination of the state of technical and vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the development goals of Trinidad and Tobago.*

## **SUSPENSION**

7.1 The Chairman suspended the meeting at 9:57 a.m.

### **PUBLIC HEARING RE: 1<sup>st</sup> Public Hearing on an examination of the state of technical and vocational education programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago**

9.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:15 a.m.

9.2 The following persons joined the meeting:

**Ministry of Education**

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Dr. Peter Smith            | Chief Education Officer                                 |
| 2. Mr. Anil Ramnarine         | Chief Executive Officer, MIC                            |
| 3. Dr. Patrice Parris Searles | Chief Executive Officer, NTA                            |
| 4. Mr. Urban Huggins          | Director, Funding and Grants<br>Administration Division |
| 5. Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman     | Manager of Research                                     |
| 6. Mr. Peter Fraser           | Curriculum Coordinator, TVET/TE                         |

**Ministry of Youth Development and National Service**

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Farook Hosein    | Permanent Secretary  |
| 2. Major David Benjamin | Director, Specialised Youth Service<br>Programme SYSP      |
| 3. Mr. Sean Ramrattan   | Director, Youth Affairs Division                           |
| 4. Ms. Jenine Benjamin  | Project Monitoring Coordinator,<br>Project Management Unit |

**Opening Statements**

9.3 The chief officials of the aforementioned entities made brief opening remarks.

**Key Issues Discussed**

The following are the main themes/issues arising from discussions with officials of the **Ministry of Education (MOE)**:

**Overview of the Ministry of Education and Tech/Voc**

- i. *Global supply and demand*: Globally, technological advances have facilitated integration of new methodologies of delivery and access, resulting in rapid growth in the supply and demand of education and training programmes generally. This is reflected in the supply and demand for Tech/Voc programmes with emphasis on relevance and standards required by business and industry, a trend that is evident in the

increased deployment of digital technologies in T&T education, training and industry environments but not in the decrease in TECH/VOC enrolment in T&T.

- ii. *Standards:*
  - a. *Secondary level and below:* The Curriculum Division of the MOE ensures adherence to curricula and standards of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC).
  - b. *Post-secondary:* The National Training Agency and the Trinidad & Tobago Accreditation Council collaborate closely to ensure that education and training programmes meet industry standards and are relevant to industry needs.
- iii. *Trinidad and Tobago outlook:* The commitment of the Ministry of Education and its training institutions to promote an enhanced perception of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) among education/training providers and the general population will continue to be pivotal to foster growth of participation in both the supply of and demand for TVET. Key elements of the overall strategy include emphasis on competencies and outcomes of training relevant to industry needs as well as availability of sufficient financial support.
- iv. Altogether, the strategies to enable successful expansion of TVET education constitutes a paradigm shift requiring the commitment of all stakeholders and significant improvement in state funding.

### **Digital Resources – Availability, Access and Training**

- v. There is growing interest in TVET education and training. However, the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed important resource gaps. Some trainees lacked internet access, software and skills needed to navigate the digital learning environment.

### **Technological Training Programmes and Technology-enabled programmes**

- vi. The MOE facilitates the use of IT-based training in the school system in multiple subject areas. Offerings in the school system provide the foundation for students to continue at the post-secondary various levels of certification.
- vii. The MIC Institute of Technology has seen growth in the demand for its programmes and its skilled graduates in a variety of areas that include renewable energy and hybrid automotive repairs. The MOE is pursuing plans to expand to higher-level certification courses. There are indications of growth in the demand for higher-level MIC graduates. This needs to be supported by improved funding to increase graduate output.

- viii. There is definite increase in technology enabled and facilitated CXC programmes in the school system, with an emphasis on practical, employable skills enhanced by industrial exposure via field trips.

### **Occupational Standards and Portability of Skills**

- ix. Occupational standards detailed in the T&T National Qualification Framework are completely in alignment with standards articulated and ratified in the CARICOM Qualification Framework. Consequently, TVET skills certifications from Trinidad and Tobago are readily acceptable in other CARICOM territories.
- x. In terms of standardizing qualifications across the region (which would allow trained persons to move throughout the Caribbean), the NTA stated that there is a CARICOM qualification framework available that would allow qualified persons to move throughout the region. NTA revealed that, just recently, CARICOM approved 46 occupational standards, inclusive of renewable energy, hybrid vehicles repair, photovoltaic training programmes which would allow for someone trained in Trinidad and Tobago to be able to participate and benefit in the CSME and move to the other areas.
- xi. Workforce assessment centres offered assessment and certification to allow persons who might have been practitioners in different areas to get certification. Obtaining the certification is voluntary and relies on the interest of citizens to pursue. The NTA admits that application for certification is not as high as they were expecting and contributes this to overall hesitancy of persons to be assessed. It was mentioned that the method of engaging the public needs to be revisited to increase the numbers of persons applying for assessment.
- xii. In terms of opportunities post-graduation, MIC indicated that some of their graduates have worked at a Solar Operated Gas station in Preysal Couva. This station also holds this country's first-ever electric vehicle charging system.
- xiii. MIC- was running short courses in renewable energy particularly solar, photovoltaic and hybrid auto repairs, these were areas previously mentioned as the areas of technical training that were in high demand. MIC stated that they are presently planning with the Ministry of Education to expand these offerings at a higher level of qualification. While they are aggressively pursuing this, they have experienced some delay with this endeavour due to the impact of COVID-19. They estimate that within the next 3 to 6 months, there will be higher level programmes for the aforementioned courses.
- xiv. MIC notes that there is an increased demand for persons in the renewable energy sector

### **Prior Learning Assessment**

- xv. Prior learning assessment for skills certification is conducted by various agencies of the MOE and third parties. However, participation was low.

## Challenges

- xvi. Decline in funding has caused significant reduction in state capacity to meet the growing demand for TECH/VOC education and training.
- xvii. Overall, it was agreed that there is a negative connotation of pursuing TVET programmes locally. The NTA states that there is a disparity in terms of how TVET is conceptualized and seen in the community. It was stated that this perception will not change overnight as it requires a cultural, mindset change from society.
- xviii. The Ministry of Education notes that challenges in literacy and numeracy affect the way that TVET is perceived, however initiatives are being put in place to ensure that these basic qualifications are met.

The main issues arising from discussions with the **Ministry of Youth Development and National Service** are recorded below:

## Overview of Ministry of Youth Development and National Service (MYDNS)

- i. *Developmental mandate:* With a mandate to align critical resources to allow for concerted efforts to facilitate an enabling environment which promotes and encourages youth participation in all aspects of sustainable development, this ministry acts as the hub for government initiatives targeting youth development.
- ii. *Target population:* Members of the population in the age range 10-35 years which comprises approximately 40% of the national citizenry.
- iii. *Investment in youth training:* The state must continue to view investment in education and training of young people to acquire modern technological and other wide-ranging skills at all levels is critical requirement for sustained national development.
- iv. *Importance of TVET training:* Investment in TVET for young people holds substantial potential for human capital development, increased productivity, growth in investments and other important consequences.
- v. *Core Issue for MYDNS:* In keeping with its mandate, the Ministry stated that it is committed to the fulfilment of its role to enable and facilitate growth in wide-ranging TVET education and training consistent with Vision 2030 and the National Youth Policy of Trinidad & Tobago 2020-2025.

## Programmes and Courses Offered

- vi. *Target group:*
  - a. In terms of training, the ministry focuses on a specific category of the youth, NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and they are referred to in the policy document as the 'at promise youth'
  - b. Ages 15-35 at Youth Development Centres  
Ages 15-25 at the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres
- vii. *Recruitment Strategy for enrolment*
  - a. Print and electronic media advertisements; plus, MYDNS web page, Instagram and Twitter sites.
  - b. Panel interviews of short-listed applicants and referral of unqualified applicants to other training programmes.
  - c. The ministry offers stipends for trainees, cultural and sports activities and job placement services as incentives. Stipends are also offered to graduates pursuing a limited number of programmes.
  - d. The T&T military collaborates with the MYDNS for programmes targeting at-risk youth and facilitates training opportunities for persons with special interests.
  - e. The main programmes are intervention programmes which cater to particular catchment areas (MiLAT and MYPART). The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is also an intervention programme, but it caters for persons who are most in need of intermediary support, for persons exiting the secondary school system to be able to find employability and the gaining of specialized skills.  
While the programmes are mainly intervention based, programmes are open to all youth. There are some programmes that target at risk youth, there are programmes that are general in nature and can be accessed by anyone.
- viii. *Employment Placement Strategies*
  - a. Holders of some Level 1 TVET certificates have access to 2-month internship programmes which improve their chances of employment.
  - b. Ongoing liaison with private sector companies is useful in identifying needs for placement.
- ix. *Entrepreneurship Skills*
  - a. Elements of business training are routinely included in MYDNS programmes to help to prepare graduates who want to set up their own businesses.

## Location of Training Centres

- x. The MYDNS undertakes broad-based assessments of geographical areas to determine where to locate training centres. Assessments include factors such as population density; youth population; social issues (e.g. crime) that may be mitigated by training; whether the area is depressed and in dire need of economic opportunities; and other factors relating to potential impact, employment access and sustainability.
- xi. There are some areas in remote North East Trinidad that are presently under consideration for the development of youth development centres.
- xii. The Ministry works with the Ministry of Labour and OJT to identify new opportunities for graduates for training courses

### **Decline in student enrolment**

- xiii. YTEPP- overall decline in the number of enrolees in the past 6 years. Annually, they are roughly at 1500 to 2000 down from roughly 4000 from 6 years ago. Reduced allocations have been identified as the main contributor of the continuous decline of enrolees over the past few years.
- xiv. MIC – similar fate of YTEPP, where they have moved from training in excess of 4500 students per year to presently about 1500. Funding for MIC has been cut by 50%. MIC noted that there is a demand for training, but they are unable to meet the demands due to the reduced allocation.
- xv. NTA – while NTA does not conduct training with youth participants, as part of their research portfolio, they maintain an online labour market dashboard. The data they have collected from 2011 to 2020 also illustrates the continuous decrease in enrolment and graduates as mentioned by the other stakeholders.

### **Decreased Funding**

- xvi. The Ministry of Education admits that funding is an issue for TVET training programmes.

### **Summary of Major Common Issues**

- xvii. Stakeholders agreed that there is a negative perception of TVET programmes locally. TVET programmes are often seen as a last resort or only as intervention strategies for persons in at risk communities and not as a viable choice for education.
- xviii. Training institutions have all recorded consistent decreases in enrolment and graduation over the past six years.
- xix. Funding of TVET programmes continues to be a major issue for these institutions. While demand for training exists, most institutions are not able to meet the capacity because of reduced funding/resources allocated.

### **ADJOURNMENT**



10.1 The meeting was adjourned accordingly at 12:02 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

January 10, 2023

## **Appendix III – Minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**EXCERPT MINUTES OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE  
OF PARLIAMENT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 03, 2022**

**This meeting was facilitated via the Zoom video conferencing program**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Members of the Committee**

Dr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	Member

### **ABSENT/EXCUSED**

Mr. Roger Monroe, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Member

#### **Secretariat**

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Ms. Rochelle Stafford	Parliamentary Researcher
Ms. Nicole Brown	Parliamentary Researcher

## **CALL TO ORDER**

1.2 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and welcomed members present.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

2.2 The Chairman advised that the following Members asked to be excused from the day's proceedings.

- Mr. Roger Monroe, MP;
- Mr. Esmond Forde, MP; and
- Mr. Rohan Sinanan.

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

3.2 The Minutes were confirmed without amendments on a motion moved by Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP and seconded by Mr. Avinash Singh.

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

4.1 The Chairman highlighted the following matters:

- i. **Item 5.6, page 2** - The Secretariat had written to the Ministries concerned and submissions were due on Tuesday February 14, 2023.
- ii. **Item 5.5, page 2** - The Chairman invited Ms. Rochelle Stafford, one of the Parliamentary Researchers assigned to the Committee to provide a brief overview on the focus group sessions that were held on January 19, 2023.

## **PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Hearing pursuant to an examination of the state of technical and vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.**

5.1 The Chairman indicated that later in the proceedings, the Committee will convene its 2<sup>nd</sup> hearing with stakeholders pursuant to *an examination of the state of technical and vocational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago*.

5.2 Members were advised that officials of the following entities were expected to participate in the day's hearing:

- iii. The University of Trinidad and Tobago;
- iv. MIC Institute of Technology; and
- v. Advanced Solutions Technical Institute.

- 5.3 Members confirmed that they were in receipt of the following documents:
- iii. Written Submission from the UTT; and
  - iv. Issues Papers prepared by the Secretariat on the Written Submission the entities above.
- 5.4 The Chairman notified Members that YTEPP was initially invited to participate in today's public hearing, however the company requested to be excused from the days' proceedings due to their inability to make a written submission in time and adequately prepare for the hearing. YTEPP further requested that they be allowed to submit their written comments by Friday February 10, 2023.
- 5.5 The Secretariat was instructed to approve YTEPP's request.
- 5.6 The Chairman informed the Members that Trinizuela Technical Institute and Vocational College Limited were also invited to attend today's hearing, however due to reasons beyond the Committee's control, this institution would not be in attendance.
- 5.7 The Committee discussed the approach to be taken during the hearing.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Proposed Date and Agenda for Next Meeting**

- 6.1 The Committee agreed to next meet on Wednesday March 15, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. and convene its first public hearing pursuant to its inquiry into an examination of the regulation and administration of public and private early childhood care and education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago with the following stakeholders:
- b. Ministry of Education
  - c. Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; and
  - d. Tobago House of Assembly Division of Education, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

## **SUSPENSION**

- 7.1 The Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

### **PUBLIC HEARING RE: 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Hearing on an examination of the state of technical and vocational education programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago**

- 8.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:17 a.m.

8.2 The following persons joined the meeting:

**Officials of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)**

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 7. Professor Stephen Joseph | Assistant Vice-President –<br>Undergraduate Studies   |
| 8. Dr. Barbara Constance    | Assistant Professor, Centre for Education<br>Programmes                                       |
| 9. Mr. Rasif Ali            | Senior Instructor – Mechanical<br>Engineering Manufacturing and<br>Entrepreneurship Programme |

**Officials of the MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT)**

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Ms. Candice Austin      | Assistant General Manager, Training and<br>Student Support Services |
| 2. Mr. Ryan Deonarine      | Manager – Quality Assurance   |
| 3. Dr. Victoria Cunningham | Manager –Curriculum   |

**Officials of the Advanced Solutions Technical Institute (ASTI)**

- |                        |                                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Ancil Peters    | Chief Executive Officer/Academic Dean |
| 2. Ms. Nicola Humphrey | Recruitment Officer/Sales Executive   |

**Opening Statements**

8.3 The chief officials of the aforementioned entities made brief opening remarks.

**Key Issues Discussed**

The following are the main themes/issues arising from discussions with officials of the **MIC Institute of Technology**:

**Curriculum**

- xix. MIC inherited programmes from both John D. and the MUST Programme.
- xx. MIC added a life skills component to their curriculum to assist with supporting the socio-economic, psycho-social and socio-emotional issues faced by students.
- xxi. MIC's programming operates on a tiered system with levels one, two, three and four. Levels 3 and 4 are German-based programmes that operate on an apprenticeship model where students' training was supplemented by work in their given fields.

- xxii. There was a high level of interest in both electrical and welding programmes.
- xxiii. MIC collaborates with UTT at their ECIAF location on the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme. They also collaborate with the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.
- xxiv. There were discussions taking place with UTT to align the lower level programmes with degree programmes that will allow for seamless matriculation.

### **Facilities and Funding**

- xxv. All projects falling under MIC's PSIP were 100% completed.
- xxvi. Funding received was not sufficient to fulfil the institution's mandate. More funding was needed in the areas of technological developments, infrastructural improvements and adapting to the growing demands of the industry.
- xxvii. 10 years ago, MIC operated 20 centres with an average of 3,000-5,000 trainees per year. As of February, 2023, they operated 10 centres with an average of 1,000-1,200 trainees per year. The reduction in funding significantly impacted its reach within Trinidad and Tobago.
- xxviii. MIC had sought to offer training in other Caribbean countries as a means of supplementing funding received from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
- xxix. The stipend attached to the programme is essential in helping students to meet immediate costs associated with attending the programmes.
- xxx. In addition to the stipend offered, MIC provided free lunches and tablets to facilitate blended learning.
- xxxi. Demand for programmes was high but the funding available was not enough to cover the large number of students who were interested in MIC's programmes.

### **Employment and employability**

- xxxii. Many MIC graduates were not working in the fields that they studied. However, research had not been conducted to find out why.
- xxxiii. MIC had introduced an entrepreneurship programme, which was available to all students, regardless of their level. MIC partnered with NEDCO for their BizSmart programme to assist with training in areas such as developing business plans and the business registration process.

The following are the main themes/issues arising from discussions with officials of the **University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)**

### **Curriculum**

- xx. UTT play a very important role in TVET, particularly in the area of teacher education training.
- xxi. Some of the TVET programmes offered at UTT included chemical engineering, electrical engineering, fashion and food technology.
- xxii. UTT has trained teachers who teach tech/voc in the secondary schools.
- xxiii. UTT had developed a partnership with MIC where those who complete tech/voc at the MIC level and the NESC level can be enrolled in UTT and pursue degree programmes that can easily transition into a Master's and or PhD programme.
- xxiv. The National Engineering Technician Diploma in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering is the most pursued Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme at UTT due to the ready available market for jobs in the field.
- xxv. New students were required to enrol in an introduction to entrepreneurial studies course.

### **Marketing of TVET**

- xxvi. The marketing strategy for TVT programmes needed to be revamped as the current perception is that TVET is a backup plan for students who are not academically inclined.
- xxvii. The marketing strategy needs to demonstrate that TVET is a viable option for anyone who chooses to pursue that option.

### **Challenges Faced**

- xxviii. Outdated labs and equipment need to be upgraded. However, Government funding was not always forthcoming to facilitate these upgrades.
- xxix. There was a \$4 million shortfall in funding for UTT's programmes.
- xxx. The lack of funding has a negative impact on UTT's ability to pay instructors and hire new staff. There were approximately 12 instructors assigned to the National Engineering Technical Diploma. These instructors were responsible for teaching the approximately 300 students enrolled in the programme, in addition to their other teaching responsibilities.

### **Employment Prospects**

- xxxi. UTT assists companies that request recommendations of graduates for filling vacancies in particular fields.

The following are the main themes/issues arising from discussions with officials of the **Advanced Solutions Technical Institute (ASTI)**:

### **Curriculum and Facilities**

- i. ASTI has been in existence for over 20 years. They cover programmes in alternative energy, solar, data communication, fibre optics and wireless communication.
- ii. The facility comprises over 7,000 square feet of lab space.
- iii. Enrolment is approximately 150 students at a time. Over the course of a year between 700 and 800 students participate in ASTI's programmes.
- iv. Four of ASTI's programmes are eligible for GATE funding. However, the majority of programmes are privately funded.
- v. Some of the most popular programmes are fibre security, wireless communication, cellphone repairs and IP installation and robotics.
- vi. ASTI conducts an industry needs analysis of the market before implementing its programmes.

### **Identified Gaps**

- vii. The curriculum being taught in academia does not align with industry requirements
- viii. The focus is on enrolment numbers rather than filling skills gaps
- ix. There is greater need for collaboration among institutions offering TVET training.
- x. There is inadequate data on job market needs both locally and regionally regarding TVET skills as much of the information gathered is largely anecdotal.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

10.2 The meeting was adjourned accordingly at 11:54 a.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

March 14, 2023

## Appendix IV – Verbatim Notes of 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FOURTEENTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022, AT 10.15 A.M.

### PRESENT

Mr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. David Nakhid	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit	Member
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Mr. Roger Monroe	Member
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rochelle Stafford	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Nicole Brown	Graduate Research Assistant

### ABSENT

Ms. Penelope Beckles	Member [ <i>Excused</i> ]
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member [ <i>Excused</i> ]
Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman [ <i>Excused</i> ]

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**



Dr. Peter Smith	Chief Education Officer
Mr. Anil Ramnarine	Chief Executive Officer, MIC
Dr. Patrice Parris Searles	Chief Executive Officer, NTA
Mr. Urban Huggins	Director, Funding and Grants Administration Division
Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman	Manager of Research
Mr. Peter Fraser	Curriculum Coordinator, TVET/TE

## **MINISTRY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL SERVICE**

Mr. Farook Hosein	Permanent Secretary
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**Mr. Chairman:** Hello and welcome to the viewing and listening audience to this the Fourteenth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. This is the Committee's first hearing with stakeholders pursuant to its examination of the state of technical and vocational education programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Members of the public are invited to submit your comments or questions on the Parliament's social media platforms, YouTube channel, *ParlView*, or via the Parliament's Facebook or Twitter accounts.

At this point, we will be having two entities before us, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. The enquiry once again is an examination of the state of technical and vocational education programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of T&T, and has the following objectives:

1. To examine the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. To assess whether TVET programmes are aligned to meeting the country's developmental goals; and.
3. To evaluate the strategies and measures that are being adopted by the State to sustain and promote the enrollment of young persons in TVET programmes.

I am the Committee's Chairman, Paul Richards, and at this time I would like to invite the other members of the Committee to introduce themselves starting with member Monroe.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you all. The other members of the Committee are: member Penelope Beckles, who is out of the country; member Esmond Forde is also out of the country; and member Avinash Singh, who has a conflicting engagement. Thank you once again and welcome to this enquiry.

At this time, we would like to invite the heads of our visiting entities to introduce their entities and also to deliver short opening comments starting with Dr. Peter Smith, the Chief Education Officer, Education Ministry. Dr. Smith.

**Dr. Smith:** Good morning, Chair, and thank you very much. So I will move straight into the short opening remarks, opening statements. Sen. Paul Richards, Chairman; members of the Committee; members of the panel from the Ministry of Education, Dr. Patrice Parris Searles, Chief Executive Officer, National Training Agency; Mr. Anil Ramnarine, Chief Executive Officer, MIC Institute of Technology; Mr. Urban Huggins, Director of Funding and Grants

Administration Division; Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman, Manager of Research at YTEPP; Mr. Peter Fraser, Curriculum Coordinator, Ministry of Education; and let me say, representatives of the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service and the viewing public, good morning.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training has evolved over the years, recently at an even higher rate with the advancement of technology and the integration of new methodology in the training and education industries and the levels heightened even further with the challenges posed by the global pandemic, COVID-19, and the advent of new competency requirements at the international level. There has been a global increase and uptick in offerings driven by demand and interest as the new pedagogy and increased relevance of these training programmes have attracted a larger student base than in previous years.

In Trinidad and Tobago, in the classroom setting at the secondary and lower educational levels, the curriculum division serves to ensure the adherence to the Caribbean Examinations Council's regional developed syllabi, while at the post-secondary levels there is a collaborative effort between the National Training Agency and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure the offerings of training providers meet industry standards and are responsive to the needs of employers and the industry.

The Ministry of Education and its implemented institutions embrace the challenge in changing the perception of TVET. Firstly, within the education and training sector and more so amongst the population. This has spawned, and will continue to be the catalyst for several initiatives to attract new and returning participants to the education and training sector through

apprenticeship programmes and systems, equivalency of qualifications from a competency and outcome requirement standpoint and continued financial support towards the fostering of growth in the industry.

All this being said, there will be a need for a paradigm shift and will definitely be a long-term strategic project that will lend to success and popularization of the TVET global movement. The Ministry of Education takes this opportunity to thank the Committee for its enquiry into the state of technical or vocational programmes and are confident that the esteemed panel will be able to answer questions that may arise. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Dr. Smith, we move now to the comments from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, Mr. Farook Hosein. Mr. Hosein.

**Mr. Hosein:** Good morning, Chair, and members of the Joint Select Committee as well as to the Chief Education Officer and representatives of the Ministry of Education. The other representatives of the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service present are: Major David Benjamin, who is the Director of Specialised Youth Service Programme; Mr. Sean Ramrattan, Director, Youth Affairs Division and Ms. Jenine Benjamin, the Project Coordinator at the Project Management Unit at the Ministry.

The Ministry of Youth Development and National Service was established by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as a new Ministry in August 2020, with the strategic intent of aligning critical resources to allow for concerted efforts to facilitate an enabling environment which promotes and encourages youth participation in all aspects of sustain-

able development. Data from the CSO estimates that there are approximately 544 persons in Trinidad and Tobago between the ages of 10 and 35, representing approximately 40 per cent of the country's citizens.

The Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, MYDNS, views young people as an asset for national development and as such invests in training to help youth realize their innate potential is critical to the social and economic development of our country. Thus, young people must be given the opportunity to learn skills and obtain the knowledge necessary to thrive in the modern world, characterized by a fusion of technologies that is transcending the physical, digital and biological spheres.

It is recognized that Technical and Vocational Educational Training, TVET, can play a critical role in economic growth and sustainability. This type of education can improve productivity, make people employable, enhance human capital, improve creativity and attract investment. TVET for today's economy, therefore, must provide skilled workers at all level. The MYDNS, in keeping with *Vision 2030, Putting People First*, as well as the National Youth Policy of Trinidad and Tobago 2020 to 2025, seeks to harness youth social and intellectual capital, affording young people opportunities for TVET in both traditional and non-traditional occupational areas. We look forward to providing additional information to the Committee in its deliberation. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Hosein. Mr. Hosein is the PS, Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. The way we would proceed, members have been assigned to start the round of questioning with both entities. Member Nakhid will start in a short while. He will have about seven

to eight minutes to start with the Ministry of Education and then other members will be able to do follow-up questions with the Education Ministry and its team here today. And also, we will have the same approach to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, and in that round, member Monroe will start, followed by other members chiming in with questions or enquiries or comments following Munroe's first interventions with the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service.

Before I pass over to member Nakhid, Dr. Smith, who is the Chief Education Officer, you mentioned the global uptick in persons wishing to train themselves and being a part of tech/voc sectors around the world. Two questions: one, given the increase in the use of digital technologies – let me start with the first question to be, has that trend presented itself in Trinidad and Tobago, that the information you presented in your opening comments about the global uptick in persons availing themselves of tech/voc are training and going into that sector, is that the case in Trinidad and Tobago, are we aligned with that trend?

And two, because digital technologies have become even more pervasive – they were pervasive before the pandemic – how much more are we seeing an uptick of persons going into tech/voc training to service this increase in digital services in Trinidad and Tobago, maintenance, innovation, et cetera?

**Dr. Smith:** So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. So what we will do, we will take it from the perspective of the school at this point in time and at this point, I will ask Mr. Peter Fraser to provide that response and then we will go to the other arms of the Ministry.

**Mr. Fraser:** Yes, so good morning again to the panel and to everyone and the viewing public. So, in terms of the digital – well, TVET itself basically has moved to the digital platform, in terms of teachers utilizing, of course, Teams, Zoom and Google Meet, in terms of training and lessons for teachers. Also, the use of simulation software, especially in the areas where we have electrical and electronic technology, those areas are being taught in schools. Teachers would have moved to utilizing playlists in terms of using YouTube videos.

We would have also used, in terms of simulation software, Multisim, which is one of the software being used in the electrical and electronic technology. Also too, the implementation and utilization of the School Learning Management System in which we would have curriculum officers as well as teachers providing lessons on the platform so that teachers would have been able to use that platform in terms of accessing lessons there. At that time too we would have had, especially during the COVID, lessons that would have been provided on TV, on the television, especially when we look at TVET, Form 1 and Form 3 for the technology education, which is taught at Form 1 and Form 3.

Curriculum officers themselves are also engaged in online training and also teachers, and at least trying to assist teachers in using the digital media platform for teaching their students and so forth. The move also – students also complete their CXC, SBA assignments, and we would also say CVQ assignments. We have moved to e-portfolios in some circumstances where CXC have accepted the e-portfolios. So students who are required to complete portfolios, they can be physical but a lot of schools now have –

**Mr. Chairman:** Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Fraser. I think the question I was trying to get at is based on the fact that we are using more technology in every sector, education and every other sector, is there a move, from the Ministry's perspective, an increase in the number of persons seeking to train themselves to service these technologies? Dr. Smith indicated there is a global uptick in training for TVET in several sectors. Has that been presented in Trinidad and Tobago? Do we have an uptick in training persons wishing to be a part of that sector, TVET and other technology-driven sectors in terms of training themselves? And is that also what we are seeing in terms of persons who are coming into the sector, was what I wanted to get from – the information I wanted to get.

**Mr. Fraser:** Okay. So I would have basically looked at really utilizing the digital platform in terms of sensitizing teachers and training teachers in terms of utilizing those platforms now for classes and implementation of TVET.

**Dr. Smith:** Chair, if I may, I know at YTEPP there is some work being done in that area, so I can ask Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman to give her perspective.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Chair, good morning, good morning to the Committee and other members of the representative boards. Yes, YTEPP Limited did see some increase in the –

**Mr. Chairman:** Mrs. Billy-Jackman, we are hardly hearing you. Could you speak up a bit, please?

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.



**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** I apologize. Are you hearing me now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, we are hearing you better now, thank you.

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Okay, good. We did see interest in Technical and Vocational Educational Training, and we did make several efforts within the confines of the challenges of the pandemic to ensure that we continue to meet our mandate. However, we found that our trainees lacked the resources that were necessary for us to continue during that period. Persons were unable to access the Internet in some cases. Some persons were unable to access the software that was needed in some cases. And, of course, we had persons who were unable to navigate the spaces.

Prior to the pandemic, YTEPP Limited actually did start introducing technology-enabled learning and as a result of that, we already had a learning management system up and running. So we sought to expand the use of that learning management system at the time, but we had some challenges with persons being able to navigate the space. We also attempted to use Zoom and Teams and other facilities in order to continue our classes which was difficult because we were not able to manage the hands on –

**Mr. Chairman:** Prior to the pandemic had you seen an increase in the number of persons accessing training at YTEPP in technical areas?

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** In terms of some courses being oversubscribed, yes. However, we tried to accommodate as many as we could within the resources that we did have at the time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Member Nakhid, you can go ahead, please. Member Nakhid.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Thank you, Chair. For the Ministry of Education, Dr. Smith

and Mr. Fraser: Given that there is a greater demand for training in the areas of renewable energy, particularly when it comes to photovoltaics and vehicle hybrid technology and also agricultural training options, how is the Ministry assisting or contributing to formulating and designing training courses to meet this new demand?

**Mr. Fraser:** In terms of the new technologies – well, I would answer in terms of the new technologies, in terms of the hybrid technologies and so forth. In schools, certification that is offered, they are offered at CSEC and we also have the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications. The Caribbean Vocational Qualifications, they utilize what we would call occupational standards to prepare students for the world of work.

In terms of the new technologies, what I can say, in terms of the hybrid systems, recently CANTA, which would be the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies, would have rectified new and approved new occupational standards for those areas, in terms of automotive technology, in terms of hybrid vehicles. And in the school system itself there are a number of areas in agriculture that are being taught for certification for the CVQ in schools. So we have livestock rearing, even rabbit rearing would be one of the areas, crop production, right, Grow Box Operations and those other areas. There is a large range of areas in agriculture that is being taught in schools and, of course, utilizing technology in those areas.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Well, given those four areas that I mentioned, of those four areas how many of those areas are you satisfied with where you are right now?

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, in the school system itself, basically the offerings are more foundation level. So the preparation is not really to enter with full qualifications in the world of work, but basically for students to gain foundations that they can move on at post-secondary level to attain higher qualifications. Right? So basically you would say that for the CVQ offerings, it is basically pitted at what we would call a pre-craft level or what we would have, an entry level or semi-entry level worker. Right? And, of course, the CSEC curricula would be more at what we would call pre-technician, which is a broader sort of curriculum and more advances someone to maybe a technician level programme at post-secondary and so forth.

So I think in terms of looking at the expansion of TVET in those particular areas, you would be more looking at post-secondary in that regard in terms of finalization of your certification and qualifications.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Well then, I will have to – Chair, I will have to expand on this because I think it is important. So if you are talking about the post-secondary, then what infrastructure is in place to accommodate the students, post-secondary, through these programmes? What do you have lined up?

**Dr. Smith:** So, Chair, if I may, I could probably ask Mr. Ramnarine from MIC to respond.

**Mr. Chairman:** Absolutely. Mr. Ramnarine.

**Mr. Ramnarine:** Yes. Chair, good morning, good morning to all. In terms of the next step, at this time, MIC is currently running a couple short courses in renewable energy, particularly solar, photovoltaic and hybrid auto re-

pairs. There are plans afoot very, very shortly in discussions with the Ministry of Education to expand these offerings to a higher level, which is equal to our Level 3 in the old qualification framework, the Journeyman programme. So we are actually, at this time, very aggressively pursuing that. We are very much behind, I would admit, on this, but that was particularly because of COVID, that has set us back a little bit, but we have taken the baton again and within the next three to six months, there will be higher level programmes. And, of course, immediately we have a massive campaign going on to do our short courses 40, 45-hour programmes that has been very successful so far.

I must add also that some of our graduates and, of course, trainees then, they worked on the first solar-operated gas station in Preysal, Couva which was a huge achievement for us. So these are the kinds of initiatives that the MIC continues to partner on. I do not want to say too much into another project but there is another large contract that has been awarded and MIC has been asked to supply some of our past graduates into that space.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, I was going to ask, if I could, member Nakhid – I was just going to ask Mr. Ramnarine if there is an increase in persons seeking training at MIC, given what you have outlined with the solar panels, the photovoltaic cells, the hybrid cars? And what kind of prospects do they have in term of employment, sustainable employment in Trinidad and Tobago, if you are putting emphasis for training persons and developing curricula and courses for these areas?

**Mr. Ramnarine:** Yes, the question, answering piece by piece, yes, there has

been a demand because of the fact of the global agenda on renewable energies and, of course, locally, based on government's agenda to go green. There has been a number of projects that have been awarded recently and these awardees have been coming to MIC to seek participants. That being said, there has been an increase in demand for persons in this renewable sector, which is very good for us.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid. Your mike is still muted. Your mike is still muted, member Nakhid.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Okay. Sorry, sorry, Chair. Is the Ministry satisfied that the changes CXC has made to the syllabi for TVET subjects would equip students to effectively transition to a higher level of competency in the respected field? Are you satisfied with the changes CXC has made?

**Mr. Fraser:** Yes, in terms of curricula utilized in schools – the CSEC curricula utilized in school, there is a more demand in terms of practical – ensuring that their students are engaged in more practical activities, there are more practical assignments in terms of the SBAs. The CXC itself also, especially with the industrial technology curricular, instituted an area, a core element in it, which exposes students to more disciplinary or more industrial – desensitizing to more industrial needs of industry.

**10.45 p.m.**

So what you will find in those core areas of the curricula – and when I say industrial technology, those will include areas like electrical and electronic technology, mechanical technology, building and furniture technology – that core area would concentrate on health and safety issues; the use of ICTs. And there are SBAs to reflect those things in which students are

marked on: communication skills, in terms of students doing things like accident reports and those things like that; a knowledge of the organizational structure of industry, so they would look at a flat structure, matrix systems and so forth; you know, skills in terms of design skills, those elements; and even entrepreneurial skills, because students are required to complete a business plan.

There is a focus basically for the CSEC curriculum in terms of continuous assessments which are practicals that would be done in school-based assessments, even in the home economics areas; areas in business like electronic document preparation, management and preparation. And what we would have seen in terms of that focus on the practical areas is that those SBA marks have been increased. Especially in the industrial technology areas you would find that the SBA marks now go from 40 per cent of the overall marks to now 50 per cent of the overall marks, because the preparation is basically preparing students to go into the world of work with the necessary skills that are needed. So the emphasis there is in trying to prepare students with those practical skills as well as those employability skills that I would have mentioned, hence the reason for the core elements in the curriculum.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Well, hold on there, Mr. Fraser. Since you have mentioned the practical aspect of it, which we are very interested in because this is a very hands on – this is not like the legal professionals so where it is basically a lot of theory. So what is the level of synergy that you have implemented with those students while they are learning the theoretical part of it? What is the level of synergy you have with the actual industries in terms of internships and so with these students? Can you give us an update on that?

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, at the school level, basically what would occur is that students would be engaged in field trips and those things. But in terms of being engaged in the world of work or being exposed to the world of work externally, there are certain issues there for students at that age in terms of – because these are students who would be engaged in these subjects at the age of 15 and 16. So that because they have being prepared at pre-craft level and pre-technician level, most of the practical activities occur in the school system. However, there are some schools that do have CVQ at Level 2, and the CVQ at Level 2 would – especially in the area like pan manufacturing, may have people that may come into the system externally to assist students in real world of work activities, areas like cosmetology, and you may have it in some areas in terms of the culinary arts, food preparation and so forth.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Mohit –

**Mr. Fraser:** There are some elements of engagement, but we have to take into account the students, the age of the students, and certain aspects to account for in terms of insurance and those things.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We are going to open it. Member Mohit, you have a follow-up question?

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much. Based on the responses given, can I just ask a quick question and it relates to what those representatives would have stated. And I would like to ask whether the practice of students pursuing basic proficiency in subject areas of maths and English is still in effect? And whether the Ministry of Education would not consider this an affront to the student population at large, in other words, an inherent inferiority complex?

**Dr. Smith:** Okay. So, Chair, if I may? At this point in time, we have no basic proficiency at the school level. It is general proficiency for the math.

**Ms. Mohit:** Okay. Thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, I have a follow-up question based on that. Dr. Smith, earlier on you mentioned the perceptions about TVET. And in relation to some areas in the education sector where there are challenges with literacy and numeracy, is that part of that perception that you referenced earlier on? And if it is, how was the curriculum designed to remediate that while also pursuing one's training in the specific technical area?

**Dr. Smith:** So, yes – thank you very much for that question. Yes, that aspect of the challenges with both literacy and numeracy does affect how persons perceive TVET and it is perhaps well known by some that if you are not able to cope with the academics, then you go the line of the TVET, those practical subjects, which is not really a realistic understanding of what is involved in TVET. As Mr. Fraser would have indicated, we both have the theory as well as the practical component that needs to be addressed.

**Mr. Chairman:** So what is the Ministry doing to reverse that perception, one, nationally, while also understanding that you will have a variety of students coming to do TVET training? Because the perception is that, “Okay, well, I cannot make any classical subjects, they will shunt me off to TVET,” when that should not be the perception. It should be that I have a real interest in this, it is a viable employment opportunity for me, and it can contribute significantly and sustainably to national development.

**Dr. Smith:** So currently what the Ministry is doing is trying to ensure that our students achieve what we refer to as minimum standards in at least two



key areas, your numeracy and literacy, which would allow our students to access these courses. We would have, as recent as this term, announced the school operations in selective schools, whereby there are programmes designed to target these two key areas, numeracy and literacy, with the intention of exposing our students to TVET areas as they proceed at the secondary school level. So remediation programmes are being put in place at this point in time to ensure that there is a bridge that those literacy and numeracy areas are satisfactorily addressed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid.

**Mr. Nakhid:** I would like to stay on that point because I think the Chairman brought it up earlier – not to you to guys, but to us – is the perception of TVET and tech/voc. What is the Ministry actively doing, in terms of public awareness, in terms of the national conscientiousness about the importance of these programmes, maybe in terms of weight structure? I know Chair will go into that probably a bit later. But what is the Ministry doing to raise, elevate the status of these jobs and these vocations?

**Mr. Fraser:** So I would just look at it from the secondary school perspective in this regard. So students that enter into – one of the core areas of the curricula at Form 1 to Form 3, one of the areas is technology education. So all students are basically engaged in Form 1 to Form 3 in technology education which basically prepares them with most of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills to actually enter the world of work eventually or to engage in TVET subjects or, I should say, give them the options to engage in TVET subjects in Form 4 and Form 5.

The technology education basically introduces students to one of the

main skills, to problem solving skills, and they utilize a model which is called the IDEATE model. So what you will find is that students are now engaged in utilizing that model in terms of they will be given a challenge and utilize that model in terms of—

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Fraser, I think—

**Mr. Nakhid:** Mr. Fraser, sorry to cut you off—

**Mr. Chairman:**—maybe I have been following member Nakhid wrong. Member Nakhid asked about what the Ministry is doing to raise public awareness about the importance of TVET and tech/voc subjects in the context of viable jobs on par with some other sectors and changing perceptions about it in terms of it being a viable point of endeavour for the students. Member Nakhid, am I wrong? Because there is a perception that their—  
[Inaudible]—in many instances—

**Mr. Nakhid:** You are completely on point, Chairman. Completely on point.

**Mr. Fraser:** So basically the point really was exposing all students to TVET from the standpoint in Form 1 to Form 3 from utilizing technology education as one of those areas. So what you will find is that you are basically—because it is general education, you are basically giving students' options. So that what you would find happening is that by the time students have to select subjects in Form 3, they are aware of all the different areas in TVET which would be—

**Mr. Chairman:** But being aware—if I could jump—of the areas of TVET and making them attractive are two completely different things because you do not have to advertise the pay structure of a doctor or a lawyer. But if you are to make these areas attractive, you need public awareness programmes

and ad campaigns to show students that, well, if I enter the sector for agriculture training and agro processing, there is a line that takes me to a viable job that can sustain my family, and I think that is what member Nakhid is getting at—and there is a pay structure and a remuneration expectation based on the value placed on that training. Am I wrong, member Nakhid?

**Mr. Nakhid:** Completely on point, Chair, and I would just like to add to that—

**Mr. Chairman:** And I am not getting the answer for that.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** If there is a programme to apprise trainees of the line or maybe a matriculation path to higher education through these programmes that will make—while all are exposed at an early level in secondary school, it makes this an attractive point of endeavour for me as a student in the context of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Smith:** So, Chair, if I may? I am hearing perhaps the whole issue of equivalency here and perhaps I can ask—

**Mr. Chairman:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Smith:** Yeah—Dr. Patrice Searles to elaborate on this point.

**Dr. Searles:** So thank you again, Mr. Chair, and good morning to the members. So let me start. Okay. We are all aware that, yes, there is a disparity at this point in time in terms of how TVET is conceptualized and seen in the community. But it is not necessarily something that is going to be a quick fix because it is calling for a cultural mind change and an adjustment in terms of the society. What we have been doing at the NTA is that we have been engaging a whole host of industry representatives. These are persons who

show up when they are called and requested to help us articulate exactly what the occupational standards are for each of the areas. That sets out exactly the competencies, the knowledge, the attitudes that will be required by industry for persons to be gainfully employed. Once we have those occupational standards, we utilize that as part of our promotional tool.

We engage the community as well as the school population to say, these are the careers that you can do and that can be engaged in, and when you go into these areas this is what will be expected of you. We can articulate exactly the competencies, the environment in which you are working, and we are also able to make some rudimentary productions in terms of what your livelihood is going to look like. That is what we have traditionally been doing.

Now, more recently to allow for the equivalency, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Training Agency would have collaborated to develop the National Qualifications Framework of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the transformation tool that we are asking all institutions, whether they are the training providers and educational institutions, or the industry members, to look at qualifications on the basis of what a graduate is supposed to do at the end of the day. That is where the transformation is going to come in. Because then the persons are able to compare a qualification that would have come out from a traditional post-secondary or university setting, and look at what is coming out from technical vocational institutions to see if it is that there is an easy articulation.

We are hoping that with full roll-out of the NQF for Trinidad and To-

bago, it would allow for those bridges and connecting points so that someone can start off in YTEPP at a Level 1/Level 2, gain the competencies. Through the mapping and the alignment, MIC might say, "Okay, we will accept this Level I from YTEPP into our journeyman programme," which is now at the Level III/Level IV. The persons now go there, and through the intervention of, again, another mapping, UTT may get involved to say, "Okay, with an augmenting of your literacy and numeracy and perhaps your science, we will accept a graduate from the Journeyman programme to do our BSc in engineering." So we have been actively working towards creating that translation device and that is the national qualification for Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. That is kind of what I was looking for. We are going to be moving to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, and I am putting member Monroe on standby to start his line of questioning, but as we close off at the moment with the Education Ministry, I do not know which of your team would take this, Dr. Smith, including Mr. Ramnarine, Dr. Parris Searles, or Mrs. Billy-Jackman. But in terms of the opportunities available, not only Trinidad and Tobago, I know there was a move at some point to standardize across the region TVET qualifications so persons who were trained could move across the Caribbean and get employment opportunities. Is that also part of your pursuit under the championing of this sector in Trinidad and Tobago and training persons for opportunities not only in Trinidad and Tobago but certainly in the wider Caribbean and I know in the energy sector around the world?

**Dr. Smith:** So, Chair, again, I can perhaps ask Dr. Searles to respond.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Dr. Searles:** Thank you, Dr. Smith. And, Chair, with your leave, yes, to answer your question. What would have been ratified some time ago would have been the Caricom Qualifications Framework. And as a member of Caricom, we, Trinidad and Tobago, would have tied into that system and we have ensured that the developed qualification framework that we have right now, the National Qualifications Framework of Trinidad and Tobago, is in alignment with the Caricom Qualifications Framework. But more importantly, because of that umbrella agency that is represented by the Caribbean Association of National Training Agency, what we have done is that each member state has the opportunity to engage their industry persons to develop the occupational standards in their areas. So different locational areas.

In doing so, one community does not have to do all occupational areas. It is spread out. Once a member state has developed their occupational standard, we have a rigorous vetting process by which all member states get copies of those occupational standards. We have the opportunity, therefore, to go and meet with our industry representatives and say, "Look, this is what articulated for a renewal energy technician, is this suitable for Trinidad and Tobago's context; is it fit for purpose?" And once we have gotten the sanction by our industry persons, we are able to vote at the regional level for the acceptance of those occupational standards.

So that now represents the standard across the region. It goes up to COHSOD and Caricom, and just recently Caricom would have approved 46 occupational standards, inclusive of renewal energies, the hybrid vehicles,

the solar panel. I do not want to massacre the photovoltaic sector. But, yes, because of the spread with all member states working simultaneously we are able to get those occupational standards completed, and that in fact will then standardize the qualification and allow for someone who is trained in Trinidad and Tobago to be able to participate and benefit from the CSME and move to the other areas. Yes?

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Just before we go to member Monroe, member Mohit, you had a follow-up question and then member Monroe. We will move to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. Member Mohit, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes sure, Mr. Chairman. Just a follow-up question in light of what was just stated. Whether an update can be given in terms of the previous or current initiative of certifying those persons with experience in the various tech/voc fields, which was really touted to allow such persons to become more marketable? So can we have an answer, an update on that?

**Dr. Searles:** So, Chair, if I may? Because I think what –

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, please.

**Dr. Searles:** – the member is referencing here would have been the Workforce Assessment Centres where we would have applied the prior learning assessment and recognition system to allow for persons who might have been practitioners in different areas to get certification. So yes, in terms of an update, the NTA continues to approve agencies whether it is corporate agencies or training providers to do that prior learning assessment, and they are now established as Workforce Assessment Centres where any member of the public who feels that they have looked at the occupational standard,

that they have all the competencies, knowledge and attitudes that they feel that would allow them to be qualified, can go, submit themselves for assessment, and then ultimately get certified.

The certification can be done for the entire occupational area, or if it is that they are deemed only competent in some of the modules, they will get unit awards. That continues to occur and at present we do have in the virtual room two approved Workforce Assessment Centres in the body of MIC. They are Workforce Assessment Centres for a number of vocational areas related to manufacturing as well as YTEPP Limited.

**Ms. Mohit:** Before I complete, can I just ask what is the success rate of these centres thus far?

**Dr. Searles:** In terms of certification?

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes.

**Dr. Searles:** Thank you for that question, member Mohit. The reality though is that at this point in time it is really on the interest of citizens to come forward. So I do know that we continue to field the requests for external validation of competencies from individual centres, but my understanding would be that it is not as high as we would like it to be. The numbers continue to be small, and I do not know if Mr. Ramnarine or Mrs. Billy-Jackman could bear me out here but it really is not as – the uptick has not been as what we would have expected it to be.

**Ms. Mohit:** Do you have any form of educational campaign to encourage persons to come forward?

**Dr. Searles:** The reality is that, yes, we are working on continuing to engage members of the public. I think, however, in reality that we perhaps need to



revisit the method of engaging the stakeholders, because somehow persons are still overwhelmed by the thought of being tested. So there is a need for us to approach it in a more down to earth, grassroot, perhaps we need more testimonials from persons who have successfully gone through it and can speak to it, the ease to which they can get their certification, and the benefit of it, of being certified at the end of the day. So while we have been doing some work, I would in all honesty admit that there is more that we can do. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much, Dr. Patrice Parris Searles. We are moving now to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. Earlier on, the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Farook Hosein, indicated that there are 544,000 persons considered, between the ages of 10 to 35, which comprises 40 per cent of the population, which is just over one-third, which is quite substantial. So the Ministry has quite a bit of work to do. Member Monroe, you can start and we will chime after your first round of questioning. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much, Chairman. Once again. good morning to the team from the Ministry of Education, and to the team from the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. And most importantly, good morning to the viewing and listening members of the public. Chairman, with your permission, before I ask my questions to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, may I be afforded a minute or two just to chime in on something that I really find a place –

**Mr. Chairman:** Not a problem. Go ahead.

**Mr. Monroe:** Chairman, the discussion at hand with respect to the TVET

and tech/voc issues is one that weighs heavy on my heart and I will say why. I represent the far constituency at the north-east of Trinidad, Toco/Sangre Grande to be exact, which ends all the way in Matelot, and based on my experience I have had interactions with many persons who participate in TVET and tech/voc courses. However, they somehow feel as if they are at the lower end or at the backburner of the educational system, because those courses and the persons who partake in those courses are not as recognized as others who would have been successful at the academic level. I would like to just put forward my personal views with respect to persons who are participants of those courses.

Mr. Chairman, I see personally situations that arise before me with persons and I deal directly with persons who carry out those functions, those courses, those trained work, and I would like to just make this clear comparison. I see a person who is a vehicle mechanic as a doctor or as in the same line as a doctor, and I will tell you why. Just recently, in the recently flooding situation in my constituency, a doctor would have been caught up in the middle of floodwaters, and he happened luckily to make it out on the other end but the vehicle was stored there. And he waited there for approximately three hours for a mechanic to come and relieve him of his stress which is to repair this vehicle.

So in that case, a doctor who is a professional in his field was waiting for a doctor to see about his vehicle because he could not do what that person could do, although that course is a TVET course that that person would have pursued. So they are all specialists in their own areas. For instance, an attorney-at-law may call out his plumber, or mason, or carpenter,

and they go to the hardware. He accompanied that professional, the attorney-at-law, to the hardware to purchase some materials. In that case, I see that person now as being the representative of that attorney in the hardware. It is not in the courtroom, but in that scenario he is that representative. So I really would like to see strong efforts be made to really give persons in those fields a real, meaningful chance of developing themselves and be respected for the services that they provide to this nation. Thank you very much, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well said. You could go ahead with your line of questioning for the Ministry now.

**Mr. Monroe:** So to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, I have a couple questions here and it is based on your submission. You would have submitted a list of programmes and courses that would be delivered at the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres that would be set up throughout this nation. My first question is: What is the target age group of these programmes and courses?

**Mr. Hosein:** Good morning, again. With me is Mr. Sean Ramrattan who was a member of the Advisory Committee on the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres and that committee prepared a report which sought to update the curriculum for the YDNS, and I would ask Mr. Ramrattan to assist us in that question with your leave, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, please.

**11.15 a.m.**

**Mr. Ramrattan:** Good morning to the panel and viewing public. With respect to the question at the YDACs, we are looking at the ages 15 to 25 for

the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres. We also have what you call the Youth Development Centres and they would take the ages up to 35. So they would be looking at 15 to 35. Because the youth age in Trinidad, as defined by the Youth Policy 2020 to 2025, is 15 to 35 – sorry, 10 to 35. My error there.

In terms of the training, we are going to be focusing on that category of youth in need, not in education, employment or training, and we refer to them in the policy document, as well as in the report of the committee, as the “At-promise Youth”.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much. And may I ask what is the recruitment strategy for enrollment?

**Mr. Ramrattan:** Okay. Basically, in terms of enrollment, the strategy, the Ministry, in terms of its approach, in particular to the YDACs and in general in terms of all our TVET programmes, we advertise in both the print and electronic media and we use very attractive, enticing-type advertisements with visuals and optics that the young people could relate the training to occupational fields.

So if you look at our web pages, our Instagram page and Twitter, you would recognize that we use those platforms and we have very attractive, colourful advertisements that would encourage young people to apply. Then, there would be a panel that would review and shortlist the application based on the criteria set and then we would also have face-to-face interviews with the clients or prospective trainees, to assess their ability for the respective programmes, as well as if a trainee does not fit the profile for our programme, we would refer to another programme that we feel he or she might

best fit. Thank you.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you. Another question.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Chairman, sorry. Can I make a brief intervention, Member Monroe?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Nakhid:** It has to do with what I would call a bit of ageism. Now, I know you mentioned that there was an age of 25 and then, you had some subsequent programmes that would go until the age of 35, but there was a recent article in the *Guardian*, I think, about a young man, Daniel Ayoung was his name, who said that he was part of the MYDNS and that because of his age he had only one year left. I think he mentioned that he had a level of training for two years, but because of his age he had one year and then he did not know what he would do.

Now, I am thinking, just expanding on that, when you look at First World countries there is no limit, age limit, because you never know the circumstances of the individuals within the country. This boy was homeless, when I say homeless –

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid, the question you are asking is a policy question.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Yes, but it has to do with the age. Why the age limit when you have a level of skill, when you are looking to –

**Mr. Chairman:** I understand that.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Why is there the limit with the age, Chair? This is the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** So that is a policy question and I think this team before us is not able to answer that question. I understand your question, but that is a

policy question that this team cannot answer. All right? Member Monroe, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much, Chairman. My follow-up question is: What incentives, if any, are offered for enrollment in these programmes?

**Mr. Ramrattan:** Okay, in terms of incentives, there are additional activities that take place at the centres. So, we have a lot of cultural-type programmes. We have sporting activities that take place. Some people may also consider this an incentive, but at the Ministry we look at it as a necessity, which is sometimes referred to as a stipend. So some people see it as an incentive, but it is not. It is actually a resource that we provide the young persons, to help them with commuting sometimes, as well as purchasing meals to ensure that they can partake in these programmes. So those are some of the incentives.

Additionally, in terms of – there is a placement unit at the Ministry that looks, at the end of the programme, to try and place young people in occupational fields in terms of the industry and the training that they would have been involved in. So those are some of the incentives currently.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just before member Munroe continues, and I know member Mohit has a follow-up question. Going back to the recruitment strategy for enrollment, what is the target number of persons that the Ministry has in a particular time frame? And how is the Ministry ensuring that the recruitment strategy ensures that the persons who are enrolled, or who have an opportunity to enroll, are from, in particular, areas from across the country and geographically diverse?

**Mr. Hosein:** Also, under the purview of our Ministry, are the Specialized

Youth Service Programme, the CCC, the MiLAT and MYPART. The Director of that programme is with us, Major Benjamin, and I will ask him to assist us with a response.

**Maj. Benjamin:** Thank you very much, Chair, and members, and good morning to the listening public. In terms of the recruitment strategy for youth programmes in general, the Specialised Youth Service Programmes encompass the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme; the MiLAT, Military-Led Academic Training Programme; and MYPART, Military-led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training; also the CHINS programme, Children In Need of Supervision, under the auspices of the SYSP, which is managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence force, on behalf of the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service.

These programmes are spread throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme, being established in all of the parishes, because we use the parish system to site our programmes originally. The programme is approximately 29 years in existence and now we are looking to make sure that that programme's reach has persons from all parishes and also we have a reach in Tobago as well. So, in terms of geography, we have a reach throughout all of the seven regions of Trinidad and one region in Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** But are those strictly intervention programmes, or are those generalized programmes that anyone can access? Because I know MiLAT and MYPART, correct me if I am wrong, but are intervention programmes.

**Maj. Benjamin:** Chair, you are correct. The MiLAT and MYPART are intervention programmes, with a particular catchment that they cater for.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Programme is also an intervention. But it really caters for persons who are most in need of that intermediary support, that bridging system, coming out of the secondary school system to be able to find their way towards employability and the gaining of a specialized skill, however using a targeted approach when we focus on persons who need what we call additional support, attitudinal change, attitudinal adjustment in preparation for the workplace.

**Mr. Chairman:** But then it opens a question to the PS. Is this then, is your focus on TVET focused primarily targeting youth who are considered vulnerable youth? Or is it any young person falling within the age category identified who can access these programmes? Because Maj. Benjamin identified persons who seem to be running in a category of vulnerable youth or youth at risk. Is that correct or am I getting the wrong impression here?

**Mr. Hosein:** We cater for both. While the SYSP, the Specialised Youth Service Programmes; the CCC; the MiLAT and the MYPART are intervention programmes, we also have other programmes that are managed by the Youth Affairs Division, for example, in the area of heavy equipment, music, and so on. So, I would ask Mr. Ramrattan to give some further details on those programmes that are more general and not intervention-type programmes.

**Mr. Chairman:** You see, why I asked the question – member Mohit, please stand by – is we spoke earlier on, about perceptions; perceptions that TVET programmes and TVOC programmes are for a particular cadre of persons. And while I have no problem with persons who are at risk or vulnerable



being given access to training in these areas, it seems to be reinforcing a particular stereotype. Am I wrong?

**Mr. Hosein:** Well, we cater for all youths, both those “at risk” or “at promise”, as well as the general youth population. So, while some of our programmes might be targeting those particular individuals who have special needs, there are programmes that are general in nature. For example, someone is interested in music production, we have the AMPLIFY project that specially caters for that particular person. That person might be academically inclined, but has an interest in music. So our AMPLIFY programme seeks to provide training in that area.

In terms of heavy equipment, we have a programme, A.L.L. S.E.T. which is not necessarily catered for persons with special needs, but someone who is specifically interested in heavy equipment operations. So, we cater for both sets, the general, as well as those with special needs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, special interests.

**Mr. Hosein:** Special interests, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Mohit, go ahead and then member Monroe you can continue.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, seeing that we are on the discussion of incentives as well as intervention, I would like to focus a little bit on the graduates, and I would like to ask the Ministry of youth affairs to indicate whether any thought processes have been given to possibly engaging the construction sector, the agricultural sector, et cetera, to utilize the skill sets of the tech/voc graduates along the similar vein of the OJT programme, since this can create a symbiotic relationship between both parties

against those persons gaining experience whilst accessing a stipend after they graduate.

**Mr. Ramrattan:** Okay. In response to that question, for example, one of the programmes that we have is the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme. That would have had over 1,400 applicants. And when we looked at the applicants we recognized that they were applicants who would have completed the diploma programme in agriculture at ECIAF. We even had some students from the University of the West Indies who would have completed their Master's programme. And we have those students now enrolled in that Youth Agricultural Homestead project, which is a stipend programme. It has a stipend and they are continuing their training in terms of achieving a certificate in agricultural production and husbandry. So, the young persons, the incentives for those young persons do exist, who have completed programmes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Monroe.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much, Chairman. To the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, I continue. I would like to know, for those graduates of these programmes and courses, what strategy is in place to funnel them into the place of employment?

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay, Maj. Benjamin would assist us in the response.

**Maj. Benjamin:** Member, thank you very much for that question. In the Civilian Conservation Corps Programme, we would have looked at the results of a tracer study that was done between 2015 to 2018. And one of the key results there were that persons graduating from the programme, while they were certified at TVET Level 1, were not introduced to the potential

workforce. So there was a bridging challenge, in terms of getting them into job opportunities.

We have introduced in the last two cycles of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and more so in the last cycle graduating in September of this year, an internship programme, which lasts for a period of two months at the end of the cycle. That internship programme is now seen to be an impactful bridging point where employers who have actually offered persons who were interns, employment in their particular fields. So to date, of the 727 persons that would have graduated in the last intake, we have over 200 persons that would have been employed so far, to date. And we are still tracking that to see what the success rate is on our internship initiative.

**Mr. Monroe:** Okay. So basically you would have just mentioned that there is some level of filtering of these trainees. However, 200-plus out of seven-something, that is what you would have mentioned. Right? Is there any other plans of the Ministry to ramp up that number to see a higher number of persons/trainees finding employment?

**Mr. Chairman:** If I could add to that question that member Monroe is adding: What sort of consultations are you having with the private sector, given your training record and your output of graduates, in terms of including them in their workforce catchment? Because there is a constant cry in many private sector enterprises that they cannot find persons to fill positions. Is that part of what your strategy is, in terms of helping your graduates to find employment in collaboration with private sector entities?

**Mr. Hosein:** Specifically, in terms of identifying the technical/vocational areas, that training is provided for by the Ministry, that is a consideration

that is taken into account. So, Maj. Benjamin, under the SYSP, and Mr. Ramrattan, under the youth affairs programme, they would have identified specific technical/vocational areas in which there would be a need for persons in those particular areas. Among these are, for example, small engine repairs, culinary arts, cosmetology, computer repairs, et cetera. So, there is always that interaction between officials of the Ministry and the industry to identify areas where there are needs, so that we would cater in terms of providing the training to fit those needs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you also provide some level of basic business acumen in your training, so that persons who graduate can start to have a sense of, either forming their own business or being able to negotiate with a business for the best outcome in terms of remuneration packages and employment?

**Mr. Hosein:** Certainly. In all our programmes, even the programmes that I mentioned before like the AMPLIFY which deals with music, and A.L.L. S.E.T. Heavy Equipment Operation, there is that element of entrepreneurship, as well as in the Specialised Youth Service Programmes. So I will ask Mr. Ramrattan to provide some details on those.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ramrattan:** To the panel, the viewing public again, to elaborate, yes, all our programmes that are delivered, they have components of entrepreneurship training, budgeting, as well as national service. So that, we are not only creating the opportunity for young people to acquire skill for employment, but also to become their own employers, so they can actually open businesses. So we are looking at ensuring that they look at the option of entrepreneurship as well. So there definitely is that element in terms of business

training and entrepreneurship training, as well as national service, so that they understand their role in terms of society.

**Mr. Chairman:** Your submission indicated that the Ministry intends to construct 12 additional facilities for use in various catchment areas including, but not limited to, La Horquetta, Moruga, Enterprise, Sea Lots, Maloney, Arouca, Mayaro, and Beetham Estate. How did the Ministry identify these areas for the construction of these 12 catchment area facilities?

**Mr. Hosein:** Those areas would have been identified by our project unit in collaboration with our Youth Affairs Division. Ms. Jenine Benjamin, who heads that unit is with us, and I would ask her to provide some details in that regard. Ms. Benjamin.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you. Good morning everyone. When we are assessing the areas that we would like to open our centres in, we do a comprehensive assessment. And that would include looking at the density of the population in the area, how many youths are in that area that would have that need for training. We also look at if the area is looked at as a hotspot, in terms of Trinidad and Tobago and their crime rate, and we would really want to have some sort of intervention in those types of areas, as we aim to try to reduce the amount of youth turning to crime.

We also look at if the area is depressed; if it is a depressed community and has a number of vulnerable youths that would be seeking further education and training in order to gain employment. We also look at the need for skilled training of the youth in that area. So it might be an area that would be close to a particular type of industry, and we would try to provide

training, so that the persons, the youth in area would be able to get employed.

We would also look at if the area is one that is remote, and going to a separate community would be difficult. So we would try to target the areas to make training as easy as possible and go into the areas that need it.

Those are the general categories that we use. But it is not limited to and we are always open to looking at different areas where there is a need.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Monroe, and then member Mohit. Member Monroe, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much, Chairman for that question, and I would like to come on the heels of that question. I would have just heard you mention that the closest centre to the north-east district is La Horquetta. I would like to ask the Ministry: Has any consultation or consideration been taken into place for the young men and women of the far north-east? And I will call some communities which are all the way from Valencia to Matelot and then we have on the other side, because I am now talking as a region, the north-east region here. I am talking about the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, Guaico/Tamana, Manzanilla; all these communities here. These areas, because of our geographic location, we are somewhat at a disadvantage. And what consideration is being taken, or would be put into place to consider the young men and women of this part?

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you for that question. And we are definitely considering that area. I know we conducted a site visit in Turure and we were looking at areas where we could get our youth development centre built, and that continues to be a discussion, and hopefully it could be carded for

this fiscal. So we are looking at all areas, especially those that are remote, north-east Trinidad included. And we continue to have the area in Turure that was identified/earmarked for a youth development centre.

**Mr. Monroe:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Mohit, go ahead please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr.Chairman. Mr.Chairman, I had a follow-up question a little while back. I was having some difficulties. Mr.Chairman, I just want to go along the line of yourself and member Monroe, as it relates to the inclusion of private entities in terms of the graduates, which brings me back to my question previously, as it relates to having any similar programme, any thought processes in terms of any similar programme, as it relates to the OJT programme.

Speaking about at-risk communities and intervention programmes and whatnot, I think one of the most serious concerns that we have at this point in time is what happens after intervention? You intervene, you have persons participating. After participation, what is your success? Is it that the success is a certificate? What happens after that certificate?

And it brings me back to the question of having a similar programme to the OJT programme for graduates. What exactly is in store for graduates? This is what we need to know. If you are partnering with private entities to ensure that persons are somewhat considered, how many persons have been considered? Is it just that we are in the discussion stage? What exactly is happening for those persons? Because you mentioned the community of Enterprise, and I am very concerned because, of course, that is in my constituency. So I really would like to know what happens after the certificate for

graduates, in terms of employment, in terms of entrepreneurship. Yes we are speaking it but what is happening to those persons who have graduated?

**Mr. Chairman:** PS Hosein, is there someone you would like to assign to that, or would you like to take that?

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay. The Director of Youth will provide some details. But in terms of the past, what we had done with respect to SYSP was to do a tracer study in terms of identifying what has happened to the graduates, and Maj. Benjamin and our head of M&E is working on doing a terms of reference for a tracer study to be conducted in this fiscal as well, so in order to identify how many persons who have graduated from our programmes are in employment, or have opened their own business and the like. Mr. Ramrattan would provide some further details.

**Mr. Ramrattan:** Okay. So as Maj. Benjamin would have indicated earlier, once the programme is completed, most of our programmes will have a complement of OJTs. For example, the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, when the young persons are nearing completion of their programme, they would go on an OJT exercise which would last about three months in the industry. So they actually get the world of work experience there.

Now, what happens in most instances, based on the young person's performance, the company keeps them on. If the company does not keep them on, there is a placement unit at the Ministry that looks for placement for the young persons. How do they get those placements? Now, most of the instructors are very familiar with the industries, as well as what we refer to as youth development officers and youth development associates. They



work in the communities. So they liaise with businesses in the community and we try to link the young persons to those opportunities.

Additionally, just recently I would have begun talks with the On-the-Job Training Programme in particular with respect to AMPLIFY as well as HEO, because these are non-traditional areas of training that we are getting involved in and we want to ensure that the OJT programme would be able to afford these young persons opportunities. So we are currently in talks with the OJT programme in terms of placement for the traditional and non-traditional programmes that we are offering at the Ministry. Thank you.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** PS Hosein, based on the question member Mohit asked, is it that you are working in close collaboration with the Education Ministry? Several of the stakeholders earlier on identified their own TVET programme output and roll-out, and there are a lot of similarities in what you are doing as a relatively new Ministry, only starting in August of 2020. Is it that you are working in close collaboration with the Education Ministry, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, et cetera, so that there is not duplication of services and that you can align your objectives?

**Mr. Hosein:** Certainly, as the Director of Youth Affairs would have mentioned, we are working with OJT – well, the Ministry of Labour, in terms of identifying opportunities for those who have graduated from our training courses. But even in the conduct of those training courses we are liaising with the Ministry of Education and its agencies. For example, we have conducted a training course in skills for technological and a diversified economy

where we provided training in coding, web designing, and mobile application development, and this was in conjunction and partnering with MIC-IT and 450 persons would have participated in this programme.

And also, we are partnering with YTEPP and NESC as well in some of our training programmes, so that if there is an agency that is already providing some training in a particular area, rather than reinventing the wheel, our Ministry partners with that particular agency in expanding opportunities for young persons in training.

**Mr. Chairman:** Great. I want to go back a bit to the Education Ministry because of the dovetail between the two Ministries obviously in terms of youth intervention and providing opportunities for youth. And to call on Dr. Smith again, if he can give us a sense – I know parts of your team today include the CEO of MIC; the CEO of NTA, the National Training Academy; the Manager of Research of YTEPP, and if Dr. Smith can give us a sense of the enrollment level or the graduate levels, numbers, for persons in TVET programmes over the last couple years? So we get a sense of the trends in enrollment and also graduation. And what currently are the more popular programmes being engaged by persons who are seeking to train themselves in technical/vocational and TVET sector programmes?

**Dr. Smith:** Thank you very much, Chair. I would like to pass on to Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman of YTEPP who should be able to give us some more information in terms of the enrollment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Good day, everyone. In terms of our enrollment over the past – and I can only speak to YTEPP, right. Our enrollment over the

past five years has in fact reduced, all right, and that has been a source of concern for us.

**Mr. Chairman:** Can you give us more raw numbers? What would it have been like five years ago, and what is the trend to date?

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** I would not be able to give to—I would need to open some documents in order to give you that—*[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure. Is it in the realm of 1,000, 5,000 annually?

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Oh. Annually, we train—now, we need to understand as well that we do different types of training, we target different persons. So in terms of our core skills our enrollment has been roughly 1,500 to 2,000 over the past few years. That is down from roughly 4,000 or so of six years ago. Right? But we also—not only do we do the core training in terms of skills like—

**Mr. Chairman:** Have you been able to do an assessment as to why enrollment is falling?

**Mrs. Billy-Jackman:** Well, in terms of our resources having allocations, to be exact, having been reduced over the past five to six years, we have not been able to service as many centres. So, for example, going back to parts of the discussion that transpired before, geographically we are no longer able to service the centres in all of the secondary schools that we used to. At one point in time, we were in approximately 26 centres and right now, we are down to eight.

**Mr. Chairman:** Dr. Smith, is that a strategic decision or is that occurring by happenstance?

**Dr. Smith:** Chair, if it is okay with you, can I get that additional information

and provide you with it in writing, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** So you are not aware of if it is a strategic decision to scale back YTEPP? Or is it that the students are just not thinking that YTEPP—because I know once upon a time YTEPP was very active in terms of marketing and advertising. YTEPP was the go-to agency for persons who wanted to train themselves in technical/vocational studies and other areas, but from what Mrs. Billy-Jackman is saying there seems to have been a drastic fall back from persons accessing YTEPP, YTEPP funding generally, and the ability to service and continue to operate. So what is happening here?

**Dr. Smith:** As indicated, Chair, I am aware of the drop in some of the figures. I would need to get some additional information to respond to you comfortably.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Can we ask the same question of Mr. Ramnarine where MIC is concerned, and also Dr. Parris Searles where NTA is concerned in terms of the enrollment levels and the trends over the last couple of years? Can we start with Mr. Ramnarine?

**Mr. Ramnarine:** Good day, again, Chairman. In terms of MIC, we follow the similar fate of YTEPP. For the last five or six years, our funding was cut by 50 per cent. And so, our annual allocation was basically the driving factor for us moving from at one time training in excess of 4,500 students per year, to now on or about 1,500.

So, basically, I mean, looking at it from a reasonable perspective, you know the cost per student in terms of the allocation, you know, led us to reduce in terms of what we can reasonably deliver on. So there is—I mean,

if you ask another question there is the demand certainly for more training but, of course, we are guided by the public purse and what is afforded to the Ministry of Education and the hence forth too MIC's allocation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, the Education Ministry received the largest amount of funding, either first or second, in every budget for the last 15 or so years. Can I move to NTA and ask the same question please.

**Dr. Parris Searles:** So thank you very much Chair, and through you, the NTA does not actually do any training with youth participants, but we do have as part of our research portfolio, we maintain a labour market dashboard online that any one of the committee members can access that will give you the comprehensive enrollment data that we would have collected from 2011 to 2020. It will provide both the final enrollment figures and the final graduation figures on the dashboard. At this point in time, we have 143 training providers submitting their information. Based on that data, Chair, the reality is that we would have seen a significant fall in both the enrollment and graduation figures from 2017 to current, and that is for both private and public institutions.

So while I do know that the public agencies may have an issue in terms of the quantum of subvention that they have been receiving, we are seeing a like fall in the private institutions as well. So it points to at least in terms from where we sit, that something significantly has to be done in terms of reigniting and reenergizing persons to look at TVET as an option for employability, and just you know success within their personal esteem.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. So this enquiry's topic is an examination of the state of technical and vocational educational programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago. And from what three significant stakeholders have just told me, funding is an issue. Am I crazy to surmise that? And so, the question coming from that to Dr. Smith, is funding negatively impacting the ability of the State to champion technical and vocational education programmes to ensure that they sustainably contribute to the development of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Dr. Smith:** Chair, funding is an issue. As you would know the industry is resource intensive but along with the funding there is also the issue of the interest, as well as how the industry is perceived by persons who want to get into it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Ramnarine just told us plainly that there is a huge demand at MIC, but their resources cut by 50 per cent does not allow them to accommodate as many students. Am I wrong?

**Dr. Smith:** No, you are not wrong, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** So funding is an issue?

**Dr. Smith:** Yes, funding is an issue.

**Mr. Chairman:** So is there a strategy to deal with reduced funding in terms of championing tech/voc and TVET sector training? Because they are extremely important in national development as we see in other jurisdictions. You started off by identifying in your opening statements that the global up-tick in technical training, TVET training, is exponentially rising. Yet we, in Trinidad and Tobago, are seemingly reducing the funding for that so it just sounds counter-intuitive to me.

**Dr. Smith:** Chair, and your concern is noted. And hence, in our proposed Education Policy Paper 2022 to 2027, one of the areas that we have put on the front burner is the TVET sector going forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We are coming up on the end of the enquiry. Is there any other question member Mohit would like to ask and then member Monroe? And then we would invite the leads of our teams to deliver closing comments and thank them for being with us today. We start with member Mohit. Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, just a final question based on what was just, you know, stated in terms of enrollment, reduction, and what-not. Can I ask whether there has been any consideration to streamline all the tech/voc institutions under one singular body allowing for better programme of qualification? Whether any type of consideration was given to that? Since, Mr. Chair, this would really help in terms of economies of scale and maybe more persons qualifying, et cetera.

**Mr. Chairman:** Dr.Smith.

**Dr. Smith:** Chair, if I may, is it that member Mohit is asking about one training body.

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. Smith:** Okay. So, at this point, member Mohit and Chair, I cannot confirm yes, but as was mentioned, it is definitely an area that we should be looking at going forward.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Member Monroe any final questions?

**Mr. Monroe:** Yes, Chair. Thank you very much. I will just like to know

from the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, which department or division of their Ministry holds responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of their quality of programmes and courses offered?

**Mr. Hosein:** At the Ministry, we have an M&E unit, and that unit collaborates with all the various divisions of the Ministry in providing a framework for monitoring and evaluation for the various programmes. So there is an M&E unit at the Ministry.

**Mr. Monroe:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Okay, at this time, I would like to invite Dr. Smith, on behalf of your team, to deliver any closing comments and if any of your team would like you think would like to deliver closing comments given their contribution, that will also be accepted at this time.

**Dr. Smith:** Okay. Thank you very much, Chair. So the Ministry of Education and its implementing institutions will continue to strive to ensure the educational learning experiences of citizens are rewarding, lifelong, and prepare them for productive contributions towards the development of Trinidad and Tobago in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We do acknowledge, Chair, those falling numbers and the need for us to embark on a more aggressive campaign to get our youths as well as citizens into this most productive area.

I would like to thank all members of the staff of the Ministry of Education, the heads of the various agencies, and all persons that assisted in providing information for this enquiry. I do hope that the Committee and the public at large is satisfied by the responses provided and are assured that the future of TVET in Trinidad and Tobago is of great importance to the Ministry of Education. Thank you very much, Chair.



**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. Mr. Hosein.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. The Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, MYDNS is pleased to have provided information to this Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on the TVET programmes conducted by the Ministry, and we look forward to continued engagement with all stakeholders to ensure that the national youth development agenda is implemented in a sustainable manner. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. And both Dr. Smith's team and Mr. Farook and his team are invited to submit any further information or comments to the Secretariat in writing. We would appreciate that. It will be factored into our final report coming from this enquiry.

I would like to thank you all for being with us. Dr. Peter Smith, Chief Education Officer with the Ministry of Education; Mr. Anil Ramnarine, CEO of MIC; Dr. Patrice Parris Searles, CEO of NTA; Mr. Urban Huggins, Director of Funding and Grants, Administration Division; Mrs. Ava Billy-Jackman, Manager of Research YTEPP; Mr. Peter Fraser, Curriculum Coordinator, TVET; and also from the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, Mr. Farook Hosein, PS; Major David Benjamin, Director Specialised Youth Service Programme, SYSP; Mr. Sean Ramrattan, Director, Youth Affairs Division; and Ms. Jenine Benjamin, Project Monitoring Coordinator, Project Management Unit. And, of course, the members of this Committee, MP Roger Monroe, member Monroe, member Mohit, member Sinanan, and member Nakhid. We would also like to thank the Secretariat for their usual yeoman service and also, you, members of the viewing and listening public,

for being with us today and your attention. At this time, it is my honour to be able to thank you all for viewing and adjourn this session until next time. Thank you all and have a great, safe day.

**Members:** Thank you, Chair.

**12.03 p.m.:** *Meeting adjourned.*

# Appendix V – Verbatim Notes of 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FIFTEENTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
COMMITTEE HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 03, 2023, AT 10.15  
A.M.**

## **PRESENT**

Mr. Paul Richards	Chairman
Mr. David Nakhid	Member
Ms. Vandana Mohit	Member
Ms. Penelope Beckles	Member
Mr. Avinash Singh	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	Assistant Secretary

## **ABSENT**

Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman [ <i>Excused</i> ]
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Mr. Roger Monroe	Member

## **MIC INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MIC-IT)**

Ms. Candice Austin	Assistant General Manager Training, Student Support Services
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Mr. Ryan Deonarine                      Manager – Quality Assurance  
Dr. Victoria Cunningham              Manager – Curriculum

**UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (UTT)**

Prof. Stephen Joseph                      Assistant Vice President  
Undergraduate Studies  
Dr. Barbara Constance Assistant  
Professor, Center for Education  
Programmes  
Mr. Rasif Ali                                  Senior Instructor –  
Mechanical Engineering,  
Manufacturing and  
Entrepreneurship Programme

**ADVANCED SOLUTIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE**

Dr. Ancil Peters                              Chief Executive Officer/ Aca-  
ademic Dean  
Ms. Nicola Humphrey                      Recruitment Officer – Sales Execu-  
tive

**Mr. Chairman:** Good day and welcome to the viewing and listening audience to this the Fifteenth meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. This is the Committee's second hearing with stakeholders, pursuant to its examination of the state of technical and vocational educational programmes and their contribution to achieving the

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developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Members of the public are invited to submit their comments and/or questions to the Parliament's social media platforms, including YouTube channel, *ParlView*, or via Facebook and/or Twitter.

Today, of course, we are going through our second hearing focusing on the examination of the state of tech/voc and education programmes, and as we said before, and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago.

The stakeholders with us today include the following: the University of Trinidad and Tobago, UTT, representative of MIC, the Institute of Technology, and Advanced Solutions Technical Institute. The enquiry objectives include the following:

- To examine the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. To assess whether TVET programmes are aligned to meet the country's developmental goals; and
3. To evaluate the strategies and measures that are being adopted by the State to sustain and promote the enrollment of young persons in TVET programmes.

We have representatives from the three entities with us, but before I do that, let me just do some housekeeping and indicate that, I am the Committee's Chairman, and the members include the following. Three are unable to be with us today, they have conflicting engagements and they are: the Vice Chairman, MP Roger Monroe, Mr. Esmond Forde MP, and also Mr. Rohan Sinanan who is also a member. All three have conflicting engagements,

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but we are happy to have the following members with us who I will invite to introduce themselves. MP Vandana Mohit, member Mohit, good morning.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** And also, member Singh will be rejoining us in good stead. At this time, it is my pleasure to introduce the stakeholder groups and their representatives to you. We will ask the leads on each of the groups to introduce their teams and also to present brief opening remarks not exceeding two minutes at this time. We will start with University of Trinidad and Tobago, and Prof. Stephen Joseph who is the Assistant Vice-President of Undergraduate Studies. Prof. Joseph, go ahead please.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** You can go ahead Prof. Joseph, and deliver your opening remarks if you care to at this time.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes. Well, UTT, as you might know, plays a very important role with the TVET programme, particularly in the area of teacher education and training. And you would recall that a few years ago John D and Sando Tech were handed over to UTT, and so, we continue the teacher education programme at UTT.

We also have a number of NETD programmes that are quite, quite, well established, and so we have a number of students pursuing diplomas in chemical engineering, electrical and so on and these are also TVET areas. We do have fashion, we have food technology as well, the ECIAF Campus provides that kind of support for food technology. So we are well entrenched with the TVET programme.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Prof. Joseph. We move now to the officials from MIC Institute of Technology, and I hope I do not mispronounce your name, Mr. Nathan “Lang-guy-nee” is that how it is pronounced?

**Ms. Austin:** Hi, good morning. Mr. Langaigue.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Langaigue, sorry about that. Mr. Nathan Langaigue, who is the Assistant General Manager, Training, and he can introduce his team and deliver the opening remarks please. Thank you.

**Ms. Austin:** All right. Good morning everyone, let me send apologies for Mr. Langaigue, he had a prior engagement, so I am holding in his position. I am Candace Austin, Assistant General Manager of Training, Student Support Services.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Austin, would you be delivering the opening remarks on behalf of MIC?

**Ms. Austin:** Yes. I would.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead please.

**Ms. Austin:** Sure. So MIC’s contribution to the development of our nation and citizens is a great one, and it is a role that we take quite seriously. Similar to UTT, we too have also inherited a few programmes from John D, and we also inherited the MUST Programme. So there has been collaboration and inheritance throughout the years.

We have continued to adapt and innovate as time has passed, and especially post-COVID. We continue to expand in our resources in terms of how we treat with the new learning environment, and you know, the online

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platform, and even expanding into maybe areas of entrepreneurship, because we see the disconnect from when you learn the trade and taking your skill area and making it into a business. So we look forward to the conversation today and I am sure a lot will come out from all the other stakeholders as well.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Ms. Austin, appreciate it. And now we move to the officials—well the official from Advance Solutions Technical Institute, it is just—

**Mr. Ogilvie:** No representation at this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** —oh, who are not with us at this time I understand, but we can also come back to them. Okay. So we can start the official interface at this time. Just before I go to member Mohit, I would like to ask a general question of both groups before us, and the enquiry is focused on examining TVET programmes and their contribution to achieving the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago. So I will start with Ms. Austin, and you can direct which of your team you think can answer this, and then, Prof. Joseph at UTT, and how you think the institution is doing in shifting the mindset of the population? Because the Secretariat from the Parliament did a very impressive study with some young persons, and among the information that was gleaned from that, was that there is a perception about tech/voc and TVET programmes in the country. And there is a feeling that it is either an extra source of income, or in some of their estimations, not something that they could get into full-time, or not something they had the training to turn into a business. So the context of its contribution to the GDP of Trinidad and

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Tobago and the development, do you think that the programmes are positioned adequately enough to attract the people that you want, the cohort that you want to enter the workplace in Trinidad and Tobago, with the objectives stated? If I could start with Ms. Austin on that or any of your team that you would like to assign, and then Prof. Joseph from UTT.

**Ms. Austin:** Okay sure. So, in terms of tech/voc, I would admit that the marketing of the tech/voc course would need to be revamped. There is a perception that if my child is not academically inclined, I can push my child towards a tech/voc course. I will send you to do plumbing or something where you can work with your hands. So in terms of the mindset, we need to market the tech/voc differently as a viable option, not just for those that are, you know, on the hands-on side, but everybody can access the tech/voc.

In terms of the income – I made a note here. A lot of the income coming in as well for our graduates they do not – in terms of the graduate data, they do not stay in the field as well. So a lot of our graduates that maybe did welding or electrical, you know, you bounce them up in groceries, they are not working in the field, or maybe they are doing it as a side hustle. So –

**Mr. Chairman:** But have you done any research to find out why? Because have you ever tried to hire a plumber or a mason and see what you have to pay, and how difficult it is to get somebody who has a high skill level?

**Ms. Austin:** It is. Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** So it is not a side hustle in terms of the cost for the service, but why have we not been able to make the transition to telegraph to the population this is a lucrative –

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**Ms. Austin:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:**—legitimate, endeavour?

**Ms. Austin:** Yeah, that would also help in our diversification. Yeah, and there is a gap, I would admit there is a gap between learning the skill and becoming an entrepreneur.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Thank you. Prof. Joseph.

**Prof. Joseph:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Chairman:** You are still muted. Please unmute.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, sorry about that. You know, there is this general perception by the public that tech/voc is for people who cannot achieve academically. Now, at UTT our programmes say quite the opposite. And I will ask, Mr. Ali to talk a little bit about the NETD programmes which form part of tech/voc.

But I just want to say now that our involvement in training teachers, the teachers who teach tech/voc in the school, is a very important role for UTT, and over the years we have trained almost all the teachers who actually teach students in the school. So UTT presents this hope for upward mobility because people can do the tech/voc at the MIC level, and the NESC level, get into UTT and pursue degree programmes that can easily articulate into a Master's programme and PhD, if they wish. So this is what really we are hoping to represent to the public that there is a path, a clear path, for people who might want to take tech/voc to the very highest level. But Mr. Ali can talk a little bit more about what actually happens in the NETD programmes.

**Mr. Ali:** Okay, thank you Prof. Joseph. Let me introduce myself, I am Rasif

Ali, I am the Discipline Leader of the NETD programme, mechanical at UTT. As far as I have seen for the past years, in fact, our intake at UTT every year is over 100 students at the NETD programme. And these students that come in, they are anxious about this programme. They do not see themselves like this is an alternative then. The moment they leave the CXC with their five CXC, English, Math, Physics, they apply to UTT to the NETD programme and they see a future here. In fact, that is why our numbers are so high in the mechanical programme because that is like – so it is not like they feel that they are not good enough for other careers, but there is a ready market for this NETD mechanical, electrical, and even civil here in Trinidad. And for the past – in fact our cohort right now is 24, you know, 24 batches of students have graduated from UTT, and most of them I would say are working and they are working like in the plants at Pt. Lisas, in all the manufacturing throughout Trinidad and Tobago. So I would say right now we are on good grounds as far as the NETD programme at UTT, and TVET in general.

And just to add to that, I will just add that our students at UTT are fitting in quite comfortably in any of the industry in Trinidad. Just prior to me coming to UTT, I was with an industry and we were actually looking – we were looking for UTT graduates rather than other institutions, because we saw that UTT had something in addition to other institutions, which they had the practical base at UTT and that was a big advantage. So, if I could close off there and any comments?

**Prof. Joseph:** No, well I just want to bring Dr. Constance in the conversation because she also has been liaising with the Ministry of Education regarding our tech/voc programme.

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So Dr. Constance, perhaps you can share some of the discussions. I know that at some point we were negotiating with the Ministry of Education to consider having scholarships, you know, offering scholarships for students why might want to get into the tech/voc stream, you know at this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** I want to ask if you could just put a pause, we would bring Dr. Constance in in short while. And let me just welcome member Mohit because she has the first round of questioning, and then we will go to member Nakhid, and we will facilitate Dr. Constance and that information that you advised us that she has for us. So member Mohit, go ahead please.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, based on where this conversation is going and what was stated in terms of the opening remarks by Mr. Ali, as well as Prof. Joseph, and at the same time MIC, as it relates the gap of learning a skill and becoming an entrepreneur, and on the other hand UTT stating that, you know, they are on good grounds. My first question would be based on the submission which indicated that National Engineering Technician Diploma in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering is the most pursued TVET programme. Mr. Ali, or Prof. Joseph, what in your estimation can you state makes this programme attractive to persons?

**Prof. Joseph:** I think Mr. Ali could answer that.

**Mr. Ali:** Okay. There are several reasons, in fact, first of all, mechanical, there is a wide – okay, there are a lot of vacancies right now in the industries for mechanical. So most students finishing the CXC with English, Maths, Physics, they tend to come to UTT to do the mechanical because they see a ready market for jobs. Also, they could also go and branch into their own

business, say like they could go in a garage, set up a garage with our diploma. And also, this diploma is qualifying them to go to a degree, because instead of doing CAPE, a student completing the diploma is qualified to go onto the BSc programme.

So as I said, there are a number of reasons why students might choose this because they see a lot of options available for them.

**Ms. Mohit:** So you are basically saying that there is room for growth.

**Mr. Ali:** Correct. Yes.

**Ms. Mohit:** That is the attraction. All right, well, in terms of your submission, it stated that there were some challenges with regard to access of sharing labs but despite that, students were able to complete their disciplines. Can you elaborate a little bit on the challenges faced regarding the TVET equipment and infrastructure at your institution? And at the same time, can you state for us what remedial actions are being implemented to rectify these challenges which were stated?

**Mr. Ali:** Okay, fine. Okay. As Prof. Joseph indicated, San Fernando Technical and John D are under the ambit of UTT. Now, as you all know, those are old institutions I mean, going back way over almost 40 years or 30 years. So actually, the lab equipment at those facilities need upgrading. And I know Prof. Joseph advised me that there is ongoing talks to upgrade it, but the one at Pt. Lisas which is a recent campus, I must say the lab facilities are up to mark, it is up to standard. So sometime we shuttle students from the campuses to Pt. Lisas to make sure the labs are up to standard when is time to complete it. But for now, we are looking at targeting and improving the

standard at San Fernando and John D as best as possible there. But the students are not compromised at this point in time.

**Ms. Mohit:** But you are just in the talking stage? Is it that funding is posing a challenge as it relates to these upgrades?

**Mr. Ali:** Maybe I can ask Prof. Joseph to come in here.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, absolutely, absolutely. We depend of course, as you know, it is no secret heavily on Government subvention and so on and the PSIP for funds. And you know, that is not always forthcoming. So therefore we are you know hamstrung in some regard, but we soldier on and we try to be creative in facilitating the needs of our students.

**Ms. Mohit:** Prof. Joseph, as it relates to – well this is concerning PSIP, but as it relates to funding itself, you know, funding to UTT has been reduced over the years, maybe you would like to tell us a little bit how this reduction, you know, has impacted the university's ability to efficiently administer your TVET courses and programmes?

**Prof. Joseph:** Yeah absolutely. We get funding largely for paying salaries, right, teachers' salaries. And I am advised by our finance people that we have a \$4 million shortfall. So with that alone, so you know, I think that impacts negatively on our ability to hire the staff, the requisite staff, to really push the tech/voc. So if we do not have enough funding to pay teachers then that is a big problem right there, all right. We are not even going to get into the PSIP and the length of time that it takes to be approved, so.

**Ms. Mohit:** As it relates to what you explained in terms of not having enough funding for teachers, do you have adequate staff to carry out these TVET courses and programmes at this point?

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**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, I think we do have. I mean, there is always need for improvement, but we have a group of dedicated people who double up their services and work, you know, more than they should to get the job done. But I cannot say that we have enough. You know we certainly do need and if we can get some more persons in those areas that will be fine. I mean, you know, our data, the last time we checked, I think we had just about 12 faculty members to do the NETD programme right, and those programmes carry about quite a few hundreds, I think, at least 300 or 400 persons, all right. And those faculty members also teach other areas as well.

**Ms. Mohit:** “Um-hmm.”

**Prof. Joseph:** So funding really is a big deal for us.

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Ali, before I complete, you mentioned over 100 students, and am I correct to say 24 batches graduated?

**Mr. Ali:** Correct.

**Ms. Mohit:** If you were to have the funding available in terms of your staffing to properly secure your staffing, would you say that you would have had more batches of students graduating and more students enrolled in these programmes?

**Mr. Ali:** “Hmmm.” That is a difficult question to ask there in the sense that our number of graduates – okay, I would not say it was affecting our staff. Right now, we have 12 instructors in the mechanical programme and we have 100 students. So getting more instructors would not really increase the number of graduates then, but I mean increasing the number of instructors will increase the delivery of the programme, the quality and so on, but it will not affect the numbers as such.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. In terms of engagement and collaboration, have you all, UTT, sought to engage and collaborate with Ministry of Education and tech/voc training institutions such as MIC who are here with us, with a view to increasing the diversity and the scope of tech/voc training opportunities available in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, absolutely. Quite a few years now, we have been liaising with MIC. They provide some training and I think we brokered a deal with them for them to send their teachers to us so that we can do the upgrade in terms of training. We are also in talks with NESC who is really anxious to send their instructors to UTT for training. Because as you know, teachers that are supposed to teach, you know, have qualifications one level above the areas that they teach. And these institutions some of the instructors, I know in NESC, are teaching at the diploma level. Some of them do not have degrees. So UTT presents an opportunity for that kind of upgrade.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. And one final question either of you can answer, in terms of your projected success rate how far behind are you from that?

**Prof. Joseph:** Success in terms of?

**Ms. Mohit:** Success rate in terms of your TVOC courses and programmes. Because I know you are counting your students, you are counting your batches of graduates; you are counting who are working at the plant in terms of the industries. So probably during the course of each year you will have a success rate that you are targeting, so how far behind are you at this point from your targeted success rate?

**Prof. Joseph:** Well, I think we are doing pretty well with the NETD. With the Bachelor of Education, right now we are almost halting that programme



while we review it. We are in talks with the Ministry of Education, and so, we are sort of adding some new dimensions to the programme to attract students. But right now we would have trained almost all the people who would have come from the John D Institution and Sando Tech, and so we are now looking to see whether we can attract brand new people straight out from school to come in to do our programmes. And to do that, we have to work closely with the NETD group as well the education group.

So for education, teacher training, we are way behind time, and you know, the Ministry of Education needs well-trained teachers to teach the tech/voc in the schools.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure.

**Mr. Ali:** Okay, just to add to Prof. Joseph, that is an interesting question that Ms. Mohit just raised, in that you are looking at the success rate. Well we are looking at also improving the competency of students, because right now we are looking at accrediting the diploma with the NETD, with the IET which is the Institute of Engineering and Technology from the UK. In fact, this year we will have a site visit because right now a diploma is accredited with ACTT, as you all know. So as far as the success rate is concerned, we are looking at graduating a student now who could be accredited worldwide. So June this year, we will have a visit from them and most likely we will get accredited with that body. And this is a plus for the institution, it is a plus for the student, and it is a plus for the programme, and it is that success rate that we are looking at now, in the programme being accredited worldwide.

**Ms. Mohit:** Sure. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, and member Nakhid you had a question holding?

**Mr. Nakhid:** Yes, I had a couple questions based on what we were talking about the perception.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead please, that is fine.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Okay, Chairman. To any one of the UTT representatives, I have done some research, Switzerland and Austria in particular, and that perception emanates from some systemic deficiencies it seems like, because as far as I know, UTT is tertiary education. And if we look at Switzerland and Austria, they have tech/voc as early as what we would call here Form 3.

**10.45 a.m.**

There is some symbiotic relationship between the normal academia and tech/voc as early as Form 3, that alone would change the perception that we currently have among the population. I mean, no matter what kind of public relations that we would advocate or what kind of commercial management we try or public relations, that perception, which is so important, in order for us to get some kind of progress in tech/voc, we will have to have some kind of systemic changes within the secondary education, where we integrate tech/voc as early as Form 3 from what I have seen, from my research. What comments do you all have to make on that observation?

**Prof. Joseph:** Yeah, you are spot on and you are quite right. In order for tech/voc to have the kind of respectability that it should, greater attempts must be made to introduce tech/voc as a viable subject and I know that that happens at some level, because, I mean, there has always been tech/voc from

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Form 1, you know. But, again, I think the gap here is in training, or having adequately trained teachers at the secondary level to really implement a good tech/voc programme, right. And I think the Ministry of Education is aware of that, and I took a peep into their strategic plan and so for '22 to '27 and I think that is a very important item on the agenda.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well it is interesting you said that Prof. Joseph, I know Dr. Constance was going to comment on the perception issue earlier. I do not know if she wants to come in now before we go to member Beckles but member Nakhid makes a great point. And I will tell you, when I did my undergrad, my major is behavioural science and psychology, but part of what you have to do in Andrews, you had to do upholstery, electrical –

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** –you had to choose one to graduate. So there was –and I had a poor perception of it going into it and I loved it afterward I chose upholstery by the way

[*Laughter*] and you had to actually make something –

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** –or you could not graduate with your academic degree. So, member Nakhid makes a great point that if it is introduced in secondary school, you have a greater chance of having persons integrating it and deciding what I want to do this at tertiary level. I do not know if Dr. Constance wants to comment on that. And why is the education Ministry not making those linkages because you all could supply the teachers?

**Dr. Constance:** Yes, thank you Chair, and I would like to also underscore what member Nakhid is saying, because if we understand the perception is

there from childhood, and we are talking about at the home, we are talking about societal views. There is not a particular advertisement that targets children to say okay, this is a way, this is a particular path that you can probably take. So by the time they leave primary school, they are thinking, I want to be a lawyer, I want to be a doctor, I want to be a teacher, few children from the primary level if you ask them – in fact, if – you know, parents have a way of asking children, what do you want to be when you grow up? And the children say a doctor, lawyer – if that child says a plumber, what is the response from the parents?

**Mr. Chairman:** But if they understand that a plumber, a great plumber –

**Dr. Constance:** We understand.

**Mr. Chairman:** – is probably making more than 50 per cent of the attorneys in the country?

**Dr. Constance:** Yes, if they would understand and this is what we need to show them, and when we have well trained teachers at the secondary level and they start teaching now they need to also encourage students, show them that this is a viable option for the future, for your future, for the country. Because we are not just talking about individual development, we are talking about nationwide development. Right? And I think the Ministry of Education, we need to have some talks across the different areas, schools, society, business places, and we need to have a more collaborative approach to this because, I still think, yes, there are people out there who get it but there are not enough persons who get it and we started at the schools.

Now, the Ministry of Education does have what we call the criteria for assessment of qualifications for teaching at the tech/voc levels. We here at

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the UTT we are now trying to revisit that in the areas of electrical, engineering, mechanical engineering, technical drawing and drafting, food and nutrition, and fashion. Now, we are hoping that we can really get this programme off the ground. As we mentioned earlier, the same staff that we are using right now at the CEP for teacher training, this is the same staff that will be involved in the TVET teacher training also and same staff involved for everything. So, earlier when we spoke about funding, if you look at any top university in the world, if systems are to really run and go as we would have it go, we need that funding for labs, funding for teaching, funding for equipment. We also talking about time for research, because no university worth its salt just has people teaching without doing sound research. So, this is where we are sort of at the moment in a nutshell.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, and I am going to get to innovation in a while. Member Beckles, you had a question before I go back to member Nakhid?

**Ms. Beckles:** Quickly, I just wanted to ask on the issue of whether you are fairly satisfied about the issue of the accreditation, that we would be successful and the other one has to do with what sort of influences and data collection as it relates to this direction of tech/voc that member Nakhid asked? In other words, what are we doing to actually create greater influences in the minds of children about going in a particular direction? And what is the relationship between that and the Ministry of Education, so, when we collect the data, we can actually see whether or not you have some sort of transition that is actually taking place?

**Mr. Ali:** Okay, well, I can speak on the accreditation, in fact, we are very comfortable that we will be approved for at least for the next three years, in

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fact, that is normal operation period IT will give to any institution for the first time because we have all the documentation up to standard, we have all the labs and all the instruction facilities, we have qualification. So, we are pretty sure when you visit that they visit us in June, we will be approved for the next three years, yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid, you had other questions? You are muted.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Can you hear me now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Nakhid:** All right. Okay, before I go into the questions listed for MIC, I was I was looking at some of the budget allocations. And I was just interested because I have had a chance to visit some of these areas. So, I am looking at some of the budget allocations for the period 2021/2022, for infrastructural upgrades at COSTAATT, at some of the facilities. Have they been completed?

**Mr. Chairman:** Is this for UTT or MIC?

**Mr. Nakhid:** You assigned me MIC, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, all right. Well, we will have to introduce the members for MIC, so, I am going to ask you to pause on that question and just welcome, as a matter of housekeeping, the officials from Advanced Solutions Technical Institute, Dr. Ancil Peters, Ms. Leema Ramdeen and Ms. Nicola Humphrey. We will get to you in a short while.

Just before you go on to MIC member Nakhid, a couple issues came up when we were talking to UTT, especially regarding when member Mohit raised the issue of funding. And the question to UTT is—how much has GATE funding affected enrolment, if at all? Because we spoke about the

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funding for teachers, but GATE funding is also something that will impact enrolment, no doubt it has in other universities – has it impacted your institution, in terms of enrolment numbers?

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, well, yes, in the first iteration when funding was just stopped for, you know, there was a limitation on how many programmes you can take and I think that that impacted us. But, I think there is a revision there now where you can get funding for diploma as well as the bachelors, so, that is working well for us at the moment. So students know that they can articulate, they can move from the NATD into the bachelor's stream. Before that there was a panic amongst students and we started to see some negative outcomes there.

**Mr. Chairman:** How much would you say it affected your enrolment at that time?

**Prof. Joseph:** Well, we had an enrolment of close to 7,000 students, all right, 6 or 7,000, now we are hovering over just about 5,000. So there is some kind of impact, I cannot tell you the distribution.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, if it went from seven to five, that is not some kind of impact, that is a significant impact.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yeah, but you know, I just wanted to be a little granular, but I do have the data for the tech/voc, and how it impacts tech/voc.

**Mr. Chairman:** Understood, and how much collaboration just before I go to member Nakhid and introduce the members of MIC for the second round of questioning, how much collaboration is done with the Ministry of Planning, because the topic of this enquiry is the examination of the state of tech/voc, or TVET, and contribution to achieving developmental goals. There is a lot

of conversation about solar plant coming up. BP, Shell Lighthouse, I think, which is supposed to be the largest in the Caribbean, one. So, are you having those discussions with Ministry of Planning to start training people in solar plant, photovoltaics, repairs, installations, et cetera, because you cannot wait till it comes on stream and then look to train people afterwards? One, part one of the question, the world is moving digital, how much emphasis is being placed on software development, ICT training, networking, et cetera? Because that is also a burgeoning area in the world – any responses to those and are those conversations taking place in a timely manner to capitalize on what is coming in the country.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yes, absolutely. I know that the President has been very busy making those kinds of linkages and having those kinds of discussions and UTT is really involved in a couple of those energy-related projects. But I do know that we are at the – maybe, you know, maybe I should not advertise this yet, but you know, in terms of, cybersecurity and so on, we have actively started to make moves towards creating a Caribbean cyber institute, right. Now, that is still in the in the burgeoning stages, but is just to give you an example of how we are thinking ahead, and trying to see whether we can meet the needs of, you know, what is happening, what is trending currently.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, and finally, before we go to MIC. The issue of jobs for your graduates and the certification they get, I know, if I am not mistaken, they are CVQ rated, which means they can work throughout the Caribbean. Is that correct?

**Prof. Joseph:** Mr. Ali?

**Mr. Ali:** Yes, yes, yes, that is correct.

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**Mr. Chairman:** How much emphasis is placed on forming linkages between countries throughout the Caribbean? We see what is happening in Guyana presently, it is an economic explosion. Money is flowing in and out of Guyana very significantly and I would imagine that your graduates because of the nature of your institution, and the training you do, should be looking at Guyana and other countries like that, or you should be make any linkages for them, in terms of encouraging more enrolment, and looking at the prospects for employment across the region, through CMSC et cetera for your graduates, is that a conversation at all?

**Mr. Ali:** I will say yes, because right now we have a number of companies that communicate with UTT directly and say they are looking for graduates. In fact, there are about five companies right now who have sent us lists that they want so, we communicate with them, we recommend the graduates with our top graduates. So, we have a linkages with companies between UTT and for those students who graduate from the programme, so we have that, but as far as UTT finding jobs for them, I mean, that is the link we find then that we actually liaise with other companies to find jobs for our graduates there.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, thank you. The persons here from MIC are, Ms. Candice Austin, Mr. Ryan Deonarine and Dr. Victoria Cunningham. Member Nakhid is over to you and MIC.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Good morning, to you all.

**Ms. Austin:** Morning.

**Mr. Deonarine:** Morning.

**Dr. Cunningham:** Morning.

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**Mr. Nakhid:** Okay, well, we know this is a human development issue, primarily. But it is interesting, I was looking at some of the budget allocations so, before we get into those questions listed primarily on human development, I am looking at some of the funding just to ensure for the public's benefit, that everything has been up to mark as I am sure they have been. I am looking at some of the allocations, especially in terms of NESC, what has been listed here in 2021, .3 million; 2021, 7.8 million for upgrades and so forth, have these upgrades and purchase of infrastructure, have they been completed, fully optimized?

**Ms. Austin:** Well, we can speak to MIC's PSIP, and yes, our projects have been completed 100 per cent.

**Mr. Nakhid:** And I guess, later on, I can speak Chairman, to YTEPP and NESC and so forth, as to get that assurance that these budget allocations have been optimized?

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, they are not with us today, but we could certainly write them and ask them.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Okay, excellent, excellent. So as far as coming to what we are here for, which is the human development, the funding that each institution, well primarily MIC, is it sufficient you feel to fulfill your institution's mandate?

**Ms. Austin:** So in terms of funding, no, the short answer is no [*laughs*]. More funding is needed in terms of technological developments, and adapting to the growing demands of the industry. If we are training for the industry, we have to keep up with the industry, and the new technology that industry partners are utilizing in their machine shops.

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**Mr. Nakhid:** And of course, that increased allocation that you would ask for would involve some of the infrastructural upgrades and so that we just spoke about, correct?

**Ms. Austin:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Nakhid:** But that is why I asked you –

**Ms. Austin:** Mr. Deonarine has a comment.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Sorry, go on please.

**Mr. Deonarine:** If I may, we look at our history, you would see that some 10 years ago, MIC would have been operating around 20 centres throughout the country with on average between 3,000 to 5,000 trainees in any given year. Fast forward to today, and we operate 10 centres with around, we typically have between 1,000 to 1,200 students, full-time students at any given time, but more making up or part-time and short courses offerings. The reduction in funding has significantly impacted our reach within Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Well, I have noticed that your enrolment has decreased as has been stated before. So the question that will come if there has been additional allocations and you are still needing even more allocations, there seems to be somewhat of a disconnect there, you know. I do not know if you can help me with that, because your enrolment has decreased, there has been some upgrades and I asked you and you said that they were optimized, well optimized at MIC, and you said now that there is still more, there is more needed. Who exactly do you go to for that increase allocation, and how would you justify that?

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**Ms. Austin:** So for the increase allocation, we at MIC here we realized that we needed to innovate, and we needed to become less dependent on funding from the Government. So we have expanded into short course units and we have expanded into options where we can bring in funding for ourselves. But—

**Mr. Nakhid:** For example? For example? Tell us.

**Ms. Austin:** —expanding into the region. I know we be discussing making connections in the region as well. We have done some training in St. Maarten and St. Vincent's. We will tap into Guyana. We also did some training in Grenada as well. But going back to the numbers of the trainees remember we are unique because we have a wide variety of programmes and levels. So we have from level one to level four and each programme has different demands in terms of material and resources, equipment—

**Mr. Nakhid:** Of course, of course.

**Ms. Austin:** —and then we have the level one and level two, some of our programmes have stipends, which is a very hefty part of the budget as well.

**Dr. Cunningham:** If I may add [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Nakhid:** I cannot hear you at all.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are sounding very soft, I do not know if you are close to the mike or far from the microphone, or you could speak up just a bit please.

**Dr. Cunningham:** If I may add—is that better?

**Mr. Chairman:** Not much unfortunately.

**Dr. Cunningham:** [*Laughs*] Let me try—

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**Mr. Chairman:** Is it a microphone or camera situation that might be better?  
Yes.

**Dr. Cunningham:** See if you are hearing me much better now.

**Mr. Chairman:** We would try, go ahead please.

**Dr. Cunningham:** Let me change chairs. If I may add our level one and level two programmes and even higher programmes what—because we deal—our intake, we accept our students with 3 O’Levels, Maths, English and one other for our higher programmes, and we have to work with them. In other words, a lot of them now level one or level two may not come to us with anything. But we can try our people at sea we have to work with what we get from the secondary schools—

**Mr. Nakhid:** Of course.

**Dr. Cunningham:** —they come at us with a freight with a lot of social issues, and economic issues as well, so in order to treat with them, we have a stipend attached to our programmes to help them with their immediate needs. In addition to that, what we have done, we have we study, we recognize the problems we are having so what we have done, we have developed life skill curriculum that will cater for the needs of our students. So they focus on how help them develop their, you know, the socio-economic, the socio-psychological and socio-emotional issues. The reason for this is so that we can give them that support, so that they can get through their programmes successfully.

In addition to that, what we have been working on we get we have a placement unit that we have been working really hard to get our trainees placed within the industry. But remember, as I mentioned, by Ms Austin, we

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have different level programmes. So our level one, level two, that will cater for the lowest strata and then we have the level three and level four programme, these programmes are German-based and one of the philosophies behind this programme is that we have an apprenticeship-type programme. So it is not like other programmes that you all may be familiar with, maybe at UTT or so. So they come one year for a portion of training, and then we place them within an industry. And while, let us say for two years or so, they are working in the industry for three days, they come back to us and we continue the training for two days a week.

Now we have made such attempts because we recognize the needs of our students. But clearly, what we have seen, since I have started with MIC let say in 2018, the amount of centres in operation have decreased. I remember at one time when I came in, we had about 18 centres, I understand there were as much as 20 but right now we operating just 10 centres. Our student intake has reduced not because they do not want to come to us is because we cannot facilitate a large number. Because we have a stipend attached, we give them the free lunches and we try to get with the technology. So now with those who come into programmes, we give them a tablet so we can facilitate the online blended learning format. So we are trying as an institution but there is only so much we can do.

One of the issues that was mentioned before when we talk about industry now because of shortfall and funding, we have equipment, this equipment, they can be pretty expensive and some of them can be pretty outdated, but they work well in teaching students the basic concepts and the

basic skills and therefore, the only way we can actually compensate for introducing them to the newer technology we have to take advantage the replacement industry. So when they go out industry, they are more exposed as to what is happening out there. When they come back to us of course they might tell us what you have old, but nonetheless it works, it works. We introduced the basic concepts, and we training them for industry, so we let the industry –

**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Austin, just before Mr. Nakhid continues, could you give us a sense of for those looking and listening? What are the more popular programmes that are accessed at MIC? And what is the type of conversion because from what you indicated, you have a great apprenticeship programme with several industries. And what is it conversion from training to actually getting jobs with those locations that your students are able to apprentice with during the course of your training?

**Dr. Cunningham:** All right, I will pass that on to Mr. Deonarine.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Deonarine:** Typically we see a greater level of demand for our welding-based programmes –

**Mr. Nakhid:** Cannot hear you.

**Dr. Cunningham:** The positioning.

**Mr. Deonarine:** Is the positioning can you hear me better now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Deonarine:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Chairman:** We are hardly hearing you for some – whatever.

**Dr. Cunningham:** Is that corner [*laughs*].

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**Mr. Chairman:** This is quite interesting [*laughs*]

**Mr. Deonarine:** I do not know what is going on with that particular point yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, go ahead.

**Mr. Deonarine:** All right, sorry, apologies for that. So we see again, just to repeat higher levels of interest in welding programmes and electrical programmes, so typically across levels we will see greater enrollments and great applications in those areas from level one through level four. As noted by Ms. Austin in opening statements, as regards getting employment in those particular areas, we typically see in our trace of studies et cetera, persons would have completed level one and level two typically would be holding, some enter fully into the area. A lot of them hold down some full time jobs, be it in clerical areas, unrelated areas and utilize the skills that they have developed at level one and level two, to run a side business. And that was one of the driving factors between us developing our entrepreneurship programme and now introducing it from level one through level four, as well as, we currently partner with the NEDCO with our BizStart programme and help our trainees while they in training to develop their business plans, register their businesses, et cetera.

At level three and level four, we see the NSDP journeyman programme with placement, we do see a higher level of employment in the field. A lot of it driven by the fact that many of them are employed by the placement sites, following their training. So that that certainly contributes to where there is greater levels of employment in the field at the higher levels of study as compared to the lower levels of study.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Member Nakhid, go ahead please.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Thank you, Chair. Your representative said something that was very, very interesting and it is something that we do not approach in a holistic fashion in Trinidad and Tobago. She talked about people who come into the MIC programme with straightened circumstances, emotionally, psychologically, because we know the backgrounds that, unfortunately a lot of the people who come into the MIC programme. Have you reached out to any organizations that deal with mental illness with psychological support to help you with the students that come to you in such a state?

**Mr. Deonarine:** Certainly, if I may. So we have internally our guidance and counselling unit that is staffed with trained psychologists and counsellors, however, they do maintain open relationships with some of the national and smaller bodies, child line et cetera, should there be instances where our capacities are insufficient to deal with some of the issues and challenges that present themselves. Also, we have had instances where we have allowed or we have made arrangements for our trainees to be included in our employee assistance programme, so that they can receive that type of support as needed. So to respond to your question, yes, we do try to maintain those connections to these bodies. We absolutely need to.

**11.15 a.m.**

**Mr. Nakhid:** Okay. And then, this is just a follow-up. Do you maintain any kind of data, statistics and on especially those specific cases that could guide us going forward from a drafting policy?

**Mr. Deonarine:** Sure. So, we do have regular reporting, statistical data on the numbers of cases, as well the presenting issues. And that allows us – we

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use that data, currently, to guide the developmental intervention programmes. So, we would have our workshops, et cetera, for our trainees in those areas that are presenting, more frequently, and that is something that can certainly be provided.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Excellent. That will be excellent, Chair. If you can provide it to the Chair. I must, based on what you all have said – of course, I will do my research further – commend you all for working with what it seems like in very straightened circumstances – cutting of funding – and trying to navigate what must be a very, very, difficult area.

**Mr. Deonarine:** Certainly.

**Mr. Nakhid:** So, kudos, based on what you have said. Of course, I will do my research to verify. Have you provided for us the number of graduates from the period 2017 to 2022? Is that possible?

**Mr. Deonarine:** Certainly. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but they can be provided.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Excellent. As well as those that transitioned from your MIC training into actual employment. Would you have that as well?

**Mr. Deonarine:** Yes. We have results from our tracer studies. I believe we have tracer studies due this year. So the current results that we have may be a couple of years, and it is typically on a tri-annual basis.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid, it is just to give you an update. MIC would have provided to us: Enrolment 2014 and 2015, 4,904; graduates, 2,891; from '16 to '17, 3,680 enrolled; 2,290 graduated. So, there is some data available in your package.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Yes, that is why I asked – I saw that Chair – from 2017 to 2022.

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That has not been provided. Have you been able to identify exactly how many students were able to successful launch businesses after completing your skill-based programmes?

**Mr. Deonarine:** So, as it regards that, in our tracer studies, previously, we did monitor entrepreneurial activities. So, we have some data now. Our tracer studies, typically, have a response rate of around a third, one-third of the trainee population. So we cannot speak for the entire population, but we can extrapolate the data that we do have. With the implementation of our entrepreneurial programme, and our BizStart Programme, we are now more actively tracking. So, we should be able to, over the past couple of years, provide more detail into these specific businesses that have been launched and their activities.

**Mr. Nakhid:** So, let me be clear, you saying – let me, just to be clear, because your voice is very low, so sorry. I apologize if I am asking you something redundant. Just to be clear, are you saying that one-third of the students that graduate from your skill-based programmes, one-third of them launch their own businesses?

**Mr. Deonarine:** No, no, no. What I am saying is that when we conduct our tracer studies, which is the follow-up that we do with our graduates, the response rate that we get is about one-third.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Or.

**Mr. Deonarine:** Yeah. So, out of that one-third, we will be able to tell you how many are involved in entrepreneurial activity and we extrapolate it to the entire population. As I said, over the last couple of years, with the launch of our entrepreneurship, we are monitoring that activity a bit and working

more closely with our trainees. So, we should be going forward be able to provide a greater level of detail.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member Nakhid, we have time for one more question from you before we move on.

**Mr. Nakhid:** One more question? Okay. Then, obviously, the logical follow-up to that would be, other than the others – not taking into account that one-third that respond – that two-thirds that do not respond, is there any way to track if they are being employed? What has happened to them? Have they fallen out of the system?

**Mr. Deonarine:** We get a lot of – and this is really anecdotal, because we do not maintain a lot of partnerships with industry. So, we do get feedback from those partners in terms of they have some of our graduates. In addition to that, we still continue to try and reach out to those graduates that we have not been able to get into contact with over the past couple of years, particularly.

**Mr. Nakhid:** Stick a pin. Stick a pin right there. The reason I am asking, in the public's interest, is that out of those two-thirds that do not respond, the public would be interested to know, how many of them would have fallen by the wayside? How many of them, therefore, we would have to worry about, especially with the increase in crime rate that we have seen and so forth? So, in the public's interest, I am sure you will be concerned as well. I mean, is there any way that we can start to really find out and verify what happened to those people that we lose track of in the system?

**Mr. Deonarine:** I know that in addition to our attempts – we do emails, calls, et cetera – there have been, at a national level, the launched of the NTA

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TVET Research Council, and I am saying we would have worked with a national tracer study for TVET, in general, to kind of bolster with the institutions, because MIC would do our tracer studies as with the UTT, as with the NESO. To bolster that, there has been a national effort to help address all those gaps in the data. But, at this point, it is still work in progress, and we still have some challenges with that, getting in contact with some of our past trainees and getting them involved in conversations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Member Nakhid. Member Mohit, you had a follow question for MIC? You are muted.

**Ms. Mohit:** Asked and answered, Mr. Chair. My apologies.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Thank you. All right. Thank you to the officials from MIC. Just a question: do you institutions collaborate or do you think you are competing with each other?

**Mr. Deonarine:** We certainly collaborate. Right now, we have a collaboration with the UTT at their ECIAF location on the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme that is in partnership, of course, with MYDNS and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. As noted, I think by Prof. Joseph, we also collaborate to have our internal arrangement in place so that our instructors can be trained. And I know that there are certainly discussions around alignment of our lower-level programmes, with the Level 3 programmes with their degree programmes to allow our trainees to have that ability to matriculate. So, we collaborate.

**Mr. Chairman:** May I also add my commendations to your social intervention component of your programme, because I think it is highly commendable, and recognizing that the student catchment, because of the perception

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in some instances, naturally gravitate to these programmes and providing the intervention is extremely commendable and kudos to you also.

We would like to, at this time, introduce the officials from the Advanced Solutions Technical Institute, Dr. Ancil Peters, who is the Chief Executive Officer and the Academic Dean, Ms. Leema Ramdeen, Support Director and Ms. Nicola Humphrey, Recruitment Officer and Sales Executive. Dr. Peters, could you just give us a sense of the institution? What it is for those who may not know, so we get a sense of what we are dealing with here in terms of the general public, please?

**Dr. Peters:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and to the board, the panel.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is it that you cannot turn on your camera, at this time?

**Dr. Peters:** Yes. Let me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. All right.

**Dr. Peters:** Is it on?

**Mr. Chairman:** I would hope so. We are seeing you.

**Dr. Peters:** Allow me to say a lot of things that are being shared, it is very foreign to me, in the sense that I am the Chairman, and I am the owner of Advanced Solutions Technical Institution. We have been around for the past 20-something years, and we are what you call a hard-core technical institution. When everybody else was teaching – was, basically, not involved in TVET, we were involved in TVET.

Our foundation streams directly from the industry. We cover programmes in alternative energy, solar, data communication, fibre optics and wireless. I mean, some of the more hard-core programmes – IP cameras, all the major areas we cover in those particular areas as a vocational college. So,

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when there were institutions that were still teaching IT, we were basically in foundation in these particular areas. So, some of what is being taught now, we are way ahead of that particular area.

My facility is over 7,000 square feet of lab. My lab is bigger than my institution, the foundation of what—

**Mr. Chairman:** You are starting to sound like an advertisement now. So, we appreciate your acumen, your facilities, but give us a sense of your student body, what is your student's intake, et cetera.

**Dr. Peters:** We are pretty small. We are not just UTT, we are not as some of the MIC, large. My student body is large as 150 students. The numbers that you are calling is, we are nowhere in that range. For the year, I might have, at least, about 700 to 800 students. So, we are not in that league, in terms of some of the larger schools and what they are offering—some of the facilities that they are offering to students. Part of it, we offer yes, but we are nowhere in that range. But in terms of—

**Mr. Chairman:** Are your programmes GATE funded or are they privately funded?

**Dr. Peters:** Yes, we are registered with ACTT. We have, at least, about four of our programmes that are gated and we are privately funded. So, the majority of our training that we offer are privately.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, of the 700, 800 students, what are the more popular programmes that are being accessed at your institution?

**Dr. Peters:** Fibre security, wireless communication, photovoltaic, cellphone repairs, IP installation and robotics. These are some of the mainstream programmes.

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**Mr. Chairman:** So, you could be a division of UTT then?

**Dr. Peters:** UTT will not associate with us.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am just joking, Sir. I did not ask for that.

**Dr. Peters:** Yes, so we would not—

**Mr. Chairman:** And we are not here to compete, we are here to get information. So, why we invited you is to get a sense of if you think the sector is growing in Trinidad and Tobago at the rate it should, if you think TVET and tech/voc is becoming more prominent, and not a second choice for students in the country in terms of the development, the goals of the country. Because you have said that your institution has been around for 27 years, I think it is, or over 20 years. And what you see as the trends over the time your institution has been in existence? So, if you could give us a sense of how you see it has evolved and how you think we, as a country, are evolving with it based on the evolution of the world in tech/voc and technology, et cetera?

**Dr. Peters:** I think we have a long way to go; very, very, long way. While there is a lot of statistics being presented in terms of individual advancement, we have had to work with the level deficiency in these particular areas. Everybody talks TVET, at the end of the day, but TVET does not speak to industry. TVET has to be an integrated aspect of the industry. So, if I have to give my small percentage on this, Mr. Chairman, we have a long way to go in relation. The way we react to technology in our industry, we are very reactive to it. It is not something that comes to us from a sustainable standpoint. It is something that comes to us: “Hey, there is a demand here, so let us get involved in it. Hey, this is the trend now, so let us get involved in it.”

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Because of that approach to much of what we are doing, from a TVET level and from an academia level, there are a lot of gaps in our process. So, I will simply say that we have a long way –

**Mr. Chairman:** What do you think the main gaps are?

**Dr. Peters:** I think the academia is one of it. That whole process between the student articulating, what is required by the industry. I think people are more focused on numbers. I think people are more focused on the fact of how much people we can get in a class, and we give them some practical skills. But it is one thing to teach a student how to apply a screwdriver, but is to tell a student what is the purpose of that. That is some of the major problems we have.

Let me draw an example. We have a lot of people come out with different levels of certification, but when they come to Advanced Solutions, and we decide to take them through a photovoltaic training, just to basically install a panel, from a mathematical level they have problems, they struggle. A lot of students, they just want to focus on the practical skills. “Do not tell me the reasons why. Do not tell me the hows. Do not tell me the whens. Just tell me where this screw go, where that go, where this go.” And much of the TVET formulation that we have today is geared towards that direction. So, yes, we have some serious issues.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, you are saying that you think there are curriculum issues? Is that the sentiment?

**Dr. Peters:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the level that your students come in at? Because

you mentioned they come in not understanding, I guess the theoretical aspect. They are taught, in your opinion, the practical aspect. Now, I see Mr. Ali and Dr. Constance and Prof. the intensity in their eyes is palpable. When they come to you institution, do they come as teenagers? Do they come trained from other institutions and you will see gaps? Walk us through why you are saying what you are saying.

**Dr. Peters:** No problem. The teenagers are easy to handle to deal with, because we are able to take them through the process. When some of them come from the other institutions, and we have to take them through some of our – let us say they come with a Level 1 or a Level 2 and we have to take them to a Level 3, it is very difficult from an academia level. To do a basic sentence, they cannot even construct it. To do a basic essay, there are some major, major, major –

**Mr. Chairman:** I would tell you, Sir, I lecture at university, and that is not exclusive to TVET. Okay? So that is not about UTT or MIC. There are engineering –

**Dr. Peters:** No, no.

**Mr. Chairman:** – medical, law students who cannot write an essay. It is not exclusive. It is a function of parts of the secondary school system and, in some instances, the background of the students. So let us not typecast here.

**Dr. Peters:** No, no, no. The question that you asked me is just to share. I did not say UTT, I did not say MIC. I am talking no school. I am just talking on the whole, the average concerns that we have. So, at the end of day, I will simply say that there is so much. I mean, I am hearing everything that you all are saying here, but in reality when you begin to look at the job market,

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and you begin to look at what is being placed out there, we are in some serious trouble. And GATE funding is a whole different issue by itself. That has its cohorts; that has its place where it can help a student, but it has done a lot of damage too.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think member Beckles has a question, if I am not mistaken. Member Beckles did your hand remain up by mistake or do you have a question?

So, give us a sense then—yeah, go ahead member Beckles, please.

**Ms. Beckles:** Are you hearing me?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes we are. Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Beckles:** Okay. So, I mean, I have been listening to the discourse and it sounds a little like, we need to have a little bit more collaboration and ironing out. At the end of the day, I am fairly satisfied, from listening today, that we are all on the same page as it relates to the country, the education. We know that there are some challenges, but I have listened to the data collection, the policy, and it is how we are always mindful that, yes, we may have challenges and we may have conflicts and it is how—and I mean, part of doing this session today is to allow for that kind of interaction and discourse. And, at the end of day, it is always a willingness to allow people to hear, you know, different perspectives, different views, so that this session, I think, allows us to move forward a little.

And I am quite satisfied, Chairman, that the objective of the exercise and what you have been doing today, and I just want to join with you to say

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that I, too, I am quite happy to hear, especially as it relates to issues of challenges, mental and how that is working out, because sometimes we ignore that. But COVID has shown us that really that is so critical. So, I want to join with you in the congratulations as well for that kind of work that has been done. But, most important to talk about the importance of willingness for us to collaborate, to hear each other's point of view and to realize that we are all, I think, genuinely concerned about the direction of Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to tech/voc and other education. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, member Beckles. Dr. Ali, sorry, Dr. Peters, I see you have your Support Director with us, Ms. Ramdeen. Give us a sense of what her role is and if she could tell us what kind of support that you have found productive in your establishment and what the response has been to that kind of support? Or, she is not on?

**Dr. Peters:** I do not think she is here, at this point in time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Well, you probably could answer on her behalf, if you can, what does a Support Director in your institution do and how do you think that is important in terms of getting your cohort intake to the levels you want both socially and academically and practically?

**Dr. Peters:** I think the Support Director at our institution more works from the standpoint of the ground up in relation to the vision of the institution, supporting and as a second marker. She is not directly in the recruitment of the such, but more works directly with the directors themselves. So, I would not be able to speak for her on that level, but tell you just as much, she is not

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involved in the recruitment process. She more deals directly with the support of the vision that each department and directors facilitate at different levels. That is what she does.

**Mr. Chairman:** Given where you see the country is now, and your concerns that you articulated earlier on, what would you think would make a significant shift in one, the mindset of the people to TVET? Because the Parliament Secretariat was able to do a focus group before this interface and some of the – you may have logged on later on when we presented that – issues that came up, the primary issues that came up, were one: there was a deficit of programmes to older persons suggesting that may be many of the programmes are targeted to younger people, but persons who may be at a stage in their life where they want to learn a skill or shift careers are not being accommodated for; two, there is a deficit or, in some instances, an absence of adequate business training. So, when you get a skill, it is one thing, but to start a business or to be entrepreneurial with that skill is something else and; three, the marketing and awareness programmes for these types of programmes were some of the main issues that came up in that focus group. What are your thoughts on that and do you think that your institution is providing those solutions one, and the general space dealing with those? How is the general space dealing with those?

**Dr. Peters:** I agree with the concerns with the panel, which is true that we, in some way or the other, make our contribution in this particular area to be able to aid in these particular areas and assist. I think that there is a greater need for more collaborations. So, I think there is a greater for more in-depth consultation, not just from the higher schools, but smaller schools like us.

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We have a lot to say and we have a lot to share, and I think that from that standpoint, I think that much can be done in that area. But the other areas, I think, I agree with you and I think that we have done our part to be able to facilitate those areas as much as possible as we can.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Prof. Joseph, how do you feel about what Dr. Peters has said in terms of his hope for more collaboration between the institutions? Because, at the end of day, as member Beckles said, we all have the same vision – training people, getting people integrated into society in a more productive way, intervening where there are social issues and other issues, so that there is a social aspect to this; there is an academic aspect to this; there is a practical aspect to this, but there is also a developmental aspect to this personally and nationally.

**Prof. Joseph:** Absolutely. We are quite open at UTT to collaboration. You know, as you heard before, we have been talking to MIC, we have collaborated with NESAC. But, you know, and we welcome any kind of collaboration from the private institutions. All right? And we have skills, we have expertise that we could share and we can learn as well from the private institutions. I know that we have a very strong link with our industry partners as well in certain areas, and we can extend that to some of the private institutions, if you are interested.

In the area of curriculum, I think that came up in our discussion, we can offer, you know, quite a lot help in terms of curriculum development, directions and so on, because there are some areas, there are, you know, expertise. There is expertise at UTT in that area as well. So we are here ready and open to collaborate.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Ms. Austin from MIC, your response to what Dr. Peters has said in terms of, in his opinion, the requirement for more collaboration— because, at the end of the day, sometimes the element of competition can be good, but it can also be— if it is not strategic, it can also not be as productive as we want it.

**Ms. Austin:** That is true. And we, just like UTT, are willing to collaborate and continue in the collaborative discussions in taking tech/voc forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** You all have me feeling like Oprah here now, bringing you together. [*Laughter*] Anyway, we are closing in now. You know, one of the issues that I think we need discuss, and I would start with Dr. Peters on this is, if there has been a job market assessment for persons who are interested, who can be enticed into being interested, and that it can sustain the level of graduates that all new institutions and also YTEPP and others that may not be with us today, in the way that it moves the country forward strategically, and supply us the need for the country.

When you think of the manufacturing sector that is growing, when you look at the model that Germany employed 25, 30 years ago, where they moved TVET and Tech-Voc from the perceptions that exist in Trinidad and Tobago to a primary interest area for 10, 15 year-olds and what it has done for the Germany economy in terms of their manufacturing sector— Dr. Peters, why are you shaking your head?

**Dr. Peters:** No, I am listening to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question is, what will it take for us to make that paradigm shift?

**Dr. Peters:** Well I tend to agree with you.

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**Mr. Chairman:** Well, it is one thing to opine and seem frustrated. It is a completely different thing to add solution and have a discussion or discourse on the way forward.

**Dr. Peters:** All right. I tend to agree with you in the sense that before you even seek to get registration or introduce a programme, as you would know being part of ACTT, you have to be able to do a needs analysis first to see if that programme there is a demand for it on the local market, and that has to be justified by a panel by ACTT and otherwise external neutral groups on the outside. So, yes, if I am implementing a programme, I will do my needs analysis, check the industry, what the demand is in that area; if there is a demand at all; what are some of the marketing areas I am going to look at how; how I am going to gather the students. Yes, that is very, very, important to any process or to any recruitment process. So, I agree with you.

**Mr. Chairman:** But, has your institution been able to access information or get the information on that needs analysis in terms of a job market assessment for the market in Trinidad and Tobago for Tech-Voc specialist areas? And I will transfer that question to Prof. Joseph or Mr. Ali or Dr. Constance or the persons at MIC. Because if we do not know the size of the market, not only locally, but Caribbean-wide, which is to me another job market, how are we going to chart the way forward in terms of what needs to be trained? Who needs to be trained? What are the areas where we need to increase training? What are the areas we need to reduce training? Or we can have like the attorneys in Trinidad and Tobago with too many attorneys or too many this or too many that, and not serving the needs of the developmental goals of the country. So, I would start with you Dr. Peters and then after go

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to Prof. Joseph and the others.

**Dr. Peters:** And that exactly what you are saying there, Mr. Chairman, is the problem. Exactly, what you are saying there, and that is one of the reasons why that pool that you are talking about there, we do not have access to it, as much of it. We just do to the best that we can do from a local standpoint, but we do not have that type of data where we can have that level of exposure to know exactly what needs to be done or what we can put out there. If that is available, we would gladly be able to work with the interest groups that are there to be able to assist us in that area. But the answer is no, we do not have that excessive pool.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Prof. Joseph or Dr. Constance, do you think that data exists? Has it been done, that kind of survey?

**Prof. Joseph:** We do have some insights regarding some of those needs as far as the Ministry of Education is concerned. We are aware that the tech/voc teachers, many of them have been retiring and there is this gap in terms of getting new young tech/voc teachers, you know, and the problem really is with training.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** But you are speaking about the teachers –

**Prof. Joseph:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** – I am referring here to the market for the jobs specifically.

**Prof. Joseph:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Because it is one thing to have teachers and train people but if you do not know what the market is you could be training in a vacuum.

**Prof. Joseph:** Right. Yeah. I think we do not have that kind of information, you

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know. I agree that we do need to have better research, market studies, and so on, and so we are just simply working from anecdotal information, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that not interesting that we are—before us, academic institutions that are supposed to be, as Dr. Constance said, research-based, data-driven but we lack basic market research information. Ms. Austin, do you have that kind of information or has it been—is it available?

**Dr. Cunningham:** I would speak to that. What we do have to—based on our experience, what we have done within the last year, we at MIC capitalized on some research that was done between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the TTMA, and based on their findings they were looking for persons, you know, to fill the gaps that they found within the manufacturing sector and that led to much collaboration; that led to the launch of a new programme at MIC. What we did, we took our existing journeyman programme, and within the curriculum unit—it is a hybrid programme and we tinkered with it some in order to fulfil the needs of the manufacturing sector. And currently, we have almost one year now, the Mechatronics diploma programme, journeyman programme that will be certified by the German Institute, and therefore we are using what we have what is out there.

So while we may not have the full capacity to go out there and get all that data, we are capitalizing on what other Ministries have done. We were also able to start a woodworking apprenticeship programme and that started late 2022 based on the very same data, and we have a full complement of trainees in those programmes. We provide a stipend for them and within a short space of time we are collaborating with our industry partners that are

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our sponsors in order for them to find placing within the working industry.  
So—

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. It just dawned on me that we have a vital resource here that I have not addressed, and she is not a stakeholder perhaps but she is part of the Committee. Member Beckles is the Ministry of Planning and Development, if I not mistaken; member Beckles, I am sorry to put you on the spot. [*Laughs*] I do not know if she is with us or in a meeting, but, I mean, if she is with us the Ministry of Planning and Development may have that information; I do not know, or— [*Chairman confers with Secretary* ]—or not. Well, certainly she has not responded so—you know, but to me one of the issues we are clearly dealing with here is, because I am looking at the data as supplied by each of the institutions—member Beckles is with us—the question—

**Ms. Beckles:** Yeah, I am here.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question that came up—

**Ms. Beckles:** I got the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question—

**Ms. Beckles:** So what I would do—I do not think I could give you the answer right away, but what I would do is to commit to getting some information from the Ministry so that I can submit.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Because what dawned on me, the enquiry title is about the developmental goals of Trinidad and Tobago—

**Ms. Beckles:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:**—so there must be some sort of strategic approach to this and what the market is projected to need in the next—in the short, medium and

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long-term. So that the institutions can align their programmes and train persons to fulfil that sort of need in a data-driven way.

**Ms. Beckles:** Yeah. So what I will do, I would liaise with the CSO, but I would agree with you that—I mean, one of the things we are trying to focus a lot more in the Ministry of Planning and Development is what you call, real-time data, and that alignment of which you speak, because clearly it is not just a question of asking the institutions but what we can provide, what we can share. The CSO now is providing a lot more information, a lot more real-time data, so we would be in a position; I would make the request and forward to you, Mr. Chairman,

**Mr. Chairman:** Much appreciated.

**Mrs. Beckles:** So you can share it with the respective institutions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. We are looking to a 12.00 noon close today because there is a sitting of the House of Representatives coming up so we need to clear some way for that. So what I am going to do at this point is invite the heads of the delegations to deliver their closing comments, unless there is a question from any of the members at this point, member Nakhid, member Beckles, member Mohit, or anyone else, who may have a question to the panel, just quickly. If not, I can go to Prof. Joseph of UTT to deliver closing comments or requests. And also, I will just like to advise, any additional information any of you may have, you can submit it to our Secretariat in writing. We would appreciate it greatly. So let us go to Prof. Joseph at this, please.

**Prof. Joseph:** Yeah. Thank you. I think that, clearly, we need to establish or develop a TVET mindset very early, maybe at the level of the primary school. I think my colleague, Dr. Constance, alluded to that, and if we are to do that then we need

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to revise the teacher education programme to include courses in entrepreneurial studies and so on. We have already started that in anticipation at UTT where everybody who enters must do an introduction to entrepreneurial studies. I am saying, the idea of a greater focus—we need to do our part, and we are prepared to do our part in creating this mindset which I feel should begin from the primary school level if we are to change the whole perception of what TVET is about, you know, in our country.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. Can we go to Ms. Austin from MIC?

**Ms. Austin:** Thank you. So we just want to say thanks for the opportunity today and we look forward to continue collaborating with the other stakeholders. We know that the sector is growing and we would continue to be aligned to the needs of the country and adapting and attending to the needs of the citizenry in terms of the trainees that come into our programmes, you know. Even though with limited resources, we know increased funding would assist but we would still, you know, go the avenue of addressing the entrepreneurial gap. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much. I was going to cue to—is Dr. Peters still with us? Ms. Humphrey, would you like to deliver closing comments on behalf of the Advanced Solutions Technical Institute?

**Ms. Humphrey:** Sure. Are you hearing me?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, we are. Go ahead, please. Thank you for joining us.

**Ms. Humphrey:** Yes. Thank you for having us. First of all, some of the things that stood out to me listening is, and I am leaving with, in the area of collaboration and real-time data, are the two main things that stand out greatly in getting us to that place of development for our citizens to take them from one place to a next. So, thank you very much for this forum, and

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I hope it is something that we will have again soon in spite of Carnival, but hoping it is something that we will have soon again. So thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of those that were able to be present. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you so much, Ms. Humphrey. I think Carnival is a wonderful Tech/Voc area also, so it is not in spite of Carnival. [*Laughs*]

**Ms. Humphrey:** [*Inaudible*] – in a sense. [*Laughs*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Carnival is a wide area for tech/voc to flourish and enjoy ourselves within the ambits of the law. We would like to thank the officials from MIC Institute of Technology, the University of Trinidad and Tobago and from the Advanced Solutions Technical Institute. I would also like to thank the Committee members for being with us. Just as a matter of house-keeping, the public is advised that the Fourth Report of the Committee on the Enquiry into the Mental Health and Psychosocial Services available to the population during the COVID-19 pandemic, with specific focus on measures to curb substance abuse and suicide was presented in the House of Representatives on April 22, 2022, and in the Senate on April 26, 2022. The report is posted on the Parliament's website, [www.ttparliament.org](http://www.ttparliament.org), where it can be reviewed and/or downloaded.

Once again, we would like to thank all the stakeholders who took time to be with us today. You are advised also, if you have additional information that you wish to supply to the Secretariat to the Committee, to do so to the Secretariat in writing; we would appreciate that, and the Committee members for their continued support and participation, the staff and Office of the Parliament for your procedural and logistical support, and to the viewing and listening audience. On behalf of the Committee, I thank you for viewing

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and wish you a wonderful and safe afternoon. Have a great day.

**11:54 a.m.:** *Meeting adjourned.*

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