



Summary of Proceedings

Public Hearing

Held on **Friday February 3, 2023** from **10:17 a.m. to 11:54 a.m.**

Subject matter: Examination of the state of Tech/Voc education programmes and their contribution to the development goals of Trinidad and Tobago, with the following specific objectives:

1. Examination of the scope and quality of TVET programmes available in Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Assessment of whether TVET programmes are aligned to meet national developmental goals.
3. Evaluation of the strategies and methods that are being adopted by the state to sustain and promote the enrolment of young persons in TVET programmes.

Venue: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Committee Members

The following Committee Members were present:

- Mr. Paul Richards
- Mr. Avinash Singh
- Ms. Vandana Mohit
- Mr. David Nakhid
- Ms. Penelope Beckles

The following Committee Members were excused:

- Mr. Roger Munroe, MP
- Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
- Mr. Rohan Sinanan, MP

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the **MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT)** appeared:

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

The following officials of the **University of Trinidad And Tobago (UTT)** appeared:

- **Professor 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

The following officials of the **Advanced Solutions Technical Institute** appeared:

- **Dr. Ancil Peters**
Chief Executive Officer/ Academic Dean
- **Ms. Nicola Humphrey**
Recruitment Officer – Sales Executive

Key Issues Discussed

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

Curriculum

- i. MIC has inherited programmes from both John D. and the MUST Programme
- ii. MIC has added a life skills component to their curriculum to assist with supporting the socio-economic, psycho-social and socio-emotional issues faced by students.
- iii. 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 is supplemented by work in their given fields.
- iv. There is a high level of interest in both electrical and welding programmes
- v. 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.
- vi. There are discussions taking place with UTT to align the lower level programmes with degree programmes that will allow for seamless matriculation.

Facilities and Funding

- i. All projects falling under MIC's PSIP have been 100% completed
- ii. Funding received is not sufficient to fulfil the institution's mandate. More funding is needed in the areas of technological developments, infrastructural improvements and adapting to the growing demands of the industry.
- iii. 10 years ago, MIC operated 20 centres with an average of 3,000-5,000 trainees per year. Currently, they operate 10 centres with an average of 1,000-1,200 trainees per year. The reduction in funding has significantly impacted its reach within Trinidad and Tobago.
- iv. MIC has sought to offer training in other Caribbean countries as a means of supplementing funding received from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
- v. The stipend attached to the programme is essential in helping students to meet immediate costs associated with attending the programmes.
- vi. In addition to the stipend offered, MIC provides free lunches and tablets to facilitate blended learning.
- vii. Demand for programmes is high but the funding available is not enough to cover the large number of students who are interested in MIC's programmes.

Employment and employability

- i. Many MIC graduates are not working in the fields that they studied. However, research has not been conducted to find out why.

- ii. MIC has introduced an entrepreneurship programme, which is available to all students, regardless of their level. They currently partner 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

- i. UTT plays a very important role in TVET, particularly in the area of teacher education training.
- ii. Some of the TVET programmes offered at UTT include chemical engineering, electrical engineering, fashion and food technology.
- iii. UTT has trained teachers who teach tech/voc in the secondary schools.
- iv. UTT has developed a partnership with MIC where those who complete 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
- v. The National Engineering Technician Diploma in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering is the most pursued TVET programme at UTT due to the ready market for jobs in the field.
- vi. New students are now required to enrol in an introduction to entrepreneurial studies course.

Marketing of TVET

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

Challenges Faced

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

Employment Prospects

- i. UTT has linkages with companies that ask for recommendations of graduates in particular fields for various vacancies.

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

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

This public hearing can be viewed on demand via our YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEgKp4AEkhg&list=PL-SY0ndJDfa5LAYQn79awq-7kflN3BqX6&index=13>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

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Committees Unit

March 10, 2021.