



Summary of Proceedings

Public Hearing

Held on **Wednesday, November 16, 2022** from **10:15 a.m. to 12:02 p.m.**

Subject matter: Examination of the state of technical and vocational education programmes and their contribution to the development goals of Trinidad and Tobago, with the following 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. Roger Munroe, MP
- Ms. Vandana Mohit, MP
- Mr. David Nakhid
- Mr. Rohan Sinanan

The following Committee Members were excused:

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

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the **Ministry of Education** appeared:

- 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

The following officials of the **Ministry of Youth Development and National Service** appeared:

- Mr. Farook Hosein Permanent Secretary
- Major David Benjamin Director, Specialised Youth Service Programme (SYSP)
- Mr. Sean Ramrattan Director, Youth Affairs Division
- Ms. Jenine Benjamin Project Monitoring Coordinator, Project Management Unit

Key Issues Discussed

The main issues arising from discussions with officials of the **Ministry of Education (MOE)** are recorded below.

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.

This public hearing can be viewed on demand via our YouTube Channel or accessed from the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwtJzQ2d6YA&list=PL-SY0ndJDfa5LAYQn79awq-7kflN3BqX6&index=12>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

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Committees Unit

November 28, 2022.