



# FROM PREJUDICE TO PRESTIGE: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GHANA



June 2011

In partnership with:

**COTVET**  
COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL AND  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING





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DEVELOPMENT

# FROM PREJUDICE TO PRESTIGE: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GHANA

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**On behalf of City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development, and the  
Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Ghana**

June 2011

# ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

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## The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), Ghana

The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) was established by the Government of Ghana through an Act of Parliament in 2006. The Act mandated COTVET to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of technical and vocational education and training in the country.

To achieve its objective the Council is mandated to:

- formulate national policies for skills development across the broad spectrum of pre-tertiary and tertiary education – formal, informal and non-formal;
- co-ordinate, harmonise and supervise the activities of private and public providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), including the informal sector;
- rationalise the assessment and certification system;
- take measures to ensure quality in delivery of, and equity in access to, TVET;
- maintain a national database on technical and vocational education and training;
- facilitate research and development;
- source funding to support TVET activities;
- facilitate collaboration between training providers and industry to promote demand-driven curriculum development and placement, and national internship programmes;
- promote co-operation with international agencies and development partners;
- issue annual reports on the state of skills development in the country; and
- advise the Government on all matters related to the management and improvement of the TVET system.

For more information on COTVET, please visit [www.cotvet.org](http://www.cotvet.org)

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# FOREWORD

The vocational training system in Ghana has long suffered from low levels of esteem and negative stereotyping. This is despite the prominent role that vocational training has played in the development of human capital throughout the economy. There remains a belief that those possessing the requisite academic ability will go on to pursue higher education and only those that either can't achieve academically, or simply cannot afford the costs of senior high school will enter into vocational education and training.

These negative perceptions of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector are limiting the career opportunities available to Ghanaian youth. TVET related jobs have the capacity to absorb large numbers of young people, in the formal sector, in enterprises and for self-employment in the informal sector. Without a coordinated approach to improving the position of TVET in the national economy, these young people will continue to find themselves without the chances to develop sufficient livelihood opportunities.

The Government of Ghana has recognised this issue through the establishment of the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET). COTVET has the responsibility of formulating policies to improve the quality, relevance and perception of vocational education and training across Ghana. This is a crucial change and one which, alongside the new Skills Development Fund, offers hope for the growth and development of the sector.

City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development worked with COTVET to carry out this research because we both recognise the inherent value of vocational education and training for social and economic development and the key role it must play in the ongoing development and competitiveness of the Ghanaian economy. In order for the recent policy changes to have the desired impact there is a need for COTVET to develop a firm understanding of the issues affecting those engaged with vocational training. This research provides a valuable insight into these issues, highlighting some of the positive elements of the existing system but also some stark challenges and misrepresentations which, if left unaddressed, will be a severe constraint to unleashing the talent of Ghana's youth and driving positive change in the future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Grist".

**Nick Grist**  
Head of City & Guilds Centre  
for Skills Development



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Baffour-Awuah".

**Dan Baffour-Awuah**  
Executive Director, COTVET

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays a key role in Ghana's economic and social development. Higher skills levels are required to boost productivity, underpin economic growth, and create opportunities for individuals. TVET is, however, poorly perceived in Ghana, often being seen as the reserve option for those unable to achieve the grades to enter into higher education. This has traditionally limited the numbers of young people going into vocational training, the funding for the sector and the quality of provision. Unless TVET begins to be seen as the important component of economic and social development that it is, a lack of skills will ultimately have serious consequences for Ghana's economy. It is crucial, therefore, to understand the nature and dimensions of attitudes towards and perceptions of vocational education and training in Ghana, in order to develop interventions that will enhance TVET delivery, acceptance and market worth.

With these issues in mind, the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (UK) and the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET – Ghana) approached the Centre for Social Policy Studies from the University of Ghana to conduct this research. The report explores the attitudes of key stakeholders, including learners, graduates, employers, trainers, parents and policy makers, towards TVET in Ghana and provides recommendations for policy makers to attempt to address some of the key issues facing the sector.

## Key conclusions

1. There is a widely held perception in Ghana that only people who are academically weak undertake technical and vocational education. A significant proportion of current TVET trainees, particularly in the informal sector (primarily apprenticeships), are therefore labelled as school dropouts, which impacts on the self esteem and external perceptions of trainees' abilities.
2. Within the informal sector, master craftspersons did not indicate any significant difference in the ability to take up new technical skills between trainees from different educational backgrounds. There was, however, consensus that some level of formal education (literacy and numeracy) is essential for trainees to learn effectively and take up new skills. The required levels of support for developing basic literacy and numeracy for those that were unable to complete formal education are not currently in place.
3. Evidence from parents, policy makers and in some cases trainees themselves suggests that vocational education is perceived to have a poor rate of return. This stems from the fact that those who enter into vocational education and training in Ghana are more likely to be poor. A high percentage of trainees surveyed came from poor homes, where their parents could not afford to send them into higher education. This trend was even more marked for informal trainees. The stakeholders surveyed often said that vocational training is meant for those who cannot afford formal 'grammar' education. There was also a clear assumption that to gain a well-paid and highly regarded job, you need to go through academic routes.
4. A significant number of respondents (trainees, trainers and parents) believed that there are limited employment opportunities for people who undergo vocational and technical education. Some trainees were sceptical about the employment prospects presented by TVET, pointing to a widening gap between the supply of graduates from TVET programmes and the demand from employers.
5. Significantly, some trades such as hairdressing have become stigmatised because they are seen to be associated with other anti-social trades. They consequently struggle to attract the strongest students, and the value of these trades in society is downplayed. This is particularly unfortunate as these trades have the potential to absorb large numbers of young people.





6. Respondents highlighted the volatility of income from vocational and technical skills related jobs. Some trades were seasonal, and the income flow from them tended to be unpredictable, making them less attractive as livelihood options.
7. Many young people, particularly in informal training, were sceptical about the quality of the training they received. Some felt that master craftsmen hid valuable skills from them. These differences between trainers' provision has an impact on the comparability of trainees and therefore their options for further training and opportunities with other employers. Improving the quality and standardisation of informal training is a key concern and needs to be addressed if the sector is to be rejuvenated.
8. Meeting employers' expectations was a major challenge for TVET graduates. Employers generally saw the value of TVET graduates to their business and were positive with regard to the applicability of the skills they had. Despite these positive attitudes towards TVET graduates, employers nonetheless felt that graduates did not show a sufficient level of professionalism towards their work. Employers from both the formal and informal sectors appeared frustrated that most new graduates struggle to work on their own without supervision and lack basic employability skills.
9. Informal employers complained about a decline in proficiency standards over the years among TVET recruits who had undergone informal vocational training. Many of them were sceptical about the capabilities of future employees, especially those from the informal sector. These employers indicated that they had difficulty securing evidence of competence from informal TVET trainees. This has an impact on the marketability of acquired skills and may be contributing to weak employment opportunities for informal trainees.
10. Young people need career counselling to help them weigh up the options open to them and choose pathways that are relevant to them. However, guidance and counselling for trainees was mostly informal and uncoordinated. Parents, peers and sometimes trainers were sources of guidance and focused on conduct and behaviour during training, rather than discussing future options, prospects and alternatives.
11. There are indications of a previously unfavourable policy environment for developing TVET. Past policies gave prominence to formal grammar education and higher education, to the neglect of skills training. While this report recognises the steps made by the current administration to begin to mainstream TVET in the policy debate, the esteem of vocational training, the quality of training, and ongoing support after training are still problems and must be addressed. These issues have culminated in the existing system which has limited progression routes for TVET graduates from both formal and informal training.

## The way forward – recommendations

It is imperative that COTVET and its allied agencies take steps to address the issue of negative attitudes and perceptions through programmes to enhance the image of TVET. To ensure effectiveness, any campaign should coincide with programmes to improve the quality of training provision. Policy issues, including support for learners during and after training, the quality of training provision and funding for the sector, must also be resolved. It is also crucial to develop a coordinated structure and system for guidance and counselling for young people in TVET.

In addition, in the informal sector, master craftsmen are a critical mass whose capacities can be harnessed for effective delivery of TVET training. Their ability to deliver training could be enhanced through programmes to improve their pedagogical skills. This section lists the five key recommendations which emerged from the research.

### CONDUCT A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS OF TVET

Negative attitudes and perceptions greatly obscure the gains from TVET for young people. It is important that an image-enhancing project is initiated as part of COTVET's strategy. The campaign should promote vocational pathways as viable education options for young people, alongside higher education. COTVET could consider collaborating with the Department of Information to implement the campaign. It is also important to give young people access to vocational training at an early age to improve their understanding of training pathways and possible careers. With this in mind, options such as taster days for school children to go to training institutes and workshops could be adopted as part of a promotional strategy.

Any campaign aiming to improve the image of TVET must be targeted directly at the stakeholders it wishes to influence, particularly parents, who are the key providers of careers advice, and young people. The campaign should focus on sectors where the financial and career benefits of pursuing a TVET-related career are clear. In addition, it is essential to target those trades that are socially stigmatised, such as hairdressing, beauty therapy and auto-mechanics, because they have the potential to absorb high numbers of young people.



### DEVELOP THE CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SYSTEM

Careers guidance and counselling are important for providing relevant pathways to young people. It is recommended that COTVET takes steps to re-introduce guidance and counselling co-ordinators into both formal and informal training systems. COTVET will need to collaborate with the Ghana Education Service to optimise current and future provision, develop a careers guidance framework and improve transferability between different learning pathways.

There is also a need to train teachers to ensure that they are able to understand and communicate the different options open to young people, as well as information about where these options may lead and employers' workplace expectations. Improved labour market information will enhance the ability of advisors to understand where opportunities lie within the labour market and is a key requirement to improve the supply and demand of skills.

## EXPAND THE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE PLATFORMS FOR TVET

There has been an appreciable attempt to introduce policies to enhance the TVET system through the initiation of COTVET. There is, however, a need to align the TVET policies framework with other supportive policy, such as small business development. Policies that address funding difficulties for the informal sector, particularly support for trainees, are desirable. The proposed Government support for the first year of training for traditional apprenticeships is laudable but could be expanded to include support for young graduates who need to set up workshops.

The issue of credit for start-up capital for graduates is important to enhance self-employment opportunities, which is a key aim of the existing TVET system. The Government could therefore consider integrating the skills development fund with credit provision to micro- and small enterprise establishment.

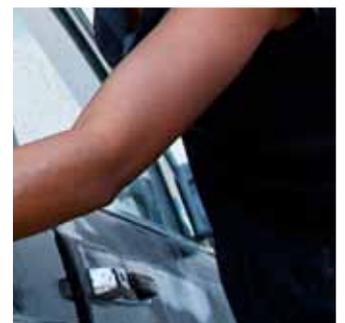
## CAPACITY TRAINING FOR MASTER CRAFTSPERSONS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED

Master craftspersons constitute a critical mass of professionals whose potential can be harnessed to enhance the quality of TVET training. There are inconsistencies in training arrangements from one trainer to another, with varied teaching methods. It is recommended that the issue of standardisation be given greater attention, and the training capacity of master craftspersons developed so that they can provide quality training with relevant curricula and improved pedagogy. This would serve to improve the marketability of skills and enhance comparability between trainees. A supporting structure would need to be put in place to ensure that trainers are able to gain access to the required information and knowledge in the long term, as well as ongoing support.

There is also a need for further research into good practice in terms of developing a training system for informal trainers, to identify what has worked in different locations. Primarily this research needs to identify approaches which have been able to integrate master craftspersons into a more formalised system of learning with structured improvements in pedagogical ability, whilst also retaining the current benefits of the informal system.

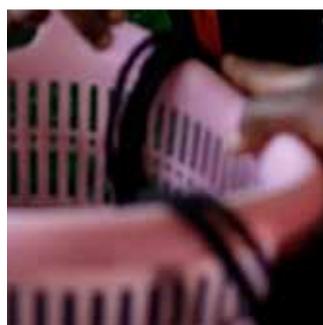
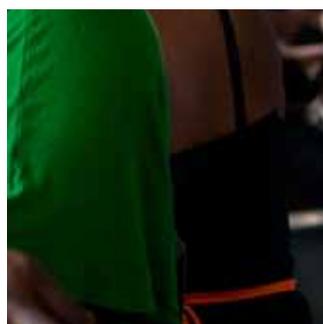
## IMPROVE THE LINKS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND TRAINING

As part of the efforts to create demand for technical and vocational skills, it is important for COTVET to address gaps between the supply and demand of skills. It is recommended that a common platform for employer engagement is developed for industry and training institutions to narrow the gaps between the supply of skills and the demand of industry. To develop the necessary links between industry and training, improved labour market information is again essential to identify growth areas.

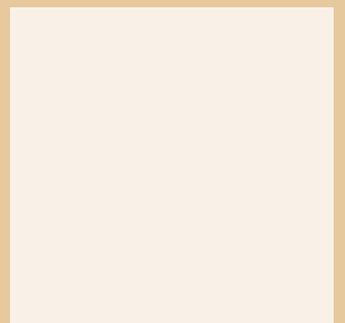


A support system for graduates and trainees is also important. If TVET is to continue to generate jobs for self-employment, linking financial provision and wider business support to graduates would be of great benefit. In addition to this, improved access for both informal and formal sector trainees to basic skills training, as well as English language provision, could have great benefits for their career progression.

Ensuring that the support is there for the informal sector, which makes up a large proportion of the economy, and therefore training requirements in Ghana, is essential to ensure ongoing productivity gains. Further research into potential quality assurance systems, as well as funding models for training and post-training support structures within the informal sector, would be of great use to the development and viability of TVET in Ghana.



# CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH APPROACH



# CHAPTER 1:

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH APPROACH

### Introduction

Ghana has a long history of technical and vocational education and training (TVET).<sup>1</sup> Over the years, three different forms of TVET have evolved. These comprise the formal system, the non-formal system and the informal system.

**The formal system** includes primarily time-bound, institution-based, graded, and certified training. It is offered by institutions such as the NVTI (National Vocational Training Institute), Ghana Education Service (GES), youth training institutions and a variety of private vocational training schools.

**Non-formal TVET** typically has structured learning objectives, learning times and learning support but will normally not lead to certification. Workshops, short courses and seminars are typical examples of non-formal learning.

**The informal system** includes a wide range of flexible programmes and processes by which individuals acquire skills and knowledge from designated training venues outside of the home and, in some cases, at home. Traditional apprenticeships make up the majority of the informal sector. Indeed, Ghana has a long tradition of informal apprenticeships, particularly in the following trades:

- Carpentry
- Masonry
- Auto-mechanics
- Welding and fabrication
- Foundry and casting
- Photography
- Tailoring
- Dressmaking and beauty
- Food processing and other agro-based industries
- Shoe making and repair
- Electrical wiring and repairs

The informal sector is perceived to be characterised by a lack of co-ordination and standardisation. It is, however, where the majority of trainees throughout the developing world gain the skills required to make a livelihood, and therefore is an essential focus of any study looking at skills development (Adams, 2008). Recently, master craftspersons (the primary providers of informal apprenticeship training) have shown a greater interest in re-orienting training arrangements by introducing more systematic training modules, although the practice is mostly on a pilot basis in a limited number of trades.

There are a variety of challenges affecting the effectiveness of the TVET sector, both in Ghana and internationally, which are widely accepted. Some of the key challenges include the mismatch between acquired skills and market needs, widespread concern about poor quality training and training environments, and negative public attitudes and perceptions regarding vocational education and training (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2001).

With the initiation of the new Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) in Ghana, it is imperative to understand the nature of these attitudes and perceptions to be able to target effective interventions which will improve and promote the sector. This report presents evidence from key stakeholders from within the sector, with the aim of improving understanding of these issues within the Ghanaian context. With this information COTVET can develop interventions that improve TVET delivery, recognise the benefits of training and what the perceptions of the market worth of TVET-trained individuals are.

### Research approach

#### THE DESIGN

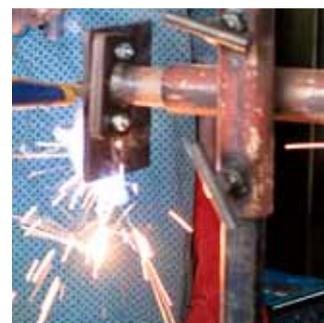
The study was conducted using participatory approaches, primarily through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The approach was used to ensure the depth of data required and to gauge perceptions from all key stakeholders.

#### STUDY AREAS

The research was conducted in four districts from two regions in Ghana; the Greater Accra region and the Eastern region. From the Greater Accra region, the Accra Metropolis and the Ga West Municipality were selected. In the Eastern region, Yilo Krobo and Lower Manya Krobo districts were selected.

It is important to recognise that the sample is not representative of the Ghanaian population as a whole. The study is intended to provide a snapshot of the effectiveness of the current TVET system, and draw out generalities in terms of the perceptions of training, its issues and any barriers to the development of TVET within the Ghanaian context. Further, the study restricts itself to discussion of formal and informal TVET systems and does not consider non-formal provision.

<sup>1</sup> Within formal education settings in Ghana, 'vocational' relates principally to visual arts and home economics subjects, including leatherwork, basketry, sculpture, graphic design and nutrition; 'technical' relates to trade, industrial and engineering subjects (Akyeampong, 2002).



## THE STUDY DISTRICTS

**Greater Accra region** – The Accra Metropolis is the national capital of Ghana. It has a cosmopolitan population that brings together a wide range of local ethnic and racial groups from within Ghana and internationally. Accra also has a high concentration of vocational and technical skills training centres and is an area of high demand for vocational and technical skills, with higher employment opportunities in comparison to the rest of Ghana.

The Ga West Municipality represents one of the oldest peri-urban communities in Ghana. The area is noted for a predominance of artisanal skills, such as carpentry, welding, auto-mechanics and many others. In addition, there is a high concentration of traditional apprenticeships.

**Eastern region** – The Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo districts are twin districts with similar characteristics to each other and also represent another high density of formal and informal skills training. Self-employed master craftsmen and women are highly visible in the economic life of these two districts and therefore offer an important critical mass for sampling in this study.

## TARGET SECTORS

The non-agricultural informal economy offers the largest number of potential employment opportunities for the majority of Ghanaians. Many people therefore find themselves in artisanal self-employment, petty trading and small-scale enterprises, and these types of employment absorb large numbers of labour market entrants. The selection of the trades in this report was guided by the numbers of TVET trainees found in each sector relative to others. The selection was also based on economic profiles, to identify key sectors from the Ghanaian economy. In view of this the following trades were chosen:

1. **Garment making** – including tailoring and fashion design
2. **Cosmetology** – including hairdressers and beauticians
3. **Electronics**
4. **Automotive engineering** – including auto-mechanic, auto-welding and other allied auto-engineering services
5. **Construction** – including masonry, carpentry, and aluminium and metal fabrication.

## SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

Four districts were selected from the two regions to conduct the research. Subsequently communities in the selected districts were identified. The districts were mapped to identify areas where there was a concentration of vocational training centres/facilities. Four communities were selected from each of the districts, based on the training offered and trades present. This process ensured that all groups of stakeholders were incorporated in the respondent group.

The final stage was to select training centres/institutions randomly from the initial mapping conducted and identify participants for the study. In addition to the focus group participants, key informants were selected from employer institutions and frontline policy personnel within the study districts. The interviewees were selected based on evidence that they were either directly responsible for the training or recruitment of graduates, or in frontline policy making in relevant ministries and departments. 243 respondents participated in focus group discussions across the different stakeholders, and seven key informants were selected for in-depth interviews.

### DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

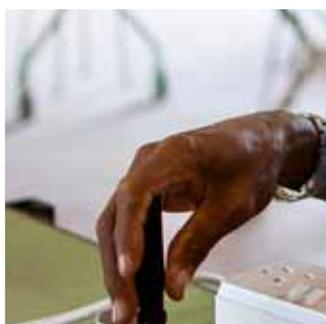
The focus groups were classified in the following ways:

- Current trainees within formal TVET institutions
- Current trainees within informal TVET training (primarily apprentices)
- Recent TVET graduates
- Trainers (master craftspersons in the informal training system and formal trainers from TVET institutions)
- Parents of trainees
- Frontline TVET policy personnel and employer groups

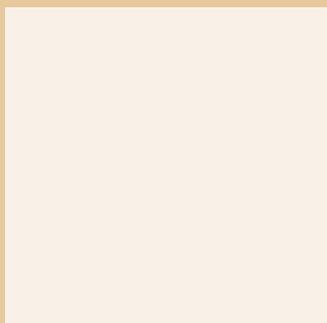
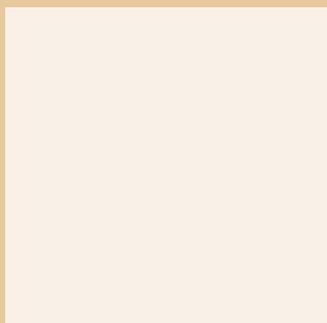
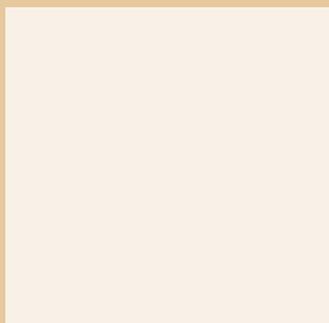
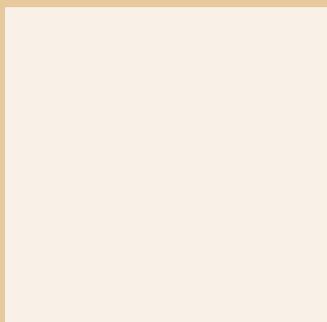
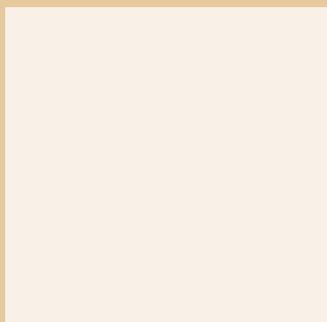
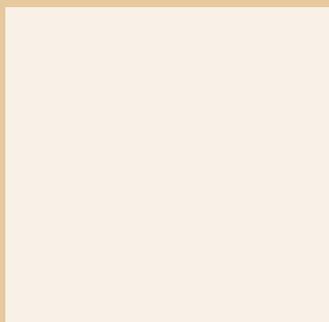
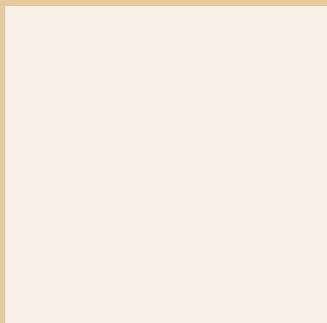
A total of 24 focus group discussions were organised across the selected districts and among the various vocations. Key informant interviews were conducted using question guides, with 5 employer institutions and 2 policy institutions engaged in TVET.

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

A thematic analytical framework was used to analyse the data, in line with the inductive approach. Inductive approaches are used in qualitative research to augment understanding of complex data using summary themes or categories from the raw data (Thomas, 2003). Many of the focus group discussions were held in Twi and Krobo, widely spoken dialects in the regions. To analyse the data, the focus group discussions were transcribed and translated into English for commonality in conceptualisation. Common emerging themes were identified and these themes were developed into the key framework for analysis of the findings.



# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Overview

Ghana's workforce has grown rapidly since its independence in 1957; formal employment has failed to grow at the same rate, resulting in significant levels of unemployment and underemployment (ILO, 2003). Ghana has placed technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the centre of its policies to help solve employment problems and to reduce poverty (King & Palmer, 2007). Its Government recognises, however, that the country's training system is not yet producing employable graduates with the right skills (Ministry of Education, Science & Sports, 2008).

Key challenges facing TVET in Africa include the need to improve perceptions of vocational education and training; to improve the training of instructors; to develop links between vocational and general education, which currently often operate in parallel, and between formal and non-formal training programmes; to reduce gender stereotyping in courses such as hairdressing; to develop traditional (indigenous), management and entrepreneurial training; and to work towards mutual recognition of qualifications across the continent (African Union, 2007). Capacity is another significant challenge. The combined training capacity of public and private TVET institutions in Ghana is estimated at around 12% of the annual number of labour market entrants (calculated from figures used by Botchie & Ahadzie, 2004). TVET completion rates are low, which may be linked to course duration. Technical institutes and national vocational institutes run courses of between three and five years; many learners leave after two years, believing that their employability will not be significantly improved in the remainder of the course (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2001).

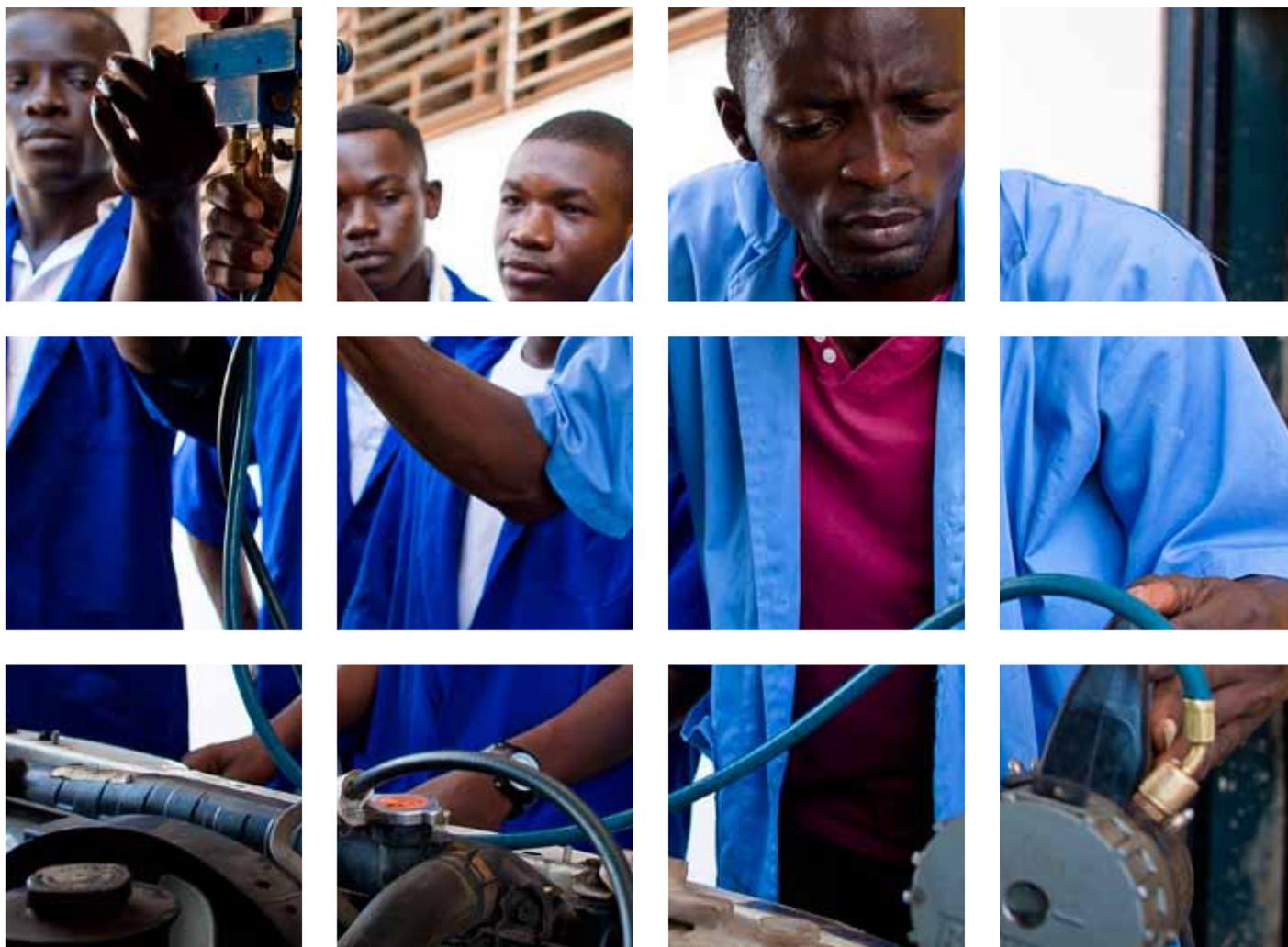
Wage returns from TVET in Ghana are similar to those from senior secondary education (World Bank, 2009). It is notable that apprenticeships generate minimal wage returns (*ibid.*); this may relate to apprenticeships' pathways into informal sector employment, however, rather than an intrinsic lack of financial return attached to undertaking an apprenticeship (Monk, Sandefur & Teal, 2008). Workers in the informal sector receive, on average, lower wages than formal sector workers (*ibid.*). Formal employment in Ghana's urban areas, for example, brings a wage premium of around 20% when compared to other forms of employment (World Bank, *op. cit.*).

Employment rates of TVET graduates in Ghana are low, leading Akyeampong (2010) to suggest that TVET has been too supply-driven and focuses on training which has a low market demand. Reasons for a lack of TVET relevance may include incorrect assumptions about the labour market or an inadequate needs assessment, lack of links between

training providers and business, out-dated curricula and equipment, inability or unwillingness of training providers to adapt to change, and the delivery of training for the wrong reasons. Mureithi (2009) points out that training by itself does not create jobs; skills must be applicable and economic conditions supportive. Such economic conditions might include the availability of seed funding for those who have completed entrepreneurship training (*ibid.*). Palmer questions the entire premise of the TVET agenda in Ghana, stating that a link between training and self-employment creation has never been established: 'More research-based evidence is required that examines the relationships between skills development for poverty reduction and growth, particularly with respect to the informal economy.' (2007, p. 22)

Poor links between TVET institutions and business mean that TVET programmes often fail to meet labour market needs. Young people working within the informal economy tend to have multiple jobs, rather than the single profession at which TVET programmes are often aimed, and little is available in the way of post-training support (Palmer, 2005). A recent analysis of skills supply and demand found that the breadth and range of courses on offer are generally appropriate (with the exception of ICT and oil sector training, for which insufficient programmes are available), but the actual content of training programmes does not meet the needs of the workplace (Gondwe & Walenkamp, 2011). Anamuah-Mensah (2004) suggests that the supply-demand challenge faced by Ghana could be improved by the establishment of a national labour market forecasting unit, labour market monitoring by training institutions and improved links between training providers, employers and trades unions.

Unequal access to educational opportunities is a fundamental policy challenge for Ghana: women, for example, have lower access to training which is compounded by low literacy rates, family responsibilities, limited female autonomy, gender stereotypes within educational curricula and a lack of awareness about training opportunities (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*). The Ministry of Education aims to secure 50% female enrolment in TVET by 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2010b). Inequity is observable in educational choices. Apprentices, for example, tend to come from a poor background and have little formal education; this is later compounded by a lack of progression routes into formal sector employment (Monk et al, *op. cit.*). The rural-urban divide is also integral to discussions on equity. Ensuring that training in rural areas meets the needs of local communities can help to mitigate rural-urban migration, which currently causes high levels of unemployment in cities (Mureithi, *op. cit.*).



According to the African Union (*op. cit.*), the number of private TVET providers is increasing across Africa. This, the Union believes, is attributable to the focus of private providers on the growing informal sector, and public providers' focus on the 'stagnant' industrial sector (2007, p. 7). The capacity of the TVET system to meet skill needs in the informal sector remains limited, however, which has constrained job growth and restricted quality (Mureithi, *op. cit.*).

TVET strategies need to be considered in the context of the importance of the informal economy in Ghana. A successful skills development strategy can only work if an 'innovative pro-poor, and gender aware' informal economy strategy is in place (Palmer, 2005, p. 20). While many countries have been criticised for their failure to consider the informal sector in their skills development plans, the Ghanaian Government's intention to increase informal sector workers' skills, particularly in the context of the traditional apprenticeship system, represents a notable exception (King & Palmer, *op. cit.*).

## 2.2 The historical context

Education was placed at the centre of Ghana's economic and social development policies following its independence in 1957 and the 1961 Education Act (Akyeampong, 2010). Technical education, through the development of technical schools and polytechnics, was a key element of Ghana's education plans. Rapid expansion of the education system, however, was later criticised for compromising on quality (*ibid.*).

In 1967, continuation schools were established for learners who were not selected for secondary education. Continuation schools emphasised pre-vocational education; this contributed to the erosion of TVET's credibility, as it was viewed as a route for those who had failed to progress to academic education (*ibid.*). The National Vocational Training Institute was established in 1970 to provide national co-ordination of TVET (Preddey, 2005). Its remit included apprenticeships, standards and certification, and labour market monitoring (*ibid.*). It also set up a network of training centres which remain in place today.



The economic crisis of the 1980s led to reduced levels of public sector employment, increased unemployment and a reduced rate of return to post-basic education (Atchoarena & Delluc, *op. cit.*). It also led to protracted problems for Ghana's education system, including shortages in textbooks and instructional materials, as well as teaching staff (Akyeampong, *op. cit.*). Reforms in 1987 saw the combination of primary and junior secondary education into 'basic education', and senior secondary education reduced to three years. Curriculum reforms aimed to ensure that all primary school leavers had access to secondary education, and to prepare learners who left the formal education system for paid work or self-employment (Akyeampong, 2002 and 2010).

These curriculum reforms included a greater focus on TVET, but 'failed to recognise that the kind of macro-economic conditions needed to motivate demand for practical subjects was lacking in what was a poor-performing economy' (Akyeampong, 2010, p. 6). Less time was available in the curriculum for the development of the literacy and numeracy skills necessary for more advanced technical and vocational understanding (Atchoarena & Delluc, *op. cit.*). Furthermore, although vocational programmes in schools were intended to offer vocational orientation to learners within a school-based setting, delivery conflicted with policy objectives: 13 specialised vocational subjects were offered, rather than a more general vocational curriculum (Akyeampong, 2002), and teachers failed to implement the proposed integrated approaches (Osei, 2004).

The National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training was established in 1990 to co-ordinate the activities of public and private training providers (Atchoarena & Delluc, *op. cit.*). The World Bank's Vocational Skills and Informal Sector Support Project (VSP) ran between 1995 and 2000 (King & Palmer, *op. cit.*). It aimed to shift training from a supply-driven perspective to a demand-driven one, to respond to short-term training needs within the informal sector (Haan, 2001) and to upgrade the skills of both master craftsmen and traditional apprentices (King & Palmer, *op. cit.*). It trained almost 15,000 apprentices and over 9,000 master craftsmen. The World Bank rated VSP as unsatisfactory, however, due to poor linkages between the institutions involved, a failure to upgrade and adapt technology, inaccessibility, inferior equipment and limited coverage (*ibid.*).

In 2004, the Government of Ghana published a white paper on education reform. The paper suggested that the 1987 reforms had led to 'immature' learners between the ages of 12 and 15 who were unable to absorb vocational skills, and vast numbers of 'unskilled, unemployable' young Ghanaians entering the labour market at the age of 15 (Government of Ghana, 2004, p. 2). The white paper saw an ambition to develop TVET as a 'credible alternative' to general education (2004, p. 8) and stated that a particular focus would be given to training TVET teachers. It also announced the formation of a National Apprentice Training Board to oversee the largely unregulated traditional apprenticeship sector (*ibid.*).

An accompanying TVET policy framework aimed to improve the links between formal and informal training systems, and to support trade associations to assist their members to deliver training (Palmer, 2005). Palmer (*ibid.*) has highlighted possible challenges in formalising the informal sector, including the potential to undermine its sustainability as well as possible implementation difficulties. Education reforms in 2007, the result of the 2004 white paper, aimed to streamline general, vocational, technical and agricultural education through improvements in the quality and nature of compulsory subjects (Gondwe & Walenkamp, *op. cit.*). Core subjects are English language, mathematics, integrated science, social studies and ICT; elective subjects are agriculture, business, technical education, vocational education and general education (arts or science) (UNESCO, 2010).

The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) was established in 2006 (OECD, 2008). It formulates skills development policies and is developing the TVET system to ‘improve the productivity and competitiveness of the skilled workforce and raise the income generating capacities of people, especially women and low income groups, through provision of quality-oriented, industry-focused and competency-based training programmes and complementary services’.<sup>2</sup> One of COTVET’s principal challenges is to co-ordinate the work of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (Ministry of Education, 2009). It is in charge of implementing a National Apprenticeship Programme, which Gondwe & Walenkamp (*op. cit.*) suggest will reduce the youth unemployment rate by increasing on-the-job training and preparing learners for self-employment.

The Ghana Youth Job Corps Programme was also established in 2006 after a merger of the former Skills Training and Employment Programme, which offered vocational training and microcredit through the delivery of apprenticeships to unemployed young people, and the National Youth Fund (OECD, *op. cit.*). This was followed in 2007 by the establishment of the National Accreditation Board, which regulates content and standards of tertiary education programmes and accredits both public and private institutions (UNESCO, *op. cit.*). The OECD has criticised the proliferation of organisations and initiatives in the Ghanaian TVET sector, suggesting that unco-ordinated programmes have led to ‘duplicated efforts and wasted resources’ (2008, p. 341).

Teacher shortages in TVET, combined with a lack of learning resources necessary to deliver a practical curriculum, have led to reductions in the quality of provision and reduced learner interest (Akyeampong, 2010). Learners increasingly see academic subjects as offering better opportunities than TVET subjects (*ibid.*). Government efforts to change the current labour market structure and associated skill levels are likely to prove challenging; not only is TVET suffering from declining learner interest, but low levels of schooling and high areas of land per worker have combined to form an ‘excessive dependence of the country on primary and extractive activities and therefore a reduction of the comparative advantage in manufacturing activities that are skill intensive’ (Botchie & Ahadzie, 2004, p. 9).

## 2.3 The Ghanaian TVET system

### STRUCTURE AND NUMBERS

TVET in Ghana is delivered through public and private schools, vocational training institutes and informal apprenticeships (Ministry of Education, *op. cit.*). Young people leaving junior secondary school can choose to enter senior secondary school, secondary technical schools or technical institutes (Gondwe & Walenkamp, *op. cit.*). Secondary technical school graduates can progress to universities and polytechnics; technical institute graduates can progress to polytechnics or apprenticeships. Learners who have not completed secondary school education can choose from a range of apprenticeships and other adult training programmes (*ibid.*).

Estimates of TVET institution numbers vary substantially: the Ministry of Education (2010a) records 129 public TVET institutions and 151 private ones, whereas the OECD (*op. cit.*) estimates the number of public institutions at 440 and the number of private institutions at 500. The Ministry of Education (*op. cit.*) records 64,156 learners enrolled in TVET; this number may be substantially higher if OECD institution estimates are taken into account, and it excludes apprentices.

Of public and private TVET institutions recorded by the Ministry of Education, 27% are Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills, 21% are Ghana Education Service (GES) Technical Institutes, 19% are National Vocational Training Institute Centres, 16% are Community Development Centres, 10% are Social Welfare Centres, 6% are Leadership Training Institutes, 1% are Opportunities Industrialisation Centres and 1% are Agricultural Training Institutes (calculated from figures provided by the Ministry of Education, 2010a). The Catholic Church is the largest private provider of TVET in Ghana (Kirchberger, 2008).

<sup>2</sup><http://www.cotvet.org/>



Palmer (2005) suggests that more than 80% of basic skills training in Ghana takes place through traditional apprenticeships, 5–10% takes place in public training institutions and 10–15% takes place in private training institutions.

## TVET TRAINING

Formal TVET training programmes at senior secondary education level are offered through technical secondary schools and technical institutes (Gondwe & Walenkamp, *op. cit.*). According to Akyeampong (2002), successful vocationalisation of the secondary education system must ensure the provision of adequate equipment and materials, provide professional teacher training and increase levels of student enrolment to reduce high unit costs without reducing quality. It should also focus on broader employability skills, including numeracy and literacy, problem-solving, decision-making and negotiation skills (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*).

Subject requirements for university entrance affect both the TVET subjects offered by schools and learner choices (Akyeampong, *op. cit.*). This can lead learners who later choose a vocational route to study subjects which are of little practical use. Assessment is another area which requires greater policy focus; TVET assessment is often based upon assessment techniques used in general education and has insufficient practical focus (*ibid.*).

More than 90% of training takes place within the informal sector (African Union, *op. cit.*), often through apprenticeships. This is leading to an increased need for business management and entrepreneurial skills training to equip people to operate within the informal sector (*ibid.*).

Non-formal training, defined as training which takes place outside the education system, is provided principally by community organisations and NGOs. Botchie & Ahadzie (2004, p. 18) point out that training services are often provided by 'inexperienced staff who are not necessarily familiar with the needs of the informal sector workers'. Lack of co-ordination between agencies can lead to duplication of activities and gaps in the provision of training in certain trades; training can be specific, limited in reach and linked to negative labour market outcomes (*ibid.*).

Informal training is diverse and tends not to be underpinned by curricula. It has a practical focus with little theoretical content and consists mainly of apprenticeships in Ghana (*ibid.*). 19% of the working age population has previously undertaken an apprenticeship, and 7% are currently apprentices; this compares to 8% who have undertaken any other vocational or technical training (Monk et al, *op. cit.*). 60% of junior secondary school leavers (not continuing in school) enter apprenticeships (OECD, *op. cit.*).

Traditional apprenticeships in Ghana are often centred in the family or community (*ibid.*) and incorporate 'moral upbringing' as well as the transfer of practical skills (Haan, 2001, p. 120). They average two years and nine months, although durations vary significantly; they range from one year and 11 months (fishing/hunting/forestry) to three-and-a-half years (mechanics) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008). Textiles, apparel and furnishing apprenticeships are the most popular, representing 36% of the total number; this is followed by building (15%) and personal/grounds service (14%) (*ibid.*). Most apprentices are self-employed or work in small firms, highlighting their importance in the informal sector (Monk et al, *op. cit.*).

Challenges are prevalent in the informal apprenticeship system. A lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills in apprentices has undermined their ability to develop knowledge and competencies (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*); the majority of Ghanaian apprentices have attained junior secondary level or below (Monk et al, *op. cit.*). While apprenticeships represent an accessible training route for the poor, costs attached to apprenticeships mean that the very poor are excluded (King & Palmer, *op. cit.*). Physical environmental factors are often unsafe and present limitations on the effectiveness of training; most trainers have received no training themselves on how to teach; training standards and instructional material are limited for many subjects; and there is a lack of external assessment (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*). Singh (2000) has suggested that traditional apprenticeships could be complemented by formal training programmes in business centres, which would bypass some of their limitations while allowing their value not to be diluted.

Apprentices studying certain crafts are able to take tests administered by the relevant trade associations, which has encouraged the use of training standards in certain areas (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*).

## FUNDING

Cost constraints have hampered the development of TVET in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2010). Despite Akyeampong's (*op. cit.*) assertion that Ghana's TVET education budget allocation remains unchanged at around 1%, the allocation grew to 2.4% in 2007 and was 1.9% in 2008 (Allsop, Attah, Cammack & Woods, 2010). Expenditure has not matched allocation, however: TVET expenditure in 2007 was only one quarter of the budget allocation, at 0.6% (*ibid.*). Private funding sources include international grants and fees charged to learners (Anamuah-Mensah, *op. cit.*). TVET costs are high due to a need for specialised equipment, tools and training materials (*ibid.*). Sustainable finance is needed to develop TVET infrastructure (Akyeampong, *op. cit.*).

According to Botchie & Ahadzie (2004, p. 24), there is 'a huge gap between policy prescriptions and the commitment of fiscal resources for the realisation of the objectives of [skills development] policies'. They add that training systems receive insufficient funding, and that traditional apprenticeships receive no funding. The Government is currently working to reduce dependence on state funding by encouraging greater contributions from individual trainees, local communities and businesses (OECD, *op. cit.*). Gondwe & Walenkamp (*op. cit.*) state that the Ministry of Education's large share of the national budget is being used effectively on recurring costs, such as salaries, and important works such as facilities maintenance; they suggest that sectoral improvements will only be realised through additional funding from sources such as oil export profits.

The Ghana Education Trust fund (GETfund), which is financed through VAT receipts,<sup>3</sup> is used to address funding shortfalls in pre-tertiary and tertiary education (Akyeampong, *op. cit.*). Between 1998 and 2000, the GETfund helped to increase polytechnic funding from 28% to 58% of the total estimated requirement (Effah, 2003,<sup>4</sup> cited in Akyeampong, *op. cit.*).

Funding for poorer learners is a particular challenge. Solutions may include microcredit schemes, community subsidies and state funding (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*). Anamuah-Mensah (*op. cit.*) has suggested the diversification of TVET funding through an employer levy system and a graduate tax. Small Business Centres run by training providers and their learners could help to generate much-needed income; Anamuah-Mensah suggests that seed capital for their establishment could come from funds such as the District Assembly Common Fund and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Fund. Savings could be made through improvements in institutional efficiencies (Singh, *op. cit.*).

<sup>3</sup>20%.

<sup>4</sup>Effah, P. (2003). A Decade of Polytechnic Education in Ghana: An Assessment of Achievements and Failures.



## ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

Learners who successfully complete secondary technical school education can qualify with a Senior High School Leaving Certificate; those who successfully complete technical institute education can qualify with awards from City & Guilds, the Royal Society of Arts or the West African Examinations Council; and those who successfully complete polytechnic education can gain a Higher National Diploma or an Advanced Technician and Craft Certificate (Gondwe & Walenkamp, *op. cit.*). Higher National Diplomas can be used as progression routes to a Bachelor of Technology degree, and some universities also offer TVET qualifications in the form of sub-degree professional certificates and diplomas (*ibid.*).

National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) Centres administer trade tests (leading to a Trade Test Certificate) in over 80 skilled areas for those who have taken formal training routes, and proficiency tests (leading to a Proficiency Certificate) for those who have not undertaken formal learning programmes. Proficiency Certificate holders can choose to take a written examination which qualifies them to take trade tests. NVTI Centres also administer secretarial and ICT examinations.<sup>5</sup> Apprenticeships, thought to account for the majority of labour market-based training programmes, are leading to increasing numbers of qualifications, but levels remain low (Botchie & Ahadzie, *op. cit.*).

Despite the range of qualifications on offer, low completion rates and levels of assessment have led to large numbers of unqualified learners leaving TVET education. Just 1.6% of the educated Ghanaian labour force has a TVET qualification, compared to an estimated 11% of the total population who have undertaken secondary TVET studies (Anamuah-Mensah, *op. cit.*). Certification and assessment has also been heavily criticised by the OECD, which sees 'a multiplicity of testing and certification standards, with a proliferation of useless TVET certificates' (2008, pp. 341–342).

A TVET qualifications framework has recently been introduced, which aims to improve progression routes for TVET graduates (Ministry of Education, 2010a).

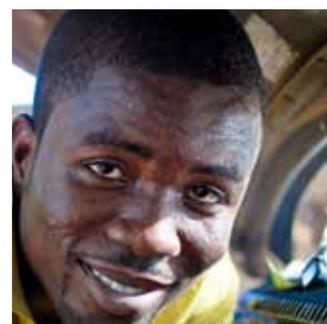
<sup>5</sup><http://www.nvtighana.org/examination.html>

## ATTITUDES

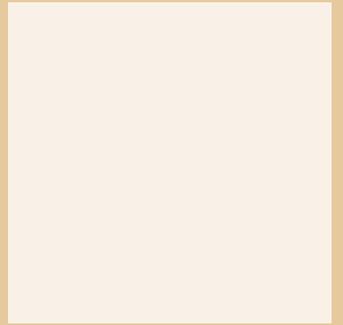
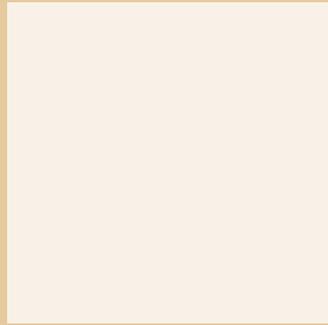
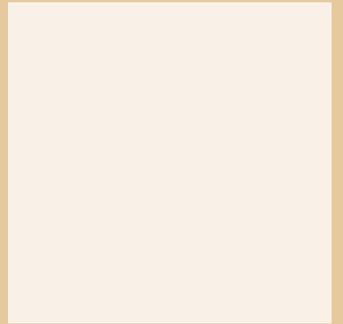
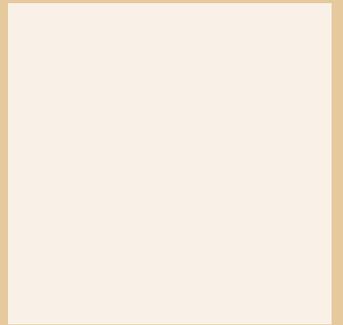
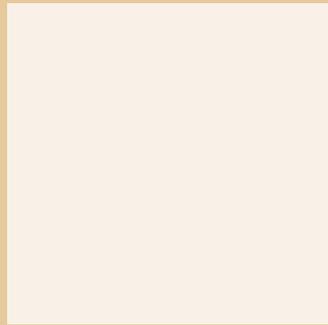
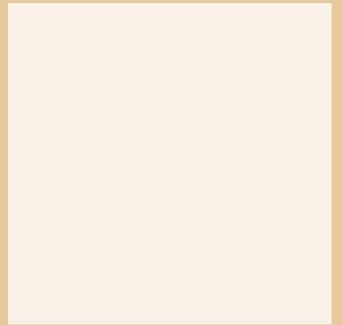
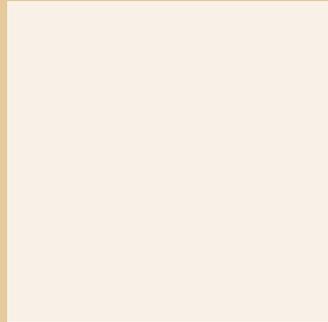
TVET is perceived across Africa as a route for those who are not able to function within an academic setting; this perception is compounded by a lack of progression routes from TVET into higher education (African Union, *op. cit.*). Negative perceptions are not limited to those who have little understanding of TVET: a 2002 survey of public TVET teachers found that none of the 87 respondents wanted their own children to study TVET programmes (Anamuah-Mensah, *op. cit.*).

Anamuah-Mensah (*ibid.*) suggests that perceptions can be improved by government promotion of TVET as an alternative route for school leavers; media promotion of the role of TVET in wealth creation; the provision of 'awareness weeks', exhibitions and open days by TVET institutions; and improved salaries for TVET graduates. Hoppers recommends a sustained campaign by policy makers, educationalists, civil society groups and other interested parties to alter perceptions, suggesting that this can 'be done, in part, by promoting the positive features of "alternative" training pathways, explaining how the specificities of local economic and [labour] demands are met through training workers; demand is met by supply' (2008, p. 124). Associating TVET with modern science and technology rather than manual labour is also critical to improving perceptions (*ibid.*).

In Ghana, historical and economic influences mean that informal and non-formal learning are as important as formal TVET learning (Singh, *op. cit.*); finding ways to make these learning systems support each other to improve employment outcomes would be one important way to shift attitudes.



# CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES TOWARDS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TVET AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS



# CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES TOWARDS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TVET AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS

## Introduction

The previous chapter presented a variety of challenges for TVET development, both internationally and in Ghana. For young people to see TVET pathways as a viable option for them to develop their skills and pursue career opportunities, there is clearly a need for changes within the system. Changes to the policy environment are, however, clearly not enough. Societal perspectives are driving a two-tiered system, in which academic routes are seemingly always the first option, and if this is unachievable vocational options are then a possibility. This chapter attempts to understand these perspectives in more depth by presenting evidence from focus group discussions and interviews with key stakeholders to understand some of these challenges, but also to identify successes in the system.

## 3.1 Trainees and graduates

### TVET AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

From the study, there was a consensus among informal trainees and informal graduates that only people who are unable to get the grades to enter into higher academic pathways opt to go into TVET. Linking this perception to the educational level of informal trainees who participated in the study, it is worth noting that most of them were either school dropouts or had completed only primary school or junior high school (JHS). Some of those who completed JHS were found unable to meet the minimum grade requirement for senior high school (SHS). Many trainees linked a low level of social acceptance of TVET to their inability to further their education through the formal grammar school system. This is a particularly stark finding coming from trainees themselves and could serve to reinforce societal perspectives. For example, a young female informal trainee in one of the focus group discussions remarked: 'We are not respected because we are unable to speak English.'

Another participant noted:

*'They see us as people who were not able to go to school – that is why we are in this trade.'* **Informal trainee**

A similar link between the less academically endowed and vocational training was seen among TVET graduates from the informal training system. One graduate pointed out that 'the country has no respect for trade workers, they think we are complete illiterates'.



The following extract was taken from discussions with male trainees in the informal sector:

*'[The public] don't respect us because we didn't go to school, which means you have nothing. For them, if you didn't go to school, you don't know anything. That is why you are doing this work ... There are many who look at us without respect. They don't respect us as workers.'*

To support these statements, the Draft African Union Strategy to Revitalise TVET in Africa (2007) affirmed that many countries including Ghana considered vocational and technical education as a career path for the less academically able. The document acknowledged that this has been exacerbated by the low academic requirements for admission into TVET programmes and the limited prospects for further education and professional development through these pathways.

It should, however, be emphasised that this perception was mostly expressed by those in the informal traditional apprenticeship system rather than those in the formal TVET system. Trainees from formal TVET institutions did not indicate that they felt technical and vocational education belonged to those with low academic ability. The majority saw themselves as on the same level, in terms of academic competence, as those in the secondary school system. The greatest desire of trainees in formal TVET institutions was the introduction of courses which would improve their competitiveness with students from secondary school, in terms of progression onto the next level of education, i.e. an integration of basic skills with their technical training. Nonetheless, at the time of this study, core courses such as English language, mathematics, general science and social studies have only been introduced into the formal TVET training system in a few institutions.

The difference in the perception of trainees from formal and informal training systems could be attributed to the fact that, unlike the informal system, the formal system of TVET normally demands a certain grade at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). In the informal system, however, BECE is not required.

## TVET AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

From the focus group discussion among informal trainees and graduates, there was an assertion that formal employment opportunities are limited for them. They generally attributed their frustration in getting formal sector employment (private or public) to the absence of certificates to prove their competence, or poor English proficiency. As a result, many highlighted that:

*'Practical knowledge or skills without an academic certificate is useless in seeking employment in Ghana.'*  
**Informal graduate**

Another graduate noted:

*'It is not only English that is spoken in this country. Also if someone is employing you, it is because you know the job. [For me], when one is going to be employed, he should be examined on what he knows to find out if he can do the job. This can be done in Twi or English because it is better to employ someone who can do the job and not on the grounds of language spoken.'*  
**Informal graduate**

This statement is a reflection of the frustration informal sector graduates go through in searching for jobs after training. It also depicts the way society perceives them, as a group of people who cannot communicate well in English and so cannot perform their tasks appropriately because English speaking is associated with academic success. This issue also highlights the need to examine the language of instruction during training, to ensure that training is relevant to the needs of learners.

## A WIDENING SUPPLY AND DEMAND MISMATCH?

Closely linked to the perception of weak employment opportunities for graduates from TVET was a general fear among trainees that the labour market for artisans and lower skilled technicians is becoming saturated, posing a threat to the viability of a career within the sector. This affects a newly qualified artisan's prospects of wage employment or, should they set up on their own, the likelihood of success for their new enterprises. A focus group discussion with recent graduates of informal training further confirmed the lack of employment opportunities for graduates of TVET. Some graduates surveyed highlighted that after graduation they had stayed at home for more than two years without work. Others have had to 'perch' with (help out) their former masters for tips, in order to make ends meet.

The recognition of a narrowing job market was echoed further by formal TVET trainees who attribute the situation to direct competition with those who attend grammar schools. On the whole, those surveyed felt that they would lose out to those that had gone through higher education. This is despite the assertion that formal graduates felt they were as competent as SHS students. One formal trainee remarked:

*'Employers value secondary education more than the technical education. For instance a secondary student will [study] general arts and go to the polytechnic to [study] mechanical engineering while a student from a formal TVET institution will [study] mechanical engineering here [and go] straight to the polytechnic afterwards. [When applying to] a firm for employment they will take the secondary student and leave the technical student so I think [employers] are not being fair to us.'* **Formal trainee**

Another stated:

*'I have finished the training and have acquired very excellent skills. But [I'm] left with getting someone to help me set up, or getting a company job to do ... If I get company work or my own shop, I will like it.'*  
**Formal trainee**

These and many other such statements suggest the growing insecurity young people face in vocational and technical education in terms of the possibility for stable employment. In addition, those who are able to raise the needed capital to start their own businesses are usually confronted with competition from established businesses and so are unable to stabilise and grow. The implication of this is that with time, many skilled people who are out of work will experience what the ILO (2010) refer to as ‘skills erosion’, implying a loss of skills when one is out of practice, further limiting chances for employment in the long term.

### LINKS BETWEEN TVET AND POVERTY?

There was a perception among the majority of trainees, as well as other stakeholders, that vocational and technical education is a preserve of the poor. Within this context, the level of academic ability is of no importance – the only defining factor as to whether to continue with academic education or go into vocational training is the availability of money.

Many trainees emphasised that the primary reason they found themselves in informal vocational training or an apprenticeship was because their parents did not have the money to send them into higher education. Few, however, acknowledged that they had not made the grades required to enter SHS. One respondent remarked:

*‘My parents could not afford to send me to school so they asked me to learn a vocation ... there is no money at home for further education.’ Informal trainee*

Another emphasised:

*‘The reason why I’m learning fitting and mechanics is that my parents have nothing and can’t continue my education, so it happens that I enter the fitting trade so that I will help my parents and myself.’ Informal trainee*

When traced to the discussion with parents on family background it was evident that most trainees in the informal sector indeed come from low income backgrounds. This is again highlighted by the case of the trainees below:

*‘The reason why I’m learning this [trade] is that my mother is not here. I was living with my grandmother but my grandmother died. That is the reason why I’m learning this trade, else I will be idle. There would have been nothing to do to help myself and that is why I’ve come to learn dressmaking.’ Informal trainee*

*‘I had wanted to continue with my education when I completed the basic school because I was very intelligent, but there was no money.’ Informal trainee*

This perception was further reinforced when discussing the conditions experienced by most trainees during training. Many associated the training period with a time of hardship due to their parents not being able to support them. The evidence suggests that a trainee on a typical day is given about GH¢1.00 or less, which is equivalent to about US \$0.60, for meals for the whole day. Furthermore, most trainees, particularly in apprenticeships, have left home and many highlighted that they spend their nights in shops, broken-down vehicles and open spaces, an experience that wealthier students would not endure. Informal trainees continually highlighted:

*‘The problem I have in learning this job is “chop money”.<sup>6</sup> After work, we are given chop money. There are times after work, you are given 20 pesewas and ... what will you buy with it? There is nothing you can buy with it.’*

**Informal trainee**

Another respondent reinforced this, stating:

*‘The problems are many. Sometimes where to sleep is a problem. Secondly, when there are many apprentices, the master practises favouritism. Also, in the evenings, the chop money we are given ... they give the money to the senior apprentices and you may or may not get some of the money. In that case you will go to bed on an empty stomach .... When you come at first, you will sleep in a car because there is no room for you to sleep in.’*

**Informal trainee**

These statements are indicative of the fact that trainees, and particularly informal trainees, go through a variety of challenges during training, which impact on the learning environment. The key challenges noted include: lack of money, food and poor shelter. These issues are primarily attributable to poverty and the lack of support for trainees, both from the existing system and from wider social networks.

### STIGMA IN TVET

Interactions with trainees in the study reveal stereotyping of certain vocations. A very clear example of this was an extremely damaging association of hairdressers and beauticians with prostitution. One hairdresser emphasised that:

*‘We are branded as prostitutes because we make people beautiful.’ Informal trainee*

This type of labelling and stigma creates a sense of despair among young trainees who are interested in hairdressing.

<sup>6</sup> Chop money is a common term used in Ghana to mean pocket money for daily subsistence.



A critical examination of the situation suggests that, generally, hairdressers or beauticians, unlike many other vocations, keep themselves presentable in order to attract customers. It is clear that this is being misrepresented within Ghanaian society as being provocative. This perception contradicts the ideals of the hairdressing profession and must be resolved with a sense of urgency, as hairdressing is a key trade with the potential to absorb more young people into productive employment.

Another vocation which has received negative labelling is auto-mechanics (primarily in the informal sector). This trade was consistently labelled as a 'dirty job' and hence less attractive. Auto-mechanic workers, particularly those in the informal sector, are known for their oil- and soil-stained overalls. Trainees in the formal technical training centres, however, often have access to professional overalls for use during practical training. They are thus spared this unfortunate stigma.

These perspectives act as a disincentive for young people who may want to enter into these trades. COTVET should consider launching an image-enhancing programme to dispel some of the labels associated with these vocations to encourage young people to see them as viable career opportunities.

#### A MIXED FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TVET?

Among young people in both formal and informal vocational and technical education, there appears to be a mixed conception of what the future holds. As noted earlier, many appear despondent. For others, who referred to the status of their 'masters' or 'madams',<sup>7</sup> they were confident that their trade will be able to put food on the table and provide future support for other family members. They often, however, linked this positive outlook to the availability of support after graduating from training, which is currently limited. This trainee, for example, clearly challenged the view that there are no jobs for TVET graduates:

*'Since the time of the colonial era the white men came here and they trained the Ghanaians in the white collar jobs so since that time they left, their mentality that being a bank manager or in the police or being a lawyer makes you [more] popular than being a technical man. So one question that I asked them is that their cars which they are riding in, who manufactured that car and the air conditioners and the kind of things they are using, who manufactured those? It's the technical man, so we have a lot to offer.'* **Formal trainee**

This statement is an indication that formal TVET trainees think highly of their technical skills and see themselves as indispensable in people's daily lives. This was also echoed in other focus groups with informal trainees.

<sup>7</sup> In the traditional apprenticeship system, the master craftsmen are called 'masters' for males and 'madams' for females.



The fear of the future that some trainees had is not just about a lack of jobs, but lack of a regular income, even when they have a job or their own enterprise. The volatility of earnings for vocational graduates poses the greatest challenge for most young people. One such young graduate stated:

*'For me it has not been easy, because I get scared every day as to what to eat. I am losing weight as a result of hunger. This has been due to lack of customers. Life however gets normalised when business goes well even for a week. It [however] takes sometimes a year before someone calls for my painting services. I sometimes have to buy even food on credit and use everything I ever gain to pay off debt.'* **Formal trainee**

TVET trainees and graduates are influenced by what they see as discrimination against their educational pathway, even before they finish their training. They often highlighted a feeling of 'driving blind-folded', pressing ahead without being able to see what lies in front of them. Conspicuously, they express doubt and apprehension about the future, not knowing what to expect after their training. Notably, trainees from formal TVET institutions did demonstrate clear knowledge of potential progression routes within their respective trades. However, they did often still have a feeling of insecurity about the future.

#### LIMITED PATHWAYS IN TVET?

Educational policy has, over the years, discriminated against TVET, to the point that many are beginning to attribute the current difficulties within the system to a failure in the overall human resource development framework of Ghana. The opportunities for progression are limited when one chooses vocational pathways, giving rise to a feeling that TVET has become a dead end in terms of both academic and professional development. Where there are possibilities, the processes of advancing are usually drawn out, in comparison to those in SHS. One focus group discussion revealed:

*'Our curriculum and progression is not very clear. Here, you will need to complete Part I, Part II or Intermediate before you go to polytechnic. However, from secondary school, one can go straight to the polytechnics and the universities. So I think they don't have [a good] regard for the technical institution.'* **Formal trainee**

The challenge lies in overhauling the human resource development system in Ghana, to highlight the credibility of vocational training. One respondent expressed the feeling this process has been initiated; however, this was not the perspective of the majority:

*'I think the problem is now solved ... the Government has attached those core subjects to our elective ones and we are going to [do] almost all the subjects the secondary school students write, in addition to our technical subjects.'* **Formal TVET trainee**

Progression onto higher levels of vocational training, as is possible in the formal TVET system, was not highlighted in the discussions with informal trainees. For most of them, progression related to upgrading of technical skills, as new ways of doing things emerge in respective trade areas. The only complement to skills acquired among informal trainees was the opportunity to undertake direct trading activities such as buying and selling of wares relevant to specific trades. There is therefore still a question of how to enable informal trainees to move into formal TVET certification systems if they so desire.

### ISSUES WITH SKILLS TRANSFERABILITY

There was a feeling from some trainees that master craftspersons deliberately leave essential skills untaught. Some have therefore become sceptical towards the training delivered by masters, noting that they felt, whenever a master sent an apprentice outside the training shop, they were likely to utilise an important skill that he/she did not want the apprentice to know. One respondent stated that:

*'I'm learning sewing. What my madam is teaching is good but what we need [is] someone to teach us how to cut the fabric. This is because sometimes when our madam is about to cut a fabric for a dress she will not inform us.'* **Informal trainee**

Another said:

*'Sometimes when she is about to cut a fabric, she calls all of us to come and stand beside her so that she will measure the dress and tell us that this is how to cut, say, the neck of the dress, cut it like that etc. But there are certain times when she is about to cut a dress, she will send you [on an errand] and by the time you are back, she would have finished cutting and will just bring it to you and tell you to sew it.'* **Informal trainee**

These and other such statements from the focus group discussions, particularly among informal trainees, emphasise some of the issues with the informal training system. Training is largely unstructured, unplanned and very much subject to what the master craftsperson deems needs to be taught at any particular time. There are also clearly issues with regard to the comparability of training, which limits the marketability of skills for individuals.

## 3.2 Informal master craftspersons

### COMPARABILITY BETWEEN SHS AND TVET

Master craftspersons countered the view that vocational and technical education is a preserve of the academically weak. They emphasised that some academic knowledge is a pre-requisite for the take up of new skills but that successful acquisition of skills is not necessarily dependent on academic ability. One master craftsperson noted:

*'My work is electronics. If you have not attended school before, you can't do it. You need at least a JSS education because there are things you have to learn, like things that you have to multiply. We also write things, so without education you cannot learn anything.'* **Master craftsperson**

Trainers contended that everybody is capable of learning skills and that skills training depends on willingness and an openness of mind. In sharing their experiences of training young people, trainers asserted that intelligence should not be measured by academic work alone, but by a person's ability to connect concepts and ideas together to produce a result. The importance of some basic education prior to undertaking an apprenticeship or skills training, in meeting this aim, cannot therefore be underplayed:

*'My job is hairdressing and ... without education, you cannot do it because every cream you take there are instructions written on it which you should be able to read. You need at least a JSS education so that ... you will be able to read to know how to apply it.'* **Master craftsperson**

Craftspersons indicated that some basic skills training is sometimes provided to improve literacy and numeracy levels. The following extract is a typical case:

*'When you come, I have someone who will teach you how to read. We have an apprentices' meeting where there is a teacher who will teach you and prepare you for an examination. So, by the time you are through with the training, you would know how to read, to be able to apply it.'* **Master craftsperson**

This scenario is a critical case worth considering for replication, whereby apprentices in the informal sector can also be provided with skills to improve literacy and numeracy. This will give them a professional advantage in the competitive labour market, and also improves progression routes and potential productivity.

## INCOME VOLATILITY IN TVET

The volatility of income and the unpredictable nature of returns on TVET-related activities was a clear source of worry for most master craftspersons who echoed trainees' frustration in being able to provide a sustainable source of income to support their families. Most were of the opinion that they could not rely solely on their existing jobs to survive. The sense of income insecurity expressed by master craftspersons was attributed to a number of factors, including; low patronage or an inadequate customer base, low reliability of payment from customers and in some cases excessive tax:

*'If I work for people, they do not make payments. In the end, I work but do not get paid and hence I do not benefit.'* **Master craftsperson**

Another respondent reinforced this, stating:

*'I am working but the only problem is for the customers to make payments for services rendered to them. I pray that money would be in the system for customers to be able to pay for services rendered to them.'*  
**Master craftsperson**

## PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR TRAINEES: LIMITED PARENTAL SUPPORT?

A vast number of master craftspersons felt that parents or guardians of trainees reneged on their responsibilities to provide adequate support for their wards during training. It was often highlighted that parents or civil society organisations that sponsor trainees dump them with masters without providing the required support. Issues of feeding and shelter of young trainees were usually a source of worry. One focus group discussion noted:

*'Apprentices need pocket money, so families should support them financially through the training period. We should be well stationed so that we can attract more trainees from family members of other trainees.'*  
**Master craftsperson**

*'Families should be educated in the area of encouraging and supporting their wards throughout their training period.'* **Master craftsperson**

*'Some families believe that when one is learning a trade, then she or he is okay financially so they don't support them.'* **Master craftsperson**

These statements are indicative of the precarious situation that both trainees and master craftspersons are confronted with. This has implications for the overall wellbeing of trainees and the quality of training received, as they have to grapple with basic necessities such as food and shelter. The discussion also emphasises a generally weak partnership between trainers and the parents of trainees. A better understanding and collaboration between parents and guardians and master craftspersons could provide a better context for mobilising resources to support trainees.

## 3.3 Employers

Most of the employers interviewed have a high proportion of graduates from TVET, from both formal and informal training. This was even higher among the manufacturing and construction firms.

Interestingly, some service providers also employ a large number of support staff from TVET backgrounds. Many of these institutions have already developed, while some are also in the process of developing, refresher courses in-house to enhance the performance and quality of these personnel. For example, the University of Ghana (one of the employers interviewed) is now devoting a great deal of attention to improving the capacity of TVET-trained employees. One of the respondents stated that:

*'Originally the university had a major direction towards the arts and social sciences. But you recognise that in recent times they had even gone to the extent of creating a faculty for engineering sciences. This lends credence to the fact that the frontiers of technical education are assuming a certain high proportion in the scheme of the university's activities.'* **Employer**

Because of the esteem in which university education is held in Ghana, the implication is that as universities expand TVET options, it is likely that public perceptions of and appreciation for TVET may well improve. There is also the possibility that a further tier will be integrated into the system, with those in existing vocational provision further down the education ladder. This would certainly not be a positive change and could further impact on the value of TVET-related skills.

Generally, there were positive attitudes from the employers towards TVET-trained personnel. One employer believed that:

*'These technical men are the people who actually keep the firm running. Take them away and the company collapses.'* **Employer**

Another commented:

*'In the country if you don't have these enterprises what will you do with our sourcing, you will have to take personnel on board. We have electricians, we have refrigeration and air conditioning services and then also we have the water drainage and sewage section, these are all basically technical. Since we deal with a lot of maintenance work, the respect towards or the attitude towards technical persons is something we cannot really ignore.'* **Employer**

One of the key issues faced by TVET graduates is the relatively low wages that they receive. The majority of these employers offer low remuneration to vocationally trained staff because of a generally low market rate. In addition, most firms, especially those in the building and construction sectors, for various reasons, prefer to employ these people on a contractual basis, rather than taking them on as permanent staff. The primary reason is to avoid paying higher remuneration and other incentives that may accrue to a permanent employee. This practice has adverse effects on the personnel, since they are compelled to always be looking out for other opportunities. It also reduces the attractiveness of the sector, since jobs and income are less stable:

*'Most of my colleagues are not willing to pay accordingly, due to the hardship in the economy. I mean when you go abroad, artisans are remunerated wholesomely ... Right now, when you go to most companies, the secretaries and administrative staff earn more than most of the technical men, which is bad. You know these people [technically related workers] can also be put on a payment scale. I mean it will help all of us when the right thing is done.'* **Employer**

The disparity in employer remuneration for technical and administrative staff has created disincentives for technically trained personnel seeking waged employment. The statement implies that employers undervalue technical and vocational skills in their remuneration structure.

## EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS

Employers expect that TVET graduates should be able to perform what are regarded as minimum professional skills to be able to effectively execute jobs. Despite their positive attitude towards TVET, many employers appear to be concerned that the recruits do not show enough professionalism towards their work. There was also a general feeling that many struggle without supervision.

*'At times they behave as if they don't have any training, so you have to be with them all the time if you want good work to be done.'* **Employer**



Another employer stated:

*'Some of them are simply lazy. If you are not strict on them, then they won't do the right thing. They take it that since it is not their work they will do whatever they like.'* **Employer**

Furthermore, most employers in the construction and manufacturing sectors expressed reservations about the low level of basic skills among TVET graduates, especially those from the informal sector. The situation is made worse by the lack of documentation and certificates for training, and examination content. In some cases employers try to conduct their own proficiency tests, such as practical tests and theoretical interviews, for applicants. One employer noted:

*'Most of them cannot read or write. They could hardly even speak English. So we just give them some work to do to see if they know what they are about. And if they pass the test, we employ them.'* **Employer**

Many employers suggest that the problem will be solved when the Government shows more commitment to technical and vocational education and training through better facilities and better-trained teachers. There is an expectancy that the Government will commit sufficiently to technical and vocational education and training, in order to improve the Ghanaian skills base.



## EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYERS

The employers interviewed had varied experiences with TVET personnel. While some described their experience in terms of the employees' capabilities and work ethics as good and commendable, others believe there is a need for improvement. The latter argued primarily that their personnel need extra technical training to become workplace ready in their specific fields.

It was also observed that employees from the formal sector do not have enough practical experience; they acquire most of the skills on the job. Those who come from the informal sector are more experienced, though they lack the theoretical background. It is therefore important that any new interventions that focus on developing training provision within the informal economy do not lose the current strengths, but are able to improve the comparability of training provision. Likewise, in the formal sector there would be benefits in improving access to work placements in industry, as well as better links between industry and training, whilst ensuring that the theoretical basis to training remains. This employer emphasises the adoption of an approach to recruiting informal trainees to combat issues of quality and comparability of provision:

*'Generally, people who were trained outside [of the formal] institutions, we had an approach in interviewing them before taking them on. We would ask them to do practical test ... and then also a theoretical interview before we took them on. The level of knowledge and experience was quite high ... They really worked very hard when they got on board.'* **Employer**

As indicated earlier most of the employers also commented on the low confidence levels of employees. They attributed this to a lack of requisite academic qualifications coupled with negative societal perceptions. They highlighted that the majority of employees lack confidence and self esteem. Seemingly graduates have accepted that they are perceived as having low social status and thus do very little to change such perceptions; there were few examples of trainees and graduates actively attempting to defy them. This emphasises the integral need for a campaign to attempt to change societal perspectives, to ensure that the youth coming through vocational training are able to pursue career pathways without having to fight against negative stereotyping – which will inevitably impact on productivity.

Despite recognition of the contributions made by TVET graduates to the wider economy, employers felt that industry and institutions do not receive the required level of support and attention from policy makers. This has real implications for the quality of training received by TVET participants. One employer commented:

*'I know that gradually it is becoming expensive to do technical, vocational training – generally because of the practical orientation that is required and the fact that you need some equipment and logistics to be able to help [trainees] practically. So I think the Government ought to [support it]. I think it has its rightful place and must be accorded as such. So I think the right motivation ought to be put into that training.'* **Employer**

Another employer stressed that:

*'Those who make the law will have to take a second look at technical and vocational education. Because, as it is now, those boys and girls who pass out from there are unable to cope with the job market. The whole system needs restructuring you understand.'* **Employer**

### 3.4 Parents

#### PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND TVET

The association between vocational and technical skills training and weak academic ability was clearly noted in discussions with parents and guardians of trainees. Some suggested that they decided to send their children into vocational training or apprenticeships after they did not perform well at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The implication was that if the child had performed well, he/she would have been sent to the secondary school and not a vocational or technical training institute. A parent remarked:

*'There was something that the child wanted to pursue. Firstly, the child didn't perform well after examinations and secondly, there wasn't any support to help the child continue his/her education. That was why the child went into [vocational] training.'* **Parent**

Aside from the perception that only the weakest children in terms of academic ability enter into TVET, it is important to recognise that the issue is also to do with the finances available to support the child and not just his or her academic performance. Some parents in the focus group discussions suggested that they chose the option of skills training because there was no money at home to support the child to go to senior high school. This is in line with trainees' perceptions.

#### APATHY OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO TVET

Although it was not evident with all parents, some suggested that, in comparison to their generation, the present generation of young people are apathetic towards learning a vocational trade. They noted that in the past there was a great deal of commitment and respect for those who went into skills training. They linked this lack of commitment among the present generation to the desire to make quick money, because of low barriers to entry into the informal economy through petty trading. For example, a parent remarked:

*'In the past, children of old respected skills training. They knew that it would take them somewhere. They were very zealous about it even if they had no food or support. But nowadays, young people don't show any zeal for skills training. They rather prefer to go and trade so that they can make quick money. They take skills training for granted.'* **Parent**

Parents generally felt that young people were less interested in TVET-related careers. This lack of interest may be attributed to the perceived low returns, in comparison with other economic activities such as petty trading, which also have low barriers to entry. It is important therefore to find an entry point into the psyche of young people to make TVET more appealing.



## RETURNS ON INVESTMENT FOR TVET GRADUATES

There was no consensus among parents on the returns from their investment in vocational training. While some were hopeful that the skills acquired will provide a means of livelihood opportunities in the future, others were indifferent. The argument encountered was that vocational skills are not competitive for high wage jobs in the labour market. Graduates therefore, who are able to get a job will usually not be well remunerated. The following two examples demonstrate these issues:

*'I don't think it's preparing them for the world of work. I don't think so. I think it is unstructured, not competitive. It's not reflective of what the market needs. It's just training. That's what I think and because of that I think that [our son] has been generating other interests.'*

**Parent**

*'What I see is that when the child finishes learning the work, it doesn't help because a lot have finished learning skills and they have not been able to set up or get employment. They end up selling items [in the informal economy].'*

**Parent**

In contrast, another parent noted:

*'I think the training will help her because ... for a start she could do our hair for us, so I see that now she is improving and moving forward. So I see it that the work will help her to [be self employed].'*

**Parent**

This inconsistency in the perspective of parents on the returns on investment could well reflect the unpredictable nature and lack of comparability of training provision, and the uncertainties trainees expressed about what the future holds for them. A certain level of predictability of training pathways and potential employment opportunities beyond skills training is essential, so that young people can have confidence in their capacity to develop when taking vocational pathways. Issues of support from both the Government and private sector for young TVET graduates, in terms of setting up, job placements for skills enhancement or full employment, are crucial.

## 3.5 Policy makers

### UNFAVOURABLE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR TVET

Front-line policy personnel who were interviewed indicated that past policies and legislation for human capacity development did not provide the required platform to develop the TVET sector. They contended that successive governments after President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah did not offer a sufficient focus to TVET in relation to human capacity development. One interviewee remarked:

*'We have failed in the past to create a working environment for vocational education. Kwame Nkrumah actually was of the view that technical and vocational education was the way to promote our development so he established a technical university. However, after him, no serious thought was given to TVET.'*

**Policy Maker**

Another noted:

*'We have had several educational reforms, even in the Dzobo Report,<sup>8</sup> the junior secondary school concept was to integrate vocational and technical education, but where did we go with that idea? Is it dead? You see, we have failed to push the vocational aspects.'*

**Policy maker**

The argument mainly put forward by frontline policy makers in TVET was that the current challenges could be attributed to a lack of positive commitment and political will in the past. This consequently affected the development of a positive legislative and policy framework, until 2006 when the COTVET Act was passed.

*'We did not give the needed attention to the sector. I think we have belittled the TVET sector and what it can do for Ghana. For some years past, the sector was hanging without any serious designation, until now.'*

**Policy maker**

### A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR TVET?

The passing of the COTVET Act has been met with renewed optimism for the development of the sector:

*'Things are changing quite fast, we now have an Act of Parliament that establishes the Council for Technical and Vocational Education. This is a clear indication of the beginning of systems, and structures. I think TVET has a future, provided COTVET lives up to its mandate.'*

**Policy maker**

<sup>8</sup>The Dzobo Report (1973) was a key change in educational policy, particularly at the basic level.

This statement indicates that the future looks brighter for TVET in Ghana, and more and more effort is being made to provide a better policy and legislative environment for TVET to thrive in. However, the success of the TVET sector was directly linked to the programmes and strategies that will be implemented by COTVET. The suggestion was that COTVET and its allied agencies such as the NVTI (National Vocational Training Institute) and other stakeholders such as the Opportunity Industrialisation Centre (OIC) and Integrated Community Centre for Employable Skills (ICCES) require a more functional collaboration in any attempt to develop the TVET sector.

### FUNDING FOR THE TVET SECTOR

Interviews with frontline policy officers showed that one of the greatest challenges facing the TVET sector was the issue of public funding. Policy officers acknowledged an absolute need for greater public funding to the sector, particularly the traditional apprenticeship system. The contention was that over the years, government funding for TVET has been low compared with basic education. Thus an increase in government investment into the sector was recommended by the majority of interviewees. The model of ‘Talk Tax’, as in the case of ‘communication tax’ for the national youth employment programme, was proposed. In view of government funding for TVET, the proposed plan of the Government providing one year of funding for apprentices in traditional apprenticeships was seen by policy officers as a good springboard to spur growth of the sector.

## 3.6 Guidance and counselling for TVET

### THE NATURE AND PRACTICE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR TVET TRAINEES

Guidance and counselling among TVET trainees in the study was primarily derived from informal family advice on how to conduct oneself during training. There was no indication from any respondents of any formal provision to assist young people to make informed choices about the pathways they take. Consequently, guidance and counselling provision can best be described as informal, uncoordinated and unorganised. For example, a trainee stated that:

*‘When I told my sister that I wanted to learn a trade, she asked me what I wanted to do and I said hairdressing, she told me that hairdressers are stigmatised. But that is what I wanted to do, so she advised me to make sure that I go there to learn and not learn bad attitudes from the workplace.’* **Formal trainee**



Most young people's desire to undertake vocational or technical education is driven by their own interest in a particular trade and by the fact that they cannot continue in the secondary school system for the reasons highlighted previously. In addition, young people rely heavily on their parents' or close relatives' advice with regard to how they should conduct themselves during training. There is very little offered to young people to allow them to understand alternative choices and formal information, advice and guidance. Rarely are the professional and the market value of different trades discussed with young people. Another influence on the type of trades young people chose was found to be peers who were already in such vocations, as one respondent noted:

*'When I was going into training, I told one of my sisters who was also learning how to sew. She told me that on the job you can be sent while it is raining to give something to someone. Do not refuse to do it so that your seniors can teach you what you want to know. When you go to work late, your master would punish you; he has rules and regulations which you must adhere to and [if you do, your] master would like you. When I started too, I realised that what my sister said was true and it is helping me.'* **Informal trainee**

Interaction with master craftspersons in the informal TVET sector on guidance and counselling for trainees suggests that they acknowledge the relevance and need for improved provision. Some have been involved in providing some brief guidance and counselling to their trainees. A master craftsperson noted:

*'I use my life as an example to counsel them to learn other trades connected to dressmaking, such as bead making and hat making.'* **Master craftsperson**

The general observation is that the trainees receive substantial 'on the job' guidance. What is absent is guidance and counselling prior to training, which is desperately needed. Young people are not aware of the options open to them and often what their chosen studies actually entail. It is positive to note that master craftspersons were recommending a more organised and well coordinated guidance and counselling system for trainees.

The informal system seems to be better at providing guidance to young people albeit in an uncoordinated manner. The formal TVET system (vocational and technical schools), on the other hand, generally lacks even ad hoc and unstructured guidance and counselling. For many children in the formal TVET system their parents were the only source of information about the options open to them. For example, one trainee in formal training noted:

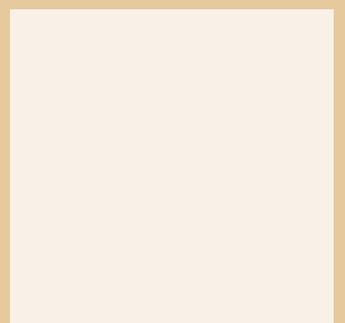
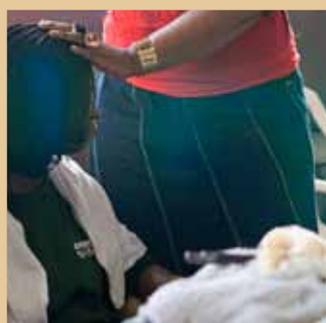
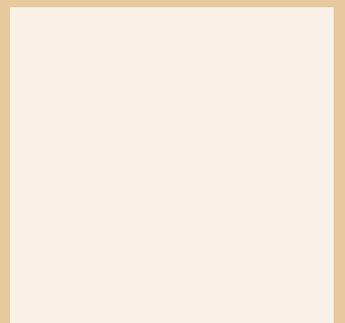
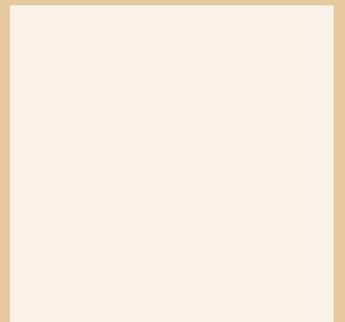
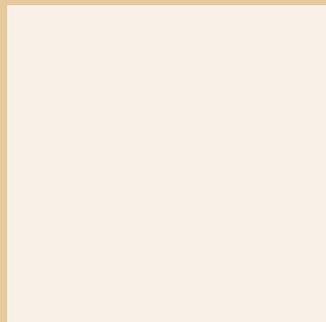
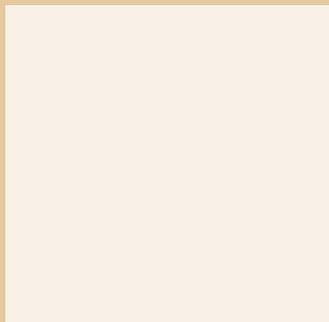
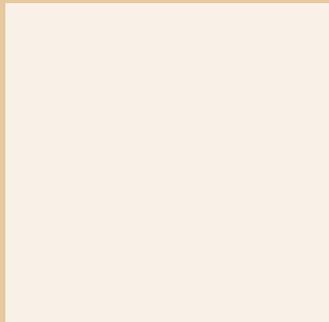
*'[My father] has a basis of technical education. He has the knowledge in it so he advises me; he lectured welding. He told me that welding is at the heart of industries. That every industry in Ghana will need a welder. So he encouraged me.'* **Informal trainee**

Another trainee said:

*'I chose to become engineer; an auto-engineer. Then I did not have any career counsellor to introduce me to those things or to tell me to know more about it. So I have friends who were working there so I went and I asked them and I looked at how they do their things.'* **Informal trainee**

It was clear from the discussions with all stakeholders that careers advice and guidance provision is either not available or is woefully inadequate. Careers advice and guidance is an important tool to allow young people to assess the options available to them, and identify which educational pathway and potential career most suits their interests and abilities. In addition, good careers advice provision will also provide information on where jobs are available in the labour market. This would reduce the bottlenecks that are currently occurring for trainees after they have completed courses, and is vital to reducing unemployment levels in Ghana.

# CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



# CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TVET sector has been burdened with countless problems which have affected its ability to provide an effective platform for service delivery. This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of key stakeholders in selected districts of Ghana to understand some of the key issues and barriers affecting the sector. In this chapter we draw conclusions from the evidence presented and provide some key policy recommendations, which we believe COTVET and its allied partners should consider addressing, and from which, where relevant, the private sector could derive opportunities.

## 4.1 Key conclusions

1. There is a widely held perception in Ghana that only people who are academically weak undertake technical and vocational education. A significant proportion of current TVET trainees, particularly in the informal sector (primarily apprenticeships), are therefore labelled as school dropouts, which impacts on the self esteem and external perceptions of trainees' abilities.
2. Within the informal sector, master craftsmen did not indicate any significant difference in the ability to take up new technical skills between trainees from different educational backgrounds. There was, however, consensus that some level of formal education (literacy and numeracy) is essential for trainees to learn effectively and take up new skills. The required levels of support for developing basic literacy and numeracy for those that were unable to complete formal education are not currently in place.

3. Evidence from parents, policy makers and in some cases trainees themselves suggests that vocational education is perceived to have a poor rate of return. This stems from the fact that those who enter into vocational education and training in Ghana are more likely to be poor. A high percentage of trainees surveyed came from poor homes, where their parents could not afford to send them into higher education. This trend was even more marked for informal trainees. The stakeholders surveyed often said that vocational training is meant for those who cannot afford formal 'grammar' education. There was also a clear assumption that to gain a well-paid and highly regarded job, you need to go through academic routes.
4. A significant number of respondents (trainees, trainers and parents) believed that there are limited employment opportunities for people who undergo vocational and technical education. Some trainees were sceptical about the employment prospects presented by TVET, pointing to a widening gap between the supply of graduates from TVET programmes and the demand from employers.
5. Significantly, some trades such as hairdressing have become stigmatised because they are seen to be associated with other anti-social trades. They consequently struggle to attract the strongest students, and the value of these trades in society is downplayed. This is particularly unfortunate as these trades have the potential to absorb large numbers of young people.
6. Respondents highlighted the volatility of income from vocational-and-technical-skills-related jobs. Some trades were seasonal, and the income flow from them tended to be unpredictable, making them less attractive as livelihood options.
7. Many young people, particularly in informal training, were sceptical about the quality of the training they received. Some felt that master craftsmen hid valuable skills from them. These differences between provision has an impact on the comparability of trainees and therefore their options for further training and opportunities with other employers. Improving the quality and standardisation of informal training is a key concern and needs to be addressed if the sector is to be rejuvenated.



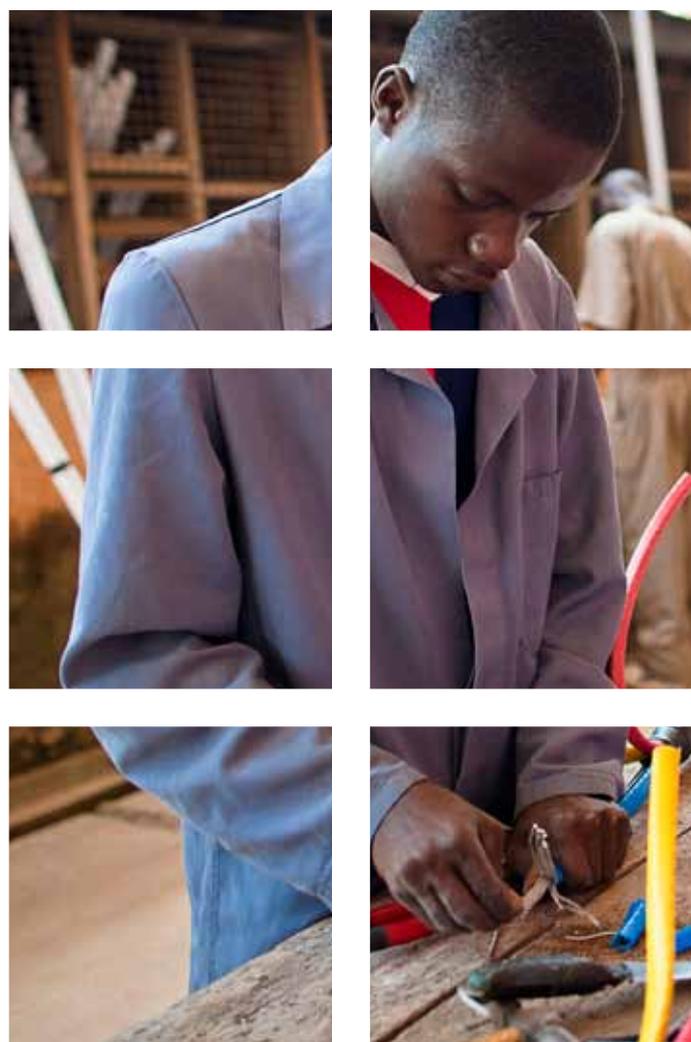


8. Meeting employers' expectations was a major challenge for TVET graduates. Employers generally saw the value of TVET graduates to their business and were positive with regard to the applicability of the skills they had. Despite these positive attitudes towards TVET graduates, employers nonetheless felt that graduates did not show a sufficient level of professionalism towards their work. Employers from both the formal and informal sectors appeared frustrated that most new graduates struggle to work on their own without supervision and lack basic employability skills.
9. Informal employers complained about a decline in proficiency standards over the years among TVET recruits who had undergone informal vocational training. Many of them were sceptical about the capabilities of future employees, especially those from the informal sector. These employers indicated that they had difficulty securing evidence of competence from informal TVET trainees. This has an impact on the marketability of acquired skills and may be contributing to weak employment opportunities for informal trainees.
10. Young people need career counselling to help them weigh up the options open to them and choose pathways that are relevant to them. However, guidance and counselling for trainees was mostly informal and uncoordinated. Parents, peers and sometimes trainers were sources of guidance and focused on conduct and behaviour during training, rather than discussing future options, prospects and alternatives.
11. There are indications of a previously unfavourable policy environment for developing TVET. Past policies gave prominence to formal grammar education and higher education, to the neglect of skills training. While this report recognises the steps made by the current administration to begin to mainstream TVET in the policy debate, the esteem of vocational training, the quality of training, and ongoing support after training are still problems and must be addressed. These issues have culminated in the existing system which has limited progression routes for TVET graduates from both formal and informal training.

## 4.2 The way forward – recommendations

It is imperative that COTVET and its allied agencies take steps to address the issue of negative attitudes and perceptions through programmes to enhance the image of TVET. To ensure effectiveness, any campaign should coincide with programmes to improve the quality of training provision. Policy issues, including support for learners during and after training, the quality of training provision and funding for the sector, must also be resolved. It is also crucial to develop a coordinated structure and system for guidance and counselling for young people in TVET.

Master craftsmen in the informal sector are a critical mass whose capacities can be harnessed for effective delivery of TVET training. Their ability to deliver training can be enhanced through programmes to improve their pedagogical skills. This section lists the five key recommendations which emerged from the research.



### CONDUCT A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS OF TVET

Negative attitudes and perceptions greatly obscure the gains from TVET for young people. It is important that an image-enhancing project is initiated as part of COTVET's strategy. The campaign should promote vocational pathways as viable education options for young people, alongside higher education. COTVET could consider collaborating with the Department of Information to implement the campaign. It is also important to give young people access to vocational training at an early age to improve their understanding of training pathways and possible careers. With this in mind, options such as taster days for school children to go to training institutes and workshops could be adopted as part of a promotional strategy.

Any campaign aiming to improve the image of TVET must be targeted directly at the stakeholders it wishes to influence, particularly parents, who are the key providers of careers advice, and young people. The campaign should focus on sectors where the financial and career benefits of pursuing a TVET-related career are clear. In addition, it is essential to target those trades that are socially stigmatised, such as hairdressing, beauty therapy and auto-mechanics, because they have the potential to absorb high numbers of young people.

### DEVELOP THE CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SYSTEM

Careers guidance and counselling are important for providing relevant pathways to young people. It is recommended that COTVET takes steps to re-introduce guidance and counselling co-ordinators into both formal and informal training systems. COTVET will need to collaborate with the Ghana Education Service to optimise current and future provision, develop a careers guidance framework and improve transferability between different learning pathways.

There is also a need to train teachers to ensure that they are able to understand and communicate the different options open to young people, as well as information about where these options may lead and employers' workplace expectations. Improved labour market information will enhance the ability of advisors to understand where opportunities lie within the labour market and is a key requirement to improve the supply and demand of skills.

## EXPAND THE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE PLATFORMS FOR TVET

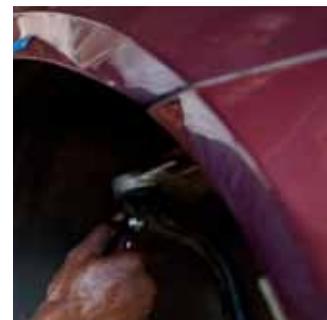
There has been an appreciable attempt to introduce policies to enhance the TVET system through the initiation of COTVET. There is, however, a need to align the TVET policy framework with other supportive policies, such as small business development. Policies that address funding difficulties for the informal sector, particularly support for trainees, are desirable. The proposed Government support for the first year of training for traditional apprenticeships is laudable but could be expanded to include support for young graduates who need to set up workshops.

The issue of credit for start-up capital for graduates is important to enhance self-employment opportunities, which is a key aim of the existing TVET system. The Government could therefore consider integrating the skills development fund with credit provision to micro- and small enterprise establishment.

## CAPACITY TRAINING FOR MASTER CRAFTSPERSONS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED

Master craftspersons constitute a critical mass of professionals whose potential can be harnessed to enhance the quality of TVET training. There are inconsistencies in training arrangements from one trainer to another, with varied teaching methods. It is recommended that the issue of standardisation be given greater attention, and the training capacity of master craftspersons developed so that they can provide quality training with relevant curricula and improved pedagogy. This would serve to improve the marketability of skills and enhance comparability between trainees. A supporting structure would need to be put in place to ensure that trainers are able to gain access to the required information and knowledge in the long term, as well as ongoing support.

There is also a need for further research into good practice in terms of developing a training system for informal trainers, to identify what has worked in different locations. Primarily this research needs to identify approaches which have been able to integrate master craftspersons into a more formalised system of learning with structured improvements in pedagogical ability, whilst also retaining the current benefits of the informal system.



## IMPROVE THE LINKS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND TRAINING

As part of the efforts to create demand for technical and vocational skills, it is important for COTVET to address gaps between the supply and demand of skills. It is recommended that a common platform for employer engagement is developed for industry and training institutions to narrow the gaps between the supply of skills and the demand of industry. To develop the necessary links between industry and training, improved labour market information is again essential to identify growth areas.

A support system for graduates and trainees is also important. If TVET is to continue to generate jobs for self-employment, linking financial provision and wider business support to graduates would be of great benefit. In addition to this, improved access for both informal and formal sector trainees to basic skills training, as well as English language provision, could have great benefits for their career progression.

Ensuring that the support is there for the informal sector, which makes up a large proportion of the economy, and therefore of training requirements in Ghana, is essential to ensure ongoing productivity gains. Further research into potential quality assurance systems, as well as funding models for training and post-training support structures within the informal sector, would be of great use to the development and viability of TVET in Ghana.

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# GLOSSARY

|        |   |       |  |
|--------|---|-------|--|
| BECE   | Basic Education Certificate Examination                 | LIC   | Local Implementation Committee                         |
| CBT    | Competency-based training                               | MDG   | Millennium Development Goals                           |
| COTVET | Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training | MOE   | Ministry of Education                                  |
| CSD    | City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development             | MOESS | Ministry of Education, Science & Sports                |
| FGD    | Focus group discussion                                  | MSE   | Micro- and small enterprises                           |
| GES    | Ghana Education Service                                 | NVTI  | National Vocational Training Institute                 |
| GOG    | Government of Ghana                                     | OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| ICCES  | Integrated Community Centre for Employable Skills       | OIC   | Opportunity Industrialisation Centre                   |
| ICT    | Information and communication technology                | SHS   | Senior high school                                     |
| ILO    | International Labour Organisation                       | SSS   | Senior secondary school                                |
| JHS    | Junior high school                                      | TVET  | Technical vocational education and training            |
| JSS    | Junior secondary school                                 | VET   | Vocational education and training                      |
| KII    | Key informant interview                                 | VTI   | Vocational training institute                          |





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