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The extent to which the falling standard of TVET affects the student's trainees in the job market: a case study of technical and vocational educational institutes in the Volta Region of Ghana

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Abstract

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has proven to be one of the most effective human resource development strategies for preparing the nation's technical workforce for rapid industrialization and national growth. This served as the basis for the researcher's examination of the elements influencing the decline in the proportion of craft practice skills in technical and vocational institutions. The study examined the existing environment in which the TVET system in the country operates, with an emphasis on how collaboration between practical skill exhibition and workshop process education may promote skill acquisition and training. Questionnaires and interviews were selected as the two main data collection strategies for this project. Interviews with the leaders of the selected technical and vocational institutions were conducted, and questionnaires were given to both students and instructors. The majority of technical institutes, according to the survey, lack suitable facilities, which has an effect on the caliber of teaching offered there. There is not enough time set aside for workshop practice. Additionally, there is insufficient oversight and monitoring of the institutes. There is no requirement for students to

have an industrial attachment, and colleges do not organise field trips for students to visit businesses. It might be difficult for TVET graduates to find jobs after graduation, despite the fact that the curriculum being used is not industry-driven. According to the study, technical institutions' curricula are not created to meet the needs of the domestic and international labour markets. The study also revealed that it is challenging for graduates of technical institutes to get employment following graduation. The majority of graduates also struggle to deal with the practical skills that employers expect of them in the workplace.

Key Words: Technical, Vocational, Education, Standards and Training, Job market

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) is a critical area in the development process of every nation and over the past five years has been revolving as a critical strategy that is directly linked to growth, development, poverty reduction and job creation. Over the years Ghana, like several other countries in Sub Saharan Africa, has devised several approaches to address and in fact re-engineer Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (Adams et al., 2023).

This re-engineering and repositioning has been reflected in several national and sector documents and policies including but not limited to: the Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategies (GPRS I &II), The New Education Reform 2007 (NER), the draft Long Term Development Plan 2008 – 2015, the Private Sector Development Strategy 2010 - 2015 (PSD II), the revised Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010 - 2020 and the 2004 TVET Policy Framework which led to the passing of Act 718 and the subsequent establishment of the Council for TVET in 2006 (Pongo, & Obinnim, 2015). The main objectives of these strategies/policies and the establishment of the Council, are to guide and streamline the TVET system and promote Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) in Ghana. Critically, the New Education Reform (NER) of 2007 further shifted the focus of the national education policy towards post-basic education, with a renewed focus on skills development, and science and technology as key focal areas where reforms, new policies, investments and partnerships need to be pursued towards economic competitiveness, employment and poverty reduction (Nkwanyane, 2023). This has been the policy direction of the country towards technical and vocational reformation for the country. This is the case because Technical and Vocational Education is the vehicle of national development.

Literature Review

Causes of falling standards in TVET in Ghana?

Employment Challenges

In the technical and vocational sector, where it can be challenging to interpret credentials for placement on the employment ladder, the employability of TVET graduates has been a key concern. Afeti et al. (2003), Gowreesunkar et al. 2019; Dwomoh & Luguterah (2010), among others, imply that around two-thirds of TVET

graduates are unemployed, despite the fact that no extensive tracer studies on TVET graduate employment have been conducted. Once more, this shows that a large portion of TVET has been supply-driven and has concentrated very narrowly on specialized training that is not in high demand from the market.

Ghana started implementing new educational reforms in September 2007. TVET and secondary education have both been given top priority in the reform initiatives. Senior secondary education was increased from three to four years in order to address concerns about quality, only to be changed back with a change of administration in 2009. With a renewed focus on preparing all students for admittance into postsecondary institutions or for the job market through apprenticeship training in the private sector, technical and vocational education is being reorganized across the nation (MOESS 2007). Although the adjustments may seem familiar, they appear to reflect fresh insights that are in line with global patterns and lessons learned from investing in education for economic growth (Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). The new reforms have acknowledged that there is less distinction between academic, technical, and even vocational training and that students trained today need not only skills that are immediately useful in the workplace but also adaptable knowledge and skills that will allow them to change with the evolution of products and production techniques. The emphasis now is on TVET students' ability to apply the existing training and skill practices for more effective output through their education, for instance. As a result, the reforms seek to connect education with the workplace by creating programs that emphasize job market readiness through partnerships with private and public sector organizations (MOESS 2007). In order to improve the creation and design of programs specifically suited to the demands of the job market, a commitment has also been made to measuring, monitoring, and analyzing student flows. In order to encourage continued educational progress, a new education bill has been created that outlines new institutional duties and structures (Lugya, 2018).

Impact of falling standards in TVET on trainee's employability

As Nakanishi (2006) aptly described it in relation to NVTI graduates, the labour market in Ghana is a "difficult labour market." The labour absorption capacity of the market is low and not growing fast enough to cope with the hundreds of thousands of graduates entering the market at various levels of the educational system.

It is generally understood that the basic difference between TVET and general academic education is that TVET aims to prepare people for employment in specific occupational fields; hence the ultimate criterion for judging the efficacy of TVET is the extent to which its graduates get and remain employed. Traditionally, Ghanaian TVET institutions have measured their success in terms of outputs such as number of trainees who have passed the end-of-programme examinations for the award of certificates and diplomas (Nugba, 2020). Institutions have cared less about and not monitored what happens to their students after graduation. There is therefore, little information on student transition to the labour market. The efficacy of the technical and vocational education came into question as unemployment among TVET graduates became visible and chronic. The dilemmas of transition from school to the world of work stimulated four kinds of awareness which the TVET system is struggling to institutionalize: a) correcting the mismatch between curricula and industry needs; (b) need to monitor transition to the labour market

through tracer studies; (c) need for structured industrial attachment involving businesses, and (d) training towards self- employment rather than towards paid employment only.

The Education Sector Performance Report 2008 (MoESS, 2008) in response to the findings of a GSS, (2007) survey maintained that "In general, industry has not identified skills shortages as a major obstacle to conducting business or to expansion" and that "There is little evidence of a general shortage of workers with vocational/technical skills." However, the empirical basis of this assertion is not clear. There are anecdotal reports that in the building construction industry, for example, employers are not able to find competency skilled workers for floor tiling and prefer to recruit from the Republic of Benin. There may not be shortages of skills in terms of quantity but in terms of quality, there may be shortages. The lack of infrastructure in terms of training equipment and materials for simulations and workshop practices are non-existent in most TVET institutions. In such situations tutors are compelled to resort to theoretical approach to teaching practical concepts. This affects the practical competency of the trainees thereby affecting their employability.

One significant recommendation made by Nakanishi (2006) was that "as the labour market is difficult, it is important for trainees to decide what they want to do after training as soon as possible." This implies that trainees or students should be made aware of the realities of the labour market right from the beginning so that they can consider employment options early and be prepared for those options instead of the current false assumption that everybody was being prepared for paid employment (Sallaz, 2015). Transition from school to work has been a difficult one for TVET graduates and as a matter of policy, the TVET system in Ghana should be transformed through the use of Competency Based Training (CBT) approach. Industry and training institutions should work together to develop a structure industrial attachment system to strengthen the link between demand and supply of skills.

Methods and Materials

This study used both quantitative and qualitative case study methodologies, and its primary goal was to make discoveries. The case study approach was selected due to its ability to enable an in-depth investigation of a case and reveal significant concerns that might otherwise be missed by other approaches. Since this study attempted to address both a "descriptive question" about the reasons behind the decline in standards in technical and vocational education as well as an "explanatory question" about how it affects trainees, the case study approach was particularly suitable. Additionally, data was gathered by direct observation in a real-world setting, which gave the results more validity (Xian et al., 2023; Yin, 2006). The causes of the decline in TVET quality in Ghana and its effects on student trainees were the main topics of the study. The method of systematic random sampling was used by the researcher. The primary data collection tools utilized were questionnaires and interviews. Using SPSS v16, the collected data were coded and examined.

Result and Discussion

Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

The Table 4.1 gives information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents surveyed.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Top Officials (%)	H.O. Ds & Tutors (%)	Students (%)
Gender			
Female	20	-	7.4
Male	80	100	92.6
Age groups			
Under 20			20
20-25			80
45-55	26.7	63.6	
Above 55	73.3	36.4	
Level of education			
Technical & Vocational	57	63	100
Tertiary	43	37	

Three groups of respondents were surveyed. These people are department heads, tutors, and pupils. According to the table, 26.7% of the senior officials who were in the same year group as the H. O. Ds and tutors were between the ages of 45 and 55. The majority (73.3%) of the top officials were over the age of 55. Over 80% of the pupils were between the ages of 20 and 25. Unlike the highest officials, who were split 80/20 male to female, all H. O. D.s and tutors were men. The gender split among the students was 92.6% male and 7.4% female. The two categories that were polled were pursued, comprising 80% of the total of these two groupings.

Analysis on the Causes for the falling standards of technical and vocational education and t Standard accessories and attachment for machine tools.

To investigate the extent at which the falling standard of TVET affects the student's trainees in the job market?

The results concern the provision of adequate consumable tools and materials for use in the institution throughout the academic year.

Table 4.2 Provision of adequate consumable tools and materials throughout the academic year

	Age				
	21 - 30	**31 - 40**	**41 - 50**	**51 +**	**Total**
Strongly Disagree	7 (50.0%)	6 (37.5%)	5 (26.3%)	4 (44.4%)	22 (37.9%)
Disagree	3 (21.4%)	3 (18.8%)	8 (42.1%)	5 (55.6%)	19 (32.8%)
Not sure	0 (.0%)	1 (6.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.7%)
Agree	1 (7.1%)	3	5 (26.3%)	0 (.0%)	9 (15.5%)
Strongly Agree	3 (21.4%)	3 (18.8%)	1 (5.3%)	0 (.0%)	7 (12.1%)
Total	14 (100.0%)	16 (100.0%)	19 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)	58 (100.0%)

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents (n = 22, 37.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement that their institutions receive sufficient consumable tools and materials throughout the academic year. Additionally, 19 (32.8%) people disagreed with that statement. The results are also shown with respect to the respondents' age ranges from the survey.

A schedule of workshop practice in place in the institution

The results on the whether there is a system in place in the institution to enhance the skill performance of students.

Table 4.3 Institution of a workshop practice to enhance the skill performance of students

	Age				
	< 18	19 – 23	24 – 29	30 +	Total
Strongly Disagree	7 (7.5%)	1 (4.5%)	0 (.0%)	1 (25.0%)	9 (6.2%)
Disagree	12 (12.9%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (18.5%)	0 (.0%)	20 (13.7%)
Not sure	1 (1.1%)	0	1 (3.7%)	0 (.0%)	2 (1.4%)
Agree	38 (40.9%)	6 (27.3%)	8 (29.6%)	2 (50.0%)	54 (37.0%)

Strongly Agree	35 (37.6%)	12 (54.5%)	13 (48.1%)	1 (25.0%)	61 (41.8%)
Total	93 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	27 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	146 (100.0%)

According to Table 4.3's results, the majority of respondents (n = 61, 41.8%) highly agreed that the institution has a schedule of workshop practice sessions to improve students' skill performance. The results also show that 54 respondents, or 37% of those surveyed, agreed with the statement that their schools hold practice workshops to help students improve their skills. The results have been broken down according to the respondents' ages.

Provision of adequate consumable tools and materials throughout the academic year

The results in Table 4.4 concern the provision of adequate consumable tools and materials for use in the institution throughout the academic year.

Table 4.4 Provision of adequate consumable tools and materials throughout the academic year

	Age				
	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 +	Total
Strongly Disagree	7 (50.0%)	6 (37.5%)	5 (26.3%)	4 (44.4%)	22 (37.9%)
Disagree	3 (21.4%)	3 (18.8%)	8 (42.1%)	5 (55.6%)	19 (32.8%)
Not sure	0 (.0%)	1 (6.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.7%)
Agree	1 (7.1%)	3	5 (26.3%)	0 (.0%)	9 (15.5%)
Strongly Agree	3 (21.4%)	3 (18.8%)	1 (5.3%)	0 (.0%)	7 (12.1%)
Total	14 (100.0%)	16 (100.0%)	19 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)	58 (100.0%)

Table 4.4 shows that the majority of respondents (n = 22, 37.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement that their institutions receive sufficient consumable tools and materials throughout the academic year. Additionally, 19 (32.8%) people disagreed with that statement.

System of workshop practice demonstration in the institution

Table 4.5 gives results on the system of workshop practice demonstration to enhance the performance of students in the technical institutions used for the study.

Table 4.5 System of workshop practice demonstration to enhance the performance of students

Age					
	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 +	Total
Strongly Disagree	5	3	6	2	16
	(35.7%)	(18.8%)	(33.3%)	(22.2%)	(28.1%)
Disagree	5	8	3	2	18
	(35.7%)	(50.0%)	(16.7%)	(22.2%)	(31.6%)
Not sure	1	1	0	1	3
	(7.1%)	(6.2%)	(.0%)	(11.1%)	(5.3%)
Agree	3	3	7	4	17
	(21.4%)	(18.8%)	(38.9%)	(44.4%)	(29.8%)
Strongly Agree	0	1	2	0	3
	(.0%)	(6.2%)	(11.1%)	(.0%)	(5.3%)
Total	14	16	18	9	57
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

In Table 4.5 the respondents were asked whether they have in their institution a system of workshop practice demonstration sessions for student to enhance their performance. The results indicate the responses were skewed towards the disagreement end of the scale with accumulated percentage of more than half (n=34, 59.7) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. However, and notably, 17 (29.8%) of the respondents also agreed to the effect that they have a system of workshop practice demonstration sessions geared to enhance the performance of students.

Further Discussion

As indicated by Nakanishi (2006), the problems technical institutions face is further compounded by the fact that TVET programmes and curriculum are often not designed to meet observed or projected labour market demands, as already established in figure 4.2. Interview results from graduates revealed that they find it very difficult to get placed in jobs after they have completed school. As one put it "I completed school in 2002 from Kpando Technical Institute, and it took me 6 years to be able to get the job I am doing right now." This highlights the very problem of the employability of graduates from technical institutes. Another fellow also described the ordeal she went through

after she got a job: *"When* I started this job, I realised I'd wasted my time in school. I didn't know anything, and my supervisors were always unhappy with me. This is because I had machine handling problems and I lacked the skill to handle some of the tools; it was so embarrassing. This scenario gives the impression that TVET students are not able to cope with the demand for skill training since they lack the requisite and adequate training to produce the quality that industry needs. A service the technical institutions were set up to provide. The heads of the institutions further confirmed their lack of data to support the job placement details of their products as the contract ends right after the student leaves the walls of the institutions. As stated by one head, "We don't know how many have had jobs and those who haven't had jobs. And as I said, some of the students come from as far as Brong Ahafo Region to this place, and when they complete, they go back; we don't have the resources to track them." This coincides with the claim of Afeti (2009), who maintained that the use of tracer studies to improve the market responsiveness of training programmes is currently absent. Nevertheless, the institutes offer students entrepreneurial training (table 4.16). From this finding, one can assume that this is an effort on the part of the institutions to inculcate in the students the attitude of self-employment rather than towards paid employment, as suggested by Afeti (2009).

Conclusions and Recommendations.

Effects of the fall in standards on student trainees on the job market.

a. Graduates from TVETs find it difficult getting placed in jobs because the skill set they possess is not what industry requires.
b. Graduates are unable to cope with the demand for skill performance given the lack of adequate training.

Recommendation

1. The government should make significant investments in this area of the education system. Government funding should be used to build state-of-the-art training workshops, machinery, tools, and equipment, as well as other facilities needed for efficient teaching and learning at technical institutions.
2. To make technical and vocational education more efficient, the government should work toward reorganizing the entire system. To control the industry, national policies had to be developed. This necessitates a concentration on preparing pupils for the job market through apprenticeship training in the private sector or for admittance into tertiary institutions. TVET (Quality-Based TVET) is implementing quality assurance measures. Additionally, this policy would entail boosting the budgetary funding given to TVET institutions so they may purchase training tools and materials.
3. The country should work with the private sector to provide technical and vocational education since doing so will encourage competition, which will lead to better service delivery. Adding new TVET institutions

(Vocational Institutes, Vocational Training Centers, and Technical Industrial Schools) is another strategy to address community demands for technical and vocational education and training.

4. The institutions should be making it compulsory for students to have industrial attachment during vacations and at the same time while in school embark on industrial visits. These will increase their awareness about the demands of work in the industry so they prepare before they leave school.

Suggestion for Further study

A further study should be conducted to find out if consumable training materials should be supplied direct from the government to the training institutions.

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