

## Guiding Young People to Technical and Vocational Careers in Ghana

### Introduction

Since the establishment of the first model schools in the 1970s, Ghana has made strides to incorporate Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) into basic and second-cycle education. This has led to increased acceptance of technical and vocational careers in Ghanaian society. However, despite progress in policy implementation, the notion persists that TVET is primarily an educational and career path for those who are less academically inclined.

To help students and parents recognize the educational and career opportunities that TVET offers, it is essential to enhance career guidance for students in basic and secondary schools and to develop and deploy a national policy on career guidance and counseling.

### The current state of TVET career guidance in Ghana

#### *TVET schools*

Until recently, TVET in Ghana was highly fragmented and delivered by several departments and agencies under nine different ministries. Agencies and Departments such as the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), National Vocational and Technical Institutes (NVTI), Department of Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills (DICCES) existed under MELR, while the Gratis Foundation was housed under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Community Development Vocational Training Institute under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development Local Government. Meanwhile, the Government Transport Training Institute and Farm Institutes sat under the Ministry of Transport, and the Accra Technical Training Institute and the Tema Technical Institute operated under the Ministry of Education.

The government consolidated all technical and vocational training institutions into a single entity, the Ghana TVET Service. However, no structure for career guidance and counseling was included in the TVET curriculum. As a result, of the more than 200 TVET institutions in Ghana, none have an existing policy for guidance and counseling. The Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Ghana TVET Service is in the process of formulating a policy framework, as is Ghana Education Service (GES), and the debate continues as to whether the two should have one unified policy or two separate ones.

#### *Basic schools*

Career guidance can be defined as “services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers” (EU Commission LLP 2007-2013, Europe). These services can be found in the private sector, in schools, universities and colleges, training institutions, public employment services, the workplace, and the voluntary or community sector.

In Ghana, primary education (years 1 to 6) and junior high school education (years 6 to 9) comprise basic school. Career guidance is typically offered at the junior high school level by teachers. For those students who demonstrate technical and vocational ability, teachers can suggest schools offering TVET;

however, teachers are not devoted solely to providing career guidance and they typically lack the necessary training. Public basic schools also have dedicated days for career counseling where students who are inclined toward technical and vocational education are encouraged to pursue such career paths.

The newly introduced curriculum for Junior High School (JHS) includes Core Skills for Basic Design and Technology (BDT) as its core subject. This subject introduces students to topics such as “Introduction to the Job Market” and “Entrepreneurial Skills”, giving an overview of TVET careers. Despite this, there is a lack of qualified teachers providing adequate career guidance and counseling for basic students. Some teachers do give guidance voluntarily, but this is not enough.

## Research findings

This brief draws from the larger study by the African Center for Economic Transformation's Youth Employment and Skills (ACET-YES) on *Strengthening Education and Learning Systems to Deliver a 4IR-Ready Workforce: Ghana Country Report*<sup>1</sup>. In addition, we interviewed key stakeholders in the field of career guidance in Ghana.

The ACET-YES Ghana study revealed that **63 percent of secondary school teachers and administrators believe that career guidance is not embedded at JHS and Senior High School (SHS) levels.**

Approximately 60 percent felt career guidance is more prevalent at the JHS level. About 72 percent of respondents suggested that industry representatives should take up invitations to school career fairs (usually once a year), indicating that this lack of contact is strongly felt at the SHS level where there is also a shortage of career counselors.

On the other hand, respondents from TVET institutions felt that career guidance is embedded within the learning system and is often delivered as part of subjects such as entrepreneurship. Occasionally, students, graduates, and alumni from universities and other tertiary institutions attend Senior High Technical Schools and mentor students on educational and career progression. One respondent said, “University students and graduates serve as real-life role models to high school students, guiding them to acquire university education.”

However, this **support is not systematic and depends on each school's strategies and priorities.** Some schools

engage with foundations and associations that provide support and career guidance to students. In the absence of formal structures for career guidance, some teachers and national service personnel take it upon themselves to advise students, but this is very unstructured.

An education specialist with Africa Education Watch, an education policy research and advocacy organization, said that at the basic schools, “We have guidance and counseling coordinators who are supposed to facilitate such career guidance provision, but they rarely do that. Their guidance and counseling activities are more on issues of social vices. Besides, they do not have the expertise in career guidance provision to deliver that themselves.” He also specified that these guidance and counseling coordinators are not professional guidance and counseling practitioners, and that any teacher can be appointed for that role.

**Resources are another challenge— only 3 percent of public funding for education is allocated to TVET (MOE 2018), which impacts awareness and career guidance.** A teacher at the Kotobabi No. 2 Basic Schools indicated that there is a lack of learning material at the public basic schools to facilitate the learning of core skills of Basic Design and Technology, a subject which has been subdivided into Career Technology and Creative Arts and Design which are features of a newly introduced curriculum. He further indicated that there are no textbooks for Career Technology, but only a teacher resource for the subject area. This limits the likelihood of students developing interest in TVET skills.

As the nature of work changes, employers are well placed to advise on secondary and TVET curriculum design and review and provide career guidance to students. **However, the links between schools and employers to assist with career guidance are weak.** The government's TVET transformation strategy aims to address this through the establishment of sector skills bodies through the Commission for TVET (CTVET), which assists TVET sectors in curriculum development, standard generation, and other related matters.

**Strong links between schools and employers are needed to introduce young people to the world of work.** A large majority of employers (78 percent) said that more private sector involvement would help make education more relevant to the rapidly evolving labor market by influencing the types of skills being taught. However, only 26.9 percent of companies and entrepreneurs surveyed

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<sup>1</sup> Full report available here: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/reports-studies/multi-country-studies/strengthening-education-and-learning-systems-to-deliver-a-4ir-ready-workforce-in-ghana/>

said they have been invited to or take part in career fairs. Those who have been involved in career fairs had either been contacted by the school or through organizers of such fairs and received no formal assistance from government actors.

Most employers (61.5 percent) said their minimum qualification level is secondary, while 30.8 percent said primary, and 7.7 percent said tertiary. Respondents identified communication skills as the most commonly missing skill among new employees. This reinforces the notion that secondary education should provide young

people with relevant skills to be productive in the labor market. Organizations, if given the opportunity, can help young people strengthen their practical skills through internships, apprenticeships and mentorship.

According to a Ghana TVET Service employee, **career guidance and counseling at the TVET institutions has not been effective**. Some TVET institutions have school career advisors who coordinate guidance provision and organize career-oriented activities, but these are not present in all institutions. There are plans to employ at least one such officer for each institution.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at strengthening the quality and impact of career guidance and counseling in Ghana.

### 1. Develop a national policy on career guidance and counseling for pre-tertiary education

Policymakers need to develop a comprehensive and cohesive national policy on career guidance and counseling for education. This policy should cover both basic schools and TVET institutions and provide a clear framework for the delivery of effective career guidance and counseling services.

### 2. Enhance capacity training for teachers

Teachers who offer voluntary career guidance and counseling services should be given capacity training to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. Teachers who are responsible for providing career guidance at the basic level should be specialists in this area, with this being their sole responsibility.

### 3. Make career guidance a core part of the curriculum

Career guidance should be an extra-curricular activity that is included in the curriculum as a non-examinable activity. This will help ensure that students have access to the information and support they need to make informed decisions about their future careers.

### 4. Develop resource packs for basic schools and TVET institutions

Resource packs should be developed for both

basic schools and TVET institutions so that students have access to up-to-date information on careers and the courses they need to study to attain their career goals.

### 5. Start career guidance on TVET at the basic school level

Basic schools should not wait until students are embarking on Senior High School (SHS) selection to provide career guidance. Career guidance on TVET should be conducted at least once a year, or once a term, at the basic school level to increase awareness and interest in TVET among young people.

### 6. Involve TVET institutions in career guidance

Teachers from TVET institutions should participate in career guidance sessions at the basic schools. This will provide students with up-to-date information about TVET and careers and help prevent cases of students only enrolling in TVET institutions after completing SHS.

### 7. Include parents in career guidance and TVET awareness

Students and parents are often not well informed about TVET. It is important to include parents in career guidance and TVET awareness efforts to ensure they can provide informed support to their children who choose to enroll in TVET institutions after basic school.

### 8. Provide tools necessary for TVET learning

Basic schools need tools to facilitate TVET, such as those for beadmaking, fashion design, picture making, and woodworking. These should be made available by the Ghana Education Service to make teaching and learning of TVET skills appealing for both students and teachers.

### 9. Promote societal acceptance of TVET

Societal stereotyping of TVET remains a major challenge in Ghana. Stakeholder institutions, such as the Ghana TVET Service, the Commission for TVET, and the Ghana Education Service, should continue to embark on awareness creation efforts to promote societal acceptance of TVET.

### 10. Foster a diverse and inclusive career guidance profession

A comprehensive career guidance profession is necessary in Ghana, consisting of counselors with a deep understanding of various careers and industries. This profession should strive for gender diversity and empower young people to choose careers that challenge societal stereotypes.

## Conclusion

For Ghana to ensure it is adequately nurturing its young citizens to unlock their potential, a comprehensive national policy on career guidance and counseling is crucial. Such a policy, covering both basic schools and TVET institutions, will increase the sector's appeal and attract top students. By addressing the stigma surrounding TVET as an educational path for less academically gifted students, the policy will also help change negative perceptions. Regular promotion of successful TVET professionals and diverse job

opportunities available to TVET graduates can encourage parents and students to consider this path as a viable option.

To enhance career guidance and counseling in Ghana, three key steps are necessary: a comprehensive and cohesive national policy, capacity building for teachers, and structured career guidance integrated into the curriculum. With these measures in place, students will have access to the information and support they need to make informed decisions about their future careers.

## REFERENCES

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