



NEWSLETTER

Improving access to TVET in Ghana – prioritizing career education at the primary school level.

In 2015, the member states of the United Nations adopted seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals to provide "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet," with the 4th Goal aiming to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Target 4.3 aims at ensuring that by 2030, there is equal access "for all women and men to affordable and quality technical and vocational education," with Target 4.4 aiming to substantially increase the number of youth with relevant Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) skills for their readiness for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

The TVET landscape in Ghana

Ghana's TVET delivery is in two major streams – the formal and informal – with the formal stream delivered in a well-structured environment by public or private institutions and training mostly delivered using a structured curriculum. The informal stream is largely unstructured and unregulated, with training offered without a curriculum. The formal TVET system has over the years operated with several challenges, including the fragmentation of TVET programs across different ministries and public agencies, outdated curriculum, inadequate investment, and a lack of standardization, among others. Recently, the sub-sector has been on the front burner, undergoing a number of reforms to make it responsive to Ghana's industrialization agenda following the approval of a five-year strategic plan for TVET transformation (2018–2022) by the Cabinet. Since the adoption of the plan, the TVET Council has been upgraded to a Commission to regulate, promote, and administer technical and vocational education and training; there has been the passage of the

TVET Service Bill, which mandates the Ghana TVET Service to implement approved TVET-related policies at the pre-tertiary level; and also, there has been a realignment of all Technical and Vocational Institutions (TVI) under the various ministries and agencies under the Ministry of Education.

Improving access to TVET in Ghana

One of the key policy objectives in the five-year Strategic Plan for TVET Transformation (2018–2022) is to ensure equitable access and promote gender mainstreaming in TVET. To achieve this objective, the government introduced the free TVET program and subsequently increased the number of TVI under the free TVET program from 47 to 139 as of 2022. Prior to the introduction of the free TVET program, there had been the Ghana TVET Voucher Project, which had contributed to improving enrollment in public pre-tertiary training institutions. Between 2015 and 2020, the enrolment in public pre-tertiary training institutions increased from 31,281 to 100,086, representing a 220%

increment from 2015 to 2020. Yet, the 100,086 enrolments into TVET programs at the pre-tertiary training institutions represent just about 9.1% of students enrolled in conventional education programs in 2020, suggesting the need for extra efforts to improve learners' enrollment in TVET programs.

Developing positive social attitudes towards training

Despite the positive gains in TVET service provision and enrolment over the years, it is still peripheral because of the negative social attitudes towards it held by a section of Ghanaians. For instance, TVET is generally seen as a programme catering to students with lower academic performance, making it the last option for students when selecting future career programmes. To generate more public interest, including students' interest in TVET, the Commission for TVET (CTVET) recently launched the MyTVET Campaign to market and promote TVET to stakeholders. The campaign engaged six (6) Ghanaian celebrities and entrepreneurs as TVET ambassadors to use their influence to help promote TVET and make it more attractive. The Commission has also introduced career guidance and counseling at the junior high school (JHS) to promote a positive image of TVET and to promote the interest of more pupils in TVET programs with the aim of increasing their enrolment in TVET programs. Pursuant thereto, the Commission developed a career guidance and counseling training manual and facilitator guide for use during the career guidance and counseling sessions at the junior high school (JHS) level. As of 2020, about 17,000 training manuals and facilitator guides had been distributed to 101 pilot schools implementing the Career Guidance and Counseling project, with a total of 27,757 JHS learners enrolled on the TVET Career Guidance and Counseling project in Ghana.¹

The significance of Career Guidance and Counselling in promoting TVET

TVET Career Guidance and Counselling is essential in guiding learners to appreciate the relevance of TVET, reduce the poor image of TVET, and understand career options, their requirements, and possible employment opportunities in TVET. The absence of it at the school level could leave individual students with no or inadequate information they need to think about the career options available and make a decision as to which matches their interests and which they would like to develop their career in. The promotion of TVET career guidance and counselling in the formal school system is, therefore, a necessity and must be part of each level of the education system – primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary. However, the lack of structures and capacity to implement TVET career guidance and counselling affects its effectiveness, so there must be the provision of the necessary structures, such as well-qualified professionals.

Extending Career Guidance and Counselling to primary schools

Studies argue that ensuring children develop a positive attitude towards TVET and avoid the negative notions surrounding it requires early intervention by way of exposing them to different career options in both conventional and TVET education.² If children aren't exposed to career options early, they develop and hold biased assumptions and narrow career aspirations based on the work they mostly see people do which has the potential to influence; 1) the academic effort they exert in certain lessons; 2) the subject they choose to study in upper secondary and tertiary schools, and 3) the work they end up pursuing.

¹ Commission for TVET (CTVET). 2021. Ghana TVET Report.

² Kashhepakdel, E., Rehill, J. & Hughes, D. 2018. What works? Career-related learning in primary schools

The need to expose children early to different career options is reinforced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In a policy paper by the organization, they noted that,

"To make decisions, students need to have a good picture of work and where they need to put their efforts in studying to be able to realise their dreams. For that, schools should encourage a first-hand understanding of the world of work from the EARLIEST YEARS".³

It is also important to underscore the fact that the development of career ambition has important stages, some occurring at the child's primary school age. Impliedly, the exposure of learners to career options or providing them with career guidance and counselling must not necessarily be delayed until JHS. Pursuant to this, consideration must be given to extending the existing career guidance and Counselling at the JHS to Ghanaian primary schools in the form of activities designed to expose the learners to different career options in both conventional education and TVET streams. As advised by Gottfredson, Gutman, and Akerman⁴ [1] [2], career learning

activities at the primary school level must be done to help children raise their career aspirations, broaden their horizons, and broadly consider a multiple of options (including TVET) and not *"be designed in a way that allows children to make premature choices over future careers."*

The way forward

Even though there are some career education elements in the primary school curriculum, the problem is that they don't get enough attention because there is no policy that says how this education should be organized and given. As such, the efforts being made by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other agencies such as the Ghana TVET Service, the Ghana Education Service, the YES Chapter of the PACT, and other relevant bodies, to provide a policy and a primary-age-appropriate education manual for the provision of career-related learning at the upper primary school level (at least), if not both the lower and upper primary school levels, are commendable. The focus of the policy and the manuals must equally target addressing gender disparities in TVET career options. Similarly, the manual must be accompanied by giving primary school teachers adequate training in both conventional and TVET career education or guidance.

³ (2018). Working it out: Career Guidance and Employer Engagement. OECD Education Working Papers, 175. Paris: OECD Publishing

⁴ [1] Gottfredson, L. S. (2002). Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise, and self creation. In Brown, D., and Brooks, L. (Eds.) Career Choice and Development. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 85-148.

[2] Gutman, L. and Akerman, R. (2008). Determinants of Aspirations. London: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

About YES-Chapter of the PACT

The Youth Employment and Skills (YES) Chapter of the Pan-African Coalition for Transformation (PACT) is a program focused on addressing the issue of youth unemployment and underemployment in Africa. PACT is a network of African leaders and organizations dedicated to advancing economic development, good governance, and social progress across the continent. The YES Chapter of PACT aims to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship by creating opportunities for young people to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the job market or start their own businesses. The program provides a platform for collaboration between government, private sector, civil society organizations, and young people to address the challenges facing youth employment in Africa.

The YES Chapter of PACT focuses on four key areas: skills development, entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation. It seeks to promote policies that create an enabling environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship, while also providing training and support for young people to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Through its

programs and initiatives, the YES Chapter of PACT aims to create a sustainable future for young people in Africa, empowering them to become agents of change in their communities and contributing to the overall development of the continent.

In Ghana, the anchor institution leading the YES Chapter of the PACT activities is YOTA - Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa. Members of the Chapter include ACET, PenPlusByte, Oxfam, GNECC, AGI, Ghana TVET Service, Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Africa Education Watch, and Media Liaison.

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