

HOW TO DRAW VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS INTO SECONDARY EDUCATION

The following guest article is an adaptation of a speech given by Dr Ken Boston and is available on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) website. Dr. Boston became Chief Executive of the QCA in the United Kingdom in September 2002. He was previously Managing Director of Technical and Further Education, and Director-General of Education and Training, in New South Wales, Australia. His previous positions include Director-General of Education in South Australia, and General Manager of Educational Planning and Policy in Victoria. In 2001 Dr Boston was made an Officer in the Order of Australia, for services to education and training. He is a Fellow and former President of the Australian College of Education, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management. For more information please visit <http://www.qca.org.uk/index.html>

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I propose to attempt to distil the essence of how to draw vocational qualifications into secondary schools, or, to put it another way, how to encourage more young people to take subjects which equip them for employment, while also being as robust and developmental as all other subjects in both the cognitive domain and in the affective domain.

And I draw essentially on my experience in Australia, where there have been both mistakes and successes. I am fully aware that national solutions to this problem are culturally-based and not readily transferable, but the lessons I have learned the hard way might be of interest.

What conditions need to be satisfied if vocational qualifications are to be drawn into secondary schools?

I think there are five of them.

The first requirement is to stop talking about vocational qualifications, as if they are necessarily a different class of qualification from other qualifications; as if vocational subjects are necessarily qualitatively different from other subjects; as if further study and employment, to which secondary education leads, falls neatly into the academic and the vocational, leading to either a profession and or a trade.

Which of the following is vocational? Oral surgery, law, web design, stock-broking, brick-laying, writing history, navigation, being an able seaman, being a ship's captain, cabinet-making, playing first violin for the London Symphony Orchestra.



Dr. Ken Boston, CEO of the UK's Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The distinction between academic and vocational, or professional and other, is illogical, unhelpful and destructive.

It is so often made simply to mask what we believe might be shameful if said directly: that I personally would rather be a stock-broker than an able seaman, and that I would rather have my child playing first violin for the LSO than laying bricks.

Now, I have just broken a taboo. We all hide our preferences behind mindless statements about parity of esteem.

But I believe that what I just said, must be said and acknowledged, if vocational education and training in schools is to be put on a firm foundation.

By hiding our individual preferences behind a fictitious dichotomy between so-called academic and vocational subjects, we blur the discussion before it begins.

And we compound the issue by chasing the hallucination of parity of esteem.

Esteem is in the eye of the esteemed, and those who esteem.

I know a cabinet-maker, a craftsman of the first order, whose work is now so

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TECVOC is published twice a year by the TVET Council, a statutory corporation established in 1993 under the Ministry of Labour with a mandate *to promote the growth of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in order to enhance the competitive position of the nation.* **TECVOC** offers information on the TVET Council, its programmes and activities to stakeholders, who include employers, employees, training providers and government, and the wider population.

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expensive that only the rich can afford it, who has mentored two generations of apprentices who are now so highly successful, and selling internationally, who would never wish to be nothing else in this world.

I have never yet met a cabinet-maker, a photographer, a web designer, a graphic artist, a plumber, a builder, electrician who appeared troubled by problems of low self-esteem, although I know several who are greatly troubled by the need to reduce their tax bill.

When you go to Worldskills, the International Skills Olympics – held this year in St Gallen, and previously in Seoul and Montreal – you see young people from all over the world, some only 16 and still in FE colleges, whose sense of pride and self-worth has soared as a result of their prowess and achievement.

One of the events which has always impressed me at the Skills Olympics is the joinery competition.

The first time I saw a joinery competition was a training event in Australia. Competitors were given a large sheet of paper on which was drawn, to precise scale, the rafters and beams and pillars of the interior of a pavilion with a curvilinear ceiling. A large piece of wood, about 15 feet by 12 feet had been placed in front of each competitor.

They had to study the plan, which showed a three dimensional structure in two dimensions; then, using their knowledge of geometry and their skills in drafting, mark out in two dimensions on the wood the pieces needed to erect the structure in three dimensions. Most of them spent two full days in this extraordinarily exacting task on their knees.

They then had to cut the pieces from the wood and erect the structure, and for four full days they were under the close scrutiny of judges with clipboards following every step.

The coordination of mind, hand and eye which is characteristic of all vocations is extraordinarily demanding in this particular competition

A soft option? Hardly. A subject for those without higher order skills in reasoning? Certainly not.

So, the first necessary condition to draw vocational education into secondary schools is to stop talking about it as if it is something different.

The second condition is to structure vocational education on the basis of a

curriculum that has its roots deeply in contemporary industry.

The so-called academic subjects in secondary school have their curriculum basis in the mainstream of university teaching and research. We want the work young people are doing in these subjects, no matter how elementary or introductory, to be grounded in the mainstream (say) of physical science or Romantic poetry. We want to know that it leads somewhere.

In the same way, I believe it is important to ensure that vocational subjects are genuinely vocationally based, not peripherally vocationally related. No matter how elementary or introductory, they should offer real engagement with the content, skills, demands and experiences of an occupation. Students should put their feet on the first rung of an occupation, just as they put their feet on the first rung of the ladder that is chemistry or French.

The curriculum underpinning vocational education in schools should be one that is verified by industry. Of course, the program taken by 14 or 15 year-olds will come nowhere near making them job-ready, but the introduction must be real. It must be founded on a curriculum that is as rock-solid as that which teaches you to appreciate Shakespeare.

That means that industry must be drawn into shaping the school curriculum in a range of vocational areas, just as universities have been the genesis of the curriculum in other areas.

Countries throughout the western world are wrestling with ways in which this can be achieved, some more successfully than others.

In Australia, the schools most successful in attracting

students into vocational education are those that shape their curriculum, according to the age of the students, on the basis of the national training packages. These are uninitiated, credit-based, industry-derived training programs, which specify knowledge, skill and competencies at successive levels of qualification within each vocation. Such schools have been much more successful than those which have offered vocationally related programs outside the framework of the training packages.

A particular attraction in those schools which use the packages is that students can count the vocational subjects towards their Higher School Certificate at the end of their thirteenth and final year of schooling, while also qualifying for a National Vocational Qualification at Certificate I or Certificate II level.

As more than half of the universities will allow the vocational subjects to be counted for admission, these young people have a choice of two clear pathways.

So the second condition is that whatever is offered in vocational education in schools must

genuinely be the first rung on the ladder; it must be validated and valued, regardless of whether that particular ladder is eventually climbed.

The third condition concerns quality of teaching.

Those of us whose schooling was based on the traditional academic disciplines can all identify at least one teacher who ignited the fire of learning in us, in English, or history or mathematics or some other area.

My experience has been that the presence of teachers with similar inspirational qualities is critical to the attraction and retention of young people to vocational education in schools.

In Australia we made some mistakes in this area. In an effort to promote the growth of vocational education, we retrained substantial numbers of teachers in areas of teacher over-supply - such as industrial arts - to be teachers of

vocational subjects such as hospitality and retailing.

With some conspicuous exceptions, it was pretty unsuccessful. Many of the teachers were disaffected; none of them had industry experience; in the main they attracted to their classes similarly disaffected children.

We then turned to some solutions.

One was to bring teachers from further education, with industry experience, into secondary schools to teach vocational education.

Another was to move groups of secondary students into further education colleges for part of the week.

And a third was to make it attractive for people from industry to enter the teaching workforce in schools or further education colleges on a part-time basis, subject to some concurrent training as a teacher, and under the supervision of the head of a faculty.

These things contributed substantially to a real lift in the profile of

vocational education in schools, which began to attract the brighter students rather than just those who could not cope with the academic stream.

In particular, faculties in schools and colleges have been rejuvenated by part-time vocational teachers who are also running their own businesses or are employees of national or multi-national companies. They bring with them state-of-the-art knowledge, currency as practitioners, and high credibility with industry - and they have had a real impact on the appetite of young people for vocational education.

So, the third condition is that the teachers of vocational education must be highly skilled professionals in their own fields, as with teachers in other areas of secondary education.

The fourth requirement is that the operation of schools and colleges needs to change to the degree necessary to deliver vocational education for secondary

students, and needs to establish effective work-based learning arrangements with industry.

My experience has been that it is extraordinarily difficult to introduce a vibrant vocational education program in schools in the absence of greatly increased flexibility in school and college timetables, in the shared use of industrial standard facilities, and in sharing teachers with a background in industry. It also requires access to the workplace for at least limited periods of genuine on-the-job teaching and learning, rather than work experience.

The significant progress made in New South Wales really came only in 1997, when the schools and the technical and further education colleges were brought together under a single Department of Education and Training.

That made it possible for the facilities of schools and colleges to be managed as a single resource: the most progressive head teachers and principals of nearby schools and colleges took the opportunity to develop complementary timetables, which permitted the movement of students between school and college. This was particularly important in providing school students access to industry-standard kitchens, workshops, laboratories, studios, design centres, information technology facilities and other highly specialised facilities, which in some cases were mainly used by technical and further education after normal school hours.

The amalgamation also made possible the introduction of a common industrial award for schoolteachers and FE lecturers. This did not mean that they had common conditions in terms of salary and hours, but it did make promotion and transfer possible between schools and colleges as well as working part of the week in a school and part in a college.

The result in curriculum terms is that significant and growing numbers of students in years 10,11,12 and 13 are now spending three days a week in school, one day a week in an FE college, and one day a week in the workplace as a paid employee. In years 12 and 13, the three days in school are spent on traditional academic study; one day at the FE college, and the related day in the workplace, leading to a National Vocational Qualification over two years. All

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... the traditional academic disciplines can all identify at least one teacher who ignited the fire of learning in us, in English, or history or mathematics or some other area.

Job Training and Work Experience Go Hand-In-Hand



Russell Corrie, CEO of Nature Care Barbados.

What started out as a little side job to put pocket change in the hands of two students has turned into a thriving business which has stood the test of time for over 22 years.

And Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Nature Care Barbados, Russell Corrie, is not prepared to cruise on his past successes but rather is playing an active role in developing occupational standards of competence which will help to ensure a pool of quality human resource from which to draw for his business and others in the Amenities Horticulture and Turf Maintenance and Management sector.

It was while pursuing a degree in economics at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Cave Hill Campus that the Harrison College and Barbados Community College (BCC) graduate, and friend David Yearwood, hit upon a plan to earn gas and spending money by borrowing their parents' lawn mowers to cut lawns.

"It was a fairly easy business to enter. One of our first customers was Shell Bottling Company just off of the Spring Garden Highway. I put on a tie for the first time and went knocking on doors. Between Shell and the people that we knew the business took off quicker than we expected and grew faster than we

expected. We went from cutting grass and planting plants to being asked to give landscaping advice."

"At the end of the first six months we had our first employee and by the end of the first year we had ten employees," he noted.

Russell made a decision then to give up the degree that he was doing to dedicate himself to the business. His parents, while not exactly thrilled by the idea, were nonetheless supportive of their desire to be entrepreneurs.

"We wanted to grow the business ourselves. We went to the Barbados Development Bank to borrow seed money to buy equipment but got turned down the first time because we were undercapitalised and the funding seemed to be more than we could handle."

"However, we came up with a different business plan to borrow less money, expand a little slower and showed them existing business contracts. That loan of \$6000 got us our first equipment. We had a second-hand mini moke, a small garden tractor, a built trailer, weed whackers, lawn mowers, etc, and a five-year contract to repay the loan," Russell recalled.

The BDB loan also meant that the business venture was a long-term commitment for Russell. He bought out his first partner, who went off to the United Kingdom and another friend, Mahmood Patel, joined the business. He also realised that the direction in which the business was growing – i.e. offering landscaping advice and services – called for greater training and knowledge than what he at the time had to offer.

Strong Advocate of Vocational Education and Training

He did some research and discovered a community college located in Orlando,

Florida which offered a two-year vocational programme in Ornamental Horticulture (i.e. similar to Amenity Horticulture).

"I enrolled in Valencia Community College to do the Certificate in Ornamental Horticulture. It was a very practical programme which targeted persons working in the industry but who needed further education and training. It equipped one to work, plus the college allowed me to condense the two years into one year."

Russell had high praise for the vocational programme and indeed for the practice of combining education and training with work experience.

"I got work experience and at the same time I was being taught about landscape design, nursery plant production and landscape maintenance. However, I would say that 50 per cent of what I learned that year I learned at work. It was the opportunity to see what was done at work and then go into the classroom to see the way it should be done that was so invaluable."

Russell, a strong advocate of vocational education and training, said he supported the idea of formal training while acquiring work experience. "Up to that time, the business was focussed mainly on garden maintenance. The training helped me to get into the nursery business...without reinventing the wheel. It was invaluable to be able to adapt what I had learned," he said, adding, "I am a product of vocational training despite starting out with a very academic background."

He stressed that an educational foundation needed to be academic so that an individual could go off in any direction. "At least up until 16 years old one's educational foundation should be built on certain academic type basics. The academic foundation needs to be there in order for the vocational training to be successful," he added.

Russell, who sits on the Amenity Horticulture Lead Body (AHLB) formed in

collaboration with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council earlier this year, noted that a sound educational background for members of the workforce was going to be critical to the success of the occupational standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Barbados.

"Individuals will have to be able to take the occupational standards, read and understand them in order to apply them to the work role. If basic education is lacking, it will call for a lot more hand holding, coaching and a general extending of the effort involved to train individuals (and certify them as competent). If basic education is lacking, it would mean, in other words, that individuals are not easily trainable."

And for Russell the success of Nature Care is more than adequate proof of the benefits of education/training and work experience in building a career.

After graduating from Valencia, he opened the company's first nursery at Paradise Hotel which led to an increase in landscaping work. "It was the part of the business for which we were getting the most requests. Because of the size of the market here, if you are going to compete for jobs, you have to have a nursery.

Later, with Leslie Taylor as a new partner, came the entry into the retail sector with the opening of the first plant shop at Sheraton Mall. Today Nature Care has two plant shops – a second one was established at Warrens in 2003. The company also does bulk wholesale in the business-to-business sector and the nursery at the company's headquarters at Lowlands, Christ Church, supplies plants to the other departments within the company.

In addition, the company has begun exporting its services with the establishment of Nature Care SVG in St. Vincent in 2002 which serves Mustique, Cannouan and mainland St. Vincent.

Void within Barbados' Training Culture

"Strategically that is our intention for the

future, to export our business model to the other CARICOM territories through partnerships with a local entity. But in the meantime, we want to maintain and improve market share in Barbados.

But to achieve his vision, Russell understands that the human resource on which the company must grow needs to be developed. He expressed the hope that the occupational standards and NVQ programme would help to fill the void within Barbados' training culture.

He noted that in his company the management might see the need for training but sometimes they did not get the level of commitment to the benefits of training by individuals. "NVQs will help to give purpose to training," he noted, they will give credibility to the profession that we don't currently have. There is still a 'yardboy' stigma attached to people within the industry. Usually when we get people looking for a career, we get them at the top with Phds and masters degrees, etc, and then we get entry level workers who generally have not finished their secondary education. There is very little in between."

"People who enter the industry at entry level tend to do it only because they need to find employment. There is an absence of persons at the technician level as in other fields or sectors. For example, individuals will train as electricians and go seeking work in that area. Not usually so in the horticulture industry."

Russell stressed that if NVQs became recognised as a qualification that offers viability in terms of a career, people in the wider society would start to see horticulture as a profession and students would see it as a viable option. He added the stigma attached to the industry would be removed and the kinds of people the industry needed would be attracted.

"If people come to work feeling good about the work they do and recognise the value of that work, it adds a level of intangible benefits that helps to drive productivity," Russell concluded.



Russell Corrie (2nd from right) attending an Amenity Horticulture Lead Body (AHLB) meeting.

CANTA Members Meet

In February this year, representatives of national training agencies from five CARICOM territories attended a meeting in Barbados of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), held at the Pommarine Hotel, Hastings, Christ Church.

Also in attendance were representatives of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), the regional sub-office of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the CARICOM Secretariat, all of which are working closely with CANTA in the efforts to strengthen the development of the region's workforce through training.

February's meeting was the first for the year held by CANTA and looked at a number of issues surrounding the implementation of a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ).

The TVET Council was represented by Executive Director Trevor King, Manager of the Employment and Training Fund (ETF) Geoffrey Yearwood and Senior Technical Officer (STO) Wendy McClean.

CANTA, which was launched in 2003 in Jamaica, is an association of national training agencies and other TVET apex bodies in CARICOM states. The founding members are HEART Trust/NTA of Jamaica, the TVET Council of Barbados and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago.



Sitting L to R:

Ms Esther Brathwaite; St. Lucia, Ms Myrna Bernard; CARICOM Secretariat, Ms. Estellita Rene; St. Lucia, Ms Wendy McClean; Barbados, and Mrs Paulette Dunn-Smith; Jamaica.

Standing L to R:

Mr Paul Payne; Montserrat, Mr Geoffrey Yearwood; Barbados, Mr Trevor King; Barbados, Mr Guy Hewitt; CXC, Mr Robert Gregory; Jamaica, Mr Henderson Eastmond; CXC, Mr Fazal Karim; Trinidad and Tobago and Mr George Gamerdinger; ILO.

CANTA has been endorsed by the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) as the implementation arm of the CARICOM Regional Coordinating Mechanism for TVET (RCMTVET).

BOTSWANAN EDUCATION OFFICIALS VISIT TVET COUNCIL

Part of a six-member team from Botswana on a visit to Barbados in February this year to examine this country's education and training systems, took the opportunity to meet with members of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council's secretariat.

Registrar in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Unit, Ministry of Education, Botswana, Ms. G. Sedisa and consultants Naledi Norwebb and Asad Petkar said that they were meeting with education and training institutions here, as well as qualification providers, so as to examine local examination processing systems and discuss business processes.

They noted that Botswana had introduced the National Vocational Qualifications programme, following a Needs Assessment Survey, with the assistance of the Scottish Qualifications

Authority (SQA). NVQs, which are issued by the Quality Assurance and Assessment Unit, were introduced to Botswana around 2000 as part of the reform of the administration of that country's education system.

Petkar, a consultant with EOH KPMG Consulting, said that his role was to assist the Exams and Testing Division in computerising its operations and so his purpose here was to meet with education and training organisations to examine their computer systems and operations.

Executive Director Trevor King outlined for the visiting officials the purpose and functions of the TVET Council, in

particular the management of the Employment and Training Fund (ETF) and the development of occupational standards for technical and vocational education and training, and certification.

Senior Technical Officer Wendy McClean summarised developments to date with regard to the NVQ programme which, she noted, was at the pilot stage.



Members of the Botswana delegation: (L-R) Consultants Asad Petkar and Naledi Norwebb and Registrar G. Sedisa.

SCIACT 2005 Awards Ceremony

Vocational education and training is the key to the competitive position of the nation, and what's more, students who leave school with such marketable occupational skills are placed at a greater advantage in the job market.

Senior Technical Officer (STO) Wendy McClean made these comments as she delivered a brief address at the Schools' Industrial Arts Craft and Technology Exhibition (SCIACT 2005) at the Sherbourne Conference Centre on Monday, March 21, 2005. She was representing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council, at the prize-giving ceremony for the annual event, which is in its seventh year.

Being competent was a critical factor for success in the world of work, she said.

Miss McClean stressed that competence was more than making a product or having concrete technical skills, it was also about having generic work skills such as reading, writing, spelling, problem solving, communicating and multi-tasking.

Job competence also included having a good attitude towards work, she said. "A good attitude means being punctual, polite, being willing to serve and going the extra mile. All of these are (important) to having a successful working life," she noted.

Chief Executive Officer of Aqua Sol Components Ltd. Vincent McClean also threw his support behind a technical and vocational education. He disclosed that as a secondary school student he was in the technical stream and attended the Barbados Technical Institute two days a week.

The graduate of a technical university in the United Kingdom noted that excellent work had to translate to product development and product promotion. He said that the best chance for competing in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was by raising the skill level and competing among the best.



Overall winners of SCIACT 2005 St. George Secondary School.

During the delivery of the feature address, he said SCIACT should be a source of pride but noted that craftsmanship and technical skills were not enough. There was also a need for language and logic skills, self discipline and deportment skills. An absence of self discipline would "lead to ruin," he stressed.

Mr. McClean also urged the TVET Council to continue its support of SCIACT and to ensure that there existed a cadre of persons to meet the manpower needs of the nation.

DEVELOPING A TVET OPERATING MODEL FOR CARICOM

In April 2005 CANTA collaborated with CARICOM and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to host a conference and workshop titled Developing a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Operating Model for CARICOM.

Senior Technical Officer Wendy McClean and Technical Officers Andrew Skeete and Olivia Smith attended the three-day conference/workshop which ran from April 6th to 8th and was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate the

harmonisation and standardisation of systems in order to:

- * Rationalise the process of producing the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)
- * Share the expertise amongst CANTA membership and document the entire process
- * Ensure that the proposed Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) has reliability and validity as a qualification throughout the region.

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LOCAL CHEFS TRAIN WITH TOP INTERNATIONAL CHEFS

Twenty-one local chefs benefited from a four-day workshop in **Professional Culinary Arts for Competition** held at the Dining Club Conference Centre, Manor Lodge, Green Hill, St. Michael, from February 22 – 25, 2005 and conducted by Master Chef Johnny Rivers, Master Pastry Chef Susan Notter and Chef Clayton Sherrod out of the United States.

The workshop, which was sponsored jointly by the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) and the Technical and Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) Council, was also used as an opportunity to fine tune the food preparation and presentation skills of the chefs participating in the Taste of the Caribbean 2005 competition which took place in Miami at the end of June.

The workshop consisted of planning menus and buffets as they relate to culinary competitions, preparing *mise en place* for the cooking competition/Pastries and desserts, basic ice carving for decorative purposes, critique and presentation sessions.

Chef Notter said that under simulated competition conditions the chefs “each had 30 minutes to develop their own menus. They look at the ingredients they have and they have 30 minutes to write their menu, they give it to us and then they get started.”

She explained: “The chefs had a total of three hours - 30 minutes to write the menu and two-and-a-half hours cooking time. They have presentation windows i.e. 15 minute windows in

which to serve the three courses, if they are late with that they get points deducted.”

She noted that since the chefs were training towards the competition in Miami the trainers used the same guidelines. “It’s the same thing if you do a mystery basket type competition; it’s the same thing. You are going to be faced with ingredients which are surprises, a (certain) amount of time, you get kitchen scores.”

“I look at things like are they working cleanly, is sanitation good and this is really crucial because we have a responsibility as chefs to give our customers healthy food. So we stress sanitation, then we look at skills such as culinary skills, knife skills, preparation skills, what they do with the ingredients, their choice of how they put that together, and then of course the visual appeal and then taste,” she added.

Chef Sherrod, who noted that it was his second time visiting Barbados to conduct training, said: “Your foods and customs are very rich, the heritage is very, very strong but at the same time

we could see that it was here but most of the chefs were not expounding on that. And that is what we are doing and we can see the progress (from the start of the training) until now.”

He advised up and coming chefs that it was necessary to become knowledgeable about local culture so that it could help to influence their cooking. He said it was also important to be knowledgeable about running a business because chefs today either had to manage their own business or manage someone else’s business.

“There is a lot more to pleasing the customer than just the food itself,” he stressed.

Chef Rivers added: “I think that the potential of the food service in Barbados is just endless. It starts with a desire to want to be better and you have that here. It is not about the medals, it is about the desire to want to be better and Barbados has an opportunity to become the number one most sought after island of any island in the whole Caribbean. That’s because you have a group of people here who truly believe in their culture, their cuisine and their people most of all.”



Master Pastry Chef Susan Notter reviewing the chefs efforts.



(L-R) Head of the Dining Club Conference Centre Chef Peter Edey, Master Chef Johnny Rivers, Master Pastry Chef Susan Notter and Chef Clayton Sherrod pictured with trainees of the four-day workshop.

RAISING THE STANDARD OF WORK IN AMENITIES HORTICULTURE

This issue of TECVOC continues the focus on the development of occupational standards of competence. We feature Jimmy Kidd, Director of Golf, Sandy Lane Hotel, who is a member of the Amenity Horticulture Lead Body (AHLB) established in March this year to collaborate in the development of occupational standards for the sector.



Jimmy Kidd, Director of Golf, Sandy Lane Hotel.

Barbados' tourism based economy will in the future require higher quality recreational facilities managed and maintained by qualified Amenity Horticulture and turf-based professionals who possess National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). In keeping with this, we at Sandy Lane Hotel have partnered with the TVET Council and several other like-minded organisations to set the stage for developing this standard.

The islands of the Caribbean are famous for their natural beauty, wonderful beaches golden sands, welcoming populations and scenic vegetation that enhance our landscapes. However, our service and skills in many facets of the tourist industry require standards of competence and NVQs, which are recognised worldwide.

As part of the process, an Industry Lead Body (ILB) has been set up under the heading of Amenity Horticulture to drive the process of developing occupational standards of competence which will be used as a basis for training and certification within the sector. The objective of the Amenity Horticulture Lead Body (AHLB) is to provide such work-based standards in order to create consistency in job performance throughout the Turf and Landscape-based industries of Barbados and the Caribbean region.

The other organisations represented on the AHLB include the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP), the National Sports Council (NSC), the Barbados Horticultural Society (BHS), the Barbados Workers Union (BWU), Nature Care Barbados, Quality Landscape Services Inc., Barbados Golf Club, the Barbados Turf Club, Rockley Golf Club, and the Almond Beach Village.

The Genesis of Amenity Sports Turf and Amenity Horticulture NVQs

It was approximately 20 years ago that NVQs were introduced in Sports Turf and Amenity Horticulture in the United Kingdom, but prior to that competency-based standards in occupations within these areas were at best variable.

Organisations hiring prospective employees could only rely on recommendations from previous employers, and the impressions made by candidates through personal observation at interviews, as proof of competence. Hence, staff with existing full-time employment and poor occupational standards were protected by a poor system of competency training.

NVQs evolved at Gleneagles five-star Resort Hotel and Golf Courses in Scotland which introduced the new concept in order to create a well structured organisation, where each employee was completely aware at all times of their competence in the various aspects of the business. They were also involved in developing their own personal career path from the moment they entered the company.

Following the introduction of Amenity Horticulture NVQs, assessors (i.e. internal examiners) from Gleneagles' Golf and Landscaping departments were identified and verified by the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) as competent assessors of candidates. These individuals eventually performed the role of external assessors of candidates from other organisations under a fee structure set up by the Industry Lead Body. This system hastened the spread of NVQs by utilising qualified people existing within the industry and appointing them as internal and external assessors.

It also helped to bring even greater credibility to Gleneagles Resort as the initiators of the NVQ process, and, prestige to its assessors within a growing vocational qualifications industry, opening up wider career opportunities for them personally.

Furthermore, one of the real benefits of introducing NVQ qualified staff to an operation such as Gleneagles was the major improvement in the work ethics of the existing staff who realized very quickly that they had to match the arriving skills, qualifications and work ethics of new staff.

Another great benefit of the arrival of occupational standards of competence was the increased awareness of the Health and Safety of the internal and external customer within the workings of a company, hence protecting brand image and employees.

Need for Qualified Staff with Proven Competence in Amenity Horticulture

As the momentum for World Cup Cricket 2007 goes into higher gear, and new golf course developments emerge throughout the region, especially those that are connected to high-quality resort hotels such as Sandy Lane and Royal Westmoreland, this sector will require qualified staff with proven competence. We at Sandy Lane have been actively involved in this initiative with the aims and objectives of:

- * Sharing our turf maintenance knowledge and expertise with a wider Caribbean audience.
- * Assisting in bringing worldwide accreditation to the golf and horticultural based industries of Barbados.

- * Focusing our workforce on the economic benefits of golf and horticultural based competency skills designed to provide Barbados and the Caribbean region with a database of highly skilled and internationally qualified turf managers serving this growing golf Industry
- * Creating a competent and well structured workforce respected within the golf world in particular for it's knowledge and understanding of Caribbean "specific" turf and horticultural management techniques and skills

- * Bringing greater 'transparency' to the promotional system and organisational structures.
- * Taking the guesswork out of hiring and evaluating new employees.
- * Harnessing "work based" competency training and skills records into a similar timeline with theoretical training, a desire of most future employers in the region.
- * Creating a greater understanding of Risk Management and Health and Safety in the Golf and Horticultural

workplace, protecting staff and company-brand images.

We also recognise the need for a broader approach to golf course management integrating golf course design, cultural practices, best practices, integrated pest management and monitoring to form the synergies of horticulture. Coupled with this, we have instituted a holistic approach to turf care with strong emphasis on communication and education. We are particularly pleased to partner with TVETC on this initiative. 

INSIDE THE TVET COUNCIL



David Falconer, SQA Consultant.


Project to Establish NVQ Awarding Body Enters Third Phase

The third phase of the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) consultancy to establish an NVQ Awarding Body within the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council took place during April 18 – 22, 2005, with the arrival of Mr. David Falconer, Head of the SQA's Certification and Management Unit.

The purpose of Mr. Falconer's visit was to assist the TVET Council in detailing its Awarding Body requirements so that an operational enrolment and certification system could be developed for the award of NVQs and units. During the five-day consultancy Mr. Falconer met with key stakeholders




(L-R) TVET Council's Manager, Employment and Training Fund Geoffrey Yearwood, Executive Director Trevor King and Senior Technical Officer Wendy McClean (right) greet SQA Consultant David Falconer.

including NVQ pilot centres and representatives of the local education and training sector. 

TVET COUNCIL: "THANK YOU ILBs"

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council treated the members of the Industry Lead Bodies (ILBs) – tripartite technical consulting groups which collaborate with the TVET Council in the development of occupational standards – to a 'thank you' luncheon in January.

The luncheon, which was held at the Dining Club, Manor Lodge, Green Hill, St. Michael on Friday, January 14, 2005, was attended by members of the Information Technology, Customer Service and Tourism and Hospitality Lead Bodies.

During a brief speech, Technical Officer Andrew Skeete thanked the Lead Body members for their hard work and dedication throughout 2004 in contributing to the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which are being piloted this year. 

five days contribute to completion of the Higher School Certificate.

The response from industry was very supportive we negotiated with the Toyota Motor Company for every Toyota dealer in NSW, and subsequently across Australia, to take four school students for one day a week for two years, enrolled in NVQs in automotive practice, small business, and sales and marketing. Every country town of any size has a high school and a Toyota dealership. The benefit from the dealers' point of view was that they were able to select from a competitive pool of motivated young people; they received a government subsidy so the investment was of benefit; and they were able to grow young people into the business, recruiting them at the end of the two years.

A similar scheme was then set up with Woolworths, with young people taking an NVQ in the bakery trade or in meat processing being employed in by bakers and butchers in the supermarkets; and there are thousands of other placements with small business.

Across the state, teachers report that the self-esteem, motivation and application of previously disaffected young people

has soared through involvement in this program. It has become fashionable to wear the Toyota uniform or checked baker's trousers to school.

At the same time, the workplace has been critical to the acquisition of key skills for employability. Bosses, relating to 15 year-old paid employees, have proved far more effective in transmitting the employability skills of working in teams, problem solving, customer relations, punctuality and attendance, than teachers relating to disaffected students.

So the fourth requirement, in my view, is new organisation arrangements and operating models.

The last of the five conditions is for government to recognise that drawing more young people into vocational education is not solely or even mainly a curriculum issue. Significant industrial issues are involved in relation to the teaching workforce; there are issues relating to the duty of care for students; and significant investment is required to provide incentives for business and industry to commit to effective participation. I won't dwell on that final point, but it is perhaps even more critical than the others.

So, drawing vocational qualifications into secondary education is a huge challenge. Deployed to address it are the Tomlinson Inquiry, the Skills Strategy, and QCA's remit to improve vocational qualifications. The goal is the building of the national stock of human capital, the pillars of which are participation and skill.

I have drawn on my experiences in Australia, which has faced a similar problem of raising the status of vocational education and training in schools. Even taking into account cultural and other differences, I believe that the five conditions apply here. In a nutshell, the status of vocational education will be raised if we stop talking about it as something qualitatively different from academic education, and see it as a genuinely vocational first step for young people in schools. It must be taught well, and supported by those in business and industry. And it needs new approaches to delivery, and clear support from the government and the rest of us, in tackling a task which is so vital to the future health and welfare of this country and its citizens.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Continuation of training in assessment and internal verification.

Workshops in the uses and applications of occupational standards in curricula development.

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KATHY-ANN COMPLETES JOB ATTACHMENT



Kathy-Ann Haynes.

Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) student Kathy-Ann Haynes completed an eight-week job attachment with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council in June.

The Deighton Griffith Secondary School alumna, who is pursuing the Certificate in Office Technology at the SJPP, worked at the TVET Council's secretariat in the position of Receptionist/Clerk-Typist during the period May 9 – July 1, 2005.

Continued from page 7

During the proceedings, working groups were established to focus on different aspects of documenting the CARICOM TVET Model. The working groups were led by the following persons:


- * Developing the CARICOM Model – Myrna Bernard, CARICOM Secretariat
- * Assessment and Certification – Nadine Walker-Wright, Jamaica
- * Developing Occupational Standards – Wendy McClean, Barbados
- * Quality Assurance and Accreditation – Paulette Dunn-Smith, Jamaica
- * Labour Market Information – Ronald Philips, Trinidad and Tobago

The co-ordinators of the working groups were asked to communicate electronically with the group members and complete the required documentation in time for an interim report to be made to a CARICOM committee at the end of April 2005. It was also proposed that a further six to eight groups be formed to assist in the development of documentation to be forwarded to COHSOD later in the year.

Mr. Skeete will represent the TVET Council on the Assessment and Certification working group and Ms. Smith will give representation on the Quality Assurance and Accreditation group.

With regard to the CVQ, it was noted that the arrangements to be put in place for a

regional accreditation mechanism would be important since the accreditation process needed to be harmonised in order to arrive at a common understanding in presenting that model.

In closing the workshop Chief Executive Officer of the Trinidad and Tobago National Training Agency (TTNTA), Mr. Fazal Karim, thanked all who attended and expressed hope that there would be a collective effort to bring reality to a CARICOM model and CVQ. He also thanked all who participated as resource persons and concluded with a presentation of awards to participants. 

The Executive Director

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