



**MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE** in attendance at the lecture included **Dr Esther Byer Suckoo** (front row, fourth from right), **Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development (MLSD)**, whose ministry sponsored the lecture as part of the management of the Barbados Human Resource Development Strategy. (GP)

• From Page 16.

Resource Development Fund in 1993 with the aim of developing quality human capital in order to achieve a high-income economy based on knowledge and innovation. The purpose of the Fund is to encourage employers to retrain and upgrade the skills of their employees, apprentices and trainees in line with their business needs and the development strategy of the country. The country's GDP as of 2013 is about US\$312.4 billion (World Bank).

The lesson to learn from these and other small countries is that quality skills development requires a holistic approach and policy coherence. This approach encompasses but is not limited to the following features:

**a)** An integrated strategy: Implementing regional and or national **TVET** policies will require a systematic and deliberate promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies towards achieving the agreed policies.

**b)** Upgrading of education and training institutions: The development of higher level skills to capitalise on or create opportunities for high-quality or high-wage jobs will require upgrading of institutions to provide higher level knowledge and skills. This forms the basis for higher level problem-solving, creativity, and innovation.

## Employment prospects

**c)** Qualification framework: Since 1983, over 100 countries have been involved in the development of qualifications frameworks. Qualifications are designed to recognise where learners have achieved readiness to progress to further learning and perform on the job. Some of the general assumptions about qualification framework include quality and relevance, skilled workforce, increased productivity, delivery of competency-based education and assessment (outcome-based), industry recognised standards, labour or skills mobility, articulation between levels of qualifications, labour market impact and social mobility (employment); prior learning or lifelong learning, and enhancement of youth employment prospects.

**d)** Skills mismatch and career guidance: Policymakers and social partners across the world are becoming increasingly concerned with the gap between the skills required on the job and those possessed by an individual (World Economic Forum 2014). A recent ILO study covering 24 European countries shows that mismatches between workers' competencies and what is required by their job are widespread with marked differences between countries. Between 25 and 45 per cent of workers in Europe are either over or underqualified for their job, leading to a substantial mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market.

High-quality career guidance helps inform

# Developing skills a key part of response



Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development

educational and career choices that are more in line with available jobs and foreseen labour market opportunities. Little or no attention is paid to career guidance. Rapid transformation in all sectors of the economy makes it increasingly important to prepare career guidance workers and counsellors to understand labour market information and job demands. This should be part of the policy agenda for responsive education and training.

**e)** Work-based learning and entrepreneurial skills: Providing trainees or students with skills is not sufficient to improve their labour market outcomes, if these skills do not match what is required by the labour market. Young people especially, are always placed in the lack of experience trap.

Quality apprenticeship systems for youth, which link classroom and workplace training are part of the solution. Such systems require a well functioning social dialogue between government and the social partners. In addition, entrepreneurship programmes can offer students the tools to think creatively and be effective problem solvers, who can analyse a business idea objectively.

Students feel more confident about setting up their own businesses if they can test their ideas in an educational supportive environment (EU Commission 2009).

**f)** Equal opportunities should be provided to all to access quality vocational education and training, including workplace learning, and especially promoting the needs of under-represented groups in the labour market or those with difficulties in accessing the labour market such as young workers, older workers, women, and those with disabilities. A country cannot perform to its full capacity unless all are given equal opportunities.

**g)** Research in **TVET** should continue to influence the field's policy and practice. Quantitative and qualitative data, and forecasting should be linked to broadly defined national strategies. It is important to track sectors with high growth potential to identify new employment prospects and their skills requirements, as well as to track sectors in decline and the skills profiles of those losing jobs.

Labour market data generated and disseminated on current and future skills is critical to the delivery of quality **TVET** programmes. A mismatch between skills demand and supply has high economic and social costs, and contributes to structural unemployment. Early identification of current and future skills needs is part of a forward-looking strategy (ILO 2008).

## Changing environment

**h)** Programme evaluation: A fast-changing global economic environment, occupational standards, and skill competencies, underscore the importance of programme evaluation to improve existing programmes, eliminate duplication of programmes and courses, accredit our education and training institutions, discontinue programmes that are no longer viable, articulate programmes and reduce enrolment where necessary to adjust to skills demand.

**i)** Leadership and management: The concern about establishment of sound leadership and management in **TVET** has evolved in much the same way as leadership in business. It is important for administrators of **TVET** institutions to devote a significant portion of their time to the administrative, educational



**FEATURED SPEAKER Dr Hassan Ndahi** mingling with members of the audience at the reception held after the lecture. (GP)

and technical aspects of their work.

These should include issues of supervision, financing, coordination of practical work experience; planning, design and delivery of the institution's programmes. They should understand the importance of the stakeholders and their participation in skills development.

**j)** Stakeholder participation: The participation of stakeholders is critical to quality skills development. While government continues to play a lead role in the development of **TVET**, the involvement of all stakeholders in policy decision-making to reaffirm the supposition that the **TVET** institution belongs to everyone and that arriving at mutually shared responsibility is best for skills development.

**k)** Sustainable financing: Government should take a leadership role in promoting dialogue on shared responsibility for sustainable financing.

Government should engage the social partners to consider effective funding arrangement to overcome specific disadvantages in accessing initial training and lifelong learning. The objective of such funds should be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure that the fund's performance is driven by outputs. Such shift requires giving institutions greater financial and administrative autonomy (King and Palmer 2010).

There is no doubt that developing the human resource is a huge responsibility for education and training institutions. Skills development should form part of an effective response to changing economic conditions. Education and training must be integrated into the broad framework of national economic and social development plans in order to achieve their potential to contribute to economic growth.

The ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean will continue to work with you as you plan, design or enhance the quality of your **TVET** programmes and systems.

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts.