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SJPP on board as NVQ assessment centre

THE Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (TVETC) and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP), last Saturday saw the strengthening of the working relationship that exists between the two organisations with the public recognition of the first SJPP students to complete a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

Nine graduates of the Agricultural Division's one-year Landscaping and Amenity Horticulture programme were awarded for completion of the NVQ in Amenity Horticulture Level 1, before officials and guests in attendance at the SJPP's annual graduation ceremony. One person was awarded unit recognition for completing units of the same NVQ.

The SJPP is the first public education and training institution to be approved as an NVQ assessment centre.

The NVQ, and its regional equivalent the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), are competence-based certifications awarded to persons who have been trained and successfully assessed against occupational standards, and have demonstrated competence in a real, or realistic, work environment.

Speaking in the lead-up to Saturday's graduation ceremony, NVQ coordinator for SJPP, Henderson Cadogan, said the next step for the training institution was to continue the process of preparing to roll out NVQs and CVQs for the next academic year.

NVQs and CVQs, Levels 1 and/or 2 which target entry level and junior level workers, respectively, will be introduced in the areas of amenity horticulture, cosmetology, plumbing, mechanical maintenance, and electrical installation.

He added: "The syllabi in these programme areas are going to be mapped to the corresponding occupational standards; this will show which units in the standards are being covered within which specific parts of the programmes during training and assessment."

Mr Cadogan noted that training and certification for the instructors in competence-based education and training (CBET), and NVQ assessment, had already commenced.

He said: "The institution has embarked on assessing and upgrading its facilities as well as providing staff development opportunities for its instructors in NVQ Coordination, Internal Verification, CBET, and the NVQ Level 4 in Assessment."

Emphasising the benefits of the NVQ programme to students, Mr Cadogan said: "NVQs/CVQs will enhance the on-the-job learning experience because they are competence-based qualifications that reflect an individual's competence to perform the various work related tasks; as outlined in the occupational standards which are developed from the requirements of industry.

"Therefore, the students should be better equipped to fit in on-the-job and function more effectively," he said.



TVETC'S TECHNICAL OFFICER PAUL PUCKERIN (left) sharing information on the NVQ programme with persons attending the SJPP's Open Day and Exhibition last week. (GP)

Dual certification

Another benefit the NVQ coordinator noted was the possibility of students graduating with dual certification: "(They can do so) if they satisfy the requirements necessary to successfully complete both the SJPP programme and the NVQ/CVQ.

"The benefits of the dual certification will allow students to gain an NVQ/CVQ while pursuing an SJPP programme. The requirements to successfully complete an SJPP programme exceed that required in the standards for the NVQ/CVQ in the occupational area," Mr Cadogan explained.

The SJPP's participation in the NVQ programme has also had a positive impact on the institution's staff development programme. The staff that have undergone training

and certification in CBET and Assessment are already seeing the benefits.

Mr Cadogan said: "They have employed a wider range of delivery methods to train the students and they have taken a more open approach to the assessment process whereby various assessment methods are used.

"The practice of surprising the students with tests and exams has been removed from the assessment process; they now ensure that the students are prepared and aware of what, when, and how they will be assessed."

Technical officer Paul Puckerin, who recently joined the TVET Council's staff, was one of the first SJPP instructors to complete the National Vocational Qualification, Jamaica (NVQJ) Level 4 in Assessment (2007), and more recently the certificate

in competence-based training and assessment.

He was one of the SJPP instructors involved in the pilot of the NVQ in Amenity Horticulture Level 1, for which the graduates were awarded on Saturday.

Benefits

Mr Puckerin shared the benefits as an educator/trainer of his involvement in the NVQ programme:

"The CBET training exposed me to such elements as the use of occupational standards in training; that helped me to be more specific in identifying what the students needed to know, and be able to do, which I found they appreciated. As part of the assessor training I was also exposed to use of rubrics for assessment and other more realistic and valid means of assessment," he

said.

He added: "The training as an assessor also helped me to learn to be a better coach and mentor to the students so that they became partners in their own learning."

Mr Puckerin, who also holds an Associate Degree in Agriculture, a Bachelors Degree in Spanish and Management, a professional qualification in Turf Management from the University of Georgia, and a Teacher Training Certificate from Erdiston Teachers' Training College, noted that undertaking the training in the delivery of CBET was very important for educators/trainers, especially those intending to participate in the NVQ programme.

Mr Cadogan also elaborated on the benefits to the SJPP of being an NVQ Centre: "It means that the institution can offer another recognised qualification to the society. The training programmes offered at the institution will be aligned with the occupational standards, which have been developed with the approval of industry. Hence the students should gain the knowledge and skills required to function in industry."

He added: "The SJPP will also be in a position to provide an opportunity for uncertified skilled workers to acquire certification through the assessment process." The NVQ coordinator noted that efforts were under way to make the NVQ/CVQ offerings available by the beginning of the 2010 academic year.

Important aspects of the preparation process still to be completed include the completion of a facilities' audit, successful completion of the assessor training by instructors, and mapping of the NVQ/CVQ standards to the relevant SJPP programmes.

Mr Cadogan noted that another important aspect of the process was the "strengthening of the links and relationships with firms/companies in industry to assist and ensure that a real work environment can be available for the assessment process".