

## Assessing national skills needs

**ASSESSING SKILLS NEEDS: Planning for the Future** was the theme of the recently held Third Annual Labour Seminar hosted by the Ministry of Labour and Immigration's Manpower Research and Statistical Unit (MRSU). The **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council** joined with other representatives of Government and the private sector to share in the MRSU's labour market information as well as discuss and explore key labour related issues.

MRSU Senior Economist (ag) Erika Watson noted that information on skills projections and the identification of future skills gaps was necessary at the policy level to assist in the development of a broad human resource development (HRD) strategy and more concise skills development programmes.

"It can also facilitate the development of mechanisms for

retraining of persons displaced by shifts in skills demand. Furthermore, training institutions can use this information to design training programmes and enrich curricula to provide a better fit between jobs and the skills acquired by graduates," she stated.

The **TVET Council's** representative, Geoffrey Yearwood, manager of the **Employment and**

**Training Fund (ETF)**, delivered a presentation on the importance of assessing national skills needs and the part it played in the achievement of the Council's mission.

He noted that the **TVET Council's** mission was to develop a competent and competitive workforce in Barbados and the wider Caribbean and competence

meant that workers had to have the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior required for a given work role, profession or career. The **ETF** facilitated the Council's mission by providing grants to employers to train and upgrade the skills of their employees.

"One of the key instruments employed by the Council to decide how to allocate funds is the five-

year **National Training Plan (NTP)** which is used to establish national priorities for the training of the workforce, whether employed or seeking employment.

"The **NTP** provides information on the specific types of knowledge and skills needed in Barbados over a five-year period. It takes into account an inventory of current skills and also the capacity to develop new skills through training and educational endeavours. The **NTP** seeks to provide guidance for investments in education and training for the entire technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system and the operation of the **ETF** within that larger system," Mr Yearwood explained.

He disclosed that the new **NTP** was currently under development with the assistance of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), University of the West Indies (UWI) and would include:

- Employment trends,
- The specific types of knowledge and skills needed in Barbados for the next five years,
- An inventory of current skills,
- The capacity of training institutions to provide the required skills, and,
- The capacity to develop new skills through training and educational endeavours.

Mr Yearwood also pointed out that the model of workforce development adopted by Barbados, the **CARICOM Process for Workforce Training, Assessment and Certification**, was driven by assessing national skills needs.

"This philosophy of a standards-driven, outcomes-based (i.e. competency-based) approach to training and certification has as a very important starting point the identification of labour market needs and analysis. Emphasis is placed on recognition of competencies within an occupation including "skills set" underscored by demonstrated performance of knowledge, skills and attitude measured against work-based standards."

The model, which facilitates life-long learning and is intended to strengthen the relationship between the learning situation, regardless of where it takes place and the world of work, comprises the following steps:

- Labour Market Needs and Analysis
- Occupational Analysis
- Development of Standards and Qualifications
- Development and Approval of Assessment Tools and Instruments/Assessment of Learners
- Development of Instructional Materials/Training Intervention, and,
- Award of Certification.

## NVQs to become available through BVTB

THE National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) will soon become available to trainees of the Barbados Vocational Training Board (BVTB).

Minister of Labour Dr Esther Byer-Suckoo stated this during the delivery of the opening address of the BVTB's Showcase and Career Fair last month.

Stressing that the days were gone "when workmen showed up at a job site and worked based on a recommendation", she noted that the modern day worker was required to provide impeccable evidence of his skills in order to perform duties on the job.

"The question is how can we facilitate the modern day worker so that he can meet the demands of the 21st century? We can point him in the direction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)," she noted.

Minister Byer-Suckoo added that through the successful completion of an NVQ in his area of specialty, today's worker would possess the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding that enabled

effective performance of work roles.

NVQs are work-related, competence-based qualifications that reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively and show that a candidate is competent in the area and level of work the NVQ represents.

"With the assistance of the **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council**, the Barbados Vocational Training Board will soon be offering certification through NVQs. Currently, the Board is concentrating its efforts on two areas - Bar and Restaurant and International Cooking. Eventually NVQ certification will be extended to other courses," the minister said.

Commenting on the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), the regional equivalent of an NVQ, the minister said: "At a recent meeting of the COHSOD - the Council for Human and Social Development, CARICOM - some 60 (additional) occupational standards for



**TVET COUNCIL'S** technical officers (from left) **Andrea Harding-Waithe** and **Paul Puckerin** engaging in discussion with **Minister of Labour and Immigration Dr Esther Byer-Suckoo**. Looking on is **TVET Council's Executive Director Trevor King**. (GP)



**TVET COUNCIL'S** technical officers **Andrea Harding-Waithe** (left) and **Paul Puckerin** (right) discussing the benefits of achieving a **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)** with visitors to the **Barbados Vocational Training Board's Showcase and Career Fair**. (GP)

CVQs were approved. These regionally accepted qualifications will facilitate the movement of artisans

and other skilled persons in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). This qualification

will be accessible to persons already in the workforce as well as students in secondary schools and technical colleges across the Caribbean region."

Minister Byer-Suckoo stressed that in order for CSME to be truly successful there must be a common system and understanding across the region of quality assurance issues at all levels of education and training, and portable qualifications which the CVQ will provide.

"The **TVET Council** which falls under my portfolio is working assiduously to ensure that the new system of NVQs and CVQs is well managed as it seeks to enhance the status of technical and vocational training in Barbados and contribute to a competent and competitive workforce."