



TVET - Key To A WorldClass Workforce

# INSIDE TVET

*This is the second article in a three-part series examining the importance of core skills to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Part One, which appeared on February 25, 2010, defined TVET, core skills and explained the importance of core skills to TVET. Today we feature Dr Hamilton Jemmott, Barbados Community College tutor and specialist in TVET and competence-based education and training (CBET), who looks at the apparent deficiency in core skills vis-a-vis the education and training system.*

CORE SKILLS are defined as non-technical skills, which are most commonly needed to succeed in a range of activities at work, in education and training and everyday life. They are intended to help people adapt to changing circumstances and are considered essential for effective participation and success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. They include: Communication, Application of Number, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving, Working With Others and Improving Own Learning and Performance.

## What is the importance of core skills in today's work environment?

Research on employability skills (also known as core skills) in Barbados, which I completed in 2002, identified several other non-technical skills (in addition to literacy and numeracy) as being critical to worker success and useful in everyday life. Some of these skills were oral communication, teamwork, learning to learn, written communication, creative thinking, problem solving and information technology. These skills were identified through an employer survey, review of job advertisements and case studies which involved in-depth interviews with employers.

Therefore, the desire for these skills among employees in Barbados is grounded in substantial evidence.

A further rationale for the support of core skills is evidenced by changes occurring in the world of work; changes such as delayering (i.e. simplifying the structure of an organisation to make it more efficient), worker empowerment and teamwork in an environment of globalisation, severe technological changes and intensification of competition at the local, regional and international levels.

On a wider scale, changes in the organisation of work including total quality management, quality circles, the use of teamwork, multi-skilling and participative forms of management have precipitated the demand for core skills such as problem solving, teamwork and communication.

## Why does the seeming deficiency in core skills exist?

The deficiency in core skills exists because the education and training system was developed against the backdrop of the work structure that existed in earlier times, that is, an education system based on mass production, treating workers as individuals to perform job roles without question and without having an input into decision making, problem solving or any aspect of the job. These were seen to be outside of the requirements of these workers. Since workers did not require these skills, there was no need for their

# The importance of core skills to TVET - PART 2



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education to include them.

Furthermore, today, there is also the problem of expecting everyone to learn at the same pace. When that kind of situation is created what you are doing is creating difficulties for some children who are having problems with learning certain concepts. We have also become so exam oriented that the focus is on preparation for an exam, but, the problem is that the emphasis then goes towards the exam rather than towards satisfying what the individual has actually learnt.

There is also the focus on completing the syllabus but the need for repetition and for practising the concepts being

taught might not get sufficient attention, particularly in the classroom setting. The opportunity for intense practice does not exist easily in a classroom setting because the emphasis is on meeting timelines, in the form of the syllabus, and deadlines in the form of the exam.

## How can a core skills programme help to rectify the situation?

The CBET methodology is much better at dealing with individuals who learn at a different pace, because it is designed to cater to the individual rather than the group and the core skills programme is based on the CBET methodology. Also, dealing with core skills allows students to practise some of the concepts. For example, in addition to the teaching of English and Literacy, the core skills programme would give the students a chance to develop their core skills to the standard expected in work and other social contexts e.g. the home, work, social groups, etc.

A core skills programme would serve to provide individuals with the rationale for the importance of such skills in the modern world of work; one which requires greater input from workers at all levels. A core skills programme will also provide students with the opportunity to understand why these skills are required and provide them with opportunities, though limited, to develop and practise these skills.

The structure and potential delivery modes of occupational areas/subjects that fall under the heading of technical and vocational education and training make them excellent vehicles through which core skills could be introduced to students and by extension students be allowed to develop these skills.

The inclusion of core skills in the curriculum of schools and other education and training institutions cannot be effectively achieved without the input of teachers and other personnel responsible for delivering technical and vocational programmes.

Additionally, the context in which they are practised must be considered. In this regard, employers have a responsibility to inform education and training of their specific needs regarding core skills, and there has to be greater understanding by education and training of the needs of the business world, particularly with regards to service businesses.

## CBET Train-the-Trainer workshop begins

THE SEVENTH Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Competence-based Education and Training (CBET), which is hosted by the TVET Council in collaboration with the Barbados Community College (BCC),

commences next Tuesday, in the Training Room of the BCC's Barbados Language Centre, Howell's Cross Road, St Michael.

The 11-day workshop, which will take place on Tuesdays and

Thursdays from May 4 to June 15, is designed to promote competence-based training, assessment and certification using occupational standards, to assist in closing the gap between the needs of employment and

the outcomes of occupational training.

The cost of the workshop is being subsidised by the TVET Council.

The workshop targets corporate training

practitioners/consultants, human resources management personnel, managers/employers, institution-based trainers and all persons responsible for the design, delivery and administration of training.