

# INSIDE TVET

THE United Nation's Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), UNESCO-UNEVOC, describes TVET as education that prepares learners for the world of work and enables skills development for employability.

It notes that TVET includes a general education, in addition to learning that equips an individual with the knowledge, skills and attitude to become competent in a chosen career, profession or occupation.

A general education such as what is provided by primary and secondary schooling is important to laying the foundation for TVET. CARICOM's Regional Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training notes: "The entry requirements for TVET are essentially basic skills in literacy and numeracy and those concepts, principles, skills and attitudes that are required for continuing education after the first phase of the education system."

According to the strategy, identification of the prerequisites are premised on the belief that "in a rapidly changing society, the best form of vocational education is one which helps students to develop their capacity to learn, to think critically, to adjust to rapid changes in technology, and to gain some understanding of their later working environment".

## Inadequate skills in literacy and numeracy

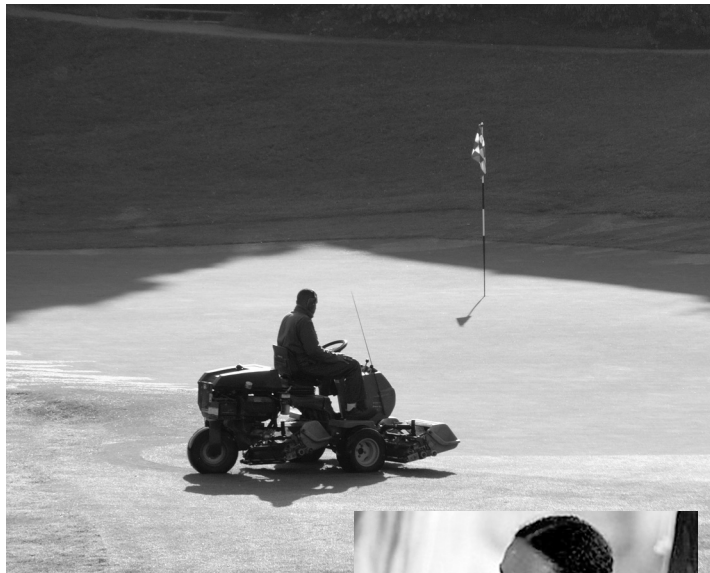
The strategy stresses that the factors which hinder students from "deriving maximum benefits from TVET programmes" include an inability to process information and inadequate skills in literacy and numeracy.

"Educators in TVET claim that literacy and numeracy are serious concerns for TVET programmes as they are in fact for any other education programme. Indeed, many candidates for TVET are unable to read and perform elementary mathematical operations; yet in many cases this is the principal rationale for their being placed in TVET programmes," the strategy states.

This is a situation with which the Barbados education system grapples and about which employers regularly express dissatisfaction.

The report on the TVET Review Meeting hosted by the TVET Council in September last year states that employers and other stakeholders are calling for enhancement of core skills training and, in particular, for all educational institutions to provide compulsory programmes on areas including application of the English Language.

Their concern is supported by local statistics which show that ten per cent of unemployed people had technical qualifications and 13 per cent had university/college qualifications; a state of affairs that is attributed to many of the unemployed lacking core skills such as



**CORE SKILLS are needed to succeed in a range of activities at work, in education and training and everyday life.**

(FPs)



# The importance of core skills to TVET – PART I

communication, numeracy, information technology and interpersonal skills.

This situation also poses a problem for the future development of Barbados' TVET system. UNESCO-UNEVOC notes that the development of an effective TVET system is at the heart of education reform efforts, and that the current focus is increasingly upon preparing knowledge workers to meet the challenges posed during the transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age.

## Core Skills

In order for all learners to benefit from today's TVET system and its emphasis on preparation of the modern worker, they must possess the prerequisites, known also as core skills or key skills. 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 to adapt to changing circumstances and are considered

**FAQ:** The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), its regional equivalent, are competence-based certification issued by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (TVETC).

NVQs/CVQs are earned through the successful demonstration of job competence. Competence is measured through the assessment of the knowledge and skills to do a job to the recognized standards. Assessment is conducted by a trained and certified assessor either in a real job setting or in a simulated workplace such as the Pommarine Hotel (the Barbados Community College's hotel training school).

Assessment measures job competence through the performance of the related tasks and job functions. Successful assessment results in the award of an NVQ or a CVQ.

essential for effective participation and success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development."

Core Skills often include: Applying and using numbers; communicating with other people; using information technology; solving problems; working with other people and in a team; improving one's own learning and performance; and taking independent decisions.

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (TVETC) has begun the process of developing a core skills programme and has identified a core skills model for use in Barbados – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), United Kingdom Key Skills.

This model was developed in close consultation with education and employment specialists in Britain and consists of six areas:

- Communication
- Application of number
- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Problem solving
- Working with others
- Improving own learning and performance.

TVETC's technical officer Dawn Gill, who is working with the project, explained: "Core skills models have been adopted worldwide and have been recognised as part of school and college learning for some time. Employers, colleges and universities are giving more and more weight to them. [They] are normally incorporated into existing programmes so that they are a part of normal teaching, learning and assessment."

Gill added: "Each of these skills areas is presented at four levels which equate to the first four levels of the British National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) – that is, entry level (Level 1) to junior management level (Level 4) – and can be separately certified.

"Consultation has taken place with public and private training institutions and it has been determined that the (QCA UK) model is fit for use in Barbados. Work is continuing with these institutions and other stakeholders to establish how best the model can be integrated into existing curricula and programmes."

## Benefits of core skills

Secondary school teacher Henderson Wiltshire explained the benefits of a core skills programme from an educational perspective: "There is a linkage between Core Skills and traditional Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) subjects such as Mathematics and English. CXC Mathematics and English in general prepare an individual more for higher learning than for the world of work hence emphasis is placed on passing an examination."

Wiltshire, a certified assessor for the NVQ and its regional equivalent the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), added: "Students gain lots of knowledge within CXC preparation in areas such as letter writing, expression, geometry and calculations. These can be complemented within the CVQ preparation where students can apply these concepts to practical situations through core skills. Students will have the opportunity to actually communicate in a work setting or calculate angles in a roof."

Wiltshire stressed that while CXC's emphasised the demonstration of knowledge, core skills emphasised the application of knowledge which helped the two areas to complement each other.

"A student leaving school armed with both Core Skills qualifications and CXC Mathematics and English would have a distinct advantage within the work environment," he said.