

An investigation of the growth of TVET occupationally directed programmes and CETA support for the growth of the TVET colleges as a key provider of skills required for socio-economic development.

Abstract

Currently enrolment at South Africa's TVET Colleges is seen as a secondary option only necessitated by the denial of university access. Furthermore, the quality of qualifications and lecturers from TVETs are often questioned and criticized. Thus the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), and the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) collaborated on a baseline study to investigate the growth of TVET occupationally directed programmes and CETA support for the growth of the TVET colleges as a key provider of skills required for socio-economic development. The mixed method approach was employed in the study where both the qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized. Also, desktop research was used in conjunction with empirical data to address the study's research objectives. The quantitative aspect was two-fold, one entailing the analysis of supply-related secondary data and the other involving conducting a survey. The qualitative aspect of the study utilized semi-structured interviews and discussions to collect in-depth data. Among other things, the study confirmed that the perceptions of TVET colleges were negative and they were classified secondary to universities. The study also found that the extent of TVET provision is substantial, the decline of state-funded TVET enrolments and budgets cuts have impacted enrolment and there is a need to capacitate lecturers through continuous development programmes. The study thus concluded that the evolution of technical and vocational education and training in South Africa, particularly within the construction sector, is integral to improving the perceptions of TVETs, increasing enrolments and meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving workforce landscape and the socio-economic needs of the country. The following recommendations were thus made: increase the funding allocation for expanding TVET programmes, capacitate lecturers to improve their skills and performance and launch awareness campaigns to promote and highlight the programmes and initiatives undertaken by TVET institutions.

Introduction

The CBE is a Schedule 3A public entity established by the Council for the Built Environment Act No 43 of 2000 and is mandated to promote on-going human resource development in the built environment, and facilitate participation by the built environment professions in integrated development in the context of achieving national goals. CETA is also a Schedule 3A Public Entity established in accordance with the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998. Accordingly, its responsibilities include identifying skill gaps and shortages and developing education and training programmes to address them. Its primary purpose is to promote training and skill development in the construction sector. This is why, CETA, among other tasks, carries out research to identify the skills gaps within the construction sector, and then develop education and training programmes in line with the skills needed. It is important to note that the CBE and CETA are like minded institutions working towards the same objective.

Currently South Africa's TVETs are seen as key instruments in enhancing employment opportunities through providing students with marketable vocational skills and relevant knowledge in key economic spheres. However, they are not the first choice for students looking to expand their skills, students who enroll in TVETs are perceived to have been unable to access universities and the quality of qualifications and lecturers are criticized. Thus, it is against this background that CETA approached the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) to investigate the growth of TVET occupationally directed programmes and how CETA can support them to become key providers of skills required for socio-economic development.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The mixed method approach allows the collection of both in-depth data and numeric data. Also, desktop research was used in conjunction with empirical data to address the study's research objectives. The quantitative aspect was two-fold, one entailing the analysis of supply-related secondary data and the other involving conducting a survey. The qualitative aspect of the study utilized semi-structured interviews and discussions to collect comprehensive data.

Several stakeholder engagements were undertaken in the form of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Stakeholders included Boland TVET, ORBIT TVET, the Eskom Academy of Learning, the Motheo Training Academy, the Construction Industry Development Board, the Black Business Council in the Built Environment, transformation advocates and the WordSkills ambassadors for Africa.

Discussions/interviews were also arranged with students to explore their insights. Interview questions were based on five areas of interest:

What do you think the role of TVETs are in providing skills for the construction industry?

1. Do you feel that TVETs are delivering on this role? If yes, how, and if no, what challenges or constraints do you think they face?
2. How do you think the CETA can support the TVETs?
3. How do you think TVETs are perceived in general by:
 - Students/potential students wanting to enter the construction industry?
 - The construction industry itself?
4. What do you think is needed to make TVETs sought-after institutions?

Research Findings

Current supply and demand of occupationally directed programmes:

- The extent of TVET provision is substantial.
- TVETs offer a wide array of programmes, particularly in physical construction studies (205 programmes), civil engineering construction (275 programmes), and electrical engineering (140 programmes).
- CETA offers learnerships, while the DHET has established several Centres of Specialisation (34 centres and 27 colleges) and Trade Test Centres (33 centres at 16 colleges).
- The decline of the state funded TVET enrollments and budget cuts have impacted enrollments.

TVETs perception as secondary choice after failed University access:

- Students communicated having a negative view of TVETs and TVET qualifications prior to admission.
- Data shows that the negative perception of TVETs extends to the broader public with students reporting having grown up hearing negative conversations around TVET education.
- The quality of TVET qualifications are often criticized and associated with unemployment prospects. While the quality of lectures at TVETs is also perceived negatively and interrogated.

TVETs capacity of lecturers:

- Stakeholder engagements noted the importance of ongoing training for lecturers, the inclusion of practical experience for students and the need to upgrade and expand education and training programmes to keep up with the technical skills required for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- There is a need support lecturer through continuous development programmed to remain up to date with the latest trends and technology and get further site experience as well.
- There is a need to standardise training for teaching staff.

Recommendations

Current supply and demand of occupationally directed programmes:

Target funding allocation

- Advocate for increased funding allocation specifically earmarked for expanding TVET programmes in the construction sector.

Streamline programme offerings:

- Assess the current programme offerings across TVET colleges to identify duplication and inefficiencies
- Streamline programmes to ensure that they align with industry needs and are offered at the colleges where there is the greatest demand. Consolidate programmes, enhancing the quality of existing offerings, and phasing out outdated or redundant courses.

Expand Centres of Specialisation:

- Engage with the DHET around expansion of the Centres of Specialisation programme to provide specialised training in high-demand areas within the construction sector; identifying emerging skills gaps and establishing new centres focused on green construction, renewable energy, or digital construction technologies.

Enhance industry partnerships:

- Strengthen partnerships with industry stakeholders to ensure that TVET programmes are relevant and responsive to current industry needs, establishing advisory boards of industry experts to provide input on curriculum development, work-integrated learning opportunities, and job placement initiatives.

Run market and awareness campaigns; and promote

TVET excellence:

- Launch marketing and awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of pursuing a career in the construction sector through TVET. This includes targeted outreach to high schools, career fairs, and community events to showcase the diverse opportunities available in the construction industry and dispel misconceptions about TVET education.
- Showcase success stories of TVET graduates who have successfully transitioned into the workforce and made significant contributions to the construction industry.

Technology integration and modernisation:

- Invest in upgrading TVET infrastructure to ensure access to modern equipment, technologies, and training materials.
- Develop partnerships with technology providers and industry leaders to facilitate the integration of emerging technologies into TVET curriculum and training programmes. These could include local universities within the specific TVET region; and the academies set up by the state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, Rand Water, and Transnet.

Improve the capacity of lecturers through ongoing professional development programmes:

- Investigate the implementation of structured professional development programmes for lecturers at TVET colleges, focusing on enhancing technical skills, teaching methodologies, and industry-relevant knowledge.

Conclusion

The evolution of technical and vocational education and training in South Africa, particularly within the construction sector, is integral to meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving workforce landscape and the socio-economic needs of the country. The supply of occupationally directed programmes in TVET colleges is extensive, yet challenges persist in ensuring these programmes meet the needs of industry effectively and equip students with the skills required for success in the workforce. Issues such as skills shortages, declining enrolments, budget constraints, and negative perceptions of TVET institutions exist and must be addressed through strategic interventions and collaborative efforts. One of the critical findings of this report is the importance of partnerships in the learning and education sector.

By providing students with more practical experience, promoting continuous learning initiatives, and supporting teaching staff through professional development opportunities, TVET colleges can better attract and prepare students for the demands of the construction industry and the broader workforce. CETA is well positioned to facilitate such partnerships, including perhaps the piloting of various programmes, and development of initiatives.

Areas of future research

- Investigate structured professional development programmes for lecturers at TVET colleges, focusing on enhancing technical skills, teaching methodologies, and industry-relevant knowledge.

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Approved

Dr Msizi Myeza
Chief Executive Officer