



# Technical and Vocational Education and Training



**NEWSLETTER**  
Issue 5, April 2009



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# **IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYER BASED TRAINING ( EBT) FOR A COMPETENT WORKFORCE IN THE MALDIVES**

This article is based on the findings reported within the research undertaken to fulfill the requirements of the Masters degree in Education (Vocational) at Griffith University, 2004.

Thesis Title: ***Issues in contemporary vocational education and training: a case study of marine engineering in the Maldives, Thesis (M.Ed.), Adam Haleem, Griffith University, 2004.***

Importance of strengthening newly introduced EBT track of skills development is crucial as the country's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system reported to be facing several issues. The issues identified in this article are reported in a study undertaken in 2004 in which performance of the graduates of 'Engine repair and Maintenance Course' of the Faculty of Engineering Technology (FET) were studied, analyzed and reported. The study reported that graduates of this training program were identified to be working in varying types of workplaces as mechanics, maintenance officers and even as apprentices in hospitals, resorts, land and marine transportation vessels and road-side garages and workshops. Although the work may look similar, work practices of each individual workplace is different, creating a massive task for the training provider in meeting demand side requirements of all these workplaces. Based on the findings of this study, issues associated with the provision of institution-based skill courses are discussed below.

## **1. Mismatch of training and occupational tasks**

The provision of existing skills development programs were seen to lack proper coordination with industry and hence to lack focused skill development. For example, the resort mechanics have to work on resort machinery and airport mechanics have to attend work on the airport vehicles besides repairing small and medium-sized engines for which the 'Engine Repair and Maintenance' course was designed.

## **2. Lack of comprehensive skill development**

Although the 'Engine Repair and Maintenance' program was considered successful in developing general and foundation skills, the program was seen to have failed to develop comprehensive skills in this area of training. After several years of work experience, the graduates reflected on the outcomes of the training and felt that comprehensive skill development was poor in the training provision. In response to a question that invited the graduates to comment on weaknesses of the present training, the graduates overwhelmingly referred to the absence of activities needed for comprehensive skill development.

## **3. Limited work-readiness**

The study reported that the graduates coming out from the studied training program lack appropriate work readiness as graduating students had to spend several years (1.5 to 5 years) in the workplaces after their training before being considered competent thus raising training period between 3 to 7 years. In addition to this long training period, participants of the program expressed concerns on the contents taught in the program.

## **4. Responsiveness to diversity**

Only one institute, namely the Faculty of Engineering Technology (FET), is providing skilled based engineering education and training in the Maldives. The diversity of the work practices identified across the Maldivian industry provides strong indications of the kind of pressures the institute is facing in responding to the skill requirements of all the workplaces. For example, the studied 'Engine repair and maintenance' course is designed to deliver skilled personnel competent in

repairing and maintenance of small and medium sized diesel and petrol engines. However, the undertaken study reported that their work practices vary from repairing and maintenance of small engines to repair and maintenance of electrical, electronic, hydraulics, pneumatics, plumbing and so on. The diversity of machines the graduates have to attend varies from kitchen equipment, medical equipment, incinerators and various complex systems of modern engines. They even have to attend various tasks on generator sets. Such a high degree of diversity puts pressure on the current provision.

### 5. Limited authenticity in training

Another issue identified from the study was that the tasks conducted in the Institute's workshop did not match well with the tasks conducted in the workplaces. Though the tasks in the workshops were similar to that of the workplaces, the training tasks lacked authenticity. The graduates usually attend practical sessions in the Institute's workshop with limited training engines (generally 10-45 Hp) and these engines lacked features of some of the workplace engines and hence the tasks conducted in these workshops were less than fully authentic.

### 6. Limited authenticity in the training setting

According to the ongoing institution based training, students undertake their practical

tasks within the institute's workshops. In these settings, students hardly experience workplace engagements as sessions are planned to facilitate the instructional timing of the particular institute. According to the study, students commented that they hardly undertook outside assignments and were poorly exposed to real workplace settings. It can be stated that the tasks conducted in workplace-like settings are more readily recalled while tasks individually performed in the Institute's workshop are less significant.

### Discussion

Given the issues identified within the current provision skills training, newly introduced 'Employer Based Training' track can play an important role for the provision of contextually relevant skills training. Although the track may look new in the Maldives, successful apprenticeship systems in Australia and the Dual Training System of Germany exhibits features similar to the newly introduced 'Employer Based Training' track of TVET provision. Therefore, we need to diversify provision of 'Employer Based Training' programs to all areas of skills training and improve the newly established TVET system for skills training.

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# TVET INFORMATION SHARING SEMINAR

## 14TH AUGUST 2008

An information sharing seminar was conducted by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Section of the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports in August 2008. The target groups for this seminar were Private and Public training providers and the main objective was to provide information regarding TVET.

The seminar was conducted in two sessions. During the first session, TVET officials and an official from Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) did presentations on TVET, National Competency Standards, Assessment and Accreditation and Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF) followed by Q&A sessions. The Presentations covered all aspects of TVET starting from how standards are developed and how TVET assures quality of the trainings through standard monitoring and assessment procedures.

For the second session, participants were divided into four working groups representing the tourism, transport, construction and social sectors. Each group identified issues and challenges faced by them in conducting Technical and vocational trainings. In identifying issues, groups gave their recommendations to these issues and presented their findings.

### Major issues identified by the working groups



Almost all the participants from all the sectors identified the lack of awareness for TVET programs as one of the major challenges they face. Society as a whole does not understand the benefits of skills training and hence are reluctant to indulge into such training. Another major issue raised particularly through the construction sector

working group was that parents perceive working in the construction as low level and dirty jobs that they do not at all encourage their children into any construction related skills trainings.

All the sectors faced the problem of recruiting and retaining trainees, lack of interest from the trainees to TVET programs often causes them to drop out halfway through the training and the training provider is again faced with the problem of recruiting new trainees. As identified by the working groups the lack of interest maybe due to the monetary and other benefits provided to trainees by their parents. Hence there is no real 'need' to learn a skill and work.



### Conclusion

The working groups identified a lot of issues which were already being addressed by TVET such as recruitment, awareness and attitude of parents as well as trainees. TVET hopes to organize a follow up meeting of this seminar to discuss recommendations and solutions to overcome the issues identified and also to discuss the steps which are already being taken by TVET in assisting training providers. In this regard TVET hopes to share the experiences from previous trainings conducted through TVET as well as best practices followed by some of the TVET partner training providers.

Since employment is through technical and vocational education, TVET is also confident that working as partners with the stake holders, the major challenges can be overcome and in future our society will perceive TVET trainings as prestigious as any other higher education.

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# **STUDY TO MEASURE OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATION OF MALDIVIAN YOUTH**

## **A Sector Specific Exploratory Study**

Business entities have flourished in the Maldives over the past few decades. The resultant creation of new jobs has led to a steep demand for Human Resources. With a significant amount of new entrants to the job market every year, the ensuing competition for job openings have increased. The ailing economic conditions augment the competition. Concurrently, globalization, technology, the new economy, demographic shifts, political change and their consequent transformations have induced the requisite for convalescence. Human Resource research has provided substantial evidence that both economic and social well-being of nations are dependent on the competence of its workforce.

Understanding the status quo is crucial in developing strategies and programs to cultivate a continuous learning environment. This cross sectional research would test the impact and the extent of influence rendered by major factors historically cited that affects Level of Occupational Aspiration. Upon analysis this sector specific exploratory study would help identify key factors that induce occupational aspirations towards priority sectors, among the Maldivian youth. It would also give TVET a better understanding as to which areas or occupations are in demand from trainee's point of view. All the studies so far concentrated on the employer's side, and gave answers to all the reasons why employers needed the particular trainings but this study would give us an insight into the trainee's aspirations, which would be very helpful in evaluating which programs to be conducted in what provinces or regions.

This study will be focused on the 15-34 year old youth age group and covers the geographic scope of the 7 provinces of Maldives. As aspiration levels are affected by environment,

background and personal factors it tends to vary from island to island even in the same atoll. Hence it is paramount to conduct such a study in all the inhabited islands. However with time and financial restraints the current phase would cover 3 islands from each province. These islands would be chosen based on population size and also the level of economic activity.

A survey questionnaire is under development that would help evaluate the major factors affecting level of occupational aspiration. The questionnaire would also incorporate an assessment to identify the individual Occupational Aspiration Levels. The data upon regression & correlation analysis would help identify the impact, of the factors evaluated, on the occupational aspiration of Maldivian Youth.

The instrument that would be utilized for the evaluation of the Level of Occupational Aspiration requires a foundation of a prestige scale, which needs to be recalibrated to the Maldivian context. Hence it is greatly anticipated that the relevant Ministries would provide appropriate input in this pursuit. The input from major stakeholders would be compiled and developed into a new prestige scale fit for the Maldivian context that would act as the basis for measurement in the Occupational Aspiration Scale used in this study.

The findings of this research would help distinguish the factors that have the most impact on Occupational Aspiration of Maldivian youth. This could subsequently be used at an advantage to develop education and training programs that are highly focused on the occupational ambitions of the Maldivian youth.



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## TVET - PATHWAY TO EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH

It is a generally accepted fact that education is an investment and human resource development is critical to the socio economic development of any nation. However the type of education which best contributes to the needs of the nation is the big question everyone faces. Everywhere we hear that there is mismatch between what education develops in school leavers and what the world of work needs.

It is very clear that through a system of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) we can overcome one of the biggest challenges – empowering our youth. TVET equips its recipients with skills which are more likely to give them promising opportunities for employment as well as giving them a career. It creates lifelong learning and a system which gives priority on employee training and career development. Today we cannot deny the vital role TVET plays in the socio-economic development of any nation.

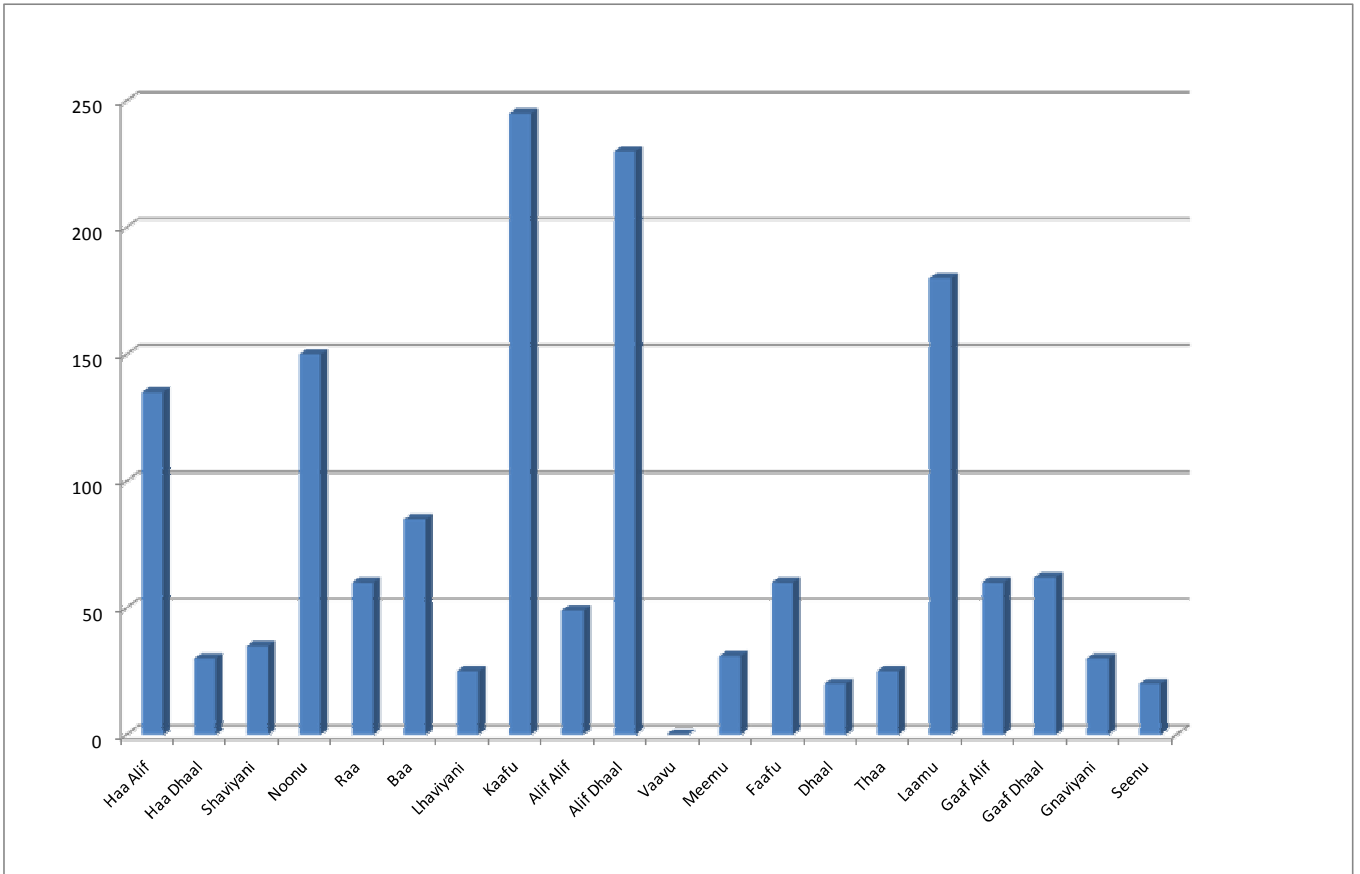
Over the past one and half years through TVET system, we have been able to identify major skill requirements and deliver those skills to that fraction of the population which really needs it. We have been piloting all modes to deliver TVET programs and the most successful of them all are the programs which includes community and employers as stake holders. It can be seen from TVET statistics that through employer based training and community applied training

TVET has been successful in reaching out to the extreme corners of the nation in creating a skilled workforce. TVET programs have covered all the provinces producing almost 2000 graduates and trainees by the end of March 2009. The TVET program needed for that particular island or region or even the sector is identified either by the community or the employers hence all our programs are demand driven and since we facilitate the delivery of training through private providers it is the responsibility of TVET to monitor and assure the quality of the training. Today we are indeed proud to state that, we are achieving our aim of being accessible to all, being beneficiary financed, being demand driven and quality assured. Our target now is to further develop and expand the TVET system.

The Bonn Resolution of October 2004 noted that since education is considered to be the key to effective development TVET must be the master key to improve quality of human life and sustainable development. But for this master key to be functional and practical there are critical requirements – government support, stakeholder support, community partnership, management leadership and staff commitment. We believe that we have the major ingredients for an excellent TVET system and our target is to reach every corner of the nation giving our youth the technical and vocational skills they need to rise and shine.



# TVET TRAINEES BY REGION



## PHOTO GALLERY

