



**CONCEPT PAPER**

**FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CARICOM STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

**IN THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY  
(CSME)**

By

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## 1.0 Overview of the Regional Technical and Vocational Education and Training System (TVET)

A critical challenge that faces the region is the development of a competent workforce for sustained economic growth in the global economy. Human resource development, through well planned education and training initiatives can contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society within the region. By helping individuals to gain access to decent work and sustainable jobs, and escape poverty and marginalization, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can impact positively on the region's economic development, achieving full employment and promoting social inclusion. A well-structured TVET system will enable productivity, enhance competitiveness and promote entrepreneurial activity.

UNEVOC as a policy implementation arm of the United Nations have placed renewed strategic importance on TVET especially for developing countries. UNEVOC has indicated that TVET embodies *"those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in all sectors of economic and social life. Technical and vocational education is further understood to be:*

- (a) *an integral part of general education;*
- (b) *a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;*
- (c) *an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;*
- (d) *an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;*
- (e) *a method of facilitating poverty alleviation."*

The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), as the foremost regional initiative for social, economic and political integration, recognize the importance of education and training for its citizenry. The Vision of the Ideal Caribbean Person<sup>1</sup> as adopted by CARICOM Heads of Government at their 18th Summit states that the education system should ideally *"mould the kind of individual who possesses the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for active participation in life and underscore the role of education in enriching human experience."*

Consequently, the region continues to be faced with the need to expand and improve the provision of education and training, from primary to tertiary, and to encourage and promote initiatives which seek to increase the number of competent people within the regional workforce.

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<sup>1</sup> Caribbean Education Strategy- Part III: The Way Forward

## 2.0 Situational Analysis

CARICOM adopted a Regional TVET Strategy in 1990 which led to many developments in TVET. Among its recommendations was the implementation of National Training Agencies / TVET Councils as apex agencies to rationalize all training, which was seen to be administratively fragmented, to ensure proper manpower development and centralized planning. While most have acknowledged that substantial progress has been made in building the education and training infrastructure based on national and regional policies, sustained efforts are required for further development. Among the key milestones achieved by the region in TVET include:

- The development of a 5-level Regional Qualifications Framework representing the different levels of skill, autonomy and responsibility that correspond to levels of employment in the labour market (2003)
- The setting up of National TVET Apex Agencies namely the Heart Trust NTA (Jamaica, 1991), the TVET Council (Barbados, 1998) and the National Training Agency (T&T, 1999)
- The setting up of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) as the implementation arm of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for TVET (RCMTVET) (2003)
- The wide participation of Caribbean territories in major regional TVET workshops hosted by Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica (2000-2008)
- The adoption of the CARICOM Process for Workforce Training, Assessment and Certification (2005) by the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD)
- The launch of a CANTA TVET Journal in conjunction with the ILO/CINTERFOR (2005)
- The agreement by COHSOD for the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) to be used for the movement of artisans (2007)
- The setting-up of regional processes for the development of Occupational Standards and the Quality Assurance of TVET Providers (2007/08)
- The regional approval of occupational standards (first in 2003 and again in 2008)

- The implementation of a project by the Organization of American States (OAS) has developed teachers and administrators within the secondary school system in the region. They were trained as Assessors of Competency Based Education and Training as part of a School-to-Work strategy
- The recent setting up of TVET Agencies and Competency Based Systems in countries such as Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia and Guyana, most of which are in the formative stages
- The award of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) in the Trinidad & Tobago Secondary School system to over 1,000 students (2007/08)

### 3.0 Current Challenges in TVET

As CARICOM moves toward a policy establishing the free movement of skilled labour within the CSME and the implementation of the CVQ, specific issues with regard to regional implementation arise. These issues include the processes for assessing competencies of individuals and the seamlessness of paths for learners within the education and training system.

Some of the critical issues identified by TVET administrators and previous studies within the region include:

1. There continues to be fragmentation among, and proliferation of, training providers as well as duplication of training programmes in the public and private sectors. The key reason being that most countries are still in the process of setting up TVET Councils and National Training Agencies as central coordinating bodies.
2. There are inadequacies in the preparation of TVET teachers/instructors in terms of delivering the TVET competency-based curriculum and facilitating the holistic development of trainees/students more so in the post-secondary system.
3. There are persistent vacancies in some occupations and surpluses in others, which is indicative of the fact that there is little correlation between training and manpower needs i.e. inadequate manpower planning and labour market analysis.
4. The existing training curricula are deficient and in many respects do not fully meet industries' requirements.
5. The existing education and training system produces students that lack basic skills required for accessing employment, i.e. employability skills which include having the right attitude for the world-of-work.
6. The need for rationalizing other TVET subjects in the schools with the technical offerings being short on practical application but having a high level of knowledge and understanding.
7. There are a limited number of occupational standards for key sectors that would support a competency based certification.

8. There is still an over emphasis on trainer/teacher centered approaches in the delivery of TVET programmes as opposed to learner centered competency based education and training (CBET) methodologies which are designed to more effectively meet the needs of the trainees.
9. There is need to raise the image and status of TVET. Vocational training continues to be offered as a second class alternative for students who do not succeed academically, in state-run programmes that have been under-resourced. This has led to high "failure rates" in TVET.
10. There are limited alternative routes to tertiary education (especially at the university level).
11. There is a greater role for industry in the development of human resources within a national and regional system of education and training such as the development of standards and the assessment and verification of learners within institutions, communities or enterprises.
12. There is a lack of industry participation in the regional approval of occupational standards. This has been primarily due to the absence of National TVET Apex Agencies.
13. There is a need for appropriate institutional infrastructure that would integrate skills development and training with sustainable job creation such as workplace apprenticeships and on-the-job training models.
14. There is need to upgrade facilities in training institutions to reflect the use of current technologies being used in the workplace.
15. There is an absence of "Centres of Excellence" that would cater for development of select activity areas that are of strategic importance to the community/country development. Many secondary and post-secondary training institutions are not purpose built.
16. There are insufficient national scholarships awarded to TVET students/trainees, educators/trainers and administrators to meet the demands of the TVET sector.
17. The widening impact of migrant labour i.e. the outsourcing of labour with the required competencies to do the job, where the local unemployed labour force does not have the requisite skills.

18. The impact of national and regional brain drain with several economies benefitting while most having a negative effect.
19. The absence of an accreditation mechanism to support the regional TVET model.
20. There is need for more collaboration between education, training and industry to continuously improve and upgrade the workforce.

#### **4.0 International Trends in Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

The outputs of a well structured TVET system have led countries such as Canada, Australia, Germany, Singapore and Japan to become global leaders in all aspects of their enterprise in a very short space of time. The following are key strategies being used by these countries for workforce development:

- a) Promotion and marketing of TVET as a viable alternative to the more traditional mode of advancement and education. This was done through the integration of competency-based training with academia both at the secondary and tertiary level.
- b) Establishment of a National Qualification Framework for education and training to include all levels from pre-primary to post-graduate.
- c) Establishment of National Worker Certification / Licensing Programme.
- d) Development of Industry-led Standard setting bodies in all sectors.
- e) Establishment of an independent labour market observatory.
- f) Provision of labour market reports on a continuing basis – both on the demand side and the supply side.
- g) Development of a Dictionary of Occupations aligned to international models.
- h) Creation of mechanisms for defining, classifying, training and certifying people in the informal sector.
- i) Provision of training opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation.
- j) Increasing the Employability and Participation of Vulnerable Groups - young workers, differently-abled, older displaced workers and the incarcerated population.
- k) Establishment of a National Training Fund with contributions from the Government and private sector.
- l) Passage of legislation for the funding, accreditation, standard setting and quality assurance within the national training system.
- m) Development of a Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship Programmes
- n) Encouragement of lifelong education through a seamless system i.e. school to work and work to school models.
- o) Provision of information on careers & proper career guidance.

## 5.0 Regional Demand for TVET

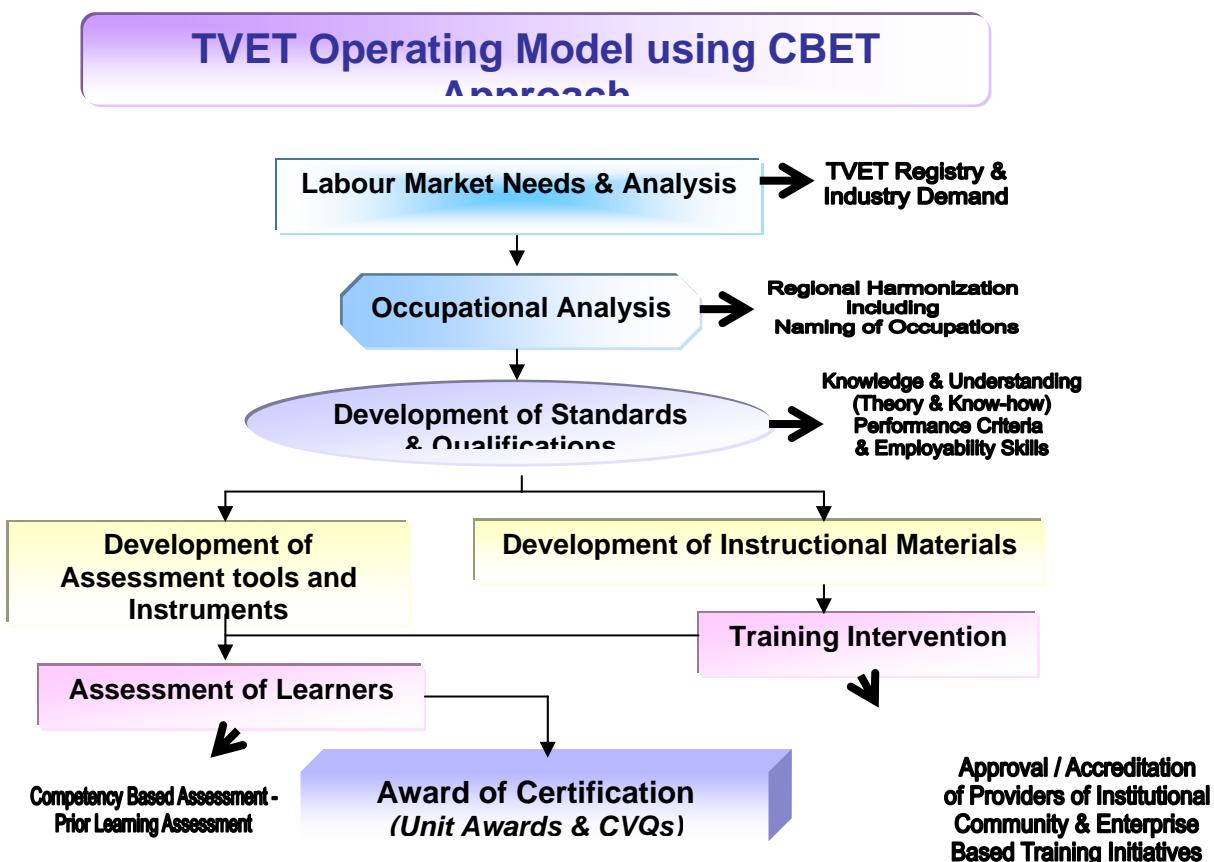
The regional economy is primarily a services economy. Some of the major changes in the sectoral contributions in different island states include significant decreases in agriculture and manufacturing, and growth in the contribution of construction, transport, distributive trade, government services, education and training, communications, and other services thus requiring competent labour for such expansion. Due to the declining commodity prices in the world market, the region's outlook for foreign direct investment and industrial development seems grim with several economic analysts and world reports suggesting the following as key objectives of the education and training system:

- Continue to channel investments in education and training and employee development in expanding the *services sector*, especially those that are generating investments, creating employment, and capable of earning foreign exchange. These may include:
  - Tourism and Hospitality, as the dominant sector in most Caribbean territories. The region should seek to continually develop and diversify the sector. Some areas may include:
    - Eco tourism / Heritage tourism
    - Health tourism
    - Sports tourism / Adventure tourism
    - Meeting places for business and executives
  - Distributive trade / entrepreneurial activity
  - Manufacturing of food and beverages
  - Construction primarily related to tourism and civil construction such as ports and airports
  - Mineral resource mining and processing
  - Information and Communications services
  - Education and Training Administration

These sectors will make up a large percentage of the "new" regional service economy. Countries will therefore need to develop and continue educating, training, retraining and realigning its workforce through its TVET initiatives to ensure the required competencies are achieved.

## 6.0 CARICOM Model for Workforce Development

TVET has had a long history in the Caribbean with each country having its own system developed. Over the last decade, a regional model for the development of TVET has been adopted in the form of a competency-based approach to education and training (CBET). Competency-based education (CBE) is built on the philosophy that "almost all learners can learn equally well if they receive the kind of instructions they need." Learning outcomes are derived from standards which are defined by industry which is used to guide the development of curriculum materials and instructional design based on the needs of the workplace or institution. This facilitates the competency-based training and assessment throughout the TVET system, as the approach seeks to systematically identify and develop essential worker competencies, or the knowledge, skills and attitude required for a particular job (see Figure below).



## 7.0 Assumptions / Risks

Government's within the region must recognize and accept the strategic importance of NTAs and TVET Councils, and its role in terms of the Country's human resource and economic development. It requires various government departments/ministries working together in a coordinated approach towards realizing National TVET Apex Agencies' strategic aims and mandates, including the Ministries of Education, Labour, Planning and Finance. Ministries of Tourism, Infrastructural Development and Community Relations are also key to the TVET development model.

**GOVERNANCE:** The responsibilities on the Agency's governance and senior management will be considerable. The need for senior management to have the requisite skills and qualifications and exposure to national, regional and international models affects the proper national planning. A proper mix of industrial experience and exposure to education and human resource development is required. The Board of TVET coordinating bodies will require the necessary authority and autonomy to implement its policies. The Board should be so comprised of persons within Industry, Labour, Government and Training to effectively achieve its mandate. There is need to separate the political, the technical and the administrative levels within the governance framework.

**STATUS OF TVET:** The public's perception of TVET as being a programme for drop-outs of the formal academic system still exists and needs to be changed. By an active and sustained programme of promotion and public education, TVET must be seen as becoming a symbol for success leading to high quality jobs. Competency based TVET qualifications should be integrated at all levels of the education and training system and not be delineated starting at the level of the secondary school system right up to the university level.

**RESOURCES:** The introduction of the new competence-based TVET system will have considerable resource implications on educational institutions. One of the most important of these is the ability for teaching staff to deliver the new curricula aligned to industry set occupational standards and the senior staff to verify and manage them. The new quality assurance mechanisms will also require additional levels of expertise amongst staff.

**INDUSTRY LINKAGES:** The success of the new TVET system is heavily dependant on the relationship between education, employers and social partners. This relationship needs to be strengthened and formalized so that industry will assume ownership of the new approach to TVET and invest in it in terms of continued support and on its reliance to provide it with trained personnel. This strategic initiative proposes the setting up of Industry Skills Councils / Sectoral Lead Groups whose terms of reference will include the identification and regular review of occupational standards, and to act as advisory bodies to Government and educational institutions.

**TRAINING POLICIES:** There is an identified need for the development of comprehensive National Training Policies to reflect a national identity but within the regionally established framework. There are still many registered and unregistered training providers in the public and private sectors offering different qualifications. Rationalization of these programmes with the CVQ would lead to a more economic and efficient use of state funds.

**RATIONALIZATION:** The elimination of dubious certification is also important. There is need for the establishment of a legal framework, standards, guidelines and procedures related to the different levels of training. This would ultimately lead to the accreditation of TVET programmes and the award of certification, which would be of value to the potential employer.

## 8.0 Policy Framework - Review of the CARICOM Regional TVET Strategy (1990)

The CARICOM Regional Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was adopted by the Caribbean Community's Ministers of Education at their Eighth Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in May 1990 and provided for a cohesive framework for developing, improving and coordinating TVET across the Region. Based on the challenges in the current TVET system and the initiatives within the global TVET sector, the CARICOM TVET Strategy (1990) remains a very strategic intervention for the enhancement of our human resource capability and the challenges that the region may face. Some of the major areas of action with strategies and key indicators of successful implementation are tabled below.

	MAJOR ACTION	IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS
1.	Establish a National Training Agency	<p><i>Completed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- three established agencies</li> </ul> <p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at least 4 countries have started to put TVET apex structures in place</li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- all countries having established TVET apex agencies</li> </ul>
2.	Appoint a Regional Advisory Committee	<p><i>Completed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- established CANTA</li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increasing the participation of countries</li> <li>- launch of a CANTA Secretariat</li> </ul>
3.	Develop a Labour Market Information System	<p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CANTA Website - <a href="http://www.cantaonline.org">www.cantaonline.org</a></li> <li>- Caribbean Labour Market Information System - a project in conjunction with the ILO</li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a Regional TVET Registry to capture all approved standards, providers and awards of CVQs</li> </ul>
4.	Develop and implement a promotional programme	<p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National communication strategies</li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Regional Communication and Marketing plan supported by national strategies to be developed</li> </ul>

	MAJOR ACTION	IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS
5.	Organize professional vocational and career guidance services	<p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a <i>Regional Dictionary of Occupations</i></li> <li>- <i>Career Mapping linked to occupational Standards</i></li> <li>- <i>Regional implementation of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) offered to persons who do not have certification but have the required competencies</i></li> </ul>
6.	Review, Upgrade, Intensify and Extend TVET offerings	<p><i>Completed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed a <i>Regional Model for TVET implementation based on a Competency Based System</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>the award of CVQs in the secondary school system</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>the award of CVQs within the post-secondary system and the workplace</i></li> <li>- <i>the need to have all countries with adequate resources and infrastructure to implement the CVQs</i></li> </ul>
7.	Create effective linkages among TVET programmes and institutions	<p><i>Completed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed a <i>five-tiered regional qualifications framework</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Need for a Regional Qualifications Framework representing pre-school to tertiary education to allow for proper articulation (seamless system catering to lifelong learning needs)</i></li> <li>- <i>Need to quality assure and assess all providers against stated criteria to allow for backward, lateral and forward linkages</i></li> </ul>
8.	Strengthen teacher training for diversified and effective programme delivery	<p><i>Completed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jamaica has a Vocational Training and Development Institute (VTDI) supported by the University of Technology (U Tech) to effectively deal with TVET teacher training.</li> </ul> <p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through the OAS Project, a number of teachers have been trained in competency based assessment methods</li> <li>- Territories have sent some teachers / prospective teachers on scholarships to VTDI and U Tech</li> </ul>

	MAJOR ACTION	IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The University of Trinidad &amp; Tobago (UTT) has launched a programme - B.Ed. TVET in conjunction with the Metal Industries Company which will do the skills based training.</li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for distance learning strategies to be implemented for more effective teacher training especially within the smaller, less developed territories.</li> </ul>
9.	Rationalize, upgrade training facilities and arrangements in keeping with projected needs	<p><i>Processes Initiated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Award of the CVQs as a means of rationalizing TVET offerings</i></li> <li>- <i>Processes developed for the development of occupational standards and quality assurance/audits to ensure that training providers meet those standards</i></li> <li>- <i>Development of Occupational Standards based on industry requirements</i></li> <li>- <i>Development of Facility Standards and checklists</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Future Development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Implementation of Apprenticeship Training Schemes</i></li> <li>- <i>Widespread implementation of the occupational standards and vocational qualifications</i></li> </ul>

## 9.0 Constraints

### Administrative Framework - CANTA Secretariat

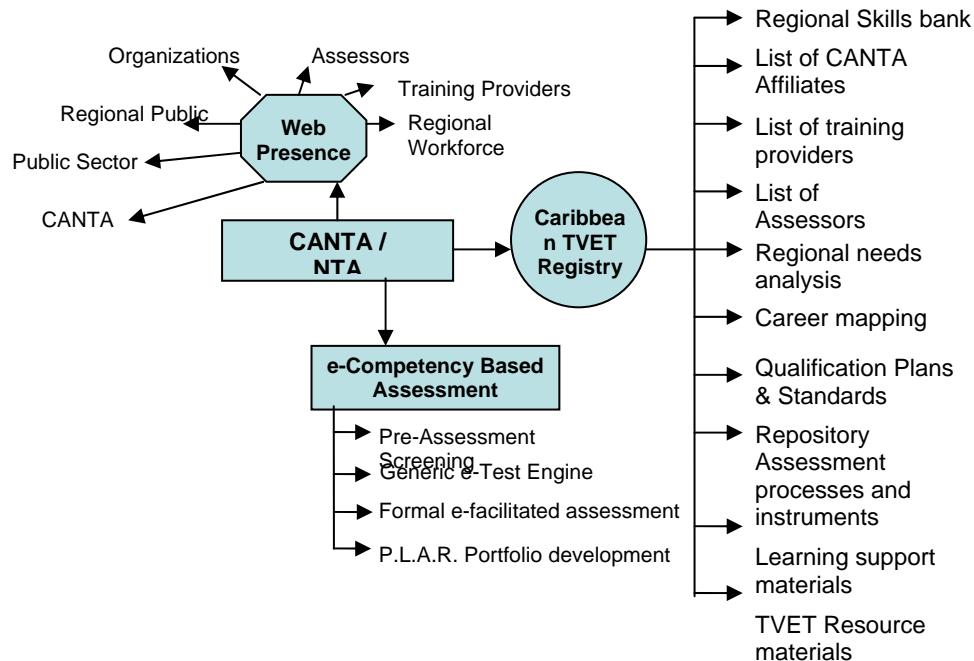
The major issue faced by these national apex agencies in the Caribbean is not a lack of understanding of what needs to be done to strengthen workforce development, but rather continuous access to human, financial and legislative frameworks to support the implementation. CANTA has not been able to give the required support to territories in the startup phase in implementing CARICOM's TVET strategies. The Heart Trust NTA of Jamaica and to a lesser extent the National Training Agency of Trinidad & Tobago has been assisting countries in the training of Assessors, development of occupational standards, prior learning assessment and other related developments.

The role of the secretariat in promoting knowledge sharing on TVET extends beyond simply communication between TVET agencies. It straddles from interregional and international technical workshops to on-site advisory services. While efforts are being made to have a Secretariat located in Trinidad & Tobago, a more concerted effort is required by all stakeholders for implementation. The need for dedicated financial and fiscal support is the single most pressing issue to effective implementation of CARICOM's TVET Strategies.

### Technology Framework - CANTA Registry

The culture of knowledge exchange has long been established and recognized in the region. The development of a proper knowledge management system at the National and the Regional Level will support the Secretariat and strengthen the level of coordination, communication and administration of TVET. A model is presented below.

## MODEL OF A TVET REGISTRY: TVET Integrated e-Solution – Stakeholder Interface



### Human Resource Framework - Training of Teachers / Administrators

There must be an adequate cadre of trained TVET teachers and instructors to effectively deliver proper competency based assessments. A primary element of an effective training system is a cadre of competent teaching and training personnel. TVET teachers/trainers need to be both technically and pedagogically competent.

### Legislative Framework

Many countries have started developing legislation specific to the objectives set out by CARICOM. Some of these include (1) Establishing, promoting and maintaining occupational standards; (2) Producing Vocational Qualifications (3) Establishing an awarding body for CVQs; (4) Providing registration/approval status to training providers through the process of quality enhancement and quality assurance; (5) Promoting lifelong learning via continuous education and training; (6) Facilitating the assessment of Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs);(7) Facilitating the implementation of modern apprenticeships.

### **Financing Framework - Fiscal Support**

The issue of financing of National TVET Apex Agencies is crucial to TVET development. The Agency can begin to operate with a relatively lean complement of staff during the initial start up period but the need for resources will increase as the Agency's various functions are established. The potential for raising revenue through registration fees and the sale of materials is very limited and therefore continued support from Government sources is essential. Governments may wish to consider a funding model similar to that currently used in Jamaica where a training levy is imposed on employers to partly finance all TVET.

Some of these initiatives could include the following activities related to the generation of additional resources:

- a) Seek partnerships with industry to:
  - i) Provide resource persons for training programmes
  - ii) Provide access to additional training facilities for students and teachers
  - iii) Donate equipment and or funds to training institution
  - iv) Adopt training institutions
- b) Implement cost recovery programmes which include:
  - i) Registration fees for trainees/employers;
  - ii) Offer consultancy services to companies/organisations/ministries at a cost – mutually agreement before project start-up
- c) Seek funding from external agencies
  - i) Develop project proposals
  - ii) Identify external donor agencies for technical assistance – although this strategy is currently being practised, it must be noted that the funding should be channelled into projects within the regional framework.

## 10.0 Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the vehicle for the provision of education, training, assessment and certification that is relevant to the needs and aspirations of the Caribbean Community. A proper TVET system speaks to a sound basic and secondary education as an important enabler within a seamless system of education and training. The role of industry in defining the competencies within the internationally benchmarked occupation standards makes the TVET system relevant to the social and economic needs of the region. It is the role of CARICOM, through its coordinating agents and affiliates, to ensure that education and training is seen as the joint responsibility of Governments, Industry, Labour, Service Providers and the End Users in achieving regional success.

The implementation of a regional survey resulting in action plans for individual countries, similar to what led to the Regional TVET Strategy of 1990, is now being recommended to further advance the scope of this document and create a better picture in terms of aligning individual territories to the regional TVET plans.

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## Appendix 1: BIO-SKETCH

### NAVNEET BOODHAI

Mr. Navneet Boodhai currently serves as the Manager of Research, Planning and Development at the National Training Agency (Trinidad & Tobago) – a body setup by Government to coordinate and regulate technical and vocational education and training (TVET). He is a TVET expert with over eight years experience both nationally and regionally, with a proven track record in the implementation of workforce development strategies. He has responsibility for labour market research, developing TVET strategies, manpower planning and resourcing.

Mr. Boodhai holds a B.Sc. in Electrical & Computer Engineering (UWI) and an International Masters in Business Administration from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business. He has written and presented numerous technical papers and proposals on labor force productivity and competency development systems. In addition, he has represented the National Training Agency and the Government of T&T at various regional and international events.

Mr. Boodhai also holds the position of Member and Assistant Secretary to the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) – the implementation arm of CARICOM's Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD). He also serves as a Board Member of SERVOL as well as a number of Government and Industry Committees setup to look at workforce development.