

ABSTRACT

Postsecondary, Technical/ Vocational Training and its 'At Risk' Participants

Patrice Parris – Searles

For years, governments, administrators and policy makers emphasize the need to provide postsecondary youth who possess little or no educational qualifications, opportunities to gain marketable skills and occupational competencies. In Trinidad and Tobago, a number of craft and technical/ vocational training programmes have as such, been established to facilitate the increased employability of these 'at risk' individuals

While there exists international research on a range of areas associated with technical/ vocational education and training (TVET) among the educationally disadvantaged, no recent, local research has evaluated postsecondary, technical/ vocational training initiatives or their participants. Furthermore, no existing study within Trinidad and Tobago has attempted to comprehensively evaluate how the social and personal backgrounds of these youth influence the successes registered within such programmes.

This study fills this informational gap. Specifically, it assesses the degree of alignment between the design and objectives of one such postsecondary, technical/ vocational training programme and the expectations and/or needs expressed by its participants. Additionally, the study evaluates how peer, familial, community and personal characteristics affect trainees' performance. Moreover, the exercise assesses the effectiveness of the training initiative in terms of the very objectives these programmes aim to achieve, namely, increased employability and marketability of its graduates.

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Overall, the study determines that the postsecondary, technical/ vocational training intervention in question does not significantly alter the employment rate of its 'at risk' participants. Despite this, technical/ vocational training did appear to increase the occupational tiers attained by graduates once employed.

In terms of the training success documented among 'at risk' postsecondary TVET participants, personal variables such as self - efficacy, achievement motivation and occupational aspirations did not significantly influence the training success recorded. In contrast, familial, peer and neighbourhood traits had statistical influence upon trainees' performance.

A few disparities between the operational focus of the postsecondary technical/ vocational training provider and trainees' expectations or needs were also highlighted by this study. Importantly though, there is harmony between the programme's emphasis upon dimensions of workforce, entrepreneurial, personal/social development and the expectations of 'at risk' participants.

Keywords: 'At Risk' youth, technical/ vocational training, skills development, labour market outcomes, training effectiveness.