



TVET in Malaysia: Capabilities and Challenges as Viable Pathway and Educational Attainment

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Abstract: *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is known as skill-oriented education to fulfill the increased demand of a highly competent workforce with advanced skills. This paper provides an overview of the current literature related to TVET and the analysis of available TVET data in both developed and developing countries. The focus of the review is on numerous challenges in achieving TVET goals. Part of the challenges includes misperceptions and stigmatizations against TVET that contribute to the low enrollment among students applying to further their studies in technical and vocational education. This misperception has led to a poor image of TVET as a viable pathway and educational attainment. TVET seems new to certain people in Malaysia, and this kind of misperception trend will cause the occurrence of continuity in setting stigma as TVET as considered a secondary choice. This paper reviews the scenarios that occur in the world of TVET involving the challenges towards TVET and various initiatives taken towards TVET educational attainment so that it can be used as a guide to performing a paradigm shift towards stigmatization as well as improving the perception of TVET in Malaysia. Certain recommendations were suggested to reinforce the new perception of TVET.*

Keywords: *Technical and Vocational Education, challenges, misperception, Malaysia, workforce.*

1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Malaysia still need to strengthen and reform as an important way of producing quality and skillful manpower. Mostly in the developing countries, TVET facing challenges with the various misperception against the objectives and the challenge exists because of a lack of participants in TVET streams.

There are numerous TVET providers in Malaysia involving several ministries under a government such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Community Development, and also other agencies under state governments and private providers (Zain, 2020).

TVET needs to be re-emphasized and supported in Malaysia to draw more youth to join in TVET programs to ensure that TVET is not regarded as a second choice in educational options (Ab. Rahim, 2011). Full support of academicians, industries, and society at large is needed to form a better perception of the TVET system.

TVET play critical roles in providing technical and professional skills workforce needed by a nation for the socio-economic and industrial development of the country. To achieve the objective requires consistent, coordinated, and concentrated efforts to close the misperception gap and attract youth into TVET and retain them as a high-quality talent to support the human capital needs of the economy.

2. Challenges Towards TVET

The biggest challenge in empowering TVET education is having to deal with misunderstanding, misperception, and stigmatization towards TVET. According to Ismail & Hassan (2013), TVET's social stigma was generated by the perception that the primary aim of vocational education and training is to cater for school dropouts, rather than as an effective tool for educating qualified workers for the job

market and sustainable livelihoods. Misperception in TVET not only occurs in Malaysia but has long existed all over the world including developed and developing countries.

The primary cause of disregard for TVET in Ethiopia is partly the result of perceiving TVET as education for youth with low academic abilities and this perception equates academic education with intelligence and TVET with a lack of intelligence; consequently imposing a negative impact on results (de Borja & Marasigan 2020). Some countries may provide TVET to prevent students from dropping out by offering them a curriculum that is both more suitable for early labor market entry and less demanding in the purely academic subjects that these students might find the most challenging (ILO DWT for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific., 2016).

TVET is sometimes seen as a pathway for those who dislike academic learning and it is not always rewarding to teach more academic skills to such students. These attitudes and perceptions translate into a significant reduction of general education content and/or lower quality in general education in VET programs (Kuczera, 2010). According to Essel et al. (2014), the limitations of TVET systems in African societies have created a perception that TVET is second fiddle to general academic education.

TVET as a training provider has recognized as the main provider of skilled workers. Malaysia towards a developed nation needs a highly skilled workforce in industries to remain the industry as a competitive and viable in a global economy. This objective could be achieved through TVET agency-industry collaboration. Although employers are the ultimate beneficiaries of TVET, there is no clear platform for the industry to engage with TVET institutes to provide input such as on curriculum and training content, the quality of training, apprenticeship as well as developments in the needs of the industry (Ashari et al., n.d.).

Zain (2020), highlights several challenges in TVET Malaysia involving demand and supply mismatch, the issue of status, and non-homogeneous participation of ethnic groups which reported by Thiruselvam (2006) that Indian youths make up less than 3% of the total intake to TVET places offered in the country. The majority is dominated by Malays participants.

3. TVET Towards Educational Attainment

Malaysia needs to develop its human capital to achieve high-income nation status. The focus must be given to mainstreaming TVET education and enhancing the competencies of tertiary graduates to prepare them for entering the labor market.

TEVT has become a mainstream education option in many developed countries. Fawcett et al., (2014) had described and analyzed trends in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Europe and Eurasia (E&E) region and explained the concept of TVET into a structure and few models as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

3.1 TVET structure and enrollment patterns in the 24 countries of Europe and Eurasia

Figure 1 had shown that Europe and Eurasia countries offer various levels of TVET programs. Most countries concentrated at the upper secondary and tertiary levels. Fawcett et al. (2014) state that education systems within the region are now beginning to offer continuous education (lifelong learning).

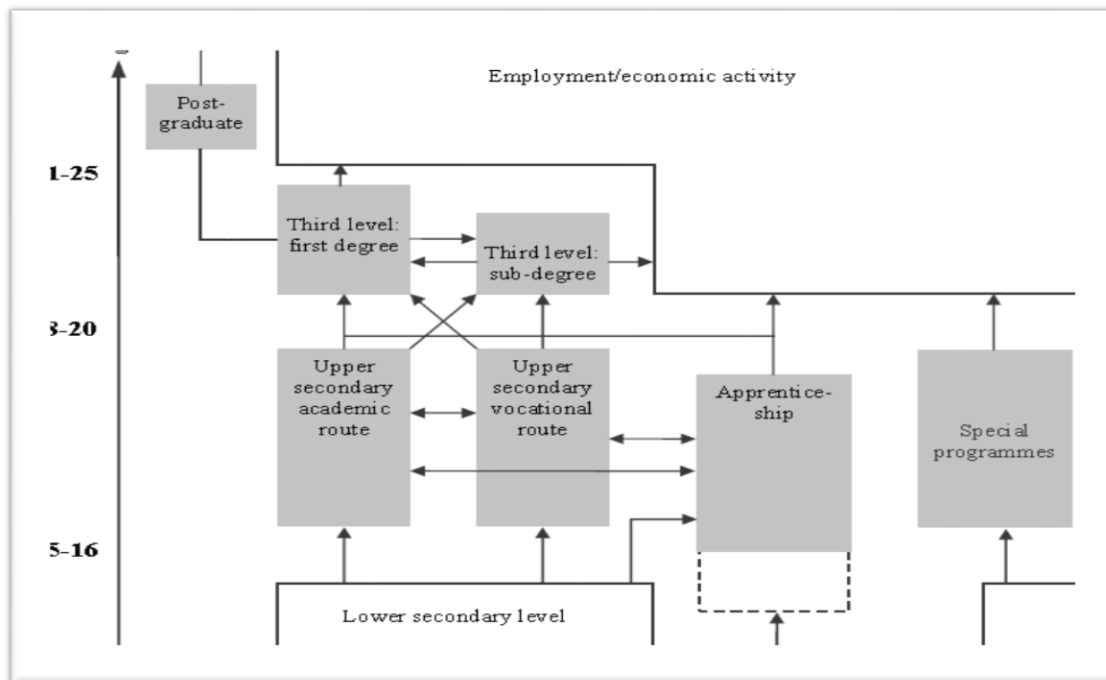


Figure 1 Structure of TVET in Most Europe and Eurasia Countries (Fawcett et al., 2014)

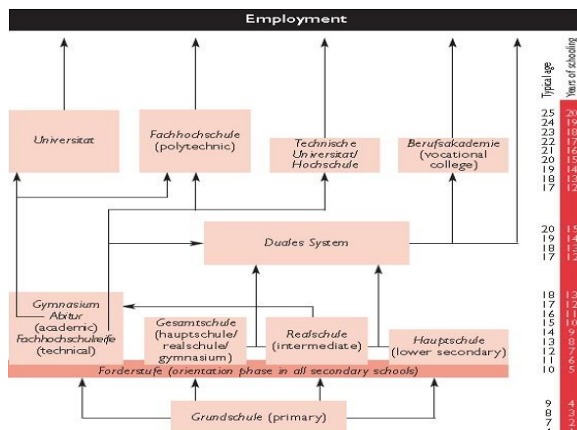
3.2 TVET Models in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom

The three models in Figure 2 proves that TVET education is rapidly being integrated into tertiary education in Europe. According to Büchter & Gramlinger (2004), the system of continuing vocational training in German is characterized by its market-led approach to provision.

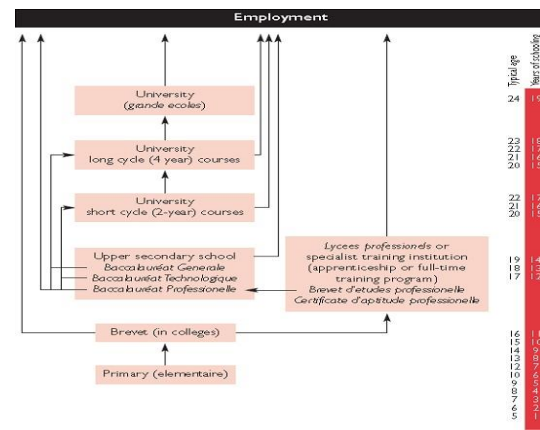
In Malaysia, some innovations and enhancements of the TVET system have been made to overcome the challenges. Malaysian Government implements the 'National Dual Training System (NDTS), which aims to expose apprentices to actual situations in the industry, introduces the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) to provide accelerated industrial training and extent of vocational in tertiary education (Zain, 2020). The National Dual Training System (NDTS), introduced training initiative for producing k-workers in the country to resolve the issue of skilled workers being produced but not meeting the needs of industry (Abdullah, 2011).

4. Capabilities of TVET in Malaysia

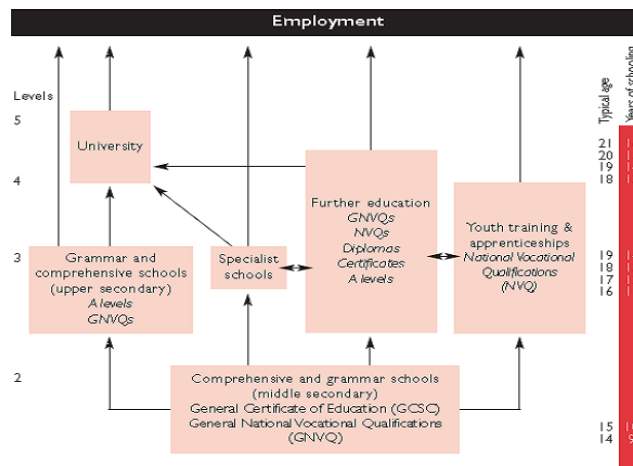
TVET in Malaysia is not a mainstream option among school students. TVET rebranding that had been announced by Prime Minister on the 11th of January 2011 is aiming to face the challenges and provide the new perception of TVET. The role of TVET in strengthening the education system is being driven by a number of factors including economic, social, political, and so on (Hutton & Dixon, 2016). The ultimate objective challenges of TVET in Malaysia is to reform TVET as a relevance system that promotes greater employment and efficiency in the labor market. Engagement between TVET sectors with the industry is one of the forms to achieve shared goals. The need for highly skilled manpower could be achieved through the involvement of all stakeholders in TVET education (Ashari et al., n.d.)



DUAL SYSTEM MODEL: GERMANY



STATE-REGULATED BUREAUCRATIC MODEL: FRANCE



LIBERAL MARKET ECONOMY MODEL: GREAT BRITAIN

Figure 2: TVET model in Germany, France, and the UK (Fawcett et al., 2014)

According to Lanka (2011), the full potential of Malaysia's national TVET program has been limited by the misconception that it offers mainly for the less academically capable and does not represent careers of choice. A systematic set of programs was also developed which also included:

- (a) rebranding and improving the perception of TVET to mainstream TV;
- (b) validating and revamping the provisioning, operating and financing structure of the TVET sector;
- (c) enhancing private skills training to build a vibrant TVET market.

Students in Malaysia joining the TVET stream find it difficult to continue to higher educational and qualification grades because the TVET pathway has been designed mainly for the less academically competent. Education systems should provide for clear procedures for how TVET students can continue to learn and progress in their careers or move on to higher education or continued learning (Fawcett et al., 2014).

The implementation of TVET should be the responsibility of not only the government but also of the business sector (Ab. Rahim, 2011). In Malaysia TVET plays an important role in providing the professional workers for the economic development of Malaysia. The impression of a second-class status on TVET must therefore be excluded.

Awang (2011) conducted a study using a sample from 356 form four high school students and 102 interns from private training centers in Malaysia, and both groups of respondents had a favorable view of low entrance qualifications in TVET, as shown in Figure 3.

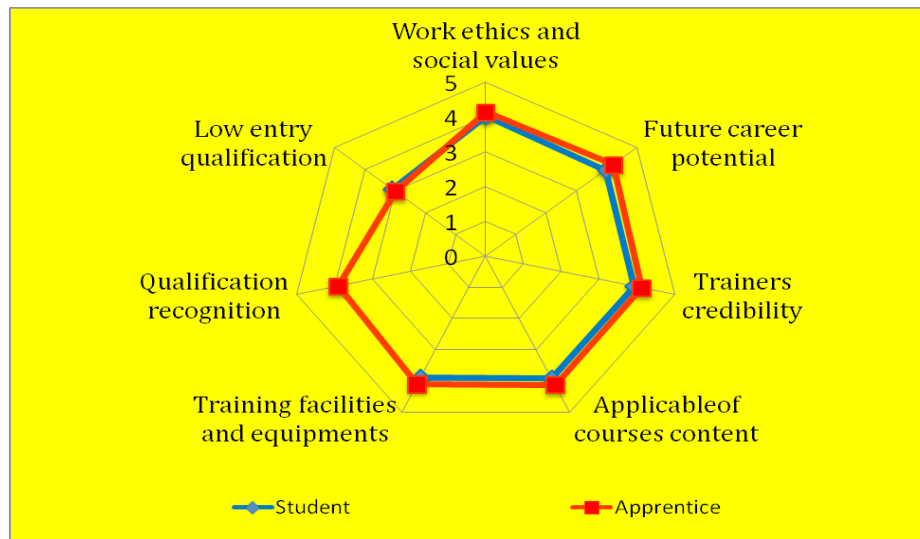


Figure 3: Overall Image Score (Awang, 2011)

[Notes: Scale 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree]

Due to the findings of the study, priority has to be given in promoting the image of TVET to achieve a better perception which related directly to students' loyalty. Recognition of skills, job ethics and social values, and applicability of course content were considered key predictors of a loyalty of students in TVET (Awang, 2011).

Though the TVET system facing numerous challenges in achieving objectives, various innovative and approaches developed to operationalize transformative lifelong learning in TVET. In a landscape of technological change, lifelong learning will need to become part of TVET if sustainable development is to be achieved. Kanwar et al. (2019), highlights the need to integrate informal and non-formal learning in TVET systems and showcases the potential of technology and heutagogy to facilitate transformative, lifelong learning.

The Malaysian government has committed itself to restructuring the TVET education system through an internationalization framework that involves one of Malaysia's TVET universities, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). Internationalization program is characterized as a program with an international content orientation, aimed at preparing students for international and multicultural achievement (professional / social) and for domestic and/or foreign students (Rashid et al., 2009). The partnership is being made between UTHM and Germany's University of Bremen to establish a German-Malaysian Ph.D. programed.

5. Conclusion

Malaysia towards an industrialized nation with great economies acquired to emphasized the development of TVET in its education system. An effort must be made to reform our society's misleading views toward TVET, and to inspire young person to register in TVET. The commitment also must be taken by both government and business sectors to recognized TVET qualification as a well-educated workforce which highly needed to develop economic prosperity. TVET's most significant characteristics need to be recognized as well-placed with a strategic approach to train a professional and creative workforce with a broad industry-compliant curriculum and market-driven focus on emerging technology.

Malaysia has taken numerous strategies and initiatives through the TVET providers to implement TVET improvements, including the design and implementation of industry-led curricula, the upgrading of teaching staff, and the development of a portfolio of high-tech and high-value programs. This is a very holistic effort to strengthen the TVET education system in order to equip Malaysians with knowledge and expertise to become a nation of high earnings.

Overall, it can be concluded that the TVET system is still relevant and needed as a provider of a highly skilled workforce that needed to both developed and developing countries in a new technology world and global economy. Thus, TVET providers should take proactive steps in generating and enhancing the promotion of TEVT to bridge the gap of misperception and reinforce the new perception of TVET in Malaysia.

Many studies have been conducted related to the challenges and misperception and stigmatization in the implementation of TVET in Malaysia. For future research, more studies can be conducted on the capabilities and involvement of communities, industries, and various agencies to reinforce the new perception of TVET. In order to perform a paradigm, shift towards stigmatization as well as improving the perception of TVET in Malaysia, the involvement of all parties in future research regarding their expectations and needs in the hope that this effort can expand their trust and belief in TVET education.

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