

Original Paper

Perspectives of Parents towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This paper presents the parents' perceptions on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Zimbabwe. The target population comprise of 63 parents with children in secondary schools. Quantitative research method, whereby an interview protocol involving twenty open ended questions exploring the parental perspectives, was employed. Open-ended questions allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own words, in their own time and in a place of their own choice. The study revealed that most parents have negative attitude towards TVET. Going forward, there is need for interventions like implementing media campaigns and awareness raising programs across the country with the aim of encouraging the enrolment of potential students into TVET education and/or institutions.

Keywords

technical, vocational, education, training, perceptions

1. Introduction

Education, since time immemorial, has been used in the world from ancient cultures to the present as a means of acquiring knowledge (ILO, 2012), skills, attitudes, values and competencies which are applied to unearth hidden knowledge and apply them effectively to achieve socio-cultural, economic, political and technological developments. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) refers to studies in the areas of technology, applied sciences, agriculture, business studies, industrial studies and visual arts (Boateng, 2012). TVET skills are essential to generate job creation, employment and a productive economy (Heraty, Morley, & McCarthy, 2000). In other words, TVET prepares the youth for the job market either to be employed or become self-employed.

According to World Bank (2008), TVET is the secret behind the technological advancement and economic fortunes of several developing nations across the globe. In a bid to redress the challenges of poverty, unemployment, low technological progress and slow national development caused by apathy towards TVET, the policymakers pursued several socioeconomic programmes, but their performances were woeful and catastrophic (Ahmad & Singh, 2003). UNESCO-UNEVOC (2012) noted that this form of education had great prospect for tackling poverty, enhancing employability through skills acquisition and boosting sustainable development in different continents. In Africa, the report emphasized that TVET was imperative for boosting the skills of learners in secondary schools, polytechnics and TVET-oriented institutions to meet the expectations of the world of work (industry) and self-employment.

The governments of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries were renewing efforts to promote Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with the belief that skills formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy (Dasmani, 2011). Despite legislations enacted, TVET systems implemented in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries faced many challenges and were not always well aligned with the needs of the local labour market and economy (Szirmai, Gebreyesus, Guadagno, & Verspagen, 2013). In case of Zimbabwe, since the 1990s, the expansion of private training providers became powerful in the TVET sector. Indeed, most of these private training providers were preparing students for the National Foundation Certificate (NFC), certificate, diploma or degree level qualifications.

1.1 Background and Context

The development of TVET in Zimbabwe found its roots in the crafts training that was taking place in Natal organised by the Native Commissioner of Natal, Loram. The philosophy of TVET was brought to Zimbabwe by Kegwin and Jowitt in 1923 resulting in establishment of skills centres at Tjolotjo and Domboshava mainly for crafts training in building, carpentry and agriculture. Transformation in the school sector in TVET took place after the Education Commission chaired by Professor Judges (1962). The Commission emphasised the establishment of Ecological curriculum, for example, introduction of F2 schools. That was a purely practical curriculum running parallel to the F1 academic streams. The system was not received by people because it was rather discriminatory as F2 schools were only for the blacks and they were eventually faced out after Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980.

Despite the fact that country has implemented TVET education in its training system for a number of years, no studies have been done in the context of Zimbabwe to hear the views and perceptions of parents towards TVET training system, specifically those parents with children in secondary schools. Once these children have graduated from secondary schools, they will either enrol for TVET training or university training. Parents of these children are a major stakeholder, among other stakeholders who directly or indirectly influence these children when it comes to making a choice to either to enrol for TVET training or choose another education path. To this end, the research problem of this study, posed as a question is: what are the perceptions of parents with children who are about to consider enrolling

for TVET training? Thus, the main purpose of this study is to explore parents' perspectives towards the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Zimbabwe.

A systematic reform of post-independence TVET policy in Zimbabwe has not yet taken place. However, a number of reform initiatives are noteworthy. In 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe established Higher Education Examination Council (HEXCO) with the sole mandate for TVET programmes in polytechnics, colleges, vocational training centres and schools were to sit alongside the Apprenticeship Authority, which was responsible for lower-level TVET qualifications.

A policy review in 2006 stressed the need for an overall human resources development strategy and was later followed by the draft skills policy in 2010. A qualifications framework and authority have been proposed, but not yet implemented. After realising that the phasing out of F2 schools which imparted skills to youth was a shot on the foot, the Government of Zimbabwean established the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 which came out with the following findings just to mention a few, and these are now being followed religiously:

- Each school child/pupil/student / learner is expected to do at least two (2) practical subjects.
- Schools are expected to offer a wide range of practical subjects, for example, carpentry, building, agriculture, food and nutrition, fashion and fabrics ICT metal work, creative art and design and many more.
- Review of the school curriculum at the time of writing this study (September 2020) was in progress, though some aspects of the ongoing curriculum review are already being implementation.
- Skills training were starting from Early Childhood Development (ECD) up to (A) level. For example, agriculture as a subject at grade 7 was first examined in November 2017 by Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC).

The government has also given parastatals the mandate to train school leavers with relevant passes at Advanced level to undergo an apprenticeship training to equip them with necessary skills relevant for the job. A good example is the Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission Distribution Company (ZETDC) which provide in house and apprenticeship to workers and employees. TVEVT in Zimbabwe has been driven by the concern to create a national TVET sector responsive to labour market demands and able to drive the development of skills needed for economic growth and development.

The reforms initiated by the government from 1999 (as recommended by the Nziramasanga Commission) were often associated with policies to decentralise governance of the public TVET system, and to include public and private providers in the service of skills development. Most TVET agencies had an explicit role to include private and/or enterprise-based providers within the TVET system. In Zimbabwe, TVET is delivered by different types of providers including secondary schools, technical colleges, polytechnics, vocational training centres, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), training companies and enterprises.

1.2 Research Problem and Study Rationale

Although there are a number of documented researches on TVET, to the best knowledge of the authors, no one in Zimbabwe has made an effort to make a research on the perspectives of parents towards TVET. The socialisation of the child starts from the family and hence parents play a pivotal role in the upbringing of the children. Only parents could motivate their children to like any learning area. It is against this background that this research paper tries to close this literature gap in the case of Zimbabwe.

There are a variety of challenges affecting the effectiveness of the TVET sector, both in Zimbabwe and globally. Some of the key challenges includes the mismatch between acquired skills and market needs, widespread concern about poor quality training and training environments, negative public attitudes and perceptions regarding TVET (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2001). In developing countries such as Zimbabwe, TVET had been characterised by low status and poor attitudes in comparison to academic subjects. This study explored views and attitudes of parents; whose voices are rarely heard in educational policy formulation. The value placed on practical subjects, that is, technical and vocational subjects in comparison to academic subjects is not highly pronounced. The negative attitudes of parents towards TVET are implied by several factors including, very low rate of students' enrolment in TVET institutions, poor infrastructure and limited resources devoted to activities of TVET institutions, limited competitiveness of TVET graduates in the labour market, and the mismatching between TVET curriculum and industry requirements. Boateng (2012) emphasised the need for transforming TVET in line with developments in the job market. However, knowledge of youth attitudes and aspirations towards training and careers is limited. Bennell et al. (1999) acknowledged the scarcity of contemporary inquiry into TVET in Africa which made this study a worthy contribution. Globally, TVET struggled to define and promote its status against academic subjects. Cedefop (2011) maintained that TVET had been viewed as a second-best option which carries a social stigma in a number of countries. In the United Kingdom, Wolf (2011, 6) proclaimed that TVET had for a long time been seen as 'the poor relation of academic learning.' In Zimbabwe TVET had generated considerable interest among academicians and politicians. Shizha and Kariwo (2011), Mupinga, Bunnet, and Redman (2005) and Chinyamunzore (1995) concurred that the role of TVET in Zimbabwe need to be redefined. The then Minister of Education Coltart (2011) regretted that Zimbabwe's post-independence education system was too academic and fell short of meeting the needs of the youth. Despite the clamour for orienting the country's education system towards, the parents of potential TVET students have not been consulted to get their respective views.

The country has been subjected to considerable social, political and economic turmoil since 2000. Zimbabwe was once dubbed the bread basket of Africa producing a range of crops, livestock and minerals. Political instability and subsequently economic crisis have seen the economy shrinking by approximately 50.3% (UNESCO, 2015) between 2000 and 2008. Many companies closed down. These developments led to a sharp rise in poverty, unemployment, infrastructure collapse and a haemorrhage

of human resources (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO (2015) estimated that about three to four million untrained, trained and experienced personnel left Zimbabwe for neighbouring countries. Despite the fast-shrinking employment market, academic and university education continues to be the government's priority while TVET remained underfunded and peripheral. It should be noted though that the academically skewed education policy raised Zimbabwe's literacy rate to great heights. UNESCO reported that Zimbabwe had an estimated literacy rate of between 92% and 97% since 2000 to date, representing the highest in Africa (Munjanganja & Machawira, 2015). Paradoxically, Zimbabwe had the highest unemployment rate in the world. The unemployment rate was estimated at 80% in 2005 rising to 95% by 2009 (CIA World Fact Book, 2016), and the situation has remained the same since then.

Despite some recommendations by the Nziramasanga Commission of inquiry into Education in 1999, by start of 2015, Zimbabwe had not yet implemented them. As Zimbabwe's policy makers and educators sought to overhaul the education system to address young people's aspirations and the country's labour needs, this study particularly offered different perspectives for policy makers' consideration. The research made recommendations for addressing the status of TVET, attitudinal change and careers guidance for students. This paper is an empirical contribution to ongoing discussions on the role of TVET in Zimbabwe. The findings from this study would appraise educational policy makers on the views of parents and cultural status quo of TVET.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to establish parents' perspectives towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Zimbabwe. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Undertake and identify parental perspectives of the TVET training.
2. Help government and other stakeholders to scale-up skilling of new entrants and up skilling of existing workers to contribute to higher growth of priority sectors.
3. Strengthen skills development and enhance overall coordination of the currently fragmented skills development systems both within public and private TVET institutions
4. Increase public awareness about the opportunities that TVET avail regarding skills development and diffuse negative perceptions about TVET as a dead-end option to further education.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A quantitative research methodology was adopted using an interview protocol involving twenty open ended questions exploring the parental perspectives. Open-ended questionnaire allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own words and in their own time and in a place of their choice. With regards to sample size, 63 parents participated in the survey. These parents were targeted because they had children learning in the secondary schools (ranging from form 3 to form 6), and these children after graduating from secondary schools will have the option of enrolling either for TVET or university

education.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection and recording of data from open-ended questionnaires was done using a paper-based form which listed all twenty open-ended questions for parents to answer and complete. The principal advantage of this strategy was that it allowed plenty of time for parents to answer the questions. However, (Kendall and Kendall, 2002) suggested that lack of opportunity to observe the physical responses of parents about the topics and un-timeous return of completed questionnaires were some of the limitations of this approach.

The completed questionnaires were collected two weeks after distribution. Data pertaining to each question was entered into separate Excel spreadsheets. A thematic analytical framework was applied to analyse data in line with the inductive approach. An inductive approach when used in quantitative research help to augment understanding of complex data using summary themes or categories from the raw data (Thomas, 2003). The responses from the questions were grouped into three domains to explain the viewpoints of parents concerning TVET. In each domain, there were issues describing the detailed aspects of the TVET sector. According to Ryan (2003), there are twelve techniques used to create themes and sub-themes. In this study, three techniques, namely (1) word repetitions, (2) key words in context, and (3) similarities and differences were applied to determine the common emerging themes in each issue. The next step was to identify sub-themes that link the research findings and the research questions through data analysis. Data was compiled by gathering them in the poles, themes and categories to understand the meaning of a phenomenon.

3. Result

3.1 Meaning of the Term TVET

Parents were asked the question: *What comes to your minds when the term, TVET, is mentioned?* The responses showed that parents had different understanding of the word TVET. Out of the 63 parents who provided answers to this question only 62 provided meaningful answers and 1 did not provide an answer. Of the 62 parents, 12 (or 19%) said that TVET referred to hands on; while 37 (or 60%) said that it referred to skills with the remaining 13 (or 21%) indicating that it referred to practical subjects such as woodwork, building, metal work, fashion and fabrics; and food and nutrition.

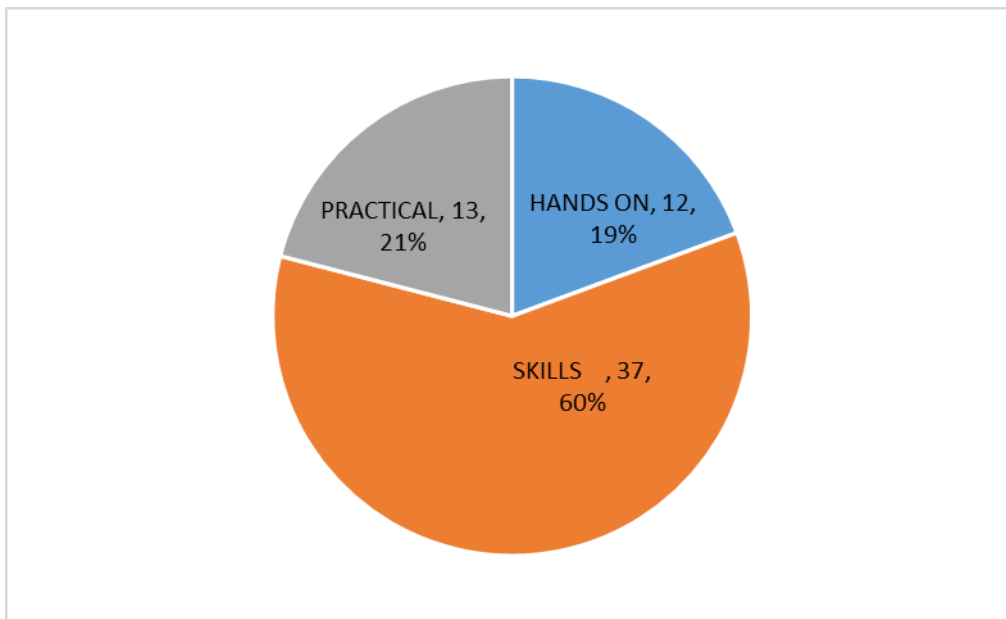


Figure 1. Parents' Understanding of TVET

Source: Survey.

3.2 Decisions for a Student to Enroll for a TVET Qualification

Decisions with regards to enrolling for TVET training has been a subject of contention given that there are many stakeholders who provided education guidance, directly and indirectly. To objectively deal with this subjective, parents were asked the question: *Who made the decision for a student to enroll for a TVET qualification?* From the parents who responded, it emerged that out of the 63 respondents, 52 parents said that the decision to enroll for a TVET qualification rested with the parent or guardian, 9 parents said that the decision rested with the student, 1 parent said that it depends with how the student has passed and 1 parent said that the decision to enroll was reached after a thorough discussion between the child and the parent or guardian. Figure 2 provides the distribution of parents' responses.

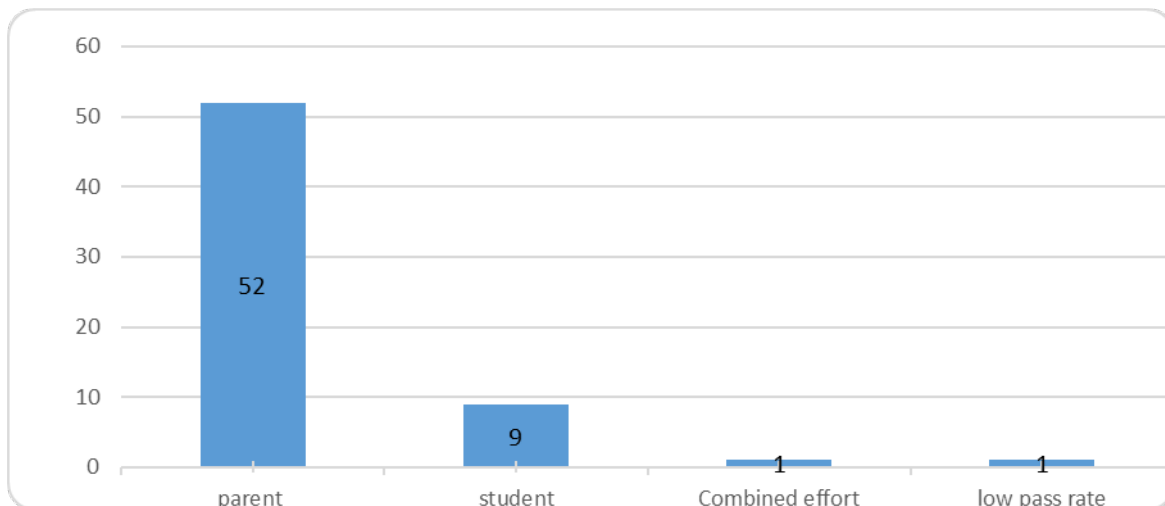


Figure 2. The Person Who Makes Decision Regarding Enrolling for TVET Training

Source: Survey.

3.3 Strengths of TVET Training

The following question was asked to the parents: *What are the strengths and weaknesses of TVET system in Zimbabwe?* Figure 3 shows that most parents know the importance of TVET, especially given the Zimbabwean situation from 2008 to present where most skilled individuals earned a better living through self-employment. TVET is seen as an essential as it provided a setting for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, gaining skills and hands-on experience.

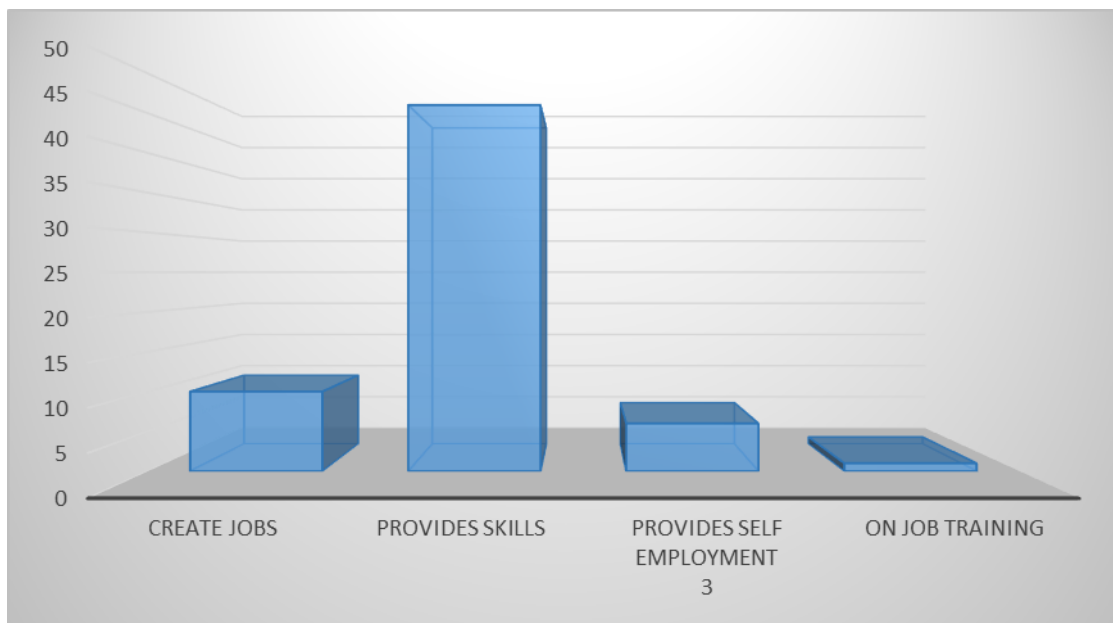


Figure 3. Importance of TVET Training from Parents' Perspective

Source: Survey.

3.4 Weaknesses of TVET Training

Overly, parents had a negative perception with regards to entry requirements and types of students enrolling in TVET programs. There was consensus of parents that only students who achieved average and poor results enrolled in TVET programmes, meaning students who failed Ordinary (O) or Advanced (A) level or failed to get a place in a university and that they had limited avenues for the future. Therefore, TVET was considered as a last resort. A number of weaknesses were highlighted by parents and these included: (i) few TVET centres, (ii) gender stereotyping, (iii) poor instructor training, (iv) no clear linkage between vocational and general education, (v) poor linkage between formal and non-formal TVET, and (vi) poor linkage of TVET to the labour market. Furthermore, traditional skills, business management and entrepreneurial training and harmonisation of TVET programmes and qualifications were found not to be properly documented.

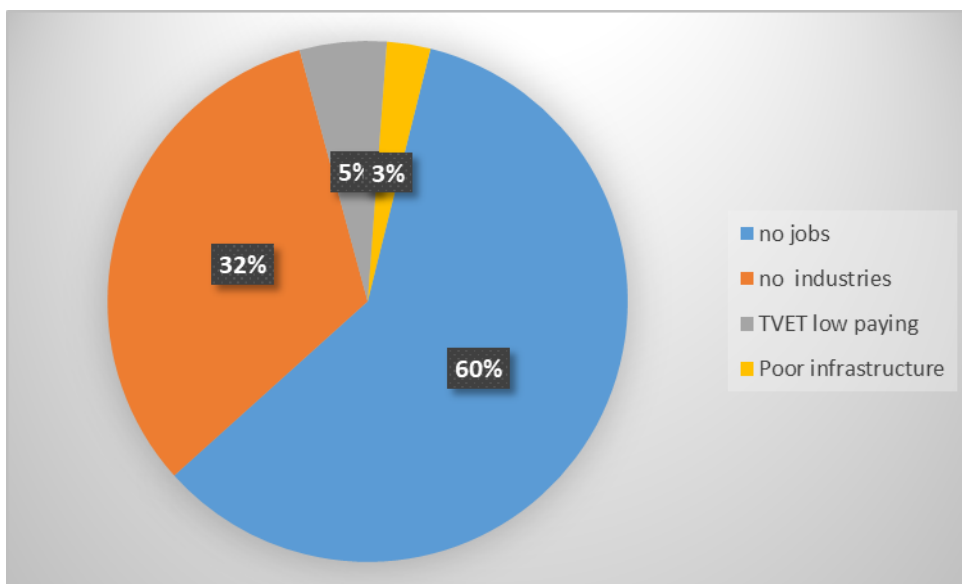


Figure 4. Weaknesses of TVET Training

Source: Survey.

Parents claimed that training in TVET had no meaning in Zimbabwe as there were no industries for attachment and that there are no jobs. In fact, in most cases TVET jobs are low paying and TVET institutions have poor infrastructure.

3.5 The Educational Level of the Students Who Enrolled in TVET Programmes

The academic qualifications of students who enrolled for TVET training in Zimbabwe are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Educational level of TVET Students

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 7	7	11
“O” Level	41	65
“A” Level	10	16
Below Grade 7	5	8
Total	63	100

Source: Survey.

The enrolment qualification presented in Table 1 clearly showed that in Zimbabwe most TVET students had passed “O” level subjects but could not proceed to “A” level due to weak passes or financial problems. Vocational education and training in Zimbabwe is characterised as something ‘for other people’s children. As highlighted by Wolf (2002, p. 56) who regarded TVET as second choice option whilst academic education was regarded as the ‘gold standard’ to which the best should aspire. Unsurprisingly, the literature on young people’s perceptions of vocational education and training suggested that they were not inclined to (or were at least reluctant to) pursue vocational courses or careers (Finegold et al., 1990; Bell, 2005). Such beliefs or perceptions were predicated upon the prevalent understanding that in order to be successful in life an individual need to acquire educational credentials in the form of high-status academic qualifications. Literature also suggests that vocational courses and careers are more often pursued by individuals who have performed relatively poor at school. In Zimbabwe, TVET is considered mostly for school dropout, and those who failed grade 7, “O” level ad “A” level.

3.6 Nature of TVET Learners

Most parents from the survey viewed TVET students as those who frequently come from a lower economic status background, from mountainous or rural areas, or from households where there are other specific, extenuating circumstances. One parent said that “Students joining TVET programs are mainly from difficult economic status families and from rural areas. There are only small numbers of students from urban zones entering the TVET sector”.

3.6 Learners’ Knowledge about TVET

Some parents from the survey indicated that TVET students did not know how to choose a career or had insufficient or poor guidance. Parents said that students who entered the TVET sector did not had enough information about the TVET sector from the career guidance counsellor in the school, or advice from their relatives, especially their parents. Also, parents indicated that some students did not make a confident choice. They just enrolled in TVET programmes because they were following their friends or had no other opportunity for study after they failed their grade 7 or form 4 examinations.

3.7 Sense of Belonging and Pride in TVET Qualifications

Respondents were asked the question: *Do graduates from TVET institutions felt a sense of belonging and pride in their profession?* Table 2 show that out of the 60 parents who responded, 28 said that graduates of TVET schools felt a sense of belonging and pride in their profession. At the same time, 32 said that graduates do not feel a sense of belonging and pride because academically they failed and their achievement (of having TVET qualifications) was never celebrated.

Table 2. Extent of Pride in TVET Qualification

Feelings of TVET graduates	Yes		No	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Frequency	28	47	32	53

Source: Survey.

3.8 Activities for Guidance and Awareness about TVET

Participating parents were asked to respond to the following question: *Are there any activities for guidance and awareness about TVET from the government?* From the responses given in Table 3, 50% of respondents said that there were no activities for guidance and awareness of TVET while another 50% indicated that activities for guidance and awareness were limited given that only those that attended speech and prize giving days and careers days in schools managed to get information.

Table 3. Availability of TVET Guidance and Awareness Activities

TVET awareness	Yes		No	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Frequency	29	50	29	50

Source: Survey.

3.9 Barriers that Limit Enrolment in TVET Institutions

Despite fees being low in TVET institutions, it was highlighted by 41 parents that TVET tuition fees continue to be one of the barriers to enrolment. A total of 10 parents said that there were no colleges, while 8 parents said that they were not informed about the TVET education option, and 4 parents said that there was lack of equipment in these institutions. According to these parents, therefore, these challenges meant that it was a mere waste of time to send their children to TVET institutions given the high possibility of that theory could be taught only without the necessary practical for skills acquisition. Table 4 depict barriers to TVET enrolment in Zimbabwe as observed from parent's perspective.

Table 4. Barriers to TVET Enrolment in Zimbabwe

Type of barrier	Frequency	Percentage
No school fees	42	65
No colleges	10	16
Not informed	8	13
Absence of equipment	4	6
Total	63	100

Source: Survey.

3.10 Overcoming Barriers to TVET Enrolment

Parents were given the opportunity to suggest pragmatic and possible solutions to overcome the barriers to TVET enrolment. Specifically, they were asked the following question: *How can the barriers mentioned above be mitigated?* Table 5 provides suggested solutions. Most parents, constituting 62% of respondents prioritized the building of more TVET facilities (colleges) as the number one solution, while 17% considered offering free TVET training as another solution.

Table 5. Ways of Overcoming Barriers to TVET Enrolment

Way of overcoming	Frequency	Percentage
Building more colleges	33	62
Improving campaigns	7	13
Giving grants	2	4
Training of more lecturers	2	4
Offering free education	9	17
Total	53	100

Source: Survey.

3.11 Problems Faced by Female Students in TVET Institutions

The girl child faces a lot of challenges, chief among them being stigmatisation. From the survey, 4 respondents said female students were regarded as being inferior as TVET subjects are regarded to be for boys. 28 parents indicated that some female students fell pregnant and drop out of school for a variety of reasons including (i) seeking favours to pass instead of working hard to compete with the boys and (ii) some end up falling prey to teachers or lecturers who propose love. Furthermore, some parents said that there was gender discrimination as the recruitment was biased towards boys and only very few girls could be recruited. During classroom lessons, and hands-on practical lessons, girls are often humiliated and given demeaning words when they cannot perform correctly the various practical tasks assigned.

3.12 Attitude of Parents towards TVET

Most parents had a negative attitude towards TVET. They felt that TVET was characterised by low performers, those that would have failed, some students who could not read or write, low salaries, dirty work and unorganised. However, some parents said that TVET, if well organised and taught, the graduates can earn a good living through self-employment and can also employ other people thereby helping the government to create employment. Parents needed their children to achieve good results at school, thus rendering other skills and interests of their children useless. This was also seen as one of the reasons why students did not consider TVET programmes. Parents emulated outstanding academic university students unlike successful students in TVET.

3.13 Community Perception on TVET

Respondents were asked the question: *How is the community's perception on TVET be changed?* Interviewed parents said that there was negative perception with regards to TVET training in Zimbabwe. Going forward, parents said that the community perception on TVET could be improved through holding of workshops, campaigns, conducting meetings with parents, inviting successful TVET candidates during field days or speech and Prize giving days and holding some road shows. They also said that such activities would help to build TVET image.

3.14 Improving Quality of TVET Graduates

Responding to the question: *How best to improve community awareness on the need and importance of upgrading TVET sector professionally and organizationally?* Parents enumerated the following as possible ways to improve the quality:

- i. Making attachment or work-related learning part of the TVET curriculum so that learners can gain actual practical experience
- ii. Increase on-the-job training
- iii. Recruiting students with at least 5 'O' levels
- iv. Equipping TVET institutions so that actual modern tools and equipment are used and learners learn how to use the machines than to just do theory without real practical.
- v. Curriculum offered by TVET institutions should take on board challenges facing the country
- vi. Teachers teaching TVET subjects should be qualified to ensure that right content is taught by competent resource persons.

3.15 Enrolment of Students into TVET Programs

The economic, geographic and social factors that encouraged students to enrol into TVET programs were highlighted as follows by parents:

- i. Limited financial resources to pursue academic subjects as they were expensive as compared to TVET subjects
- ii. Some students needed to acquire skills for life to be self-employed, and

- iii. In Zimbabwe there was high unemployment rate, therefore some learners opted for TVET learning areas so that they could get the necessary skills to earn a living and some learners just wanted to link the mind and hands.

3.16 Accessibility of TVET Centres

In Zimbabwe, TVET centres were found mostly in urban areas whereas about 70% of the population resides in the rural areas with one TVET per district and some districts had no TVET institutions at all. As depicted in Table 6, of the 54 parents who responded, 36 said that they faced challenges in finding TVET centres to meet their desire, and 18 said that TVET institutions found in geographic locations far away from their localities.

Table 6. Accessibility of TVET Centres

Difficulties in finding TVET centres	Yes		No	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Frequency	36	67	18	33

Source: Survey.

Other responses were that some nearby centres had no qualified teaching personnel. Lack of money/funds to go to other centres that are fully equipped and with trained teaching staff was another biggest challenge as that involved other expense including travelling, accommodation, food and general upkeep while at the centre.

3.17 Infrastructure and Equipment

Infrastructure and equipment are some of the major learning capital which underpin the quality of TVET training programmes. Parents were asked the question: *Is the infrastructure and equipment used in the TVET training in tandem with the developing trends in technology?* Most parents said that infrastructure and equipment used in most TVET training institutions is not in tandem with the current technology. Table 7 indicated that out of 60 parents who responded, 31 parents said that equipment used was not in tandem with current technology at all and 29 said that the equipment needed to be replaced since some were obsolete.

Table 7. State of TVET Infrastructure and Equipment

State of equipment	In tandem with technology		Not in tandem with technology	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Frequency	29	48	31	52

Source: Survey.

Equipment used in TVET training was not in tandem with equipment used in industry and labour market as evidenced by responses given by parents. The responses showed that the equipment used in TVET institutions was a cause for concern as it was not in line with those in the labour market rendering TVET graduates to be of no particular use. According to Table 8, out of the 64 parents who responded, 46 (or 72%) said that the machines and equipment were not in line with those used in the labour market and 18 (or 28%) said that they were not sure. Therefore, it follows that there is need to equip TVET institutions to keep them in line with those in the labour market. Some industries tended to donate such obsolete machines and equipment to TVET institutions as the institutions do not have money to purchase new equipment.

Table 8. TVET Equipment Versus Equipment in Labour Market

State of equipment	In tandem with labour market		Not in tandem with labour market	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Frequency	18	28	46	72

Source: Survey.

3.18 Safety Measures in TVET Institutions

Given that TVET training was associated with laboratory and workshops with various equipment, safety in use and keeping of such equipment is paramount to avoid accidents and damages. Survey results showed that safety in TVET institutions was not guaranteed. Out of the 52 parents who responded, 34 (representing 65%) said that there were no safety measures whilst 18 respondents (or 35%) said that there were some safety measures in place though there was need for major improvements.

4. Discussion

The TVET sector was generally viewed by parents negatively, but with some positive highlights. TVET in Zimbabwe has been driven by the concern to create a national TVET sector responsive to labour market demand and able to drive the development of skills needed for economic growth and development. TVET skills were essential to generate jobs/employment and a productive economy. TVET struggled to define and promote its status against academic subjects. In Zimbabwe TVET has generated considerable interest among academicians and politicians. Despite the clamour for orienting the country's education system towards, the parents of potential TVET students have not been consulted to get their respective views.

In this current study, it emerged out that majority of parents have negative perception as far as TVET training is concerned. With regards to TVET enrolment, out of the 63 respondents, 52 (or 83%) parents said that the decision to enroll for a TVET qualification rested with the parent or guardian. The survey

indicated that most TVET students would have reached grade 7, “O” level or “A” level and failed. For parents whose children enrolled for university education, they considered TVET in Zimbabwe as something “for other people’s children”. Interviewed parents indicated that TVET graduates did not feel a sense of belonging and pride because academically they failed and their achievement was never celebrated. Lack of school fees, absence of TVET institutions in some areas, not being informed, lack of equipment and lack of qualified teaching personnel were some of the factors that were given as contributing to low enrolments in TVET institutions. Most parents said that the infrastructure and equipment used in the TVET were not in tandem with the current technology and also those found in the labour market. In some cases, female students faced some challenges simply because TVET institutions are dominated by boys and at times they (female students) are humiliated and negatively labelled, thus leading to stigmatisation of female students in TVET institutions.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main purpose of the research was to examine the perceptions of parents with regards to TVET education in Zimbabwe. In order to achieve its objective, the study adopted the quantitative research methodology using an interview protocol involving twenty open ended questions exploring the parental perspectives. Open-ended questions allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own words, in their own time and in a place of their choice.

The study found out that parents had a negative attitude towards TVET training. In light of this survey, several interventions are required to develop the TVET sector and to change the perception and attitudes of parents towards TVET training in Zimbabwe. The following are some of the recommendations to improve parents’ attitude towards TVET:

- i. Implementing media campaigns and awareness raising programs across the country with the aim of encouraging the enrolment of potential students in TVET institutions.
- ii. Continuous developing of the teachers’ capacities and facilities of TVET institutions.
- iii. Improve infrastructure so as to attract learners, thus improving enrolment and recruiting qualified personnel who can teach competently.
- iv. Addressing negative attitude and perceptions towards TVET training by holding of road shows, symposiums, distribution of pamphlets in various languages so that parents in different communities can read and get to know and appreciate TVET.

Taking on board the above recommendations, respective government ministries and departments as well as other TVET training stakeholders can develop interventions that enhance TVET delivery for the benefit of the individual graduates and the country at large or world over.

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