



# Exploring Strategies to Enhance TVET Engagement in Maldives to Improve Youth Career Development

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**Abstract:** Several aspects of the Maldives' recent development pattern highlight imbalances between labor demand and supply. Public sector jobs are predominantly in the civil service with the rapid expansion of cadres in the 1990s and 2000s. However, with the increasing standard of living over time, the labor market has become more challenging for Maldivians in general. Increasing educational attainment among the younger generation and expectations have coincided/collided with the rapid growth in low-skill service jobs associated with tourism and construction, leading to a mismatch in skills supply and demand. Despite the high levels of growth and labor market conditions in public investments, tourism, fisheries and non-tradable tourism related activities, important challenges remain for young Maldivians. TVET is perceived as second-class option to most of the youth. Many reasons that cloaked these issues such as lack of awareness, publicity and career readiness. This research seeks to identify the issue and challenges and strategies that can be implemented to enhance career development among Maldivian youth on TVET. Mixed method has been adapted in this research by employing questionnaires and conducting interviews. 200 respondents participated in the survey and five experts were involved in the interviews. Data were analysed quantitatively for survey and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. According to the findings, a majority of respondents (81.7%) have heard of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), but less than half (45.2%) understand that it can lead to better employment opportunities. Experts have identified seven strategies to improve TVET for youth career development, including promoting it through electronic media, launching a national campaign, strengthening partnerships with industry, branding and holding skills competitions. This information is valuable for policymakers and stakeholders in the Maldives as they work to design and implement effective and coordinated government support for TVET.

**Keywords:** TVET in Maldives, quality TVET, youth career

## 1. Introduction

The term 'TVET' embodies a multitude of concepts and definitions which influences the implementation of its system for certain countries. There are many developed countries that benefit from transforming their TVET systems such as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United State of America, Australia and the Republic of Korea. While in Seoul, Korea, in 1999, the World Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) officially officiated the phrase "Technical and Vocational Education and Training." Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a kind of education and training that is comparable to TVET, but it is also used as an umbrella term for a variety of educational and training opportunities to embrace all sorts of education and training (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020).

TVET is the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work. TVET uses formal, non-formal and informal learning. TVET is recognised to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development. TVET is defined as education, training, and skill development in a variety of occupational domains, production, services, and livelihoods. According to UNESCO (2021), TVET consists of work-based learning, ongoing training, and professional development that may result in certificates. It also provides several opportunities for skill development that are customised to national and local conditions. Developing literacy and numeracy, as well as transversal skills and citizenship qualities are all key components of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The Republic of Maldives is a small island of 1190 islands distributed around the Indian Ocean, with a total land area of only 300 km<sup>2</sup> (United Nations Environment Programme, 2005). As of 2021, the population of the Maldives was around 530,000 people and most of the population is relatively young, with about 25-30% being under the age of 15, and around 60% of the population aged between 15 and 59 (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The youth population (aged 15-24) in the Maldives is considered a significant segment of the population. The youth are a significant group that can contribute to the country's economic and social development, but they also face various challenges, such as high unemployment, limited education and job opportunities, and a lack of access to basic services.

The government of Maldives has recognized the importance of the youth population and has implemented various initiatives to support their development and well-being. The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment is responsible for youth development policies in the country. They have implemented various programs and projects to support the development of young people, including education and vocational training, sports, and cultural activities. In the Maldives, the Ministry of Education is responsible for TVET and vocational training programs. The Maldives National Vocational Qualification (MNQF) is the national framework that governs TVET and vocational training in the country. TVET programs in Maldives are provided at various levels including vocational education and training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. Vocational schools and technical institutes offer programs in various trades and industries such as tourism, engineering, health care, and information technology. Currently, TVET is engaged in courses relating to welding, machining, refrigeration and air conditioning, automotive and marine repair, electrician, carpentry, IT, office management, beauty and fashion. These programmes are designed to provide students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to enter the workforce. In the Maldives, there are also opportunities for Apprenticeship training, these opportunities allow young people to work in different jobs while training and learning from experienced professionals.

TVET development in Maldives depends on its capacity to initiate a greater strategy to develop its human capital. These relate to (i) the need for greater inclusion and productive employment for youth, especially for those who cannot rely on the public sector or who are from the most vulnerable segments of the population; (ii) increasing reliance on foreign labour in important sectors such as tourism and construction services; and (iii) significantly low female employment in the key sector such as tourism and construction (UN Women, 2018). There are many reasons that contribute to this issue. To overcome the issues, the government and responsible stakeholders are required to be proactive to enhance public perception on TVET. This also includes the curriculum for teaching and training the future workforce to be designed to be in line with the demand of industry and national skills of Maldives. Besides, strategic promotion plans also need to be conducted to increase the enrolment in TVET courses. Overall, the Maldives is working to increase access to TVET programs, particularly for young people and disadvantaged groups, with the goal of helping them gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce and contribute to the country's economic development.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the level of engagement among Maldivian youth in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes and to identify strategies for improving career development opportunities for young people in the Maldives.

## **2. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the process of combining all vocational educational and technical training activities with the goal of promoting workplace learning and improving individuals' occupational skills. TVET, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], entails the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET has two main goals: one is social, which involves training and integrating young people into the labour market, and the other is economic and employment development (UNESCO, 2018).

The goal of preparing the youth for jobs includes acquiring and improving job-related abilities, as well as expertise in information and scientific ideas. Work is widely defined, so it includes both conventional employment and self-employment. TVET programs frequently contain entrepreneurial training to encourage self-employment. Associated with this is the occupational and professional activities that are reproduced and transformed in society (Schroder, 2019). United Nations (2017) has highlighted the importance of Sustainable Development enabling upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty. In the Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), it focuses on the three priority areas: (1) Fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship; (2) Promoting equity and gender equality; (3) Facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2016). Accordingly, the Strategy aims to support Member States in their efforts to improve the relevance of their TVET systems, and to equip youth and adults with the skills they need for employment, decent work, and quality of life, in line with

SDG4.

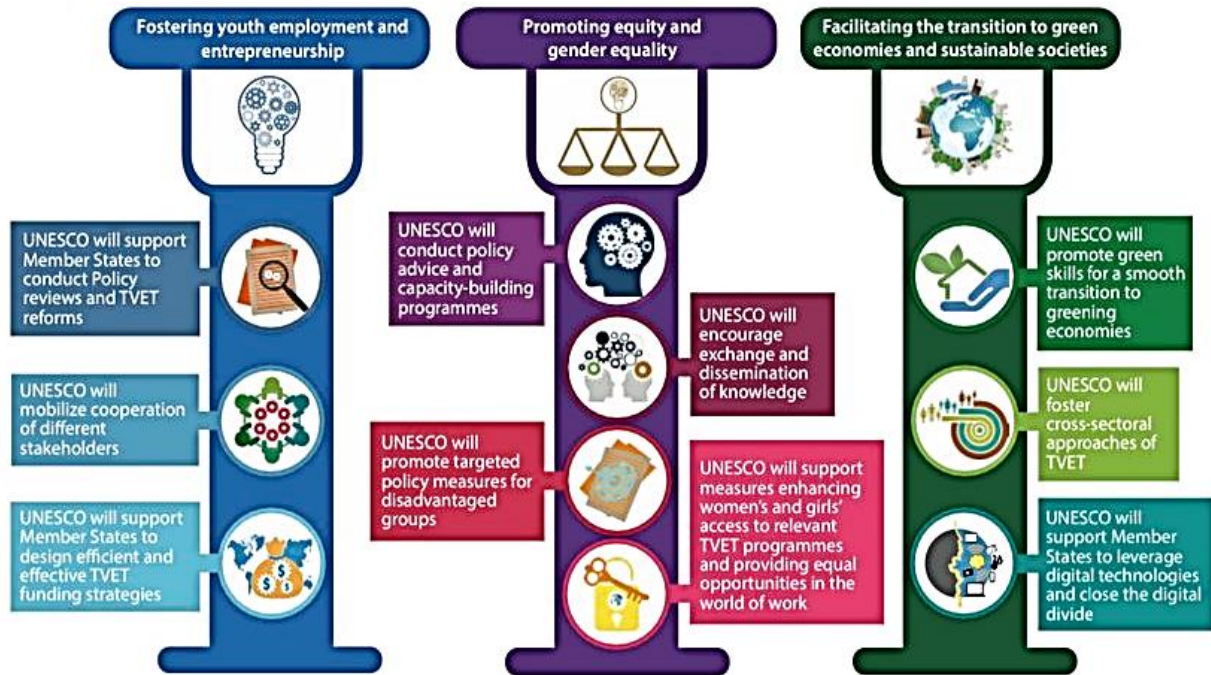


Fig. 1 - TVET strategy (2016-2021)

Meanwhile, the new UNESCO strategy for TVET 2022-2029 has been launched on 25 and 26 October 2022 with three strategic priorities proposed which are: (i) Skills for individuals to learn, work and live; (ii) Skills for economies to transition towards sustainable development; and (iii) Skills for inclusive and resilient societies. This strategy presents UNESCO's vision to transform TVET for successful and just transitions during the period 2022 to 2029, by promoting skills development for empowerment, productive employment and decent work, and facilitating the transition to more digital, green and inclusive economies and societies (UNESCO, 2022).

### 3. Approach to Quality Assurance

Quality is characterised by multifaceted dimensions that make it difficult to define precisely. According to Bhatta. K (2021). A number of different definitions are used for quality, which generally refers to the degree to which outcomes are achieved against desired benchmarks rather than to an absolute value. Quality is also 'situational and time-based. There is no universally accepted definition of quality in technical and vocational education and training, as there is in all facets of production and service provision (TVET). In line with the TVET definition and aims, one of the main key players in this aspect is the TVET educators. Quality TVET educators have become a focus of many TVET stakeholders in recent years.

Quality assurance of TVET qualifications focuses on achieving quality outcomes. It is the responsibility of all key stakeholders, at all levels of the TVET qualifications system: the international, regional, and national awarding body and TVET education institution levels. Quite often these various levels are connected and interrelated. At the regional level, a common understanding of quality and how it applies to TVET qualifications has been documented through regional quality standards and agreed-on indicators and measures. Such quality assurance frameworks serve to review and measure TVET systems, including qualifications, seeking continuous improvement. At the national level, quality assurance of TVET qualifications should be seen as an end-to-end process, which applies to the conception and formation of qualifications, the assessors, the practical administration of the assessment, and to the issuing of qualifications (UNESCO, 2016).

Nowadays, various scholars (Bhatta, 2021; Grosch, 2017) assert that quality improvement is one of the major focus areas of TVET employability because low-quality TVET is one of the key poverty traps in many countries, particularly developing ones. Grosch (2017) also asserts that quality assurance in TVET is an essential step towards maintaining TVET quality. Delivering quality TVET is strongly linked with the establishment of a strong quality management and leadership system. This included management commitment, teamwork, a good understanding of principles and procedures by all, maintaining quality at any step by everybody, dependence on facts and objective data, and systematic problem-solving competence.

TVET empowerment also places a strong emphasis on interacting with businesses to assess how relevant the curriculum and practical instruction are to ensuring the employability of TVET graduates. UNESCO and ILO emphasize the need to forge closer links between training and the labour market for the improvement of training systems systematically (UNESCO, 2018). In certain countries, there are various kinds of collaboration between skills institutions and industries which permit students to be attached to industries. Challenges related to TVET from the perspective of industry are less easy to determine. Understanding how the industry sees TVET will help skills institutions to prepare their students for the demands of industrial placements. Awareness of the issues or problems that the industry might anticipate will help students to be better prepared for employment.

### 3.2 Competency of Educators

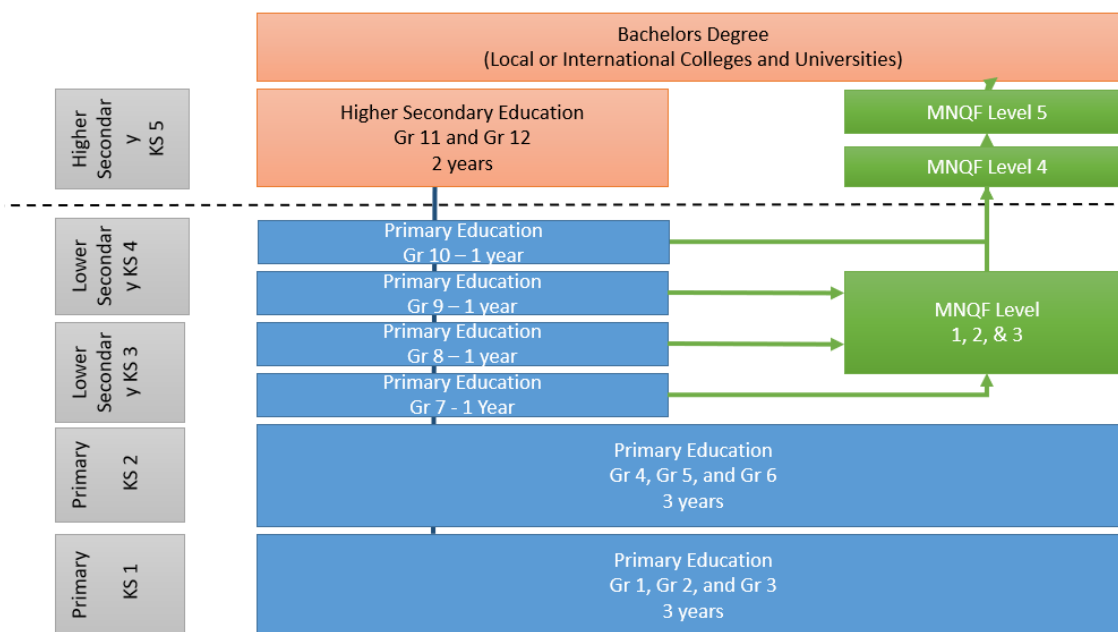
In general, TVET educators know little about workplaces and the competencies required of TVET graduates. Furthermore, they lack methodologies for analysing such workplaces and competency requirements. The same is true at the national level in terms of TVET curriculum development. The quality of teachers/trainers has a very serious impact on the assessment of quality in our universities. The teacher/trainers need to be adequately qualified for the job of imparting knowledge, they must be equipped with the principles and practice of vocational education, and this parameter focuses on their qualifications, experiences, competencies, capacities, and acquisition of desirable skills to carry out certain tasks. Thus, structured training for TVET teachers is proposed to enhance their competencies and to develop their capacity as professional educators (Ismail *et al.*, 2018). This includes personal, teaching and technical competencies. These competencies serve as a guideline in developing TVET teacher's training for re-skilling and up-skilling purposes.

The quality of TVET Educators is also being focused on as the main contribution to student performance. The trainer or TVET teachers need to be equipped with skills and knowledge in a specific field (Ismail *et al.*, 2016). In this context, TVET educator in Maldives is difficult to be hired when they are being assessed based on academic degrees rather than skills and experience (Noordeen, 2009). Thus, the recruitment process for TVET educators needs to be properly administered including their ability to conduct TVET training.

### 3.3 TVET in Maldives

The MNSDA (Maldives National Skills Development Authority) is the main agency responsible for developing and regulating all TVET programs. The MNSDA is responsible for updating curricula and introducing new courses in cooperation with the ESCs, conducting examinations, and awarding certificates. Based on recent information, there are more than 117 public institutions and 12 private institutions registered with the MNSDA as training providers (Maldives National Skills Development Authority, 2021).

Maldives Polytechnic, one of the government's TVET institutions was created by a Presidential Decree under Article 116 of the constitution of the Maldives on April 12, 2010, as the national government institution to develop, manage and provide training facilities for technical and vocational education and training. Maldives Polytechnic operates within the Maldives Qualification Framework aligned with the principles and practices of partnership with the industry and community to provide demand-driven skills development for economic growth and the needs of the people for employment. According to Figure 2, TVET in Maldives is offered from Certificate 1 until Advanced Diploma. The qualifications recognized in the MNQF are classified into two groups: (i) Further education and training and (ii) Higher Education. The MNQF is similar to other countries in terms of its level and promoting lifelong learning opportunities.



**Fig. 2 - TVET in the Maldivian Education System (Maldives Qualification Authority, 2017)**

TVET Authority of Maldives is a government body, to enforce quality assurance systems in all TVET providers (public, private and community-based), through the development of National Vocational Standards, the validation of the skills, and competence acquisition of students and the flexible recognition of non-formal forms of TVET (credits) Ministry of Education & Ministry of Higher Education (2019).

It is also a prevalent issue that there is an imbalance of gender involvement in TVET programs, particularly in Maldives Polytechnic. According to the TVET Authority in 2018, the number of Male students is higher than the Female student in all institutions. Table 1 shows the enrolment by type of institution and gender.

**Table 1 - Enrolment by gender in TVET programs, 2018**

	Male	Female	Total
Public Institutions	479	364	853
Private Institutions	288	135	423
Maldives Polytechnic	411	75	486

Sources: TVET Authority, MPI.

### 3.4 Youth Career in Maldives

In the Maldives, as in many other countries, career development for young people can be challenging. However, the government has made efforts in recent years to improve education and job opportunities for young Maldivians. The Ministry of Education in the Maldives focuses on providing quality education to young people and ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. The government has also implemented various vocational training programs and internships to help young people gain hands-on experience in various industries. The Maldives also has a large tourism industry, which employs a significant number of young people in various roles, such as front office, housekeeping, and food and beverage. Additionally, there are also opportunities for young people in the fishing and agriculture industries. The Maldives also has a strong demand for healthcare professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and therapists, and in recent years, many young Maldivians have pursued careers in healthcare. The country also has also a government system and administrative jobs are also open for young people. However, the challenges for the youth to have a stable job and career growth in the retail food industry are a major concern. The high employee turnover rates and the lack of proper career development and training have caused a challenge for the retail food industry to attract and retain human resources which is a major concern for the industry and young people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a shift towards sustainable resource management for Maldivian organizations, creating economic and developmental challenges (Suzana, Moosa, Rafeeq, & Usman, 2020). The retail food industry is particularly significant in the Maldives, especially during the pandemic when food supply became uncertain. This sector accounts for around 7% of the Maldives' GDP (Suzana et al., 2020). Many Maldivians are employed in the retail industry, making it the second-largest workforce sector (Van Driessche, 2020). However, the retail food industry faces high

employee turnover rates, caused by issues such as low wages, poor working conditions, and inadequate career development and training opportunities, resulting in a low retention rate (Van Driessche, 2020; Imna & Hassan, 2015), these factors make it hard for the industry to attract and retain human resources, and for young people to have a stable job and career growth in the sector.

#### 4. Methodology

This study employed a mixed methodology that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. Based on simple random sampling, an online survey was distributed to respondents as part of the quantitative methodology. The instrument for the online survey is a self-designed questionnaire based on the literature and input from industry and academic professionals in the field of TVET. The instrument has been evaluated and found to be appropriate in terms of its content and face validity. The survey was made available to the public via government and polytechnic websites, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The Maldives Polytechnic, also known as the Maldives Technical Institute, is the main provider of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Maldives. The Maldives Polytechnic is a government-run institution that provides vocational and technical education to young people in the country. The institution offers a wide range of programs and courses in various trades and industries, including tourism, engineering, health care, and information technology. There were 205 responses received in all. However, five responses were eliminated due to an incomplete answer, leaving 200 responses to be analysed.

As part of the qualitative methodology, interviews were held with five experts in the field of education and TVET. They are government employees and lecturers. The criteria for the experts include at least 10 years of experience working in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, and an in-depth understanding of the TVET system. Three are affiliated with the Maldives Polytechnic, one with the Ministry of Higher Education, and one with the Maldives National Skills Development Authority (MNSDA). The purpose of the interview was to elicit additional information regarding youth participation in TVET and the most effective measures to encourage youth participation in TVET. Experts validated the interview protocol, which was established based on the research questions. The experts were asked a series of structured questions via an online Zoom meeting. Quantitative data from the online survey were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and mean. In the meantime, qualitative interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. Given the usage of structured questions, the qualitative data themes were organised accordingly. Similar remarks and responses from the panels were grouped under the same theme, while the elaborate points were categorised according to the domains.

#### 5. Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the quantitative and qualitative findings from the research. Among the 205 responses, males represent 51% ( $f = 102$ ) and females 49% ( $f = 98$ ). The majority of the respondents are ranging from the age of 15 to 45 years. The age group 25 to 29 years represents the highest (21.5%). As shown in Table 3, most respondents (81.7%) reported that they have heard of TVET, however, many of them were not aware of the benefits of enrolling in TVET programs (45.2%). Items A4 and A7 reveal a low level of participation in TVET programs, with only 34.4% of respondents indicating that they had taken a TVET program and a lack of advice on taking TVET courses.

**Table 3 - Readiness and awareness**

No	Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
A1	Have you ever heard about TVET?	81.7	18.3
A2	Do you know the differences between TVET and Academic courses?	63.4	36.6
A3	Are you aware that there are many TVET programs offered by the government?	67.7	32.3
A4	Are there anyone close to you enrolling in TVET programmes?	34.4	65.6
A5	Do you think that TVET is a better choice for gaining technical skills training?	79.6	20.4
A6	Do you know that TVET programme is based on specific occupation?	66.7	33.3
A7	Has anyone advised you to register for TVET courses?	34.4	65.6
A8	Do you know that you will get better employment by taking TVET?	45.2	54.8

When it comes to the level of interest in enrolling in TVET programs, only 9% of the respondents reported being extremely interested. On the other hand, 16% of the respondents indicated that they are not at all interested in TVET programs. However, most of the respondents, 34%, reported being moderately interested in enrolling in TVET programs. (See Table 4).

**Table 4 - What is your level of interest to enrol for the TVET programme?**

		Frequency, f	Valid Percent
Scale	Not at all interested	32	16
	Slightly interested	26	13
	Moderately interested	68	34
	Very interested	56	28
	Extremely interested	18	9
	Total	200	100

Table 5 shows the sector trends for TVET programmes based on the respondents' preferences. The most popular among the respondents is Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at 29.5%. The least preferred sector among the respondents is construction at 12.5%. There may be several reasons why Maldives youth prefer to work in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. One reason may be that the ICT sector is growing rapidly in the Maldives and around the world, and it offers many opportunities for career growth and advancement. Additionally, the ICT sector is known for providing high paying jobs and better working conditions as compared to other sectors. It also can be seen as a sector that is less physically demanding and can be done from anywhere in the world.

**Table 5 - Interest to enrol TVET program by sector**

No.	TVET sector	Frequency, f	Valid Percent
1	Construction	25	12.5
2	Fisheries and Agriculture	28	14
3	Information and Communication Technology	59	29.5
4	Social	31	15.5
5	Tourism	39	19.5
6	Transport	18	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondents reported that they enrol in TVET programs to acquire essential life skills and to continue their learning and development with a mean score of 3.5 and above. However, the three lowest scoring items, with mean scores of 2.56, 2.61 and 2.65 respectively, were that "many of my friends or contacts have been to or currently enrol in TVET programs", "it was recommended to me by someone" and "because I thought I am not qualified to be accepted at the University (Academic)". More detailed information can be studied in Table 6.

**Table 6 - The reason to enrol for TVET programmes**

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Because I am passionate about the TVET program that I pursue	3.05	1.18
2	To continue my learning and development	3.52	1.21
3	Because I want to pursue a particular career or occupation	3.37	1.30
4	To be intellectually challenged and stimulated	3.47	1.13
5	To learn essential life skills	3.54	1.28
6	To help me get a job or find a better job	3.37	1.23
7	Because I want to change of direction in life	3.22	1.11
8	To earn more money in my future career	3.36	1.26
9	To have more independence and greater sense of freedom	3.37	1.31
10	Because it is the natural progression after school	3.06	1.28

11	To spend time deciding what I want to do with my life	3.01	1.27
12	I want to run a business	3.28	1.35
13	Many of my friends or contacts have been to or currently enroll in TVET programs	2.56	1.19
14	It was recommended to me by someone	2.61	1.23
15	Because I thought I am not qualified to be accepted at the University (Academic)	2.65	1.17
16	It provides many practical lectures so it would be easy for me to be accepted as a skilled worker	3.18	1.24

The thematic analysis on the structured interview which involved five experts: two from Maldives Polytechnic, two from Ministry of Higher Education and one from MNSQ was conducted. The interviews have defined few important points to address which are:

*The TVET Institutions must adapt themselves to their specific context, characteristics, features, culture and values. When it is in line with these values, marketing can be a powerful tool for defining and promoting the University's image over time.*

Expert 1, 2 and 3

*The TVET Institutions should provide ICT and information management technologies. Well-documented and serious global imbalances exist in the context of a "digital divide". Conduct development on promotion of access to public information can help bridge that gap in national and international level.*

Expert 1, 4 and 5

*The TVET Institutions should ensure that public awareness and support regarding the strategy are crucial towards its effectiveness. By providing access to the information on the implementation of the strategy, they will know what to expect from them. The information needs to be widely disseminated to the public in order to improve their awareness, thus influence their support to the government regarding the strategy.*

Expert 1, 4 and 5

*The TVET Institutions could implement several mediums that can be used to spread the information. Among them are advertisements including radio and television, printed and digital. Each type has its own pro and con in spreading the information. Other than that, a direct contact also can contribute in increasing public awareness and support.*

Expert 1, 2, 3 and 4

*The TVET Institutions should establish a good image, performance and branding through multiple approaches and methods such as conducting a joint academic program or franchise program (i.e. dual-certificate, degree and etc.). Joint program should be established with other Institutions with a good ranking and reputation.*

Expert 1,2 and 3

*The TVET Institutions should work out on getting recognition from professional bodies and external auditing bodies which will help towards achieving greater consistency in performance and regulation (i.e. Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission - APACC).*

Expert 1, 3 and 5

*The TVET Institutions should consider commercial and educational talks by using advertisements on television, radio and social media. Introduce newspaper advertisements such as business directories, roadside signage or public transport advertisements and consider designing promotional material such as the distribution of pamphlets, posters, brochures etc.*

All Experts

*The TVET Institutions can organize digital ads via social networking, primarily Facebook and Twitter, direct email marketing or existing online business forums and should engage in a comprehensive promotion platform with the Government/Agency official.*

All Experts



The expert's consensus on the main domain and elements related to the strategy to enhance TVET is shown in Table 7. The findings depict that the threshold value ( $d \leq 0.2$ ) and the percentage of expert consensus is more than 75%. Therefore, all experts agree on the domain and elements presented in Table 7.

**Table 7 - Domain and elements for TVET**

No	Domain	Findings from interview
1	Promotion through electronic media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use social media</li> <li>- Target young people</li> <li>- Fast and reliable Outreach</li> <li>- Digital marketing approach</li> <li>- Special team for graphic and media</li> </ul>
2	National campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campaign Strategy</li> <li>- Involve people from industries</li> <li>- Promotes program and institutions</li> <li>- Target on community</li> <li>- TVET influencer</li> </ul>
3	Collaboration with industry partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination between Institution and Industries</li> <li>- Involvement in curriculum</li> <li>- Work Based Learning</li> <li>- Effective Support System</li> <li>- Upskilling and reskilling programs</li> <li>- Professional certification</li> </ul>
4	Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public Awareness</li> <li>- Image and Social Recognition</li> <li>- Industry Acceptance</li> <li>- Income and Salary</li> <li>- Graduates and Alumni</li> </ul>
5	Skills competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration and Communication Method</li> <li>- Organize national level competition</li> <li>- Open for Institutions partner (local or international)</li> <li>- Select best participants to represent the country</li> <li>- Motivation to join</li> <li>- Reward and prize for participants</li> </ul>

Globalisation, internationalisation and growing economic competition are requiring TVET Institutions to adapt to the change, so that it can react better to a complex, demanding and increasingly competitive environment. This all-encompassing process of change covers a wide range of spheres and raises many fundamental issues. It must be striving in showing its capability and reputation through effective communication and promotion plan. The main objective of operative communication is to introduce the benefit of embarking in TVET programs to public. More importantly, it encourages the accessibility of education to a wide range of population. It should coordinate the on-going monitoring of the internal and external environments so as to decipher the slightest signal and make clear the desires, expectations and demands of new players and stakeholders (Kasman, Ismail, Siron, & Abd Samad, 2018). Besides, it may mobilize staff and focus all their energies on the new vision to ensure that goals, initiatives, messages and values are communicated in a proper way and shared by the education community, forge ties of a new kind with the media, ranking agencies, pressure groups and other influential networks in order to ensure that these relations are as beneficial as possible and to anticipate potential problems.

The findings from this research provide insights into the level of interest of Maldivian youth in considering TVET as their education pathway and their preferred sectors. The results indicate that the ICT sector is the most popular among the respondents. However, it is important to note that the tourism and fisheries sectors are still significant for the economic contribution of the Maldives. Based on the research findings, the experts agree that several strategies should be implemented to enhance TVET in Maldives. These strategies include promoting TVET through electronic media, launching a national campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of TVET, collaborating with industry partners, branding, and promoting TVET, and organizing skills competitions. These activities can be implemented in collaboration with other TVET stakeholders in the Maldives to achieve the goals of the strategies and attract more youth to the TVET sector. The strategies need to target creating a positive image for the TVET sector and the opportunities that it offers to the youth, by emphasizing the relevance of the TVET training and their ability to lead to decent and well-paying jobs in their field of interest.

In a summary, the strategy depends on meeting the needs of a rapidly changing labour market and aligning with wider industrial strategy, matching supply and demand, engaging employers, and improving the quality of outcomes, including more relevant curricula, higher quality teaching and clearer outcomes. Therefore, these recommendations need to be

addressed effectively to enhance the public perception of TVET and to attract the Maldivian youth to consider TVET for national economic development. This includes:

- i. Make TVET a national priority agenda for society so that it is understood that personal and economic well-being is bound up with high-quality TVET.
- ii. The government is fully engaged in well-understood structures and practices which include provision for research, dissemination and advice for current employers, existing employees and future employees.
- iii. TVET should enjoy an excellent reputation for quality through the provision of well-qualified teachers, equipment, facilities, quality assurance and improvement arrangements.
- iv. Apprenticeship with a strong technical and educational element is a major option throughout all sectors of the economy to have less reliance on higher education or the unskilled labour market.
- v. There are clear pathways and well-understood routes of qualification progression from initial TVET, through to continuing TVET leading to career progression including articulation for higher education.
- vi. TVET is developed and of equal standing in rural as well as urban areas which means everyone gets equal access to TVET.
- vii. TVET is supported through publicity campaigns, skill competitions, success stories, and informational transparency to create a sense of excitement about it for employers, parents and youth.
- viii. No sections of the population are excluded from TVET, particularly disadvantaged and marginal groups.
- ix. Promote lifelong learning in TVET through Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

## **6. Conclusion**

This research concludes that there is a need for TVET stakeholders to promote and enhance the image of TVET in order to attract more young people to enrol in TVET programs. The research also identified several key components that are essential for the success of TVET programs. These include outstanding trainers, strong and purposeful leadership, high moral values, care and concern for trainees, excellent assessment and certification systems, support from businesses, parents, and society, sufficient resources, the use of modern technologies, and well-balanced, challenging, and responsive sustainable programs. It is important for the TVET system to continuously adapt and respond to the changing needs of society and the workforce to ensure the success of TVET programs and the well-being of the nation. Enhancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) requires a dedicated and committed approach, strong leadership, and cooperation among employers, TVET agencies, and institutions. It requires investment in quality facilitation and equipment, curriculum development, and continuous monitoring of labour market needs and developments. This includes the use of robust, competence-based, occupational, and training standards. Maintaining the quality of TVET institutions also requires a focus on continuous improvement, which benefits trainees, graduates, employers, institutions, the community, and the nation. High-quality TVET can have a significant impact on overall well-being and national competitiveness.

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