

**Major Research Project for MA in International Education and Development**

**School of Education and Social Work**

**University of Sussex**

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***Secondary school  
students' perceptions of  
vocational education in  
Barbados***

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Candidate number: 119706

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## *Abstract*

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The field of technical and vocational education presents an intriguing opportunity to investigate economic and social issues. For Clarke and Winch (2007) the approach to vocational education can give insight into the peculiarities of a society. This research paper examined secondary school student perceptions of vocational education in Barbados. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to garner perspectives from several stakeholders; students, guidance counsellors, and those involved in the delivery of vocational training. The results showed that student perceptions of vocational education did not significantly vary by school, but there was a high level of uncertainty about all aspects of vocational education recorded at all schools. Students' perceptions were strongly influenced by society's overall view of vocational education and its status. This highlights a cause for concern in terms of how vocational education is marketed to its supposed target audience and justifies the need for additional research to be carried out.

## *Acknowledgements*

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## List of acronyms

<i>BAGC</i>	Barbados Association of Guidance Counsellors
<i>BCC</i>	Barbados Community College
<i>BHRDS</i>	Barbados Human Resource Development Strategy
<i>BSSEE</i>	Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination
<i>BVTB</i>	Barbados Vocational Training Board
<i>CANTA</i>	Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies
<i>CARICOM</i>	Caribbean Community
<i>CXC</i>	Caribbean Examinations Council
<i>FET</i>	Further Education and Training
<i>GMR</i>	Global Monitoring Report
<i>GOB</i>	Government of Barbados
<i>HE</i>	Higher Education
<i>HRDS</i>	Human Resource Development Strategy
<i>IDB</i>	Inter-American Development Bank
<i>MDGs</i>	Millennium Development Goals
<i>NQF</i>	National Qualifications Framework
<i>SJPP</i>	Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic
<i>TVET</i>	Technical and vocational education and training
<i>USD</i>	US dollars
<i>UPE</i>	Universal Primary Education
<i>UWI</i>	University of the West Indies (Cave Hill campus)

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

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### Background

The 2011 World Youth report refers to the need for youth to be appropriately skilled in order to facilitate their entry into the labour market. It recommends that training systems be in place ‘not only to prepare youth for entry into work, but provide pathways for continual learning over a lifetime in response to changing technologies and global economic requirements’ (United Nations, 2011 p. 111). For McGrath (2012, p. 624) vocational education and training encompasses ‘the myriad forms of learning ... aimed at ... participation in the worlds of work’. Discussions about vocational education therefore engage with the concepts of knowledge, learning, education, work and employment, with the understanding that the field is dynamic.

A wide literature on vocational education exists; showing its contributions to post war restructuring (Akoojee, 2007), human development (McGrath, 2012), technological advancement (Paes de Carvalho, 2012) and national development (Billet, 2014). However, the 2012 annual review of the regional UNESCO office for Latin America and the Caribbean reported that TVET lags behind in that region (UNESCO, 2013).

### Issue

Despite the contributions of vocational education listed in the previous paragraph, as put by Billet (2014) the lowly standing of vocational education continues to be an enduring problem. This suggests that although there are social, economic, developmental and personal benefits to be had from vocational education it does not enjoy high status. Literature shows that issues surrounding the difference between earnings of holders of vocational qualifications as opposed to university graduates

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(Hillmert and Jacob, 2003), the relevance and currency of vocational qualifications (Bathmaker, 2013) and the limited content of vocational programmes (Wheelahan, 2007; Rose, 2012) may contribute to this. Additionally, the stigma and class associations attached to manual labour (Billet, 2014), lack of contribution from stakeholders (Bathmaker, 2013), low progression into higher education (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003) and being rated as second best when compared to purely academic routes (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010; Swift and Fisher, 2012) strongly influence the perception of vocational education.

McGrath (2012) sees a paucity of research on vocational education and training in the global south and lamented the absence of a theoretical framework. The issue of the perception of vocational education is also very contested, although not as well documented in the Caribbean.

### Solution

For Oketch (2007) the above listed challenges contribute to a mismatch in student aspirations and what vocational programmes have to offer. Many assumptions are made about student perceptions and preferences, but the research on that area is not extensive. The solution proposed here is for more research to be carried out to investigate student perceptions. Replacing assumptions with evidence illuminating the student decision-making process should result in better informed and more effective policies.

Stockfelt (2013, p. 18) describes the field of student aspirations in Jamaica as being 'topical but under researched'. This is an apt description of the debate surrounding vocational education in Barbados. This piece of research will document student perceptions of a small sample, and hopefully be the catalyst of more in depth studies into this under researched area. It begins with a review of the literature on vocational education, detailing its history, studies done on student perception and the literature on factors which influence student choice. The research design is explained in detail including the methodology chosen to get the desired information. The results are presented and discussed in



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relation to what was found in the literature. It concludes with a consideration of the implications and recommendations for the context under consideration.

# Literature Review

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## Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Bathmaker (2013, p. 90) admits that vocational education is seen as ‘an umbrella term’ associated with the learning of practical and technical knowledge in a formal education setting. McGrath (2012) sees vocational education and training as encompassing the many forms of learning aimed at supporting participation in the world of work. Oketch (2007) uses the term to refer to the range of learning experiences relevant to work which can occur in a variety of settings. McGrath (2012) recognizes the proliferation of terminology associated with the field, with terms often used interchangeably, while Bathmaker (2013) points out that what is meant by vocational education varies by country. For example, Rose (2012) speaks of career and technical education in the United States, while Wheelahan (2007) cites a recent preference for competency based training in Australia and Akoojee (2007) describes a shift in South Africa to the term Further Education and Training. This multiplicity of terms seems to complicate the very notion of the concept and leads McGrath (2012, p. 624) to proffer a view of vocational education and training as ‘a set of practices and technologies, more than a defined concept’. In Barbados, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council defines technical and vocational education and training as ‘education to prepare people – students, job seekers, the employed and the self-employed - for the world of work and business’ (TVET Council, 2014). As this is the context under consideration for this piece of research, the acronym TVET, with the above stated meaning, will be used throughout the paper.

Although very dated, Lewis and Lewis’ description (1985, p. 157) of the Caribbean TVET tradition as not supported ‘by any literature to speak of’, is still very much the reality. Literature searches on the topic revealed most studies on TVET to be of European or African origin. As a result, the majority of the literature cited is not directly related to the context in question. This chapter will begin with some

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author's views on the history of TVET and then the literature on student perception of the field. Factors that influence or deter participation will be elaborated and the capability theory will be briefly considered as a way forward for the field of TVET. The chapter will end with a detailed description of the Barbadian educational system to set the socio-cultural context the research was conducted in.

### **History of the Field**

The formation of TVET systems is often associated with nationalistic efforts such as the need for skilled workers, the desire to develop employable skills in young people and the need to engage them as citizens (Westerhuis, 2007; Billet, 2014). Skills development has also been linked to the employment growth in the post war periods of the 1950s to 1970's (Akoojee, 2007). Paes de Carvalho (2012) explained that TVET in Brazil came about to provide training to meet the needs of industrial development and improve the lot of the poor urban population. However, Billet (2014) also considers less than innocent roots in desires to maintain control over young people and ensure employability to reduce the likelihood of them being burdens on the state.

Seen through a human capital lens, education and training are investments designed to make individuals more productive. Human capital proponents have proven that the higher the level of education the higher the personal returns to an individual (Becker, 1993). TVET is predominantly seen as a means to provide individuals with a skill to earn a living. However, no study directly proving investment in TVET led to economic growth was found when doing literature searches.

### **The Perception of TVET**

Billet (2014) acknowledges that the standing of TVET compared to other education sectors varies by country. In the literature, the German context was consistently used as an example of TVET with high status (Kerchhoff, 2001; Hillbert and Jacob, 2003; Clarke and Winch, 2007, Triventi, 2013).

However, there are some distinct features of the German educational system which would have contributed to this. Triventi (2013) described the German secondary school system as being very stratified, with students entering specific tracks as early as eleven years old and institutionalised links between higher education (HE) and the labour market. McGrath (2012) cited authors who showed that German theorists of TVET focused on not only the technical aspects of vocational education but also the moral and social aspects of vocational learning. Clarke and Winch (2007) observed aspects of German vocabulary which also gave insight into how skills are viewed in Germany. They explained that the English verb 'train' has three separate German translations, showing the scope of the word in that context. Additionally, the German word 'beruf' loosely translated to English means occupation. However, the authors explain that direct translation loses the notion of a calling and application of knowledge it has in German (Clark and Winch, 2007). As a result, the environment in which German students pursue TVET and operate with their vocational qualifications is very distinct to the realities in many other contexts.

The basic question that determines how TVET is viewed is whether it widens or limits opportunities for young people. Wheelahan (2007) presents a critique which contends that TVET through its content, structure and subsequent qualifications excludes those who pursue it (usually the working class) from access to powerful knowledge. She uses Bernstein's theories of knowledge structures to argue that although TVET does give students knowledge, it is of the mundane kind, which can only be applied to certain contexts and events, not the powerful esoteric knowledge which can be transferred and applied to different settings (Wheelahan, 2007). Her argument is that in the increasingly globalised world we live in, students need exposure to esoteric knowledge for competitive advantages in the work place. Therefore, for her, the focus on skills to undertake a particular job serves to short-change students, preparing them for very narrow job options and limiting their future opportunities (Wheelahan, 2007).

Billet (2014) traces the low status of TVET back to the long-standing preference given to certain types of knowledge and ranking of occupations. His hypothesis is that direct associations made between the jobs held by persons and their intellect, and the educational provisions needed to prepare them for work were made to serve purposes of power and control (Billet, 2014). As a result, the perception of manual labour as inferior to jobs relying primarily on the mind (Billet, 2014), and TVET as geared towards preparing working class people for work (Rose, 2012) prevails in contemporary society.

Consultation leading to the draft of the CARICOM Regional TVET Strategy revealed the sentiment that TVET is seen as 'a program for those who can't make it in the academic stream, for dunces... or for those not academically inclined' (CANTA, 2012 p. 6). In that document the Regional Coordination Mechanism for TVET recognises the need for sentiments such as these to change if TVET is to be furthered in the Caribbean region.

### Stakeholders in TVET

Billet (2014, p. 1) sees the perception of TVET as important for those who 'sponsor, participate in and work within it'. However he acknowledges that each of these stakeholders may have a different view. In some cases, there has been a shift to give employers more influence and power, with the assumption that this will make TVET more relevant to industry needs (McGrath, 2012). However, Billet (2014) highlights the concern that TVET educators merely implement and assess what others have decided should be taught and learnt. For him these others are often those who maintain the ranking of occupations referred to in the previous paragraph.

Bathmaker (2013) looked at the perceptions of stakeholders in TVET in England. She revealed that some designers of TVET courses saw theoretical knowledge as difficult, and as a result it was reduced or eliminated from the content of TVET programmes, rather than being presented in more accessible forms. In the American context, Rose (2012) reported some instructors as guilty of

emphasizing job specific skills to the almost complete exclusion of theoretical content, diminishing what was being offered to students. Programme designers validated this absence with the assumption that students choose to enrol in TVET pathways to avoid meeting difficult content. Writing about the Brazilian case, Christophe (2005) as cited in Paes de Carvalho (2012) debunked this belief. She discovered that although programme designers believed that a short duration and immediate output would make TVET courses attractive, other factors such as uncertainty about recognition of said courses, expectations about job opportunities and access to high salaries were more likely to shape how students see vocational education (Christophe, 2005). This again shows the disparity between what stakeholders believe and the students who will actually be doing the courses. It also highlights variables which possibly determine student perception of TVET.

Bathmaker (2013, p. 98) found contention in the field when doing interviews, with one representative seeing TVET as 'a qualification route for learners who find exams difficult', while another disagreed, positing that 'these are the same kind of learners, they are just interested in different stuff...'. This substantiates Wheelahan's theory (2007) expounded above and presents a case of what Rose (2012, p. 13) refers to as the 'rationing of educational opportunity'. Both Rose (2012) and Billet (2014) agree that TVET will never fully realize its purpose until there is more involvement of those who teach and experience said programmes, (namely instructors and students) in determining its content. TVET is most closely associated with young people's initial preparation for work. However, Billet (2014) argues that they are rarely seen as stakeholders and their opinions seldom sought or considered. This research attempts to add to that area of investigation by focussing on student perceptions of TVET and the factors which may influence their decision to pursue or avoid it as an educational choice.

## **The Process of Student Aspiration and Choice – Related Studies**

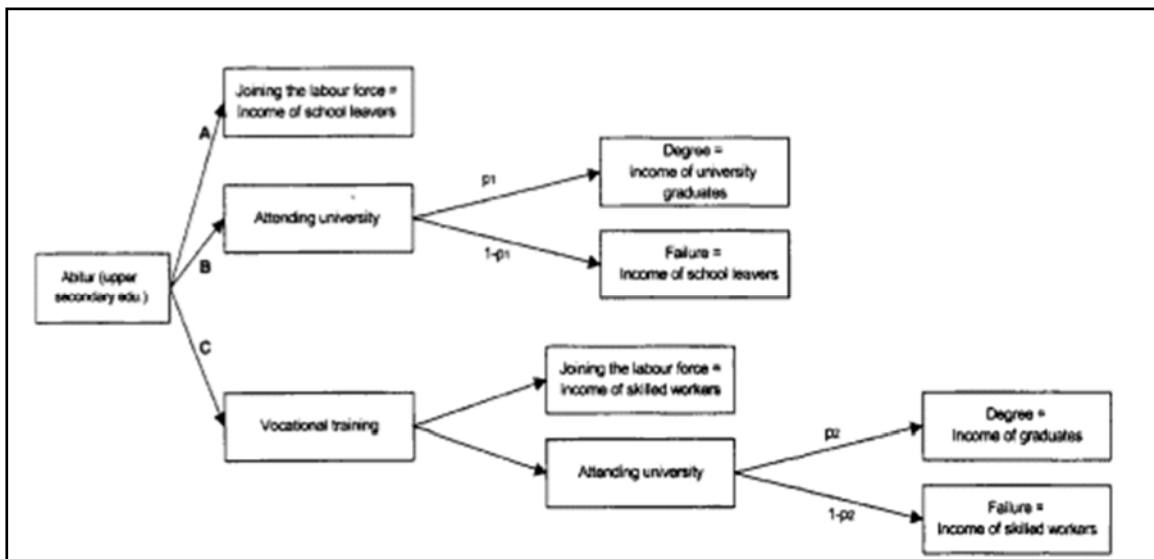
Billet (2004) posits that social sentiments determine the perception individuals have of the status of TVET. For Stockfelt (2013, p. 14), the ‘norms, values, beliefs, and the perceptions of education and the opportunity it creates’ influence the decisions students make regarding educational paths. The literature on student perceptions of TVET and their decision making processes will now be discussed, with special focus on the influences from society, the family and school.

### Social and economic influence

Aspiration is usually defined in terms of the highest level of education that students intend to or expect to achieve upon completion of their studies (Stockfelt, 2013). In research on boy’s educational aspirations in Jamaica, Stockfelt (2013) made the case that aspirations are contextual and dynamic and should be understood in light of the socio-economic and cultural environments being experienced. Her research revealed that these aspirations are usually linked to employment opportunities and perceptions of economic future.

The literature also recognises student agency in the process, and for Stockfelt (2013), students’ own agency and the combination of social influences and cultural beliefs are all tempered by the actual opportunities which exist. Hillmert and Jacob (2003) found in the German context that decisions regarding whether to pursue TVET or university after completing secondary school were made at the individual level. However, they did admit that since the decision was made close to the time of labour market entry, criteria relevant to the labour market plays a major role in the decision making process. These authors discuss the rational choice model which posits that prospective students rationally consider the costs and benefits associated with any educational transition. According to this model, students choose the alternative whose outcome has the best utility (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003).

However, recognising limitations in the rational choice model, Hillmert and Jacob (2003) presented the individual decision model, as a way of theorising students' educational decisions after leaving secondary school. The model presents a system which is reflected in many social contexts – whether to attend university after secondary school or not. Differentiated systems such as those in Germany offer students TVET as an alternative to a purely academic track. School leavers in such a system therefore have three options – enter the labour market, pursue TVET or go to university. This model is useful when considering student progression in any context and is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1** - Post-Secondary student options (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003 p. 323)

As can be seen, the alternatives have corresponding expected incomes based on the qualification level. There is therefore a difference in the income of those who leave school and begin to work immediately (seen as unskilled workers), those who complete TVET (skilled workers) and the income of university graduates. However, students who pursue TVET still have the option of attending university later and therefore accessing the salary associated with such.

The process shown in Figure 1 is one where school leavers calculate expected earnings and compare possible outcomes associated with different educational options. Hillmert and Jacob (2013) hypothesised that students are likely to choose an option if its expected income is higher than the



expected outcome of others. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) found evidence which showed that students gained considerable economic advantages in the form of better employment rates and higher salaries from participating in HE. Becker (1993) sees this scenario of university graduates earning more than persons with non-academic vocational training as grounded in the human capital perspective that higher investments in education contribute to increases in individual productivity, and hence graduates are attractive to employers. Hillmert and Jacob (2003) also found this inequality to be the case in the German system, with evidence of the income difference between persons with vocational qualifications and HE graduates as being greater than the gap between those with vocational qualifications and without any training at all. It must be noted that this is in a context that, as mentioned before, associates relatively high status to TVET. These complexities and contradictions highlighted student perceptions of job availability and earning potential associated with specific educational tracks as an area warranting further investigation.

In Gottfredson's (2002) analysis of the process of student choice, she sees aspirations as developmental, changing as young people mature and theorises a process of change from idealistic aspirations to more realistic expectations based on life circumstances, experiences and socialisation. The school and family were further explored as influential roles in this process of socialisation.

### Parental influence

Stockfelt (2013) identifies the family as one of the strongest influences on the aspirations of young people. In the literature social class of the family was a variable used by several authors when investigating students' academic progression (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003; Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010; Paes de Carvalho, 2012; Stockfelt, 2013).

Hillmert and Jacob (2003, p. 321) described the impact of parent's level of education as 'remarkable' when investigating students' progression patterns in Germany. They found that school

leavers with better educated parents had a higher probability of entering university, while conversely parents of lower social classes viewed leaving education to enter the labour market as a wise choice to avoid downward mobility (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003). A similar scenario was described in Aynsley and Crossouard's (2010) sample from South East England. They reported that in their sample of vocational students, only a fifth of them had at least one parent who had completed HE, while only 16.3% planned to do so themselves. On the other hand, 61.5% of those whose parents were not university graduates were also planning not to attend.

Stockfelt (2013) found that in Jamaica, the lack of examples of success through the route of HE in the home and immediate community led to students not being motivated to progress via that route. Using qualitative methods she revealed that being in a family with limited economic resources meant that 'the space, environment and resources to support a stable educational experience were limited' (Stockfelt, 2013 p. 8). She found that this put students at a disadvantage, which limited their educational aspirations. Rose (2012) acknowledges that low-income students are over represented in vocational education in America. Triventi (2013, p. 46) refers to the choice of different educational routes as 'higher education institutional stratification'. The examples above show that this process of choice can be influenced by existing social stratification in different contexts.

### School influence

Yuen et al. (2010) postulate that schools have a role to play in helping students to formulate their career and study goals. Paes de Carvalho (2006) hypothesised that correlations exist between patterns of schooling and progression to HE. She did this by constructing a typology of schools students attended before progressing to HE. The results led her to conclude that depending on the school attended, students were more likely to develop a habitus conducive to them choosing to pursue university education. She also explored the idea of this habitus being developed within the home and

analysed this based on parents' occupation. In her Brazilian sample, over half of the students who opted to do law were the children of professionals who were university graduates. She used statistics such as these to prove her hypothesis that parents' occupation tended to influence students' subsequent choice of study and progression to HE (Paes de Carvalho, 2006).

Stockfelt's (2013) sample to investigate aspirations consisted of boys from two schools. One was a traditional grammar school and the other a newer school whose student body composed of those who received lower marks in the entrance examination. She was able to glean insightful responses from students to show that student aspirations differed greatly at these two schools. One student at 'School A' reported feeling proud when people saw his school crest, and feeling obligated to do his school proud and progress to maintain its tradition of academic excellence. On the contrary, a student from 'School B' shared feelings of disillusionment that he couldn't achieve anything at that particular school; furthermore consider university (Stockfelt, 2013). Similarly, in an English context, Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) discovered that some students found making decisions about their educational progression difficult to make as the schooling they had experienced left them with feelings of indifference or uncertainty. Some even responded having stronger feelings about what they could not do rather than possible study or work paths, and not wanting to study anymore (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010). These sentiments highlight the significance of educational experiences in students' decision making processes. These educational experiences can take the form of a school ethos, as can be inferred from the student at 'School A' interviewed by Stockfelt (2013) or as a result of formal assessment (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010).

#### Academic versus vocational education

Students are differently motivated to pursue TVET. Akoojee (2007) found that in South Africa possible employment was the major factor that influenced students to pursue training. This was

followed by value for money or affordability of said training. When Australian students were questioned about their reasons for engaging in a vocational course those stated were to improve chances of getting a job, to acquire computer skills and to realise desires to enter specific fields (Billet, 2014). However, Aynsley and Crossouard (2010, p. 133) admit that progression to university is seen as 'being ... the desirable option for all'. They call for equal research into student aspirations in general, instead of the portrayal of those choosing options other than HE in a deficit light (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010). This lack of investigation results in student aspirations not being fully understood or appreciated.

### Vocational Qualifications

Whether students decide to pursue TVET or not is also influenced by society's perception of vocational qualifications. Bathmaker (2013) admits there is much debate about what constitutes knowledge and how acquisition of said knowledge should be determined in TVET. For him this is especially contentious as the dominant discourse in TVET surrounds the word skill, and not knowledge (Bathmaker, 2013). Billet (2014, p. 9) opines that the perception of TVET as 'straightforward, unambiguous and easily quantifiable' has led to overly simplistic forms of assessment and low level certification such as a simple pass or fail. Indeed, when Bathmaker (2013, p. 98) interviewed stakeholders, one representative's view of TVET was as 'a qualification route for learners who find exams difficult'.

Bathmaker (2013) chronicled several name changes, introduction of new qualifications and phasing out of old ones made in attempts to improve the status of TVET. However, for Aynsley and Crossouard (2010, p. 130) the resulting 'proliferation in vocational qualifications' has had the unintended consequence of making the field appear to be lacking credibility. For them, problems about how TVET qualifications link to other HE pathways remain, making the field unattractive to students and as a result the 'gold standard' of the A level remaining in place (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010 p. 132).

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Sentiments such as these question how well TVET qualifications can prepare students for progression, either to work or for further study and as earlier discussed, whether TVET qualifications provide or limit future opportunities for students.

### **The Future of Vocational Education**

McGrath (2012) sees utility in using the capability approach to consider how TVET can be better utilized. It is within discussion of the future of TVET and its utility for development that room for a capability approach to this field can be considered. McGrath (2012) critiques the current mode of TVET as being out dated and short-sighted by maintaining immediate employability via paid work as its chief goal. Billet (2014) agrees, charging that instead as merely a means to job acquisition, TVET should be seen in a holistic light, with goals that are societal, economic and personal.

The point of view that TVET should not only be used to facilitate economic development, but its capacity for human development should also be explored, critiques the human capital approach that heavily influenced the structure of TVET. Anderson (2009) as cited in McGrath (2012, p. 44) reminds us that TVET students are not simply potential workers, but 'human beings and citizens with ...needs ...and interests beyond work'. For this reason, he strongly believes that TVET should do more than simply teach how to labour and produce commodities (Anderson, 2009). Sen (1999) speaks of the freedom to achieve and for him the ability to recognise ones human capability is broader than human capital. Thus, he believes education, like other social services should be seen in terms of its direct relevance to well-being and freedom, as well as indirect roles of influencing social change and economic production (Sen, 1999). McGrath (2012) continues this line of thought, calling for TVET to be seen within the broader context of human learning and development, and used to build on the existing capacities of persons. For Billet (2014), when these additional purposes are considered TVET will more likely be seen as an important part of any country's educational system.

The educational benefits of TVET are often overlooked in the emphasis on labour market benefits, and likewise the effectiveness of vocational programmes based on labour market factors. However, Rose (2012) believes that TVET can lead to improvement in general education objectives, such as reading, computation and arithmetic skills. Lewis and Lewis (1985) saw a role for TVET to play in inculcating positive attitudes in students who may otherwise be deemed academic failures. These are just some points which show the valuable contribution TVET can make beyond skill preparation.

According to Tripney et al. (2013), there is growing consensus that TVET is important for economic growth. Akoojee's thesis (2007) examines the extent to which the TVET sector, through skills development can respond to national development issues of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa. He admits that although skills alone are unable to generate formal employment, the absence of skills significantly reduces the ability for individual and societal development. However, TVET's contribution to development is too often seen in a purely economic context, whereas a well-functioning and efficient TVET system can serve both national and individual needs, and contribute to social and economic development.

For Paes de Carvalho (2012) the post millennium focus on knowledge for economic development and information and communication technologies has put the spotlight on TVET. McGrath (2012) agrees, and sees this current decade as bringing a return of significant international interest in TVET, reflected in a focus on skills in the 2012 Global Monitoring Report (GMR). This comes after a focus on basic education, commitment to achieving UPE and subsequent formulation of MDGs which may have served to side-line the importance of TVET. Now skills are being recommended as a pathway to a better future, with UNESCO suggesting making upper secondary education more relevant to work, and skills training more accessible to youth as the ways to achieve this (UNESCO, 2012).

However, authors agree that there is room for much improvement in the field. McGrath (2012) acknowledges the failings of many forms of TVET reflected in low pass rates, poor instructors, low progression into the labour market, lack of resources, and overall inefficiency. The Wolf report (2011, p. 7) raised concern about 'low-level vocational qualifications... with little to no labour market value'. There are many other areas of TVET that warrant additional investigation and the 2012 GMR calls for improved planning, data collection and coordination of skills programmes if they are truly to benefit young people (UNESCO, 2012). Billet (2014) believes the content and assessment in TVET needs to be more informed and directed by those who teach and practice it, instead of remotely planned by educational administrators. This piece of research stands in agreement with his call for greater engagement with the student voice in TVET to understand their aspirations.

# Barbados – the country context

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## Historical background and Education System

Barbados is a 166 square mile island state in the Caribbean whose 339 years of continuous British colonisation ended with independence in 1966. Lewis and Lewis (1985, p. 159) described education in the Caribbean as being ‘consistent with its British colonial heritage ... overwhelmingly partial to grammar-school type education and ... correspondingly averse to technical education’. Stockfelt (2013) described the Jamaican secondary school system as follows;

Grammar schools are ... schools that host pupils with the higher passes from the ... test... done at the end of primary schooling. Almost exclusively, these schools produce higher levels of passes and success rates in the CXC exams done at the end of secondary school. Newer schools are those that usually host students with the lower passes and tend to produce the same on the CXC exams (p. 3).

An identical situation of stratification exists in Barbados, and a look at the twenty-two secondary schools in Appendix A shows those established between 1695 and 1928, mainly for the purpose of educating the children of planters and poor whites on the island (Ministry of Education, 2001). These are referred to as the older grammar schools. At the end of seven years of primary schooling, children take the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE), commonly referred to as the ‘Common Entrance Exam’. This one stage examination was implemented in 1974 (Ministry of Education, 2001) and requires students to complete a Mathematics and Language Arts paper as well as write a Composition<sup>1</sup>. Entrance into secondary school is based on the cumulative marks gained in the examination and parental choice. However, the students scoring in the top quintile are consistently those who gain entry into the older grammar schools. Despite purporting a more child friendly approach to education, the White Paper on Educational Reform stated that ‘the Ministry proposes that the Common Entrance Examination should remain as ... the fairest way by which children’s attainment

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<sup>1</sup> A Social Studies component is to be introduced in 2015



levels can be assessed' (Ministry of Education, 1995 p. 67). This is in spite of complaints made by Principals and teachers that 'the preferred schools get children who have acquired all the basic skills while others get children many of whom have not acquired those skills' (Ministry of Education, 1995 p. 69). The colonial model of education has proven very resilient and its stratifying effects difficult to dislodge. As a result of traditional intake patterns and results, a pecking order of sorts is well known and a strong public perception of schools exists in the island. There is still an overwhelming preference for the grammar schools established during the colonial period.

Rose (2012) describes vocational education at the secondary school level as often taking shape in the development of comprehensive high schools. Likewise, the expansion of TVET in the Caribbean was based in secondary school expansion programmes which took place in the 1960-70s. Rose (2012) described this expansion as being the response to the rapid increase in working class and immigrant children in urban areas of the United States. In Barbados, the abolition of school fees in 1962 created a need for schools to accommodate the children of plantation workers who could now afford to attend. These were labelled as newer secondary, or comprehensive schools, established from 1952 onwards and can be seen in Appendix A. These schools provided more vocational options in their curricula such as Food and Nutrition, Wood and Metal Work. However, the school system in Barbados does not consist of two paths such as those described in Germany (Kerckhoff, 2001) and many African countries (Oketch, 2007) and the structure of secondary education remains academic. At this present time, the curricula of all twenty-two public schools is similar and students are all expected to complete the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations after five years of secondary tuition.

Paes de Carvalho (2012, p. 79) describes education as being seen as a 'passport for upward social mobility in Brazil'. This sentiment holds true in Barbados as well. Education is compulsory until

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the age of 16 and is provided free of cost from the nursery to tertiary level<sup>2</sup>. This view of education as an important social service was based in sentiments of nationalism, and school fees were abolished in 1962 in the context of the nation building measures leading up to independence in 1966. However, Bourdieu (1984), cited in Billet (2014) cautions that the fact that different social groups have access to all levels of education does not automatically guarantee a change in social relations.

### Post-secondary options

Writing on the American context, Rose (2012) acknowledges that status hierarchy is also present in post-secondary institutions; ranging from elite research universities to local community colleges. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) call for further analysis of the barriers that explain differences in patterns of participation between socio-economic groups, instead of assuming that making choices available to all will result in equality. In terms of public provisions, on completion of CXC's Barbadian students have several options. They can attend sixth form at one of the seven schools with this option, the sites of the Barbados Vocational Training Board, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic or Barbados Community College (BCC). In some cases students progress directly to the University of the West Indies. Student progression patterns at this stage were part of the phenomenon explored in this research paper.

### **Current economic realities**

According to World Bank classification, Barbados has status as a high income developing country (World Bank, 2014). However, years of running a current account deficit and a rising level of borrowing have resulted in Government debt being a high 72.9% of GDP (Central Bank of Barbados, 2014). Most social services are free at the point of delivery, and the economic situation has pressured the State's

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<sup>2</sup> Effective the 2014-2015 academic year students will have to pay 20% of the cost of their tertiary tuition. The Government will pay the remaining 80%.

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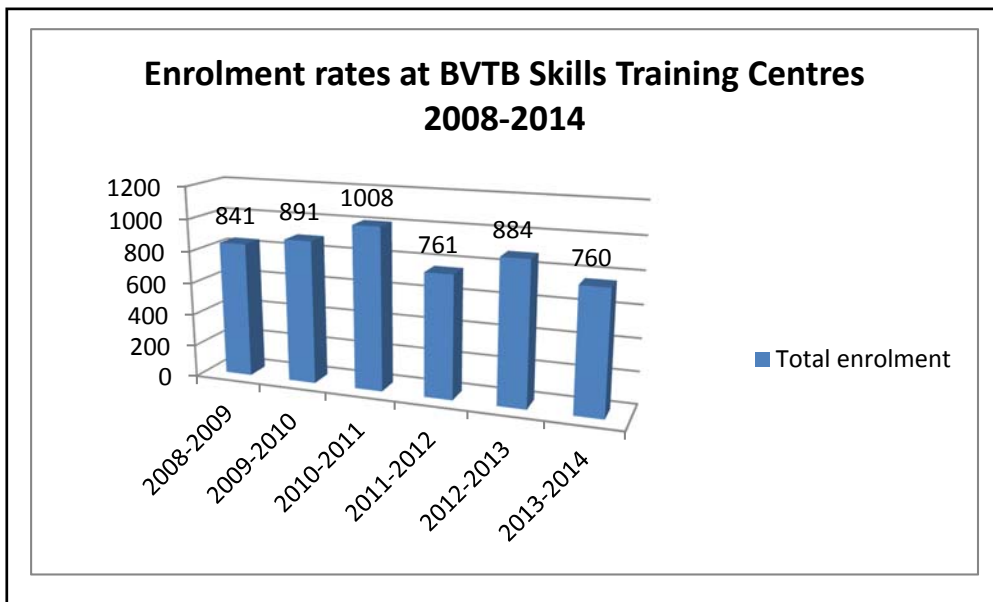
ability to maintain several of them. These harsh economic realities have been the catalyst for recent public debate on the funding of public services. Many developing countries spend a high proportion of their already small national budgets on education, Barbados being no different. UNESCO reported the Barbadian Government's expenditure on education to have been 5.6% of GDP in 2012, which was 13.4% of Government's total expenditure (UNESCO, 2014). Education and how it is funded has therefore been in the forefront of this topical debate.

### **TVET Provisions in Barbados**

In Barbados, TVET is publically provided at two institutions; the sites operated by the Barbados Vocational Training Board (BVTB) and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP). The BVTB is a TVET institution which was established under the Occupational Training Act of 1979. Its mandate is 'to ensure that the nation is provided with a competitive and appropriately trained workforce' (BVTB, 2014). Historical background information acquired on request from the Board revealed that the Skills Training programme had its genesis in the massive unemployment challenges the island faced in the 1980's. Craigwell and Warner (2003) report that at this time youth unemployment was 23% and there was also a shortage of skilled workers in construction and manufacturing. The BVTB therefore responded by developing skills training programmes to meet the market's needs. These programmes were designed to give individuals employable skills to allow them to enter the job market quickly. The Skills Training Centres fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development.

The Skills Training Programme currently is one of the principle activities of the BVTB and is aimed at providing unemployed persons, especially the youth, with skills. It is a modular programme based on the International Labour Organization's concept of the Module of Employable Skills (International Labour Organization, 2004). This involves the mastery of a skill in a narrow, well defined

complete operation or series of operations, which are part of a trade and can be performed as a discreet job. The programme emphasizes practical hands-on training in courses that range from three to nine months (BVTB, 2014). Different types of premises based training take place at the seven centres across the island and persons attending the programmes receive a stipend of \$75BDS<sup>3</sup> a week to assist them with transportation costs. Added to this, the training board runs fee based evening programmes determined by demand for persons seeking self-employment, persons who want to acquire new skills or upgrade ones they have. The bar graph below shows combined enrolment at the Skills Training Centres for the last six years.



**Figure 2:** Bar graph showing enrolment at the BVTB Skills Training Centres 2008-2014

The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic was established in 1969 and expanded to its present form in 1972. Its mission is to 'provide quality competency-based technical and vocational training that responds to the future employment and lifelong needs of its students' (SJPP, 2014). Added to this, the SJPP provides training for trainers of the BVTB, industrial workers at various plants across the island and

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<sup>3</sup> Equivalent of \$37.50 USD

teachers. This institution is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. Figure 3 on the next page shows total enrolment at the SJPP over a five year period.

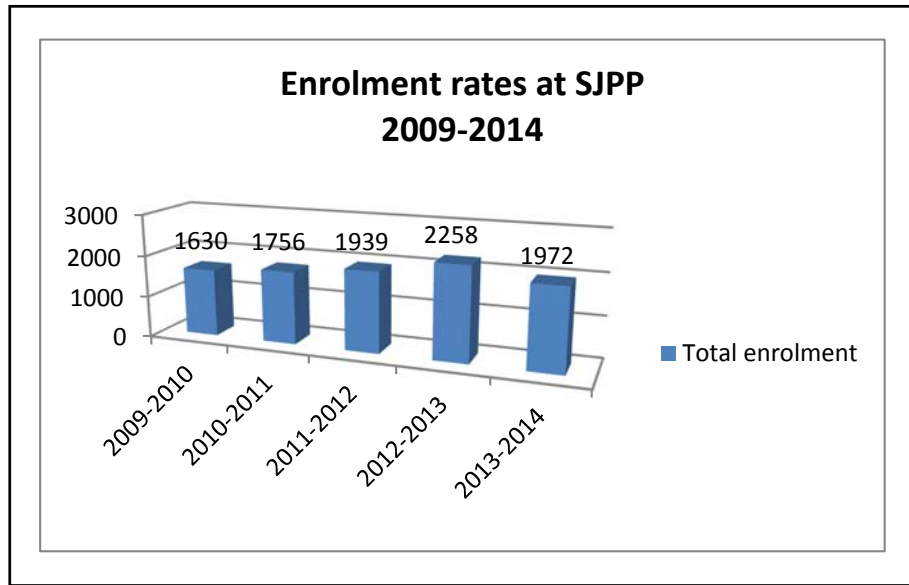


Figure 3: Bar graph showing enrolment at the SJPP 2009-2014

### New focus on skills

Crouch, Finegold and Sako (1999) argue that in cases where the state is the principal provider of TVET there is an inevitable difference between what is delivered by TVET providers and desired by firms. In November 2012 the Government of Barbados (GOB), through the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation was granted a loan in the amount of US 20 million dollars from the Inter-American Development Bank to facilitate the management and support of the Skills for the Future Programme. This programme is designed to support the GOB's Human Resource Development Strategy with an emphasis on improving the quality and relevance of TVET. It is comprised of four major components, including supporting an employer driven training system and a communication campaign to raise the overall profile of TVET in Barbados (Ministry of Labour, 2014). As part of developing demand driven training and skills certification there will be implementation of a National Qualifications

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Framework. This will provide students with more clarity on how the courses they have completed can facilitate progression into other skills areas or further education.

### **Challenges to TVET in Barbados**

Akoojee (2007) sees TVET as an important, but expensive intervention, especially when compared to other forms of education. The 2012 regional UNESCO report also admits the difficulty countries in Latin American and the Caribbean face due to the global economic crisis (UNESCO, 2013). Although skills development has been highlighted as instrumental in reducing unemployment, inequality and poverty (UNESCO, 2012), the GOB is in the process of implementing several measures to reduce state expenditure. These include reduction of the wage bill by retrenchment and ministerial budget cuts (Government of Barbados, 2013).

The historical information provided by Lewis and Lewis (1985) showed how the strong contempt for manual labour which was a result of the experience of chattel slavery has coloured the concept of TVET in the Caribbean. On January 28<sup>th</sup> 2014 the Minister of Labour called for the stigma attached to TVET to be erased (Madden, 2014). Having acknowledged the poor perceptions Barbadians have for TVET, she called for more participation from employers and curricular changes so 'parents would not hang their heads in shame' because their children are pursuing vocational paths (Madden, 2014).

The lack of a research base also limits effective delivery of TVET in the Caribbean. The 2012 GMR report calls for training programmes to be integrated with national development strategies and better quality data to monitor skills development programmes (UNESCO, 2012). The absence of studies investigating student perception of the field presents a potential knowledge gap between the education system and the work force. This research attempts to highlight some of the areas which warrant further research.

# Chapter 2

## Research Design

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### Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions Secondary school students in Barbados have of vocational education; specifically how they feel about the job opportunities it presents and future earning potential. The possibility of relationships between school and home based influences on students' choice as suggested by the literature were also considered using a mixed methods research design.

According to Pryor (2010), research questions help to establish boundaries in a study, thereby structuring its framework. Based on the area of interest and overall aim, the following main research questions were developed;

1. What perceptions do Secondary school students in Barbados have of vocational education?
2. What factors influence students' choice to pursue vocational education?

These main areas of enquiry led to the consideration of these additional questions;

- How do students view vocational education in terms of future jobs and earning potential?
- What role do home or school based factors play in determining if students pursue vocational education?

### Methodological Approach

A deductive process was used when designing the research project. There is a void of literature on student perceptions of TVET, and factors that influence post-secondary choices of students in Barbados, and widening the search to include the Caribbean region was not very fruitful. For this reason, the literature on other contexts was read to gain an understanding of how other studies were

conducted and possible variables for exploration. In this way, hypotheses already explored guided the research. In keeping with the deductive approach, after the findings for the particular context were analysed, they were discussed to show how they were congruent with or contradictory to what was found in the literature. Thomas (2013) posits that it is better to rely on several kinds of evidence rather than just one and so triangulation, a method of observing phenomenon from different viewpoints was used.

### Mixed methods

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods was used as the research design. According to Creswell and Clark (2011) the main characteristic of mixed methods research is the persuasive and rigorous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, and the integrations of these two forms of data. For Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 5) a use of mixed methods shows ‘an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question’. Creswell and Clark (2011) suggest mixed methods in cases where one data source may be deemed insufficient or when dealing with exploratory findings or results which need explanation. Given the literature gap on the local context previously mentioned, the researcher wanted to gauge the perceptions of a sample as well as get in depth personal views from students and other TVET stakeholders. To facilitate this, methods from both schools of research were utilized, allowing the researcher to maximize the strengths and compensate for weaknesses in each.

<b>Mixed methods approach</b>	
<u>Quantitative</u>	<u>Qualitative</u>
Questionnaires	Focus group discussions with students
Collection of statistics from schools and agencies	Interviews with Guidance Counsellors and TVET personnel

**Figure 4:** Table showing data collection methods used



A review of the literature revealed that several methods were used by researchers when investigating students and TVET. Morrison (2010) used only in depth individual interviews to explore the decision making process of two vocational students when considering HE, while on the other hand Paes de Carvalho (2012) used extensive surveys to investigate the relationship between university students and TVET. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) utilized paper questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to investigate vocational students' reasons for not participating in HE in South East England while Swift and Fisher (2012) used the same methods to determine student perceptions of education and training in West Yorkshire. Stockfelt (2013, p. 5) justified her use of qualitative methods in a mixed methods study on boys' educational aspirations in Jamaica as investigation of that phenomenon was 'relatively new'. This background, plus the benefits of using mixed methods as stated in the research literature, justified the decision to use the methods elaborated below.

### Questionnaire design

Questionnaire design is critical to successful data collection and as recommended by Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005) efforts were made to keep the interview questions simple and straightforward as the sample was made up of school children aged 15. Given there were no examples of instruments used in the Barbadian context, the literature was consulted to guide the researcher in developing one. This is a common practice among researchers and benefits include using questions that have already been piloted and having the ability to draw comparisons with other research (Bryman, 2012). Elements of the instrument created by Swift and Fisher (2012) were used. Their original instrument can be found in Appendix B. Some modifications were made to reduce the length of the questionnaire, allow for collection of demographic information and to use terms and qualifications relevant to the local context.

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire, beginning with questions to facilitate collection of demographic information such as students' gender and home background. The section to

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measure students' perception of education was modified from Swift and Fisher's (2012) original twelve items to ten. Changes were made to replace GCSEs with CXCs, the regional examination students in Barbados take after five years of secondary schooling. The word 'brainy' was substituted with 'bright', a term more commonly used in Barbados when commenting on academic ability in children. The items presented students with statements about vocational subjects or courses and academic courses. The Likert scale with options 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'uncertain', 'agree' and 'strongly agree' used by Swift and Fisher (2012) was retained to gauge responses. Finally, a section was added to question students on their post fifth form study plans. The modified instrument is included in Appendix C.

Bryman (2012) describes a variable as any attribute on which cases can vary. Exploration of the literature on TVET revealed that variables such as educational history, family background, future career plans (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010) as well as school attended and parents' occupation (Paes de Carvalho, 2012) were used when researching perceptions of TVET. These were used as a basis on which research could be conducted along similar lines in a Barbadian context. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) described the process of being asked to alter an item to question students about their social class after college tutors deemed it inappropriate. This consideration, added to the researcher's knowledge of the context played a role in choosing variables which would not be deemed overly sensitive.

#### Other quantitative data

The two TVET institutions in Barbados were contacted via telephone, email and written letter in one case, to acquire their enrolment numbers. This was used to gain an appreciation for the provision of TVET in Barbados and for information purposes in the context section.

### Focus group discussions and interviews

Focus group discussions were held to allow for richer data to be collected such as students' feelings on the topic of interest. The literature on students' choice process revealed the role played by guidance and career counsellors (Kuijpers, Meijers and Gundy, 2011) and for this reason the researcher felt their view could add to the discussion. Interviews were planned with the guidance counsellors at the three schools in the sample. Added to this, in order to gain information about TVET specific to Barbados an employee from the TVET Council was also interviewed. According to Bryman (2012) the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to vary the sequence of questions and gives room for further questions to be asked based on replies. This format was chosen for all interviews and interview schedules were designed to guide the process. These can be viewed in Appendix F.

### Piloting

Creswell and Clark (2011) recommend administering any data collection instrument first to a sample for validation. For Bryman (2012) the benefits of piloting include reducing the likelihood of missing data by revealing questions that may be misunderstood or make respondents feel uncomfortable. Bryman (2012) recommends that a small set of respondents with characteristics comparable to the population be used when piloting. In keeping with this, questionnaires were administered to twenty students within fourth forms at two public secondary schools. This pilot sample was chosen solely on the basis of convenience as the teachers who administered them are known by the researcher and were briefed about the research being carried out. The two schools were not a part of the sample.

Along with the questions directly related to the research, students were asked to rate the length of the questionnaire, level of understanding based on the language used and to identify any items they

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felt uncomfortable answering. They were also asked to comment on any ways they believed the questionnaire could be improved. A copy of the pilot questionnaire is in Appendix D.

Students found the questionnaire's layout and language easy to understand. No students indicated feeling uncomfortable answering any of the questions and a student actually commented that it was too short. One teacher revealed that the student most likely felt that way as the regular class schedule was relaxed to facilitate completion of the questionnaire, and a longer questionnaire would have meant a longer break from the timetabled routine. In the space left for free response on how the questionnaire could be improved some students stated that there should be more information on the options available to students so they would be able to decide what to do when leaving school, or know what options were available. The response *'it helped me think about life's decisions'* led the researcher to conclude that students may have seen the questionnaire as an instrument from the school to aid them in their post-school study options.

After piloting and reviewing the feedback received it was decided to include the option 'tourism' as a sector when questioning students about their parents' occupation or the field they would like to work in. This change was made as the teachers who administered the pilot questionnaires reported several students questioned them as to which category 'hotel worker' would fit into. It is validated by the fact that Barbados is a tourist destination and the Ministry of Labour reports accommodation and food services as being the second largest industry by employment (Ministry of Labour, 2009). When questioning students about their study plans after fifth form and the institution they think would best prepare them for their chosen field the option 'UWI or other university' was separated as it was pointed out that these were two different choices presented as one option. A copy of the post pilot questionnaire with these changes is in Appendix E.

### Sampling

Bryman (2012) advises that practical issues should play a big role in determining how social research is carried out. Figures from the Ministry of Education put the number of students at the twenty-two public secondary schools in Barbados at 19,297 in 2009. With the population in question being so large and constrained by limitations which will be expounded upon later, a sample had to be selected.

A nonprobability approach was taken which involved elements of quota and convenience sampling. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) used purposive methods to garner as diverse a range of perspectives and issues as possible from their sample. Similarly, given the researcher's knowledge of the educational system and informal ranking of secondary schools in Barbados, three schools were selected, one from each tier to garner responses along the continuum. This resulted in a convenient sample of three fourth form classes, one each from the three public secondary schools selected. Numbers of students in classes at the secondary schools in the sample normally range from 21 to 35. However, at the time the data collection took place (after the internal examination period and at the end of term) it is common for attendance at secondary schools to be very poor. After being reminded of these dynamics by school administration and experiencing postponements due to nonattendance, it was agreed that twenty students from each school would participate. Demographically, the students in the sample ranged in age from fourteen years nine months to fifteen years and six months. It was made up of both males and females and no effort was made to ensure equal or proportionate representation of gender.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2012). As this research was on a very small scale and not intended to be replicated, it was not submitted to the rigors customary in research practices to ensure high levels of validity and reliability.

What the study does provide is a small insight into students' views at three public Barbadian secondary schools at the time of investigation.

Construct validity is determined by the ability of a construct to measure what it is concerned with (Bryman, 2012). Quantitative research traditions are usually associated with a positivist perspective and involve the creation and manipulation of variables. They utilise some form of measurement, and the questionnaire items developed by Swift and Fisher (2012) were designed to measure student perceptions of education and training. For this reason, only those items directly related to vocational education were used to do cross tabulations in the analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Lewis and Simmons (2010) contend that the ethos of enquiry is absent in the Caribbean. Given that the researcher was well acquainted with the nonchalant local attitudes towards data collection and research in general, a method described by Bryman (2012) as a supervised self-completion questionnaire was used. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher and participants self-completed under the researcher's supervision in a classroom setting. A quick visual check of questionnaires was carried out as they were collected from respondents by the researcher to ensure a 100% response rate.

Students who participated in the focus groups did so voluntarily and so the researcher had less control over the numbers which varied between the schools in the sample. Themes which emerged in the literature during reading were used to guide the discussion and students were asked questions to further determine their perceptions of TVET and influences on their future decision making processes. Stockfelt (2013) reported switching the structure of interviews with students in Jamaica between semi-structured and unstructured due to the narrative nature of Jamaican conversation. With this in mind, the researcher deliberately kept the structure flexible to allow for maximum information to be collected.

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As the groups were small, the researcher was able to control the pace of the discussion and take notes as they took place. Questioning was slowed or paused when necessary to allow students to banter among themselves and elaborate points they felt passionate about. Thomas (2013) describes a shift in the way research is approached from that of a researcher interacting with participants to participants being partners in the research process. The focus groups allowed students to share freely and feel as though they were making personal contributions to the research. The interview with TVET personnel was conducted late in the field work process. This was done mainly to fill the gaps and gain access to published information related to the research and only available through the relevant agencies. Interview schedules guided collection of data from the guidance counsellors and TVET personnel.

After data collection, the questionnaire items were coded and responses entered into the statistical package SPSS by the researcher. Frequency distributions were run to facilitate discussion and comparison of the data. Cross tabulations were done to investigate the possibility of relationships between the school attended and perceptions of TVET. The results are presented graphically in the next section for ease of viewing. As this was a small scale study, qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed and analysed manually by the researcher. A simple colour coded system of highlighting was used to code themes pre-identified in the literature as likely to emerge. Relating what was collected in the field to what has already been published assisted the researcher in making meaning of the data.

### **Research Ethics**

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2012 p. 2) recommends that 'research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency'. Therefore, ethics was considered at all stages of the research, from conceptualising research questions to planning the data collection methods and in data analysis and reporting.

For Thomas (2013) research ethics are about protecting the interests of both the researcher and the participants, especially when there may be a conflict in these interests. As the study was primarily focussed on children under the age of 16 special ethical considerations had to be taken. Morrow (2013) warns that age is a powerful differential in research and adherence to the ethical clearance procedures at the University of Sussex ensured that the correct steps were taken when conducting research with children. Although the age of the primary participants meant they were considered a vulnerable group, factors such as data collection taking place during regular school hours, on the school compound and in the presence of class teachers ensured there would be no risk to participants. Consent was first given at the level of the school to conduct the research during school hours. Consent forms were given to the students in the sample and were signed by their parents, thereby ensuring informed consent was acquired at all levels.

Creswell and Clark (2011) stress that ethical issues apply to both quantitative and qualitative research. After permission was given by the school administrators, the consent of the guidance counsellors to participate was also sought separately. This ensured that they participated because of genuine interest and not because they felt it was required. Examples of these consent forms are in Appendix G. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the students in the sample, the guidance counsellor and the schools used for the research. None of the interviews conducted were recorded. No aspect of the study involved any deception, invasion of privacy or harm to participants, three other areas of ethical principles identified by Diener and Crandall (1978) as cited in Bryman (2012 p. 135).

Akoojee (2007) admits that the background and experiences of any researcher have an effect on how data is analysed, presented and discussed. Bryman (2012) explains reflexivity as a researcher's sensitivity to the cultural, political and social context they are conducting research in. As a product of the public education system in Barbados the researcher was conscious about remaining reflexive when



explaining to schools and participants the purpose of the research to prevent persons seeking to make premature conclusions.

### **Limitations**

Due to time and resource constraints a small sample was chosen which cannot be assumed as representative of all schools in Barbados. As a result, the results cannot be applied to the general population, and broad generalisations cannot be made. Reliability also cannot be assured; as if the study is replicated in another context the results will likely be very different. The size of the sample also meant that it was too small to yield inferentially meaningful statistics.

As there were few published studies or articles on TVET practices in the Caribbean available, research on countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America was heavily referred to. However, efforts were continually made to make concepts relevant to the context in question and it is hoped that the very small steps taken to conduct this study can highlight the need for further work to be done.

In hind sight, the time the research was carried out also prevented the researcher from achieving maximum access to the sample of interest. Due to end of term promotion meetings and other administrative duties only one guidance counsellor was available for interview. Added to this, focus groups were only allowed at two of the three schools in the sample. This limited the data collected from those perspectives.

# Chapter 3

## Presentation of data and discussion

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This chapter reflects what Thomas (2013) sees as a space to test emerging findings against initial thoughts. For this reason, quantitative and qualitative data will be presented and discussed simultaneously to validate or reject what was found in the literature. Students' responses will be reported verbatim in italics, with elaborations or explanations in parenthesis where necessary.

### Perceptions of TVET

Responses to the three items in the questionnaire directly related to TVET were analysed by running frequency distributions and reported to show students' perceptions. These responses ranged from strongly disagree to agree on a Likert scale. The bar graph below (Figure 5) presents the responses to question 3(a) 'vocational subjects have high status'.

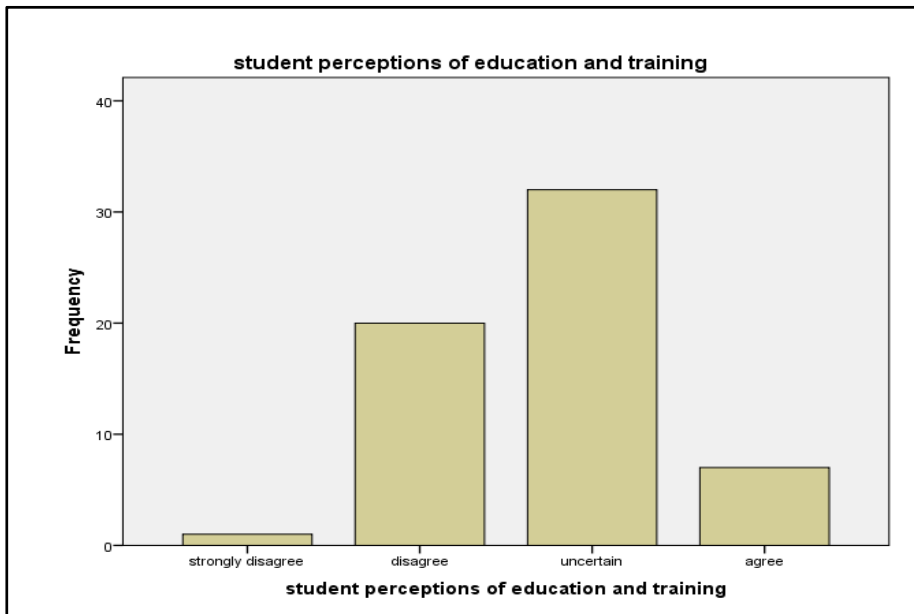
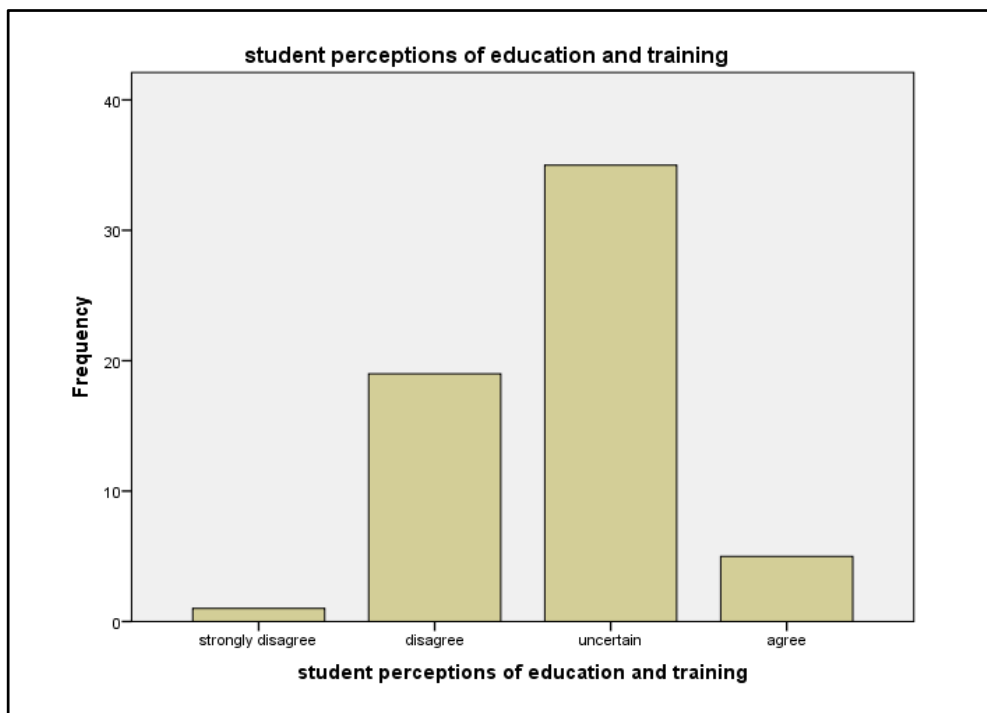


Figure 5 – Bar graph showing student perception of the status of vocational subjects

There was a high overall level of uncertainty. A cross tabulation revealed that this was the case at all three schools but highest at Oxford Secondary<sup>4</sup>. In total, slightly more than half of the total sample (53%) was 'uncertain' about the perception of vocational subjects. A third of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while only seven students agreed and none selected the option 'strongly agree'. The high level of disagreement is unsurprising. In their writings Lewis and Lewis (1985, p. 167) described vocational education as the 'second class option' for those who are considered unable to perform in the regular academic environment. This sentiment still endures the standing of TVET continues to be low when compared to other education sectors (Billet, 2014).

Paes de Carvalho (2012) implicated a link between students' perception of academic courses and the perceived level of difficulty of the subject. The bar graph below (Figure 6) shows frequencies from students' responses to item 3 (c) - the statement 'vocational courses are difficult'.



**Figure 6** – Bar graph showing perceived difficulty of vocational courses

<sup>4</sup> All names of secondary schools in the sample were changed to ensure anonymity.

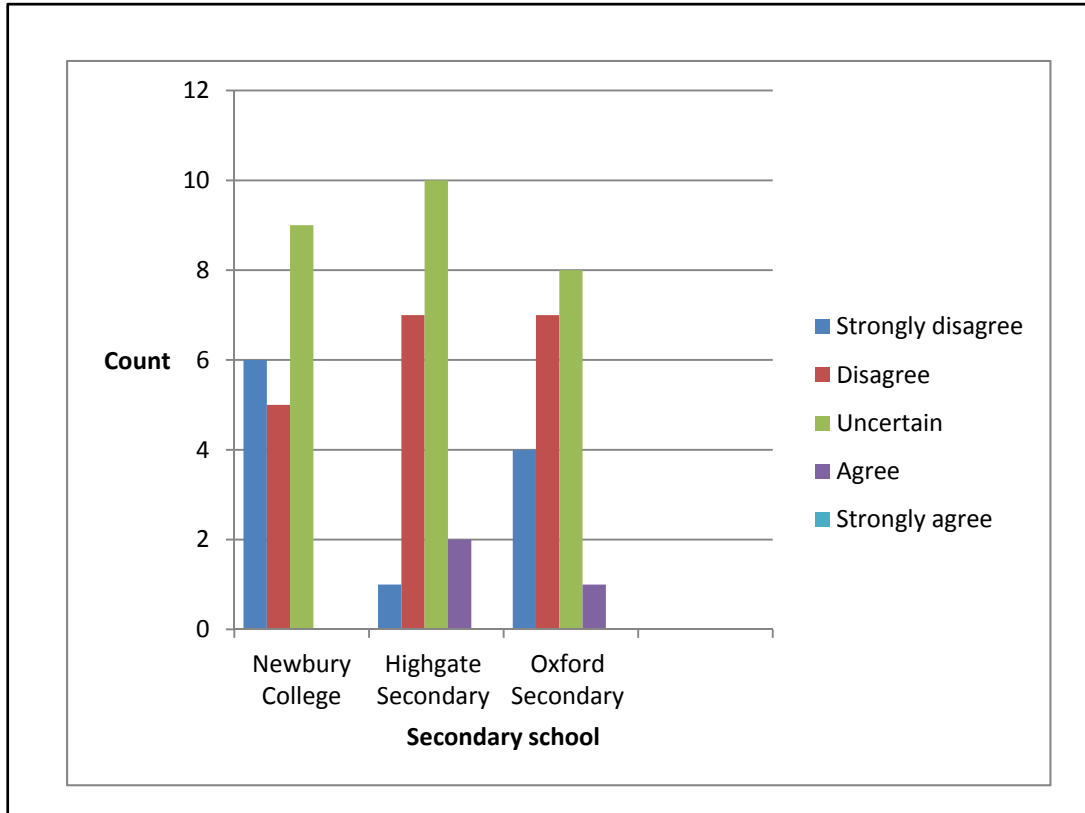
Figure 6 shows that more than half of the students (58.3%) choose the response 'uncertain'. A cumulative total of 33% of students disagreed and strongly disagreed, while only five students agreed that vocational subjects are difficult. Bathmaker (2013), and Billet (2014) found evidence to suggest that TVET education is perceived as being easy by stakeholders, including students.

Alternatively, when responses to the statement 'academic courses are difficult' were analysed, 43% of the sample agreed, while 25% 'strongly agreed'. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) found that students felt high levels of anxiety about the workload associated with HE which resulted in some choosing not to progress via that route. These results highlight student perceptions of workload and the factors that shape this perception as an area for possible further study. In the focus group discussion at Highgate Secondary, when speaking about the local context Andre<sup>5</sup> responded – '*UWI (the regional University) takes too much time! The classes are too long, three years is too long and the work [is] too hard!*'.

Figure 7 displays results to questionnaire item 3 (j) the statement 'if I do a vocational course people will think that I am "bright"'. This item was used as a proxy to determine how students think society at large views people who pursue TVET. Although almost half of the sample (27 students) was uncertain, almost a third (19) disagreed. A cross tabulation revealed that responses to this item differed by school more than the two previously discussed. The bar graph on the next page shows that those students who disagreed strongest with this statement were from Newbury College (the older grammar school) and no students at this school agreed. Again, a high level of uncertainty was present at all schools. The level of agreement was low (5% of the sample) and none of the students strongly agreed.

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<sup>5</sup> All names were changed to protect identities.

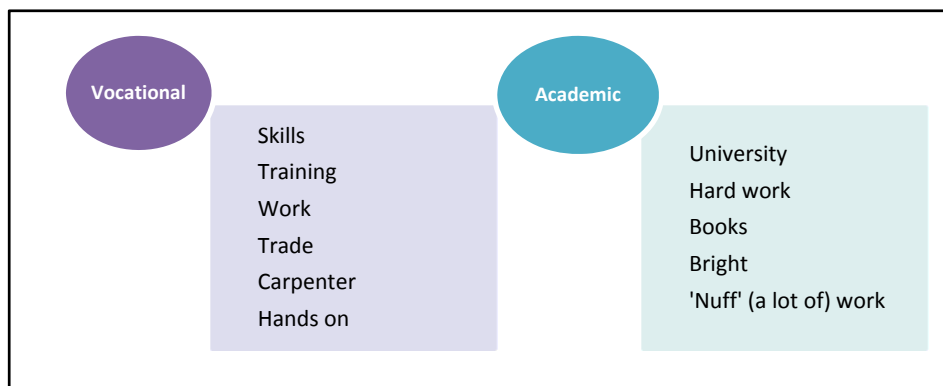


**Figure 7** – Bar graph showing student perceptions of vocational education

The students in the focus group discussion at Highgate Secondary believed it was mostly ‘old people’ that still considered all people who go to university as ‘bright’. They assured the researcher that other young people like them understood it was not that way. However, Figure 7 above shows that although students understood that going to university does not automatically make one ‘bright’, perception still has not changed enough for them to believe that if they complete a vocational course society will still see them as ‘bright’. This implies some conflict between students’ views and the prevailing perception in society.

In summary, no strong correlations were found between the school attended and students’ perceptions of TVET. The differences found were too small to be considered statistically significant. In fact, there was a high level of uncertainty about the term vocational and all items related to it at all the schools in the sample. These findings are not unprecedented as Swift and Fisher (2012, p. 207) in their

research in northern England reported a ‘high level of student uncertainty’ which they associated with the ambivalence surrounding TVET and associated careers. They concluded this could be a result of the emphasis placed on academic subjects at the expense of the vocational. This finding could hold true for the Barbadian context as well, as for some students in the focus group ‘what is vocational education?’ was their first question to the researcher. When students discussed among themselves their understanding of the word vocational one student responded ‘*oh you mean skills training*’ (Newbury College). In this way, just as suggested by Bathmaker (2013) the word skill is associated with vocational. In the focus groups students were asked to write words which come to their minds when they hear the words academic and vocational. Figure 8 below illustrates their responses.



**Figure 8** – Chart showing student associations of the words vocational and academic

The overall high level of uncertainty is a cause for concern as the students in the sample will be entering fifth form less than two months after the time of data collection. In an interview the guidance counsellor at Highgate Secondary revealed that students were engaged in dialogue about their future aspirations at the third form stage. She reported that;

*‘All third form students participate in the National Career Showcase put on by the Barbados Association of Guidance Counsellors (BAGC). Students are prepped before going to the showcase to maximize the benefits. They go with ideas of what they want to do and are prepared to ask relevant questions’.*

However the high levels of uncertainty revealed by the data suggest that the students in the sample were not very knowledgeable about vocational education. A frequency analysis of responses to question item 4(a) 'What are your study plans after 5th form?' revealed that no students in the sample indicated they will be attending the Skills Training Centres, while 21% of students reported planning to attend the SJPP. This was corroborated by the guidance counsellor who stated that '*there is high interest in SJPP but it is very low in BVTB*' (Interview with guidance counsellor, Highgate Secondary) and the enrolment figures presented in the context section which show SJPP as having enrolment rates much higher than BVTB. In her opinion this was a reflection of society's perceptions of TVET. When questioned further, she was unaware of whether the BVTB was doing anything to change this.

In the focus group discussion at Highgate Secondary, students reported hearing about TVET from siblings who had done vocational courses or the 'boys on the block'<sup>6</sup> who went to Skills Training. The fact that students seem not to be receiving information about TVET at the schools they attend raises concern. It also raises questions about the other factors such as the home or media which may influence student perception of TVET as their information about it is already very limited. Interestingly, the TVET employee interviewed stated that they (TVET Council and BVTB) '*work closely*' with the schools to inform students about the courses offered (Interview, TVET personnel). Although a generalization cannot be made, it seems a gap exists between what information TVET personnel believe is being passed on to students and what information students at the schools in the sample have. This warrants additional investigation as it could mean that schools are not instrumental in shaping students' attitudes towards TVET or the lack of information creates ambivalence and negative attitudes.

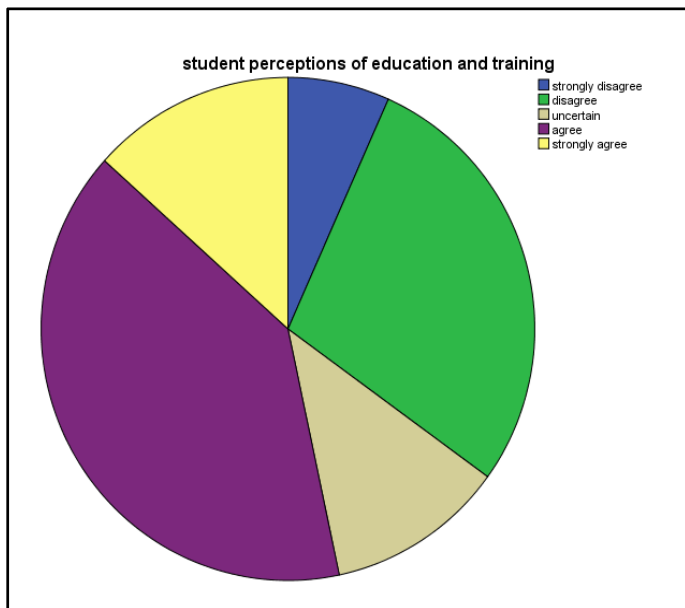
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<sup>6</sup> Term used to refer to young unemployed males who spend most of their time outdoors in the neighbourhood.

Perception as related to future jobs

As perception is a very broad concept it was decided to look specifically at how students see TVET in terms of future jobs and earning potential. However, discussions with the students revealed generally they saw ‘good jobs’ as those being ones which earn the most money. These ideas were especially explored in the focus group discussions. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) used the concept ‘imagined futures’ to discuss students’ decision making and transition processes to HE or work. They found a relationship between the formal educational process students were engaged in and the futures they imagined for themselves, primarily based on the notion of an ideal job (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010).

The following pie chart (Figure 9) visually depicts students’ responses to questionnaire item 3(f), the statement ‘people with degrees get the best jobs’. Cumulatively a little more than half of the sample (53%) agreed with the statement, while 35% chose the disagree or strongly disagree options. 11% were uncertain.



**Figure 9** – Pie chart showing student perceptions of vocational education and job prospects.



Students seemed very aware of the current economic climate and the impact that had on job availability. The Ministry of Labour (2014) currently cites youth unemployment in Barbados to be 30% and as Shakira responded *'it don't really matter which kind of learning could give a better job, cause jobs hard to get on the whole'* (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). Students also shared narratives about graduates of UWI in their neighbourhoods who were *'still home'* after graduating or working in jobs not usually commensurate with degree holders.

For Billet (2014) the ranking of occupations, educational provisions and assumptions of intellect in existence since Ancient Greek times has resulted in lingering perceptions still present in contemporary society. Students acknowledged that people used to *'look down'* on occupations such as carpentry and tiling. However they found it amusing that these tradesmen would be able to make more than their own teachers in a week. Chris was of the opinion that *'these are the things Skills Training should let school children know'* (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). This raises the relevant issue of how vocational courses are marketed. In the South African sample researched by Akoojee (2007), students were most motivated to pursue training because of the possibility of employment. He found that institutions utilised this in their marketing endeavours, using images of success as a result of qualifications as marketing tools. However, the ability of these institutions to actually secure jobs for learners had not been proven as they were no formalised links between the institutions and corporate entities (Akoojee, 2007). This led him to caution that although TVET courses should be attractively marketed, students should not be given the belief that skills acquired are immediately utilisable in the job market, especially where there is no empirical evidence (Akoojee, 2007).

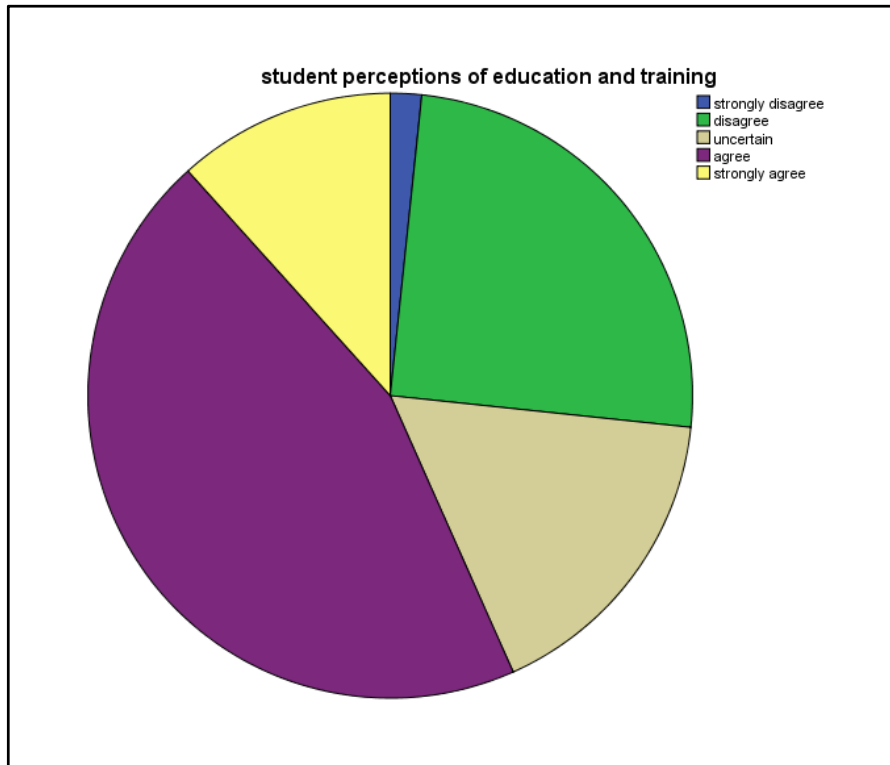
Stiff competition in the labour market has placed more emphasis on the qualifications and skills associated with knowledge and Paes de Carvalho (2012) describes a demand for higher level technological competencies in the Brazilian job market. Newspaper headlines such as *'Qualified but not*

job ready' (King, 2014) and 'Caribbean employers complaining' (Best, 2014) question how well degree study at UWI prepares Barbadian students for the world of work. However Bathmaker (2013) also highlights stakeholders' queries about how well TVET qualifications prepare students for further study or work. There is a call for more analysis of vocational qualifications (Bathmaker, 2013) and input from all stakeholders to create qualifications which reflect measures of the qualities and content desired by employers (Akoojee, 2007; Rose, 2012; Billet, 2014).

The 2011 World Youth Report suggests that private sector participation in TVET should be encouraged by 'increasing incentives for firms' (United Nations, 2011 p. 111). The joint IDM AND GOB Skills for the Future Programme emphasises the development of an employer driven training system which will result in better alignment between training and market demand. The allocation of 6.5 million USD over a three year period to the Competency Based Training Fund has led to funding being awarded to companies who will implement training programmes leading to certification (Ministry of Labour, 2014). Bathmaker (2013) found that students were apprehensive when considering pursuing TVET because they did not see it as presenting many opportunities or allowing for progression. Akoojee (2007) is of the opinion that more direct input from employers would serve to improve learners' understanding about future employment possibilities. The links being established in Barbados between the private sector and the TVET Council, the agency responsible for vocational qualifications, should be beneficial towards building synergies between the field of TVET and the world of work.

#### Perception as related to earning potential

Responses to item 3 (g), the statement 'people with degrees make more money' are presented in Figure 10. Although 45% of the sample agreed, a cumulative 43% were either uncertain or disagreed with the statement.



**Figure 10** – Pie chart showing student perceptions of education and earning potential

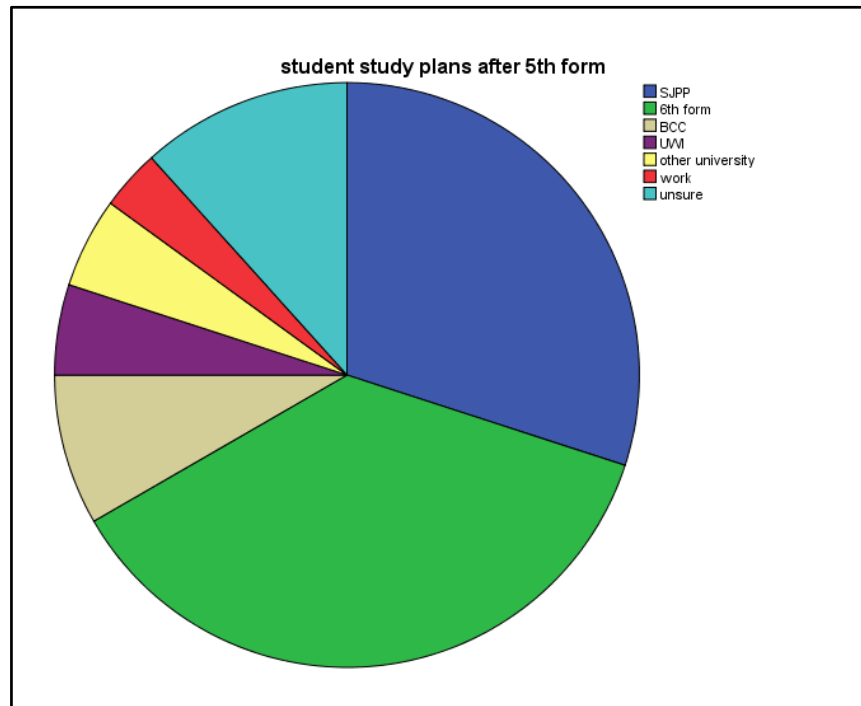
The focus group discussions revealed that students understood, especially now in the throes of an economic recession that going to university did not necessarily guarantee a *'good job'*, as it may have in the past. Nikita was of the opinion that *'children who go to Polytechnic can still come out good'* (make something of themselves) (Focus group, Highgate Secondary).

Some students interviewed by Stockfelt (2013) in Jamaica revealed that they did not see pursuing HE resulting in economic gain, and therefore felt more inclined to engage in more practical and skills oriented training. Michael, a student at Newbury College had the view that *'making money could be associated with both'* (vocational and traditional academic learning).

### **To pursue TVET or not? – A look at the student decision making process**

According to Yuen et. al (2010) the process of investigating future careers and making study plans based on knowledge, interests, talents and capabilities is a complex one. Speaking about students

in Hong Kong, these authors describe this as a tentative stage which students cannot navigate without first learning about occupational opportunities, and having knowledge about the options available (Yuen et. al, 2010). As ventilated in the literature review, the decision making process is shaped by cultural norms, expectations and student’s own agency, which are all tempered by the actual opportunities which exist (Gottfredson, 2002; Yuen et. al, 2010; Stockfelt, 2013). The pie chart below (Figure 11) shows students’ responses to question 4 ‘What are your study plans after 5<sup>th</sup> form?’. These will be discussed in terms of home and school factors which may have influenced responses.



**Figure 11** – Pie chart showing student study plans after 5<sup>th</sup> form

### Home factors

Stockfelt (2013, p. 10) found that family influence was exerted through the behaviours of family members, their professions, ‘narrated desires’ and encouragement about the value of HE. She found that this resulted in students having aspirations towards HE in efforts to make the family proud (Stockfelt, 2013). Michael (student at Newbury College) reported not being under any pressure, as

discussions with his parents about school and future jobs were always positive. In the focus group at Highgate Secondary girls reported having more discussions with their parents about plans after 5<sup>th</sup> form. For Dennis, discussions about jobs always *'came back around to what my father did good in and wants me to do'* (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). There was general agreement that parents wanted them (their children) to *'come out better'* than they did. Alicia complained that especially since exams (internal promotion examinations) started she has been pressured about the importance of doing well (Focus group, Newbury College).

In analysing the relationships between university students in Brazil with learning and TVET, Paes de Carvalho (2012) makes the point that students are studying and graduating in environments which are more competitive than their parents had to. Stacy's comment that *'my mother says she did not get to go UWI so she wants me to go so I can have better opportunities'* implies a parent very conscious of that reality (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). Echoes of similar sentiments imply that students whose parents did not access HE were very desirous of their children pursuing university education. This is consistent with Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) theory of 'relative risk aversion' which states that parents attempt to prevent their children from having a position in life seen as worse than their own (cited in Hillmert and Jacob, 2003 p. 322).

Stockfelt (2013) found that secondary school Jamaican boys from lower socio-economic groups and lower achieving schools had lower educational aspirations. Her research revealed that limited economic resources meant the *'immediate need for survival... took precedence over future plans'* (Stockfelt, 2013 p. 8). As a result in some cases there was total disillusionment with the idea of HE, while in others remained *'strong desires but low intentions'* (Stockfelt, 2013 p. 9). Although the sample used in this research was very small, and instances of economic hardship would be present in any context, comments such as *'my mother said regardless I will stop in school'* and *'my parents say they*

*would make sure I don't have to pay a bill so I could continue school'* (Focus Group at Highgate Secondary) indicate that parental influence to continue educational pursuits was positive and strong. Only two students in the sample reported having plans to work immediately after fifth form. The strong feelings Barbadians have regarding education were embodied in the statement made by Steven '*my mother say once education free I got to go somewhere after'* [5<sup>th</sup> form] (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). Considering that only seven students were unsure about their post fifth form plans it can be said that a strong desire to remain enrolled in some educational institution was present.

The view of the guidance counsellor revealed other dynamics, as her reflections on varied interactions with parents showed that parental influence was not all positive. Mrs. Sealy<sup>7</sup> complained that some parents were '*unreasonable'* ranging from those who '*wanted their children to do exactly what they did'* to those who '*know they didn't do much at school and expect the world from the children'* (Interview with guidance counsellor, Highgate Secondary). In her experience, this resulted in some students doing what their parents wanted them to do, which in some cases conflicted with their own desires or proven academic strengths. Two students complained that pressure from being compared to older siblings and the educational paths they took will also play a role in determining their options. Allison stated that her parents were disappointed she did not (originally) pass for Newbury College so they wanted her to go there to do sixth form (Focus group, Highgate Secondary).

Other literature (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003; Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010; Paes de Carvalho, 2012; Triventi, 2013) also suggests a correlation between social status and post-secondary choices. In different contexts, these researchers found that social origin influenced progression (Hillmert and Jacob, 2003). The difference between students' aspirations and actual progression could be the subject of a

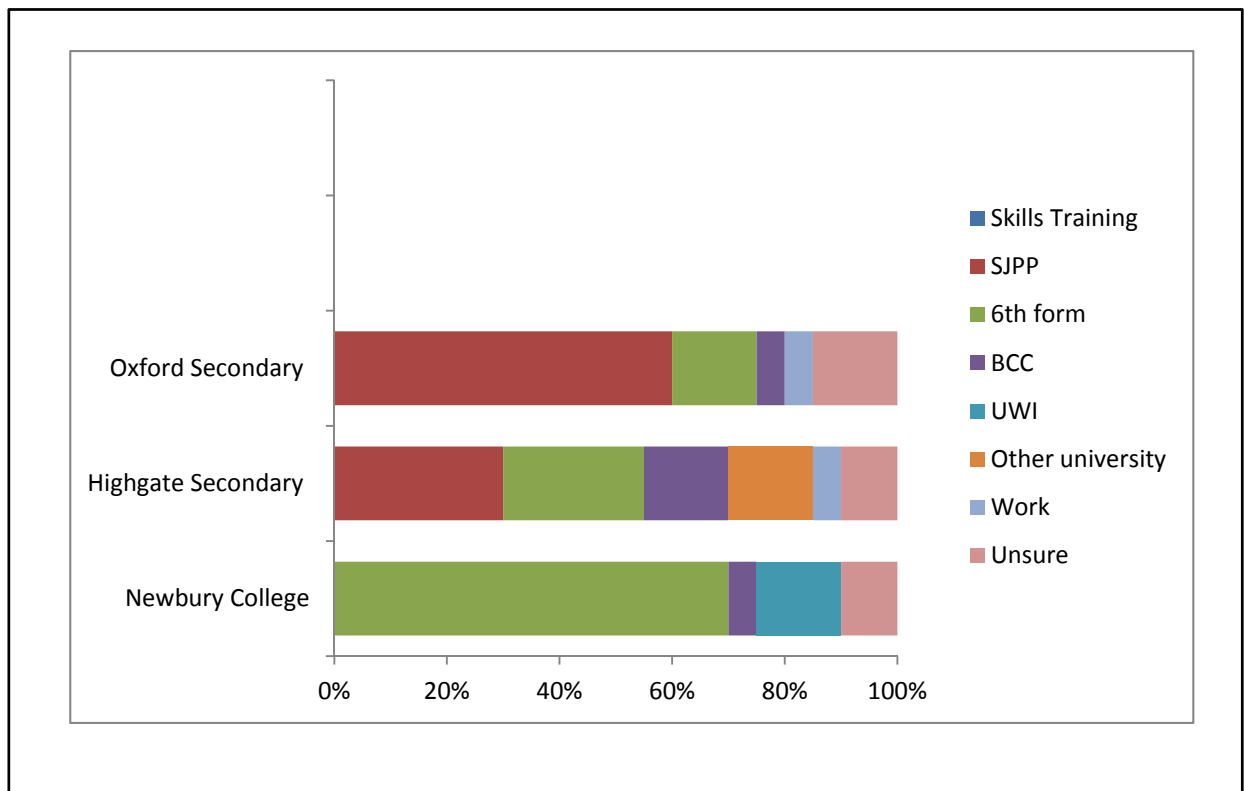
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<sup>7</sup> Name changed to protect identity.

longitudinal study; however, students at all three schools in the sample had positive attitudes about continuing education past fifth form.

### School factors

The current school attended and students' study plans after fifth form were compared and the results are displayed in Figure 12 below. These will be analysed based on student feedback in the focus group discussions and interviews with the guidance counsellor. Student aspirations at Newbury College were limited to 6<sup>th</sup> form, BCC and UWI. There was more diversity in the responses from Highgate and Oxford Secondary.



**Figure 12** – Bar graph comparing student study plans after 5<sup>th</sup> form by current school

Overall the desire to attend sixth form was relatively high (36% of the entire sample). In discussion students at Newbury College saw it as a natural progression (after fifth form) and this was

shown by the high level of response. At Highgate Secondary (mid table school) the aspirations to go to sixth form were also high, as a quarter of the students from that school selected that option. Students there reported that the recent establishment of more sixth form schools made them feel more confident about being able to attend one.

Aspirations to attend UWI immediately after fifth form were only found at Newbury College. In the focus group discussion, some students from Highgate Secondary were not keen on attending university in general because of the fact that a degree programme takes at least three years. Hillmert and Jacob (2003) found that students weighed several options when considering the possibility of prolonging earning against pursuing HE. For Damien prolonging was not an option as he thought that *'all that time I could be making money'* (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). This is consistent with the students participating in Aynsley and Crossouard's study (2010) who cited it may be more beneficial to begin gaining work experience than continuing education which may not result in direct advantages in the employment market. Some students in the Barbadian sample were not encouraged to attend university because of former students they knew who dropped out because it was too hard and demanded too many sacrifices. Aynsley and Crossouard (2010, p. 138) summarised these considerations of time and effort as *'the risks associated with education'*. This concern about investing time into HE which many not translate into economic gains was overwhelming at Highgate Secondary with students saying that *'after all that there was still no guarantee of a job'*. Ecclestone and Pryor (2003) explain this as students displaying the tendency to take low risk options.

None of the students in the sample aspired to attend the Skills Training Centres. Their candid inputs showed that they had a very good understanding of the questionnaire item. As Corey stated, *'that is no where nobody really plans to go'*, while some other boys admitted that they may *'end up'* there, but that was if they were not accepted at SJPP or *'nothing else comes up'* (Focus group, Highgate



Secondary). The literature presents evidence of such sentiments, as for Bathmaker (2013, p. 89) in some contexts TVET is still seen as 'a second chance, second choice, alternative...'. However there was high interest in the SJPP (18 students from Highgate and Oxford Secondary). Students stated that there were 'options' and 'different things to do' at SJPP (Focus group, Highgate Secondary). This narrative was very intriguing. Although research previously presented showed that students believed university courses were long and high in difficulty that did not translate in immediate interest in the vocational courses offered by BVTB which range in duration from three to nine months. This substantiates Christophe's findings (as cited in Paes de Carvalho, 2012) and discussed in the literature review.

Yuen et. al (2010) cite the role of guidance programmes that include educational and occupational awareness in influencing students' decision making process. When asked to describe the structure guidance about future educational plans took, Mrs. Sealy explained that in general Health and Family Life Education sessions were used to do this. The process of guidance included students taking the Holland Code Test developed by psychologist John Holland in the 1970s which suggests work environments based on personality traits (Woods and Hampson, 2010).

If necessary or when requested students also had individual sessions with the guidance counsellor. When asked to describe the process Mrs Sealy said; '*I start with telling them about UWI, then BCC, SJPP and come all the way down*' (Interview, Guidance Counsellor). This statement implies that the institutions are already ranked in her perception and presented to students as such. Michael revealed that there was no mention of TVET at Newbury College from either class teachers or the guidance counsellor. The quantitative results evidenced his statement as no student from that school listed the SJPP as a post-secondary plan. Students at Newbury College were in agreement that the focus at their school was academics and that decisions about future education plans were made in the home.

Some stated that *'they could'* talk to the guidance counsellor if they needed to, but this did not seem to be a major influence (Focus group, Newbury College).

Billet (2014) maintains that students make decisions and exercise their own discretion in the education process. Students admitted that school and home factors would be big influences, but the final decision on what they want to do after school would be based on their CXC results. Indeed, Aynsley and Crossouard (2010) found that assessment experiences impact student educational progression. In conclusion, there may be a need for what Rose (2012) sees as a lessening of the sharp divide between academic and vocational courses of study. Students saw the utility of doing 'hands on subjects' and getting 'real life experience' that would be useful in the world of work (Focus groups). The desire for a blend of the two is relevant and Bennell and Segerstrom (1998) see the maintained distinction between education and training as outmoded. As a solution Paes de Carvalho (2012, p. 81) posits an integration of 'career oriented further education with the regular education system' (p. 81). However there are undoubtedly perceptions of the status associated with various educational institutions, and as put by Billet (2014) the lowly standing of vocational education continues to be an enduring problem. Although students were of the opinion that these perceptions were not always justified, as Chris said *'that is how Bajan [Barbadian] society is, people don't think that much of you if you go to learn a trade'* (Focus group, Highgate Secondary).

# Chapter 4

## Conclusion, Recommendations and Reflections

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### Conclusion

Students' perceptions of the status of TVET did not differ greatly based on the school they attend. Although students showed recognition of factors such as the global economic climate and local unemployment which make TVET relevant, prevailing social perception of its status was a strong influence. This has implications for all stakeholders involved in TVET.

Firstly, there is a need to recognise that the role of career counsellor is different to that of guidance counsellor. The frequency or absence in some cases of mention of the guidance counsellor suggests that the weight of advice given by them may be determined by the level of parent interest or pressure exerted in the home. There is a need therefore for increased student participation into the guidance process, especially regarding the content and focus of career showcases so student needs are met.

The results also have several implications for Barbadian TVET providers. The overall experience of conducting this research and its findings lead the researcher to suggest intervention based on the structure of TVET and the general education system. It is my opinion that this will improve the efficiency and quality of TVET as well as contribute to changing public perception.

## **Recommendations**

### Education system

As a result of globalisation and the technological improvements associated with the 21<sup>st</sup> century different types of knowledge are now being valued. For Paes de Carvalho (2012) this means that the ability of education systems to meet market demands is being questioned. She describes a process being undertaken to facilitate integration of TVET into regular education in Brazil. This will entail the passing of legislation to acknowledge some technology courses as HE, and allow students to progress to post graduate courses in similar fields (Paes de Carvalho, 2012). This is envisioned to propose an alternative model of HE to that of the traditional academic route and give TVET added value.

Writing on the context of Jamaica, Knight and Rapley (2007, p. 18) suggest TVET as part of educational reform to create a 'well rounded adaptable, highly skilled workforce' to aid national development. Hickling-Hudson (2004) opines that for post-colonial Caribbean countries to succeed in the global era, they need educated and skilled populations. Considering that Brazil is experiencing a period of economic growth the proposal to better integrate TVET into general education may be a model other developing countries can follow. The Barbados Human Resource Development Strategy (Government of Barbados, 2010 p. 1) states that emphasis will be placed on 'promoting lifelong learning, the development of a seamless educational system... and bridging the gap between academic and technical skills...'. It is hoped that concrete steps will be taken to achieve these goals and be the precursors for the status of TVET to be improved.

### Improving the efficiency and quality of TVET

Akoojee (2007) cites stipulations which were passed to ensure quality provision by FET providers in South Africa. These included offering only programmes which lead to registered qualifications,

maintaining equipment and materials at high standards, and engaging the services of appropriately qualified academic and support staff. Added to this, mandates were passed to implement quality management systems, assessment policies and maintain student records. Although these applied to private providers of FET, similarly high standards should be set for TVET providers in Barbados. Collaboration is needed between the Ministries of Education and Labour to ensure teaching staff are adequately qualified and TVET plants have adequate physical and human resources to provide quality training.

#### Establishment of a research base

The structure and delivery of TVET in Barbados would also be improved if policies are better informed by research. Data from graduate exit surveys as suggested by Billet (2014), training impact assessments recommended by Akoojee (2007) and the tracer studies described by Lewis and Lewis (1985) would be valuable in revealing students' opinions of TVET courses, post study employment paths and earning patterns. Research can also highlight further linkages which can be established with schools, businesses and communities and determine if the TVET sector is meeting the needs of stakeholders.

Studies to determine the long term skills needs of the UK for global competitiveness (Aynsley and Crossouard, 2010) and extensive reviews such as the Wolf report (2011) would admittedly be expensive undertakings for a small developing country such as Barbados. However if training is being considered as a useful tool to achieve competitiveness in a globalized world, the depth of the information which could be acquired by way of extensive research can be seen as an investment into developing a highly skilled workforce.

### Change in Perceptions

Despite these challenges and limitations found in the literature, Billet (2014, p. 1) sees vocational education as 'an important and worthwhile project'. However, the benefits of TVET can only be fully realised in a society which values multiple forms of knowledge and places less focus on the binary division of vocational and academic education. Paes de Carvalho (2012) describes the changes proposed in Brazil as being in keeping with guidelines and policies of international bodies such as the World Bank and IDB. However, Christophe (2005) as cited in Paes de Carvalho (2012) stresses that these policies do not automatically address the issue of social acceptance of such courses of study. Akoojee (2007) is of the opinion that the extent to which providers ensure successful outcomes determines how others perceive their success. For him, these outcomes are not only paper qualifications but how well students develop appropriate skills. It is hoped that the recommendation of research based intervention, quality assurance measures and better integration within the general education system would result in more positive perceptions of TVET in Barbados.

### **Reflections**

It is hoped that the exploratory steps into this area of research can be elaborated. The experience revealed that students were keen to share their insights, and felt no avenues currently exist for them to do so. As the sample was made up of fourth form students they were not questioned regarding their age. However, a longitudinal study would be useful to determine whether students' perceptions change as they progress through school and are exposed to different subjects. Age could therefore be a useful variable when analysing student perceptions and the basis of further studies.

Although several challenges were faced regarding the availability of and access to information, the research process proved very enlightening. The topic challenged the researcher to consider her roles as a product of the public education system, alumna of an older grammar school, beneficiary of

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government-funded education to the post graduate level and researcher with an interest in the development of Barbados. These conflicting positions allowed full appreciation of the complexity of the recommendations made in this chapter.

It is hoped that this study would yield different results if conducted after implementation of the Barbados Human Resource Development Strategy, completion of the Skills for Life Programme and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework. As a young nation of 48 years, Barbados is still very much on the path of nation building and development. Education will continue to play a significant role in this process.

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**Appendix A – Public secondary schools in Barbados**

<b>Secondary school</b>	<b>Date of establishment</b>
Alexandra School	1894
Alleyne School	1785
Alma Parris Memorial Secondary School	1995
Christ Church Foundation School *	1809
Coleridge and Parry School (formerly Coleridge and Parry, amalgamated in 1952)	1881
Combermere School *	1695
Darryl Jordan Secondary School (formerly St. Lucy Secondary School)	1971
Deighton Griffith Secondary School	1991
Ellerslie Secondary School	1966
Frederick Smith Secondary School (formerly St. James Secondary School)	1979
Graydon Sealy Secondary School (formerly Garrison School)	1975
Grantley Adams Memorial School	1955
Harrison College *	1733
Lester Vaughn School	1997
Parkinson Memorial Secondary School	1960
Princess Margaret Secondary School	1955
Queen's College *	1883
Springer Memorial Secondary School *	1964
St. George Secondary School	1972
St. Leonard's Boys Secondary School	1952
The St. Michael School *	1928
The Lodge School *	1745

\*With 6<sup>th</sup> forms

## Appendix B – Research Instrument used by Swift and Fisher (2012)

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Table 1. Students' perceptions of education and training.

	Category of respondent	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree + Agree as % of total excluding Uncertain
1. Vocational subjects have a high status	Schools	3 (4)	31 (40)	32 (42)	11 (14)	0 (0)	76
	FE Colleges	1 (1)	56 (50)	47 (42)	6 (5)	1 (1)	89
	Aggregate	4 (2)	87 (46)	79 (42)	17 (9)	1 (1)	83
2. Academic subjects have a high status	Schools	22 (29)	33 (44)	17 (23)	3 (4)	0 (0)	95
	FE Colleges	13 (12)	64 (58)	31 (28)	0 (0)	3 (3)	96
	Aggregate	35 (19)	97 (52)	48 (26)	3 (2)	3 (2)	96
3. Vocational courses are difficult	Schools	4 (5)	15 (19)	47 (61)	10 (13)	1 (1)	63
	FE Colleges	8 (7)	25 (23)	54 (50)	16 (15)	5 (5)	61
	Aggregate	12 (6)	40 (22)	101 (55)	26 (14)	6 (3)	62
4. Academic courses are difficult	Schools	9 (11)	27 (33)	29 (36)	8 (10)	8 (10)	69
	FE Colleges	16 (15)	27 (25)	56 (52)	8 (7)	1 (1)	83
	Aggregate	25 (13)	54 (29)	85 (45)	16 (8)	9 (5)	76
5. Academic subjects are more important than vocational subjects	Schools	4 (5)	20 (27)	32 (43)	13 (17)	6 (8)	56
	FE Colleges	6 (6)	22 (21)	60 (57)	16 (15)	2 (2)	61
	Aggregate	10 (6)	42 (23)	92 (51)	29 (16)	8 (4)	58
6. People with lots of GCSEs get the best jobs	Schools	10 (12)	35 (44)	16 (20)	17 (21)	2 (2)	70
	FE Colleges	23 (20)	32 (28)	20 (18)	30 (27)	8 (7)	59
	Aggregate	33 (17)	67 (35)	36 (19)	47 (24)	10 (5)	64
7. People who do GNVQ foundation level courses have a better chance of getting a job than those who do NVQs	Schools	0 (0)	8 (10)	60 (77)	10 (13)	0 (0)	44
	FE Colleges	6 (5)	18 (16)	60 (54)	20 (18)	7 (6)	47
	Aggregate	6 (3)	26 (14)	120 (63)	30 (16)	7 (4)	46
8. Britain's economy depends on people with high academic ability rather than technical skills	Schools	3 (4)	9 (11)	31 (39)	31 (39)	5 (6)	25
	FE Colleges	7 (6)	20 (18)	58 (53)	18 (17)	6 (6)	53
	Aggregate	10 (5)	29 (15)	89 (47)	49 (26)	11 (6)	39

(Continued)

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Table 1. (*Continued*).

	Category of respondent	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree + Agree as % of total excluding Uncertain
9. People with high academic ability can easily adapt to technical tasks	Schools	1 (1)	14 (18)	31 (40)	27 (35)	5 (6)	32
	FE Colleges	6 (6)	40 (37)	44 (41)	14 (13)	4 (4)	72
	Aggregate	7 (4)	54 (29)	75 (40)	41 (22)	9 (5)	55
10. Bright kids get the best jobs	Schools	8 (10)	20 (26)	14 (18)	30 (38)	6 (8)	44
	FE Colleges	11 (10)	30 (28)	26 (24)	38 (35)	4 (4)	49
	Aggregate	19 (10)	50 (27)	40 (21)	68 (36)	10 (5)	47
11. If I do some academic subjects people will think that I am brainy	Schools	0 (0)	24 (30)	22 (27)	28 (35)	6 (7)	41
	FE Colleges	7 (6)	27 (24)	40 (36)	30 (27)	7 (6)	48
	Aggregate	7 (4)	51 (27)	62 (32)	58 (30)	13 (7)	45
12. If I chose to do a vocational course people would think that I am not brainy	Schools	2 (3)	5 (6)	28 (35)	32 (41)	12 (15)	14
	FE Colleges	7 (6)	7 (6)	46 (41)	41 (37)	10 (9)	22
	Aggregate	9 (5)	12 (6)	74 (39)	73 (38)	22 (12)	16

Notes: Maximum possible responses  $n = 197$  in each category. Excepting the final column, percentages are shown in brackets. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, and represent only those who responded to the question.

**Appendix C – Modified data collection instrument**

This questionnaire is being administered as part of my efforts to complete dissertation research on 'Secondary school student perceptions of vocational education in Barbados'. This research has been approved by the University of Sussex, School of Education and Social Work's ethical review process.

Your participation is voluntary and there will be no mention of the names of participants or schools in the final report. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**Please do not write your name on the questionnaire.**

**Any information you give is strictly confidential.**

1. Select your gender  Male  Female

2. Home background

Parent's level of education	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's level of education	Mother's level of education
<input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School	<input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School
<input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels	<input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels
<input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree	<input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree
<input type="radio"/> Completed degree	<input type="radio"/> Completed degree
<input type="radio"/> Post graduate level	<input type="radio"/> Post graduate level
<input type="radio"/> Unsure	<input type="radio"/> Unsure

Parents' occupation	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's occupation	Mother's occupation
<input type="radio"/> Manufacturing	<input type="radio"/> Manufacturing
<input type="radio"/> Agriculture	<input type="radio"/> Agriculture
<input type="radio"/> Construction	<input type="radio"/> Construction
<input type="radio"/> Retail	<input type="radio"/> Retail
<input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service	<input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service
<input type="radio"/> Professional	<input type="radio"/> Professional
<input type="radio"/> Self employed	<input type="radio"/> Self employed
<input type="radio"/> Unemployed	<input type="radio"/> Unemployed/Homemaker
<input type="radio"/> Other _____	<input type="radio"/> Other _____

3. Student perceptions of education and training

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
Vocational subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Vocational courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects are more important than vocational subjects	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees get the best jobs	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees make more money	0	0	0	0	0
People who go to University have a better chance of getting a job than those who do not	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a degree people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a vocational course people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0

4. Student aspirations

What are your study plans after 5th form?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> BCC (Barbados Community College)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI (or any other University)</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

What field would you like to work in?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li><li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li><li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li><li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil Service</li><li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li><li><input type="radio"/> Self employed</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

Which do you feel will best prepare you for your chosen field?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> Barbados Community College (BCC)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI (or other University)</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

**Appendix D – Pilot questionnaire**

This questionnaire is being administered as part of my efforts to complete dissertation research on 'Secondary school student perceptions of vocational education in Barbados'. This research has been approved by the University of Sussex, School of Education and Social Work's ethical review process.

Your participation is voluntary and there will be no mention of the names of participants or schools in the final report. Your cooperation is appreciated.



**Please do not write your name on the questionnaire.**

**Any information you give is strictly confidential.**

1. Select your gender                       Male                       Female

2. Home background

Parent's level of education	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's level of education	Mother's level of education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed degree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Post graduate level</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Completed degree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Post graduate level</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>

Parents' occupation	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's occupation	Mother's occupation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li><li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li><li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li><li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service</li><li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li><li><input type="radio"/> Self employed</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unemployed</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li><li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li><li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li><li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service</li><li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li><li><input type="radio"/> Self employed</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unemployed/Homemaker</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li></ul>

3. Student perceptions of education and training

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
Vocational subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Vocational courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects are more important than vocational subjects	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees get the best jobs	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees make more money	0	0	0	0	0
People who go to University have a better chance of getting a job than those who do not	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a degree people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a vocational course people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0

4. Student aspirations

What are your study plans after 5th form?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> BCC (Barbados Community College)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI (or any other University)</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

What field would you like to work in?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li><li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li><li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li><li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil Service</li><li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li><li><input type="radio"/> Self employed</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

Which do you feel will best prepare you for your chosen field?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> Barbados Community College (BCC)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI (or other University)</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

How would you rate the wording of these questions?	Shade the appropriate answer
<input type="radio"/> Very easy to understand <input type="radio"/> Easy to understand <input type="radio"/> Neutral <input type="radio"/> Hard to understand <input type="radio"/> Very hard to understand	

How would you rate the layout of this questionnaire?	Shade the appropriate answer
<input type="radio"/> Very easy to understand <input type="radio"/> Easy to understand <input type="radio"/> Neutral <input type="radio"/> Hard to understand <input type="radio"/> Very hard to understand	

How would you rate the length of this questionnaire?	Shade the appropriate answer
<input type="radio"/> Too long <input type="radio"/> Long <input type="radio"/> Neutral <input type="radio"/> Short <input type="radio"/> Too short	

Were there any questions you felt uncomfortable answering? If yes please indicate which ones.	Shade the appropriate answer
<input type="radio"/> Yes _____ <input type="radio"/> No	

Do you have any suggestions on how this questionnaire can be improved?

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**Thank you for your participation.**

**Appendix E – Post-pilot questionnaire (with changes)**

This questionnaire is being administered as part of my efforts to complete dissertation research on 'Secondary school student perceptions of vocational education in Barbados'. This research has been approved by the University of Sussex, School of Education and Social Work's ethical review process.

Your participation is voluntary and there will be no mention of the names of participants or schools in the final report. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**Please do not write your name on the questionnaire. Any information you give is strictly confidential.**

1. Select your gender                       Male                       Female

2. Home background

Parent's level of education	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's level of education	Mother's level of education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed degree</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Post graduate level</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Did not complete Secondary School</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed CXC's/GCE/O' levels</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed A levels/Associate Degree</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Completed degree</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Post graduate level</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li> </ul>

Parents' occupation	Shade the appropriate answer
Father's occupation	Mother's occupation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Tourism</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Self employed _____</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Unemployed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil service</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Tourism</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Self employed _____</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Unemployed/Homemaker</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>

3. Student perceptions of education and training

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
Vocational subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects have a high status	0	0	0	0	0
Vocational courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic courses are difficult	0	0	0	0	0
Academic subjects are more important than vocational subjects	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees get the best jobs	0	0	0	0	0
People with degrees make more money	0	0	0	0	0
People who go to University have a better chance of getting a job than those who do not	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a degree people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0
If I do a vocational course people will think I am 'bright'	0	0	0	0	0

4. Student aspirations

What are your study plans after 5th form?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> BCC (Barbados Community College)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other university</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

What field would you like to work in?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Manufacturing</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agriculture</li><li><input type="radio"/> Construction</li><li><input type="radio"/> Retail</li><li><input type="radio"/> Clerical/Civil Service</li><li><input type="radio"/> Professional</li><li><input type="radio"/> Tourism</li><li><input type="radio"/> Self employed _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

Which do you feel will best prepare you for your chosen field?	Shade the appropriate answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Skills Training Centre</li><li><input type="radio"/> SJPP (Polytechnic)</li><li><input type="radio"/> 6<sup>th</sup> form</li><li><input type="radio"/> Barbados Community College (BCC)</li><li><input type="radio"/> UWI</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other university</li><li><input type="radio"/> Work</li><li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li><li><input type="radio"/> Unsure</li></ul>	

**Thank you for your participation.**



Candidate number: 119706

**Appendix F – Interview schedules**

**Semi structured interview with Guidance Counselors (GC)**

*Make introductions and explain purpose of research*

Years in current position at school \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
School structures		
Describe the structures in place at the school for future study or career guidance e.g. career showcases, individual sessions with GC, availability of printed information, school website etc.		
Who administers them? GC only/year head/other teachers?		
When are these services available? After 3 <sup>rd</sup> form, in 4 <sup>th</sup> form? Included in the timetable Available after school/during lunch/break periods		
How do students access these services? Are they compulsory, available on request, does the GC approach students who seem to need help, do students have to use their initiative, do parents call and request?		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
GC perspective		
Describe your experience in giving students guidance regarding academic choices.		
Is this information (post 5 <sup>th</sup> form options) students are hearing for the first time? Where do they report getting prior information from?		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Student decision making process		
Do they (students) already have ideas about what they want to do?		
Do they report planning to do what their parents want?		
Are they clueless..?		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Parental involvement		
Describe the role usually played by parents. How involved are they? Do they seem supportive?		
How is final decision made?		

Candidate number: 119706

**Semi structured interview with TVET personnel**

*Make introductions and explain purpose of research. Allow him/her to describe their post and responsibilities.*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Perception of vocational education		
In your opinion what is the public perception of vocational education?		
Is this any different to student perceptions?		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Perceptions of vocational qualifications		
<p>What are the perceptions of vocational qualifications? Are they seen as having value in terms of progression to HE, progression into the job market, money earning capacity.</p> <p>Discuss student, parent and employer perceptions and how they may vary.</p>		
<p>Has this perception changed over the last few years?</p>		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
The BVTB		
How does the BVTB usually recruit students? Straight from school, is there a lag (between end of secondary school and enrollment)?		
What plans do the BVTB and TVETC have in place to improve student perceptions of TVET and the BVTB?		

Candidate number: 119706

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Notes</u>
TVET in Barbados		
Future of TVET in Barbados (from your perspective) Current priorities... Improvements which should be made.		



Appendix G – Consent forms



University of Sussex

**CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS**

**PROJECT TITLE:** What perceptions do Secondary School students in Barbados have of vocational education?

**Project Approval**

**Reference:** (ER/TH289/1)

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audio taped
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that that pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification of the school I work at and no information revealed will be made public.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before being included in the write up of the research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS**

**PROJECT TITLE:** What perceptions do Secondary School students in Barbados have of vocational education?

**Project Approval Reference:** (ER/TH289/1)

I agree for my child/ward to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing for my child/ward to take part means that I am willing for them to:

- \* Complete a questionnaire about the stated project
- \* Participate in a focus group about the stated project

I understand that any information they provide is confidential, and that no information that disclosed will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification of any participants or the school my child/ward attends and no information revealed will be made public.

I consent to the processing of information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I am willing to allow my child/ward to participate in the study outlined above.

Parent signature  
.....

Date .....



**CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS**

**PROJECT TITLE:** What perceptions do Secondary School students in Barbados have of vocational education?

**Project Approval**  
**Reference:** (ER/TH289/1)

I agree for my child/ward to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing for my child/ward to take part means that I am willing for them to:

- Complete a questionnaire about the stated project
- Participate in a focus group about the stated project

I understand that any information they provide is confidential, and that no information that disclosed will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification of any participants or the school my child/ward attends and no information revealed will be made public.

I consent to the processing of information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I am willing to allow my child/ward to participate in the study outlined above.

Parent signature  
.....

Date .....