

Vocational and Technical Education Changes that are Potential Contributors to the  
Economic Development of Trinidad and Tobago

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(ABSTRACT)

The objectives of this study were to determine what perceived changes to VTE have the potential to improve development of the economy in the next 3 to 5 years and which of these identified changes will have the greatest impact. To achieve this objective, a selected group of experts representing international development, business, economics, labor, manufacturing, service industries, and education were asked to participate in the study. First, the experts were requested to list five to eight statements, based on their experience and perceptions, about what changes to VTE have the potential to improve the development of Trinidad and Tobago economy in the next 3 to 5 years. Next, they were asked to rank-order their identified 60 statements on a continuum that approximated a normal distribution from "most important" to "least important." Rank-ordered statements were analyzed using Q-factor analysis (PQMethod).

From the rank-ordered statements, eight factors were identified as having the potential to improve the development of Trinidad and Tobago's economy. These factors were (a) access to and quality of VTE, (b) VTE higher education programs, (c) VTE program quality, (d) VTE program comprehensiveness, (e) fundamental aspects of VTE, (f) preparation for and advancement in VTE careers, (g) meeting VTE student and program needs, and (h) understanding VTE's purpose. Statements associated with each factor serve to clarify the focus of VTE related activities that may be initiated to improve development of the economy.

The most important of the identified factors was Factor 1 (access to and quality of VTE) which accounted for 15% of the explained variance in the factor matrix. The second most important factors were Factor 3 (VTE program quality) and 5 (fundamental aspects of VTE) with each accounting for 13% of the explained variance. All three of these factors (Factors 1, 3, and 5) had an average reliability coefficient of .800, a composite reliability of .889 at a significant value of  $p < .05$ .

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