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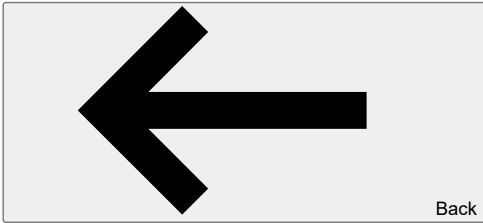
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**Improving TVET outcomes in Sri Lanka: better partnerships with non-state actors can help**

- 31 January 2023 (updated on: 2 February 2023)
- By: Nisha Arunatilake

## By Nisha Arunatilake, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

Technological change and globalization have increased the [demand for skilled workers in Sri Lanka](#). But, many Sri Lankans join the labour market [without skills or as low-skilled workers](#). According to [UNESCO Institute for Statistics data](#), fewer than 5% of 15–24 year olds take part in technical and vocational education programmes, despite the size of the sector. Better use of comparative advantages of different providers, and more efficient and effective use of public finance, can improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the country and its contribution to development.

### There is a variety of TVET institutions in Sri Lanka

The TVET sector in Sri Lanka is fragmented and complex. According to the [Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission](#) (TVEC), there were 1163 active TVEC registered institutions in 2022 providing 3219 accredited courses. As we analysed in a [background paper](#) and discussed in the national launch event of the [2022 South Asia regional report on non-state actors in education](#), about half of these TVET providers are private, while they account for a smaller but growing share of total enrolment.

**Table 3.4: Registered TVET institutions and student enrolment, 2011 and 2020**

Sector	2011				2020			
	Institutes (No)	Share (%)	Enrolment (No.)	Share (%)	Institutes (No)	Share (%)	Enrolment (No.)	Share (%)
Public	340	44%	87,774	71	521	44	183,312	73
Private	347	45%	34,359	19	615	52	67,378	27
NGOs	79	10%	18,500	10	55	5	NA	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>140,633</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>250,690</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Note:** Private institutes refer to both private companies and training/education institutions. NGOs are not for profit institutes or highly subsidised.

NA = Not available.

**Sources:** Asian Development Bank. (2015). *Innovative strategies in Technical and Vocational Education and Training for accelerated human resource development in South Asia: Sri Lanka*; Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2021).

The public TVET sector is operated by many different institutions — including the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), the Vocational Training Authority (VTA), the Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET) and the National Youth Council (NYC). Education and training services are not well coordinated, resulting in similar courses being offered in the same location by different institutions.

A variety of private sector TVET institutions also operate

throughout the country, ranging from sole proprietors, chambers, public-private partnerships, and NGOs. The government does not provide any financial support to the private sector. The funding of these centres is also varied and includes funding by local and overseas charities and donors, as well as fees paid by students.

The quality of TVET sector courses offered by different institutions in the country is regulated through the [National Vocational Qualifications](#) (NVQ) system developed by TVEC in 2015. NVQ provides a structured, seven-level qualification system for different crafts that TVET institutions must follow to obtain national level qualifications. Each qualification level is based on National Competency Standards (NCS) developed in consultation with industry.

### The TVET sector faces multiple challenges

There are four core issues remaining in the TVET sector in Sri Lanka:

1. TVEC regulates both public and private TVET institutions. The NVQ framework provides a sound mechanism for accrediting institutions and courses and certifying competencies. However, the use of this system for controlling **quality** is limited, as NVQ is not developed for all crafts. Cumbersome procedures for accreditation and delays in providing certification have discouraged TVET institutions from seeking accreditation. As a result, many private sector institutions operate without accreditation, and public sector institutions also lack mechanisms to monitor and improve quality.
2. The **financing** of public TVET institutions mainly comes from the treasury. In 2019, less than 1% of the government budget was spent on the TVET sector, which is highly inadequate to support the salaries, materials, energy, machinery, and equipment required by the more than 500 public TVET institutions.
3. The outcomes of TVET institutions are mixed. Some are very successful and produce graduates who are highly demanded in the labour market. But many TVET graduates are unable to find suitable **employment** due to inadequate practical skills and poor quality of training received. According to a World Bank [study](#), the lack of meaningful involvement of the industrial sector in TVET is preventing the sector from becoming more demand-driven, based on the needs and preferences of employers. Further, lack of demand for TVET has created a shortage of TVET graduates in the market.
4. Limited availability of human and financial resources hinders the development of quality TVET programs. The remuneration offered by public TVET institutions is unable to attract qualified and experienced Financial limitations and TVET governance structures prevent TVET institutions from matching instructor salaries to market rates and from keeping up with other changes in the marketplace. The lack of attention given to developing soft skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and leadership skills is also a hindrance for obtaining employment.

The analysis lends to three policy recommendations.

**Use available limited public resources for the TVET sector to improve quality.** Government resources should be used to improve and expand the NVQ framework to uplift the quality of TVET in the country. Investments should also be made to improve the efficiency of the certification process and help private TVET providers to meet quality standards for certification.

**Rationalize TVET courses to improve efficiency of TVET provision.** The TVET sector should assess and operationalize the most efficient means of providing quality TVET for those interested in vocational training in partnership with the private sector and the industry. Public TVET provision should be streamlined and better coordinated across different institutions, as well as with private providers. Closer partnerships with industries can be used not only to develop training courses, but also to fill gaps in material and equipment needed for providing cutting-edge training.

**Financial assistance should be provided to students who are unable to meet the costs of privately provided TVET courses to ensure equity.** Greater reliance on non-state actors can increase the out-of-pocket costs for families. The government can provide financial assistance to students unable to meet such costs through treasury funds or by mobilizing non-state assistance to provide financial aid to students.