CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Research

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is indeed a new area to Belize; therefore, presently, a lot of work is being carried out by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MOEYS) along with other stakeholders in this area to ensure that adequate vocational systems are put in place for the future development of vocational training. Indeed as Swist (2001) points out, conducting needs assessment is an essential first step in the development of a training program. Therefore, when it comes to developing a new TVET program conducting needs assessment is a necessary step that officials need to take. Only in deciphering what are the needs of the labor market, trends in industry, school enrollment, forecasting skills shortages among other factors, can appropriate training programs be developed or modified to cater to the needs of the labor force by efficiently equipping members of society with appropriate skills and technical expertise to become a successful workforce.

Purpose of the Study

This study strives to investigate and document findings related to the Training Needs Assessment process that is carried out before training programs are formulated in Belize. Basically, the researcher will be looking at the current training needs assessment methodologies and will be examining whether or not all necessary participants are involved in the process, what protocols are in place to ensure that the trainees are being equipped with the necessary job skills to gain employment, whether or not the TNA corresponds with other models of TNA and so forth. In essence, the researcher’s primary aim is to investigate whether or not the TNA process being utilized to enhance TVET in Belize is effectively being carried out. As a result, one of the
key areas that the researcher shall be examining is whether or not the methods used for needs assessment are indeed efficient. Since at present there are a lot of impetus in Belize towards establishing Centers for Employment Training (CETs) in each of the six districts, ‘needs assessment’ are the buzz words. Therefore, the researcher believes that this study will indeed be vital to shed light on the entire system.

**Research Questions:**

**Main Question:**

How are training needs assessments (TNA) conducted for the formulation of T.V.E.T programs in a Belizean context?

**Subordinates:**

a. What role does the ministry of education, educational administrators, industry personnel, teachers and students play in the training needs assessment process?

b. Are the procedures for training needs assessments properly carried out?

c. What is the main focus of the training needs assessments conducted for the development/modification of T.V.E.T programs in Belize?

d. Do stakeholders believe that the training needs assessment projects carried out are effectively catering to developing the workforce?

e. How effective are the programs that are developed/modified as a result of the training needs assessments carried out?

**Justification of Research**

Technical Vocational Education and Training (T.V.E.T) is an area that is only now becoming popular in Belize. Many people view skills training in a negative light and therefore students only enter such programs because of failure in the academics. (Interview with a CET Director, February, 2005) The government; however, has over the years supported vocational education
and at present there are several schools offering vocational training programs. This study seeks to pinpoint training needs assessment methodologies used and decipher whether or not the strategies used to determine what type of TVET programs are developed, are indeed relevant within a Belizean context.

Notwithstanding, such a study is all in effort to provide concrete documentation about what are the general steps taken by members of the ministry as well as those umbrella organizations under the ministry to develop TVET and ensure that indeed the needed vocational training programs are being formulated. At present, and to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no such study has been done in Belize; therefore, this area is indeed one that needs attention. In a nutshell, such a study is imperative in threefold; primarily because the overall the conclusions of the research will allow for others, especially those in the vocational training field, to gain insight, understanding and also have documentation for future referencing about the status of TNA in Belize.

Clearly, the availability of a properly skilled labor force is a prerequisite for economic development. The present political administration in their manifesto for the year 2003-2008 has pledged to alleviate poverty and develop the country’s economic situation. (People’s United Party Government Manifesto, 2003) Indeed one way of doing the latter is to ensure that the populace is skilled and able to effectively partake in the workforce. Education as many say is, ‘the key to success.’ Consequently, one of the roles of TVET is to respond to demands in the labor market and to impart individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to become productive members of society. The key to success in TVET is collaboration between the government, potential employers (industry), training institutions, and representatives of the labor
force to ensure that actual training needs are being met and that financing can be secured. (Interview with Interim President of NAP, 2005)

A study on the training needs assessment carried out in Belize to determine how training programs are developed/modified is thus a very vital one as it shall aid in pinpointing whether or not TVET programs are sufficiently catering to the needs of the labor market and thus to the country’s economic development. In this study focus will be on the Centers for Employment Training which at present are the largest training centers in Belize having branches in four of the country’s six districts. The focus of this study will be on CET specifically because at present a great deal of work is being carried out by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MOEYS) to develop Centers for Employment Training in all six districts of the country inclusive of another one on Belize’s south side. As a result of the latter, analysts, managing administrators, directors, TVET teachers, industry personnel among others are at present being consulted to ensure that these training centers will be adequately developed to enhance the labor force. Clearly, TNA is very vital for developing training programs and it is an ongoing process; thus, the researcher believes that it is important at this pivotal point to investigate and seek to find out exactly what is happening in Belize when it comes to developing TVET.

In concluding what must be stressed is that this research is without a doubt very important and well-justified because in conducting research that specifically examines TNA in Belize, the researcher will provide relevant documentation about the existent training programs and via findings will be able to make recommendations for future research and possible enhancement of TVET in Belize.
Scope and Limitation of Study

A quantitative research design approach will be used to conduct this study because the researcher will be using research methods inclusive of questionnaires, interviews and will be examining existing data. Questionnaires and interview sheets are intended for directors of CETs, personnel from the umbrella organization under the MOEYS, persons from the business sector, and anyone who are involved or have been involved in TNA related to developing training programs in Belize. In order to analyze the findings from the instruments, the researcher plans to use statistical software to gain key descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency tables and graphs, standard deviation, and percentiles. From the statistics the researcher will be able to write up discussion about key issues related to the TNA process in Belize and make relevant suggestions and recommendations. Qualitative analysis techniques will be used to do documentation especially in assessing the open-ended questions from the interviews that will be conducted. In using qualitative analysis techniques the researcher will gain leverage in terms of getting in-dept information about the exact situation of training needs assessment conducted for the development/modification of T.V.E.T programs in Belize.

Outline of Research

Chapter one states the research background, introduces the research question and its subordinates and gives a justification of the study.

Chapter two presents the literature review on Belize; its economy, social challenges and educational system. It provides background information on TVET and about the TNA theories, process, and practice. It also links training to the development of the economy.

Chapter three describes the research methodology.
Chapter four presents the findings and results of the research.

Chapter five presents conclusions based on findings, highlights recommendations and paves the path for future research in the area of study.

Definition of Terms

Training Needs Assessment

TNA is one of the first stages in the process of determining the prevalent needs within the society in relation to skills training and qualifications. Needs assessment is a part of a planning process focusing on identifying gaps then goes on to determine what is the applicable training program needed to solve performance problems and improve workforce skills.

Technical Vocational Education and Training

TVET is concerned with providing the necessary knowledge and skills to perform either a particular job post or an occupation, or a professional activity in the labor market. Training is oriented to provide qualifications for wage employment or contract work and also to all sorts of work that can be found in modern societies. It is geared towards both training for work and training for citizenship. (ILO, 2005)

Center for Employment Training

CET is a vocational training school that has branches in four of Belize’s six districts. The mission of CET is to equip non-school populations with skills, knowledge, work ethic and credentials. The primary area of focus includes the unemployed, private sector apprentices, skilled tradesmen seeking skill upgrading, employed workers in need of upgrading and/or retraining, and primary school leavers. (Center for Employment Training, 2005 brochure)
Limitations and Delimitations of Research Study

At present a major limitation is access to information about TVET programs; primarily because the researcher is not presently in Belize. Thus only internet searches for information can be done and the latter is limiting in scope since for the most part documentation about specifics are primarily stored in databases of target schools or in libraries in Belize.

However, while indeed documentation related to this study is anticipated to be stored, it must be noted that indeed one major set-back in Belize is the fact that there is rarely accurate and up-to-date documentation about programs in general so it will be difficult to gain access to published information.

In terms of the study, it is limited to training programs that are existent and being developed at the various Centers for Employment Training schools throughout Belize. CETs are the major schools for vocational education; however, they are not the only means of providing training to the workforce. Therefore, this research has its limitations as it is not addressing training needs assessment for developing training programs in Belize beyond the scope of CETs.

Consequently, in order to deal with the limitation of not being present in Belize, the researcher made two trips to Belize – one during the summer of 2004 and one during the winter break of 2005. During these visits the researcher contacted relevant personnel to gain information related to TVET programs in Belize. She used the snowball sampling technique as one of the major means of gathering subjects to partake in filling out the instruments which she had devised. She gained good rapport with persons involved in the process of enhancing TVET and was able to gain cooperation for interviewing them as well issuing questionnaires to them in relation to the study. The researcher was also able to gain access to data about the training needs assessment process and about training programs in Belize. Meanwhile, in order to deal with the
limitation of the actual research, the researcher will specify in her research that this study is only
dealing with TNA related to training programs being developed at the various CETs and that it
doesn’t go in dept to address areas related to the other training agencies in the country.