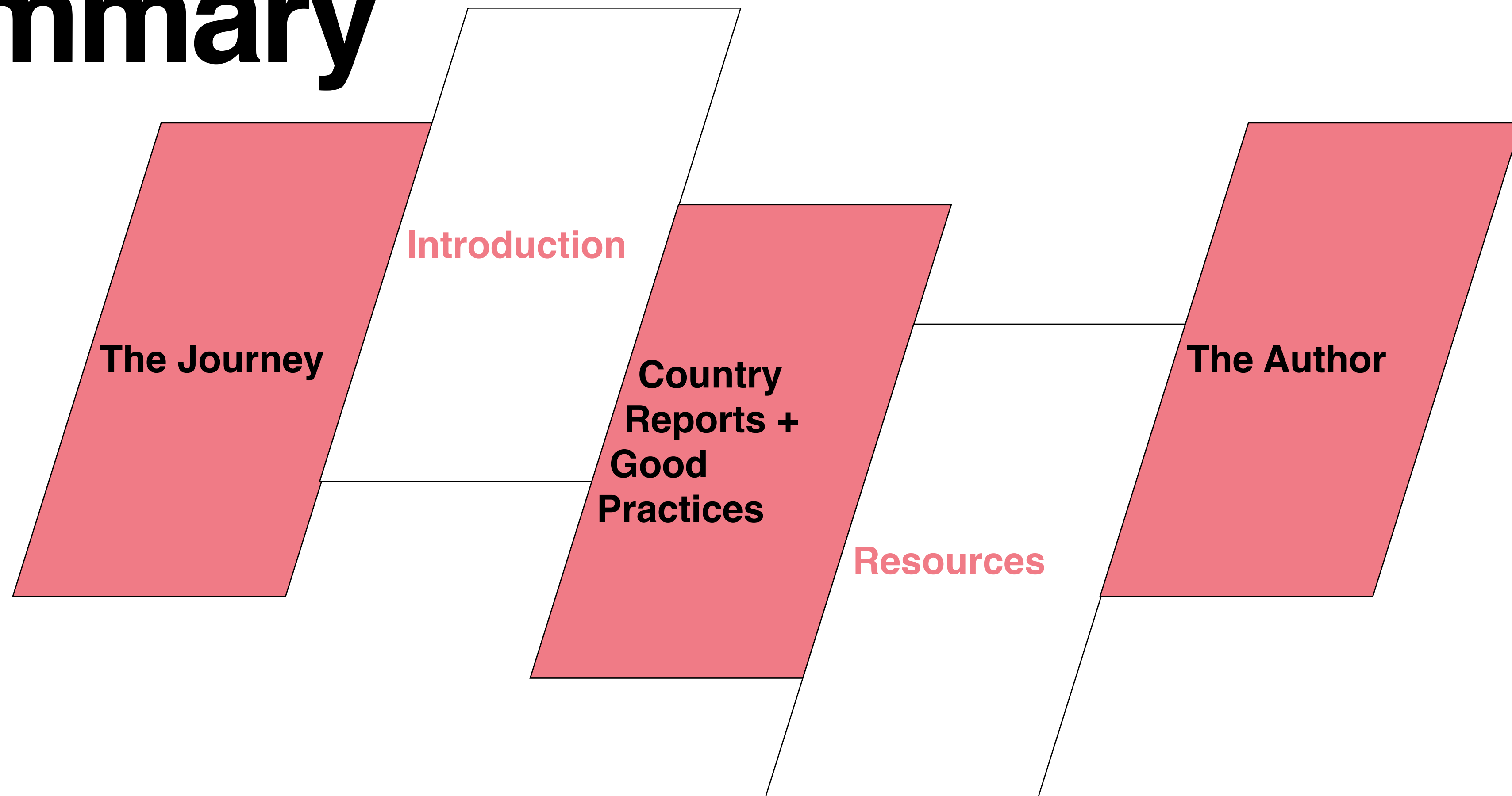


Skills Development & Youth Employability In **West** Africa.

Observations on the state of TVET and good practices from Senegal, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

Summary

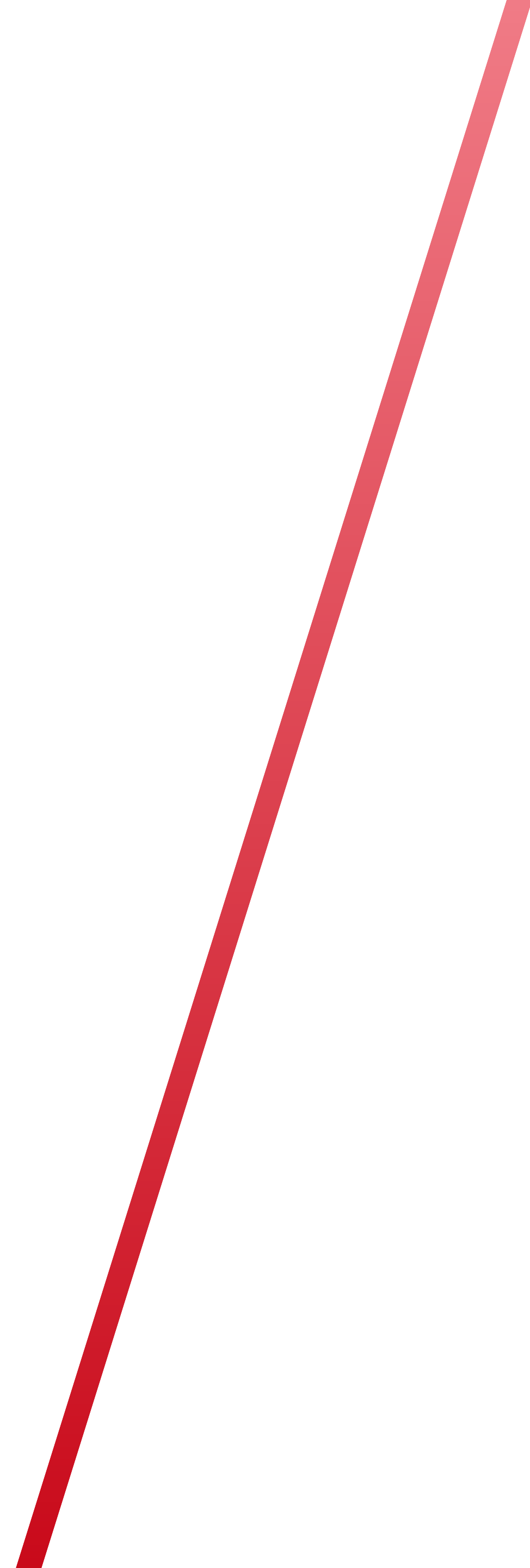


Our Journey

2 Months
4 Countries
110 Interviews



Introduction



Many Sub-saharan African countries are facing huge challenges in creating relevant education and employment opportunities for their young and fast growing population. Demand for jobs outpace growth in job opportunities. While many of the jobs available are in technical and fields, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is generally not leveraged effectively for a range of reasons - including lack of legislative and political support from the state, outdated curricula, insufficient public-private partnerships and undesirable perception of TVET among the public. However, even in the face of these challenges, there are a number of successful initiatives operating in TVET.

Recommendations to improve the state of TVET in this part of the world could be to recognize and support formal as well as informal TVET paths in order to improve its image. Also, the private sector could play a huge role by becoming more engaged in TVET through offering more internships, apprenticeships etc.

Last but not least, it seems important to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset in the African youth, to move from job search to job creation.

This report provides an overview on the state of TVET in West Africa (focusing on Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast) and highlights examples of successful models and good practices from the ground.

Overview Of The TVET Challenge

The Youngest Continent, The Biggest Challenge

Africa is the world's oldest inhabited continent, and yet today it is the youngest: 40% of the African population is under 15. In 2050, there will be 10 billion people on the planet, 25% of them will be Africans, two thirds of whom will be under 30. It is predicted that three billion of the four billion additional people that will populate the planet in the coming decades will be born in Africa. The dimensions of these numbers are breathtaking, and the challenges that come with them will be enormous.

Many African education systems are outdated and underfunded and unemployment rates for young people are growing rapidly. In Nigeria, four in ten people aged under 35 are unemployed.

Young Africans have been taught to find a job and not to create one. This represents one of the biggest issues, as the formal sector, which represents approximately only 3% of the economy, is not growing nearly as fast as the population. African nations are overwhelmed by the increased demand for education and training.





Skills Shortage vs Massive Youth Unemployment

According to the African Development Bank, 10 to 12 million youth on the continent enter the workforce each year while only 3.1 million jobs are created, leaving vast numbers of youth unemployed. In addition, there is a major contradiction concerning employment in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are not enough jobs created to meet the growing demand for jobs. Yet, at the same time, there is a skill shortage for the jobs available.

Much of the skill shortage, is in technical and vocational positions. That's driven partially by the negative perception of TVET among the public - youth prefer highly academic study paths to TVET.

Moreover, there is a big misalignment between the available study paths and skills required in new jobs. Many TVET curricula are outdated and some demanded jobs don't even have an official study path. For example, in Ivory Coast, where a growing middle class uses AC systems, there is a huge shortage of maintenance and cold-chain workers.

National governments, who are often responsible for building and updating curricula, rarely pull their weight – they are literally overwhelmed by a series of challenges linked to an exploding demography and a lack of financial resources.

The TVET Misconception

In Africa, like in other parts of the world, there is a common misunderstanding regarding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is frequently undermined and undervalued, as if it renders those who undertake it incapable of ‘succeeding’ in life. This stigma causes great harm, as students following this path – by choice or force – feel diminished.

While it might be true that in some parts of the industrialized world, certain technical jobs could be replaced by automation in the near future, this is likely not to be the case in Africa. The continent is at the dawn of its own industrial revolution, and needs talented technical workers more than ever.

The vocational path is not a “second chance” path. It should not be reserved for students who perform badly at school. Unfortunately, most parents and teachers have prejudices and do not see these study paths as *good enough*. This common misunderstanding of TVET is harming the entire system as a whole as TVET often equips youth more effectively than university to enter the job market.



Recommendations

A man in a blue shirt and safety glasses is welding a metal frame in a workshop. The background shows several white metal frames standing upright.

Recognizing and Supporting Informal TVET Paths

11

Informal TVET is the leading form in sub-saharan Africa. In some countries it accounts for 80-85% of TVET trainings. Informal masters are mainly street craftspeople: mechanics, household appliances repairers, electricians, plumbers, fashion designers, hairdressers, etc. Their apprentices often constitute their only workforce, they keep them for about 3 years and teach them what they know. These apprentices only do practicals, on-the-job-training, they leave their training with real, applicable skills and not with a purely theoretical knowledge.

But there are also challenges tied to these informal apprenticeships:

- Master craftspeople ask to be paid by their apprentices to share their knowledge with them, even though their apprentices often represent their only employees and contribute to their turnover.
- In the informal system, there is no curriculum that dictates what should be taught or not. In most cases, the training consists of simply observing the actions of the master and replicating them. The quality of training is therefore largely correlated with the motivation and commitment of each master but also to their level of expertise.

Improving The Image Of TVET

In order to attract youth to TVET, youth and their family need to view TVET as a viable and respectable path to follow.

Raising public awareness is key for improving the image of TVET. Much more could be done to educate parents, and subsequently teachers, on the value that vocational paths can bring to the individual and the society as a whole. As the importance of family is strong and relatives influence young people's education decisions in this part of the world, parents should be the primary target of any awareness-raising endeavor.

In addition, sharing and celebrating successes can help students and families in seeing TVET as a path with real opportunities. Apprentices in well-known companies or successful TVET graduates can be profiled in the media or industry events.





A Need For Private Sector Engagement

13

The private sector plays a huge role in (up)skilling the youth, it should be more rigorously engaged. Even in a context where the formal economy represents such a small proportion of the region's economic activity, they have to be incentivized to do more. Most of them struggle to find the right talents, it is thus in their own interest to act and invest more in skills development.

Private sector can develop programs to offer internships, graduate programmes and apprenticeships to attract and develop TVET graduates. In addition, It can take the form of Public Private Partnerships, such as Scania in Ghana, or a state initiative with private sector incentivization, like in the PF2E in Senegal (see country report section).

Entrepreneurship As A Mindset To Cultivate

To leverage the force of their young population, African nations need to become fertile ground for innovations that can transform the prospects of their youth. To do that, entrepreneurship skills and mindset can be taught at different levels of the education system. More of the youth can be trained and incentivized to create their own job opportunities, rather than seeing job search as the only way to access the job market.



Country Reports



Senegal

A Strong Political Willingness For Change

Even if the challenges are massive, like in all the countries visited, Senegal seemed to be the most mature ecosystem for change. There is a strong awareness from both the private and public sector that things need to evolve. Senegal has the highest number of initiatives (public + private) aiming to change the status quo among the countries visited.

Since his first presidential campaign in 2012, the current President of Senegal, Macky Sall has focused on youth. Following a study trip to Germany and Switzerland to observe apprenticeship systems during his first campaign, he made youth employability a priority.

To name just two:

- The *Société de Développement et des Fibres Textiles*. This textile manufacturer harvests cotton and needs a qualified workforce for it. The company trains young people internally and has developed training programmes in different national languages, which is important, as the majority of young Senegalese do not receive an education in French. Students are trained directly in the field to give them hands-on learning experience.
- The Project for improvement in Labour & Entrepreneurship Performance (APTE) is a project run by the Education Development Center (EDC) and funded by the MasterCard Foundation. It trains teachers to deliver soft skills like punctuality, critical thinking, problem-solving, budget management, effective communication etc. across middle schools and TVET institutions.





Fostering Apprenticeships Within The Private Sector

18

The School-Company Training programme (PF2E) was created under the leadership of the President.

A few years after his election, the programme was launched under the auspices of the Ministry for Vocational Training and today, the project has evolved into an autonomous entity within the Ministry for greater efficiency and diligence in the deployment of School-Company apprenticeship programmes.

PF2E was born as a result of a pilot project in the hospitality industry with the Terrou-bi hotel in Dakar. Two training programmes in cooking and service trialled the dual system approach for the first time in Senegal. This pilot was a success, and the Senegalese government decided to scale the apprenticeship system to other trades, for it to benefit other industries.

Today, the programme is fully funded (5.4 billion CFA, \$9 million) by the State via the apprenticeship tax, and aims to promote and develop dual training programmes with the goal of enlisting 25,000 young people aged 16 to 35 in apprenticeships with private sector companies over the next five years. By April 2019, 523 students had been placed in 23 companies across the country in collaboration with 22 training institutions. In total, the project enabled 579 young people to find an apprenticeship in 2019.

This programme is truly innovative and its efficiency is linked to the strong political support (notably from the President himself), which is crucial to its success.

A High Proportion Of Private Institutions

It is striking to see the number of private TVET and higher education institutions in Senegal. Opening a private school has become a business like any other and many businesspeople invest heavily in this pursuit. Why? Because the public education system is overwhelmed with the growing number of students entering it every year due to demographic growth.

Rather than building new institutions, the state relies increasingly on these private institutions and finances a number of them to take on students from the public sector. There is even a department at the Ministry for Vocational Training that is responsible for regulating, accrediting and controlling private institutions. To become officially recognized as a training institution involves a process which is quite simple and not too time-intensive. But some institutions benefit from a lack of control and offer over-priced, low quality training that will lead to nothing for the students who can easily be fooled by flashy marketing strategies displayed on billboards across urban areas.

Implementing certain quality standards for accrediting the private institutions could help raise the overall quality of the institutions. These standards can include an application process to gather relevant information that would later be verified by a state agency, applying a trial period of two years before fully recognizing each institution and setting minimum placement rate targets. It is important to incentivize TVET institutions for successful placement outcomes.



Good Practices // Senegal

1. EDACY

**2. Centre De Formation Aux Métiers Portuaires Et À La
Logistique (CFMPL)**

(1) EDACY, ICT Training For Youth To Be Employable



21

Since 2016, EDACY has developed a training programme, in response to the need to provide African youth with ICT-skills. The purpose of the nine-month programme is to skill up young Africans to help them to become employable in an ever-more digitized world.

The programme consists of two phases: an initial three-month in-house training, followed by a six-month internship at a partner company, during which the students – known as *Work-Learners* still benefit from online courses and workshops at EDACY. The in-house training focuses on three pillars: soft skills (leadership, critical thinking and collaboration), technical skills (data science, web development and mobile development) and design thinking.

The training takes place in-house at participating companies, online and on campus, and emphasizes the importance of capacity for solving the problems that the *Work-Learners* (EDACY students) will encounter when they hit the job market. In this sense, the partner companies provide the Work-Learners with case studies throughout the programme, that the Work-Learners solve in groups and present. This enables students to familiarize themselves with companies in various sectors, in addition to improving their project management and collaboration skills.

Work-Learners are paid a monthly salary ranging between 170\$ and 280\$ during their internship, but they pay a monthly fee of 85\$ to EDACY, during the nine-month long programme. Once they have been hired they reimburse their training over 18 months at a monthly fee of 170\$, but installments can vary depending on a student's financial situation, to make it easier for them.

Since the inception of the programme in 2016 and as of September 2019, EDACY has trained 90 students with a **placement rate of 98%.**



(2) CMFPL, A Training Institution That Works Closely²² With The Private Sector

Initially created upon demand from the National Employers Association in 2007, the Center for Port and Logistics Training (CFMPL) is the result of a successful public-private partnership. A tripartite convention was signed in 2006 by the Senegalese state, the president of the Port Industry Community and the French Agency for Development (AFD), to agree on the future operations of the centre. With financial support from AFD and the Senegalese government, management was left to the Association for Training in Port Trades (AFMP), which gathers private companies in the port industry. Today, the CFMPL trains at three levels (Level 5: Drivers, Level 4: Specialized Technicians, and Level 3: Specialized Senior Technicians) in the fields of transport, logistics, handling and port operations. More specifically, students are trained to become truck drivers specialized in port operations or to take charge of technical handling.

- The programmes last for two years, with an obligation to spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time in an internship.
- The CFMPL has more than 100 partner companies from the industry. These partnerships are valuable for the students, as the companies offer them internships during the training.
- The strong link with the private sector is secured not only through the management of the centre, but also as the teachers are professionals from the sector. This way, teachers contribute to training the students with relevant and up-to-date content.

For the school year of 2018-2019, 128 students were registered, all of them having successfully sat the entrance exam required to become a student at CFMPL. Between 2011 and 2017 the center has trained 420 students (including those who are currently in training) and out of the 254 students who have graduated since inception, **81% got placed in companies.**



**Ivory
Coast**



A Tense Political Situation Generating A Conflicting TVET Reform

24

The politico-military crisis of 2002 and 2010 slowed the development of the Ivory Coast at the educational level, as budgets were cut and reforms frozen. This instability has caused major changes over the past three years, especially in TVET, where six ministers/state secretaries were appointed and then asked to leave. The unstable political context has made it difficult to implement effective reforms.

The government launched its first TVET reform in 2009, which included an overhaul of curricula and an upgrade of training centers to better match industry needs. Private sector representatives (employers' associations, trade unions and chambers of commerce) had to organize themselves into professional branches, and for each of these, to create committees that would map the skills needed in their industry. Some 13 professional branches have been created, but 10 years later, in 2019, no concrete change has occurred. The private sector requires financial contribution from the State for the work (skills mapping, curricula writing, etc.) that has to be done within the branches, and the government feels that this is a shared responsibility, which requires greater financial engagement from the private sector.

At the same time, the State believes that the private sector lacks understanding when it comes to the possible outcomes of this work: improved quality of training leading to easier talent acquisition and economic development. From the private sector side, there is a need for an official formalization and regularization of the committees and their work, but no official text or decree was issued on these topics since the first convention in 2009.

Nevertheless, a pilot project was set up in 2018 to test the governance of TVET institutions by a joint public / private committee over two years. Eight technical and vocational schools have been selected and are supervised by a board of representatives from the private sector (in the industries they train) and ministry representatives, just like the sectoral training centers in Senegal. This is already a solid step towards bridging the gap between the training offer and industry needs.

However, like in most countries in West Africa, the informal sector plays a huge role in skills development. The informal TVET space, through apprenticeships with master craftspeople, is representing a high proportion of technical and vocational skills development in Ivory Coast. The World Bank estimates that 130,000 youth (out of 240,000) are involved in informal apprenticeships. Unlike in other countries such as Ghana, where new regulations endeavor to formalize apprenticeships, informal apprenticeships neither follow a standardized program nor are they controlled in any way.



Actors Innovating Beyond Political Complexities

One of the state actors that has an impact on youth employability and skills development is the *Agence Emploi Jeunes* (Youth Employment Agency), which serves under the Ministry of Youth Employment. It tracks every open job offer and is also a reference for HR directors who advertise for their jobs on the platform. More than being a mere recruitment platform, the Agency organizes short-term training for young people, leading to either employment or self-employment – which appears to be the Agency’s main strategic focus, as the formal job market cannot absorb the growing demand.



As part of its youth employment integration policy, the Youth Employment Agency is developing a support system that factors in the young entrepreneur's entire journey from project idea to the constitution of a functional and viable business. Young entrepreneurs get coached and can even get their project funded by the agency.

Non-State TVET actors, especially private TVET institutions, also try to innovate, despite the fact that the national diploma they deliver must follow a strict curriculum which, for most trades, hasn't been updated in decades. It is not easy to bypass the system, especially given that certification is key and a requisite for employers, parents and students. A former director of a major TVET center explained: "Preparing the students for the final exam, in our case the State recognized diploma for higher technicians (BTS), will make them anything but employable – its curriculum hasn't been reviewed since 1960."

Good Practice // Ivory Coast

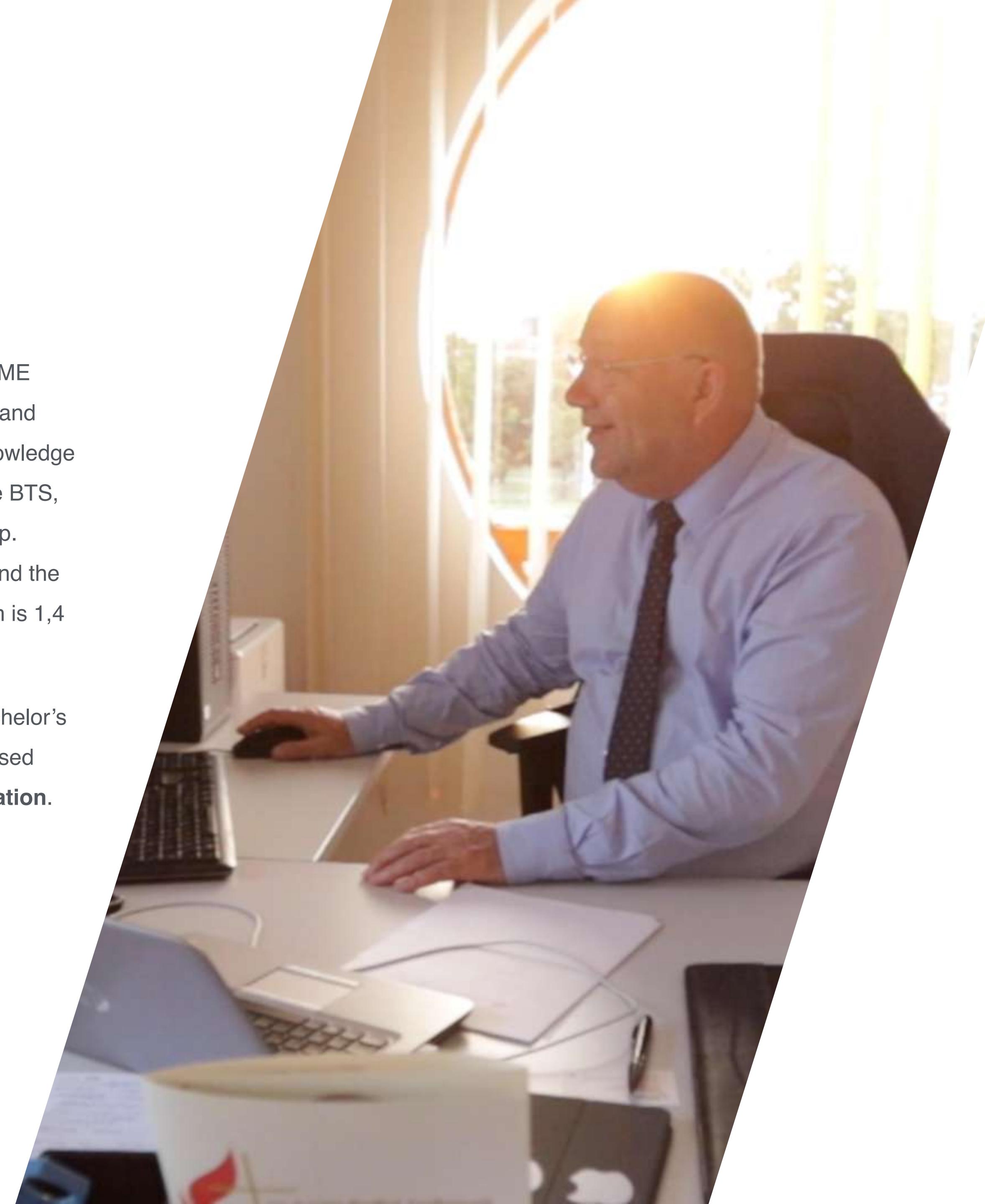
1. Centre des Métiers de l'Électricité (CME)

(1) CME, Private Sector Involvement in TVET

The Training Center for Electricity Trades (CME), owned entirely by The Ivorian Electricity Company (CIE), a subsidiary of Eranove Group, has been training CIE employees since 1970. Answering the need for skills in the sector, its training in the field of electricity and energy management became open to a wider public in 2015. The center has been recognized on the continent as a center of excellence, and trains Ivorians and other Africans eager to benefit from its expertise. Today, the CME offers several post-tertiary training format: Advanced Technician Diploma (two years, BTS), University Diploma in Technology (two years, DUT) as well as corporate training programmes.

The fact that CIE is a company already operating in the industry, brings two clear advantages to the CME training programmes. Firstly, as CIE is a large, well established company, resources (in terms of tools and equipment) at the disposal of the CME are adequate and up-to-date. Secondly, they have inherent knowledge of which skills are necessary in order to become employable in the industry. During the first year of the BTS, students must do a month-long internship, and in the second year, they do a four-month long internship. Around 50% of the students finishing their BTS go on to complete a professional Bachelor's degree, and the other 50% accept a job offer from their internship institution. The yearly tuition fee for the BTS program is 1,4 million CFA (2,340\$).

During the 2018-2019 school year, the CME trained 443 students in BTS, DUT and the vocational Bachelor's degree (Licence Pro). The statistics are promising: 98% of the students undertaking BTS degrees passed their exam (compared to the national average of 57%), and **71% were hired six months after graduation**. Also, the female presence amongst the students is increasing, and represents about 20% of the BTS students – which is quite a high percentage in the industry.





An aerial photograph of a city at sunset. In the foreground, there is a large, white, rectangular monument with a black star on top. The monument has the words "FREEDOM AND JUSTICE" and "AD 1957" inscribed on it. A wide road curves around the monument. In the background, there are various buildings, including a tall, modern skyscraper, and a hazy cityscape under a warm, orange sky.

Strong Political Willingness To Change³¹

Ghana has been undergoing a massive TVET reform with its Strategic Plan for TVET transformation (2018-2022). The plan includes:

- Setting up sector skills councils, to better match industry needs for skills and curricula.
- Consolidating technical training institutions under one ministry and not 11 different ones as was previously the case.
- The Ministry of Education is now claiming responsibility and driving the agenda with its TVET regulatory body, the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), at the forefront.

In addition to this, three awarding bodies who operated in parallel, will merge by 2022, bringing greater efficiency to skills certification.

Ghana is also reforming its informal TVET ecosystem, to better organize and recognize it, which seem to be an effective way to capitalize on the existing forms of technical & vocational training, as 90% of TVET is organized informally in Ghana.

Informal Apprenticeships At The Core Of TVET In Ghana

A photograph showing a man in blue overalls holding a smartphone, standing next to a silver car with its hood open. Another person is visible working on the engine of the car in the background. The image is partially obscured by a large white diagonal shape on the right side of the page.

32

Around 85% of the economy is informal in Ghana, in keeping with most of West Africa. Nevertheless, the informal sector seems to be fairly well organized here especially through trade associations, which represent most sectors. The biggest represent the fashion, cosmetics, automotive, electronics and electricity industries. These associations help to organize informal apprenticeships and keep track of the activity of apprentices and their master craftsperson.

Informal masters are mainly street craftspeople: mechanics, household appliance repairers, electricians, plumbers, fashion designers, hairdressers, etc. Their apprentices often constitute their only workforce, and they train them for around three years, to teach them what they know. These apprentices only do practical, on-the-job-training, so that they emerge with real, applicable skills and not purely theoretical knowledge.

Formalizing Informal TVET

Through COTVET – the State regulatory body for TVET, the government and the trade associations have set up processes to formalize these informal apprenticeships so that young participants can spend 20% of their time in formal technical colleges in order to learn the minimum theory necessary to do their job well.

Since 2015, the German government, through its development bank KfW, has set up a 22M\$ investment fund, the GTVP – Ghana TVET Voucher Project, to subsidize public training centers so that they can receive master craftspeople and informal apprentices. These grants help the centers to provide more classrooms and improve their infrastructure.

Masters get trained first: they spend four hours a week for 12 weeks studying the latest developments and innovations in their trades and learn about the CBT (Competency Based Training) pedagogy. This component seems important because most of the time, the apprentices observe and repeat. With the CBT method, masters are encouraged to follow a curriculum developed specifically for their trade, and to help their apprentices acquire skills in a more active, engaging and empowering way.

A great milestone has been achieved by COTVET, the trade associations and GIZ (German cooperation): Skills benchmarks and apprenticeship curricula for each family of trades have been developed. Since 2018, 2,974 master craftspeople and 1,003 apprentices belonging to five main trade associations in the fashion, cosmetics, automotive, electronics and electricity trades have been trained. They have adopted the curricula developed by COTVET and the trade associations.





Inconsistencies In The Reform

34

For a long time, technical colleges were totally neglected in Ghana. The country had 50 technical colleges to cater to 800 secondary schools, which is partly why there is such a predominant informal TVET sector. Ghana wants to make TVET a first choice and viable alternative to general education, but the reform isn't sufficiently focused on multiplying these Technical Institutes and upgrading their equipment. We visited one of the technical schools in Accra (Accra Technical Training Center) and were quite shocked at the state of the classrooms and the facilities.

Since 2017, when the free secondary education plan was set up, TVET lost a considerable number of students to general secondary schools. The State would need to double its efforts to make TVET more appealing.

Another spanner in the works is that curricula update is not easy to achieve for training institutions. The institution itself (public or private) is responsible for financing the adaptation of the curricula and pay COTVET committees to review or/and upgrade them. This makes little sense as there should be incentives for training institutions to renew and upgrade their curricula and not extra financial barriers to doing so. Moreover, the process of working with COTVET for certification or recognition purposes can be very time-intensive, which leads to some training institutions (such as the West-African Transport Academy) giving up on the procedures after months of back and forth.

Good Practices // Ghana

1. NVTI Pilot

2. African Internship Academy (AIA)



36

(1) NVTI Pilot, Formalizing Informal TVET

The NVTI Pilot Training Institute opened in 1970, and was the pilot programme of the National Vocational Training Institute. As part of the current TVET reform in Ghana and the intention to formalize informal apprenticeships with master craftspeople – which represents 90% of all TVET in Ghana –, the NVTI Pilot in collaboration with other NVTIs and TVET institutions across Ghana aims at helping the informal apprentices and masters to acquire new skills and get certified. Informal apprenticeships do not follow any kind of curricula, which makes the quality of the training highly dependent on the engagement and skills of the master craftspeople in their respective fields. The masters don't always teach competencies in security issues or how to manage and organize revenue streams – skills that are typically taught in school.

An informal apprenticeship typically lasts three years and, by definition, lacks structure. For this reason, training master craftspeople and their apprentices in the latest technologies/practices of their trades is essential. The NVTI Pilot offers courses in electronics, mechanical engineering, ICT, construction, carpentry and joinery, and general repairs. The NVTI Pilot and the development of this training format is a prime example of a programme established by Africans, for Africans.

By training students in the formal and informal TVET, the NVTI seeks to upskill the informal TVET sector: therefore, it trains the master craftspeople as well as their apprentices. This practice is more efficient, as one master craftsman can have several apprentices at the same time. The masters are trained in areas they might not know very well, like accounting or budget management, and in new technologies relevant to their trades.

The purpose of all this training is to give both the craftspeople and the apprentices the theoretical skills that go with their practical training and that will allow to enhance the benefits of their practical activities.

- The master craftsman:
 - Receives training in measurement, safety and financial understanding, and gets acquainted with the new training curricula for their trade, developed by the trade associations and COTVET (the regulatory body for TVET).
 - Is trained for a minimum of three months and up to two years, according to his/her individual need.
 - Spends eight hours a week in classes and workshops at the NVTI Pilot.
- The apprentice:
 - Receives training in soft skills, safety, financial knowledge and English.
 - Is trained for a minimum of three months and up to two years, according to his/her individual need
 - Spends 20 hours a week in classes and workshops.



(2) AIA: Employability Skills For All

38

The Africa Internship Academy (AIA) is an initiative by two young Ghanaians determined to fight massive unemployment among young people in their country. Created in 2016, it has already trained and supported 230 young people in their quest for employability. The concept is simple:

It starts with two weeks of courses to acquire soft skills / basic skills in employability (verbal and non-verbal communication, digital literacy, CV writing, interview simulation, etc.)

Then, participants get the choice between two paths:

- Workplace learning for those who would like to find a formal job, which consists of 2-4 weeks of internship at a company, at the end of which 70% of them earn a short or long term contract. AIA is already working with 150 companies that appreciate the level of soft skills among these young people.
- Entrepreneurship for those who wish to establish themselves as self-employed individuals or start a business. AIA supports them through a pool of 600 mentors and entrepreneurship classes.







A Country Of Countless Challenges

40

By far the most striking country in the region in terms of the state of its education system, is Nigeria. Education is definitely seen as the main challenge in a country where inequalities are amongst the highest on the continent. Statistics – which are often imprecise – show that the country has the world’s largest number of extremely poor people, which the United Nations defines as living on less than \$1.90 a day. The estimated figure now is 87 million people, or roughly half the population of Africa’s biggest oil producing nation.

The figures are startling. Nowhere else do we find more out-of-school children than in Nigeria – the number is estimated to be around 13.2 million. When children do find their way to school, their future remains uncertain. In some schools in the Kaduna state (North East), tens of thousands of pupils are enrolled and schools must work in shifts. Once they graduate from secondary school and can finally ‘choose’ their path, very few go to technical colleges. Most pursue the most popular path leading to university. Parents, teachers and society push kids towards university, as it is commonly perceived as the most respectable, reputable path. Unfortunately, the other option – technical colleges – is seen as the low-achievers’ route, those who don’t have good grades and forced to go that path. It is rarely a first choice.

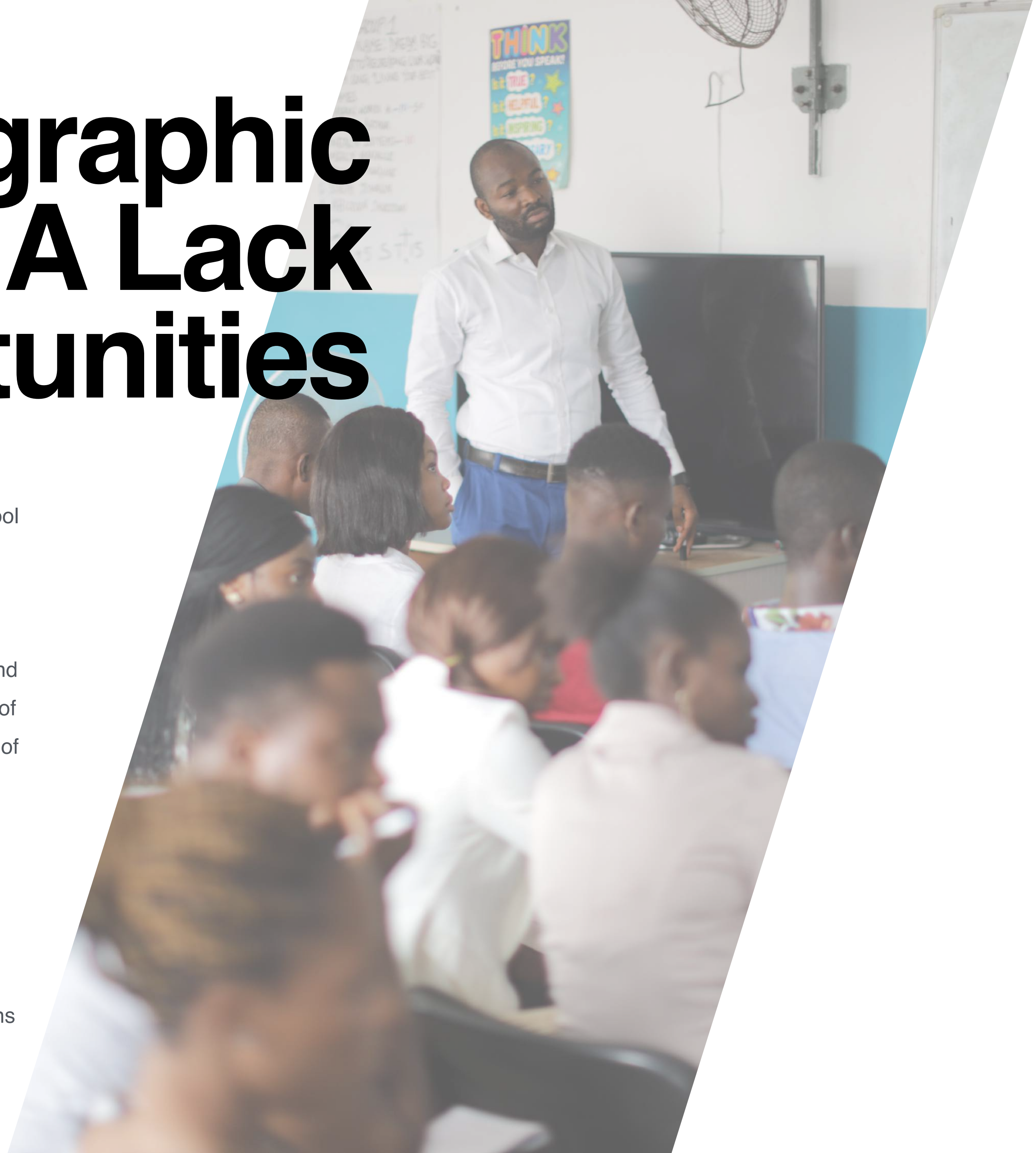
41

Huge Demographic Growth Breeds A Lack Of Opportunities

With Nigeria's exploding demographics, more high school students graduate each year and look for a university spot. But universities neither grow nor are new universities developing at the same pace as the population growth. In 2005, 40% of a million students taking the GAMB test at the end of high school were admitted to universities and polytechnic colleges. Today, two million students take the exam, and only 25% are admitted. Many of them get left behind.

This significantly contributes to youth unemployment. Around 40% of young people are unemployed and of those who graduate from university, very few end up finding a job. According to the national bureau of statistics in Nigeria, youth unemployment is on the rise and supposed to reach 40% in the first quarter of 2020. On the other 'side', employers complain that they can't find enough qualified, skilled workers – especially technicians.

Another aspect to consider is the growing mismatch between the curricula and the industry needs: university curricula are often outdated and were not developed with the private sector in the first place. The private sector is rarely invited to collaborate on curricula with the universities, polytechnics and technical colleges, which means that companies are generally dissatisfied with the level of qualifications among graduates – especially those in TVET. However, Nigeria is also the country with the most dedicated education entrepreneurs, who, in the face of such exponential challenges, find innovative solutions and put them to work.



Good Practices // Nigeria

- 1. West Africa Vocational Education (WAVE)**
- 2. Technical Skills Development Programme (TSDP)**

(1) WAVE, Employability For Everyone

The *West Africa Vocational Education* (WAVE) programme lasts four weeks and consists of intense training for three weeks followed by a one-week *job shadow* (practical work experience). WAVE organizes an informative session twice a week, where 25 interested students can attend, ask questions and raise concerns. Additionally, WAVE teachers use this occasion to ask students about their motivation, in order to stimulate and encourage them. This way, WAVE ensures that once the students arrive for the training, they are mentally ready, knowing that it will be short and intense.

The training is soft skills oriented, and aims to teach students not just how to *get* a job, but how to *keep* a job. The *job shadow* typically takes place in admin, sales, food & beverage, or customer relations roles and typically in sectors where specific knowledge is of lesser importance. Students are encouraged to improve their soft skills – which are essential in their job shadow. WAVE directly connects the trainees to their internships, mostly through companies that partner with the school. Trainees are matched with their job shadow based on factors such as their interests and commuting costs.





Certain essential factors have contributed to the relative success of WAVE's model, which can be measured through its impact on income transformation, scalability, and financial sustainability. Firstly, in terms of scale, WAVE learned early on that if it was to scale, it would need to work with other organizations (NGOs, government agencies, businesses, etc.) to replicate the model, and would also need to test the ability of others to pay for its implementation at scale. Therefore, it would need to redesign its model to make it simpler and cheaper to deliver so that others could replicate it without compromising on quality. They would also need to find a way to validate the quality of skills training delivered by replicators and measure the impact on young people's employability skills. WAVE is currently working with a cross-section of replicators, including:

- Social enterprises training youth for jobs in the construction and financial services industries.
- A team of WAVE alumni who have joined forces to launch their own academy within their low-income community of Ajegunle in Lagos.
- An Education Ministry programme that trains volunteers to deliver employability skills training to final year undergraduates across tertiary institutions.
- A national government youth service corps programme that deploys university graduates to public schools for a year of national service.

To verify the quality of the replication partners, WAVE utilizes an employability skills assessment, CoreScore, to validate the improvement in employability skill levels of participants pre- and post-training.



(2) TDSP, The Answer Of The Private Sector

45

In Nigeria, the private sector is active and engaged in technical skills development, especially thanks to the support of the Nigerian Employers' Association – NECA. In Nigeria, companies contribute the equivalent of 1% of their payroll per year to the Industrial Training Fund, which aims at financing initial and ongoing training. Through ITF, NECA supports private sector companies with its Technical Skills Development Programme TSDP, to contribute to youth employability, especially in TVET. Most companies in Nigeria have training centers to cover their own needs, and through TSDP, they are incentivized to train even more youth, for the greater good of the whole industry. NECA member companies open up their training facilities for three-month training sessions, once or twice per year, all of which is financed by ITF/NECA.

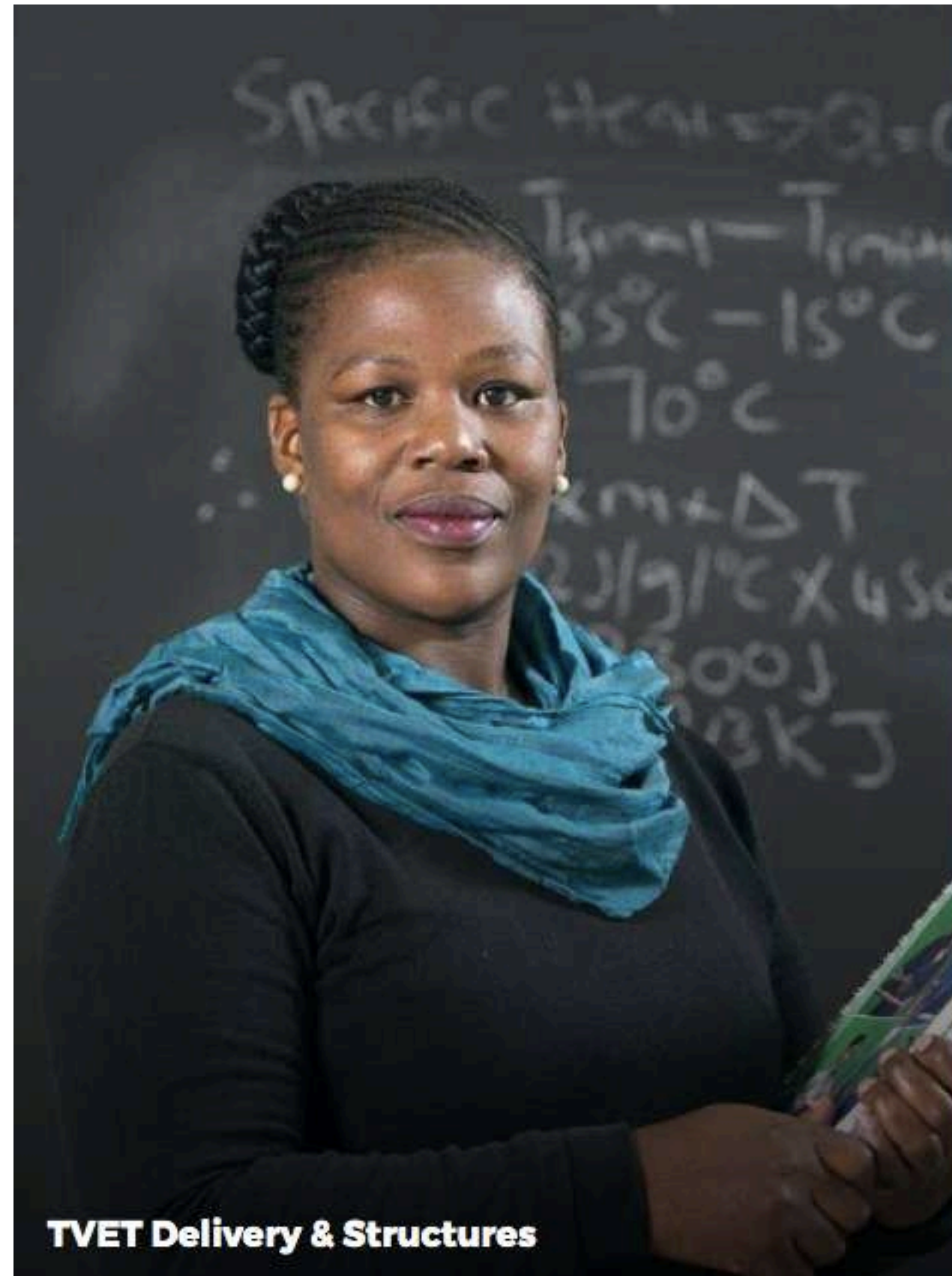
The TSDP supports a total of 17 private training centers including Truckmasters – an auto repair shop for used trucks and cars (see picture), where young Nigerians train to become automotive technicians. Upon demand from NECA, Truckmasters launched a parallel programme tailored for TSDP students (30 per cohort). The programme lasts 12 months, and students spend nine months in training (a mix of theory and practical workshops) and three months as interns. The students benefit from a grant from NECA of 15 000 Naira (41\$) a month and get their lunch covered. In addition to delivering technical skills, the programs teach apprentices valuable entrepreneurial skills. If they are not employed after graduation, NECA gives the students grants in the form of equipment such as industrial machines or toolkits, to facilitate self-employment. The project currently supports 17 private training centers, and has, since its inception, trained 6,000 trainees through its programmes. The placement rate following participation is 80%.

The public-private partnership with Nigerian companies is highly effective, as trainees learn skills within a real working environment, which allows them to find a job more efficiently. The model has proven to be quite successful and could be replicated.



Go Further With The 'Skills Portal For Youth'

47



<https://www.nepad.org/skillsportalfor youth>

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About the author:



Svenia Busson is a global Learning Innovation explorer, she travelled 19 countries to find the most innovative teaching and learning practices, some of them to be found in this report. She is the author of '[Exploring the Future of Education](#)' a book about education innovations from Europe and is running [LearnSpace](#).

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About LearnSpace:



[LearnSpace](#) is a Learning Innovation Hub which helps organizations provide learning experiences that are engaging, effective and relevant. We work with education institutions, public and private actors to advise and train them in learning innovations.

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This report couldn't have been released without the help of Kivanc Cubukcu, Sairica Rose, Mimi Dedichen & Olivier Sabatier (who provided (most of) the pictures), thank you!