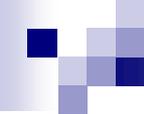


Increasing Industry-College Partnerships through Employer Satisfaction

By Felix Nankhuni



Outline

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- Brief description of TEVET in Malawi
- Objectives of the study
- Methodology
- Discussion of Findings
- Industry-college partnerships in Malawi
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Introduction

- Training colleges and industry present a reciprocated relationship which requires proper strategic partnerships for enhanced skills development. This paper presents a synthetic analysis of two survey reports which were carried out in Malawi to establish Industry College Perceptions and Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Graduates' Employer Satisfaction.
- The role of industry in complementing TEVET cannot be overemphasized. Malawi in particular follows a Competency Based Training (CBET) approach, which uses the industry as an integral part of training.
- Precisely, the industry is responsible for providing industrial modules to trainees undergoing apprenticeship programme. Given such a responsibility, the formation of proper strategic partnerships between industry and training institutions is essential in enhancing skills development. Besides this, industry exist to make profit, unfortunately
- The main objective of the study was to analyze factors that affect industry-college relationships. Precisely the study aimed at: examining challenges which industry face when interacting with colleges; examining how industry perceives colleges; and exploring the significance of employer satisfaction in industry-college partnerships.

Macro-economic overview

- Agricultural sector continues to be the backbone for the Malawi's economy, as it makes highest GDP contribution (28%). However, the sector is prone to exogenous shocks, in particular, floods and drought, which greatly affect the overall GDP.
- In 2016, Malawi's GDP growth was estimated at 2.7 percent (Annual Economic Report, 2017). This modest growth was mainly on account of weather related shocks and unstable macroeconomic conditions.
- The drought negatively affected the agricultural sector and led to a decline in production of major crops, such as maize, tobacco and tea. Overall, agricultural activity contracted by 0.2 percent.
- Although, the agriculture sector contracted, other sectors registered growth. Growth was registered in the following sectors: transportation and storage, accommodation and food services, information and communication, financial and insurance services, real estate and professional and support services.
- The growth of these sectors offset the contraction in agriculture. Improvements in some of the macroeconomic fundamentals such as availability of fuel and foreign exchange and stability of the domestic currency against the US Dollar, contributed to the growth of the sectors.

Macro-economic overview...cont'd

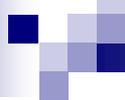
- Average annual inflation has been fluctuating over the years reaching a peak of 27.3 percent in 2013, the highest inflation rate since 2000. This is a high variation from the average inflation rate of 5.9 percent that was expected for the five years within the implementation of MGDS II. Interest rates have also risen significantly in line with the inflation rate with lending rates ranging from 18 percent in 2011 to 33.6 percent in December 2016. Consequently, the economy has lost some of the gains it made.
- Despite these positive outcomes, higher growth potential was undermined by high interest rates, high inflation rate (which has been fluctuating over the years reaching a peak of 27.3 percent in 2013), intermittent power supply and high cost of inputs such as labour, electricity and raw materials. Nonetheless, GDP per capita has been increasing at an average of 2.6%.

Brief Description of the TEVET System in Malawi

- The TEVET system in Malawi comprises formal and informal apprenticeship.
- Formal apprenticeship is a modular, competence based education and training (CBET) delivered through registered TEVET institutions and industrial attachment.
- The certification is done at levels One to Four of achievements, where trainees acquire practical and theoretical knowledge in the occupation of their choice.
- The purpose of formal apprenticeship is to generate qualified and competent artisans and technicians for existing and prospective industry, thereby creating both wage and self-employment.
- Formal apprenticeship is offered through national and community technical colleges, and rural based Community Skills Development Centres (CSDCs).

Brief Description of the TEVET System in Malawi...cont'd

- Informal apprenticeship in Malawi is a training approach which involves the transfer of knowledge and skills from master crafts persons to a trainee taking place on the job within an enterprise or workplace.
- Through the informal apprenticeship, the TEVET Authority strives to develop quality skills training that equip the youths and other disadvantaged groups with skills that will enable them to become employable through wage or self-employment.
- The informal sector in Malawi covers a spectrum of economic activities in commerce, agriculture, construction, transportation and service provision. It absorbs more than 80% of the labor force in both the rural and urban areas. Informal skills training is offered through Community Skills Development Centres (CSDCs), community technical colleges and master craft persons.



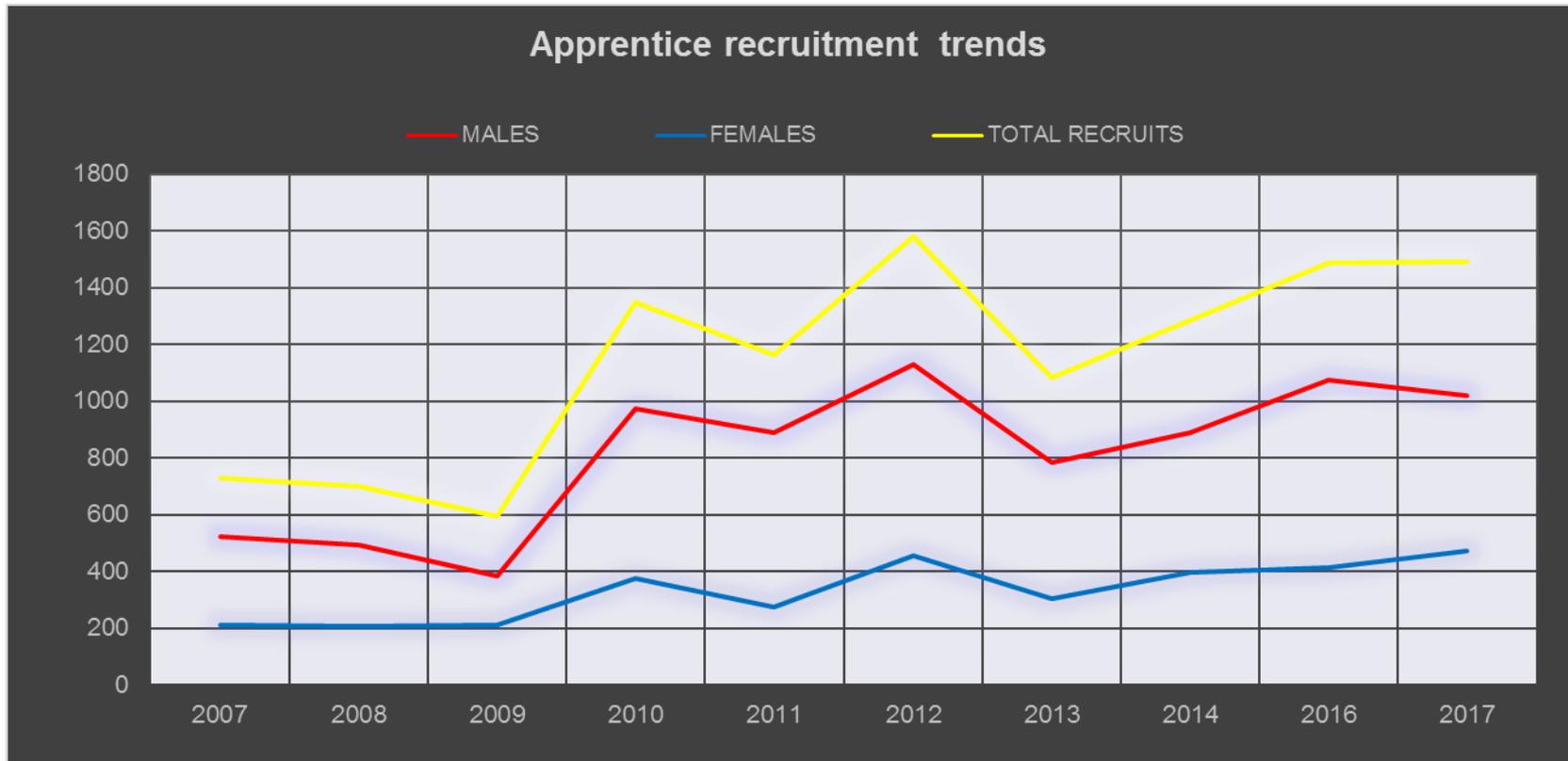
Brief Description of the TEVET System in Malawi

- Currently, there are 55 registered TEVET training providers.
- Of these the TEVET Authority subsidizes training in 23 institutions, 5 of which are public institutions, 3 are grant aided institutions and 15 are private institutions.

Apprentice enrolment trends...cont'd

- Enrolment in TEVET institutions has increased over the years by 104% from 730 in 2007 to 1,489 apprentices in 2017 (refer to figure 1 below). Despite this milestone, female enrolment remains very low. For instance, female participation rates in the country's main TEVET examination systems, Trade Testing and Malawi (advanced) Craft, are 10 percent and 23 percent respectively.
- This indicates the low access girls have to TEVET. However, at least in the public technical colleges, the female share is slowly increasing to 30 percent, which is the result of an antidiscrimination policy employed by the TEVET Authority (World Bank, 2010).
- Recently the 2018 apprentice recruitment further show improvement of female participation from 30% in 2010 to 39% in 2018.

Apprentice enrolment trends



Objectives of the Study

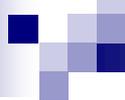
The overall objective of the study was to analyze factors that affect industry-college relationships. Precisely the study aimed at:

- Examining challenges which industry face when interacting with colleges;
- Examining how industry perceives colleges; and
- Exploring the significance of employer satisfaction in industry-college partnerships

Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What is the form of relationship between industry and colleges?
- What challenges is the industry facing as it relates to colleges?
- What perceptions does the industry hold about colleges and their graduates?
- How satisfied is the industry with the TEVET graduates? And
- What is the significance of employer satisfaction in industry-college partnerships



Methodology

The study synthesized two surveys, namely: TEVET Graduate Employer Satisfaction Survey; and Industry College Perception Survey.

Employer Satisfaction Survey

Data Collection Approach

- Realizing the nature of the study a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used to collect data. A questionnaire was used to guide one to one interviews.

Sampling

- The target population consisted of all employers of TEVET graduates, who had paid TEVET levy at least once in the past 10 years (for the formal sector respondents) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) where formal apprentices had been attached in the last five years (for informal sector respondents).
- Overall, a mixed approach to sampling was adopted to ensure a wider representation.
- As such, stratified sampling technique was employed to identify a sample from the formal sector, under this approach the population (companies) was grouped into strata (categories) which were non-overlapping and a random sample was used to select sample units from each stratum.
- As for the SME's purposive sampling was used to establish the sample units.

Methodology.....cont'd

Data Collection Methods

- Key informant interviews were carried out with the human resources managers/officers and factory/workshop supervisors. This approach allowed the study to gather as much information as possible through dialoguing with the individuals who have worked with the TEVET graduates. The interviews were guided by a structured questionnaire.
- **3.1.4. Data Entry and Analysis**
- Data collected through structured questionnaires was entered and analysed using Excel and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and descriptive frequencies of particular interest were generated accordingly.
- **3.1.5. Assumptions**
- The major assumptions guiding the study were that human resources personnel are in better position to understand the recruitment requirements of TEVET graduates while the supervisors were assumed to be in the best position to provide information relating to the performance of the TEVET employees, bearing in mind the fact that they are directly supervising the output of the TEVET employee.

Industry College Perceptions Survey-Methodology

- This survey collected qualitative information from various stakeholders involved in apprentices' attachments.
- Data collection was guided by structured questions and a questionnaire. Face to face interviews with four separate groups were carried out. These included employers (recruiting organizations and companies) human resource officers/managers, workshop supervisors, training providers (college principals) and apprentices.
- SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Sampling

- Companies and organizations which recruit apprentices on attachment basis constituted the target population. A purposive sampling approach was used to identify 42 institutions from a pool of 105 companies and organizations which regularly recruit apprentices on attachment basis.

Methodology... cont'd

Data Collection Methods

- The survey used key informant interviews to collect data. Human resource manager/officer and workshop supervisor from each of these companies were interviewed. Furthermore, College Principals from four public, five grant aided and three private technical colleges were sampled for data collection. Additionally, 34 apprentices, ideally four per college were randomly selected for interviews.

Response rate

- During the data collection the research team successfully conducted interviews in 32 companies and organizations across the country, this represents a 76% response rate. College principals and apprentices registered a 100% response rate.

Desk research.

- In addition to the above mentioned methodology, a desk review was also carried out to appreciate the underlined subject top.
- To this end, the study was enriched with the several studies and papers which have been done in relation to the topic under discussion.

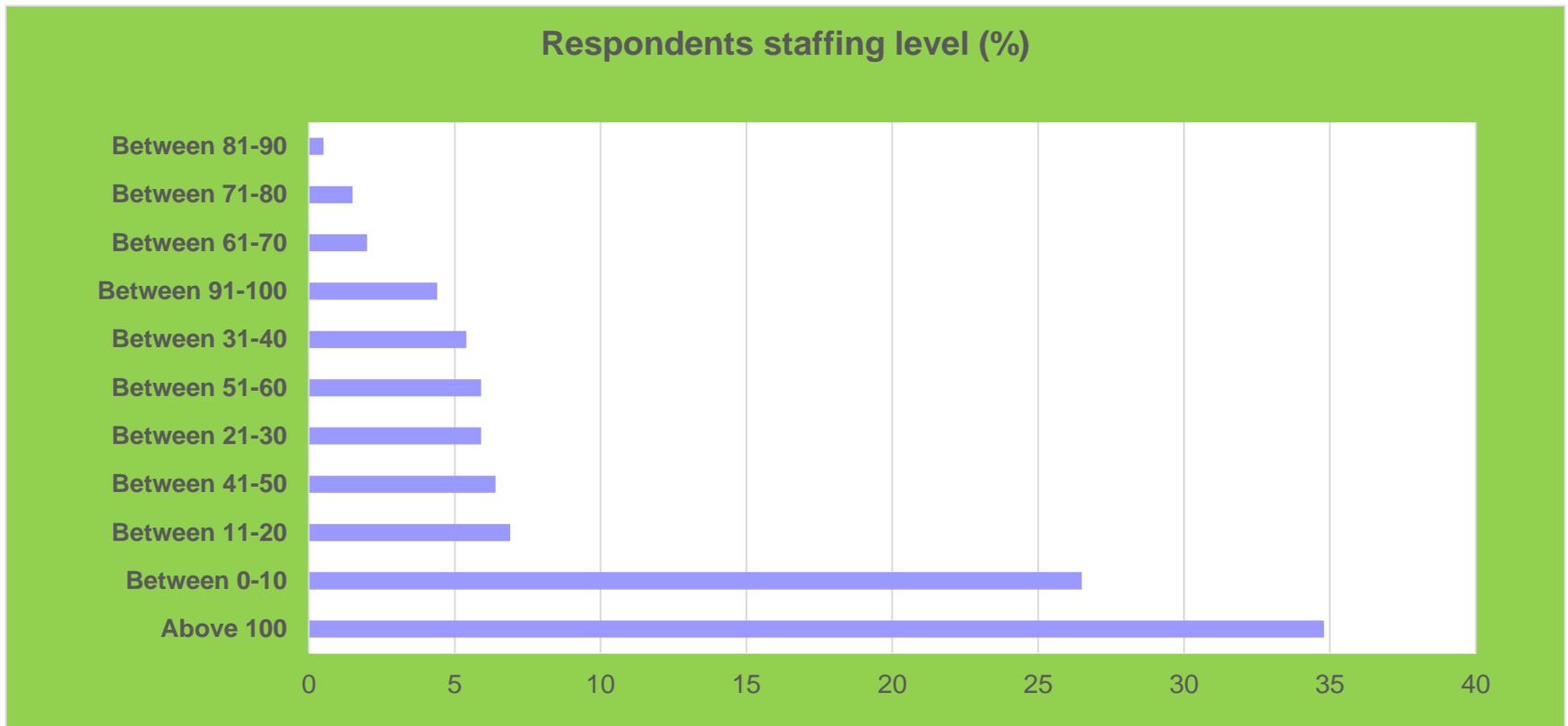
Findings and Discussion

Response Rate for Employer Satisfaction Survey

- A total of 300 employers were sampled to participate in this survey, however, the research team managed to get feedback from 204 employers representing a 68% response rate. This response was deemed sufficient to proceed with the analysis.
- Dominating the response by category were private sector employers (81.4%), followed by the public sector (15.2%), other companies (2%), and non-governmental organizations (1.5%).
- This finding points out to the fact that the private sector is instrumental in providing industrial modules for apprentices.

Company size

Majority of the respondents, 34.8%, had 100 employees and above, and 26.5% of the respondents had not more than ten employees.



Apprentice Attachment

- The results reveal that, 83.8% of the respondents had attached apprentices for industrial periods at least once at their work place. On the other hand 16.2% of the companies/organizations revealed that they had never attached apprentices in their companies/organizations.
- Resistance to offer attachment places is still high: one of the managing directors when asked to provide reasons why he does not hire TEVET graduates/trainees had this to say:
"I find college trainees and graduates incompetent and unwilling to do the "dirty job", as a result I prefer hiring those who have not gone to college and train them myself to do the electrical job. In such a way I save on money and time".
- Additionally, there is a misconception of attachment as employers expect the apprentices to be well conversant with their trade both theoretically and practically before going for attachment. This leads to a blame-game....industry vs colleges.

Relevance of industry attachment

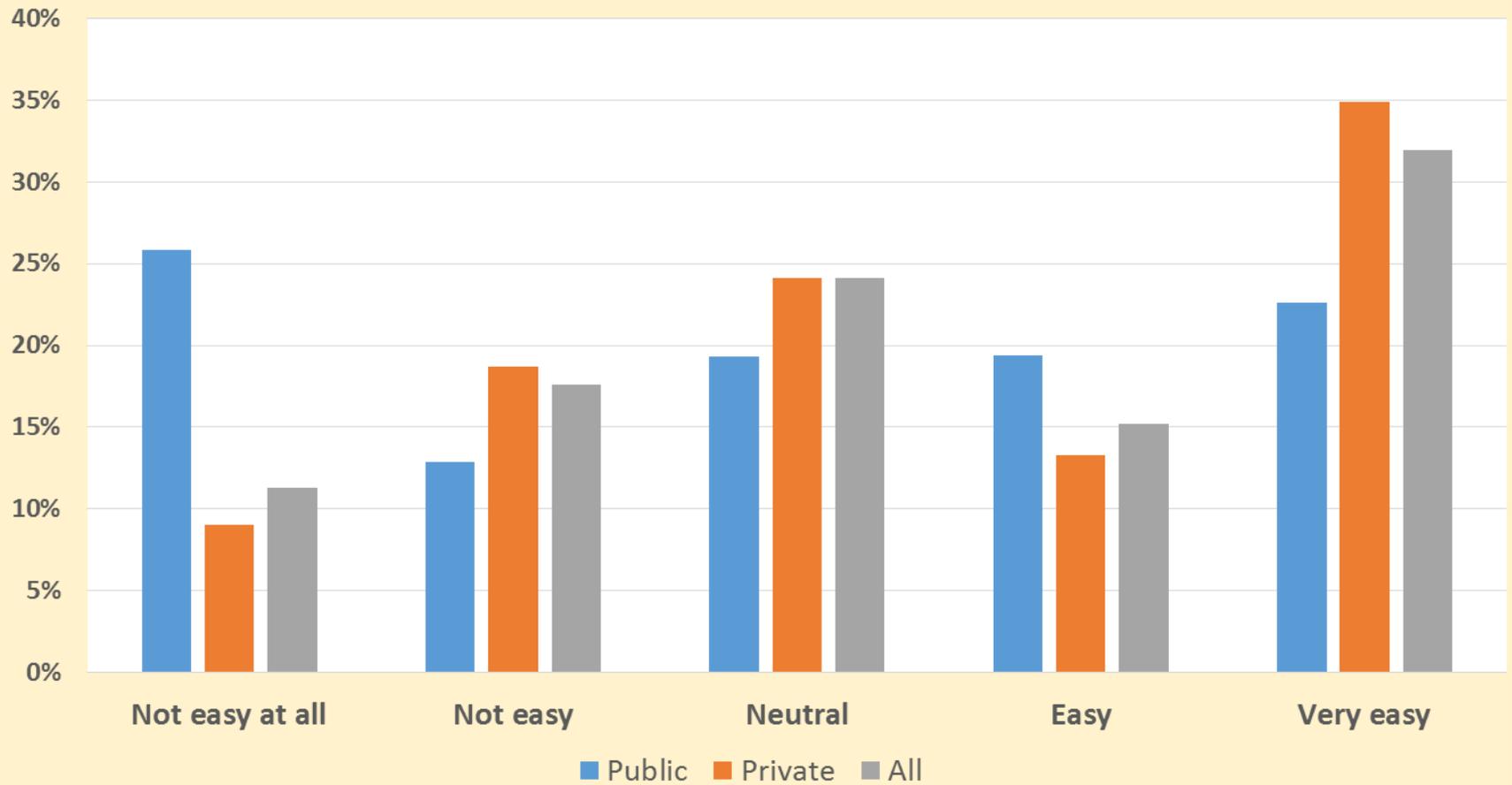
- In addition to the above challenges, trainee attachment is further compromised due to lack of relevant attachment places.
- Most trainees fail to identify relevant attachment places, consequently trainees end up being attached in companies which do not perform tasks with respect to their occupations.
- Study results for the industry-college perception survey revealed that 25% of the apprentices were attached to companies that perform tasks irrelevant to their training.



Availability of Relevant Skilled TEVET Employees for Core Business Area

- The study findings show that 47% of the respondents found it easy for them to hire relevant skilled TEVET employees in their core business area.
- On the other hand, 29% of the companies indicated that it was not easy to find relevant skilled employees for their core business, whereas 24% were undecided.

Availability of relevant TEVET skills



Sub-sector analysis

- The study findings indicate that the following sectors found it easy to source relevant skilled employees for their core business area: Service Sector (63%), Associations and NGOs (60%), Education Institutions (44%), and Agriculture/Mining/Water/Energy sub-sectors (44%).
- Despite these results, the study findings unequivocally indicate that there are some employers who find it difficult to hire relevant TEVET skilled employees, as evidenced by the fact that 22% from Education category, 11% from Agriculture/Mining/Water/Energy, 35% from Processing Trade and Industry, 20% from service sector and 40% from associations and NGOs responded that it was not easy to get relevant TEVET skilled employees for their core business, citing that most of the people on the market lack experience in their core business area.

TEVET System Responsiveness to Industry's Skills Gap

- The findings indicate that 100% of the respondents from Associations and NGOs subsector felt that TEVET system is addressing skills gap which exist in their organizations. Most of the service sector respondents (89%), also indicated that the TEVET system was addressing skills gap within the services industry.
- Likewise, respondents from the agriculture/mining/water/energy and processing trade and industry rated highly the TEVET system, as 78% and 71% of them indicated that the TEVET system was addressing skills gap within their companies respectively.
- Education sector expressed mixed feelings, with 61% indicating that their skill gap is being addressed while 39% felt that their skill gap is not being addressed.

Employers' Level of Satisfaction

- The employer satisfaction survey was therefore, carried with the mainly to gauge employers' level of satisfaction with TEVET graduates.
- In order to achieve this objective, a set of internationally accepted attributes were identified under which the respondents were supposed to rate how satisfied they were with their TEVET employees (refer to table 6 below). The respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 4, (where: 1=Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3= Satisfied, 4= Very satisfied).

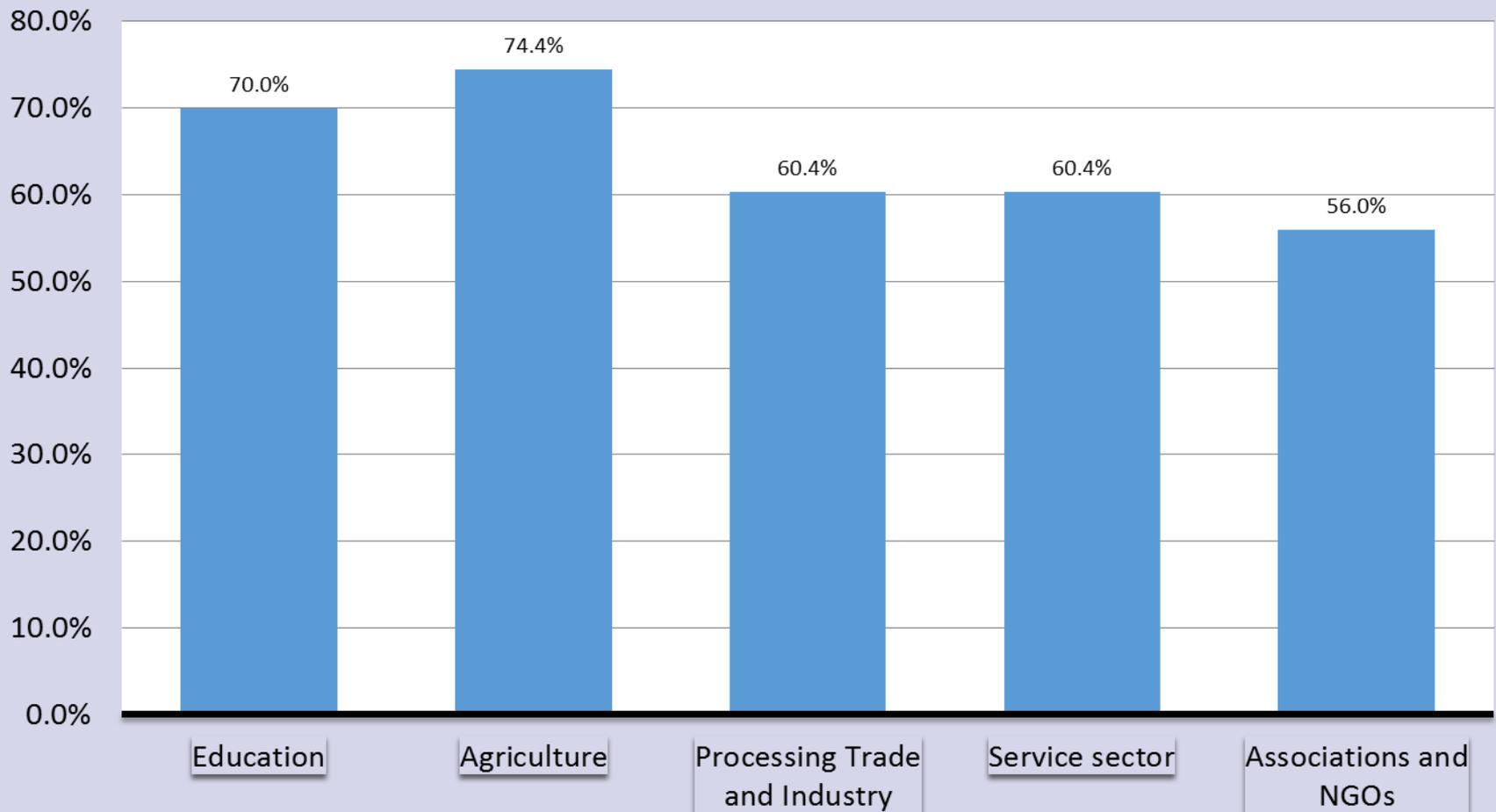
Rating employer satisfaction

Professional attributes (Malawi TEVET certificate holders)	Non response	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total
Reliability	7.3%	3.6%	2.7%	62.7%	23.6%	100%
Ability to work in a team	6.4%	2.7%	2.7%	59.1%	29.1%	100%
Understanding of job responsibilities	10.0%	2.7%	10.0%	59.1%	18.2%	100%
Ability to prioritize tasks	10.9%	1.8%	13.6%	50.0%	23.6%	100%
Ability to adapt to change	10.0%	2.7%	7.3%	56.4%	23.6%	100%
Ability to identify, formulate and solve problems	9.1%	3.6%	10.0%	58.2%	19.1%	100%
Technical expertise	9.1%	4.5%	5.5%	56.4%	24.5%	100%
Ability to deliver results	8.2%	3.6%	5.5%	60.0%	22.7%	100%
Communication/writing skills	20.0%	7.3%	8.2%	42.7%	21.8%	100%
Leadership skills	32.7%	5.5%	11.8%	37.3%	12.7%	100%
Computer skills	42.7%	6.4%	15.5%	30.0%	5.5%	100%
Time management/meeting deadlines	11.8%	5.5%	10.0%	48.2%	24.5%	100%
Innovativeness /Creativity	22.7%	3.6%	7.3%	54.5%	11.8%	100%
Independence	14.5%	4.5%	8.2%	55.5%	17.3%	100%
Numeracy	24.5%	4.5%	2.7%	49.1%	19.1%	100%
Occupation Safety and Health	18.2%	1.8%	4.5%	49.1%	26.4%	100%
Technical Drawing/ Graphics	40.0%	2.7%	5.5%	28.2%	22.7%	100%
Entrepreneurship	48.2%	0.9%	8.2%	30.0%	11.8%	100%
Knowledge of the core area	17.3%	2.7%	4.5%	52.7%	21.8%	100%
Adaptation ability	22.7%	1.8%	2.7%	59.1%	13.6%	100%
Average %	19.32%	3.62%	7.32%	49.92%	19.67%	100.00%

Rating employer satisfaction

- Beyond the above framework of rating employers' level of satisfaction, the respondents were also asked to give an arbitrary percentage on how satisfied they felt with TEVET graduates whom they employ.
- An overall picture indicates that on average the TEVET graduates' employers were 61.7% satisfied with the graduates work and other attributes. Further analysis unveils that the public sector entities were 3.6% more satisfied than the private sector.

TEVET graduates employers' satisfaction level



Significance of employer satisfaction in Industry partnerships

- The study further found that companies/organizations who indicated that they had attached apprentices at least once were 12% more satisfied than their counterparts who had never offered attachment to apprentices.
- This finding postulates that companies/organization who partner with colleges through provision of attachment placements are likely to enjoy a higher rate of employer satisfaction than their counterparts who do not attach trainees.

The intuition behind is that, such companies expose trainees to practical lessons relevant to their core business consequently the graduating TEVET trainees tend to have relevant skills for the company. In some cases companies may identify potential employees during attachment and offer the trainees employment after completion of training.

- Furthermore, employers' satisfaction level did not differ much between small and large companies, with the first one registering 57% and the later 60% average satisfaction level.

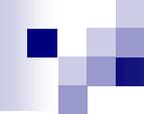
Industry College Partnerships in Malawi

- The role of industry in TEVET training cannot be over-emphasized, in precision the industry complements the training institutions in providing practical lessons to apprentices.
- The Malawian industry has supported training delivery through several activities, for instance companies and organizations are required by law to pay TEVET levy towards implementation of TEVET programmes.
 1. Industry experts also participate in curriculum development.
 2. Provision of attachment places.
 3. Donation of equipment by companies to technical colleges.

Note: The current approach has not been on a one-to-one arrangement whereby a particular company partners with a college. In cases where support has been rendered to colleges such has happened without appropriate MoU.

Industry-college partnerships....cont'd

- The industry perception survey revealed that companies who find the TEVET colleges as a source of relevant skilled labour, were more willing to partner with such institutions.
- Precisely the companies indicated that they would allow trainees as well as instructors from such colleges to carry out practical lessons in the companies' workshops.
- Equally the supervisors would also visit the colleges to provide practical lessons at the college's workshops.
- Such companies believed that if such partnerships existed there wouldn't be cases of skills-mismatch.



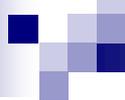
Industry-College Partnerships Challenges

- Lack of policy guidelines;
- Lack of industry-college coordination forum;
- Bureaucracy;
- Lack of awareness;
- Size of industry; and
- Failure to meet minimum required standards by colleges.

How to address the challenge of bridging the industry-college

Making colleges attractive:

- Technical colleges should have well trained instructors;
- Workshops in technical colleges should have at least minimum equipment for an occupation;
- Refresher training programmes for instructors;
- Attachment of instructors to the industry; and
- Emphasize on quality during practical lessons.



How to address the challenge of bridging the industry-college

Structures make for excellent partnerships

- Development of policy guidelines on industry-college partnerships;
- Establish a coordination forum on industry-college;
- Allow multiple partnerships to address the challenge of industry size; and
- Make attachment mandatory for companies and organizations to enhance practical training.

Conclusion

- All in all the study highlights important policy inputs as it highlights challenges which industry face when interacting with colleges
- It further points out how industry perceives the colleges
- Lastly the study underscores the significance of employer satisfaction in industry college relationships

Thank you