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LABOUR MARKET AND TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT TECHNICIAN SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

This needs assessment was conducted to inform the development of a Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum in Sri Lanka, in response to growing demands in the construction and power sectors. The study, based on a survey of 54 industry stakeholders, reveals significant skill gaps among technicians and highlights the urgent need for a structured vocational training program aligned with current industry standards. Key competencies identified as lacking include equipment maintenance, operation, safety protocols, diagnostics, and project management. Additionally, emerging needs, such as electrical systems, power generation, and sustainability practices, were also emphasized. The majority of respondents recognized vocational training as critical, with 57.4% rating it as extremely important. A hybrid model of training delivery was favored by 51.9% of participants, suggesting a need for both hands-on and flexible online learning options. The survey also revealed preferred training durations, with 38.9% supporting programs longer than one year. Barriers to participation included time constraints, cost, limited program availability, and lack of awareness. Eight core curriculum modules were recommended: fundamentals of construction equipment, maintenance and troubleshooting, hydraulics and pneumatics, electrical and electronic systems, safety standards, digital diagnostics, communication and teamwork, and internship opportunities. Respondents also stressed the value of soft skills, safety certifications, and leadership development. Overall, the findings support the creation of a comprehensive, industry-

responsive curriculum. Implementing such a program will bridge the existing skills gap, improve workforce readiness, and contribute to national development by strengthening Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors.

Keywords: Construction Equipment Technician, Curriculum Development, Construction Sector, Skill Gap, Vocational Training

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors play a vital role in the nation's economic development, contributing significantly to infrastructure growth, industrial expansion, and job creation (Why Sri Lankan Construction Services, 2024). However, these industries are currently facing a shortage of skilled professionals, particularly in the maintenance and operation of construction equipment. The rapid advancement of modern machinery and automation has further increased the demand for highly trained technicians who possess both technical expertise and hands-on experience.

Despite the growing need for competent Construction Equipment Technicians, Sri Lanka's existing vocational training programs do not sufficiently address industry-specific skill gaps. Many technicians enter the workforce with limited practical training, leading to inefficiencies, higher maintenance costs, and reduced productivity within the sector. Additionally, the global demand for skilled labor is rising, presenting new employment opportunities for well-trained professionals beyond Sri Lanka's borders. To address these challenges, the UTE Learning Center, affiliated with United Tractors & Equipment (UTE), is committed to developing a specialized vocational training program tailored to the needs of the construction and power sectors. Leveraging its industry expertise, modern training facilities, and partnerships with key stakeholders, the center aims to equip technicians with the necessary skills to operate, maintain, and repair construction equipment efficiently (Construction Equipment Technician, 2025).

By implementing a structured training curriculum, this initiative seeks to bridge the skills gap, enhance workforce readiness, and support Sri Lanka's long-term economic development. Furthermore, it aligns with national priorities for technical education, workforce competitiveness, and global employability, positioning Sri Lanka as a regional hub for skilled construction professionals.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Sri Lanka is experiencing a skilled labor shortage in the construction and power sectors, driven by rapid urbanization, infrastructure expansion, and insufficient vocational training opportunities. With the construction industry projected to grow by 7.3% in 2024 and maintain an annual growth rate of 6% until 2028, the demand for technically proficient professionals is increasing (Munasinghe, 2025). Similarly, the renewable energy sector aims to achieve 70% energy generation from sustainable sources by 2030, further emphasizing the need for specialized technical expertise.

Despite these growth opportunities, the lack of structured vocational training programs has led to an underqualified workforce, resulting in reduced efficiency, increased operational costs, and equipment downtime. To bridge this skills gap and support sustainable economic development, it is essential to establish a comprehensive training program that equips technicians with practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge. This initiative will enhance workforce readiness, improve employability, and strengthen Sri Lanka's position in the global construction and power sectors.

1.3. Significance of Study

The Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum is a critical initiative aimed at addressing the skills gap in Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors. As these industries continue to expand, the demand for technically proficient professionals capable of maintaining and operating modern equipment has significantly increased. However, the lack of specialized vocational training has resulted in an underprepared workforce, impacting efficiency and productivity. This study holds immense significance as it provides a structured, industry-relevant

training program that enhances technical competency, safety awareness, and employability. By equipping technicians with practical skills and theoretical knowledge, the program ensures that they meet both local and international job market requirements.

Furthermore, the initiative supports economic development by strengthening the workforce, reducing skill shortages, and enhancing Sri Lanka's competitiveness in the global labor market. Ultimately, this study contributes to sustainable industry growth, fostering a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and excellence in the construction and power sectors.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To train workforces in construction equipment technician and power sector skills.
2. To develop and implement an expanded vocational training program within six months.
3. To minimize the skills gap in Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors by providing industry-specific vocational training.

1.5. Mitigation Plan and Action for the Limitation of the Study

Table 1: Mitigations and Actions for Limitations

Limitation	Mitigation Plan	Actions
Resource Constraints – Limited funding, infrastructure, and access to modern equipment may affect the scalability and reach of the program.	Secure additional funding and resources.	Seek government and private sector partnerships, obtain industry sponsorships, and collaborate with equipment manufacturers to access modern machinery.
Availability of Qualified Instructors – A shortage of experienced industry professionals may impact the quality and consistency of training.	Strengthen instructor development and recruitment.	Conduct the trainers' programs, invite international experts for guest lectures, and provide competitive

		incentives to attract skilled professionals.
Focus on Technical Skills – The curriculum primarily emphasizes technical expertise, with limited coverage of soft skills such as leadership and communication.	Enhance the curriculum by integrating soft skills training.	Include communication, teamwork, and leadership development modules alongside technical training.
Geographical Accessibility – Participants from remote areas may face difficulties in attending training sessions conduct-ed at a centralized location.	Increase accessibility to training programs.	Develop online learning modules, introduce regional training centers, and offer travel allowances or remote learning support where necessary.
Adapting to Evolving Technologies – Keeping pace with rapid techno-logical advancements in the construction and power sectors may require additional time and resources for curriculum updates.	Implement a continuous curriculum review process.	Establish an industry advisory panel for regular curriculum updates, collaborate with technology providers, and introduce continuous learning and certification programs.

2. Literature Review

The literature review examines the critical challenges and opportunities within Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors, with a focus on workforce shortages resulting from inadequate vocational training and rapid urbanization. An analysis of existing research reveals a strong correlation between the lack of skilled workers and the inability to meet growing industry demands (Weerakoon et al.,2025), particularly as the construction sector is projected to grow significantly in the coming years. Key studies highlight the importance of vocational education and training (VET) in enhancing employability and equipping individuals with the skills required in today's competitive job market (Peters, 2025). Evidence supports the nation that specialized training programs aligned with international standards positively impact both individual career outcomes and national economic growth. The review also examines

various vocational training initiatives implemented globally, offering insights into best practices and strategies that could be adapted for the UTE Learning Center. These programs often demonstrate successful partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders, ensuring that training is relevant and meets real-world needs. Furthermore, the literature underscores the importance of continuous market needs analysis to identify skill gaps and tailor training programs accordingly. This approach not only addresses immediate workforce shortages but also strategically prepares the labor force for future industry trends, such as the push for renewable energy and sustainable practices.

The literature review reinforces the necessity of expanding vocational training in Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors to bridge the existing skills gap (Skills Gaps Analysis Of The Construction Industry Sector, 2025) By incorporating evidence-based strategies and fostering collaboration between education and industry, the UTE Learning Center can play a pivotal role in enhancing the employability of its graduates and contributing to the country's long-term economic development

Strategies for Workforce Development in the Sri Lankan Construction Industry

Sri Lanka's construction industry is projected to grow by 7.3% in 2024, marking a strong recovery after a 21.8% decline in 2023. Continued growth averaging 6% annually is expected from 2025 to 2028, driven by investments in industrial, infrastructure, and energy projects (Sri Lanka Construction Market Size, Trends, and Forecasts by Sector - Commercial, Industrial, Infrastructure, Energy and Utilities, Institutional and Residential Market Analysis to 2029 (H1 2025), 2024). This growth will significantly increase the demand for skilled professionals such as equipment operators, technicians, engineers, and project managers.

However, the sector faces a major workforce gap due to over one million job losses in recent years. Addressing this shortage is critical for sustaining industry growth and ensuring timely, high-quality project completion. Strategic workforce development through targeted training and recruitment will be essential to meet future construction demands in Sri Lanka.

Workforce Development for Achieving Sri Lanka's 2030 Renewable Energy Targets

Sri Lanka aims to generate 70% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, focusing on 3,805 MW from solar and 1,475 MW from wind power. This ambitious target will require major investments in infrastructure, modernization of the power grid, and integration of renewable technologies to enhance energy security and reduce emissions. To meet these goals, a highly skilled workforce is essential (Maldeniya, 2024). There will be growing demand for professionals in system design, installation, maintenance, project management, and regulatory compliance. Building this expertise is crucial for a successful transition to a sustainable, resilient energy sector and for fulfilling the country's climate and development commitments.

Caterpillar's Role in Supporting Sri Lanka's Infrastructure and Sustainability

Caterpillar, a global leader in construction and mining equipment, supports infrastructure development worldwide through advanced, sustainable machinery. Although its presence in Sri Lanka is not clearly defined, the company's mission aligns with the country's goals in infrastructure, energy, and sustainability. By providing innovative and efficient equipment, Caterpillar contributes to Sri Lanka's development efforts and economic growth (Sustainability, 2025).

Addressing Workforce Shortages in Sri Lanka's Construction and Power Sectors

To meet the rising workforce demands in Sri Lanka's construction and renewable energy sectors, the country must address labor shortages through vocational training, talent retention, and international collaboration. To address workforce shortages in construction and renewable energy, Sri Lanka should focus on three key areas:

- 1. Vocational Training:** Enhance technical education by aligning programs with industry needs, offering specialized training in areas like solar, wind energy, and construction technology through partnerships with educational and industry institutions.

- 2. Talent Retention:** Retain skilled workers by offering competitive pay, clear career paths, professional development, and a supportive work environment that promotes long-term engagement.
- 3. International Collaboration:** Partner with global industry leaders to provide advanced training, access to new technologies, and knowledge transfer, ensuring the local workforce remains skilled and globally competitive.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

This review evaluates data collection and analysis methods used in studies on workforce development in Sri Lanka's construction and renewable energy sectors. It focuses on how primary and secondary data sources have been utilized to assess industry growth and workforce challenges, providing insights into the effectiveness and relevance of these research approaches.

3.1. Data Collection

The literature on workforce development in Sri Lanka's construction and renewable energy sectors typically relies on a quantitative data collection method. Below is an outline of the key techniques used

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys are commonly used to collect quantitative data on workforce needs, skills gaps, and employment trends in the construction and renewable energy sectors. They effectively identify in-demand skills and forecast labor requirements, as demonstrated in industry reports from sources like Business Wire and the ILO.

Advantages: Surveys provide statistically significant data on the current workforce landscape and allow researchers to quantify gaps in labor supply and demand.

Limitations: While surveys provide useful quantitative data, they may fail to capture the nuances of workers' motivations, training needs, or regional disparities in skill requirements.

3.2. Methodology

The section describes a structured methodology for conducting a Needs Assessment Survey for the Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum. It outlines the use of systematic research to identify industry gaps, workforce needs, and effective training methods. Data was collected through surveys and focus groups with 54 key stakeholders selected for their expertise in the construction and power sectors. Stakeholder Analysis assessed industry expectations and technician competencies, while Descriptive Statistical Analysis interpreted the survey data to inform curriculum development and ensure alignment with industry needs

3.3. Methodology Framework

The Methodology Framework outlines a structured four-stage process for conducting a Needs Assessment Survey to develop a Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum. It includes:

1. **Study Design and Planning** – Setting research goals, identifying industry gaps, and choosing data collection methods.
2. **Data Collection** – Gathering input through surveys and focus groups with diverse stakeholders from the Construction and Power Sectors.
3. **Data Analysis and Interpretation** – Using Stakeholder Analysis and Descriptive Statistics to assess industry needs and skill gaps.
4. **Findings and Recommendations** – Interpreting results to guide curriculum development in line with industry standards and workforce needs.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

The data collection process used a quantitative method approach, structured surveys, to gather quantitative data from relevant stakeholders, ensuring a thorough understanding of industry needs for the Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum. To assess skills gaps and industry needs, a Needs Assessment Questionnaire Survey was conducted with 54 internal stakeholders, technicians, instructors, industry professionals, and lecturers from the Construction and Power Sectors. The survey was distributed online using Google Forms.

4. Results/Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Age of Stakeholder Analysis

The survey received 54 responses on participant age, ranging from 24 to 50 years. The most represented age was 26 (15.1%), followed by 35 (11.3%) and 28 (9.4%), indicating a concentration of young to mid-career professionals is shown in Figure 1.

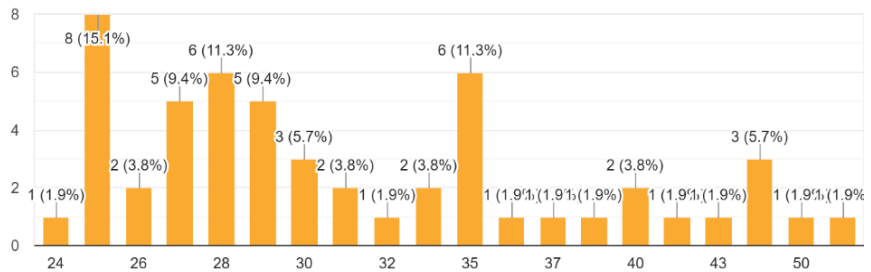


Figure 1: Results of Stakeholders – Age

4.2. Gender Distribution

The survey received responses from 54 participants, comprising 66.7% male and 33.3% female are shown in Figure 2. This reflects the traditionally male-dominated nature of the Construction and Power Sectors, while also highlighting a notable presence of women.

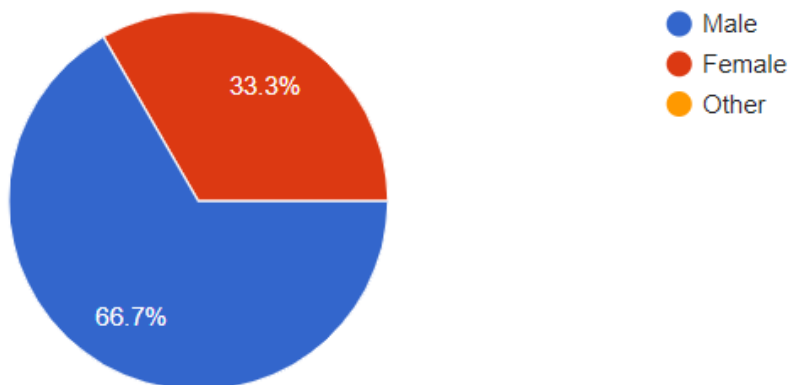


Figure 2: Results of Stakeholders – Gender

4.3. Current Occupation

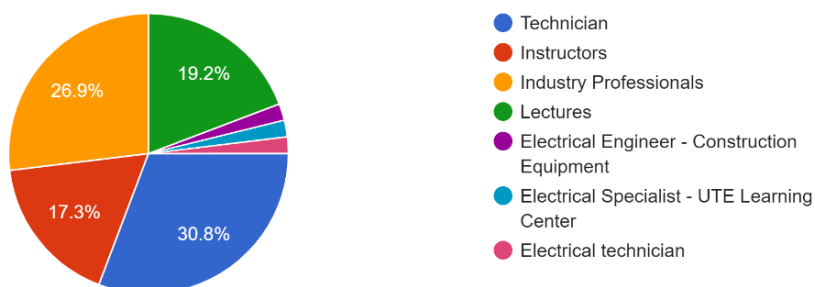


Figure 3: Results of Stakeholders – Current Occupation

According to Figure 3, the survey gathered responses from 54 participants representing a range of professions within the Construction and Power Sectors, including Technicians 30.8%, Industry Professionals 26.9%, Lecturers 19.2%, and Instructors 17.3%, an Electrical Engineer – Construction Equipment (1), an Electrical Specialist from the UTE Learning Center 1.85%, an Electrical Technician 1.85%, and individuals from other occupations 3.7%.

4.4. Educational Background

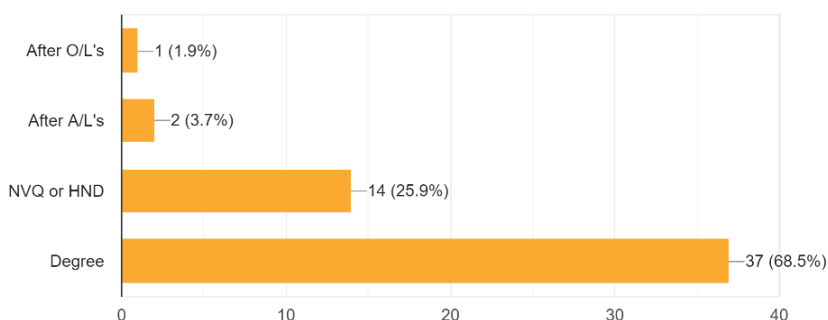


Figure 4: Results of Stakeholders – Educational Background

According to Figure 4, the survey gathered responses from 54 participants with varied educational qualifications relevant to the Construction and Power Sectors. The majority of respondents (68.5%) hold undergraduate degrees, reflecting the growing importance of advanced technical and academic knowledge in the industry. Additionally, 25.9% possess NVQ or HND qualifications, highlighting the value of practical, hands-on vocational training. A smaller portion of

respondents completed education after A/Ls (3.7%) or O/Ls (1.9%), indicating limited entry into the workforce without further formal education. Overall, the educational distribution demonstrates a strong presence of technically qualified individuals, underscoring the need for a structured vocational training curriculum that integrates both academic and practical competencies to meet the evolving demands of Sri Lanka’s construction and power sector.

4.5. Years of Experience in the Current Field

According to Figure 5, the survey reveals a diverse range of experience levels among the 54 respondents, combining early-career professionals with more experienced individuals. A majority (50%) have 1–3 years of experience, while 24.1% have less than one year, indicating that nearly three-quarters of respondents are in the early stages of their careers. This highlights the need for strong foundational training and continuous upskilling opportunities. Additionally, 14.8% have 4–6 years of experience, and 11.1% have over 7 years, representing professionals who can benefit from advanced training and may also serve as mentors or industry trainers. Overall, the data emphasizes the importance of a tiered vocational training approach that addresses both beginner and advanced competency needs within the Construction and Power Sectors.

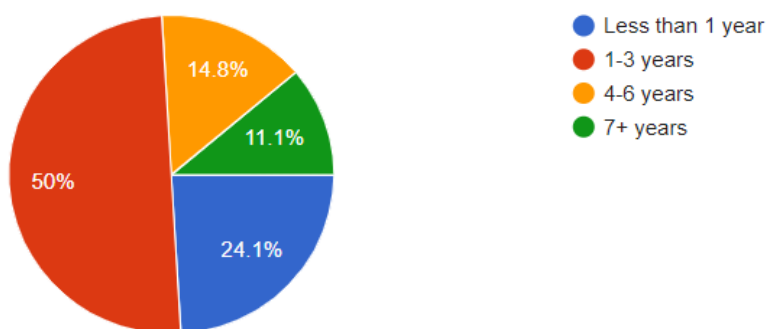


Figure 5: Results of Stakeholders – Experience

4.6. Current Skill Level of Technicians in the Industry

According to Table 2, survey responses reflect varied perceptions of technician skill levels in the industry. While the majority of respondents

rated technician skills as high (37%) or very high (27.8%), indicating strong technical competence among many professionals, a notable portion expressed more moderate views 25.9% rated skills as neutral, and 9.3% (combining very low and low) identified areas needing improvement. These findings suggest that although a substantial segment of the workforce is well-trained, there is still a need for targeted training initiatives to address skill gaps and support technicians in meeting evolving industry demands.

Table 2: Results of Stakeholders – Technicians' Skill Level

Level	Result (%)
Very Low	1.85
Low	7.40
Neutral	25.92
High	37.03
Very High	27.77

4.7. Identified Skill Gaps in the Current Workforce

The survey identified several critical skill gaps affecting workforce efficiency and industry readiness. The most significant areas needing improvement include Maintenance and Repair (66.7%) and Equipment Operation (61.1%), highlighting the need for stronger hands-on technical training. Additionally, gaps in Safety Protocols (48.1%) and Troubleshooting and Diagnostics (38.9%) point to the importance of integrating safety and problem-solving competencies into vocational programs. Project Management skills (31.5%) were also noted as lacking, particularly in planning and coordination. These findings underscore the need for targeted, comprehensive training programs to equip technicians with the technical, operational, and managerial skills required to meet evolving industry demands and support sector growth.

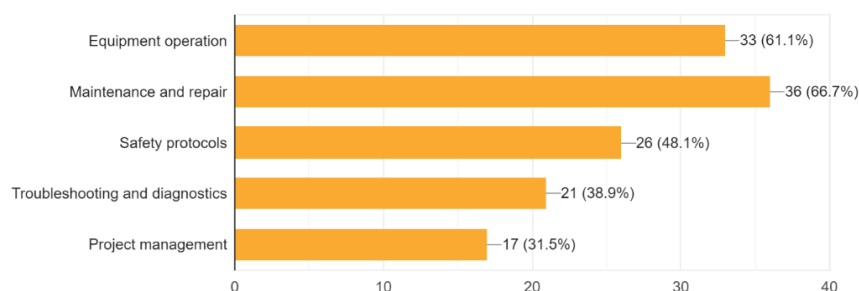


Figure 6: Results of Stakeholders – Skill Gaps

4.8. Importance of Vocational Training for Skill Development

The survey underscores the vital role of vocational training in bridging skill gaps and improving workforce competency in the construction and power sectors. According to Table 3, A majority of respondents (57.4%) rated vocational training as extremely critical, with an additional 14.8% considering it very critical. While 20.4% viewed it as moderately critical, only a small minority (7.5%) viewed it as slightly or not critical. These findings reflect a strong consensus on the necessity of structured vocational education focused on technical skills, safety, equipment operation, and project management key areas essential for raising industry standards and supporting sustainable economic growth.

Table 3: Results of Stakeholders – Importance of a Vocational Training

Level	Results (%)
Not Critical	1.85
Slightly Critical	3.70
Moderately Critical	20.37
Very Critical	14.81
Extremely Critical	57.40

4.9. Preferred Training Delivery Method

As part of the Needs Assessment Survey for the Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum in Sri Lanka, respondents expressed a clear preference for flexible training methods. Figure 7 shows that the majority (51.9%) favored a hybrid model that blends in-person and online learning, highlighting the value of both practical experience and remote accessibility. In-person training was preferred by 40.7% of

respondents, underscoring the importance of hands-on instruction, while only 7.4% opted for fully online training. These results emphasize the need for a balanced training approach that combines digital convenience with practical, skills-based learning to effectively prepare technicians for industry demands.

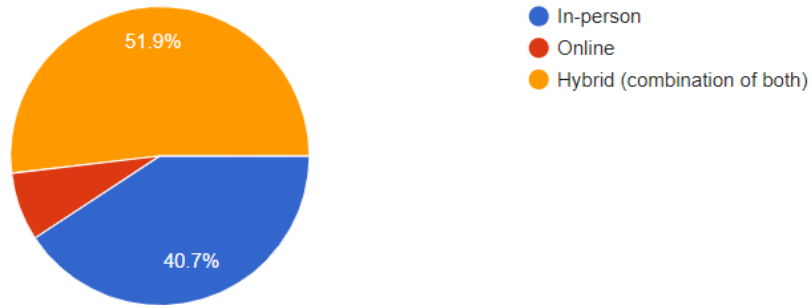


Figure 7: Results of Stakeholders - Training Delivery Method

4.10. Ideal Duration for Vocational Training Program

The Needs Assessment Survey revealed varied preferences regarding the ideal duration of vocational training for Construction Equipment Technicians in Sri Lanka. Figure 8 shows that a significant share of respondents (38.9%) preferred programs longer than one year, emphasizing the need for in-depth, comprehensive training. Others favored shorter formats, with 29.6% selecting 3–6 months and 20.4% opting for 6–12 months, reflecting interest in moderately intensive programs. A smaller group (11.1%) preferred training for under three months, likely prioritizing quick entry into the workforce. These insights underscore the importance of providing flexible training options that cater to diverse learning needs, experience levels, and career objectives.

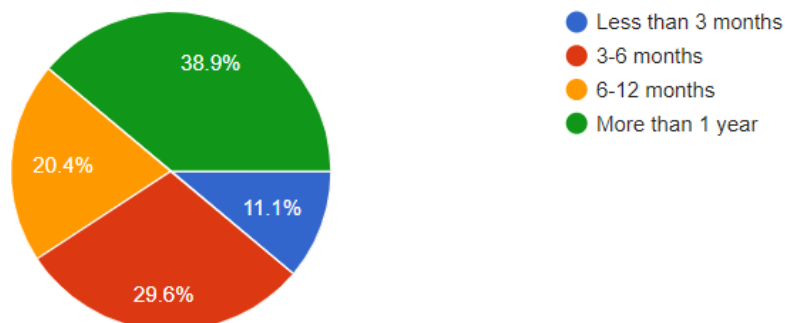


Figure 8: Results of Stakeholders - Duration for the Training Program

4.11. Recommended Curriculum Modules

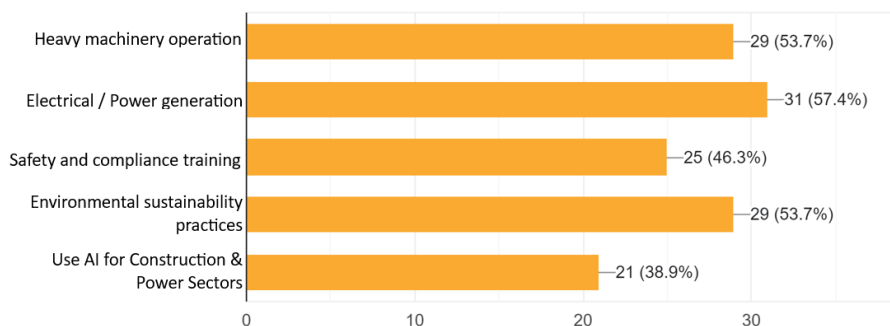


Figure 9: Results of Stakeholders - Recommended Curriculum Modules

Survey responses identified five key modules as priorities for the Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum in Sri Lanka. Electrical & Power Generation (57.4%) ranked highest, emphasizing the need for strong skills in electrical systems and diagnostics. Figure 9 shows that Heavy Machinery Operation (53.7%) and Environmental Sustainability Practices (53.7%) were equally prioritized, reflecting the demand for hands-on equipment training and eco-friendly construction methods. Safety & Compliance Training (46.3%) was also highlighted as essential for workplace safety and regulatory adherence. Lastly, the Application of AI in the construction and power sectors (38.9%) signaled a growing interest in preparing technicians for emerging technologies. These insights underscore the need for a modern, comprehensive curriculum that combines core technical skills with future-oriented competencies.

4.12. Training Priorities and Skill Development Needs

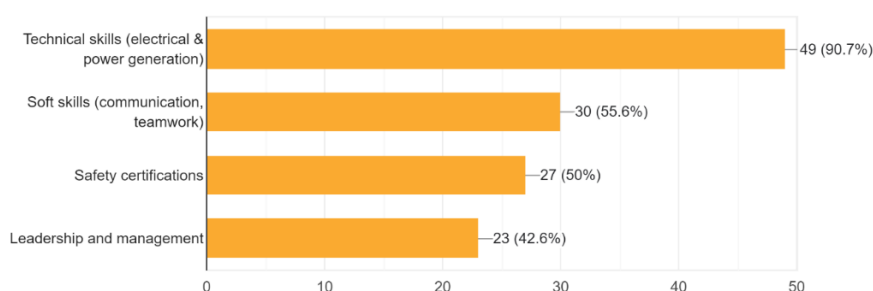


Figure 10: Results of Stakeholders' Interested Training Areas

The survey reveals a strong demand for technical skill development, with 90.7% of respondents prioritizing training in electrical systems and

power generation, highlighting the need for industry-specific, hands-on learning. Figure 10 shows that, additionally, 55.6% emphasized the importance of soft skills such as communication and teamwork, while 50% identified safety certifications as essential for workplace safety and compliance. Leadership and management training was also noted by 42.6% of participants, reflecting a desire for career progression and supervisory skills. These findings underscore the need for a comprehensive training curriculum that balances technical expertise with soft skills, safety, and leadership development to build a competent and adaptable workforce in the construction and power sectors.

4.13. Barriers to Accessing Vocational Training

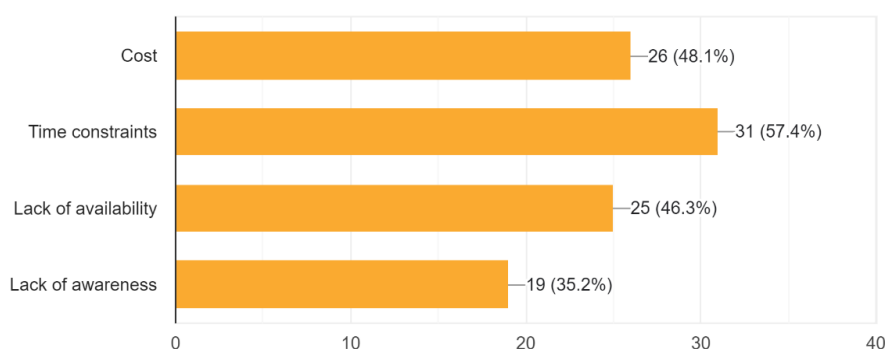


Figure 11: Results of Stakeholders - Barriers to Accessing Vocational Training

The survey identified key challenges that limit access to vocational training among professionals in the construction and power sectors. Figure 11 shows that Time constraints were the most significant barrier (57.4%), followed by high training costs (48.1%) and limited availability of relevant programs (46.3%). Additionally, 35.2% of respondents cited a lack of awareness about existing training opportunities. These findings highlight the need for flexible scheduling, affordable training options, increased program availability, and improved outreach efforts to ensure broader access to vocational education.

4.14. Likelihood of Recommending Vocational Training for Construction Equipment Technicians

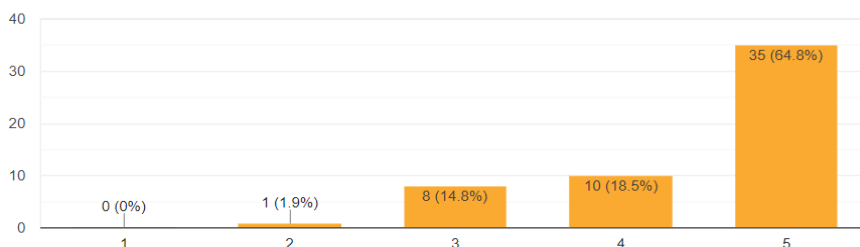


Figure 12: Results of Stakeholders - Likelihood of Recommending Vocational Training for Technicians

The survey reveals strong industry support for vocational training in the construction and power sectors, with 64.8% highly likely and 18.5% likely to recommend such programs. Only 1.9% showed slight hesitation, are shown in Figure 12, and none opposed it, indicating an overwhelmingly positive perception. These results emphasize the need for well-designed, accessible training programs and suggest that awareness campaigns and industry partnerships can further boost participation and impact.

4.15. Lessons Learnt from the Study

Survey feedback reinforces the value of vocational training in improving skills, job performance, and career growth for construction equipment technicians. Respondents emphasized the need for more focus on electrical and power generation modules, hands-on practical training, and regular curriculum updates to match industry advancements. Overall, the comments highlight the importance of modern, industry-aligned training programs to strengthen workforce readiness and support sector growth.

5. Conclusion:

The needs assessment survey confirms a strong demand for a structured Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum in Sri Lanka. As the construction and power sectors expand, there is an urgent need for skilled technicians who can operate, maintain, and repair advanced machinery. Stakeholders widely support the development of a formal

vocational training program to address the current skills gap, meet technological advancements, and improve employment opportunities. A well-designed curriculum will be instrumental in enhancing workforce capabilities and supporting long-term industry sustainability.

6. Recommendations for Module Development

To ensure the Construction Equipment Technician Curriculum effectively meets industry demands, a set of well-structured and relevant modules is recommended. The curriculum should begin with Fundamentals of Construction Equipment, providing learners with an overview of different machinery types and their applications. Equipment maintenance and troubleshooting should focus on developing practical diagnostic and repair skills essential for minimizing downtime. Training in Hydraulics and Pneumatics Systems will build understanding of the fluid power systems commonly used in heavy machinery, while Electrical and Electronic Systems will equip trainees with knowledge of modern control and automation technologies.

A dedicated module on Safety Standards & Regulations will reinforce the importance of safe work practices and compliance with industry standards. The inclusion of Advanced Diagnostics and Digital Technologies will expose learners to emerging tools such as telematics and smart systems, preparing them for the industry's digital transformation.

Workplace Communication & Team Coordination will strengthen soft skills, promoting effective collaboration and problem-solving. Finally, an Internship & On-the-Job Training component will offer real-world industry exposure through partnerships with companies and equipment suppliers. Collectively, these modules aim to produce a skilled, adaptable workforce ready to contribute to the growth and modernization of Sri Lanka's construction and power sectors.

7. Limitations of the Study

1. Time constraint for this study.
2. Lack of technical knowledge related to this study.
3. Difficulties faced in collecting data.

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