ISSN: 2958-2326

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African Journal of Commercial Studies

Publisher's Home Page: https://ijcsacademia.com/

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From Stakeholder Conviction to Expert-Validated Practice: Enablers, Strategic Consensus and Framework Design for Vocational Education in Adventist Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe

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Article Info

Volume 7, Issue 3

***Publication history*:**
Accepted on 30 April 2026;
Published: 1 June 2026

***Key Words*:**
Vocational Education; Adventist Education; Technical and Vocational Education and Training; Stakeholder beliefs; Delphi Technique; Holistic Education; Implementation Framework; Zimbabwe; Faith-based Schooling; Institutional Capacity

***Article Doi*:**
10.59413/ajocs/v7.i3.50

Abstract

Vocational education in faith-based secondary schools is marked by a paradox of conviction without sufficient institutional translation. Practical learning is affirmed by national curriculum reform, by labour-market realities, by student entrepreneurial aspiration, and by the Adventist philosophy of holistic education; yet its implementation is frequently weakened when supportive beliefs are not converted into school-level capacity, governance routines, protected time, teacher competence, certification pathways, and community-linked practice. A sequential mixed-methods inquiry was therefore conducted in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools under the Zimbabwe East Union Conference in order to determine how stakeholder beliefs, institutional capacities, and contextual factors shape vocational education programmes, and to prioritise feasible, high-impact strategies through expert consensus. Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions were integrated with survey responses from students, teachers, and administrators, after which a four-round Delphi process involving vocational education, school leadership, policy, and Adventist education experts was undertaken. Four enabling conditions were identified: alignment between government curriculum reform and Adventist educational philosophy, the underutilised head-heart-hand logic of Adventist education, strong student motivation and entrepreneurial aspiration, and growing receptivity among industry and community actors. However, these enabling conditions were shown to be latent rather than self-activating. They required deliberate institutional mediation through leadership, teacher development, stakeholder re-narration, resource mobilisation, timetabling reform, partnership formation, certification, and monitoring. The Delphi process distilled twenty-two proposed strategies into eight validated framework components and achieved 91 percent final agreement. It is recommended that vocational education be implemented through a belief-capacity-consensus model in which philosophical legitimacy, stakeholder conviction, and contextual opportunity are translated into routinised school practice through the eight-component implementation framework. The article contributes a professionally validated model for moving faith-based schooling from rhetorical affirmation of practical education toward structured, equitable, and sustainable vocational embodiment.

1. Introduction

Vocational education has increasingly been required to carry a burden that purely academic schooling can no longer bear alone. In many education systems, certificates continue to be valued, examinations continue to structure institutional reputation, and progression into higher education continues to be treated as the principal marker of success. Yet young people are also expected to enter societies in which formal employment is unstable, technological change is rapid, informal enterprise is widespread, and livelihoods are often constructed through a combination of technical skill, initiative, adaptability, and community-based economic participation. Under such conditions, practical education cannot reasonably be treated as a peripheral appendage to the curriculum. It has to be interpreted as a central mode through which education is made relevant to life, work, stewardship, and social contribution.

In the context of Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Zimbabwe, this problem is rendered more philosophically demanding. A school system that professes holistic education cannot consistently treat the hand as subordinate to the head. The Adventist educational tradition has long carried a moral language through which work, service, discipline, useful labour, self-reliance, and character formation are understood as integrated dimensions of education. The dignity of practical work is not supposed to be justified only by labour-market demand; it is supposed to be embedded in the anthropology of the learner and in the mission of the school. If the person is to be formed intellectually, spiritually, socially, physically, and practically, then vocational education should be recognised as a site of formation rather than as a remedial track for learners assumed to be less academically capable.

Nevertheless, implementation is rarely secured by conviction alone. A philosophy may be widely affirmed and still fail to organise institutional behaviour. A policy may be officially endorsed and still fail to reshape timetables, staffing, budgets, assessment regimes, parental expectations, and community linkages. A learner may value practical education and still be denied access to tools, workshops, trained teachers, certification pathways, or serious career guidance. The problem addressed here is therefore not whether vocational education is valued. It is how value is converted into sustained implementation.

The analysis is organised around two linked questions. First, how are vocational education programmes shaped by stakeholder beliefs, institutional capacities, and contextual conditions in Adventist secondary schools under the Zimbabwe East Union Conference? Second, which strategies may be prioritised as feasible and high-impact responses when subjected to expert consensus? These questions require the article to move beyond the diagnosis of barriers. Attention is directed instead toward enabling conditions, strategic assets, and the manner in which expert judgment can be used to transform dispersed possibility into a coherent implementation model.

The argument advanced is that vocational education implementation in faith-based schools should be understood as a process of institutional embodiment. By embodiment is meant the conversion of an educational ideal into routines, roles, material conditions, decision rules, and visible learner experiences. Four enabling conditions were found to be already present: policy alignment, Adventist philosophical legitimacy, student motivation, and community or industry receptivity. However, none of these conditions was sufficient on its own. They had to be mediated through leadership mandate, teacher professional development, infrastructure planning, curriculum integration, stakeholder attitude transformation, partnerships, entrepreneurship and certification, and monitoring. The framework recommended in this article is therefore not a list of desirable reforms, but a model of translation from conviction to practice.

2 Philosophical and Policy Orientation

Vocational education is often defended through economic language. It is said to improve employability, reduce skills mismatch, prepare learners for enterprise, and support national development. These claims are legitimate, and they are especially important in settings where youth unemployment and underemployment remain persistent concerns. Human Capital Theory provides one explanation for this emphasis: investment in knowledge and skill is expected to increase productive capacity, individual opportunity, and social return (Becker, 1993). In this view, vocational education is not an inferior alternative to academic education; it is a form of capital formation through which learners acquire usable capacities.

Yet an economic justification is incomplete when vocational education is considered within a faith-based school system. Practical learning also carries moral and philosophical meaning. Work may be understood as discipline, service, stewardship, creativity, and social responsibility. Within the Adventist tradition, the head-heart-hand ideal implies that cognition, conviction, and action are not to be separated. Intellectual knowledge without practical competence risks abstraction. Practical work without moral orientation risks mere productivity. Character formation without engagement with life and labour risks becoming sentimental rather than embodied. Vocational education therefore belongs at the intersection of knowledge, service, livelihood, and formation.

Policy also supplies a second line of legitimation. Zimbabwean curriculum reform has increasingly affirmed competence-based learning, practical skills, entrepreneurship, and life preparation. This national policy orientation converges with the Adventist philosophical emphasis on holistic development. Such convergence is important because it reduces the likelihood that vocational education will be experienced as an externally imposed state demand or as an optional church tradition. It can instead be positioned as a shared educational responsibility in which public curriculum reform and denominational philosophy reinforce one another.

However, policy-philosophy convergence does not automatically produce institutional practice. Schools are governed by timetables, budgets, staffing norms, examination pressures, parental expectations, and resource hierarchies. Where academic subjects are rewarded more visibly than practical subjects, vocational education can be affirmed in principle while remaining underfunded in practice. Where parents associate success with conventional academic progression, learners may be discouraged from entering practical subjects even where their interests are strong. Where teacher preparation is not aligned with competence-based vocational pedagogy, classroom delivery may remain theoretical. These tensions indicate that vocational education must be approached as an implementation problem rather than a philosophical slogan.

Stakeholder beliefs are therefore central. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, action is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Applied to vocational education, the theory suggests that positive beliefs about practical education will not be translated into action unless actors also perceive that important social groups support the behaviour and that sufficient capacity exists to perform it. A principal may value vocational education but feel unable to implement it without resources. A teacher may accept the philosophy but lack the methodology. A student may desire practical competence but be constrained by peers, parents, gender stereotypes, or limited subject choice. For this reason, beliefs, capacities, and contextual conditions must be examined together.

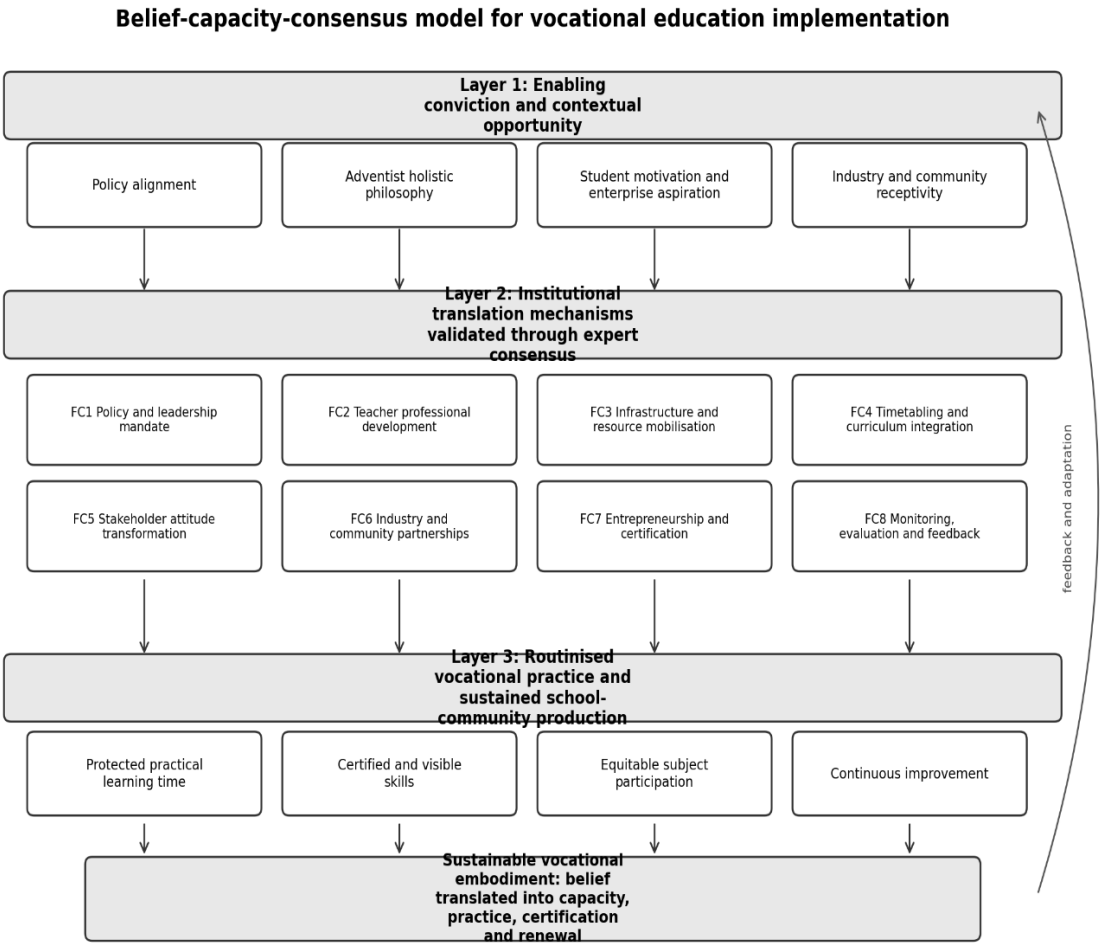

Figure 1. Conceptual framework model linking enabling conditions, expert-validated mechanisms and routinised vocational practice.

3 Methodological Approach

A sequential mixed-methods design was employed in order to move from contextual interpretation to strategic prioritisation. The design was appropriate because vocational education implementation could not be adequately understood through numerical indicators alone or through qualitative accounts alone. Beliefs, values, constraints, institutional arrangements, and expert judgments had to be integrated. The qualitative strand first enabled the meanings attached to vocational education by students, teachers, administrators, and school communities to be explored. The quantitative strand then permitted the strength of selected perceptions and capacity conditions to be estimated across a wider respondent base. A Delphi process was subsequently used to prioritise strategies and validate a framework structure.

The empirical base included interviews and focus group discussions across selected schools, survey responses from 382 students, 79 teachers, and 24 administrators, and a four-round Delphi panel that began with ten experts and concluded with eight final-round participants. The Delphi panel was intentionally multidisciplinary, drawing from Adventist education administration, vocational or technical education, school leadership, policy, and practitioner expertise. Such composition was necessary because the implementation problem was institutional, pedagogical, philosophical, and regulatory at the same time.

The analytic logic was integrative. Qualitative themes were compared with survey patterns so that findings were not treated as isolated narratives. For example, administrator ratings on policy alignment were interpreted alongside interview evidence on curriculum reform and denominational philosophy. Student motivation was interpreted alongside data on future employment value and interest in practical subjects. Delphi ratings were then used to distinguish between strategies that were merely desirable and strategies that could plausibly be implemented within the resource-variable context of Adventist secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

Consensus in the Delphi process was not treated as simple agreement. It was treated as disciplined professional convergence after controlled feedback, re-rating, and refinement. In Round 1, experts generated a wide range of proposed strategies. In Round 2, these were rated for importance and feasibility. In Round 3, contested items were clarified and re-rated after anonymised feedback. In Round 4, the refined framework was validated. This approach was consistent with established Delphi principles in which expert judgement is progressively stabilised through iterative rounds (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

Table 1. Evidence base and analytical contribution.

Evidence strand	Participants or units	Analytical contribution to Objectives Two and Three
Qualitative exploration	Interviews and focus group discussions across selected SDA secondary schools	Interpretation of stakeholder beliefs, institutional capacities, contextual pressures, and enabling conditions.
Quantitative survey	382 students, 79 teachers, and 24 administrators	Measurement of belief patterns, policy alignment, philosophical alignment, student motivation, perceived support, and resource-related implementation signals.
Delphi expert process	Ten expert panelists across four rounds; eight completed final validation	Prioritisation of feasible and high-impact strategies and validation of the eight-component implementation framework.
Integrated synthesis	Qualitative themes, survey findings, and Delphi consensus	Conversion of enabling conditions into a sequenced framework model recommendation.

4 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Stakeholder Beliefs, Institutional Capacities and Contextual Enablers

Four enabling conditions were identified. Their significance lies not simply in their presence, but in the way they reveal that vocational education already possesses moral, policy, student, and community legitimacy. The implementation challenge is therefore not best described as a lack of belief. It is better understood as a failure of institutional conversion.

The first enabling condition was policy alignment. Administrators rated the alignment between vocational education and the current curriculum framework highly, with a mean of 4.42 and 87.5 percent high responses. Alignment with the school's current context was even stronger, with a mean of 4.58 and 91.7 percent high responses. These findings suggest that school leaders did not experience vocational education as alien to current educational policy. Rather, practical education was recognised as consistent with national curriculum reform and with the economic realities facing learners. The policy environment therefore provided an enabling frame within which school-level action could be legitimised.

The second enabling condition was the Adventist philosophy of holistic education. Teachers rated alignment with SDA educational philosophy at a mean of 4.41, with 89.9 percent high responses. This finding is important because it indicates that vocational education can be narrated through the internal language of the school system rather than through an external technocratic discourse alone. The head-heart-hand tradition supplies a philosophical grammar by which practical work may be linked with dignity, service, character, discipline, and mission. Where this grammar is used deliberately, vocational education can be re-positioned as an expression of Adventist identity rather than as a concession to economic pressure.

The third enabling condition was student motivation and entrepreneurial aspiration. Students rated the importance of vocational education at a mean of 3.85, with 70.0 percent high responses. The value of vocational education for future employment was rated at a mean of 3.93, with 74.3 percent high responses. These results reveal that learners were not passive recipients of practical education policy. Many already understood its relevance to self-employment, economic resilience, and life after school. Their demand also extended beyond the traditional set of practical subjects. Interest was expressed in contemporary, service-based, technical, and enterprise-oriented fields, indicating that vocational education was being imagined by learners in modern and diversified terms.

The fourth enabling condition was growing industry and community receptivity. Employers, artisans, small enterprises, and community actors were increasingly perceived as potential contributors to vocational education. This finding is significant because resource-constrained schools cannot rely only on formal workshops or fully equipped technical departments before meaningful practical exposure begins. Community artisans, local entrepreneurs, farms, small businesses, workshops, kitchens, and service providers may function as distributed learning environments. In such a model, the school ceases to be the sole site of vocational learning and becomes the organiser of a wider skills ecosystem.

These four enablers were reinforced by a fifth mediating factor: leadership commitment. Although leadership was not merely one enabling condition among many, it was repeatedly implied as the mechanism through which other enablers would be activated. Policy alignment remains inert if principals do not translate it into school plans. Adventist philosophy remains rhetorical if school boards and administrators do not embed it in budgets and timetables. Student motivation dissipates if no structured subject pathways are available. Community receptivity remains informal if partnerships are not cultivated and monitored. Leadership, therefore, should be interpreted as the hinge between possibility and practice.

Table 2. Enabling conditions and their implementation meaning.

Enabling condition	Empirical signal	Interpretive meaning for implementation
Policy alignment	Administrator curriculum alignment mean = 4.42; school-context alignment mean = 4.58	Vocational education may be legitimised through public curriculum reform and school development planning.
Adventist holistic philosophy	Teacher SDA alignment mean = 4.41; 89.9 percent high responses	The head-heart-hand tradition may be used to re-narrate practical education as mission-consistent formation.
Student motivation	Importance mean = 3.85; future employment value mean = 3.93	Learner aspiration is already present and should be converted into structured practical pathways and certification.
Industry and community receptivity	Qualitative evidence of employer, artisan, parent, and community openness	The school may be positioned as coordinator of a distributed practical learning ecosystem.
Leadership mediation	Repeatedly identified across qualitative and Delphi evidence	Enabling conditions remain latent unless school leadership converts them into routines, budgets, timetables, and accountability.

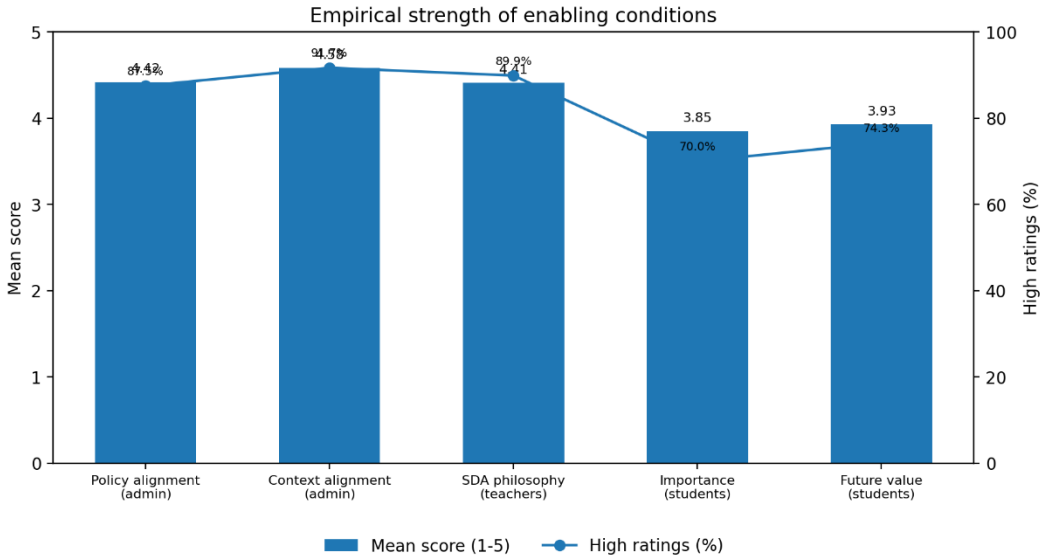

Figure 2. Quantitative signals of stakeholder and contextual enabling conditions.

4.2 Expert Consensus and Strategic Prioritisation

The Delphi process was used to determine which strategies should be prioritised when enabling conditions and implementation constraints were considered together. In the first round, sixty-three discrete response items were generated by ten panel members. After thematic aggregation, twenty-two proposed framework components were identified. This diversity was valuable because it demonstrated the multidimensional nature of vocational education implementation. At the same time, it confirmed that a school-level framework could not be built around a single intervention such as equipment provision, teacher training, or attitude change alone.

In the second round, the twenty-two components were rated for importance and feasibility. Eight components emerged as consistently high-priority. A key analytical insight was produced by the contrast between importance and feasibility ratings. Infrastructure and resource mobilisation received the highest importance rating, with a median of 4.9, but the lowest feasibility rating, with a median of 3.8. This divergence should not be read as inconsistency. It indicates that experts recognised infrastructure as indispensable while also acknowledging that full workshop construction and equipment provision cannot be imposed as a prerequisite for beginning implementation in resource-constrained schools. A phased resourcing model was therefore required.

The third round enabled contested interpretations to be resolved. Industry partnership was redefined broadly so that it would include local artisans, community enterprises, guest instructors, and informal mentorship arrangements, rather than only formal corporate agreements. Stakeholder attitude transformation was also clarified. It was not to be delayed until resources had been secured, nor was it to replace material investment. Rather, attitude change and resource mobilisation were to proceed simultaneously. This simultaneity is philosophically and practically important: resources without re-narration may reproduce stigma, while inspiration without resources may produce frustration.

The fourth round validated the eight-component framework with 91 percent agreement. The final structure was as follows: FC1, Policy and Leadership Mandate; FC2, Teacher Professional Development; FC3, Infrastructure and Resource Mobilisation; FC4, Timetabling and Curriculum Integration; FC5, Stakeholder Attitude Transformation; FC6, Industry and Community Partnerships; FC7, Student Entrepreneurship and Certification; and FC8, Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback. The components were not ranked as isolated reforms but as mutually reinforcing mechanisms through which stakeholder conviction could be institutionalised.

The expert process also clarified sequencing. Policy and leadership mandate, teacher professional development, and stakeholder attitude transformation were interpreted as foundational. Infrastructure development, timetable reform, and community partnership were then positioned as developmental mechanisms. Entrepreneurship, certification, and monitoring were placed within consolidation and sustainability phases. This sequencing does not imply that later components are less important. Rather, it recognises that vocational education systems are built through ordered institutional action. A school that attempts certification without teacher preparation, or industry partnership without leadership mandate, is unlikely to sustain implementation.

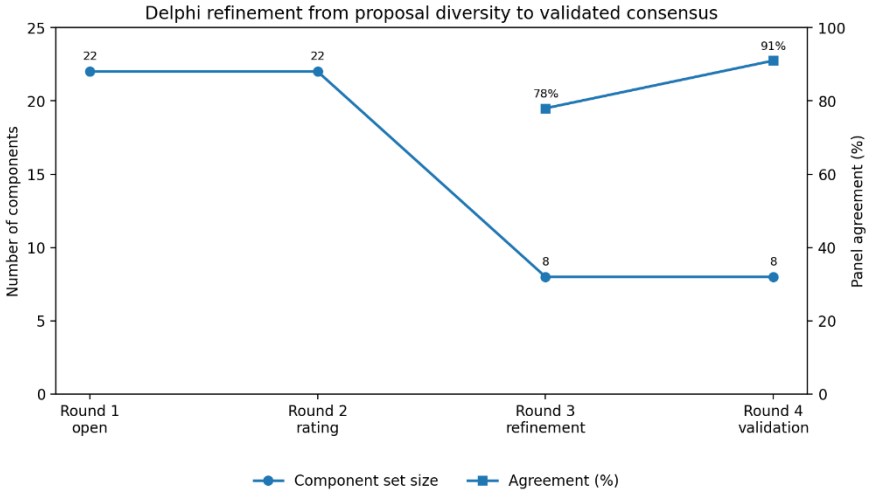

Figure 3. Delphi refinement from proposal diversity to validated consensus.

Table 3. Delphi-validated framework components and strategic interpretation.

Code	Validated component	Importance	Feasibility	Strategic interpretation
FC1	Policy and leadership mandate	4.8	4.6	A formal mandate is required to convert philosophical and policy support into institutional accountability.
FC2	Teacher professional development	4.7	4.4	Vocational delivery depends on teachers who are pedagogically and technically prepared.
FC3	Infrastructure and resource mobilisation	4.9	3.8	The highest-priority but most difficult component; a phased resource pathway is required.
FC4	Timetabling and curriculum integration	4.6	4.2	Practical learning must be protected structurally through block or double periods.
FC5	Stakeholder attitude transformation	4.7	4.0	Parents, teachers and learners must be engaged so that stigma is replaced by dignity and value.
FC6	Industry and community partnerships	4.4	4.3	Partnerships should include formal industry links and flexible local artisan or enterprise networks.
FC7	Student entrepreneurship and certification	4.5	4.1	Competence must be made visible through certification, exhibitions, projects and enterprise development.
FC8	Monitoring, evaluation and feedback	4.3	4.5	Implementation must be reviewed through a simple recurring rubric and improvement cycle.

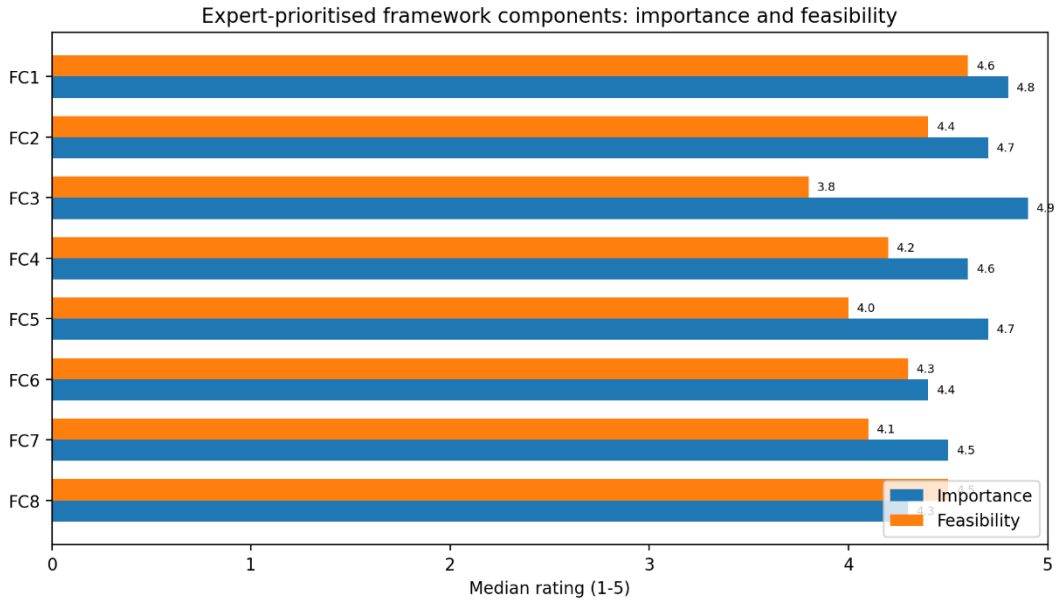

Figure 4. Expert-prioritised framework components by importance and feasibility.

4.3 Recommended Conceptual Framework Model

It is recommended that vocational education in Adventist secondary schools be guided by a belief-capacity-consensus model. The model is built on the premise that implementation becomes possible when three conditions are brought into alignment. First, stakeholder conviction must be available. Second, institutional capacity must be deliberately constructed. Third, strategic priorities must be validated and sequenced through professional consensus. Where one of these conditions is absent, implementation becomes unstable. Conviction without capacity produces aspiration. Capacity without conviction produces compliance. Consensus without institutional authority produces documents without practice.

The first layer of the model is enabling conviction and contextual opportunity. This layer includes policy alignment, Adventist philosophical legitimacy, student motivation, and industry or community receptivity. These conditions provide the moral and social rationale for vocational education. They establish why practical education should be taken seriously and why it can be justified to parents, students, teachers, boards, and external agencies. However, this layer should not be mistaken for implementation. It represents readiness, not delivery.

The second layer is institutional translation. This is the operational heart of the model and corresponds to the eight expert-validated framework components. Policy and leadership mandate convert vocational education from optional enthusiasm into formal responsibility. Teacher professional development converts subject offerings into competent pedagogy. Infrastructure and resource mobilisation convert intention into physical and material possibility. Timetabling and curriculum integration protect practical learning from academic displacement. Stakeholder attitude transformation re-narrates vocational education as dignified, formative, and mission-consistent. Industry and community partnerships extend the learning environment beyond the school. Entrepreneurship and certification make learner outcomes visible and credentialled. Monitoring, evaluation, and feedback sustain improvement.

The third layer is routinised vocational practice. This layer is reached when practical learning is no longer dependent on occasional projects, individual enthusiasm, or temporary donor support. Instead, it becomes part of the school's normal planning cycle, budget structure, timetable, teacher development programme, assessment pathway, stakeholder communication, and community partnership network. At this stage, vocational education is embodied. It is seen in learner practice time, certified competence, subject access equity, production-oriented learning, career guidance, school-community collaboration, and data-informed improvement.

The model is also cyclical. Monitoring and feedback should not be positioned at the end of implementation only. The Plan, Implement, Review, Adapt logic should inform every component. Where a school begins with limited infrastructure, a starter pathway may be used, community resource persons may be engaged, and progress may be documented. Where teacher confidence is low, professional development may be prioritised and peer learning may be organised. Where parental resistance is strong, philosophical re-narration and evidence of student outcomes may be used. The framework is therefore not a rigid blueprint. It is an adaptive architecture.

At system level, the model requires a formal policy directive from the union or conference education authority. Without such a directive, vocational education will remain vulnerable to the preferences of individual principals and to the competing demands of examination-centred schooling. At school level, the model requires a vocational education committee, a visible budget line, teacher capacity planning, protected practical periods, stakeholder engagement, and a monitoring rubric aligned to the eight components. At community level, it requires a register of artisans, enterprises, alumni, parents, and local institutions that can contribute expertise, sites, mentorship, or materials.

The recommended model is philosophical as much as technical. It does not reduce vocational education to skills training, nor does it romanticise practical work without confronting institutional constraints. Rather, it holds together three claims: that work has dignity, that learners require usable competence, and that schools must organise themselves in ways that make practical formation possible. The model therefore treats vocational education as a moral, pedagogical, economic, and administrative responsibility.

Table 4. Framework model recommendation for implementation.

Implementation layer	Recommended action	Related framework components	Rationale
System authority	A union or conference policy directive should mandate vocational education standards, budget lines, and reporting.	FC1, FC8	Without system authority, implementation remains dependent on individual leaders and temporary enthusiasm.
School leadership	A vocational education committee, principal commitment statement, protected budget line, and annual plan should be established.	FC1, FC4, FC8	Leadership decisions convert belief into timetable, finance, supervision, and accountability.
Teacher system	HEXCO-aligned pedagogy training, peer learning communities, and in-service skill upgrading should be institutionalised.	FC2, FC7	Teacher capacity is the immediate bridge between curriculum intention and learner competence.
Stakeholder culture	Parent sensitisation, student career weeks, alumni role models, and Adventist philosophy messaging should be conducted annually.	FC5	Vocational education must be re-narrated as dignified, formative, and mission-consistent.
Resource pathway	Schools should begin with a starter pathway and progress toward workshops, equipment plans, maintenance schedules, and school enterprises.	FC3	Infrastructure should be treated as a phased target, not as an excuse for delayed implementation.
Community ecosystem	Artisan registers, guest instructors, local enterprises, farms, and industry visits should be coordinated by each school.	FC6	Practical learning can be distributed across community sites when school resources are limited.
Learner outcomes	HEXCO registration, National Foundation Certificate pathways, exhibitions, projects, and entrepreneurship clubs should be prioritised.	FC7	Visible outcomes increase credibility, motivation, and parental confidence.
Continuous improvement	A termly Plan-Implement-Review-Adapt cycle should be used through an FC1-FC8 implementation rubric.	FC8	Data-informed adaptation allows the model to remain responsive rather than symbolic.

Table 5. Recommended implementation sequencing.

Phase	Timeframe	Priority components	Key milestones
Foundation	Term 1, Year 1	FC1, FC2, FC5	Policy directive; vocational committee; leadership commitment; parent sensitisation; first teacher workshop.
Development	Terms 2-3, Year 1 into Year 2	FC3, FC4, FC6	Infrastructure audit; starter or development pathway; timetable restructuring; artisan and industry contacts.
Consolidation	Year 2-3	FC7, FC8	HEXCO registration; first certification candidates; annual showcase; monitoring rubric embedded.
Sustainability	Year 3 onwards	All FC1-FC8	Peer learning network; enterprise support; annual review; continuous improvement.

4.4 Discussion

The findings indicate that vocational education in Adventist secondary schools is not primarily confronted by a legitimacy deficit. It is confronted by a translation deficit. The legitimacy of vocational education is supplied by policy, philosophy, student demand, and community need. Yet legitimacy must be translated into routines, resources, professional practice, certification, and accountability. The most important contribution of the enabling-condition analysis is therefore the distinction between latent support and operational support.

Policy alignment was shown to be strong, but policy alignment alone is not implementation. Many school systems contain policies that are rarely enacted because the institutional architecture for enactment is weak. The same principle applies to Adventist educational philosophy. The head-heart-hand ideal is powerful, but it can remain symbolic if it is not converted into timetable minutes, trained teachers, practical facilities, assessment pathways, and leadership accountability. A philosophy becomes educationally real only when it shapes institutional decisions.

Student motivation emerged as one of the most promising findings. It suggests that young people may be more open to vocational learning than older status hierarchies assume. However, motivation should not be exploited through poorly resourced programmes. If learners are encouraged to value practical education but encounter inadequate resources, narrow subject choices, weak guidance, or uncertified pathways, their aspiration may be undermined. Student motivation should therefore be treated as an ethical responsibility. Schools that invite learners into vocational programmes must provide meaningful routes toward competence and recognition.

Community and industry receptivity also require careful interpretation. In low-resource contexts, partnership language can become overly ambitious if it is imagined only as formal linkage with large companies. The Delphi refinement usefully broadened the concept. Artisans, farms, local enterprises, alumni, parents, church members, and community institutions may all contribute to vocational learning. This distributed partnership approach is more realistic for many schools and is more consistent with a faith-based community ecology. It allows vocational education to be built from local capacity while still preserving long-term aspiration for stronger formal industry linkages.

The eight framework components also show that implementation should be systemic. Teacher development cannot compensate for the absence of tools. Tools cannot compensate for inadequate timetabling. Timetabling cannot compensate for stigma. Attitude change cannot compensate for the absence of certification. Certification cannot compensate for weak teaching. Monitoring cannot compensate for absent leadership. Each component performs a distinct function within the total architecture. The model is therefore strongest when implemented as an integrated system rather than as a menu from which convenient items are selected.

The Delphi finding on infrastructure is especially important. The highest importance and lowest feasibility assigned to infrastructure represents the central dilemma of vocational education in resource-constrained contexts. A simplistic policy response would insist that proper facilities be built before implementation begins. Such a response may delay implementation indefinitely. An equally weak response would ignore infrastructure and rely only on motivation. The more defensible position is phased implementation. Schools should begin with what is possible, use community resources, protect practical time, document progress, and build a case for progressive investment. Infrastructure should be treated neither as an excuse for delay nor as a dispensable luxury.

5 Conclusions and Limitations

5.1 Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

Several contributions are offered. First, a stakeholder-centred account of vocational education implementation is provided in which beliefs, capacities, and contextual factors are analysed together. This is important because vocational education is often discussed either as a resource problem or as an attitude problem. The evidence suggests that it is both, and that each dimension shapes the other.

Second, an explicitly faith-integrated interpretation of vocational education is advanced. Practical education is positioned not merely as a response to unemployment but as part of holistic formation. This reframing is significant for Adventist and other faith-based school systems because it enables vocational education to be defended from within the moral language of the institution. The dignity of work, the formation of character, and the preparation for useful service are shown to be pedagogically relevant rather than merely devotional ideas.

Third, the use of Delphi consensus contributes a decision-making pathway for contexts in which many possible interventions compete for limited attention and resources. The movement from twenty-two proposed components to eight validated components demonstrates how expert judgement can be used to prioritise without oversimplifying. It also shows how importance and feasibility can be held together. A strategy may be essential but difficult, and such difficulty should inform sequencing rather than justify neglect.

Fourth, a framework model recommendation is offered in which enabling conviction, institutional capacity, and expert-validated priorities are integrated. The model may be adapted beyond the immediate setting because many denominational and resource-constrained schools face similar tensions: strong philosophy, weak infrastructure, motivated learners, examination pressure, and uneven stakeholder support. Transferability, however, should be pursued

through contextual adaptation rather than mechanical replication.

5.2 Limitations and Future Inquiry

The analysis should be interpreted within the boundaries of its institutional context. The evidence was generated within Adventist secondary schools under one union conference, and the framework was designed with that governance environment in view. Other school systems may share similar problems, but their policy arrangements, resource bases, denominational structures, and labour-market contexts may differ. Adaptation should therefore be preceded by a local needs assessment.

The Delphi process achieved strong consensus, but the number of final-round experts was modest. This is acceptable within Delphi methodology, especially where expert selection is purposive and the panel is specialised, but larger and more geographically diverse panels could strengthen future validation. Additional voices from industry, alumni, parents, and technical colleges could also deepen the partnership and certification dimensions of the framework.

Longitudinal inquiry is required. The present analysis identifies enabling conditions and expert-prioritised strategies, but the sustainability of the model can only be established through multi-year tracking. Future studies should examine changes in learner practical engagement, teacher confidence, HEXCO registration, certification outcomes, subject uptake patterns, gender participation, stakeholder attitudes, graduate livelihoods, and implementation fidelity across the eight components. Such evidence would permit the framework to be refined as a living model rather than treated as a completed product.

5.3 Conclusion

Vocational education in Adventist secondary schools in Zimbabwe has been found to stand at the intersection of policy expectation, philosophical conviction, learner aspiration, and institutional constraint. The enabling conditions are real. Government curriculum reform supports practical learning. Adventist educational philosophy supplies a powerful head-heart-hand rationale. Students recognise the employment and enterprise value of vocational competence. Communities and industries are increasingly receptive to practical skill formation. Yet these conditions do not implement themselves.

The central finding is that vocational education must be moved from conviction to embodiment. Such movement requires a structured framework in which beliefs are translated into mandates, capacities, resources, timetables, partnerships, certification, and feedback. The Delphi process provided a disciplined pathway for this translation by reducing a broad set of proposed strategies into eight validated framework components. These components should be implemented not as isolated reforms but as a coherent architecture.

The recommended belief-capacity-consensus model provides that architecture. It begins with the moral and contextual legitimacy of vocational education, passes through the institutional mechanisms required for implementation, and culminates in routinised practical learning. In philosophical terms, it affirms that the hand must not be treated as an educational afterthought. In policy terms, it shows how curriculum reform may be enacted at school level. In institutional terms, it makes clear that leadership and teacher capacity are foundational. In practical terms, it offers a sequenced route through which faith-based schools may convert aspiration into sustained vocational practice. Where this conversion is achieved, vocational education will no longer be merely recommended. It will be visibly embodied in the life of the school.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they not aware of any competing financial interests or personal relationships that may have influenced the work described in this document.

Funding

This research did not receive specific grants from any public, commercial, non- profit sector funding bodies.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to offer my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made a contribution to this research

Ethical considerations

The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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