

The Role of Technical and Vocational Institutions (TVET) In Empowerment of Youths in Gitaru Ward, Kabete Constituency, Kiambu County

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to investigate the determinants behind the demand for the technical and vocational training among the youth in Kiambu County in Kenya. The study specifically sought to establish how youth aspirations affect their youth empowerment; assess the extent to which socio-economic background determines the youth empowerment; establish how competitiveness of skills and knowledge impact on youth empowerment among the youth; investigate the extent to which youth and family attitude influences the youth empowerment; and explore how youth and social capital of Kiambu County affects youth empowerment. The study applied a observation research design. A description of the indicants of attributes of youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, and their influence on the youth empowerments was conducted in order to establish the relationships between the key study variables namely; aspirations, socio-economic background, competitiveness of skills and knowledge, family attitude, social capital and the demand for TVET. The population of focus comprised of youths in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu only. The data analysis was conducted using content analysis which will entail analysis of themes from the qualitative data. From the results, it is clear that the provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a necessary intervention in attempts to empower people and reduce poverty. This makes it clear that if people, especially the youth, are equipped with employable skills with which they can access labour markets, then the incidence of unemployment, poverty and other consequences of social and economic exclusion would be reduced. There is a need to establish a secure and poverty free nation for youth to become influential members of any society. Entrepreneurial skills and workshop on how to find business ideas should be integrated in school curriculum to encourage young people to start their own business. Policy actions in this regard would include: - Giving priority to mathematics and science education at all levels of education and offering incentives to science teachers.

Keywords: Aspirations; Socio-economic background; Competitiveness of skills.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The foundation of every nation is the education of its young people. The way the youth of any nation is brought up and educated in the family, in the school and in society determines the future prosperity of that nation. Kenya's development plans have, over the years, consistently stated one major educational objective: producing a properly and effectively trained, disciplined and patriotic youth that can in turn make a positive contribution to the development of the nation.

Youth unemployment is a major challenge in the world today with Sub-Saharan Africa as one of the regions that are highly affected by poverty among the youth (ILO, 2003). While contending with the current economic crisis in the world, African countries will not cope with the growing number of unemployed youth in the region unless serious measures and alternative strategies are developed for more job creation. Otherwise the situation will get out of control.

Currently, young people encounter many challenges which affect their level of aspirations. These challenges also result in the demotivation of young people and, often, emigration. These challenges include limited employment opportunities, limited access to education and housing and low participation rate of young people in society. In the context of general frustration with the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches to job creation, entrepreneurship is widely seen as key to addressing the employment challenge. There is considerable merit to the argument that the promotion of youth entrepreneurship will promote self-employment, and there is exceptional interest in entrepreneurship by the region's youth (NatCen, 2009). But the research shows that even those without such cultural capital can widen their horizons and raise their aspirations via contact with positive role models and positive experiences (Experian & Ipsos MORI, 2010). For some, it seems that making a career demand is a simple process of choosing a particular route or job. Research by ECOTEC (2006) found that limited employment choices in rural areas are a significant factor that young people feel influences their aspirations. A lack of employment choice and opportunities is a particular issue for those looking for apprenticeships. This is because larger employers are more likely to offer work-based learning opportunities than smaller employers. However, as the rural economy is generally made up of small employers with a very small number of large employers, apprenticeships can be harder to secure than in urban areas. This may reduce young people's belief that they can achieve their aspirations in the local environment and may, therefore, either encourage them to migrate to a different, more urban location, or may make them pursue less ambitious aspirations.

Lambing and Kuehl (2000) have pointed out socio-economic factors as the major issues influencing self-employment. Other authors like Saini and Rathore (2002) argue that social, cultural and economic policies as the main factors affecting self-employment. Another approach to the factors affecting self-employment is described by Khanka (2004). These factors are economic aspect, noneconomic aspects and government measures. The economic aspects comprise of capital, inputs and the market; the non-economic factors are the social and political circumstances such as social mobility, security and psychological factors. The Government measures and actions comprise issues such as economic and industrial policies and strategies which influence both the above factors.

The biggest challenge facing youths is perceptions towards some career lines which in early life may permanently impair young people's future aspirations, as patterns of behaviour and attitudes established at an early stage tend to persist later in life (Geert, 2008). Their exclusion from knowledge about TVET and lack of access to continuing training also increases their later difficulties to find jobs. In addition to depriving them of incomes and the personal fulfillment of decent work, the exclusion of young people from productive roles in the adult world of work can demoralize them and undermine social cohesion. Communities with high levels of youth unemployment are at greater risk of crime, drug abuse and vandalism (Dickerson & McIntosh, 2011).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

About 80% of Kenya's unemployed are between 15 and 34 years of age. The highest unemployment rates are for people around 20 years old, at 35% (World Bank, 2010). One of the Major challenges to youth employment in Kenya are the skills mismatch, search for white collar jobs and inadequate training for in current and emerging labour markets, in particular in technical fields (roads, water, energy, agriculture, ICT and others). Even though these challenges can be addressed by TVET, Maclean and Wilson (2009) observes that the potential of youth empowerment is also greatly limited by the low government investment towards this sector. As most developing countries are either not equipped to pay attention to this aspect or are pre-occupied with other sectors of education leaving the TVET at the mercy of market forces. A study for the World Bank by (Ziderma, 2002) found out that virtually all training systems in Sub-Saharan Africa have to deal with the reality of diminishing government funding for public sector training. Funding towards TVET programs is ad hoc and arbitrary, leading to year after year variations and uncertainty.

In Kenya, attention on TVET is even more dismal in Kiambu County with only 5 institute of technology and two functional and operational Youth Polytechnics. Moreover, there has been notable variable in demand for different courses with fashion design and garment making; motor vehicle mechanics as well as electrical and electronics registering significantly higher demand than other courses (Ministry of Devolution, 2013). To many quarters, the factors behind the low youth empowerment programs are believed to include pitiable youth perceptions and family attitudes compounded by lack of awareness among the youth. The demand could also be contributed by the negative attitude by people that vocational part of it is to failures; low government investment and funding towards TVET programmes. Furthermore, unlike formal education like secondary schools and universities; level of poverty in rural areas may affect the ability of community members to support TVET institutions and trainees; Inflexible and outdated curriculum, mismatch skills,

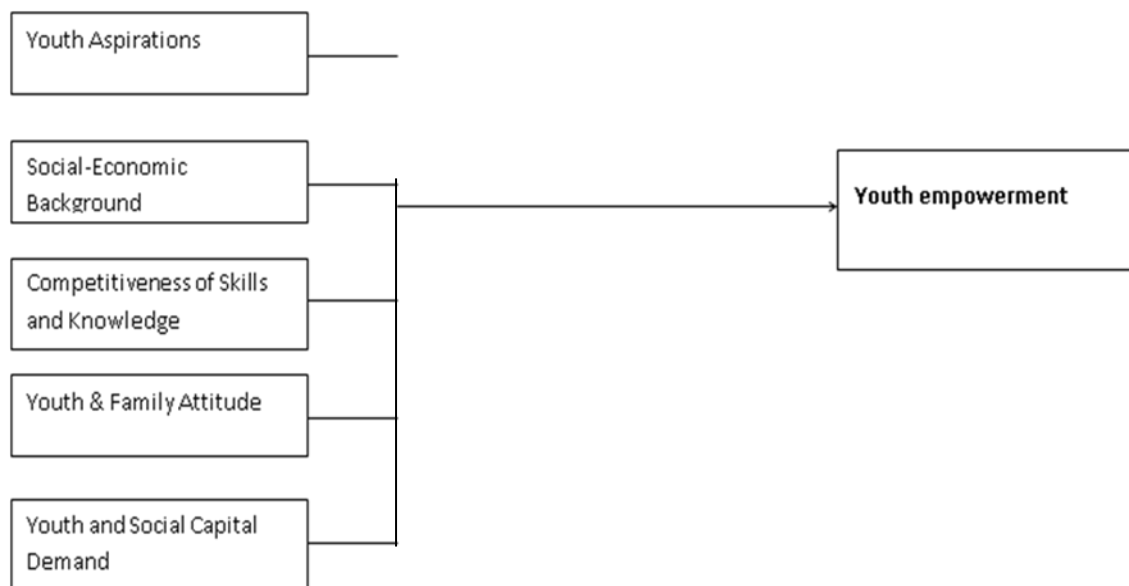
inadequate learning resources, lack of qualified instructors decline in teaching standard is a challenge faced by TVET in Kiambu County. Therefore this study sought to put to rest the speculations into the factors behind the low youth empowerment by examining determinants of the demand for technical and vocational training among the youth in Kiambu County in Kenya.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. To Establish how youth aspirations affect their youth empowerment among the youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County
- ii. Assess the extent to which socio-economic background determines the youth empowerment among the youth in Kiambu County
- iii. Establish how competitiveness of skills and knowledge impact on youth empowerment among the youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County.
- iv. Investigate the extent to which youth and family attitude influences the youth empowerment among the youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County.
- v. Explore how youth and social capital of Kiambu County affects youth empowerment in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Author (2016)

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study applied a observation research design. A description of the indicants of attributes of youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, and their influence on the youth empowerments was conducted in order to establish the relationships between the key study variables namely; aspirations, socio-economic background, competitiveness of skills and knowledge, family attitude, social capital and the demand for TVET. This further justifies the choice of the research design for the study due to its robustness in testing for effects of relationships studies (Raman and Kumar, 2008).

The population of focus comprised of youths in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu only. Students in youth polytechniques are well positioned for the purpose of this study for several reasons. Students samples have been successfully used in previous research by among others Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud (2000). Further, the TVET students provide a broad representative sample drawn from culturally diverse backgrounds. The data analysis was conducted using content analysis which will entail analysis of themes from the qualitative data.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

There is the need for government to urgently consider redesigning the curricula with emphasis on skill acquisition, especially on youth empowerment, if the government target of reducing poverty by year 2020 is to be achieved. This chapter presents findings and discussion of the findings. The chapter is divided into sections based on the themes.

Empowerment of youth aspirations through courses offered:

The study revealed that the courses offered in the institute are marketable and in line with youth aspirations. Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward offer courses in catering, tailoring and computer studies. With the inherent good performance, graduates had many employment prospects. This can be illustrated particularly by those students who had passed their examinations with distinction or credit and were subsequently offered jobs by prestigious firms. Some graduates even went on to further studies. Enterprising graduates entered self-employment. The institute lays emphasis on quality and seeks to improve and maintain the high performance of its trainees. The feedback mechanism from industry helps the institute evaluate its standards and to improve its programmes.

Below are set of pictures taken during the time of observation on the courses offered.

Skills competitiveness and youth empowerment:

Other than marketing the courses, the institution employs qualified and professional staff members who are committed to producing graduates who are competitive in the job market. Facilities are adequate and trainees gain hands-on experience, as well as being exposed to working practices during a three-month industrial attachment. Courses that are offered are popular and marketable. Advertisements for the programmes offered reach out to the target group in a timely manner, and an opinion survey is carried out before introducing new courses. The institute has earned a reputation as a professionally run entity.

It was, therefore, anticipated that this institute would provide the much-needed direction for the TVET system in Kenya. Support services or activities are those that are not directly academic, yet affect the good running of the institute. Some are co-curricular in the sense that they assist in the improvement of the core business of the institution and the well-being of the entire community. These include games, sports and recreational facilities, students' welfare, the hostels and catering services. Committed support staff have the responsibility of overseeing these services. These people carry out their work effectively and efficiently. The Board of Governors humanizes the institution by serving as a moderator between the community and the institution. For example, the Board reaches out to the community by assisting and organizing tree planting in the community by the staff and trainees, especially along the river valleys, and having some people in the community employed in the institute and even receiving on-the-job training if they are unskilled. The Board also has a role to play during Open Days by mobilizing the community to turn up in large numbers to review the projects carried out by trainees. It is in this way that the positive image of the institute is reinforced through the corporate responsibility of the community.

The principal is highly qualified, both in administration and pedagogy. He is well-versed in the technical area and is a forward-looking person able to motivate his team for the common good. Having developed a five-year strategic plan, he has been able to attain a number of quick objectives (low-lying fruits?) which do not imply any expense, such as instilling punctuality, working in teams and having a positive image towards work—among others. He practices a results-based form of management. Targets to be met are clearly stated and specific duties are allocated to particular officers who become accountable for their work. The principal has the ability to enlarge the established government policies by going the 'extra mile' to accomplish his work. For example, he uses his personal car and telephone in the interest of the institute without asking for reimbursement. He consults and liaises freely with other people to find out about the corporate image of the institute in general to help him put things in place. He has been able to instil discipline in the institute, and guidance and counselling personnel are also available to deal with order and the welfare of students.

Empowerment on Social Economic Status of the Youth:

From the survey, it was noted that the provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has been a great intervention in attempts to empower the social economic condition of the youth in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County. The intervention has equipped quite a number of youth with employable skills with which they can access labour markets with the aim of reducing the incidences of unemployment, poverty and other consequences of social and economic exclusion in the county.

All the issues relating to the economic status of the youth proved that their economic status was not the best before the start of the programmes. It was evident that the state of livelihood among the youth is much better.

Empowerment on Competitiveness of Skills And Knowledge among the Youth:

Management of the TVET institutions in Kiambu County is wanting. The study revealed that management performance is not measured in these institutions. This could mean that either standards of performance are not set or that performance is not an important variable in these institutions. The employees of these institutions do not find the current management of TVET system in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu motivating. The research found that students occasionally drop out of TVET programs and that there are complaints by teachers and students concerning the quality of training. It was also observed that teachers occasionally lacked training materials. The level of efficiency in the technical and vocational education and training institutes was found to be generally poor.

Consequently, technical and vocational training in Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County has lost its relevance and the TVET institutions have gained a negative image due to their poor state and several challenges faced by the institutions. Some of these challenges include lack of sufficient government funding, lack of modern facilities, outdated technology and lack of training materials for both teachers and students. Lack of technology was found to have impacted negatively on the students and teachers: They lack exposure to newest technology and therefore teachers need more learning (re-training) because they were found to lack the necessary skills. Both the teachers and students have poor technology awareness. Consequently, the graduating students lack marketable skills.

Empowerment on Youth Attitude:

Trainers who join technical or vocational centers for training in Kiambu County have already formed opinions; some of which are culturally based. It was noted that many youths have accorded low status to craft and vocational education. Masonry, tailoring, carpentry, driving, dressmaking and metal work are despised. Only a few youth have enrolled for these courses in the training centres. This could be attributed to some cultural beliefs towards technically related work.

The lack of business mentors or positive role models within the rural set up of the county whom the youth can look upon with admiration, reinforces this perception. Having been used to a curriculum that is too academic and theoretical, the youth have developed a culture of dislike for practical based courses. This may have militated against the concept of self employment and rural industrialization propagated by vocational training through youth polytechnics. The optional nature of technical subjects in secondary education tends to create the impression that the none-technical subjects are more important. This attitude is strengthened by the recurrent budget allocations reduction by the Government to TIVETs and the recent developments where technical institutions and National polytechnics are being transformed into universities to offer non technical subjects.

The fact that the buildings and other teaching learning resources in public youth polytechnics are in poor condition compared to other public learning institutions. This could create the impression that the youth polytechnics are of less importance as training institutions. It could also lead to the perception that vocational education is a preserve of the poor and the educationally backward sections of the community, low achievers and drop outs that are not eligible for admission into higher education. This could explain the low enrolment rate in the institutions. The courses offered do not relate to the local activities either through provision of goods and services. This divorces them from the community which may result to misconceptions.

6. CONCLUSION

From the results, it is clear that the provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a necessary intervention in attempts to empower people and reduce poverty. This makes it clear that if people, especially the youth, are equipped with employable skills with which they can access labour markets, then the incidence of unemployment, poverty and other consequences of social and economic exclusion would be reduced. There is a need to establish a secure and poverty free nation for youth to become influential members of any society. Poverty, hunger, homelessness society, sickness and lack of security are paramount issues that require immediate attention of the Kiambu County government, if young people are expected to become leaders of the future. For many youths in Kiambu County, these problems are daily challenges, when they cannot feed, clothe or shelter themselves or their immediate family, they surely cannot realize their full potentials, since the need for survival is so overwhelming a good number of young people have fallen victim to the pressures of survival and have ended up as armrobbers, prostitutes scammers, or militants fighting whatever cause, give them a glimmer of hope. The failure of the government to revitalise the technical and vocational training (TVET) education with emphasis to empower the youth for self-actualization and employment to satisfy basic social needs, exacerbates these problems. It is therefore imperative to note that, the world needs educated and skilled workers with Kanyariri Polytechnique in Gitaru ward, Kiambu County youths at the core, and technical and vocational educational training (TVET) could fill the void.

This study has established that there are various factors influencing youth empowerment. The low-status of TVET institutions is slowly fading, although some misgivings persist regarding manual work, as well as parental expectations about their children's careers. Setting goals for the institution to achieve, along with a vision and mission, are assets that would aid him or her to manage the institution's ability to carry out its responsibilities. Furthermore, teamwork and a positive attitude towards work on the part of all stakeholders—students, teachers, parents and the community are necessary ingredients to bring about a successful institutional performance. Indeed, hierarchical influence and loyalty to the principal on the part of subordinates are central to the principal's success and his/her effectiveness in the institutional setting. It is clear that the willingness of persons to co-operate with each other makes them contribute extra efforts to the organization and this is indispensable.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on how to achieve entrepreneurial skills education through Technical Vocational Education and Training. i. Entrepreneurial skills and workshop on how to find business ideas should be integrated in school curriculum to encourage young people to start their own business. Policy actions in this regard would include: - Giving priority to mathematics and science education at all levels of education and offering incentives to science teachers. - Providing adequate financing for vocational/technical training. - Linking vocational and entrepreneurial training with job centres to ensure that the skills profiles supplied match demand. - Encouraging out-of-school young people to be involved in vocational training to promote social inclusion as well as enhance employability. ii. The education system should provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance employability of young people after graduation. iii. Government should encourage private sector's participation in the delivery of Technical Vocational Education and Training. iv. Due to the socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Kiambu County, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued. v. Given the likelihood of challenges, government should offer incentives such as "tax holiday", and adequate protection from foreign competitors, as well as patent rights to spur more desire for innovation. These recommendations if pursued vigorously would no doubt remove the youth and adult alike from the shackle of poverty holding the universe to ransom.

In addition, principals of TVET institutions should be highly qualified individuals in the relevant technical areas and should also have some administrative skills. Goal-setting or some kind of (theoretical) framework that ties in with the vision and mission of the institution and its strategic plan are an asset in helping the institution to carry out its functions. Principals should carry out their responsibilities in such a manner that their staff perceives that management is working in their favour and is responsive to their needs; one such example being to undertake corporate social responsibility. Tangible targeted results should be recorded every time they occur in order to encourage persons to work harder and achieve more. This, in itself, is an incentive scheme. Payments should be related to production; for every result there must be a reason or an explanation. Principals should apply modern approaches in human-resource management since these are critical in changing the perceptions of moribund institutions. Bureaucracy should be flexible and not the only agency responsible for the running of a TVET institution. People outside the administration must be allowed to give suggestions about what can be done to overcome a particular problem and should be permitted actually to perform some activities themselves.

My personal feelings about the institution are that, with the support of academic staff, workers, trainees, the community and other stakeholders, it has become a centre of excellence able to prepare trainees to meet the challenges of the job market. This requires dynamic leadership of the calibre demonstrated by the principal. Certainly this experience can be replicated in other institutions with similar characteristics. Moreover, the status of the institution can be maintained or improved because of the momentum that has been instilled by the current principal should he be transferred.

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