

Support Systems as Antecedents for Self-Employment among TVET Graduate In Kenya

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Abstract: This paper assesses the effect of the following support systems as antecedents of self-employment among TVET graduates: The study adopted both explanatory and descriptive survey design .The study followed mixed method approach and employed both qualitative and quantitative technique. The study targeted 527 technician graduates from TVET institutions in Nakuru county Kenya. Simple random was used to select 320 sample size. Findings from Multiple Regression analysis indicated that entrepreneurship education, career guidance provision, tracking of graduates, links to professional networks and business incubation had significant and positive effect of self-employment. The findings have showed that the TVET institutions in Kenya have poor support systems although such systems have been shown to have positive effect on self-employment among the graduates. Furthermore, in order to have TVET institutions that are well equipped to meet the needs of the industry, additional funding should be channelled to these institutions with the aim of establishing adequately resourced institutions financially, asset and equipment and human capital

Keywords: Support Systems, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship Education, Career Guidance, Networks Business Incubation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Business incubation can strengthen competency based teaching and learning to make it easier for graduates of TVET to formulate intelligent use of the product of technology and develop better entrepreneurial skills and create innovative workers (Kikechi *et al.*, 2013; Mulder & Winterton, 2014; Otuya *et al.*, 2013). For graduates to succeed in self employment they require incubators nurture entrepreneurs, who create enterprises, of which some would after leaving the incubator create direct and indirect employment, with incomes and assets, which in turn contribute to sustainable economic growth.

For one to survive in a competitive labour market and lack of jobs there should be a supportive environment that can enable new graduates to transit into employment or self employment. The study agree with a study by Hasmori *et al.* (2015) that Training institutions also seem not to track the employment destination of their graduates. Consequently, the institutions have not taken advantage of feedback from past trainees on the quality of the training they have received to improve their curricula and training packages (Mayombe & Lombard, 2015). In short, the implementation of outcome evaluation and tracer studies that can improve the market responsiveness of training programmes is still lacking.

Similarly, Ncube *et al.* (2014) maintains that lack of employment and entrepreneurial experience, weak links to professional networks, and limited start-up capital and access to credit renders young people unemployed. Indeed, young entrepreneurs face higher cost than adults when searching for opportunities and turning them into profitable business. Youth view professional network as a critical factor into self employment since it is difficult to start and run a business without knowing your customers and their taste. In addition, Skriabikova *et al.* (2014) indicated that easy access to information on self-employment, access to wealth and social networks all enhance business opportunities and can potentially reduce the perceived uncertainty associated with self-employment. Thus, this study hypothesized that:

- H₀₁: There is no effect of Entrepreneurship Education on self-employment among TVET graduates*
- H₀₂: There is no effect of Career guidance Provision on self-employment among TVET graduates*
- H₀₃: There is no effect of graduate follow up on self-employment among TVET graduates*
- H₀₄: There is no effect of professional networks on self-employment among TVET graduates*
- H₀₅: There is no effect of Business Incubation on self-employment among TVET graduates*

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial capabilities and competences can be supported and nurtured through training. Vocational training play a key role in developing entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable economies. Entrepreneurship training is relevant in vocational training as self-employment is a realistic option for many VET students, who end up establishing their own businesses (CEDEFOP, 2011). The technical and professional skills gained in vocational training form the basis for setting-up a new business, but professional skills alone do not help a company survive and succeed. Entrepreneurial mind-sets, skills and competences are also needed to maximise the benefits of professional skills and expertise for company success, growth, and innovation (European Business Forum on Vocational Training, 2012).

Entrepreneurship training often aims at boosting start-ups, innovative ventures and new jobs. However, entrepreneurship is a competence for all as it supports individuals to become more creative and self-confident in any career path that they may pursue. In other words, entrepreneurship is a competence that can increase individual employability. In vocational training entrepreneurship training can be particularly effective as students are

close to entering working life and due to apprenticeship training (internship) they may test their vocational and entrepreneurial competences already during their studies and training.

Entrepreneurship training has role in supporting the acquisition and development of entrepreneurship skills (Henry et al., 2005a). A business opportunity is considered to form the core of entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Shook et al., 2003) and therefore opportunity recognition needs to be addressed in entrepreneurship training. An entrepreneur needs both knowledge (science) to exploit the business opportunity and new ways of thinking, new kinds of skills as well as new modes of behaviour (art) to create and discover new opportunities to be effectively exploited

Empirical evidence shows that late adolescents with career choice problems often have high levels of psychological problems. For example, Feldman (2003) found several factors, such as low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and low cognitive abilities to be positively related to career indecision. University students who made a career decision were less depressed than students who were undecided (Rottinghaus et al., 2009). Also Creed et al. (2004) found positive relations between indicators of adaptation and wellbeing, and indications of career decisiveness: high levels of self-efficacy, optimism, self-esteem, and low levels of pessimism and a low tendency to perceive external barriers were significant predictors for career decision, in which self-esteem emerged as the sole significant individual predictor. In another study, Creed and Patton (2003) found that self-efficacy, age, career decidedness (certainty) and work commitment were the main predictors of career maturity attitude. Kunnen et al. (2009) found that individuals who sought help for their career choice problems had above average levels of psychological problems and less effective coping strategies. Skorikov (2007) suggests that because of the relation between career choice problems and psychological problems, and because career choice is so important for large groups of late adolescents, career choice counseling should be a standard component of general prevention programs for adolescents.

Establishing meaningful relationships through such networks has also been found to improve firm performance by increasing social capital that can result in securing adequate financing, access to potential customers and specialized education (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Shane and Cable, 2002). Such networks help form trust quickly in the beginning of a relationship, particularly when direct experience with the other party is limited. Reputation is an important strategic resource and helps distinguish minority firms from competitors (Flanagan and O'Shaughnessy, 2005).

Network's hold the advantage that a person or business can gain access to personal or relevant information, combine diverse skills and create a power made possible by the combined effort (Uzzi and Dunlap, 2005). The importance of business networks is emphasised by two drivers. Firstly, to bridge the structural gaps through the relationship ties that bind different components of the network together and secondly, the need to even further enhance the cooperative motives and relationships between the different network players to develop more dense relationships and create a strong sense of community (Kadushin, 2002). According to Misner and Morgan (2000), networking will become increasingly important for a variety of reasons. These reasons include the ever-changing environment, the degree of

constancy offered by relationships and the technological innovations of the modern era that do not recognise the importance of human interaction.

Summary and Gaps Identified

The literature reviewed indicates that worldwide the problem of unemployment go hand in hand with questions on responsiveness of education. The demands in labour market today are based on technologies that did not exist 50 years ago (Darvas & Palmer, 2014). The jobs which have recently emerged includes new one in information technology, service industry, sell of electronics that are based largely on technology developed in the past 10 to 20 years (Pavlova, 2007). Indeed, with these changes new jobs are created which require extra skills in addition to technical skills which can be an answer to high rate of unemployment. TVET institutions need to shift focus to training that can prepare graduates in readiness for the modern world of work where there are new jobs for self employment.

In this study the preparation of diploma in engineering graduates for self employment in Kenya was investigated. Diploma in engineering program is practically oriented and it has opportunities for self employment in electrical energy, construction, automotive and mechanical industries which all seem to be having positive opportunities to large number of youth who are unproductive despite having technical skills growth. Well-trained workers are better innovators, as a requirement by the labour market good training programs should be a key priority for those training institutions aiming to survive in the 21st century. There is little research in the reviewed literature which has investigated how training of diploma in engineering prepares trainees for self employment in a dynamic labour market. The present study aims to contribute towards filling of this gap.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted both explanatory and descriptive survey design to identify various support system for TVET graduate and how they affect self-employment. The study followed mixed method approach and employed both qualitative and quantitative technique. The study targeted 527 technician graduate from TVET institutions in Nakuru county Kenya. Simple random was used to select 320 sample size. Quantitative data analysis will be done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. Multiple Regression analysis was done to establish relationships between selected independent and dependent variables.

IV. FINDINGS

Support Systems that Enable TVET Trainees to Transit into Self Employment

Research sought to find out existence of support systems that enables trainees to transit to self employment. The questionnaire sought answers to research question four using five (5) items on a five point scale, TVET diploma in engineering graduates were asked to rate existence of support systems on a 5 point scale. The scale range and weighting was as follows: “Very Good”, “Good”, “I don’t know”, “Poor” and “Very Poor”. It may be noted that existence of support system determines the placement of individuals to work place.

Table 1: Support Systems Provided in TVET Institutions

	Very Good	Good	I Don't Know	Poor	Very Poor
Entrepreneurship Education	43(16.0%)	58(21.6%)	08(03.0%)	82(30.6%)	77(28.7%)
Career guidance Provision	37(13.8%)	55(20.5%)	07(02.6%)	95(35.4%)	74(27.6%)
Tracking of Graduates	35(13.1%)	50(18.7%)	08(03.0%)	96(35.8%)	79(29.5%)
Links to professional networks	23(08.6%)	37(13.8%)	09(03.4%)	108(40.2%)	91(34.0%)
Business Incubation	19(07.1%)	27(10.1%)	06(02.2%)	119(44.4%)	97(36.2%)

Entrepreneurship Education Learnt in TVET Institutions

The acquisition of entrepreneurship education in TVET institutions was rated poor by 82(30.6%) of the respondents, very poor by 77(28.7%), good by 58(21.6%) and very poor by 43(16.0%) as shown in Table 1. In overall, 159(59.3%) of the respondents indicated that entrepreneurship education is poorly practiced in TVET institutions. The finding is in agreement with studies that indicates that entrepreneurship education acquired in TVET institution is only for passing examinations and not assisting graduates while they face real world of self employment (Adams *et al.*, 2013; Amanchukwu & Ezekiel-Hart, 2013). In addition self employment especially for new entrants needs practical skills on how so start up and run a business (Kikechi *et al.*, 2013; Mwangi, 2015; Otuya *et al.*, 2013). This implies that entrepreneurship education given to trainees in TVET institution is for passing examination and has never assisted unemployed graduates be self employed.

Entrepreneurship is important in enabling TVET graduates to become involved in the mainstream of the economy. Technical content combined with entrepreneurial skills are very important for business start up or self employment. The finding is further supported by FGD with trainers held in Eldoret town showed that:

“Engaging in self-employment is not easy especially for new a beginner without mentors to offer support even if he or she has starting capital. One needs to be introduced into business network that exist to reach clients and suppliers. Tracking of former trainees to know where they are can assist new graduates to get hooked to those who have already succeeded in engaging in self-employment” (FGD with trainees in Eldoret Town)

Provision of Career Guidance and Counselling in TVET institutions

When asked to rate provision of career guidance and counselling 95(35.4%) of the respondents rated it as poor, 74(27.6%) as very poor, 55(20.5%) as good and 37(13.8%) as very good as shown in Table 28. In overall 169(63.0%) of the respondents indicated that career guidance and counselling was poorly carried in TVET institutions. The finding is in agreement with studies that indicate that a career-oriented learning environment is lacking in TVET institutions hence trainees are not effectively guided in their career choice (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2011; Munishi, 2016; Sultana & Watts, 2008). In addition TVET institutions is said to lack effective career guidance and counselling that assist trainees planning and implementing

informed educational and occupational choices (Borgen & Hiebert, 2014; Munishi, 2016). This implies TVET institutions do not take serious career guidance and counselling programs which assist trainees who need to be mentored and guided as they walk alone in their career path. The finding is supported by qualitative finding through FGD with trainees.

“I never sought for guidance and counselling in my former institution since I thought it was meant for those with social problems like over indulgence in alcohol. I never believed that counsellors had capacity to give guidance and counselling across all programs since in most cases the department is headed by individual grounded in particular program” (FGD with trainees Eldoret town).

Tracking Graduates to know their Whereabouts

When asked to rate tracking of graduates by their former institutions to know their whereabouts as follows: poor by 98(36.6%), very poor by 81(30.2%), 09(03.4%), I don't know, good by 47(17.5%) and very poor by 33(12.3%) as shown in Table 28. In general 179(66.8%) of the respondents believed that tracking of TVET graduates by former institutions is poorly practiced. This is in agreement with studies that indicate that training institutions do not track the employment destination of their graduates hence lacks feedback from past trainees on how to improve their curricula and training packages (Acakpovi & Nutassey, 2015; Leong, 2011; Mulugeta & Mekonen, 2016; Yusuff & Soyemi, 2012). This implies that graduates are a forgotten lot once they have graduated, even retrieving their records in their former institutions difficult because they are of no use as they prepare another group for examination and graduation. The finding is supported by qualitative finding through interview with trainers that:

“We do not know whereabouts of our graduates in the world of work once they have graduated that linkage is disconnected. Ours is training; searching for job is graduates responsibility, but we are happy when hears that they have excelled out there” (Trainer No. 1 OTTI)

Linkage to Business Network

Linkage to professional network was ranked very poor by 91(34.0%) of the respondents, poor by 108(40.2%), fair by 09(03.4%), good by 37(13.8%) and very good by only 23(08.6%) as summarised in Table 1. In overall 199(74.2%) of the respondents indicated that linkage to existing business network was poorly practiced in TVET institutions. This means that TVET linkage of graduates to business community as a support system is very minimal. The finding is in agreement with studies that indicate TVET institutions failed to connect graduates to business community that supports self employment (Kingombe, 2012; Nyerere, 2009; Ogbuanya & Izuoba, 2015). This implies that fresh graduates from TVET institutions struggle on their own in starting and running a business without support they are in need of. This eventually may discourage those who fail even in first attempt since it is difficult for them to sail through in a competitive business environment. Many get discouraged and return to informal employment where they are paid little without job security. Support system is very important for new entrants into labour market especially for

those with specific technical skills. The finding is supported by qualitative finding through FGD with trainees in Nakuru town that:

“We come to realise the importance of business network while we play part in the world of work. Business network is like club composed of producers and clients and one needs to be introduced or connected to this portal where you can access clients of your products. No one knows you and your product it requires introduction to existing supplies and opportunities offered by established market” (FGD No. 1 Nakuru town)

Business Incubation in TVET Institutions

When asked to rate how TVET institutions prepare trainees for business operations through business incubation set up, 119(44.4%) of the respondents rated poor, 97(36.2%) very poor, 06(02.2%) fair, 27(10.1%) good and 19(07.1%) rated very good. In overall 216(80.6%) of the respondents believed that business incubation was poorly practiced in TVET institutions. The finding seemed to rate business incubation as being poorly practiced in TVET institutions. The finding is in agreement with studies that indicate TVET institutions do not impart their graduates with sufficient entrepreneurship skills because they lack business incubation facilities (Holmes, 2009; Libombo & Dinis, 2015; Musobo & Gaga, 2012). This implies that TVET institutions lack capacity in terms of human capital and funds to set up and operate business incubations.

“Although it is well documented in Vision 2030 that TVET institutions to initiate and implement business incubations it has never taken off due to lack of funding and capacity building of trainers by concerned ministries. I can categorically say it has not been practised in TVET institutions.” (Trainer No.1 KTTI)

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires has been presented in form of frequencies and percentages on tables and analysed accordingly. The qualitative findings have been used accordingly to confirm quantitative findings. Graduates consider their training as an avenue to paid employment in public formal sector and self employment is a second option. Nevertheless TVET graduates rate training process as poor since it does not prepare graduates for self employment.

The respondents considered training facilities in TVET institutions did not give enough practical skills to graduates hence are confident to engage in self employment. The training in TVET institutions was offered through demonstrations because of high cost of having equipped workshop to cater for each individual trainee. This means that graduates were inadequately prepared in hands on skills required in self employment. Similarly, the graduates considered soft skills and support system more important since these are skills that enable one to identify opportunities and turn them into self employment. Major issues that transpired during interview which include mentoring of graduates into self employment through guidance and counselling, connecting to existing business network and making entrepreneurship education practical. The study found out that the skills learnt in TVET can be applied in self-employment.

Testing of hypotheses

Table 2: Testing of hypotheses

	$\Delta y/\Delta x$	Std. Error	P value
(Constant)	0.405*	0.204	0.048
Entrepreneurship Education	0.331*	0.045	0.000
Career guidance Provision	0.197*	0.066	0.002
Tracking of Graduates	0.182*	0.059	0.001
Links to professional networks	0.178*	0.054	0.002
Business Incubation	0.106	0.002	0.433
R Square	0.524		
Adjusted R Square	0.518		
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.37466		
F Change	89.497		
df1	4		
df2	105		
Sig. F Change	0.000		
Durbin-Watson	1.968		

The R - squared in Table 2 shows that a unit change in the explanatory variables will lead to 52.4% change in self-employment (R -squared =0.524) that is, 52.4% of the variation in self-employment is accounted for by the 5 explanatory variables. This is complimented by the Adjusted R -Squared of 0.518. The significant value of the F - Statistic further justifies that the model is not biased. The Durbin- Watson statistic is used to test for first order serial correlation and in this case, the rule of thumb is that for serial correlation not to be a serious problem the statistic has to be less than 2 thus serial correlation is not a problem, 1.968.

The Goodness of fit of the model was also tested. The findings in Table 2 indicated that the model was a good fit and none of the estimated parameters was equal to zero, $F(4, 105) = 89.497, p = 0.000$. Thus, the model was fit to predict self-employment among TVET Technician Graduates in Kenya. In addition, holding every other explanatory variable constant, the findings show that self-employment would be negative and significant, $\beta_0 = 0.405, p = 0.048$.

The regression model estimated as showed in Table 2 was used in testing of the hypotheses. Findings in Table 2 showed that entrepreneurship education has a significant and positive effect on self-employment $\beta_1 = 0.331 (p = 0.000)$ at 5% level of significance. This shows that at 5% level of significance, a unit increase in entrepreneurship education would result in self-employment increasing by 0.331 units. These findings indicate that the hypothesis stating that *there is no effect of Entrepreneurship Education on self-employment among TVET graduates* is not accepted. However, despite this finding, there are gaps in terms of the practice of entrepreneurship education in TVET institutions with majority have poor support systems and this confirms that entrepreneurship education acquired in TVET institution is only for passing examinations and not assisting graduates while they face real world of self-employment (Adams *et al.*, 2013; Amanchukwu & Ezekiel-Hart, 2013).

The findings also showed that career guidance provision has a positive and significant effect on self-employment, $\beta_2 = 0.197$ and $p = 0.002$ at 5% level of significance. This means that each unit increase in career guidance provision results in an increase in self-employment by 0.197 units. These findings indicate that the hypothesis stating that *there is no effect of career guidance provision on self-employment among TVET graduates* is not accepted. Nonetheless, there are gaps as indicated by 63.0% of the respondents who rated career guidance provision as poor in TVET institutions. These findings highlight on the gaps in the provision of career guidance hence the trainees are not able to come up with planned and effective career decisions. This implies TVET institutions do not take serious career guidance and counselling programs which assist trainees who need to be mentored and guided as they walk alone in their career path. The finding is supported by qualitative finding through FGD with trainees.

The findings showed that the tracking of the graduates has a positive and significant effect on self-employment, $\beta_3 = 0.182$, $p = 0.001$. This indicates that with each unit increase in the tracking of the graduates, self-employment would increase by 0.182 units. These findings indicate that the hypothesis stating that *there is no effect of graduate follow up on self-employment among TVET graduates* is not accepted. However, despite this result, the overall tracking of graduates by TVET institutions is done poorly as indicated by 66.8% of the respondents. This means that the progress of the graduates is not tracked and the institutions are not able to assess whether the skills gained by the graduates are in line with the industry needs and plug any gaps that exist especially in their curricula and training packages (Acakpovi & Nutassey, 2015; Leong, 2011; Mulugeta & Mekonen, 2016; Yusuff & Soyemi, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that links to professional networks have a positive and significant effect on self-employment, $\beta_4 = 0.178$, $p = 0.002$ and shows that each unit increase in links to professional networks results in 0.178 unit increase in self-employment. These findings show that the hypothesis stating that *there is no effect of professional networks on self-employment among TVET graduates* is not accepted. However, despite this, 74.2% of the respondents indicated that linkage to professional networks is poorly practiced in TVET institutions. As such, the graduates are not connected to the business community that supports self-employment (Kingombe, 2012; Nyerere, 2009; Ogbuanya & Izuoba, 2015) and are left to navigate on their own hence resulting in uninformed decisions without any support. Such graduates run the risk of discouragement given the nature of the business terrain. Support system is very important for new entrants into labour market especially for those with specific technical skills.

The findings however revealed that business incubation does not have a significant effect on self-employment, $\beta_5 = 0.106$, $p = 0.433$ at 5% level of significance. These findings show that the hypothesis stating that *there is no effect of Business Incubation on self-employment among TVET graduates* is not rejected. This is confirmed by the findings that showed that 80.6% of the respondents rated the level of business incubation was poorly practiced. This is mainly because these institutions lack adequate business incubation facilities (human capital and funds) (Holmes, 2009; Libombo & Dinis, 2015; Musobo & Gaga, 2012) and thus are not able to impart their graduates with the necessary business skills.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper assesses the effect of the following support systems as antecedents of self-employment among TVET graduates: entrepreneurship education, career guidance provision, tracking of graduates, links to professional networks and business incubation. The findings have showed that the TVET institutions in Kenya have poor support systems although such systems have been shown to have positive effect on self-employment among the graduates.

One of the challenges that such TVET institutions face is that they are poorly funded and have inadequate human capital as well as teaching resources. Furthermore, the curriculum does not reflect the industrial need and is however only structured to the passing of examinations rather than the imparting of practical and required skills. This has resulted in the graduates lacking essential skills in entrepreneurship and hence do not understand how to navigate the business environment when they venture into self-employment. Furthermore, because of this dire situation among TVET institutions, the graduates are poorly guided in terms of their career choices resulting in many of them making uninformed career decisions. To add to the problem, the TVET institutions do not have in place mechanisms through which their graduates can be tracked and from it lessons learned about the industry that could lead to the restructuring of their curricula to suit industry needs. More so, the TVET institutions lack the capacity to link their graduations to professional networks and they are thus left to navigate the industry on their own given that majority even lack the capacity to implement business incubation strategies. As such, there are glaring gaps within the structure of TVET institutions in Kenya which has a negative effect on self-employment among their graduates.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the gaps identified that is inherent among TVET institutions in Kenya, there is need to review the structures and policies that are utilized in these institutions. The Kenya Vision 2030 identifies the importance of the establishment of a vibrant manufacturing sector through SMEs and it is identified as one area through which employment can be created. However, there is a clear mis-match between what the industry needs and what is taught or imparted on graduates in TVET institutions. There is need to review the curricula of these institutions with the aim of bringing together the participation of all stakeholders from the educational sector and the industries in order to structure out practical curricula that are able to adequately meet the demands of the industry.

Furthermore, in order to have TVET institutions that are well equipped to meet the needs of the industry, additional funding should be channelled to these institutions with the aim of establishing adequately resourced institutions financially, asset and equipment and human capital. There is also need for continual partnership with the industry in order to develop technologically sound innovations that can meet both local and international standards. This means both local and international partnership.

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