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Assessment of the Effectiveness of County Governments in the Development of Vocational Training Centers in Vihiga County, Kenya

By

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Abstract

Despite the rationale for the introduction of safety nets such as bursaries and constituency development fund in the education sector, there are increasing concerns over the underdeveloped Vocational Training Centers and their incompetence to provide quality education and training. Therefore, this study sought to find out effectiveness of County Government in the provision of quality education and training in Vocational Training Centers in Vihiga, Kenya. The study was guided by the following research questions; which approaches have been used to fund Vocational Training Centers, which measures have been put in place to promote enrolment in Vocational Training Centers?, how has the County Government of Vihiga supported the acquisition of instructional materials?, and what has the County done in the staffing of Vocational Training Centers?. The research adopted mixed methods research design (Convergent parallel design) involving Cross sectional survey and phenomenological study. A random sample of 100 instructors was drawn from Vocational Training Centers in Vihiga County. The Vocational Training Centers were clustered per sub-county then simple random sampling was used to draw an average of 20 instructors from each Sub-County. The researcher used purposive sampling to select 16 managers from the Vocational Training Centers who participated in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires, Interview guides and document analysis guide. In order to ensure reliability of instruments, the researcher used split half method for pilot testing, and then the scores obtained from the Likert scale items were subjected to Cronbach alpha coefficient. During the study quantitative data was generated and hence descriptive statistics (frequencies, sum, Mean, percentages and Standard Deviation) was used for data analysis and presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. In view of the data obtained, the Vocational Training Centers were having challenges in acquiring teaching and learning materials and staffing though the County Government had made efforts to improve Vocational Training Centers resulting into increased enrolment of trainee's .Similarly the researcher developed patterns from qualitative data hence expected and unexpected themes were generated for the variables to express situation at the Vocational Training Centers.

Key words: Effectiveness, County Governments, Development, Vocational Training Centers

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1.0 Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a critical element in supporting and accelerating development, inclusive growth and poverty reduction through economic transformation and job creation. Formal vocational training and new forms of skills development should equip people with the skills enabling them to get good jobs and to face the key challenges posed by globalization, the informal economy and, in the shorter term, recovery from the global crisis (EC 2017). In sub-Saharan Africa, the training for youth skills has been emphasized as a way of handling the increasing poverty, slow economic growth, unemployment and conflicts (Balwanz, 2012). However, youth from poor family backgrounds still find it hard to access the available youth polytechnics. In addition, some of the students provided have skills that are irrelevant to the job market.

A developing country like Kenya highly requires proper education and training of its population. According to Government of Kenya (GoK) Skills Gap Analysis Report (2012), seventy five percent (75%) of the population are youth, and only thirty nine percent (39%) of this population is absorbed in the job market leaving the rest unemployed. Majority of the youth are found in the rural areas and due to the scarce resources they migrate to towns to compete for the limited job opportunities. They end up in the slums where they are vulnerable to recruitment into gangs and militia groups to eke out for a living (GoK 2012). USAID (2014) an international Non-governmental Organization having done an assessment work force connection on Kenyan youth informs that, Policy implementation is an immediate area for intervention to support TVET, including improving market relevance, quality, and results-focused approaches to certification by encouraging partnerships. Similarly older youth and class 8 leave out requires a combination of soft skills, entrepreneurship training and apprenticeships to enhance their productivity in the formal and informal sectors.

The constitution of Kenya (CoK 2010) sought to transform the way of governance and management of society. As such, a central tenet of the constitution is the implementation of devolved Government. In implementing this system, the constitution in Articles 174 and 175 envisions the power of self-governance by the people and their enhanced participation in decision-making. In addition, the constitution requires proximate and easily accessible service delivery for the benefit of the people of Kenya. In this regard, the constitution envisages that the implementation of the system of devolved government will focus on empowerment, equity, prudent use of public resources and enhanced service delivery. Vihiga County Integrated Development Plan (2013-17) informs that Provision of quality and affordable education has been a challenge. The number of education facilities do not meet the needs of the growing learner population at all levels. This situation is further complicated by the shortage of staff and learning materials at all levels including vocational training. The cost of education is relatively high and hence the growing needs of the bright and needy learners in Vihiga County have not been adequately addressed. The County Government intended to partner with all key stakeholders with a view of addressing these problems. So far there is no justification to whether the situation has changed from 2013. It is from this background that

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the researcher carried out a study on assessment of the effectiveness of County Government in the development of Vocational Training Centers in Vihiga County, Kenya.

Research Questions

The following research objectives guided the study.

1. Which strategies have the County Government of Vihiga used to fund Vocational Training Centers?
2. What measures have been put in place by the County Government of Vihiga to promote enrolment in Vocational Training Centers?
3. To what extent has County Government of Vihiga supported the acquisition of instructional materials and equipment's to enhance training in Vocational Training Centers?

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Weirsmas (1985:13) said that theories help to provide a framework by serving as the spring board for the pursuit of research problem and they help to identify the crucial factor and provide a guide for systemizing and inter-relating the various facets of the research. In carrying out the study the researcher adopted the Human Capital Theory. . The Human Capital Theory has been proposed by Schulz (1961) and developed extensively by Becker (1964). Human Capital Theory provides a framework which justifies expenditure on educational provision to achieve and enhance development. The theory posits that investment in education and training increases labour production by embodying in the labour increased skills and knowledge (McConnell 1995, Shultz 1971 and 1994). Investment in human resource is important in both raising the worth of individual as well as creating skills that could be reaped in societal development (Nishimura et al, 1999). In this study the theory provides a basis to why it is important to undertake a keen assessment of what the county governments and legislators are doing to promote education and training in the VTCs for the purpose of economic and social benefits.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

This section deals with review of literature related to development of VTCs and Vocational Training Centers. A discussion exploring the knowledge gaps on the development of VTCs is synchronized with the review.

2.1 Strategies of Funding Vocational Training Centers

Funding of Youth Polytechnics is a very key role that has been done by National Governments before devolution of Vocational Training to County Governments. In Germany Zideman (2016) in a policy paper No.110 informs that a central feature common to virtually all training systems is the pressing need to augment the total amount of funding for public sector training, in the light of a paucity of government funding - in part the result of increasing calls on government funding from competing sectors and the adoption of structural adjustment policies in many developing countries. The response is greater funding diversification: seeking alternative or additional funding for public training from other sources. Funding diversification can take various forms; in particular, five different avenues may be pursued, separately or in combination. This includes Cost sharing, Development partner support, tuition fees, Income from production and services and Private training provision.

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Nyerere (2009) observes that several countries developed and developing, such as Italy, Brazil, China, Sweden and Japan have given more recognition to technical, vocational education and training through adequate funding. As a result students get exposed to vocational training and to a culture of scientific investigation and application at an early age.

Different financing mechanisms were proposed by Simiyu (2009) courtesy UNESCO-UNEVOC. These mechanisms give right to enterprise to raise funds for training its own labor force by establishing sponsorship programs with international donors. The other method of generating financial incentives for trainees who participate in the TVET is motivating them to stay in the training. In countries like Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and UK, money is directly allocated to trainees. This approach enables learners to take part in the training program. Besides, it contributes for the development of positive attitude, motivation and participation of trainees toward TVET (Cedefop, 2010). The study employed qualitative study hence lacking solid figures to express the exact amounts and impact on development of Vocational training Centers.

According to Sessional paper no 14 of 2012 enrolment in TVET institutions rose from 71,167 in 2006 to 82,843 in 2010. It is during this period that the government continuously allocated substantial amount of money, from 92.6 Billion in 2005/2006 to 160 Billion in 2009/2010 F/Y, which is about 27% of total government spending in education and training sector. The move by the government to introduce tuition subsidy in all public YPs across the country was because of a number of reasons; most of the YP trainees were school drop outs from poor backgrounds who could not afford fees in formal school systems, the level of retention was very low compared to enrolment level and the quality of training was poor.

The VTCs are encountering inadequate financial and human resources. It has become hard for the VTCs to provide youth who are well qualified because they lack enough tools to take them throughout their course successfully (Muli & Musyoka, 2013). In addition, most VTCs lack enough human resources who can prepare the graduates adequately. This has made many not hold VTCs with high value making them receive inadequate funds from the county government (Muli & Musyoka, 2013).

2.2 Promoting Enrolment in Vocational Training centers

According to Medrich, Keating, Medrich, Volkoff & Perry (2002), in Asia, Enrolment in senior secondary education has increased from 32% in 1980 but is still only available for half of middle school graduates. Transition to tertiary education has increased from 2% in 1980 to about 6% in 1997 (WDI 2000)

In Africa, TVET provision in formal education systems takes place at the lower secondary, upper secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary level, as well as at the first stage tertiary level. In 2006 UNESCO's Institute of Statistics conducted the only survey on access to formal TVET worldwide. It provides statistics on TVET enrolment in Africa as a percentage of secondary school enrolment. African countries were grouped in three categories. The first group encompasses 10 countries where TVET enrolment was 10 per cent or more of secondary school enrolment: Rwanda, with 36 per cent, followed by Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Libya, Congo, Mauritius, Benin, Algeria and Mali, each with 10 per cent (Jager and Buhner, 2000). For the second group of countries, TVET enrolment was between five and nine per cent of secondary education. This group of 10 countries consisted of Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Mozambique, Tunisia, each with eight per cent, followed by Botswana, Morocco, South Africa, Cape Verde and Togo, each with five per cent. The third group of 15 countries consisted of Mauritania and Uganda (with

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four per cent), and Niger, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Zambia, Chad, Eritrea, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, and Sudan with one per cent (OECD, 2012).

The report on African Economic Outlook (OECD, 2012) further highlights that enrolment in technical and vocational programmes is quite high in North Africa (averaging 22.95 per cent of total secondary school enrolment between 2001 and 2005). However, Vocational Education sector generally occupies a much smaller (if not marginal) position in sub-Saharan African countries (5.2 per cent between 2001 to 2005 with a falling trend since 2003) compared to the OECD countries (18.6 per cent) and other developing regions, such as Latin America (11.6 per cent) and South-East Asia (9.5 per cent). The low proportion of students enrolled in technical/vocational programmes signals stagnation and overall poor public training capacity. In addition, many vulnerable young people do not have the financial means to access formal TVET, which is seriously underfunded; the obsolescence of the equipment and weak managerial capacity further affect the quality of training programmes. Low enrolment is also partly due to the perception that TVET leads only to low-status occupations and prevents access to higher levels of education. Learners who enroll in this kind of education are considered to be those who have failed in general education. The result is a contradiction between the generally negative public image of TVET and the strategic role it is supposed to play in economic and social development.

Nganga (2010) asserts that Kenya is to spend US\$56 million in donor funding to strengthen vocational and technical training countrywide and help boost the country's skills base. Youth polytechnics will be expanded and those that had become rundown are revived. This will see a rise in number of trainees enrolled and improved access to training among the youth. He recommended that adequate infrastructure should be provided in Kenyan youth polytechnics to equip them for advanced functional training and that a campaign be made to enlighten the Kenyans about the importance of vocational education. The purpose is to attract increased enrollment of trainees for skills training among the youth.

2.3 Provision of Instructional Materials and Equipment's

Hicks' et.al (2011) study findings reveal that various trades in the public training institutions use outdated tools and equipment. A survey by MOYAS, (2012) revealed that the public YPs are constrained with inadequate modern equipment which is very critical in skill development. Their counterparts in the private institutions use modern tools and equipment, and are exposed to an apprenticeship style where the trainees work on real projects that provide them with a better understanding of the current market demand. Study findings by Mureithi, (2008) revealed that YPs fail to offer hands on skills due to inadequate training facilities. To ensure the YPs produce students with competent and employable skills that are relevant and at par with technological advancements, the government provides modern tools and equipment to replace the outdated ones to all the public VTCs. This is to ensure the youths do not get technological shock when they join the job market (Nyerere, 2009). As Kenya struggles to achieve its vision of being industrialized, achieving economic growth and reduce poverty by the year 2030, skill training must be of high quality and incorporate use of modern technologies and be relevant to the needs of industries (Afeti, 2011).

There have been attempts by some colleges to try and make the VTCs as their constituent college, a move that has been turned down with the reason that it will create a vacuum of technical human resource. In an attempt to improve the quality of training the government identified some YPs in each constituency to be centers of excellence. These will

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be institutions with sufficient capacity and track record of producing high skilled workers for an identified industry sector. They will be fully equipped by the government (MOYAS, 2012).

The polytechnics lack infrastructure for industrial attachment making the graduates from these polytechnics to lack adequate practical skills. It is common to work around different YPs in the country and find that the students are being taught using old on-modern equipment and hence denying them exposure (Okwemba, 2014). In this regard, as they graduate they are not competent enough in the job market and hence rendering them unfit in their community

3.0 Research Design

The study employed Convergent parallel mixed design in order to attain its objectives. An easy definition is that mixed methods researches are those which combine both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Mixed methods designs leave a lot of room for a researcher to triangulate data. Data triangulation caters for reliability, dependability and trustworthiness of data and reduces bias (Creswell, 2014).

The cross sectional survey in the mixed methods was chosen because of its enabling advantage of reaching a large sample over an expansive area within a short period of time. Vihiga County constitutes many Vocational Training Centres which are not confined in one place. Wyse (2015) notes that the survey research design will help to reduce cost (relatively inexpensive), describing the characteristics of a large population, can be administered in many modes and provide an avenue for more honest and unambiguous. According to Gall and Borg (2007), the survey research yields much valuable knowledge about opinions, attitudes and practices of participants. The investigator in this study analyzed the data both qualitative and quantitative at the same time.

4.0 Summary of Findings

4.1 Strategies used by County Government used to fund Vocational Training Centers

It was observed that, even though there was some form of funding given to Vocational Centers majorly it was through giving of bursaries to the needy students within the County, there was a general consensus that students at the Vocational Training Centers encountered challenges due to lack of fees because the bursary was not sufficient, .

It was however, noted that besides bursary the County Government had no any other strategy to provide funds to the Vocational Training Centers. For example, it was observed the Managers were encountering numerous challenges like inability to remunerate the instructors, lack of tools and equipment's and inability to sustain trainees due to lack of food.

4.2 Strategies used by County Government to promote enrolment in Vocational Training Centers

Data revealed that there are three main strategies that have been used so far to enhance enrolment at the Vocational Training Centers. This includes giving bursary to needy students, political rallies and sponsored graduation ceremony. Enrolment had been adversely affected by pre-conceived attitude with 86% of the instructors agreeing to that. However it is important to note that some institutions had enrolment far much below the mean of 100 trainees per institution and this was majorly due to lack of fees and other essential infrastructures like tools and workshops beside lack of instructors.

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It was alarming to note that majority of the trainees come from needy backgrounds and despite having been on bursary sponsorship some could hardly raise money to register for the final exam.

4.3 Support in the acquisition of instructional materials and equipment's to enhance training in Vocational Training Centers

Findings revealed that the County Government had not supported the Vocational Training Centers to acquire teaching and learning materials though minority of the instructors 34% agreed to the fact that the County Government had supported the Vocational Training Centers to acquire teaching and learning materials. During interviews majority of the managers 11 (70%) expressed the opinion that the instructors had difficult in training the students due to lack of equipment's and the few available were outdated hence their students had challenges during industrial attachment when encountering modern equipment's.

Of great concern is that the Count Government has selectively supported a few Vocational Training Centers to acquire teaching and learning materials. This observation raised a concern to why such a selective approach and yet all the institution are Public utilities.

Research showed that some of the Vocational Training Centers had not been registered by TVETA ((Technical Vocational Education Training Authority) therefore the national policy on TVET could not allow the County Government to provide teaching and learning materials to such institutions from grants.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research questions discussed above, several conclusions were drawn. In the succeeding discourse, the study highlights the conclusions;

The County Government did not have any other strategy to funding apart from giving of bursaries to needy students and in essence the bursary was not adequate. This led to trainees' dropout and inability of managers to run the Vocational Training centers efficiently and effectively.

The County Government had good strategies for improving enrolment in the Vocational Training centers which included giving bursary to needy students, political rallies and sponsored graduation ceremony. Though enrolment had been adversely affected by pre-conceived attitude that Vocational Training is meant for failures

The County Government did not adequately support the Vocational Training centers to acquire teaching and learning materials resultant the fact that the instructors had difficult in training the students due to lack of equipment's and the few available were outdated hence students had challenges during industrial attachment when encountering modern equipment's.

The County Government had made efforts to employ instructors on permanent and pensionable terms but they were not adequate basing on the staff needs assessment report including those on contract and on Board of Management. So far the available staff force had not been given fair opportunity to improve their training skills through seminars or refresher courses.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made with the aim of improving the Vocational Training Centers: The County Government should adopt other strategies to fund the Vocational Training Centers which should include disbursement of

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funds to intuitions' on the basis of enrolment (Capitation). Furthermore, the County Government should support the Vocational Training Centers to generate income as alternative method of funding through providing raw materials and giving favored tenders to such institutions. That through legislation, the County Governments courtesy of the County Assemblies should increase budgetary allocation on County Education Fund to fully support the needy students on course work and registration of final exams. Through public rallies, the politicians should positively market the Vocational Training Centers and encourage youth to enroll. The recommendation was made after the managers complained of numerous challenges including drop-out of trainees due to lack of fees.

The County Government should assist all the Vocational Training Centers to register with TVETA (Technical and Vocational Education Training Authority) in order to benefit from the County Government disbursements and grants through the National Government. The recommendation was made after the managers complained of selective provision of teaching and learning materials to the registered Vocational Training Centers arising from conditional grants given by the National Government. County Governments should employ more instructors on permanent and pensionable terms to ensure that all courses are taught. The recommendation was made after the managers complained of inadequate staff leading to some courses not being taught.

This study breaks ground to form a database on how the Vocational Training Centers can be improved by the County Governments following promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Taking into account the limitations and delimitations of the study, the following suggestions are made for further research:

A study to explore the challenges faced by managers at the Vocational Training Centers

A research on the challenges faced by trainees in undertaking studies at the Vocational Training Centers

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