

EFFECT OF COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING ON
EMPLOYABILITY OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL
YOUTH GRADUATES

Dukuzumuremyi Jean Léonard

University of Kigali

Dushimimana Jean de Dieu

Lecturer, University of Kigali

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Abstract

Over the next twenty years, global growth and poverty reduction will be driven by today's youth, yet majority face significant difficulties engaging in productive employment; mainly due to a mismatch of the competencies they possess to those required by the labour market. Therefore, the problem of unemployment among the youth is a huge concern. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is one promising avenue in addressing this problem, which is the highest in Africa. Governments globally endeavour to create an economic environment that promotes the growth of enterprises and generally stimulates the economy. This study was built on the objectives of examining the effect of entrepreneurship and business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates on their employability at labor market in Ngororero District; finding out the effect of practical skills acquired by TVET youth graduates on employability at the workplace in Ngororero District and determining the effect of problem-solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates on their employability in Ngororero District. Qualitative approach was used CBT and TVET graduates, trainers and employers and one local authority comprised the study sample frame and simple random and purposive sampling were used to draw an aggregate of 252 study subjects. The study findings were that TVET schools offering CBT programs had high levels of access to technical training opportunities and ensured that graduates learning experience was unique due to training based on industry's occupational standards. The study concludes that CBT programs immensely increased the employability aspects among the youth graduates. The study observes that those trainees and graduates who underwent the CBET programs were very competent at their workplace and performed better. The study also shows that competency levels of Entrepreneurship and Business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates define them at labour market. Furthermore, it shows there exists a strong relationship between problem Solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates and level of handling problems at workplace. Skills obtained from CBT driven technical courses provided the youth with more competencies. The study recommends creating awareness on the role of TVET, validate the certificates got from TVET schools and allow graduates to have access on job posted by MIFOTRA and support it for it would lead to the youth employability and being more competent in skills acquired and consequently, be ready for market and labour opportunities.

Keywords: *Competency Based Training, Employability, TVET Graduates*

Education, which is a pre-requisite to any form of skills training, has in recent years been made more accessible through free basic education (GoR, 2000) and recently, full free day secondary education learning (GoR, 2000) programs in

public schools. However, with globalization comes the integration of technological activities in all aspects of the professional realm, thus exposing the competency levels of the skills the youth possess. Therefore, because of trade liberalization and the globally increasing competition, the role of vocational training has been made more decisive and this makes having higher skills necessary, as nations require more productivity among workers in all sectors.

Competency-based training is an approach to education that focuses on the student's demonstration of desired learning outcomes as central to the learning process. It is concerned chiefly with a student's progression through curriculum at their own pace, depth, etc. As competencies are proven, students continue to progress. It is similar to mastery-based learning, with the primary difference being that competency-based learning often focuses observable skills or 'competencies,' while mastery learning may be academic—as likely to focus on concepts as skills (TeachThought, 2016).

CBT is a way of approaching (vocational) training that puts much emphasis on what a person can do as a result of the training (the outcome), and as such represents a shift away from an emphasis on the process involved in the training (the inputs). Furthermore, CBT itself may be described as training which is performance- and standards-based and related to realistic workplace practices. It is learner -focused and works naturally with independent study and with the instructor in the role of facilitator. Learners often find different individual skills more difficult than others (Almendra, *Competency-Based Learning for Motivation and Academic Performance in a Pre-calculus Course*, 2019) (Sullivan, 1995).

“Competency-based training (CBT) is a popular curriculum development model in social services training. Unlike social work practice, CBT flows from a behavioral and not a humanistic foundation. When used in a proper context, CBT is a highly effective training approach, particularly when the curriculum can be specified and se-quenched. Technical programs, such as computer applications, or re-quired training for novice workers, are appropriate for CBT. Conversely, CBT is far less effective with experienced people or with content that is less specific, is difficult to sequence, and which builds on expertise. Practitioners who promote and use CBT should understand the strengths and limitations of the approach, as well as the technical values and philosophy on which the model is based, because it imposes rigid constraints on how training is developed and delivered.” (Richard J. McCowan, 1998)

TVET in Rwanda has been delivered by different providers at various qualification levels. Technical education is offered at upper secondary school level; both by public schools under the Ministry in charge of education and by private schools and those belonging to faith-based organizations was recognized to be the training method for vocational training and introduced to Rwanda in 2008 (Rwanda, 2012). It was believed that when you complete a competence-based training course, you will have the skills and knowledge you need to

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complete specific workplace activities at an industry standard of performance, in a range of work environments and situations.

Rwanda has embarked on curriculum reform to improve the quality of education. This is a crucial step in the direction of Rwanda's ambition to "develop a knowledge-based society and the growth of regional and global competition in the jobs market. An important shift has been to move away from a "knowledge-based curriculum" to a competence-based curriculum¹ and from knowledge and skills acquisition to knowledge creation and application. The aim is to develop students' independent, lifelong learning habits; appropriate skills and knowledge; and applications to real life situations. There is a growing recognition of the potential of competence-based education, unlike traditional subject/content-based education, to develop the capabilities/competencies that are deemed essential for success in both academia and today's knowledge-based economy (Erneste Ngendahayo & HELEN ASKELL-WILLIAMS, 2016)

Rwanda's proposed competence-based curriculum is similar to programs that seek to develop generic capabilities. The competencies proposed for Rwanda's educational system include, critical and problem-solving skills; creativity and innovation; research; communication in official languages; cooperation, inter personal management and life skills; and lifelong learning (Ernest Ngendahayo, Helen Askell-Williams, 2006).

Research Questions

What is the effect of Entrepreneurship and Business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates on their employability at labor market in Ngororero District?; How do practical skills acquired by TVET youth graduates affect their employability at the workplace in Ngororero District?; What is the effect of problem-solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates on their employability in Ngororero District?

Methodology

This study uses qualitative approach to enable a researcher to get direct explanations and views of respondents. So, here, a researcher used the interview and focused group discussion because it is social in nature and a descriptive study. The qualitative approach was concerned with describing the practices of school leaders in the supervision of teaching and learning activities while the quantitative approach will rely on the principle of verifiability that means confirmation. It will focus on measurement. The quantitative research techniques will be used to enable the quantification of some information in ratios and percentages. Cohen et al (2000) explains that survey research involves collecting data to answer questions" concerning the phenomenon under study and mostly uses questionnaires. So, the quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires.

Study population

A study population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples will be taken for measurement. A study population is also defined as a group which a researcher is interested in gaining information upon which

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generalization and conclusion can be drawn subsequently (Creswell,2019). Kombo et al (2006) explained that the study population is an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. So, the study population is the total group to which the results of the study are applicable. Therefore, due to the fact that there are very many Technical training institutions across the country, I drew a sample of a given size that enabled the estimation of the impact of the competency-based training on the employment of the youth. A population of TVET youth graduates and trainers drawn from each TVET institution comprised the study population frame; as well as the industry employers. Multiple tools of data collection instruments were used to allow triangulation of responses. Data were collected through survey of self-administered questionnaire from 241 youth graduates, 7 employers and 3 trainers and 1 local authority at district level that made a total of 252 informants. Thus, the research analysed the sample to make inferences and generalize findings about the TVET institutions countrywide. A non-probability sampling, namely stratified sampling was used initially to draw stratum based on the three categories of specimen needed to undertake the research namely; TVET youth Graduates, trainers and industry employers. Within the TVET graduates' stratum, the study subjects were chosen through snowball sampling. This is because most of the TVET youth graduates are not within campus anymore so reaching them was by referral from the few contacts of the graduates that were availed by the TTIs. For the other three stratum comprising trainers and employers and local leader, the researcher used simple random sampling to draw the study subjects within each stratum.

Table 1 : Statistics of respondents

Category	Population	Sample size	Sample selection technique
TVET youth graduates	642	241	Simple random sampling
Employers	7	7	Census inquiry
Trainers	3	3	Census inquiry
Local leader at District level	1	1	Census inquiry

Field data, August2020

Findings: The findings of the study and highlights the results of the findings as set out in the research methodology are presented as follow:

The Competency levels of entrepreneurship and business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates and definition of them at labour market

The study agreed with the fact that the competency levels of entrepreneurship and business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates defines them at the labor market. When you look into the results and its interpretation, TVET youth graduates who studies under CBT approach distinguished between others on the labor market. The results found via interviews that the research had with different respondents show that TVET graduates who were trained applying CBT approach are more productive at workplace. Trainees at CBET programs experienced high support in attaining their career goals as shown by their employer's satisfaction on their work quality and attitude at Workplace.

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The study found that competency levels of Entrepreneurship and Business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates define them at labour market in Ngororero District. Indeed it showed that practical skills on TVET youth graduates enable them to perform better workplace. This translated to more of these graduates getting employed faster or being self-employed easily. This shows how technical training can be tailored in CBET so as to equip the students with market-required skills so as to curb youth unemployment.

The effect of practical skills on TVET youth graduates job performance at workplace: The survey attests those practical skills play a great role on TVET youth graduates job performance at workplace. Once trainee's knowledge levels are higher, it immediately shows that TVET youth graduates under CBT approach perform better at workplace. The fact that they were trained to become competent and have competences that are observable and measurable to perform a task to the standards required at labour market. It was shown that and observed that TVET youth graduates perform better though some impediments remain uncontrollable.

Analysis of the relationship between problem Solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates and level of handling problems at workplace: From the findings, we can notice that, there exists a strong relationship between problem Solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates and level of handling problems at workplace. This is attributed to CBET graduates who were highly absorbed into the labour market as shown by the responses from the employers and trainers. When you go to the field and observe TVET youth graduate's behaviour and the way they handle and solve problem, it confirms that problem skills acquired go hand in hand with the way they handle problems at workplace.

Recommendations

The study established that skills obtained from CBT driven technical courses provided the youth with more competencies. CBT graduates were absorbed in a shorter time span. The unique characteristics of the CBT program which involved high practicality of the skills that center around learners needs that targeted to improve their performance at their job or workplace was thus very important in reducing unemployment among the youth. When the study respondents were asked to suggest ways in which key stakeholders can address the issue of youth unemployment, the following were captured:

The Government needs to invest in training the youth to specifically meeting the relevant industrial standards. The Government needs to put more effort towards eliminating the barriers that hinder youth from being employed, i.e., work experience, nepotism, tribalism, gender bias and politics such as being 'connected' to employers.

In addition, practice of the skills learnt among the learners should be enhanced. This exposes the youth to the market before graduation and greatly elevates their competency levels. Furthermore, there should be more start-up funding allocated by Ministry of Youth and Culture in Rwanda to support self-

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employment as the labour market gets saturated from time to time. Since Education and the youth are a communal issue, it needs stakeholder engagement from both public and private sector. Harmonious coordination of all education agencies is crucial in obtaining the goal of enhancing youth employability. The agencies should also facilitate guidance on informed career selection and creating awareness about the role of TVET. They should also create avenues for the establishment of more cottage industries and value addition of the products produced which can be spearheaded by the youth who are deemed as being innovative. Empowering youth with the required machines/equipment to be self-employed hence creating more jobs for others is crucial too.

The Government needs to allocate more funding towards TVET that will enable the rolling out of competency-based programs in all TTIs nationwide so that it takes care of labour market demands and thus curbs the problem of huge unemployment rate among the youth. It should also support

CBT training in TVET, and TVET schools would work closely with the Ministry of Education and RTB to sensitize the community about CBT. In addition, ensuring whatever is taught to students is accompanied with appropriate techniques that are in line with the current technology trends too.

There is great need to sensitize the youth on practicability, importance and the rationale for CBT programs, as well as creating awareness on the role of TVET and its benefit towards improving employability among the youth. There is also need for strategic partnerships across board from Government to trainers and their trainees, donors

and employers so as to produce market-driven courses. Finally, there is need to offer scholarships among the youth equitably. Training costs is a key factor that needs a closer view from all key education stakeholders. Fully funded bachelor's and master's degree as well as PhD Scholarships are incentives that the Government of Rwanda give to the underprivileged youth to go to countries like China to pursue technical courses, but this can be replicated even locally for the rate of absorption in TVET schools to increase. All the above recommendations would lead to the youth employability and being more competent in skills acquired and consequently, be ready for market and labour opportunities.

Suggestions of further studies

The study suggests that since this primary research was limited to only three TVET schools, few employers, trainers and TVET trainees, the research should be extended to many other TVET schools countrywide in order to make a more comprehensive and conclusive strategy for implementing the study conclusions. The findings from other TVET schools would be compared and a conclusion drawn that would be utilized by other researchers. The study should also be carried out on other industries, different cohort of learners to augment a comparative analysis and review. The research target was on the assessment of the effect of competence-based training on employability of Technical and

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Vocational youth graduates. A suggestion is that other elements be considered for the competency-based training; Studies should also be carried to find out the unique factors that can be blended into the current traditional approach to convert it into the competency-based approach to stimulate employability among the youth.

It was found that TVET youth graduates who are employed are in private sector. None is employed by the government. This put pressure on government to put TVET certificates on MIFOTRA job profile to allow graduates to compete at labour market. According to Rwanda TVET qualification framework, there are five levels where a trainee is allowed to complete one level and immediately go to the labour market for job. Since the government of Rwanda do not accept TVET certificates from level one to four, it is a challenge to attain the objective of CBT to generate and create employment.

Lastly, it is crucial to note that being competent in these skills does not automatically translate to employability as there are other key determinants in play. These factors include the economic status and performance of a nation as well as answering the question of “Are there job opportunities available for all youth who will be deemed competent upon graduation? There is also policy and legal framework, involvement of local government authorities, public and private sector partnership, mindset changing of the graduates and environment aspects (Industrial development

Conclusions

The study concludes that CBT programs immensely increased the employability aspects among the youth graduates. The study observes that those trainees and graduates who underwent the CBET programs were very competent at their workplace and performed better. The study also shows that competency levels of Entrepreneurship and Business development skills acquired by TVET youth graduates define them at labour market in Ngororero District. Furthermore, it shows there exists a strong relationship between problem Solving skills acquired by TVET youth graduates and level of handling problems at workplace.

The study therefore concludes that the key stakeholders in education and training sectors as well as the industry players should plan and fully adopt the competency-based training to increase employability among the youth. In the long run this will create a pool of market-driven skills that may lead to a complete decrease in unemployment rates among the youth in Ngororero District.

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