The Relevance of Youth Polytechnics Programmes towards Youth Employment: A Case Study of Chepkorio and Iten Youth Polytechnics in Keiyo District, Kenya

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1 Abstract
The paper examines the relevance of youth polytechnics (YPs) programmes towards youth employment in Kenya. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, four research objectives were addressed: to establish the YPs Programme levels offered in Keiyo District, to find out the factors that determine the market relevancy of the programmes offered by YPs in the district, to identify the contribution of the programmes towards YPs and to establish the challenges faced by YPs in their quest for market relevance programmes. The target population comprised of youth polytechnic trainees, instructors, Project Managers, employees, employers and members of the community from the District. Simple and Stratified Random Sampling Techniques were used to select a sample size of the respondents in the study area. The study was both quantitative and qualitative. Data was collected using Questionnaires, Interviews/FDGs, Observations, and Survey of Documentary Records Methods. Descriptive Statistics and SPSS Program were used to analyse data. The findings of the study established that the higher the programme level, the higher the chances of access to employment. The study also established that, when the determinants of employment are built into a programme, the programme is enriched and thus suitable for employment. The correlation between programmes and employment opportunities indicated that when the required knowledge and skills are incorporated into the programme, and when the job specifications are known, then the programmes will provide knowledge and skills for employment. The findings of the study are anticipated to provide insightful reference that educational policy makers, researchers and scholars in Kenya could rely on in regard to the needs and challenges of providing and realising effective teaching programme to Kenyan YPs. The study revealed other areas that might require further studies.

2 Introduction
The concept of YPs was developed and popularised in the mid 1960s by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) as a solution to the problem of education and employment of primary school leavers. Since school leavers were unable to become self-employed or get wage jobs because of inadequate education and training, YPs were to provide rural youth with skills that could be used in the local economy. They would provide practical training, linked with production, and so assist in the formation of a cadre of trained artisans and self-employment workers (ILO, 2001).
Earlier assessment of the YP Programme found that they were successful in changing the attitudes of young people towards technical education and manual work, and that they had enabled many young people to engage in gainful employment. More recent studies indicate that YPs have lost most of their original focus without indicating a clear reason for this (ILO, 2001). The crucial problems of improving the employment opportunities and prospects of the rural areas in order to create a real and extensive demand for the kinds of skill the YPs offer, of encouraging the growth of the movement without stifling local initiative and without losing that capacity to respond to often quite small scale skill needs of local communities, may still remain. YPs need to be developed within the context of rural development, and may need to keep in step with, rather than move ahead of, that development (Thompson, 1981).

To address youth problems and more specifically unemployment, efforts have been made by the Government of Kenya to initiate youth development programmes through policy documents such as: Sessional Paper No.2 of 1992 on Smallscale and Jua kali Enterprises, Sessional Paper on Development Plan 1997-2001 on Economic Recovery for Employment and Wealth Creation, and Poverty Eradication Plan 1999-2015, among others. Despite these efforts, as well as increasing number of agencies dealing with youth issues, problems affecting the youth have continued to worsen. The situation was attributed to lack of a Government Ministry focusing in the youth and a comprehensive policy to provide a blueprint for youth (Ministry of Youth Affairs, Kenya, 2006).

As in any country with a rapid population growth rate, the demographic profile is biased towards children and young adults. This means that the Government has a greater burden of meeting demands of the youth. The youth are indeed very creative and innovative. However, they require to be mainstreamed in the designing, planning and implementation of policies and programmes that affect them such as health, education and training, youth protection, sports and recreation, the environment, art and culture and media, among others. The Government and the society at large have to shoulder the responsibility of youth dependency (Sambili, 2006). Besides introducing free primary education, President of Kenya Mwai Kibaki said that the Government was reviving YPs countrywide to enable those who drop out of school, for various reasons, acquire appropriate skills to earn a decent livelihood (Presidential Press Service; Kenya, 2007).

Technical Training Institutes, specifically YPs, have suffered serious neglect in the past two decades due to emphasis on academics. Yet, it is widely acknowledged that technical training is instrumental to a nation’s human resource development. The neglect of technical training is manifested in low funding, inadequate and unqualified trainers, irrelevant courses and obsolete infrastructure. In fact, YPs, which are at the low end of technical training, have perennially missed out in Government plans and in many cases, they nearly collapsed. YPs and others like institutes of technology were promoted in the 1970s following a watershed report by the ILO in 1971, which noted that the number of school leavers was quickly outstripping white-collar jobs, necessitating a shift to technical training. This vision was lost in the 1980s, leading to near-collapse of YPs. With the renewed interest in YPs it is essential that the Government rethinks the mission and vision of this sector. What is critical is to review and completely change the content and mode of training at YPs and other technical training institutions (The Nation, 2007).

Moreover, the economic measures which are being implemented in Kenya are increasing employment opportunities for the youth. To provide skills to the youth, the Government of Kenya has started a process where a Model Youth Polytechnic is being put up in each district throughout the country. Under this programme, 16 YPs are currently under construction. Funds for construction of additional 25 YPs were to be provided in the following financial year (Kibaki, 2007). The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Youth Affairs required Kshs 10 billion to implement a five-year strategic plan that addresses the underlying challenges facing the youth. It was for this reason that the Minister of Youth Affairs appealed to development partners to seek ways of mobilising resources towards the implementation of the Ministry’s strategic plan which was to be channeled in a five-year investment strategy plan that focuses on three components – revitalisation of YPs and vocational training, youth development programmes, and peace education (Gathoni, 2007).
3 Conceptual Framework

The study was based on the conceptual relationship between the YPs programmes’ relevance and the youth employment opportunities. YPs constitute the independent variable, while employment opportunities constitute the dependent variable. YPs were identified in terms of levels for example artisan or craft certificate and against each level, employment opportunities were determined or conceptualised. The relationship between the variables was diagrammatically conceptualised as shown below:

![Diagram of Conceptual Framework](image)

Figure 1: Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables.

The relationship between the independent variables (programme levels and their content) and the dependent variable (employment opportunities) was subject to the effect of the intervening variables such as:

1. **Instructors’ knowledge, skills and experiences.** These determine the probability of imparting skills and knowledge to learners which the learners will find relevant in the job market. It is expected that the instructors themselves have the knowledge and skills relevant to the job market, or are aware of the knowledge and skills needed in the current job market given their long standing experience in teaching and training.

2. **Learning resources:** These ranges from books, equipment, training aids and manuals which the learners require in their daily training. The learning resources are linked to the curriculum, which in turn is linked to the job market or employment opportunities.

3. **Training Curriculum:** This is the specifications for training detailing the content and the modalities for training. How well the curriculum is structured to meet the job market needs to determine the success as well as the relevance of the programme to the world of employment.

4 Statement of the Problem

Currently, the education and training sector in Kenya appears to be in a flux. Efforts at sector planning have been underway but the national policy on vocational training has not yet emerged. Since the expanded education opportunities after independence did not result in the expected automatic employment of the primary school leavers, a fundamental restructuring of Kenya’s education system was decided in 1984. It was known as the 8-4-4 system and it replaced the old 7-4-2-3 system. It places emphasis on attitudes and skills that prepare home for the world-of-work and self-employment in particular. New subjects such as woodwork, metalwork, leather work, tailoring
and business skills, together with agriculture, home science and art were added to the curriculum (ILO, 2001).

In particular, YPs currently offer training opportunities to a small fraction of the rural school leavers and unemployed. They have become more attached to the formal trade’s certification system, and most of its trainees are now concerned about certificates and finding a wage job and less interested in entrepreneurial skills and self-employment. The curriculum of the current YPs offers skills in the following courses; Carpentry and Joinery, Masonry, Motor Vehicle Mechanic, Motor Vehicle Technician, Tailoring, Dress making, Metal work, Electrical installation, and Electrical fitter, among others. The curriculum of YPs is too narrow and the skills in Home Economics and Tailoring are not in high demand in the rural areas. The training in business skills is inadequate for those considering entering into self-employment. In fact, in the early 1980s less than a quarter of the YPs trainees were found to have become self-employed. The number has too continued to decrease over years. Apart from lack of adequate skills, the problem has also been due to lack of credit facilities (Ibid).

The research problem focused on the unemployment of the youth due to inadequacy of YP programmes, which include lack of equipping the youth with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes for labour market.

5 Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study was to establish the relevance of YP programmes towards youth employment in Keiyo district, Kenya. The specific objectives were:

1. To establish YP programmes levels offered in Keiyo District.
2. To find out the factors that determine the market relevancy of the programmes offered by the YPs in the District.
3. To identify the contribution of the programmes towards YP.
4. To establish the challenges faced by YPs in their quest for market relevance programmes.

6 Methodology
The study employed Case Study Approach to investigate the relevance of YP programmes towards youth employment; hence the study involved an in-depth investigation of a group, or an institution. The choice to use the qualitative case-study approach in this study was based on the arguments that have been made by various researchers for the use of a case-study method in studying phenomena such as the relevance of YP programmes towards youth employment in Kenya. Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within a real life context where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Yin notes that there are some prejudices against the Case-Study method in business and management research. The main criticism of the case-study approach is that it lacks precision, objectivity and rigour, which are normally associated with the quantitative approach to research. This criticism, however, does not take into account the fact that bias can creep into any other research tactic, including experiments and surveys.

The study was conducted in Chepkorio and Iten Youth Polytechnics situated in Keiyo District, Kenya. The researcher hails from the district and so making it easy to reach the sampled areas. The region was chosen by the researcher because of the limited finances. The two institutions were chosen because they have remained operational as opposed to others, which have ended being closed from time to time. Therefore, it was appropriate for providing the study areas to investigate the relevance of their programmes towards youth employment. The target population of the study comprised trainees, instructors, project managers employees, employers and the members of the community from Keiyo District. The selection of the population was based on the argument that, “one of the major issues in sampling is to determine samples that best represent a population so as to allow for an accurate generalisation of results” Bless and Smith (1995). The study units from
the target population were included in the research work by using two approaches; a combination of Non-Probability Sampling and Probability Sampling using Stratified Random Sampling because the target population was heterogeneous. In determining the absolute sample size for the study, the researcher adopted the formula and tables that have been developed by statisticians to assist in determining the sample size and degree of confidence that the findings will reflect the whole population. The one for this study was developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) using the formula:

\[ S = \frac{X^2 NP1-1}{d^2 N-1} + X^2 P (1-P) \]

The data collection instruments for this study were Interview Schedules, Observations, Questionnaires and Survey of Documentary Records which were administered to project managers, instructors, trainees, employers, employees and members of the community where YPs were situated. The validation of the questionnaire was carried out to guarantee its efficiency as recommended by Compeau and Higgins (1995). The questionnaires were administered to ten randomly selected respondents who were encouraged to come up with the factors affecting employment prospects of graduates in order to appraise the validity of the questionnaire, (this method was used by Molla and Licker, (2005). Based on their responses the final questionnaire was prepared and administered. Data was collected from the selected respondents and thereafter instruments were verified and collected for analysis. The data from the completed questionnaires were cleaned, re-coded and entered into the computer using SPSS Program for analysis. Descriptive Statistics (that is, Frequency Analysis) was computed for presenting and analysing the data. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to describe the aggregation of raw data in numerical terms (Neuman 2000: P317). The descriptive statistics used involved the use of univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses.

7 Findings

The findings of this work have been derived from responses to the research objectives. It was established from the study that the programme levels were identified as trade test, craft and diploma. It was established that all the trainees were enrolled in Trade Test Level (100%). The Variable Market Relevancy was determined by the ease with which trainees access employment opportunities. The variable programme level was further correlated with access to employment opportunities. There was no correlation between programme level and access to employment opportunities. The lack of correlation is attributed to the existence of distort variables such as nepotism and bribery, among other variables. Essentially, the higher the programme level the higher the chances of getting employed.

The study established the factors that determine the programme’s market relevancy. The programme content (65.2%) was the most common determinant of programme’s market relevancy. Others were job advert, job interview, information from former trainees and number of students employed after completing each course at 8.7 percent each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme content</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job advert</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interviews</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from former students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students employed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was established that correlation was high when the programme contains the skills employers want (60.1%), followed by when the knowledge and skills lead to self-employment (26.1%) and when the programmes incorporate job specifications and practical skills (8.7%) and (4.3%) respectively. The higher the correlation value, the stronger the relationship.

Table 2: Contribution of Programmes towards Youth Employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisions of skills and knowledge employers insist on</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of knowledge and skills for self-employment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating job specifications into training</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of practical skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YPs had made various efforts in their quest to offer market relevance courses. However, these efforts had been met with various challenges. The challenges were identified as the ever-changing job market demands, insufficient training resources and insufficient feedback from previous employers. Each of these challenges was correlated with employment opportunities. The correlation value was high for insufficient training resources (60.9%) followed by ever-changing job market demands and insufficient feedback from previous employers (17.4%) and (17.4%) respectively.

Table 3: Challenges in the Quest for Market Relevance Courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever-changing job market demands</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient training resources and personnel</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient feedback from previous employers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Recommendations

Based on findings, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

1. There is need to revise regularly the programmes offered by YPs to make them more relevant to the job market. This can be done by incorporating employers’ specifications and requirements in the respective courses.

2. YPs reported insufficient resources for training such as human, material, equipment and finance. The YPs need to beef up their training resources base by conducting a resource audit internally and provide specifications for meeting the deficit.

3. While designing the curriculum for training YPs, there is need to incorporate the instructors’ views and inputs from trainees who have gone through the training process.

4. In order to enhance entrepreneurship development in Kenya, there is need for a collaborative effort among all the key partners to formulate a more comprehensive entrepreneurship programme catering for the needs of every potential entrepreneur.

5. The framework presented in this study, and empirical exploration of it, will assist those who are seeking to develop programmes for the youth who may currently be trapped in the assumption that the models and methods of explaining entrepreneurship in general will not vary if applied to the youth as a group. Currently this assumption does little to accurately inform stakeholders who aim to support youth entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship and enterprising behaviour are both worthy objectives, and different programmes must be developed to acknowledge...
Appendix I.

*Tayloring & Dress Class in Progress at Chepkorio Youth Polytechnic.*

Appendix II.

*YPs trainees in a Workshop.*
the different needs of those who have the potential to become more enterprising as well as those for whom entrepreneurship is the goal. If Alsos and Kolvereid’s (1998) argument that “entrepreneurship can be conceived of as a chain of multiple options” is to be taken seriously, then those supporting the chain must pay attention to every link.

6. The shortage of instruments to facilitate youth entrepreneurship in Kenya is in part due to this narrowness of perception regarding the nature of entrepreneurship, but also due to lack of empirical knowledge of the youth entrepreneur’s experience and their assistance needs. As Storey (1994) emphasises in his influential book on the small firm sector in the United Kingdom, understanding people who exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour (for example through the establishment of businesses) is critical if good policy is to be developed. In Kenya, activities to address this knowledge gap are a necessary precursor to effective policy developments in the field. This would help prevent policy becoming fragmented and focused on addressing short-term rather than long-term youth employment issues. It would also ensure that “young entrepreneurs” are viewed in their own right – with the potential for different behaviours from that of other entrepreneurs.

7. Lack of integration and institutionalisation of current “youth” policy means that the youth as a group are being trapped in the zones between existing organisations that either cooperate or compete with each other in terms of often-scarce resources. Whilst some collide with services already being provided, the needs of others are unmet by virtue of their “invisibility” and the generic nature of assistance available (for example as is the case in Kenya). Only through careful programme evaluation and exploratory work on the needs of young business owners will the situation be able to change so that cooperative connections can be established at both a micro (individual) and macro (policy and service provision) levels.

9 References