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The Critical Factors Affecting Enrolment in Kenyan Youth Polytechnics

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Abstract:

This research aimed at carrying out a comprehensive investigation of the factors that may have led to low enrolment patterns in youth polytechnics (YPs) in Kenya. This research was carried out in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet districts. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 180 YP students, 63 instructors, 90 parents, 90 YP graduates and 90 youths not enrolled from the neighborhoods of YPs. 18 YP Principals and 18 Deputy Principals were selected for interview. This gave a sample of 513 respondents. The study was both quantitative and qualitative. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, discussions and observations. Descriptive statistics and statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) were used to analyze the data collected. The findings of this study show that low enrolment pattern is caused by lack of training facilities, lack of competent trainers, mismatch of curriculum and market demands, poor management, low morale of instructors, lack of boarding facilities, lack of water and electrical power supplies, negative image created by the leaders, lack of awareness on the importance of the training in YPs and lack of proper role models in the field.

Keywords: Youth polytechnics, Enrolment, Training, Management

1. Introduction

The prioritization of Vocational Education and Training is a critical aspect for a developing economy usually characterized by abundant human resources but lacking in essential skills. Kenya seems to have a problem because of increased demand for scarce resources and the increased activities in vocational training. Vocational training in Kenya is not adequately organized to respond to new technological challenges and demands from a growing young population. There is need for a comprehensive vocational training system with clearly defined supply channels by pattern based on proper conceptualization of the relationship between education and training (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2004).

The youth polytechnics in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet districts can accommodate approximately 4500 students. The enrolment for the years 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 was approximately 1900, 1620, 1400 and 1378 respectively (DATO, Kericho, 2005). This gives an average enrolment of approximately 28 %. There has been a persistently low enrolment as revealed by the data in reference. Simiyu (2001) hinted that the technical institutions degenerated beyond recognition due to problems associated with under-enrolment. Several other studies on TVET have been conducted in the recent past but none of them has focused on enrolment patterns in YPs, hence the problem has not been adequately addressed. The objective of the study was to establish the factors that may have led to low enrolment pattern in YPs.

2. Materials and Methods

The target population for this study comprised all students and instructors of Youth Polytechnics in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet Districts. The three districts had eleven government aided and seven harambee or self-help YPs. Out of these only nine were operational and the researcher decided to use all the nine for the study. The nine YPs had a total of 580 students and 76 instructors.

This research study used survey research techniques of collecting data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used in data analysis. Data was collected through researcher-administered questionnaires, interviews and participatory observation. Data was analysed by tabulating frequency and working out percentages in order to help identify the factors which make YPs unpopular and hence low enrolment pattern. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions meant for the YP managers, their deputies, parents whose children have enrolled and youths that have not enrolled. Their responses were compared with the responses from the questionnaire. The findings were included in the discussion and conclusion remarks of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

Out of the total student-respondents, 143 (86.6%) felt that there were inadequate facilities, whereas 15 (9.1%) agreed that there was enough equipment in the YPs. But out of the total only 7 (4.3%) were undecided on the same. This indicated that YPs in the three districts had inadequate training facilities. This also indicated that most students' desire to enroll was low due to lack of the training facilities thus discouraging them. Most of the YPs in the three districts were community-based and had insufficient funds to purchase the necessary facilities.

149 (90.3%) of student – respondents agreed that the availability of training facilities was important when deciding to enroll in YP, whereas 13 (7.9%) disagreed. But out of the total only 3 (1.8%) were undecided on the same. This indicated that most students' desire to enroll was dictated by the availability of training facilities. This was apparent in the enrolment in courses that were fairly equipped. The students' expectation diminished when they discovered the facilities were inadequate. The responses from interviews indicated some students decided to drop-out on realizing that the course they had chosen was poorly equipped.

Out of the total student-respondents 127 (77%) agreed that availability of competent training staff plays a major role a YP, 12 (7.3%) disagreed and 26 (15.7%) were undecided. The availability of competent trainers was an important aspect when students were deciding to join YPs. From interviews it was evident that the main aim of joining YP was to acquire practical skills for self-employment. It was also noted the trainers were competent in practical tasks; however, they were not enterprising and lacked innovative skills, hence made their classes dull and eventually grow smaller due to dropouts.

159 (96.4%) of the total students respondents agreed with the fact that it is the career development that matters in deciding to join a YP whereas 2 (1.2%) disagreed. However, only 4(2.4%) of the total were undecided on the same. From interviews it was noted that students were inclined to courses that realized immediate returns on completion. This was further indicated by the disparity in enrollment per course. The popular courses recorded higher number of students whereas courses that did not promise immediate returns recorded lower number of students. From interviews it was further confirmed that students were inclined to courses that realized immediate returns on completion. The popular courses recorded higher number of students whereas courses that did not promise immediate returns recorded lower number of students.

Out of the total student-respondents, 35 (21.2%) agreed with the idea that it is the desire for further training that determines the decision to join YPs, whereas 76 (46.1%) were undecided. However, 54 (32.7%) disagreed with the statement. This implies that the students were not interested in further training, which confirmed the earlier statement, that students joined YPs to acquire skills for immediate returns. However 21.2% who agreed cannot be ignored. The 46.1% who was undecided confirmed the fact that there were no role models who have gone through the system to motivate the students. It also implied that there was lack of exposure and information. From interviews it was further confirmed that the most limiting factor for further training was lack of fees as most of those who enrolled in YPs came from poor financial backgrounds.

Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to the statement 'My parents influenced me to join this YP' showed that out of the total student-respondents, 135 (81.8%) agreed with the statement, whereas 21 (12.7%) disagreed and 9 (5.5%) were undecided. From interviews it was further confirmed that parents, due to their poor economic background, wanted their children enrolled for courses that realized immediate returns on completion.

On the other hand the frequencies and percentages of YP graduates' responses to the statement 'The training in YP equipped me with appropriate practical skills' indicated that out of the total YP graduate respondents, 56 (77.8%) disagreed with the statement, whereas 20.8% agreed and a mere 1 (1.4%) was undecided. This implied that the training in YPs did not offer its graduates appropriate practical skills. This could be due to lack of modern training facilities and competent trainers. From interviews it was noted that the graduates lacked basic skills of using tools and equipment and most of those who were then competent acquired the skills in the field. It was further noted that YP graduates who were self-employed claimed to offer better apprenticeship training in their premises. This further implied that youths preferred engaging in apprenticeship training for better training and soft fees payment.

Out of the total YP graduate-respondents, 55 (76.4%) disagreed with the fact that they were prepared to go for further training, whereas 8 (11.1%) agreed and 9 (12.5%) were undecided. It was also noted that those who desired further training (11.1%) were not employed. Although they were not employed there were other hindrances to further training. From interviews it was found the main hindrances were lack of fees and competence. This further confirmed the fact that the YPs had been left for the poor and also that the training in YPs did not prepare students for further training.

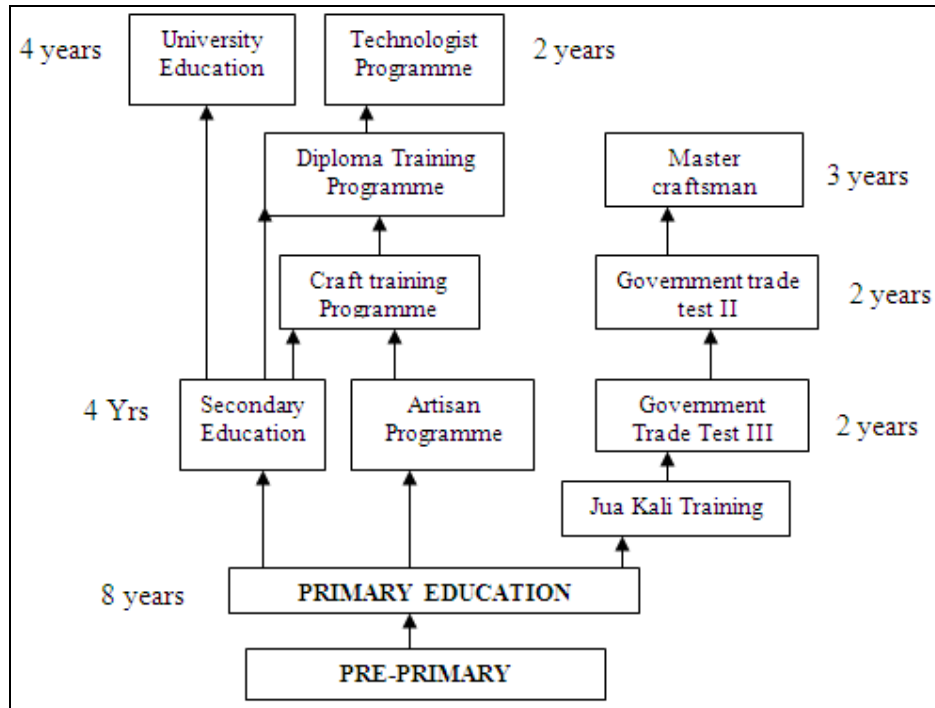


Figure 1: Structure of Education System in Kenya (Source: Kenya, Republic of, 1988).

In Kenya, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) forms a separate system that parallels the general education system, with its own institutions, teachers, programmes, etc. Pupils may enter the technical branch at the end of the primary cycle as shown in figure 1 (Kenya, Republic of, 1988). At this level the intent was to create some occupational awareness in order to create a positive attitude towards work. After primary school level those who may not get an opportunity to proceed with secondary school education may join a youth polytechnic and train as artisans in a single skill trade. Whereas this structure of education system may seem attractive and promising, the findings of this study showed that little has been achieved as far as alternative track to further education is concern.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that low enrolment patterns was caused by, among other factors, YP related factors and community related factors. The YP related factors included lack of training facilities, lack of competent trainers, mismatch of curriculum and market demands, low morale of instructors, lack of boarding facilities, lack of water and electrical power supplies. The community related factors on the other hand included lack money for fees, negative image posted by the leaders, lack of awareness on the importance of the training in YPs and lack of proper role models in the field.

5. Appendices

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	15	9.1
Undecided	7	4.3
Disagreed	143	86.6
Total	165	100

Table 1: Number and percentage of students indicating that YPs have enough training facilities.

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	149	90.3
Undecided	3	1.8
Disagreed	13	7.9
Total	165	100

Table 2: Number and percentage of students indicating that availability of training facilities is a motivating factor in enrolling in YPs

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	127	77.0
Undecided	26	15.7
Disagreed	12	7.3
Total	165	100

Table 3: Number and percentage of students indicating that availability competent training staff is a motivating factor in enrolling in YPs:

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	159	96.4
Undecided	4	2.4
Disagreed	2	1.2
Total	165	100

Table 4: Number and percentage of students indicating that the type of courses offered is a motivating factor in enrolling in YPs

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	163	98.8
Undecided	2	1.2
Disagreed	0	0
Total	165	100

Table 5: Number and percentage of students indicating that availability of jobs upon graduation is a motivating factor in enrolling in YPs

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	35	21.2
Undecided	76	46.1
Disagreed	54	32.7
Total	165	100.0

Table 6: Number and percentage of students indicating that a desire for further training is a motivating factor in enrolling in YPs

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	135	81.8
Undecided	9	5.5
Disagreed	21	12.7
Total	165	100.0

Table 7: Number and percentage of students indicating that parents influenced them to enroll in YPs

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	15	20.8
Undecided	1	1.4
Disagreed	56	77.8
Total	72	100.0

Table 8: Number and percentage of YP graduates indicating that the training in YPs equipped them with appropriate practical skills

Employment	Further training					
	Agreed		Undecided		Disagreed	
	Freq.	%	freq	%	freq	%
Self-employed	0	0	5	19.2	21	80.8
Salaried-employed	0	0	2	33.3	4	66.7
Not employed	8	20	2	5	30	75.0
Total	8	11.1	9	12.5	55	76.4

Table 9: Number and percentage of YP graduates indicating that they have a desire for further training

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	8	11.1
Undecided	0	0.0
Disagreed	64	88.9
Total	72	100.0

Table 10: Number and percentage of YPs graduates indicating that they get financial assistance upon graduation to start own enterprise

	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	7	9.7
Undecided	12	16.7
Disagreed	53	73.6
Total	72	100

Table 11: Number and percentage of YP graduates indicating that YPs they attended had enough tools and equipment

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