

Youth Unemployment among Graduates of Tertiary Institutions in Kenya: The Case of Africa Inland Church Jericho

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Abstract

Millions of the youth world over remains unemployed; furthermore, the phenomenon is on the increase. For instance, the projections by countries' policy makers say youth unemployment is likely to rise by 4 million globally each year. What is more complicated to the policy makers is the high rate of youth unemployment among college graduates. Therefore, graduate unemployment has posed a challenging and complex problem to the leaders, educationists and policy makers at all levels. Even for the few graduates who have managed to secure jobs there is some disquiet among the employers concerning skills deficiency among the recently graduated ones. The issues mentioned by the job market analysts are mismatch and skills oversupply in the market. Based on the simple economic laws of demand and supply, it is catastrophic to over supply labour because a significant number will remain unemployed. Moreover, there is an increment of colleges of higher education globally and each year these colleges are belching out thousands of graduates who throng to the job market. However, more graduates are coming out possessing skills that are seemingly not in demand in the job market. Therefore, a huge gap exists between the skills demanded by the employers, and the skills possessed by the graduates, thus, only those graduates possessing the relevant skills are employable. This paper attempted to investigate tackling of unemployment among college graduates amongst the youth in Kenya; it focused on the youth in Africa Inland Jericho. The objectives of the study were to establish the causes of unemployment among the youth, determine how much the youth know about the skill-driven courses and to demonstrate the programmes that are likely to lead to higher rate of employment. This was a descriptive study where the researcher collected data from 50 respondents sampled from a population of 1,500 church going youths in A.I.C Jericho. The findings showed that 12.5% TVET diploma graduates were unemployed; 93.75 % non-TVET diploma graduates were unemployed, while 80% degree graduates were unemployed. Therefore, the research concluded that lack of skill-driven education among the youth was the greatest cause of unemployment. The study recommended that more emphasis on pursuing skill-based education; more awareness to popularize TVET education because a few of the youth were aware of TVET.

Key words: *Unemployment, TVET, lifelong learning, life skills*

Introduction

According to Mayer, Moorti, & McCallum (2018), youth unemployment world over has already become an eyesore and recognized as one of the ever-worsening global crisis. The rapidly growing youth population further compounds this trend

of youth unemployment. For instance, according to World Bank (2018), youth unemployment is lower in the developed economies while it is higher in those countries with lower economies. Examples of unemployment in high performing economies are Germany 6.8%, Netherlands 8.9%; and then lower performing Namibia 45.5%, Lesotho 38%, Botswana 35.9% and Gabon 35.9%. Over the past decades, youth unemployment has proven to be a formidable policy challenge globally (Farm, 2012). In view of the fact that the global economy does not match at all the youth demographic growth, thus the available job opportunities are nothing compared to the ever-burgeoning youth population. Moreover, with the improved access to higher education, the problem is deemed to still get worse in future, a higher percentage of the university graduates will remain jobless (World Bank, 2018; ILO, 2018; King & Palmer, 2010) If statistical facts are anything to go by, youth unemployment has soared up sharply over decades. For instance, between 2008 and 2009, youth unemployment globally rose from 11.8 to 12.7%; in 2015, indicated unemployment was at 13.58%. Kenyan situation concerning youth unemployment is serious and the employers have been emphatic that there has been a worrying skills mismatch. Although the claim may sound hilarious, the study established that only 18% to 25% of the youth access to tertiary education. Thus according to World Bank (2016) Youth unemployment in Kenya has risen tremendously to mark about 39.1%, this is significantly higher than other countries within the region namely: Tanzania 24%, Uganda 18.1% and Ethiopia at 21.6.

Already the policy makers do not know what to do with the increasing young unemployment amongst college graduates they however acknowledge the risk of the youth losing their wealth of knowledge, skills and capabilities acquired over the years of schooling (ILO, 2012; World Bank, 2014; Danijel & Tomić, 2018). Thus, TVET institutions pride themselves of the capacity to equip the young people with the critical employability skills and relevant experience to make them increasingly competent and ready to penetrate the job market locally, nationally and globally (Linotte, 2018). As a result of the shift in the job market therefore, TVET has to creatively mount proactive interventions and responses to the dynamic and ever changing job market needs, introduce vibrant training technologies, establish alternative funding to close their huge financial gaps, and establish quality partnerships with industrial sector in order to strengthen their curriculum (UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2014).

King and Palmer (2010) opine that youth unemployment is lower for persons with higher educational attainment thus, those with higher education are able to get job placement much quicker and easier. Zachary, Beblavy and Lenaerts, (2018), state that among the youth, aged 15 – 24, those with higher education find job employment quickly, and the employers do not lay them off because they possess

skills and job experience. The argument being put across by burgeoning literature is that the so-called ‘youth unemployment’ is actually the acute mismatch between the skills possessed by the worker and employer needs. Thus, youth with higher education levels tend to have lower unemployment levels. Notwithstanding other scholars’ views who blame unemployment on non-performing economy, for instance Ikharas and Al-Wadi, (2016). Further, Kluve (2018) argues that secondary and primary school leavers are mostly unemployed given that they do not possess the job skills required in the job market. In Turkana County, although the local youth may benefit from the petroleum sector most of them cannot secure employment because their general education does not give them skills such as: vocational skills like pipe fitting; welding, drilling and operation of heavy equipment. They also may lack soft skills namely positive attitude, critical thinking and team building (Nason, 2017). Presenting the same argument, ILO (2018) state that most jobs go unfilled because of lack of the desired skills; they conclude that TVET may be used to solve the problem of unemployment by training the youth in entrepreneurship in order to acquire the entrepreneurial skills needed in small and medium enterprises. Thus, technical and vocational training enhances the critical chances of employability among the youth (World Bank, 2018). Youth unemployment also demonstrates a skewed gender dimension where more women are unemployed compared to men. The most important factor to the skewed employment has its roots on the unequal access to education among boys and girls. Due to issues of patriarchy, a higher number of women remain illiterate or semi-illiterate, such relations may have serious unemployment implications (ILO, 2014; World Bank, 2014; WHO, 2016).

Overview of the Causes of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment hit the highest level in 2010, for example, among the youth aged 15 to 25 years, 620 million were unemployed. That was a great leap from 81 million unemployed youth in 2009 (World Bank 2014; ILO, 2012; Danijel & Tomić, 2018). The phenomenon of youth unemployment continues to raise concern among all the stakeholders. World Bank (2014) defines youth unemployment, as situations where people aged 15 to 25 who are available to work cannot find employment even after rigorous searching for at least a month. Scholars give varied explanations about the causes of youth unemployment. Part of the diverse causes of the deafening youth unemployment is the youth’s unpreparedness to enter the world of work and lack of the important skills demanded in the competitive job market (King & Palmer, 2010). Youth unemployment comes with serious consequence no wonder it is referred to as a global crisis. In that regard, World Economic Forum (2018, p.16) noted,

...youth unemployment as a corrosive legacy, with the capacity to hinder young people’s integration into traditional patterns of

economic life, such as earning, saving and building careers. Among the specific issues raised were long-term unemployment, low quality, part-time and temporary employment, weak links between education and work, the impact of demographic change and migration, and increasing pressures on social protection systems.

Unless interventions are put in place, youth unemployment totally excludes the young people from the day today economic life of income earning; career development; saving and investment; weak linkage between education and work. Finally, governments will be under pressure to undertake the huge and impossible responsibility of social protection systems for the young.

One of the most serious concerns with the youth unemployment is that over the years it has not abated; it has remained static. According to ILO (2018), the phenomenon of youth unemployment has been on an upward soaring in the last three years - 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Table 1 *Level of Youth Unemployment Globally*

Year	2015	2016	2017
Developed Countries	12.9%	13%	13.1%
Emerging Countries	15.5%	14.5%	14.3%
Developing Countries	9.4%	13%	13.7%

Source: World Bank, 2018

The table above shows that the phenomenon of youth unemployment has remained static; thus new ways and interventions are necessary to mitigate the situation (World Bank, 2018).

Causes of Youth Unemployment and TVET Interventions

A plethora of literature has addressed the issue of youth employment almost conclusively (ILO, 2014; King & Palmer, 2010; Linotte, 2018; WHO, 2016). According to ILO (2014), one of the causes of youth unemployment is the ever-increasing youth population, currently it stands at 70% of the continent's population. While the youth population keeps on growing in leaps the economy has not grown to generate sufficient employment opportunities and openings for them. The tendencies of the sub-Saharan African countries to rely on exportation of primary resources hurt their economy. To come out of the economic quagmire

adequate policy structures are needed to turn around the economy and that is where TVET comes in especially in enhancement of the relevant skills and knowledge for driving the manufacturing sector. An enhanced manufacturing sector becomes dynamic in the creation of new jobs and absorption of more youths in the job market and by so doing reducing unemployment. Failure by the economy to generate sufficient employment opportunities is a dangerous trend because by not arresting the situation it may bring negative ripple effects like youth unrests, the case of Morocco and other Arab's countries serve as a case (ILO, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

One of the causes of youth unemployment is the mismatch between the workers' skills and economy demands. According to World Bank (2018), 21st century's economy is skill intensive. That means anybody lacking the demanded skills cannot find employment because of the skill gap and mismatch. Kluve (2018) indicates that economic demands must grow at the same rate with workers skills and experience. TVET institutions exist to fill that gap by enhancing skills and knowledge demanded in the job market. The youth graduating from the TVET institutions easily gets roped in the penetration of the job market given the cutting edge skills honed in the training. Generally, the transition from school to job market is tumultuous. Therefore, TVET may run short causes on employability training for which the purpose would be to help the young graduates to have an in-depth understanding of the scope of the skills and experiences demanded by the employers. For instance, clear preparation for a worthy CV (curriculum vitae), good communication, presentation and teamwork skills, professionalism and proactivism (ILO, 2014; World Bank 2014; King & Palmer, 2010). Career advisors are known for giving the young graduates identification of the correct qualifications for the particular dream careers and such information forms the fundamental foundation for developing the non-academic skills demanded by the employers (UNESCO, 2012; Aryeetey, Baah-Boateng, Ackah, Mbiti & Lehre, 2014).

Research Methodology

The study focused on the 30% of the youth attending church regularly in Africa Inland Church Jericho, Nairobi County. The researcher was attracted to this area because of two factors: in Eastlands Nairobi, Jericho is one of the Sub-County Wards rocked by organized crime and highest level of youth unemployment. The youth studied was comprised of those aged 21 to 35 years. The researcher collected data from the respondents using a standardized questionnaire. The target population was 1,500 where a sample of 50 youth was selected using probability technique. The data collected was coded, organized and analyzed using the SPSS and results presented using tables.

Findings and Discussions

TVET and Employment of the Youth

The respondents were asked if they were in any gainful employment. The study established that only 20% were in employment.

Table 2 *Percentage of the Employed and Unemployed Youth*

Sex	Employed	%	Unemployed	%
Male	7	14	11	22
Female	3	6	29	52
Total	10	20	40	74

The level of unemployment among the youth was rated very high 74%.

The Youth who had Accessed TVET and other Forms of Education

The researcher asked the respondents whether they had accessed some TVET training. The study established that only 16% had attended TVET institution. Other youth had formal education from colleges ranging from certificates were 54%, diplomas 32%, degrees 20%.

Table 3 *Educational Levels Attained by the Youth*

Sex	Certificates	TVET	Diplomas	Degrees	Total
Male	3	5	4	6	18
Female	14	3	12	4	32
Total	27	8	16	10	50

Youth Employment

All the respondents were asked to state their employment status. The results presented on the table below.

Table 4 *Employment Status*

Sex	Cert.	Exmp.	TVET	Empl.	Dip.	Empl.	Deg.	Empl.	Total
Male	3	0	5	5	4	0	6	1	18
Female	14	0	3	2	12	1	4	1	32
Total	17	0	8	7	16	1	10	2	50

The study established that out of the 20% with gainful employment, 16% had undertaken a TVET qualification. Further, the study established that only 2% of those who had accessed TVET were not in gainful employment.

Awareness of TVET among the Youth

Even though access to TVET had enabled the youth to access employability, it was unfortunate that most of the youth were not aware about TVET. The data collected is presented on the table below. The youth were asked whether they were aware about TVET and a majority of 76% had no idea, only 18% had some idea; while 6% were fully aware.

Table 5 *Awareness of TVET among the Youth*

Sex	Fully Aware	Some Idea	No Idea	Total
Male	1	5	14	20
Female	2	4	24	30
Total	6%	18%	76%	50

The youth did not know much about TVET; therefore, there was high ignorance about TVET.

Most of the youths lacked entrepreneurship and technical skills because they only had academic diplomas unlike those who had TVET; the inadequacy of these critical skills becomes a huge barrier to accessing job opportunities and thus leading to unemployment (Danijel & Tomić, 2018). The importance of TVET as the proven channel for accessing technical skills cannot be overemphasized as indicated by variety of stakeholders. For instance, in first world like Germany and China TVET occupy a top notch in dissemination of vocational skills (ILO, 2014). Therefore, vocational education successfully prepares the youth to penetrate the job market in trade and in enhancement of skills like craft, artisan, technician, or in professional vocations. Architecture, engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, and architecture are examples of professions through TVET pathways (World

Economic Forum, 2018; WHO, 2016). When the youth improve their skills, penetrating the job markets become much easier.

Conclusion

This study established that one of the causes of youth unemployment is lack of employability skills among the youth as shown by the unemployment rate of only 12.5% of those who had TVET education. However, for those with other kinds of education, their level of unemployment were high - 93.75% of the diploma holders, while 80% of the degree holders were not employed. The findings are in line with the claim by employers who have repeatedly asserted that there was serious skills mismatch compared to the job opportunities. Although most of the youth in the study had accessed some other training in post-secondary colleges, they still remained unemployed. Therefore, parents, caregivers and the youth need to aim at skill-based education in order to improve the chances of employment. Besides TVET capacity to give skill-based education, still 76% of the youth had no idea about the programmes. Therefore, there is need to double efforts and awareness of TVET programmes among the youth and parents. Already there is over emphasis on formal education at the higher level although it does not necessarily translate to employability. This is a big challenge to the funders of education among our youth, the policy makers and the youth accessing education. Acquisition of competencies and employable skills therefore are the critical component as far as penetrating the job market is concerned.

Recommendations

Parents and the youth need to focus more on TVET programmes in order to improve their chances of employment. Mainstreaming information on TVET and employability should be done in both primary and secondary schools as the youth make their choices of career pathways. All factors affecting the access of youth to TVET need to be addressed in order to enhance more admissions in the relevant TVET institutions

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