

## **Imparting Entrepreneurial Skills to the Disadvantaged Citizen Groups through Adopting Flexible and Blended Skills: The Tanzanian Context**

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### **Abstract**

*When governments in many developing countries pay attention and efforts to lower poverty levels among their people, the disadvantaged citizen groups (DCGs) are among the groups that need special attention. This study focusses on a specific DCG of people/students who drop out from various levels of education: primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and universities. These people have no reliable economic activities to support their lives. As part of a big development project, this study develops a conceptual model with a view to building capabilities of the DCGs by imparting on them entrepreneurial hands-on business skills, facilitated through a flexible & blended skills (FaBs) model. The developed model comprises six elements with the main functionality of posing procedures to the DCGs to learn entrepreneurial skills through the FaB system, and engage with own businesses of preference. They include: (i) identifying the characteristics of the DCGs (ii) preparing institutional infrastructure, (iii) preparing online and practical courses, (iv) conducting online courses, (v) conducting the courses in the institution, and (vi) conducting industrial practical studies. While five elements are self-descriptive, element two, that is 'preparing institutional infrastructure' was decomposed further into five sub-elements as follows: (i) merging policies and strategies of the TVET institution against that of the nation, (ii) modifying the institutional curriculum, (iii) defining identifying buildings' infrastructural spaces and uses, (iv) evaluating the institutional staff requirements in terms of knowledge categories, workloads and the additional loads that may be assigned from the FaBs model, and (v) mapping out institutional ICT's infrastructural requirements to support FaBs studies. Translating the holistic model, it was argued that, if DCGs participate in the FaBs studies committedly; they would receive course instructions flexibly, gain both entrepreneurial theories and practical skills, thereby alleviating the prevailing poverty levels. The study also concluded that knowledge and skills gained by the DCGs will help them support themselves, their families as well as boost the national economy. The findings of the study have utility in many other countries.*

**Key words:** *Disadvantaged citizen groups, entrepreneurship skills, FaBS*

### **Introduction**

This study is the first part of a four-phased project that aims at building the capacity of the DCGs by imparting on them entrepreneurial skills through the FaBs scheme'. Phase one prepares the methodology of the project, phase two validates the model;

phase three comprises a holist implementation of the project, whereas phase four carries out project monitoring, review and evaluation. Before explaining part one, which is also the theme of the current paper, a definition of the DCG concept is provided and its characteristics outlined.

Mayer (2003) views DCGs as representing people who have limited access to the tools found useful by the majority of the society. Such sects of the society have partial or no autonomy, incentive, responsibility, self-respect, community support, health, education, information, employment, capital, and responsive support system amongst others (Barrett, 2010; Fairlie, 2005; Brennan, Little & Locke, 2006). They look for any support from the society (Unegbu, 2012; Osorio *et al.*, 2014).

***Part one of the major development project:*** Many students at various levels of education who leave schools or fail to continue with further studies are referred to as 'DCGs'. The DCGs leave schools due to a variety of reasons, including: absenteeism, personal reasons, (pregnancy to girls) amongst others, generally noted here as 'dropouts'. Although the actual number of dropouts due to absenteeism, pregnancy and other reasons was difficult to find, they constitute substantial numbers of both girls and boys. The only statistics that could be accessed was for the year 2013 and it is referred to in this study. It was cited from the National Examinations Council of Tanzania's results for three levels, namely: Standard VII, Form IV and Form VI. On Standard VII, a total of 174,576 (38.3%) girls and 130,499 (31.8%) boys failed to continue with studies (NECTA results, 2013). With regard to Form IVs, a total of 40,525 (33.4%) girls and 50,691 (30.4%) boys added up to the dropouts figures (NECTA results, 2013). In addition, at Form VI, a total of 1772 (10.81%) girls and 4362 (12.79%) boys were dropouts (NECTA results, 2013). Results for the same levels for other years may show the same trend, or even worse than that.

This paper perceives that the DCGs comprise people who have very temporal/unrecognized activities, those who mostly stay idle, or, those who are busy watching unnecessary TV movies. Generally such are people who lack skills to boost their survival. In summary, DCGs can be considered as a group of people who form a significant part of the citizens who live below the poverty line.

Besides, DCGs represent critical masses of the Tanzanian citizenry. If this group is not thoroughly identified and examined, specific problems such as missing tactics of entrepreneurial practices identified and enhanced, the nation will hardly state with confidence about the potentials of its economy. The problem is also likely to obstruct the nation's vision and initiatives of becoming a middle income country by 2025 (Kimambo, 2005).

In order to reduce the above mentioned pitfalls, the current study develops a conceptual model to build the capacity of the DCGs enabling them to create, establish, acquire, implement and manage own entrepreneurship businesses of preference. Efforts to build this capacity would be enhanced by adopting the FaBs training model.

## **Methodology**

This study is based mainly on critical review and evaluation of the literature on DCGs and entrepreneurship business skills & practices education system in Tanzania, and FaB skills. The information explored helps in the development of a framework to enable DCGs to conduct entrepreneurship business practices of own preference. The DCGs targeted here covers students who fail from various levels of education, making a group that lacks formal education.

## **Literature Review**

### **Disadvantaged Groups: Characteristics and Requirements**

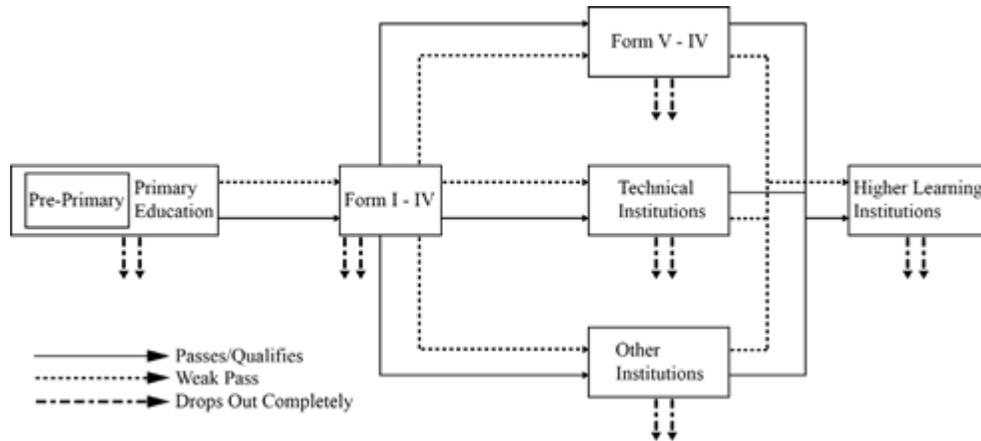
A thorough review of related literature has been used to establish four criteria to indicate characteristics of the DCGs. These criteria help to discover their composition, their strengths and weaknesses, their implication and possible mechanisms for their support (Table 1).

**Table 1: Disadvantaged Groups' Composition, Characteristics and Requirements**

Basic criteria	Characteristics	Authors
Who are they? (composition)	Those graduates at various schools at different levels and did not continue with further studies, their earning is temporal and so not reliable, those who lack life skills, and so look for support from friends & relatives	Fairlie (2005), Unegbu (2012), Schadauer et al., (2014).
What are they missing? (or what do they need?)	Access to further studies, food, shelter, employment, respect, and valued support from the community. If supported, they can change the styles of living from worse to better.	Brennan et al., (2006), ADB (2009), Osorio, Percia & Battista (2014).
Implication for individual DCGs, or the nation	Governments not benefiting due to its misuse of the potentials held by the DCGs. These DCGs themselves may not be aware of such potentials. Creating a burden to others, the DCGs need unnecessary support from friends and relatives.	Mayers (2003), ADB (2009), Unegbu (2012), Schadauer et al., (2014)
How to help these DCGs?	Identify & categorize distinct DCGs, in order to sort out the needs, make records, examine the challenges of the needs against the solution needed, then adopt & maintain the solution. Provide strong entrepreneurship skills that will help them stand on their own either as individuals or as groups/teams.	Barnes, Green & Natcen (2011), Brennan et al., (2006), Schadauer et al., (2014), Fairlie (2005), Santos, Cacentano & Curral (2013).

### Education System in Tanzania

The Tanzania's education system is organized in six levels: pre-primary, primary, ordinary level secondary (Form IV) and advanced level secondary (form six), and tertiary (which includes colleges and university) [Figure 1.1] (URT, 1996). Upon the completion of each exit level (except pre-primary); students take examinations. Those who qualify continue with studies at the next level against the failures who remain without any support.



**Figure 1:** Education System in Tanzania

From Figure 1, three important results appear; (a) pass – representing students who pass examinations and successfully continue with the studies (b) weak pass

– representing students who either repeat examinations or do bridging courses in the next level of education or training. When a student does a bridging course and qualifies, he/she continues at the highest level and (c) drop out – representing students who fail examinations, absenteeism, and pregnant girls, amongst others. These people need support.

## Flexible and Blended (FaB) Skills

FaB refers to the skills imparted to the learners in two modalities: firstly, adopting face to face, and secondly, adopting online (distance) learning (Richardson, 2012). This system helps to reach people who are situated in distant geographical locations. It has several advantages: it maximizes the use of potential ICT tools such as TV, radio, computers, mobile phones, and faxes, amongst others. People at the furthest geographical locations could easily be saved, besides people may engage with a variety of other businesses, and participate in the course flexibly. The nature of the course and its demand may suit the requirements of many people who lack formal training, as such, these people may learn and benefit (Ozolina, 2011; Richardson, 2012).

## Study Findings and Discussion

### Overview

This study aimed at developing a conceptual model to build the capability of DCGs by imparting FaBs skills. The model comprises six elements, which are summarized in Table 2 and explained in detail in consequent text.

**Table 2: Four Elements used to Develop Capability of DCGs through FaBs****Model**

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Characteristics of DCGs</b>	Problems and characteristics of the DCG identified Current policies and strategies deployment in the TVET institutions and in the national levels are reviewed
<b>Prepare institutional infrastructure</b>	Curriculum within the institution is modified  Buildings – space use and requirements assessed  Staff at the institution, workloads and additional loads revised  ICT's infrastructure, current functionality and expansion re-forecasted
<b>Online and practical courses</b>	Preparation of online and practical studies requirements and motivations
<b>Online studies</b>	Course delivery online using online tools (theories) conducted
<b>Courses at the institution</b>	Briefing course conducted within the institution to summarize material given online, plus, broad entrepreneurship skills studies conducted
<b>Industrial studies</b>	Typical practical studies in the industry to instill confidence conducted and students go for implementation

**Aspects for Preparing Institutional Infrastructures**

**Typical Problems of the DCGs.** DCGs include girls and boys of different ages and interests, who stay idle in their homes. Most of them fail to proceed with academic matters, forming the group of dropouts. The groups lack full formal schools, use most of their time on betting, staying idle or watching TV movies. Such people are unable to employ themselves because they lack the requisite skills to fuel their daily survival. In summary, a big majority of these people can be thought of as forming part of the citizens who live below the poverty line. The specific characteristics of the DCG could be identified as would be interviewed before joining specific course requirements.

**Current Policies and Strategies at MUST and at the National Level.**

Both the nation and the MUST have policies and strategies. Policies and strategies of the institution have been formulated in such a way that they achieve the vision

of the nation. For example, striving to alleviate poverty, and providing education fairly to all citizens, amongst others. As for this, institutional policies and strategies are set up so as to help realize the nation's strategy to become a middle income country by

2025. While the current policies and strategies of MUST for example are designed to deliver formal education in the only ordinary diploma and degree programmes, they are not yet appropriately incorporating aspects for addressing FaBs training. The current study therefore advocates amendment of the institutional policies, strategies and curricula to deliver FaBs skills so as to appropriately meet the nation's vision. Efforts to achieve this goal will be followed up, since this is the initial stage of the study.

**Curriculum within the Institution (MUST).** A curriculum is a well prepared document for demonstrating various competencies to be achieved by the learners at a prescribed level of study. At MUST the curricula used are those that are aimed at facilitating formal studies at the ordinary diploma and bachelor degree levels, lacking majority of aspects of the FaBs model. Therefore, this arrangement does not benefit DCGs. As such, a new curriculum needs to be developed to incorporate the FaBs model.

**Building Infrastructure in Institutions.** Infrastructure includes different buildings available in the institution for use in various functions, including laboratories, workshops, classes, and offices, amongst others. Many buildings, furnished with facilities, are available for use in the formal studies. Some opportunities are seen to exist: (a) timetables indicate free time in different classes during normal days of lectures (b) many classes are also free after day class hours, for example from

05.00pm or 6.00pm (c) many classes are free during weekends (d) almost all classes are free during public holidays (e) buildings are free in almost all the time for both short and long term vacations and during industrial practical training periods (IPT). Of a great benefit, long vacations and IPT time range from three to four months annually. Capitalizing on this, the space optimization models maintain that space use everywhere must be fully utilized in order to create reasonable returns (SCHEV,

2004). It concludes that the stated free spaces in university buildings are not fully utilized; they must be used to serve other groups such as DCGs. These spaces can be well utilized if the FaB model is conducted.

**Staff Members Utilization in the Institution.** Staff members are the employed workers and teaching staff who work at the institution (university). As in the case of building infrastructure, staff with different qualifications and backgrounds is available in large numbers and they also come from multi-discipline skills – civil engineers, electrical, mechanical, computer, architecture, food science, business management amongst others. These staffs benefit the institution and the nation to create and generate a critical mass of graduates in the mentioned fields. However, majority of them are not yet well utilized fully. The reasons for their underutilization can be related to lack of some innovation and creativity. The FaBs studies proposed in this model may reduce this gap. This model would list the staff

members, categorize their skills and make them design and conduct online courses that fill the gaps of the DCGs to benefit the nation.

### **ICT's Infrastructure**

ICT involves technologies for acquiring, processing, serving, presenting, storing information; incorporating both the software and hardware. The university has diverse ICT facilities – computer classrooms furnished with computers and other facilities. It has also already launched and continues using the moodle system by some staff members. The University also has staffs with computer technology skills; these staffs have valuable contribution in the online programs if established in this model. However, the launched moodle system is not yet well understood and used by many staffs and students. Yet, different courses that can be run through the online system to benefit especially the DCGs, are not yet designed and conducted. This model would make full exploitation of these skills. The institution would direct efforts to map out and link critically the ICT infrastructures available and new demands against the categorizing groups of DCGs who would use ICT facilities while at the University FaB model.

### **Preparation of Online and Practical Studies Requirements and Motivations.**

In the universities, particularly MUST, both theories and practical skills (in technical subjects) are imparted to students in the formal traditional class models only. They are not designed for the informal models that fit DCGs. Entrepreneurial knowledge needs to be conveyed to the DCGs through FaBs that follow the informal system of delivery, which needs to be incorporated in the formal curricula. The proposed modality to conduct these entrepreneurial courses through the FaB system to the DCGs is presented as follows:

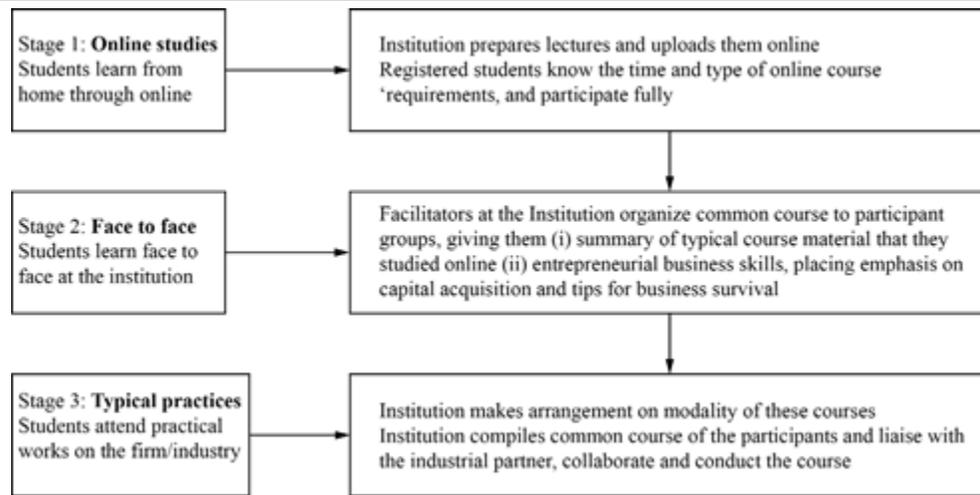
- Identifying groups of girl and boy dropouts from schools and unemployed graduates, and then record them by age, needs, and geographical location, amongst others
- Brainstorming and using different stakeholders' views to help establish data banks of possible job ventures/businesses – e.g. manufacturing of roofing tiles, see appendix 1;
- Establishing a mechanism for receiving through online system, several job ideas that meet wider demand of the majority DCGs (these would be saved in the database and shared with those who do not have any business idea;
- In using tools such as radio, TV, blogs, newspapers etc. entrepreneurship course requirements would be communicated to the targeted groups;
- University would establish theoretical courses and conduct them to respective groups. In the theoretical courses, entrepreneurship skills would be designed and covered critically to enable students build own confidence of running own businesses; and
- Arranging and conducting practical courses within the University in possible business areas. This can also be extended in the industry with the same/similar business practices that agree to collaborate.

Entrepreneurship courses of interest may cover the following topics: acquiring business capital, meeting cash flow challenges, conducting marketing, retaining customers, and becoming tolerant and resilient in business.

**Conducting Entrepreneurship Course through the FaB System.** As briefly introduced above, FaB is a combination of online and face to face studies. In this study, it is designed in three stages: online, face to face, and practices. Courses in the University are acquired through conducting face to face studies in the classroom – lectures, tutorials, assignments, case studies and presentations. The theoretical works are broken into two parts, direct in class and online class. Practical lessons are conducted in the laboratories, and workshops if necessary, and, those that are organized by and agreed to by industries are conducted on site (in industries). Critical attribute in the entrepreneurship courses is how to enable students build capability on how to acquire business capital, build confidence on own business, establish and dominate the market, conduct self-evaluation and maintain the business. A description of the online system and the four online tools are outlined as follows.

1. Conducting TV lectures on a selected television stations. The time at which students receive which courses would be specified;
2. Radio - as is the case for the TV programmes, a selected radio stations, and, a specified times at which student groups to make follow up of which courses modules would be given;
3. Computer – use computers, moodle, websites etc. to access materials online
4. Smartphone – since majority of citizens own smart phones, they make them course tools; and
5. Continuous communication and collaboration among three parties: Institution's organ, industrial partner, and student participant. The Institution is the organ that facilitates the course; the industrial partner is the agent that agrees with the institution to share/facilitate the practical, and student participant is the one who registers and participates in the course

### **The Expected Outputs**

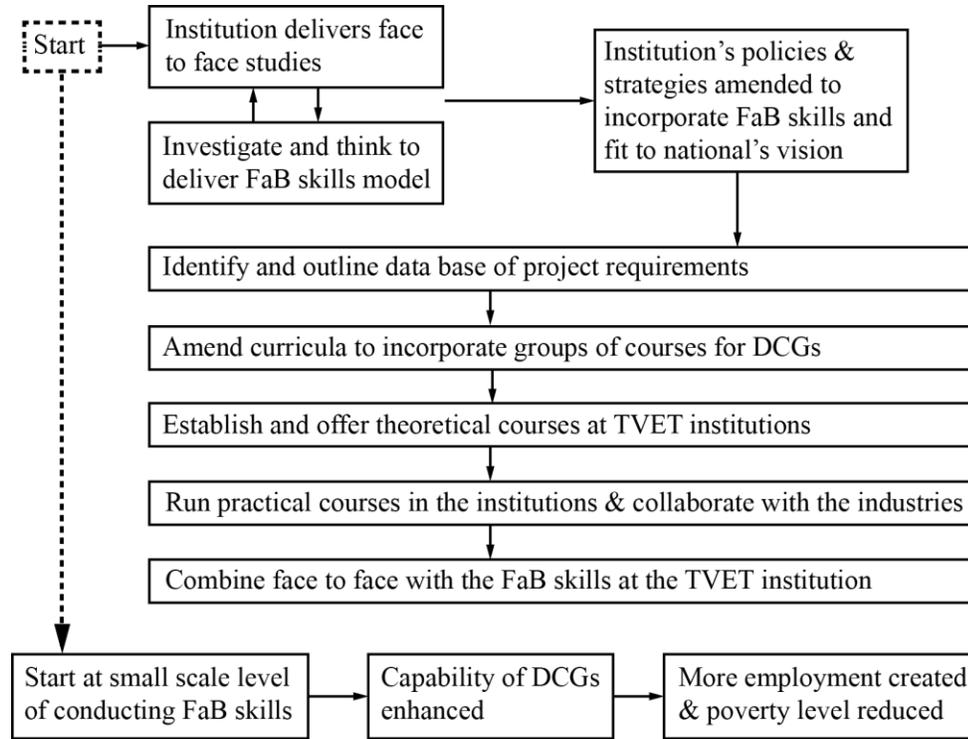


**Figure 2:** Steps for Imparting Entrepreneurial Skills to DCGs

At the end of the course participants (DCGs) would be able to:

1. Carry out own works roles;
2. Engage with entrepreneurship skills roles as individuals or as a team;
3. Run business, trace markets and overcome the challenges that always exist;
4. Get sufficient earning;
5. Give assistances to others who have not yet participated in the course;
6. Trained groups would be able to guide others newer in the course

The DCGs are expected to access information online since most, if not all of them are exposed to those tools. Therefore, the innovative model for building capability of DCGs through FaBs is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** A Conceptual Model for Building Capability of DCGs through FaB Model

## Conclusions

Almost all training institutions in the country conduct formal education that does not accommodate informal groups such as DVGs. This study regards that DCGs are groups of people who drop out of the various academic levels and live without reliable earning. The study therefore, uses potentials of the emerging FaB skills, a training that blends face to face with online studies, to prepare a model that builds the capacity of DCGs by imparting on them entrepreneurial skills to suit own preferences. The model comprises eight elements, namely: understanding DCGs' problems and characteristics, evaluating policies issues, evaluating MUST's curricula, evaluating existing building infrastructures, academic staff, ICT facilities and modalities to conduct FaB skills. Generally, the model helps identify DCG categories and their businesses of preference and offer procedures for conducting such entrepreneurship businesses to meet specific requirements. The study output has positive implication in Tanzania and in other countries.

## Recommendations

A conceptual model for imparting entrepreneurial skills through FaB system was developed in this study. In order for a model to be used successful, the characteristics of the DCGs is well discussed to help in their identification. Such DCGs are urged to seek information about the developed model and the course modality, then register, and follow the course instructions that brings its benefit.

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