

Trainee-Based Factors influencing Dropout Trends in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya

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Abstract

Despite the annual increase in TVET enrolments in Kenya, there has been poor completion rates of those enrolled especially YP trainees. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of trainee-based factors on the drop-out trends in Youth Polytechnics (YPs) in Kenya. To address the purpose of this study, the following questions were formulated; what is the trainees' entry behaviour in YPs? What are the trainees' completion trends in YPs? What are the respondents' perceptions of the trainee-based factors influencing drop-out in YPs? This study adopted Theory of Student Departure. While there are three curricula followed in the YPs, this study focused on the latest introduced in 2008, the National Vocational Certificate of Education and Training (NVCET) Curriculum. The study was conducted in four counties: Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi and Kakamega. The selected five sites had implemented the NVCET curriculum and were also centers of Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). This study adopted descriptive research design and data was collected using two sets of questionnaires and interview schedules. Survey data was collected first from 37 purposively selected instructors, 170 simple randomly selected second year, 9 purposively selected third year, and 3 conveniently selected fourth year trainees. Interviews were organized with the four County Directors of Youth Training and five Youth Polytechnic Managers who were purposively selected to participate in the study since they were deemed to possess valuable information for this study because of their respective positions. Document analysis was also used to enrich data collection. The responses from the interviews and open-ended items in the questionnaire were coded and analyzed thematically. The findings of this study revealed that early pregnancies and marriages, cases of indiscipline such as drug abuse, low entry qualification of trainees, employment opportunities during the course of study, poor performance and lack of interest in their training influenced trainee low completion rates. This study recommends the following; YPs and families should enhance guidance and counseling programs, community sensitization towards supporting trainees should be enhanced, introduction of psycho-social support programs, and the urgent review of the NVCET curriculum.

Key words: *Education, development, TVET, global labour market*

Introduction

Studies reveal that drop-out from an education system is more of a process than an event, a situation for some students which begins in earlier levels of education (Court, 1973; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Poor academic achievement as early as elementary school and several behaviours both in and out of school including absenteeism, delinquency, and substance abuse are strong indicators of dropping out (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). According to Ajaja (2012), dropping out is a serious problem because it denies individual students fundamental human right to education. In 2005, the government of Kenya created a Ministry of Youth Affairs to focus on the affairs of the youth (MOYA, 2006). The government embarked on a process to revive Youth Polytechnics countrywide to enable those who drop out of school, for various reasons acquire appropriate skills to earn a decent livelihood (Presidential Press Service, 2007). Between 2008 and 2010, the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports introduced and piloted a new National Vocational Certificate of Education and Training (NVCET) curriculum. This curriculum was meant to offer an alternative avenue for those who do not qualify for secondary education admission. The curriculum was also intended to give the youth a chance to advance their education up to the highest level which was missing in the trade courses and to some extent, in the artisan courses as well. Besides introduction of the new curriculum, infrastructure was rehabilitated, tools and equipment were provided, instructors were employed and amelioration of fees of trainees through the introduction of Subsidized Youth Polytechnic Tuition (SYPT) was introduced.

According to RoK (2014), enrolment in TVET institutions, including Youth Polytechnics increased steadily from 111,100 to 185,100 in 2010 and 2013 respectively. However, with annual increase in TVET enrolments in Kenya, it is important to note that the poor completion rates of those enrolled persisted, especially amongst YP trainees. As reported in African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC, 2013), causes of drop-out in developing countries are related to three main factors: School related factors (ineffective teaching, insufficient qualification of teachers, absence of relevant text books and inappropriate learning assessment); Student characteristics (poor motivation, learning difficulties, health and nutrition status, and behavioral problems) and family related factors (illiteracy or low education of parents, income of family).

The drop in completion rates in YPs has continued even with a stronger government support. The report of NVCET results of 2010 indicated that carpentry course had majority of students enrolled in 63 Youth Polytechnics failing the examination. The report further revealed that the number of students who sat for NVCET also dropped by 20% from the figure of 1,040 in 2009 to 839 in 2010. A government official alluded to the fact that the drop was largely caused by negative perception of Youth Polytechnics by thousands of class eight leavers who fail to secure secondary school places (Nation Media Group, 2011). The data available portrays a picture of two kinds of drop outs. In the first case, as shown by the 2009/2010 NVCET results, about 20% did not complete level 1 of the course. The second view is the drastic reduction of trainees as starting and completing level 2

of the NVCET course which is the final component of the programme (Figure 2). Therefore, an in-depth study was necessary to understand the reasons behind the high dropout rate of YP students pursuing the NVCET curriculum.

On trainee characteristics, Rumberger and Lim (2008), in a study in the US involving reviewing previous 25 years of research on drop-outs or school incompleteness, established that individual characteristics of students were some of the factors that influenced school completion levels. These factors included: Educational performance; student behaviour; attitude; and the socio-economic background of the student.

While there may be several factors that affect trainee low completion rates, the reviewed literature demonstrates that student-based, family-based, institution-based and community-based factors have great influence on the completion levels of a learner. However, the present study focused on the factors that directly related to the trainees in attempting to understand the underlying reasons for high dropout rate in YPs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of trainee-based factors on the drop-out trends in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of this study, the following questions were formulated;

1. What are the trainees' entry behaviour that influence trainee drop-out rates in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya?
2. What are the completion trends in Youth Polytechnics?
3. What are the respondents' perceptions of trainee-based factors influencing drop-out in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive cross sectional survey design. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) observed that descriptive research is utilized by many researchers as an investigative tool to collect data to address educational questions. In a cross sectional study, all the measurements for a sample member are obtained at a single point in time (Sedgwick, 2014). Hence, this design was appropriate to investigate the trainee-based factors influencing drop-out rates in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya. The study was conducted in 2015 in four counties: Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi and Kakamega. In Baringo, data was collected from Mogotio YP; in Elgeyo Marakwet from Iten YP; in Nandi from Mugen YP and in Kakamega from Lugala and Mautuma YPs. The five sites were purposively selected because they had implemented NVCET curriculum for a longer time and also for being Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) examination centres

for NVCET examinations. Data was collected using two sets of questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. Data was collected from a study population of N=345, of which 4 were County Directors of Youth Training, 5 Managers of Youth Polytechnics, 37 instructors of Youth Polytechnics and 299 trainees of Youth Polytechnics. The questionnaire which was self-administered with the help of research assistants, had both closed and open-ended questions. This study utilized both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Survey data was collected first from 37 purposively selected instructors, 170 simple randomly selected second year, 9 purposively selected third year and 3 conveniently selected fourth year trainees. Interviews were organized later with the four County Directors of Youth Training and five Youth Polytechnic Managers who were purposively selected to participate in the study. The Directors and the Managers were assumed to possess valuable information for the study due to their respective positions. Hence, the total sample size (n) for this study was 228 respondents. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptive statistics and presented using frequency, percentage and mean distribution tables. The responses from interview schedules and open-ended items in the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively. On ethical considerations, attention was directed to ethical issues prior to conducting the study, beginning the study, during data collection and data analysis, and in reporting, sharing, and storing the data (Creswell, 2014).

Results and Discussion

Level of Study of the Trainees in the Youth Polytechnic

The study revealed that 170 (93.4%) of the trainees sampled were at level 1 of study while 12 (6.6%) were at level 2 of study. The NVCET curriculum in Youth Polytechnics is offered at two levels each taking 2 years.

Year of Study of Trainees

The results of this study revealed that 170 (93.4%) of the trainees were at 2nd year while 9 (4.9%) at 3rd year and 3 (1.6%) were at 4th year of study respectively. The findings to be presented later will show that the number of trainees tend to reduce greatly at level 2 of study due to mostly factors emanate from trainees themselves, among others.

Highest Level of Academic Qualification of Trainees before Enrolling in YP

The study as shown in Table 1 revealed that majority (64.3%) of the trainees who enrolled in YP had attained Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

Table 1: Highest Level of Trainee Academic Qualification before Enrolling in YP

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Primary Education (K.C.P.E.)	117	64.3
Dropped out of Secondary School	17	9.3
Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.)	48	26.4
Total	182	100.0

Range of Marks Scored in KCPE by Trainees Who Participated in the Study

The study revealed that majority (37.9% and 36.3%) of the trainees had scored marks ranging between 201-250 and 251-300 respectively at KCPE. Others had scored between 000-050 (0.5%), 051-100 (0.5%), 351-400 (1.6%), 101-150 (2.7%), 301-350 (7.7%) and 151-200 (12.6%).

Challenges Associated with Entry Qualification of Trainees with Low Marks in Theory and Practical Subjects

Majority (97.1%) of the instructors revealed that trainees with lower marks at KCPE had challenges in the theory component of their courses. This implied that trainees admitted to YP with lower marks may have challenges in the theory components of their courses because of low intellectual abilities. Further, 85.3% of the instructors indicated that trainees with lower marks at KCPE did not have challenges in practical. Hence, to increase chances of many trainees completing their courses in YPs, there could be need to put more emphasis on practical work than theory.

Suggestion on the Entry Qualification for those Seeking Enrolment in Youth Polytechnic

The results of the study showed that majority (58.8%) of the instructors suggested that trainees seeking enrolment in YP should score between 201 and 250 at KCPE while majority (26.4%) of the trainees suggested that an applicant seeking enrolment in YP should score a mark between 201 and 250. The range of marks suggested by the instructors and trainees agree with those of YP Managers and the County Directors of Youth Training who majority suggested that applicants should score at least 200 marks at KCPE before enrolling to YPs.

Trainee Completion Trends in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya

The completion trends of trainees at level 1 from 2009-2015 is presented in Figure 1. The findings show there has been a decrease in trainee completion trends from 2009 to 2015. In 2009, 85.63% of the trainees completed level 1, 2010 (70.20%), 2011 (80.39%), 2012 (76.24%), 2013 (66.27%), 2014 (66.34% and 2015 (63.61%). These reduction in the completion was attributed to the trainee-based factors as outlined in the next section by the trainees, instructors, Managers and the County Directors of Youth Training.

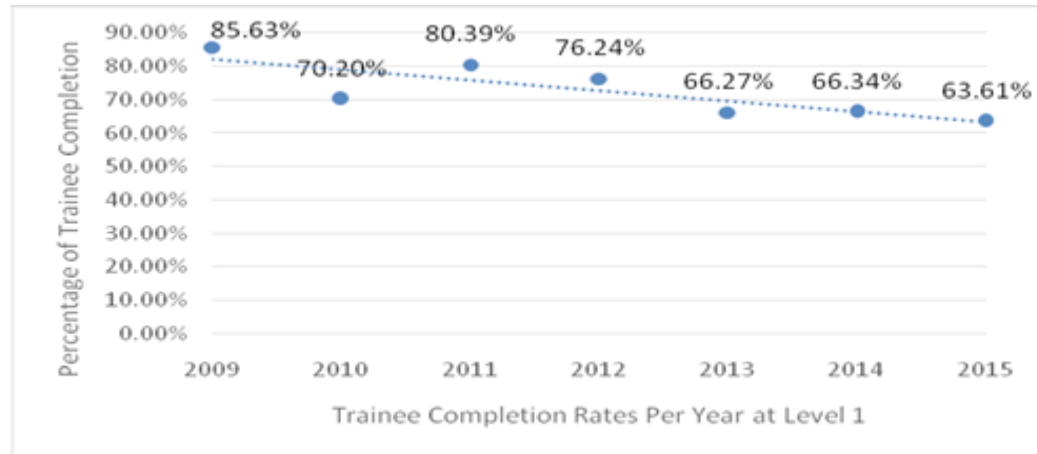


Figure 1: Trainee Completion trends per year at Level 1 from 2009-2015.

Figure 2 shows trainee completion rates at level 2. The completion rates have been slightly improving over the years. However, this shows a huge number of wastage of the trainees who are enrolled into the NV CET curriculum. Completion rate in 2011 was 2.99%, 2012 (2.53%), 2013 (2.75%), 2014 (6.60%) and 2015 (8.73%). The slight improvement on completion was attributed to the awareness created by the instructors on the need to move to level 2 and get a certificate to be able to progress to other levels of education or get meaningful employment.

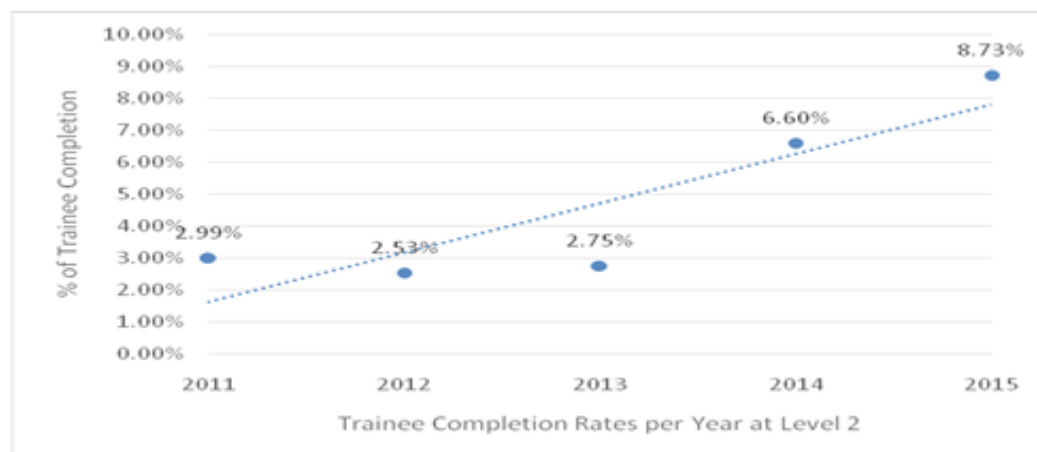


Figure 2: Trainee Completion Trends Per Year at Level 2 from 2011-2015.

Trainee-based Factors Influencing Trainee Drop-out in Youth Polytechnics

Results shown in Table 2 reveal that female trainees dropped out of YP because of pregnancy and employment offers as indicated by mean scores of 3.44 and 3.06 respectively. The study further revealed that male trainees dropped out of YP because of indiscipline and employment as shown by mean scores of 3.65 and 3.26 respectively. These findings are related to those of Omoteso and Semudara (2011) and Yahaya, et al (2009) who found that cases of indiscipline were more prevalent

among male students than female students in schools. The results of this study on this item are further supported by the findings of Hallman and Grant (2003) who found out that both early school leaving and adolescent pregnancy are strongly associated with low economic status, which is the case with trainees in Youth Polytechnic in Kenya.

Table 2: Instructors’ Views on the Causes of Trainee Dropout from Youth Polytechnic

Instructors’ views on causes on trainee drop out	N	Mean
i Female trainees drop out of this YP because of pregnancy	34	3.44
ii Male trainees drop out of this YP because of pregnancy	34	1.32
iii Female trainees drop out of this YP because of indiscipline	34	2.94
iv Male trainees drop out of this YP because of indiscipline	34	3.65
v Female trainees drop out of this YP because of employment	34	3.06
vi Male Trainees drop out of this YP because of employment	34	3.26
N	34	

A further analysis on the trainee-based factors causing drop-out in YP was provided by the qualitative questions in the trainee and instructor questionnaires and also from the interviews with the Managers and the County Directors of Youth Training. Trainee factors highlighted by the trainees include; drug and substance abuse, peer pressure, indiscipline and persistent poor performance at YP. Other reasons provided by the instructors were early marriages and fear of competition with those who enrolled in YP with higher marks at KCPE. During the interview sessions, the managers gave the following as trainee-based factors that led to trainee to drop-out from YP; pregnancy, employment especially after industrial attachment, cases of indiscipline such as drunkenness, drug abuse and theft, and early marriages. Trainee-based reasons for trainee drop-out in YP as given by the County Directors of Youth Training were closely related to those mentioned by the Managers. They include; pregnancy, early marriages, cases of indiscipline such as drunkenness and drug abuse, lack of interest for studies, low entry qualification to YP, peer pressure and trainee expectation of an easy course which turns to be very theoretical after enrolment. In summary, the findings from different respondents reveal that pregnancy, early marriages, cases of indiscipline, employment and peer pressure were the most prevalent trainee-based factors that caused trainees to drop out of YP. The findings of this study are closely related to those of Ngangi (2012). The study established that factors such as early marriages, early pregnancies, death caused by HIV/AIDs and stigma, herding of cattle or household chores, family problems like polygamy, divorce, poverty, child labour, negative peer influence, lack of feeding programs in school, overloaded curriculum, lack of role model and instability in families were responsible for pupils’ dropping out of school. This study has presented and discussed the findings guided by trainee-based factors that influenced drop-out rates in YPs in Kenya.

Conclusions

The findings reveal that a high percentage of the trainees had challenges in their training in YPs because of low entry qualification scored at KCPE. These challenges were in the theory component of NVCET course taken by the trainees. The study established that some of the trainees with lower qualification found training difficult and this occasionally led to drop-out from YPs.

Further, the study revealed that completion rates at level one, that is, end of year two, had continuously reduced from 85.63% in 2009 to 63.61% in 2015. The completion rates at level two had been increasing, though minimally from 2.99% in 2011 to 8.73% in 2015. The reduced completion rates over the years in level one were attributed to factors emanating from trainees as mentioned below. The minimal increase of completion rate at level two was as a result of instructor sensitizing the trainees to move to the end of level two to earn a certificate for further education or gain skills and knowledge for meaningful employment.

The study also found that female pregnancies, early marriages, drug and substance abuse and other disciplinary cases, employment or cheap labour in the course of study, low entry qualification and negative peer influence were the major trainee-based factors that influenced trainee drop-out in YPs. Other trainee-based factors that influenced drop-out included persistent poor performance in YP and lack of interest in the study as a result of joining the programme due to lack of other options. This study concludes that trainee-based factors have contributed to the low completion rates in YPs in Kenya.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Youth polytechnics should enhance guidance and counseling programs to deal with both social and academic aspects of the trainees. Cases of early pregnancies and marriages, drug abuse, cheap labour, choice and progression in courses taken, among others could be addressed effectively through guidance and counseling. There is need for families and guardians to take up a lead in guidance and counseling. Early interventions on issues that could negatively affect youth later were addressed through parental or guardian guidance and counseling. Youth polytechnics, families and communities need to introduce psycho-social support programs to handle cases such as those of orphaned trainees and teenage trainee mothers. Such initiatives aimed at helping female trainee mothers to return to YPs and other supports including financial could be introduced. Community sensitization towards supporting trainee needs generally could be enhanced. Also, the national government needs to urgently spearhead the process of curriculum review. Due to the lower abilities of some trainees in YPs, the curriculum ought to be more practical oriented. The curriculum should also consider raising the minimum entry qualification or mark for those enrolling in NVCET curriculum to ensure trainees are better able to cope with the cognitive aspects of the course.

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