

Empowering Youth with Technical and Vocational Education and Training Skills through Master Craft Practicum

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Abstract

This paper focuses on youth empowerment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) skills through Master Craft practicum training of the increasing number of trainees joining sustainable vocational skills development centers. The study was conducted in Karamoja region, North-Eastern Uganda. Seven Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) and eighteen work-based private training workshops were randomly sampled to establish the nature of vocational skills training provided by public and private master craft person work-based training; methods of training and trainees exposure to training materials, and how Master Craft practicum empowers youths with sustainable long-life TVET skills. A cross-sectional survey study design was used for the 7 VTIs. Tracer study was conducted on 75 VTI graduates and 19 instructors. Also, 18 private workshops with 28 trainees were involved in the study. The study was mainly descriptive with simple quantitative method to analyze statistical data collected using questionnaire and interview guide responses. In correlating the study objectives, the study revealed that, 94% of graduates from VTIs were insufficiently trained in practical works but they had scientific accuracy of the content knowledge. Also, methods of training and utilization of instructional materials varied with VTIs practicing on dummies while the private sector provided Work-Based Learning (WBL) with practice on clients' items which motivates trainees to apply concepts learnt. The inadequate practical exposure and inappropriate methods coupled with dynamic technology, attracted few trainees to VTIs. Skilling Uganda Strategy is aimed at improving quality of skills competence with WBL and addressing the diversity in trainings as demonstrated by low morale and stagnation of TVET professionals. It was recommended that; TVET trainings should improve on training modes that address sustainability and create opportunities for private sector to award trainees with workers' Practically Assessed Skills (PAS) certificate for professional development. Work-Based Learning with private sector should be strengthened in order to guarantee application of modern instruction techniques and development of skills training in the dynamic changing technology. All TVET instructors should be skilled to a master craft level to empower youths to attain sustainable skills by frequently scanning the labour market, utilizing tracer system and creating platforms for sharing TVET innovations and publications.

Key words: *Empowerment, master craft persons, workers' PAS, WBL*

Introduction

Few investigations have been done to justify why many trainees prefer being

trained by Master Craft Persons (MCPs) rather than in formal Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) with qualified instructors. Skills development is shifting to quality competency-based training with longer practicum attachment. Skill is the ability for one to perform specified tasks at a certain level of competence. Vocational Education Training (VET) has been neglected and has received limited attention compared to other parts of the education system and is often seen as having lower status. (OECD, 2017). Skills Development (SD) is a systematic competency-based training in activities oriented towards providing technical knowledge, skills and attitudinal change. SD empowers trainees to perform a particular job task in the labour market. Skills development takes place either through formal or informal skills training with the aim of providing graduates with technical practical skills needed to perform specialized life-long skill career (MoES, 2012).

Currently, TVET focuses on academic certification of graduates with visible practical skill gaps. The community expects master craft persons to address the skill gaps through a paradigm shift in general TVET education. The Government of Uganda (2010), embarked on supporting informal sectors for instant skills development that meets the skill gaps and labour shortage in the skilling Uganda Vision 2040. White Paper (1992) noted that, traditional SD was basically informal and comprehensive that produced skilled artisans in manipulation of the environment to meet the market needs as an integral part of life in the community.

Master Craft Persons (MCPs) provide local experience with unique characteristics in developing any vocational skills needed for apprenticeship in developing skills. The basic theory of Work-Based Learning (WBL) is not that the workshop wants to train, but trainees get trainings from the workshop and training does not end with the course. The trades used in the study include; motor vehicle technology (MVT), water engineering, hair dressing, livestock management, construction, agriculture and electricity. It is necessary to introduce and implement major reforms and innovations in TVET in line with the Education White Paper of 1992 (The Republic of Uganda, 1992). The reforms should target areas of policy and legal framework that has measures to increase access to quality and enhance equity at all levels of Business Technical and Vocational Education training (BTVET) System.

The paradigm shift now calls for apprenticeship with master craft, MoES (2016). It emphasised that TVET training has to adapt Active Teaching and Learning (ATL) methodologies in a well-managed environment to ensure application of acquired skills in the day-to-day activities. Frequent conducting of tracer studies will direct skill development training needs for new technicians entering the labour market to undergo relevant training that responds to labour market requirements.

TVET is viewed as non-academic and is for the talented craftsmen. TVET is not only neglected but their instructors are insufficiently trained, not motivated and not innovative enough to utilize scarce resources as analysed by Tibenderana (2003). Training instructors are key implement in TVET professional development and competency skill sustainability. A clear disparity exists in VTIs instructors and master craft person mode of training in influencing youth performance in TVET.

The general TVET is inclined to formal skill development education with little emphasis on end product and market needs. While the master craft practicum training attracts many trainees, they are not skilled in TVET delivery methodology. Despite Government of Uganda's (GoU) intervention in the skilling Uganda strategy, the contribution of master craft person in TVET skill development in Karamoja region is still underestimated. This has led to negative attitude of people in TVET as evidenced by low enrolment of trainees.

Vocational training is a vital component in enhancing productivity and economic competitiveness if the training provision is fully financed and not fragmented. To enhance effectiveness and efficiency of training systems in TVET, integration of private and public sectors in skills development is paramount for the job market (Ziderman, 2003).

The purpose of this paper was to illustrate how master craft persons could contribute to youth empowerment through TVET practicum approach in driving sustainable skills development in the global changing context. The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- i. To establish the nature of vocational skill training provided by the public, private VTIs and master craft person's practicum.
- ii. To establish the influences of training strategies and trainees exposure to training material on youth empowerment in TVET skills development in Karamoja, Uganda.
- iii. To demonstrate how master craft practicum empowers youth with sustainable TVET skills for professional development.

This paper was limited to the contribution of master craft person in empowering youth in sustainable TVET skills development by considering; the nature of skills training, influence of exposures to instructional materials and how master craft practicum empowers youths in skills development. The period under reviewed was from December 2015 to March 2017 and in line with Uganda BTNET strategic plan 2012–2021(MoES, 2012).

Methodology

The study was conducted in Karamoja region, North-Eastern Uganda. The region had numerous informal training centres as a result of stability, peace and upcoming developments. It also has 5 government-grant aided technical institutions, 2 Community Polytechnic Institutes, and 1 Private church-funded polytechnic institute. TVET master crafts contributions to professional development and youth empowerment was the major focus point. Primary information was accessed from instructors, trainees, private workshop proprietors

and alumni. Secondary information was gathered from training centre records and documents from Cooperation and Development (C&D) tracer study reports and media. Purposeful sampling was used for all VTIs respondents and random sampling technique used to select participants from the private sector where each member in the population had an equal chance of being selected as subject. A total of 142 participated in the study which adequately represented the target population and they provided the data needed for the study analysis.

Table 1. *The Number of Participants per Category*

Category	No. of Sample Questionnaire	No. of Sample Interviewed
Instructors	19	11
Master Craft Persons	18	18
Trainees from VTIs	60	15
VTIs Alumni	15	5
Trainees from workshops	22	15
Self-employed	8	8
Total No. of Participants	142	72

Table 1 represents the target groups who participated in the study. Questionnaires were administered to 142 out of whom 72 had interview discussions.

Findings and Discussion

Professional Development of Master Craft Persons

To be an instructor in formal VTIs, one must have completed instructor program from accredited college or university. Admission to instructors' college is restricted to graduates from technical institutes (technicians). This discourages competent youth from non-formal sector. The training normally takes 2-4 years and after graduation, instructors rarely get refresher training. Ninety seven percent (97%) of instructors and 42% of the private sector proprietors are graduates of formal TVET. Thirty nine percent (39%) were trained by a master craft person and 19% were self-trained.

It is clear that, professional development of master craft persons is based on the technicians' growth in the fields they were trained in. The capacity of training and technological advancement create gaps for technicians in catching up with the new trends and therefore, longer internship is being encouraged for dynamic skills development. Professional dualism is key for mastery of TVET skills. Most technicians cannot leverage on attitudinal change and team spirit which limits them from sharing information as they prefer to specilize in a single field of technology.

Tracer study and retooling of technicians through practicum approach links theory to practice with work-based-learning (on-the-job training) to support new technology in the industry. Master craft dual training with apprenticeship exposes

trainees to the world of work; however, institutionalizing private sector certification framework is based on labour market requirements to make skill development relevant.

The Nature of Skills Training Provided by the Public and Master Craft Person’s Practicum.

The analysis and interpretation of data is based on response from the 19 instructors and 18 master craft persons

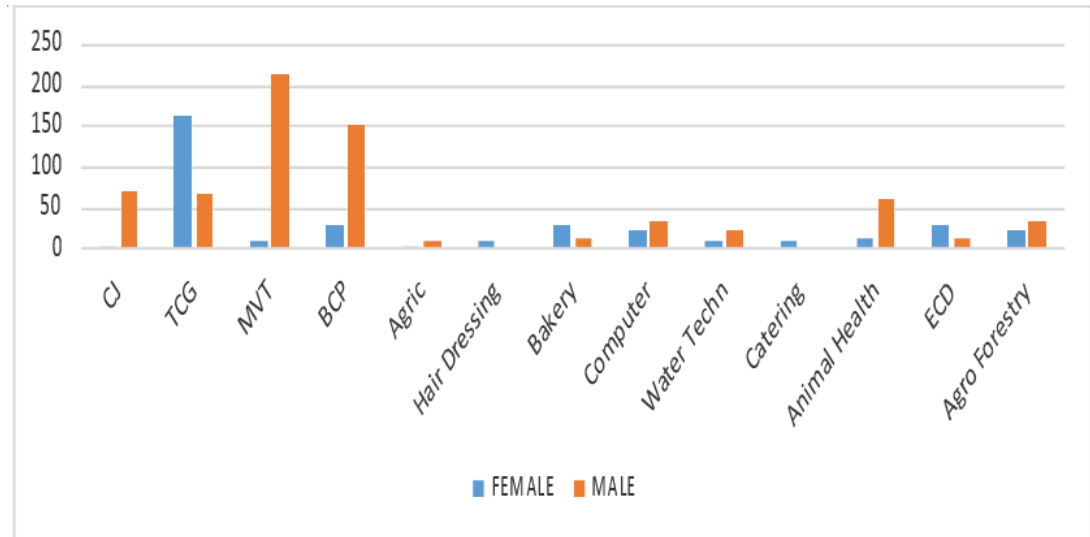


Figure 1: Popularity of vocational trades in Karamoja Region by gender

The data represents responses from 1058 trainees who were enrolled for vocational training by C&D in Karamoja by the end of 2015. The trades of carpentry and joinery (CJ), tailoring and cutting garment (TCG), motor vehicle technology (MVT), and building and concrete practice (BCP) attracted majority of trainees leaving out trades that the community and female directly interfaces with. The main reason is lack of instructors for the trades and traditional gender bias attached to a particular trade. In order to popularize these trades, private sector have to conduct WBL for trainees and MCPs be invited to instruct at VTIs (ILO, 2017).

Instructors revealed they rarely used practical and trainees participatory ATL approach during vocational instruction. It was indicated that practical instructions were mainly done by observing instructors’ demonstrations.

On factors responsible for low trainees’ enrolment in VTIs, instructors pointed at poor career guidance and use of inappropriate instruction strategies. Instructors and trainees also indicated insufficient competent human resources and materials in VTIs. Training of prospective technicians in TVET is important as Maicibi (2005) noted that, formal vocational instructors training at both pre-service and in-service accounts for the handicaps instructors face in TVET training.

Trainees from VTIs revealed that, they did major practical work during industrial

training and that their participation was under strict supervision of the industry trainer. Trainees from the private sector attributed the faster rate of grasping skills content and perfection to directly working on the clients' items. The method of instruction is normally by assigning a task to trainees who use creativity to accomplish tasks in time. The advantage of WBL is that training materials are accessible to the trainees. To improve professional development and technical performance of master craft persons, there is need for in-service and refresher training in the delivery of their fields of specialization.

Table 2 *Rating the Relevance of the TVET Content to the Labour Market*

Respondents	Relev	Irrelev	Not sure	No. of Respondents
	%	%	%	
TVET	8	1	00	19
Master Craft	1	8	07	18
Trainees	6	2	09	82
VTIs Alumni	2	7	00	23

Responses indicate that, vocational training institutions are comfortable with the relevancy of the content, yet the stakeholders outside training institutions see skills training content as irrelevant and do not match the labour market needs.

During interview with private sector trainees, they confirmed that their training content matched and they related to daily things they use in the community in terms of functions, design and satisfaction level. Majority of the instructors agreed that TVET content coverage was basic and elementary, and much was expected to be covered during field work. Sixty two percent (62%) of the VTI instructors indicated that they neither had in-service nor post skills development training and that industrial training component was not catered for since they were trained continuously at the college.

The initial instructors' training should be complemented with WBL and workshop practices to make master craft persons abreast with current trends in TVET institutions. A good instructor should be both all-rounded and compliant with the latest technology.

Influence of Training Strategies and Trainees Exposure to Training Material on Youth Empowerment in TVET Skills in Uganda

Table 3 *Involvement of Private Sector Experts in VTIs Training*

Categories		VTI's Instructors	MCP	VTI's Trainees	Alumni
Items Rated	Responses	%	%	%	%
Are experts invited to assist in specialized areas of the TVET Context	Yes	16	07	10	00
	No	84	90	87	00
	Not Sure	00	03	03	00
How effective are the experts in instructing vocational concepts that instructors have little competence?	Effective	15	67	58	82
	Less Effective	85	29	36	15
	Not Sure	00	04	06	03
Are the master craft persons instructed on assessing trainees during industrial training (Internship)?	Yes	80	32	10	22
	No	20	68	90	78

The results from the two categories of respondents reveal that private sectors experts were not invited to assist in specialized areas outside of the instructor's competence. This could be because VTIs do not have required materials and funds for hiring the experts from the private sector.

On the effectiveness of the master craft being invited to instruct specific concept of TVET content, VTIs instructors insisted it was less effective yet master craft persons, trainees and alumni indicated that, master craft persons were effective when invited to assist in formal VTIs trainings. MCPs were more practical with skills that match the workplace and the market needs.

On master craft person's capacity to assess the trainees, data indicates that they were not briefed on how to assess trainees during industrial training (IT) and internship. This affects the skill development since both instructors and the MCPs would be giving different assessment and performance targets. Sharing TVET concepts with other experts in the industries could reduce the gap in knowledge at the place of work.

On effectiveness of instruction strategies and utilization of materials, trainees revealed that, formal VTIs were more theoretical than practice oriented because trainings were conducted with insufficient instructional materials. This corroborates with trainees interview responses that instructors dictate notes and provide handouts instead of giving practical work. At times instructors postpone

trainings or borrow materials from other institutes or private sector in order to demonstrate in a practical lesson. While on the other hand, in the private workshops, trainees embraced hands- on-the-job approach that avoided staleness of knowledge, and in formal VTIs', concentration on certification.

Maicibi (2005) echoed that VTIs instructors' pedagogical performances were better than for the instructors in private sector. The master craft persons' skills in training strategies should be improved significantly to influence skills development in Ugandan.

How Master Craft Practicum Empowers Youth with Sustainable Competences in Long-life TVET Skills Professional Development

The study revealed that, the high ratio of trainees to instructors hindered TVET professional development. In VTIs, the ratio of 25:1 is too high for beneficial TVET instructional session. Some trades even had more than 42 trainees which resulted in difficulty in individual support. The recommended average number of trainees to instructor in WBL is 5:1, which is a good environment for practice with the master craft person. A small number of trainees in a workshop increased inter- personal relationships, effective demonstration of skills, instructors' guidance and their access to tools and materials.

In WBL, trainees were constantly placed under the supervision of a senior craft person who mentored and built their competence in their specific skills. VTIs instructors acknowledged that the changing methodologies and technologies of instruction were the major factors affecting their performance. Among the major challenges TVET was facing were: the number of trainees was increasing, government funding was reducing and the curriculum was inflexible.

All participants in this study supported the government's deliberate move to include private sector in TVET training. The move will develop positive attitude of stakeholders by involving them in developing TVET training contents that related to community needs through WBL for trainees.

To change the trend of low numbers of trainees in TVET, master craft persons and trainees suggested putting in place well trained instructors, opening labour market and advocating for positive attitude change for TVET, including private sector practitioners.

On the effects of training master craft persons in vocational pedagogy, 100% of the master craft persons agreed to undertake instructor's pedagogical training to standardize vocational instructions. They also asserted that, the training would improve their performance by gaining confidence and organizational skills to be used in their instruction.

On trainees' opinions on involving master craft persons in TVET instruction, majority expressed that;

- i. The government should adequately finance TVET training providers by supplying practical skills development materials for both public and private skills training providers.
- ii. Instructors should be retooled and trained in modern TVET pedagogy.
- iii. Public-private partnership should be strengthened for work-based learning and coordination.
- iv. Trainees from private sector should be certified by a TVET accredited body.
- v. Trained instructors should develop positive attitude through guidance and counselling.
- vi. Institutions of excellence for various TVET trades should be created in order to act as resource centres.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

The statement of the problem for the study was the inadequacy of the contribution of master craft persons in youth TVET skill development and sustainability in Karamoja region. The study revealed negative attitude of Karamojong towards TVET, low number of innovative craftsmen and high trainees' preference for informal skill development.

The findings established that TVET instructors were insufficiently trained in practical utilization of instructional materials, and master craft instructors did not collaborate with VTIs to strengthen work-based learning that empowers youth in professional skills through master craft practicum. With improved collaboration of private sector partners, a positive attitude change would have a significant influence on TVET sustainability.

In summary, master craft persons can enhance youth empowerment in skills through practicum training and in-service.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study;

- i. The government should make a policy that supports master craft mode of instruction.
- ii. The government, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Industry and Trade should improve on the coordination of VTIs, industry and private sector.
- iii. MoES should involve private sector in TVET training through apprenticeship in the industry to enhance the practical skills of the youth.

- iv. The line Ministries should create innovative and sustainable professional development mechanism that respond to dynamics changes in technology through in-service training. This will enable instructors to be abreast with current technology for professionally development.
- v. It is important for government of Uganda and the Ministry of Education and Sports to review the TVET act to embrace master craft persons in VTI trainings.

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