

A Review of the Status of TVET Institutions in the Revitalization of the Collapsed Textile Industry in Kenya

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Abstract

*Technical and vocational Education and Training (TVET) is considered a driving force for a sustainable textile industrial development in the world. In Kenya, the industry was one of the major sources of foreign exchange earners for the country in the 1980's. It however collapsed in the early 1990's. It is currently considered in the Government policy 'Kenya Vision 2030' as having a potential of reducing poverty by providing employment to more than 8 million people. In its effort to bring to life the collapsed textile industries, the government has revived the Rift Valley Textiles in Eldoret and it is in the process of reviving the collapsed Kisumu Cotton Mills and Mount Kenya Cotton Textiles. Further, concerted efforts are being focused on cotton research especially *Bacillus thuringiensis* cotton production, at the same time, plans are underway to ban the importation of second hand clothes. However, the government is faced with the challenge of inadequate supply of trained skilled manpower. TVET institutions are expected to play a vital role in the production of skilled labor to facilitate the revitalization of the textile industry in Kenya. In order to determine the status of training in textile and apparel courses in Kenyan TVET institutions, a database of the existing TVET institutions offering textile, and apparel courses was developed. From the database it was established that some vital textile engineering courses were not being offered by any of the TVET institutions. Additionally, it was established that none of the technical universities was offering bachelor's degree in any of the textile related courses. From the database developed, Jeremiah Nyaga Technical Training Institute was found to offer a diverse range of textile related courses and hence proposed to be considered as a center of excellence in textile training. There is need for regular review of the textile curriculum in conjunction with textile industrial players so as to be at par with the needs of the industry. The paper was based on secondary data and documents obtained from published and unpublished literature sourced from journals, books, papers and the internet. The information obtained from this study is important for the ministry of education in developing policies that will inform a skilled-based curriculum for textile related courses in TVET institutions.*

Key words: *TVET, revitalization, textile, training*

Introduction

Many of today's developed countries built their industrial strength by developing the textile, and particularly cotton textile industry. The textile and clothing (TC)

sub-sectors have played, and continue to play, a major role in the economy of the developing countries. In addition to providing one of the most important consumer goods for the population, these subsectors create significant employment opportunities. In view of the fact that cotton is a strategic crop in Kenya and has been the basis for industrial transformation in the world for many centuries, the Kenyan government identified cotton textile industry as an important sector in employment creation, poverty reduction, and food security and was included in Kenya's Vision 2030 blueprint and the Government's Medium Term Plan (ACTIF, 2013).

According to The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis Report (Ronge & Nyangito, 2000), the textile sector recorded its peak performance in 1984 when cotton production was over 70,000 bales supplying the domestic textile industry, which comprised of 52 textiles mills and employed over 42,000 people. The textile and clothing industry was at that time the second largest employer after the civil service (ACTIF, 2013). Since then, however, domestic spinning and weaving capacities have drastically reduced from 52 mills in 1984 to only 15 main textile mills that are currently in operation, but under capacity. The key reason attributed to the collapse of the industry was the Global Economic Reforms under the Structural Adjustment Programme's (SAP) and Trade Liberalization of the 1980s/'90s. Corruption and mismanagement at the defunct Cotton Board of Kenya also contributed to the collapse of the industry (ACTIF, 2013). The Cotton Development Authority (CODA) estimates currently that there are 350,000 ha in the country suitable for cotton production, with a potential production of 260,000 bales annually (CODA, 2009).

The government has however embarked on the revitalization of the sector. At national level, the Government initiated industrial-oriented policies through the export promotion council, Manufacturing Under Bond (MUB) and Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA). The government launched the Kenya Vision 2030 policy framework and identified the Textile Sector as a flagship and key contributor to the central economic pillar. Additionally, the Kenyan government in conjunction with other East African countries signed agreed policy directives which were geared towards banning second hand clothing (ACTIF, 2013).

The Kenyan government in its effort to bring to life the collapsed cotton textile industry has revived the Rift Valley Textiles (Rivatex) industry in Eldoret and it is in the process of reviving the collapsed Kisumu Cotton Mills (KICOMI) and Mount Kenya Cotton Textiles (Moutex Mills). In order to increase the production of the main raw material of the textile industry which is cotton in the country, the government through Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) has developed a high yielding *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) cotton variety which is disease resistant and is awaiting the passing of the biotechnology bill in parliament before being distributed to farmers. The government is however being faced with another challenge of inadequate supply of well trained personnel who can work in various sectors of the industry once it is fully revived. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions can play this vital role of training and churning out market driven courses.

TVET is a special type of tertiary education that is well placed to offer the much needed training in courses related to clothing and textile industry. Its role therefore in the revitalization of the collapsed textile industry in Kenya is vital. The objective of technical and vocational education is to bring up application-oriented talents that have related technical theoretical knowledge and practical ability (TVET Act, 2013). The trainees from TVET institutions acquire practical skills needed in the textile industry. The main aim of this paper was therefore to determine the status of TVET institutions in the revitalization of the collapsed textile industry in Kenya. The information obtained from this study will aid the Ministry of Education in developing policies that will enhance training of textile related courses in TVET institutions. It will also provide information that will guide the TVET institutions in identifying the most relevant textile related courses that are important in the revitalization of the textile industry in Kenya.

Methodology

The study relied on secondary data which was mainly obtained from official websites that included Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) which is a state corporation established under the TVET Act of 2013 mandated to regulate TVET sector through licensing, registration, and accreditation of institutions, programs, and trainers. The other website was Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS). Other sources included published literature sourced from books, journals, and papers. The literature used is not that on Kenya alone but also other countries in the region and overseas, for comparative reasons.

Findings

A database of institutions offering textile related courses at the artisan, craft and diploma levels were developed as shown in the table below.

Table 1 *Summary of Textile Related Courses Offered in TVET Institutions in Kenya*

Category	Course	No. of Private Institutions	No. Public Institutions	No. of Counties Present
Higher Diploma	-	-	-	-
	Fashion, Design and Garment	1	10	11
Diploma	Making Technology			
	Fabric Printing	-	1	1
	Clothing Technology	1	8	7

	Clothing and Textile technology	1	1	2
Craft	Garment Making	4	4	7
	Sewing Machine Maintenance	-	1	1
	Fashion Design and Garment Making Technology	8	18	14
	Fabric Printing	-	1	1
	Clothing technology	-	4	4
Artisan	Garment Making	8	19	17
	Fashion design and Garment making	2	11	11

Four textile related diploma courses were found to be offered in Kenyan TVET institutions in which Fashion, Design and Garment Making Technology were the most common in eleven institutions distributed in eleven counties. Jeremiah Nyaga Technical Training Institute was the only TVET institution offering craft and diploma in Fabric Printing. It was also the only institution offering craft in Sewing Machine Maintenance. Three TVET institutions for people with special needs were found to offer diploma courses in textile. They included Karen Technical Training Institute for the Deaf, Machakos Technical Institute for the Blind and St. Joseph's Technical Institute for the Deaf, Nyang'oma. There was no institution offering higher diploma in textile related course. It also was noted that artisan course in Garment Making was the most offered in TVET institutions in Kenya followed by craft in fashion design and garment making technology.

TVET Institutions in Kenya

According to TVETA a total of 978 TVET institutions were registered in Kenya (TVETA, 2018). A list of all registered TVET institutions, programs in each college and their locations were all available on the TVETA website. The categories of TVET institutions in Kenya include National Polytechnics (NP), Technical Trainers Colleges (TTC), Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVC) Industrial Training Centres (ITC), Vocational Training Centres (former Youth Polytechnics) and other Private Commercial Colleges.

The TC sub-sectors consist of three components: production and ginning of cotton, transformation of lint into yarn and fabric, and the conversion of fabric and yarn into garments. This study focused on two of these components, transformation of

lint into yarn and fabric, and the conversion of fabric and yarn into garments. Of the two courses, the latter is most common. Courses related to the transformation of lint into yarn were found to be very few. From the database of TVET institutions that was developed, two textile related courses was evidently common in most of the TVET institutions identified. They included diploma and craft courses in Clothing and Textile Technology and Fashion Design & Garment Making.

Textile Related Courses Missing in Kenyan TVET Institutions

A total of five national polytechnics and fifty five technical training colleges were identified as having textile related courses. This was an improvement from a 2012 African Cotton and Textile Industries Federation (ACTIF) report which indicated that only two national polytechnics and twenty seven technical training colleges offered courses in textiles (ACTIF, 2012). The most common course being offered in Kenyan TVET institutions is artisan, craft and diploma in fashion design and garment making. It was also found that some of the courses vital for the revitalization of textile industry in Kenya were missing. These included diploma in engineering courses such as textile engineering and ginning engineering. Also missing was diploma in textile design and technology.

Textile engineering deals with engineering problems, which occur in the process of manufacturing fibers, yarns and fabrics. It also includes the steps necessary to make fabrics useful, such as the manufacture and applications of dyestuffs, chemical auxiliaries, and finishing processes. This course is aimed at producing qualified engineers who would not only take-up maintenance and operational functions of a textile mill but would cover other aspects related to the industry such as parts manufacture, machinery development, and quality assurance and management. A curriculum should therefore be developed in conjunction with the industry and TVET institutions should be encouraged to implement. However, it is imperative to note that in Kenya, the Department of Textile Engineering in Moi University is the only one of its kind in the country offering training in textile engineering at degree level.

Another important course in the revitalization of textile industry in Kenya which was found missing in TVET institutions is diploma in ginning engineering. Ginning is the bridge between seed cotton production and textile manufacturing. The programme is aimed at producing technicians who are capable of adding value to cotton products for the local market and for export and thus improve on the competitiveness of the cotton sector on the international market. This course is being offered in some of the institutions in Uganda. A curriculum should also be developed for this course and offered in TVET institutions.

Career Growth

The TVET training programmes are expected to provide opportunities for individuals to learn the practical, social, and personal skills that will enable them to

function at workplaces and promote self-reliance. The programmes also provide for progress within their occupational area and serve as avenues for further education and training. It was noted that none of the two technical universities, Technical University of Kenya and Technical University of Mombasa offered a bachelors course in textiles. The only university which was found to offer a textile related course was Moi University which had only one bachelor's degree course in textile engineering. This is an impediment for carrier growth and enhancement of knowledge in the textiles industry. TVET and higher education institutions should be encouraged to offer the courses at all levels to cater for various needs in the industry.

Curriculum Development in TVET Institutions

According to a report by ACTIF in 2012, curriculum review in TVET institutions in Kenya is not undertaken regularly as required and that industry plays a marginal role in the development and implementation of TVET. This exacerbates the mismatch between formal training and requirements of employers. Curriculum development is both a technical and social process, and the need for its development usually emerges from a concern about a major issue or problem of one or more target audience (Otunga & Nyandusi, 2009). There is need to cooperate with textile industrial players to review the current curriculum so as to be at par with the needs of the industry. The Kenyan government through Curriculum Development Assessment and Certification Council (CDACC) has embarked on designing and developing competency based curriculum for all courses in TVET in conjunction with the industry.

Recommendations

In order for TVET institutions to make a substantial contribution to the revitalization of the collapsed textile industry, the institutions need to develop relevant linkages and further enhance the quality of linkages within training institutions; between institutions with textile and apparel courses and between institutions and industries. This will eliminate the existing disconnect between institutions and the industry and further ensure better utilization of the graduates. The TVET institutions need to formulate a regular forum for relevant stakeholders to discuss textile related issues and involve relevant industries in the process of curriculum development by the institutions. Technical universities should be encouraged to offer textile related courses which will facilitate career growth in textile related courses. This study further identified Jeremiah Technical Training Institute as having a diversity of textile related courses and therefore it was proposed that more funding be allocated to it and be identified as a center of excellence for textile training in Kenya.

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