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Research Paper

TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) ON THE LABOUR MARKET OF RWANDAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Rwanda's economy continues to grow and diversify and has been subject to regional and global influences. In spite of this, there remains significant challenges with graduates finding employment from upper secondary, TVET and from higher education institutions. Youth unemployment in Rwanda has raised concerns of a potential mismatch between workplace demands and the skills of young people leaving formal education. Today TVET is expected to equip graduates not just with technical and vocational skills but also with generic/ employability skills which are increasingly important in preparing them for employment and for work advancement. The overall objective of this paper is to examine the operation of TVET in Rwanda and its labour market connectivity. Indeed, this paper scrutinizes the Rwanda TVET delivery system, bearing in mind the International best practices worldwide especially those of the dual System applied in Germany.

KEY WORDS: TVET, Youth unemployment, Labour market.

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment in Rwanda has raised concerns of a potential mismatch between work place demands and the skills of young people leaving formal education. Today TVET is expected to equip graduates not just with technical and vocational skills but also with generic and employability skills, which are increasingly important in preparing them for employment and for work advancement (the young foundation 2012). Rwanda spends considerable money on widening access to education and on the quality of education offered. It is equally important for Rwanda to make sure that the education offered to students is relevant to the labour market.

As Rwanda enters regional and global labour markets; it will necessitate the youth to possess skills and knowledge to compete on the international scene.

There is an urgent need for TVET school managers to have direct links with the potential labour market as well as greater partnerships at the grass roots levels. This will allow for the private sector and employers to be involved at the curriculum development, governance and financing levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Irrespective of Rwanda's past of Genocide that divested the country, Rwanda has done well in terms of its economy. Rwanda has a fast and persistent growth average

of 8% from 2000 to 2013. Rwanda has a strong government leadership which put up strong policies for instance the Economic Development and poverty reduction strategy (EDPRS-11 at 2013- 2018). TVET education fosters entrepreneurship and permits young people to enter the labour market and promote job creation. As such young business people end up hiring fellow youth and young people are active in high-growth sectors (Amoroset al,2013). Education and training are key determinants of success in the labour market and strong predictors of non-vulnerable jobs among youth (Sparreboom and Staneva 2014.)

It is true that education and training pays off, the investment is realized more when education and training is linked to the labour market needs. The skills refer to a set of Job-specific technical and non-technical skills ranging from specialized skills, knowledge or know-how needed to perform specific duties or tasks to individual attributes relevant to work such as honesty and reliability, and the abilities to learn and adapt, to listen and communicate effectively, to think creatively, and to solve problems independently, among others (Brewer 2013).

For many years worldwide many countries have advocated for competence based education which combine National qualification system. The challenge remained on how to adapt the competence based system to TVET provision.



Unfortunately, many TVET providers adapted the terminology and not the practice. Majority still deliver TVET in their old teaching patterns, where most, if not all TVET instruction is conducted in the classroom without time spent in industry for hands on experience. Nonetheless, the system designers have the sole responsibility of monitoring the CBET so that they ascertain that it is being used effectively. Competence based training needs to roll in schools by both the school managers, teachers and the TVET partners so that it becomes attached to the labour market needs.

TVET IN RWANDA

As stated by Rachel Hayman in 'the Contribution of Post-Basic Education and Training (PBET) to Poverty Reduction in Rwanda: balancing short-term goals and long-term visions in the face of capacity constraint TVET is considered as a mechanism for poverty alleviation. The main purpose of TVET is to make people self-employable: Skills development in Rwandan policy-making received limited attention until the early 2000s, although the establishment of the Human Resources and Institutional Capacity Development Agency (HIDA) as a full legal entity in 2004 represents progress towards a broad policy Makuza, (2003). The Government of Rwanda has committed to tackling skills development at all levels from adult literacy to post-graduate training for professionals in the interest of both poverty reduction and economic development. These surfaces in the draft ESSP update where time-lines are set for policies on literacy, vocational training and open distance learning (MENEDUC,2005)

The Rwandan labour force is around 4.6million people who possess low skills levels. This remains a major constraint to economic development of the country. Statistics indicate that two-thirds of the population are able to receive some primary schooling while 3.5% and 0.4% are indicated to have finished secondary and higher education respectively. Unemployment in Rwanda among the youth with primary levels of education ranks high with 61% compared to the sub-Saharan average (Fast track initiatives assessment, (2006) Rwanda has serious problems concerning lack of well trained personnel. The educated people were either killed in the Genocide or fled the country altogether for better opportunities. As a consequence the private sector growth and competitiveness is constrained by low skills and labour productivity in all sectors of the economy. This is evident from the number of formal sector firms who report inadequate skills as a major constraint which has doubled since 2006, indicating that lack of skills is a growing problem in Rwanda. Lack of skills is a challenge for large firms in particular especially those with one hundred employees or more. 45% of the bigger organizations reported inadequate workforce in 2011.

The 2009 national skills Audit reported 61.5% skills shortage and severe skills gaps in the private sector in Rwanda. The nation needs to address the extensive challenges which confront its rural population in order to make progress into poverty reduction. There are 9.1 million of people who live in the rural areas and will likely continue to live there for some time. Rural families are more than twice as likely to be in poverty and extreme poverty, than an urban household. They are also bound to be in more poverty than their urban counter parts. 62 percent waged farm workers live in poverty as compared to 22 percent of the waged off-farm employees.

Thus, the Rwanda economic development and poverty reduction strategy (EDPRS II) has a challenge considering Rwanda's limitations of land, skills infrastructure and connectivity of rural populations.

Rwanda highlighted "Productivity and youth employment in EDPRS 2, to ensure that growth and rural development are underpinned by appropriate skills and productive employment, especially for the growing cohort of youth.

The EDPRS indicated productivity and youth employment creation as one of its priority areas through the following:

1. *Improving skills*
2. *Applying technology and ICT*
3. *Enhancing entrepreneurship and business development*
4. *Improving labour market interventions.*

However, there are difficulties that the country faces which interferes with productivity and youth employment. The present growth is not quick enough and there is a strong desire for it to move faster. Furthermore, there is employer feedback on TVET that is not positive. Few employers are willing to give training or internships but the employment policy is not sufficiently coordinated, and moreover, Rwandan youth lack the confidence to start their own businesses.

Thus, Rwanda has taken a strategic direction of focusing on new job creation through the private sector small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The SMEs would be linked to large ICT in order to raise productivity in the private and public sectors. Rwanda is striving to generate youth employment so that all Rwandans who are able to work can productively be engaged and contribute to its ambition of making Rwanda a middle income country. Sector skills councils have been established in Rwanda for the purpose of including employers thoughts within the policy making process for skills and for TVET policy. The sector skills council are established in mining, construction, agriculture, energy, trade and manufacturing, financial services, ICT, and tourism.

Currently in Rwanda, the enrolment in TVET is still low, but is increasing in number. Rwanda is committed to making TVET successful and is making sure that the course designs are demand driven and this is involving private sector employers taking part in the whole policy process of design, provision and evaluation of employment- focused education. Much concentration will be on priority sector which are projected to have job growth. The sectors include construction, tourism, and food processing. Rwanda is engaging many parties on the band wagon of widespread access to internships, apprenticeships and industrial attachments for students who are still in school and those who have just finished school. This will give the individual an idea of the relevant skills demanded by the industries as such, giving them the leeway into a firm of their choice. The targeted organizations for extending internships will be the National and International firms but not excluding the small firms; small firms are planned to be reached through district initiatives. Publicizing such information to students shall be done by the higher learning institution (HLI) and TVET.

Rwanda witnesses a deficit of workers both in the form of quality and quantity of skilled personnel to initiate ICT development and for attainment of vision 2020 targets

of developing required skills in order to achieve a knowledge-based society. Rwanda aims to improve equality and attitudes for women to improve productivity. The 2010 National gender policy stated a commitment to decrease the women in the “care economy” by enabling access to finance. The government also bid to take up campaigns to change the attitudes of what women and men can do. In Rwanda Technical Vocational Education and Training is offered in colleges of technology at Diploma level. There are a big number of TVET providers from the public and private technical schools which offer A2 qualification. Vocational training is provided on shorter time basis and can last 6 months sometimes longer up to one year depending on the program.

Skills development in Rwanda comprises of parts in the formal and Non- Formal Education and Training. The formal vocational training is offered by youth training centres (YTC) after pupils have finished primary schools. In addition, formal education is provided as a stream of upper secondary education; while non- formal skills training which include apprenticeships, vocational courses for vulnerable youth is delivered by Religious organizations and NGOs. In reference to problems Rwanda faced in the 1994 genocide; some of the negative aspects of the war was a big number of the youth who were well left behind in terms of their schooling. This problem remained unresolved after the war but in 2001 the African development Bank sponsored a study to find out needs of the labour market for technical workers. The results showed that 65% of Rwanda’s population were below age 25. A further finding of the study indicated that about 100000 youth enter the labour market with inadequate qualification and skills. There was clearly enormous plea for training; although at that time Rwanda was dealing with other priorities and not much yield surfaced towards an attempt to equip young people with skills at the time (ECIL, 2001). Nonetheless, since 2008 Rwanda began an aggressive campaign to equip its youths with necessary skills that would fit the labour market demands.

From 2008 Ministry of education adapted TVET as sub sector taking over from MIFTRA. The workforce development authority was created and was allocated several mandates such as identification of TVET subjects recognized in Rwanda and developing curricular and standards on technical and vocational education. Conducting inspection of observation of standards, setting up a streamlined system for conducting exams, vocational and technical certification and accreditation is also taken care of by WDA. In a similar manner, WDA sensitizes and facilitates investors to invest in Vocational and Technical training in Rwanda. Promoting employment through entrepreneurship development in collaboration with relevant authorities at the same time establishing a national TVET qualification framework is conducted by WDA. Finally WDA is also expected to establish relationship with other regional and international agencies carrying out similar missions.

CONCLUSION

Rwanda’s economy depends largely on rain –Fed agricultural production. Moreover agriculture is done on very small farms. Furthermore Rwanda has very limited natural resources. Therefore investing in TVET makes greater sense because Rwanda has set its priorities high for transferring from natural resources and agricultural based economies to a knowledge based economy (K- economies). The knowledge based economy is non –perishable and is free from the unreliability of weather and climate change, as well as being free from being raided and misused.

Even though, there is TVET policy and many other policies frame works that support it, there is persistent lack of the labour market response towards TVET graduates. The labour market in Rwanda is reluctant and has little interest of training and financing TVET. Moreover, there is not enough technical and managers in TVET and there is also insufficient TVET qualified trainers. Thus, this study seeks to explore why the TVET system in Rwanda is too weak to respond to the high and diversified and circumstantial need for demand driven, competence based training curricula. There is a mismatch between industry demand for skills and the supply of skilled graduates by the training sector.

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