Youth Polytechnic Education and Entrepreneurship in Kenya; (Are we Promoting Entrepreneurs?)

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Abstract

Over the last six years, the Kenyan economy has generated only 150,000 jobs in total leaving hundreds of thousands of youth without opportunities for formal employment. Kenya like other developing countries has experienced challenges of unemployed youth. Most of these youths suffer lack of appropriate employable skills knowledge and attitudes. To save the nation from the big problem, reviving and revitalizing youth polytechnics was introduced to enable the young people access the necessary skills attitudes and values. The government is spending lots of money through infrastructure development, curriculum development, recruiting and training of instructors and certification of the candidates to improve the polytechnic standards. But the irony of the matter is despite the increase in number of the revived youth polytechnics the youth unemployment remains a challenge. This author conducted a research in Juja farm youth polytechnic to attempt an answer

Keywords; Kenyan youth polytechnics, entrepreneurial readiness, entrepreneurship curriculum, curriculum delivery methods

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As Kenya entered the twenty first century a lot of emphasis was put on youth entrepreneurship since fifty five percent ok Kenyan youths leaving school had no regular stable source of earning livelihood. The ministry of youth affairs and sports was created and department of training under the ministry was mandated to address the youth agenda in regard to imparting employable skills and attitudes (MOYA,2005). To ensure the institutions mets the set targets in training and developing youth entrepreneurs the departments embarked on new curriculum development that is industry approved (Mwinzi,2007). The government and other partners had to support the institutions through infrastructure development, provision of tools and equipment, hiring of qualified instructors and subsidizing tuition fees to make it affordable for all the Kenyan youths (MOYAS, 2007). With the plan in place it was believed the trained young people would get into self employment thus creating employment and opening avenues for other unemployed youths.

Kenyan youth polytechnics are institutions aimed at equipping the youths with entrepreneurial and employable skills (MOYAS, ROK, 2008). The institutions equip the young people with the
relevant skills that earn them employment easily as opposed to the academic education system that has seen many young people remain unemployed due to poor performance of the country economy. Kenya’s vision 2030 of being a medium industrialized country by year 2030 honors’ innovation, science, technology. The ministry of youth affairs and sports has developed new youth polytechnic curriculum designed in modules to allow easy access to the youths, the curriculum is to be examined by Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), qualified trained teachers are engaged to train the trainees while entrepreneurship education is introduced as a compulsory subject (MOYAS, 2009). Introduction of entrepreneurship education is aimed at equipping the trainees with entrepreneurial skills that would enable them engage in self-employment based on the technical skills acquired hence earn their livelihood while they create jobs for their colleagues.

Not much research has been done on the effect of youth polytechnic programmes in relation to youth entrepreneurship in Kenya but it is evidenced that youth polytechnic graduates are still suffering unemployment despite the efforts being put in place. In Malaysia the youth polytechnic graduates engaged in entrepreneurship upon graduating and this lead to low levels of unemployment and high rate of economy growth (Yasin, 2011). Thus need arises for the researchers to research on how the entrepreneurship education is being implemented in the Kenyan youth polytechnics, in regard to entrepreneurship curriculum, teaching methodology and evaluation methods.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youth polytechnics curriculum focuses on the promotion of entrepreneurs through equipping the graduates with relevant skills knowledge and attitudes (Mwinzi, 2009). Despite the much investment by the government on the youth polytechnic the graduates from these institutions are still suffering unemployment and under employment. The researcher gets to assess what are the contributing factors to this cycle of youth unemployment. Is it that the entrepreneurship curriculum is not relevant or are the teachers able to use appealing teaching methods that promotes culture of entrepreneurship among the students to determine the entrepreneurial ability of the graduates.

1.2 STUDY OBJECTIVE

In general the study sort to evaluate the entrepreneurial readiness among the youth polytechnic graduate.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

The study focused on the delivery methods of the entrepreneurship curriculum in the youth polytechnic. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted among the youth polytechnic finalist and their teachers to evaluate their opinion concerning the delivery methods.
1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

![Diagram of Delivery Methods to Entrepreneurial Readiness]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Methods</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial Readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent variable</td>
<td>Dependent Variable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many Kenyan institutions of learning offer entrepreneurship education aimed at producing self-employable graduates to create employment. The key reason for introducing entrepreneurship education was to assist graduates venture into self-employment as opposed to looking for wage employment. Entrepreneurship is therefore about starting a growth oriented small business (Bwisa 2012). Methodologies that encourage education is not only a means to foster youth entrepreneurship but at the same time to equip young people with entrepreneurial attitude and skills (Schoof, 2006). The entrepreneurship education has to be transmitted in form of codified knowledge and entrepreneurial skills through formal and informal education. According to Hynes, (1996) as cited from Ismail (2010) entrepreneurial education incorporates both informal and formal methods. The methods used, content and delivery methods vary depending on the student group. The formal aspects of entrepreneurship education focus on providing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which underpin entrepreneurship. This theory is delivered through didactic methods such as lectures and suggested readings. The educator acts as an expert by instructing and facilitating the learning process. These methods are assessed by formal examinations which test knowledge and aptitudes. The informal aspects of entrepreneurship education combine and integrate with the formal aspects of education. The informal aspects of entrepreneurship education focus on skills building, attitude development and behavioral change. Entrepreneurship programs can give students the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to thrive financially in complex and dynamic economics challenges. Instructors in such programs play a vital role in stimulating and motivating students. According to Hytti and O’Gorman (2004), as cited in Nasrudin and Othman (2012), objectives of entrepreneurship education are: to promote better understanding of entrepreneurship, to enhance entrepreneurial skills and to create more entrepreneurs. Accordingly, if entrepreneurship aims to create more entrepreneurs, then teaching approaches should give students practical exposure in a controlled environment. Therefore, the appropriate pedagogical methods to facilitate and strengthen interest in entrepreneurial careers include real-life activities outside the classroom Kamalawati (2012). Specifically, the objectives of entrepreneurship programs are: to nurture and strengthen the values and culture of entrepreneurship among students, to provide exposure and knowledge about business management, to provide insights into business potential and entrepreneurial opportunities, and to encourage students to pursue entrepreneurship after graduation. Ismail (2010) to
complement entrepreneurship courses or classroom modules, the polytechnic Department, in collaboration with appropriate bodies, should organize various entrepreneurial activities. In order to improve teaching quality, instructors should not only practice appropriate teaching methods but also encourage the application of skills in a practical program or mini business project on campus. This will allow students to be more independent; it will also foster appropriate attitudes and entrepreneurial thinking. Instructors must ensure that students in the program are innovative and competitive, both mentally and physically.

1.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Under the new curriculum developed by the ministry of youth Affairs and Sports, Kenya Institute of education and United Nations Development program (MOYA,2007) saw the curriculum implement Twelve trade areas and support subjects which included entrepreneurship education, communication skills, Information Communication Technology and life skills as support subjects to promote entrepreneurial readiness among the youth polytechnic graduates. According to the ministry of youth affairs and sports curriculum, it’s assumed that the youth polytechnics are key drivers of the vision 2030.

The research finding revealed that though the entrepreneurship curriculum was rich in content the delivery methods engaged did not add value to the graduates entrepreneurial readiness. Most instructors engaged lecture method, presentations while giving less time to case studies, projects and field trips.

As shown in the figure 1.1; below 70% of all the respondents rated the teaching methods used by the instructors as good while 10% and 20% of the respondents rated the methods as poor and best respectively. The majorities of the 20% had secondary level of education and were above thirty years of age.
This indicated that the students were not happy with the instructors teaching methods. The skills acquired were not adequate to enable them engage into self-employment. Majority of the trainees who had primary level of education and below 20 years considered themselves too young to engage in self employment. Majority of the trainee who engaged in entrepreneurship were above 20 years and their inspiration came from other sources and not from entrepreneurship education.

Table 1.1 Delivery methods used by the instructors’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADE</th>
<th>DELIVERY METHODS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Lectures, Field trips &amp; case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVT</td>
<td>Lectures, Field trips &amp; projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Lectures, case studies, Field trips, projects &amp; presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>Lectures, Field trips &amp; projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDB</td>
<td>Lectures, case studies, Industrial attachments, Field trips projects &amp; presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Lectures, Industrial attachments, Field trips &amp; projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2: Instructors’ area of specialization against subjects taught.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor’s area of specialization</th>
<th>Subjects taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food technology</td>
<td>Food technology &amp; communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical installation</td>
<td>Electrical technology &amp; Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle mechanics</td>
<td>Motor vehicle mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Hair dressing and beauty therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion design &amp; garment making</td>
<td>Fashion design &amp; communication skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The electrical installation, hairdressing and beauty courses where teachers engaged more hours in industrial attachment had entrepreneurial acumen. Unlike other courses like motor vehicle technology where most teaching involved lectures and demonstrations using obsolete tools and equipment. The research clearly indicated that the trainees age entry behavior contributed to choice of the teaching methods. The courses where majority of trainees were below 20 years opted to adopt mostly lecture methods, projects and field trips. These methods denied the trainees the hands on access to the real enterprise management skills hence no morale for self employment.

Table 1.3: Trade, Education level, Gender and Age distribution of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADE</th>
<th>ICT freq.</th>
<th>MVT freq.</th>
<th>FT freq.</th>
<th>El freq.</th>
<th>HDB freq.</th>
<th>FD freq.</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary level</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary level</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20 yrs</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 yrs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research clearly revealed that if youth polytechnics are really to equip their trainees with appropriate entrepreneurial skills the ministry of youth affairs should

i). Employ instructors with entrepreneurship training background.

ii). Entrepreneurship should be taught as a course and not a support subject.
iii). Entry level of the youth polytechnic should focus on the young people above 20 year old.

iv). All the teaching should involve case studies, field attachments, Field visits and all other methods that would give trainees hands on experience.

References


