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Policy Brief

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Strengthening whole youth development in Kenya: Can leveraging the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) training policy framework offer a solution?

'The function of education [training] is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of education [training].'

– Martin Luther King Jr.

Introduction

The terms 'education' and 'training' suggest more far-reaching concepts associated with an individual's full development including soft skills, personality traits, cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, character skills, socio-emotional skills and technical skills. Acquisition of such skills has been linked to Whole Youth Development (WYD). With over half a million youth joining the Kenyan labor market annually, the need for WYD in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Program is critical. Equipping youth with skills and knowledge that promote WYD is essential for their success in the labor market and other aspects of life. In Kenya, TVET institutions are well-positioned to promote WYD as they prepare youth for transition to the labor market. One way to support TVET institutions to play this role is to have effective policy frameworks that support WYD. The concept of WYD aims to empower the youth by promoting all types of skills required for productivity. The WYD approach applies to both formal and informal skills training systems. To promote training among the youth, education stakeholders use the training policy frameworks and other initiatives to enhance the development of skills among the youth.

Training policy frameworks

In Kenya, existing policy frameworks - including legislative laws - are expected to contain features that promote the WYD in youth. The Ministry of Education (MoE), together with other education stakeholders, collaborate in developing a policy framework that supports the acquisition, not just of knowledge, but also values and skills required



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in the job market. The TVET training policy frameworks play a significant role in ensuring that trainees develop the skills and capabilities required by the labor market. However, as students move from entry-level to the final level of their training, they ought to progressively exhibit different WYD capabilities that they have acquired in their skills- acquisition journey. APHRC's research shows that performances on overall WYD scores for beginners and final- year TVET students were exactly the same (80%), which implies that the impact of TVET on these skills was limited.

The draft TVET policy framework is guided by, among other principles, complementarity, collaborations and partnerships, communication and information- sharing, lifelong learning, national integration, and inclusivity and respect. The study found that though some key stakeholders were aware of the existence of such a framework, they had little or no concrete knowledge of what the framework highlights.

¹Gracia, E. (2014). The Need to Address Non-Cognitive Skills in the Education Policy Agenda: Economic Policy Institute, Working Paper No. 386; Heckman, J.J., & Kautz, T. (2013). *Fostering and Measuring Skills: Interventions That Improve Character and Cognition*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

²Musiyimi, C. M., Malechwanz, J., & Luo, H. (2018). The Belt and Road Initiative and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Kenya: The Kenya-China TVET Project. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 13(3), 346-374;

³Gapultos Jr, M. C. (2017). The Management Training and Development Programme Requirements of TVET School Administrators of Brunei Darussalam. In *Technical Education and Vocational Training in Developing Nations* (pp. 45-64). IGI Global.

'There is a framework, though in draft, called the TVET Policy Framework... about 40 pages or so. I think it contains the government's requirements for soft-skills training in TVET institutions. I may not know all the soft skills contained in it (if any) but I know issues of integrity, leadership, ethical practice, and respect for human rights is contained in it. So far, I have not heard of any changes, the best-placed institution to give you that information is the Curriculum Development Assessment Certification Council (CDACC).' [KII-R7].

Existence of key policy documents

Evidence from the study also shows that TVET institutions follow policy guidelines provided by relevant ministries and government agencies though with varying adoption levels. While the study found that there was availability of some written policies like those associated with industrial attachment (92.9%) and career counselling (80.4%), policies related to sexual harassment (50.0%), community service (46.4%), and general safeguarding policies (35.1%) were largely unavailable in TVET institutions. Results further showed that there is a strong link between course coverage and availability of related policies.

This means that courses that had no associated policy were less covered, for example, those that cover relations, courtship and marriage, sexual and reproductive health education, environmental awareness and HIV and AIDs. Among the key highlights of such policies is the promotion of exchange programs between and among institutions, partnerships with other education stakeholders or independent government involvement.

The respondents knowledgeable on government interventions in soft skills felt that there is a deliberate move by the government from merely meeting the labor demand, to promoting whole

youth development. This is exemplified by the development of a competency-based education curriculum which will be rolled out across the education sector, including the country's TVET institutions. Though there is a Kenya Volunteerism Policy (2015) and its accompanying guidelines which were developed in 2016, the majority of TVET institutions seem not to have a written policy document on community service and child protection. Despite the existence of a national volunteering policy and its guidelines, a majority of TVET institutions indicate that they do not have a written policy document hence the need for involvement of all parties/stakeholders concerned to recognize the importance of effective implementation of policies.

Focus on developing written down guiding policies

It is imperative to have an anti-sexual harassment policy explaining to students, instructors and other institutional staff, what constitutes a violation of the policy. The policy should outline reporting mechanisms for harassment incidences and possible implications in the event of abuse. This can be sustained through outlining statements of intent to uphold both the national and institutional policies. These statements should reflect a true commitment from all parties to adhere to the policy guidelines.

Continuous instructor's training skills improvement

The level of instructor training was highest for life-skills (with a mean score of 61%), followed by academic skills (58%), core values (57%), and lastly social-emotional skills (50%). These results demonstrate skill gaps of various magnitudes, and call for actions through a TVET policy framework to ensure the strengthening of an instructional knowledge base that could promote these skills. This gap can benefit from, and be addressed by the policy requirement for TVET trainers to undergo pre-service and in-service exposure through continuous professional development with greater emphasis on relevant industry aligned competences.

¹Ngware et al., (2019). Building Capabilities for Work and Life: Assessing the Production of Core Values and Capabilities among Youth in TVET Institutions in Kenya. Long Version. Nairobi: APHRC.

²Ministry of Education Science and Technology, (2014). Draft Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy. Nairobi: Government of Kenya Printer

³See: The National Volunteerism Policy of 2015

https://www.labourmarket.go.ke/media/resources/FINAL_VOLUNTEERISM_POLICY.pdf

Policy implications

The results of this study indicate that the promotion and production of WYD in TVET needs some improvement. Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) and National Vocational Certificate in Education and Training (NAV CET) in consultation with other key stakeholders, such as the employment industry, have a role to play in developing effective strategies for WYD in TVET institutions. Such strategies could include strengthening core values and WYD in curriculum development and implementation, assessment and development of qualification frameworks, strengthening the capacity of TVET instructors to use WYD in their teaching, and strengthening peer-to-peer support among students.

Making a difference in policy framework's implementation

There is a need for systems and structures for monitoring WYD components in the course of training to determine where more effort needs to be put in reference to specific WYD skills. Current practice in assessing students' skills only involves the technical aspects of the program. This can be achieved by having level-specific assessments of WYD that builds on previous skills inculcated on students.

Institutional policy documents and guidelines

The TVET institutions should develop and implement salient policies, including child protection and sexual harassment and community service policies, which promote the existence of a more conducive learning environment. TVETA should monitor these policies to ensure that all requisite documents are available in all TVET institutions and/or accessible online.

Continuous instructor skill enhancement

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), and other relevant agencies should develop pre-and in-service courses that promote WYD-related instructional competencies. This should be built into the ongoing Competency Based Education Training (CBET) reforms in consultation with key stakeholders in order to capture possible skills domains, gain acceptability among stakeholders, and provide an environment to coalesce on shared WYD skills.

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⁶See: The National Volunteerism guidelines of 2015 https://www.labourmarket.go.ke/media/resources/Draft_NATIONAL_VOLUNTEERISM_GUIDELINES.pdf

⁷See: A Policy Framework for Education and Training Reforming Education and Training Sectors in Kenya, p.102. <http://www.tvetcdacc.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/A-POLICY-FRAMEWORK-FOR-EDUCATION-AND-TRAINING.pdf>

