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ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SOURCES FOR FINANCING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH POLYTECHNICS IN IMENTI SOUTH DISTRICT IN KENYA

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Citation:

Cherui, R., Kirimi, T. and Kitainge, K. (2015). Assessment of the current sources for financing educational activities in youth polytechnics in Imenti south district in Kenya. Isutsa, D. K. (Ed.). *Proceedings of the First International Research Conference held from 29th to 31st October, 2014 in Chuka University, Chuka, Kenya, 395-398 pp.*

ABSTRACT

Despite the rationale for introduction of safety nets such as bursaries and constituency development fund in the education sector, there are increasing concerns over the limited finances in youth polytechnics to provide quality education and training. This is because, almost all educational institutions in Kenya face serious financial constraints due to failure by parents to pay fees promptly. The condition is made worse by introduction of structural adjustment programme and cost sharing policy in the 1980's. This has given the youth polytechnics in Kenya a big blow because technical education is expensive due to tools and equipment required for education and training. The youth polytechnics are starved of funds and are operating on inadequate resources for both recurrent and capital expenditure. This study sought to assess the current sources of financing education in youth polytechnics in Imenti South District-Meru County. A descriptive survey design was adopted for a youth officer, 2 managers and 43 instructors in two youth polytechnics, giving a total of 46. Purposive sampling technique was employed and the sample size was 27 respondents, namely 1 youth officer, 2 managers and 24 instructors. Data collection used questionnaires, observations and interview schedules. The two main sources of finances for the youth polytechnics were parents and government subsidies. The income from Income Generating Activities and other sources came in third and fourth, respectively. The funds are insufficient for institutions recurrent and development expenditures. Thus the government should increase funding to the youth polytechnics, while youth polytechnics should venture into more Income generating activities to supplement the funding and also increase viability of their programmes.

Key words: *Technical and vocational education, Income generating activities*

Background

Education is a cornerstone of economic and social development, because it improves the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions (GoK 2008, Schultz 1971). It helps to reduce poverty and mitigating its effects on population, improves health and nutrition and also increases the value and efficiency of the labor offered by the educated. As technology advance, new methods of production depend on educated, well-trained and intellectually flexible labor force. Additionally, education reform efforts in less industrialized countries such as Kenya have aimed at making education an effective vehicle for national development (UNESCO 2005). Governments, policy makers and civil society have emphasized that developing countries need to invest more in education and ensure that systems of education are efficiently managed, that limited funds allocated to the sector have maximum impact, and that cost-saving and cost-recovery measures are adopted (UNESCO 2003). Also, UNESCO 2003 reported that education is one of the largest sectors of the economy.

Kenya is no exception to this global trend of increasing allocation of resources towards education. However, technical vocational education and training and to a greater extent youth polytechnics are neglected. Since independence,

education has taken the Lion's share of national budget as observed in the KESSP document (GOK. 2005) this, has been geared towards meeting the economic demand and for manpower development. These efforts have seen increase in educational institutions and enrolment at all levels. Expanding educational systems appears to imply a proportional increase in resources, but governments are proving increasingly unable to cope with the higher costs (UNESCO 2005). Daa (2006) reported that finance is one of the basic pillars upon which the educational system depends in achieving its goals and implementing its plans. However, since the introduction of Structural Adjustments Programs in the 80s and cost sharing policy in 1988, there was need to reduce the funding to learning institutions and this impacted negatively in development of youth polytechnics. Through cost sharing and cost-saving measures the government reduced the high public expenditure in education (Otieno, 2004). This dealt youth polytechnics a big blow because technical education is expensive due to tools and equipment required for education and training (Orodho 2002, Atchoarena 1996). Parents were to provide building, teaching and learning materials, but these efforts have made successful and quality training in youth polytechnics elusive. Knight (1983) observed that school unit cost rise when education becomes more technical or science oriented. However, the government since the introduction of cost sharing seems to neglect technical training sector in favor of academic educational sectors. Republic of Kenya (2008) reported that technical sector spent Kshs. 3.308 billion in the 2007/2008 fiscal year. The Kenya Vision 2030 launched by the government in 2008 aims at turning Kenya into a middle level economy in 20 years requires well trained managers, skilled technicians, craftsmen and artisans which make technical education and training critical towards achieving the goals of the vision in the long run.

The youth polytechnics are starved of funds and are operating on inadequate resources for both recurrent and capital expenditure. The funds they collect from students tuition fee fall short of running their programs efficiently, hence affecting the quality of their graduates and employability. RoK (2005) noted that ineffective coordination of training policies, disparities in training standards and the disproportionate production of skilled personnel in the economy have affected the development of the subsector which has been aggravated by inadequate funding. Mugumo (2005) in Daily Nation of 27/7/2005 reported that the sector-wide approach launched by the government intends to alleviate inadequate physical facilities for training and absence of modern equipment, low participation of the private sector in curriculum design and development, expensive training material and text books in youth polytechnics. More to that, lack of adequate training equipment coupled with poor terms of service and salary delays for instructors also affects running of youth polytechnics.

Financing Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Kenya

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs in Kenya target to absorb the large proportions of students who cannot progress to secondary and higher levels of education. The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs are offered in over (600) Youth Polytechnics; 21 Technical Training Institutes, 17 Institutes of Technology and 4 National Polytechnics (two of the National Polytechnics have become constituent colleges of Nairobi and Jomo Kenyatta universities). This study focused on youth polytechnics although only 350 youth polytechnics receive government's assistance (Nyerere 2009). Of the more than 600,000 graduates of primary schools every year, only 55% i.e. 350,000 proceed to secondary schools (Government of Kenya 2006). The Waki report of 2008 and the 2007 post election crisis highlighted problems of a large population of unskilled, unemployed youth amidst growing poverty. The KESSP program of 2005 aims at mobilization of resources to rehabilitate facilities in public Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and especially youth polytechnics to ensure quality training. However, most of the strategies have not been implemented (Nyerere, 2009). Since independence, Technical Vocational Education and Training subsector has generated little attention and budget provision in Kenya resulting in poor infrastructure and facilities and a low status overall (Ngame 2003).

Financing of youth polytechnics has been a joint venture of the government, communities, parents, donors, religious organizations, nongovernmental organizations and other stake holders. The main source of finance is from tuition fees paid by the student trainees of these institutions (Nishimura and Orodho 2002). Also since 'self help' has been a key factor in education development in Kenya, the degree of success of a particular youth polytechnic depends very much on local leadership and local prevailing economic conditions. As a result, there is a marked imbalance in developing and running such institutions from one locality to another (Atchoarena 1996). After the launching of the cost sharing policy in 1988 the government agreed with the presidential working party about the need to expand and to streamline vocational and technical training institutions and their training programs to cater for the training demands of the 8-4-4 system, to provide greater opportunities for the training of primary and secondary school leavers and also to produce more at the various categories of trained manpower for the economy. To add to that, the government was to ensure all public training institutions will be provided with adequate and appropriate facilities and equipment to enable them

undertake training more effectively and enable their graduates to be operationally effective and keep abreast with changes in the industry and technology.

Nishimura et al. (1999) and Nyerere (2009) reported that there are inadequate facilities, obsolete equipments dilapidated buildings, lack of refresher courses for lecturers and drastic budget cut followed by structural adjustment programs which adversely affected public Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to a large extent. Moreover, the cut on recurrent budget has negatively affected the number of those qualifying, the pay, morale, and motivation of teachers and managers in youth polytechnics. Underfunding has led to poor service delivery, poor image and compromised training leading to technology shock of trainees in the labor market (Otieno 2009).

Koech report of 1999 noted that, parents continue to meet most of the cost of recurrent expenditure through payment of fees. This has affected enrolment and staffing at various youth polytechnics in the country. Also this situation has made education and training out of reach for a significant number of students. Further, Kibbogu (2001) noted that an increasing number of students have continued to drop out of school before completing the full education cycle; this is a scenario consisting of a serious drain and wastage on the countries budget. The main culprit cited is the private cost for education and training. World Bank (2002) notes that education is a powerful instrument for reducing poverty and inequality, health and social well being and laying the basis for a sustainable economic growth. Therefore, how will this be achieved with wastage rates going up and for those completing the training in our youth polytechnics being of wanting quality due to inadequate funding for their education and training?

Cost of Technical Vocational Education and Training in Kenya

According to Olembo (1986), education is a non-material good that cannot be free because to provide it, money is required for the training of personnel, employment of professionals, acquisition of land, buildings and teaching and learning material. As a durable good, education is costly; Ngerechi (2003) confirms this and observes that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a very expensive undertaking in terms of equipment, physical facilities such as workshops, training materials and teacher's salaries. However, it has a multiplier effect in that it benefits the government, society at large, the family and individuals (Kimenyi et al., 2002). It is a producer as well as a consumer good and still it is a commodity to sell in order to enhance one's life and to be bought for the learner's benefits. According to the children's, act of 2001 education is one of the basic rights. Also articles 28 and 29 of the United Nation convention on the rights of the child (1989) states that, it is the right of every child to have access to education. Eshiwani (1993) observed that in its effort to provide education for all citizens; the government's expenditure on education in Kenya continues to rise and requires both the parents and beneficiaries to contribute towards it. Since independence this has been done through 'Harambee' (fund raising activities) that helped to lower the government development expenditure on education. The presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond (Republic of Kenya, 1988) recommended the cost sharing policy. Parents and community were to supplement the government effort by providing with equipment and funds to procure teaching and learning materials. According to Kenya Education Sector Support Program (Republic of Kenya 2005), inadequate funding of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sub-sector has aggravated the situation. Hence, this has led to inflexible and outdated curriculum, mismatch between the skills learned and the skills demanded by the industries, inadequate physical facilities for training coupled with lack of sufficient modern equipment and expensive training materials and textbooks.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the two youth polytechnics in Imenti South District of Meru County. Exploratory approach using a descriptive survey design. There are two youth polytechnics in Imenti South District according to the District youth officer as at January 2010. The study targeted 1 District Youth Officer, 2 youth polytechnic managers and 43 instructors in the two youth polytechnics. The researcher applied a purposive sampling technique where the District youth officer (1), the two youth polytechnic managers (2) and a total of twenty four (24) instructors from the two youth polytechnics especially those who head income generating and production units were selected. The entire sampling matrix yielded a total sample size of 27 respondents for the study. These respondents were best placed to furnish the researcher with relevant information regarding alternative financing mechanisms in the youth polytechnics in Imenti South District. The data for the study were collected using questionnaires, observation guide and interview schedule. The research instruments were piloted at Kiamakoro Youth Polytechnic which was not involved in the actual study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings revealed that the two main sources of finance for youth polytechnics are school fees (parents) and government subsidy. The income from IGAs and other sources come in third and fourth position, respectively. Furthermore, the researcher sought to find out how sufficient the current sources of finance were for the youth polytechnics. Out of the 26 respondents, 6 (23.1%) said that the finances were sufficient (Yes), while 20 (76.9%) said that the finances were insufficient (No) to smoothly run the training programme. Further findings revealed that the majority 20 (76.9%) of the respondent agreed that the cited sources of finance were insufficient for the institutions recurrent and development expenditure. This is due to the fact that the youth polytechnics were not able to meet their budget estimates from the income realized. Hence there were budget deficits, stalled buildings, inadequate tools and low instructors' salaries. However, the GoK (2005) in the KESSP document noted that youth polytechnics can provide more facilities and equipment if they can generate some income of their own from income generating activities. Inadequate funds impact negatively on provision of quality training in youth polytechnics in the district. Thus, majority of the youth polytechnics are in dire need of extra funds to effectively conduct their educational programmes. These findings are in line with the National Development Plan 2002–2008 (RoK, 2002), which cited inadequacy of funds as one of the challenges facing education provision in Kenya.

The findings also depicted clearly the prominence the issue of instructors' remuneration as given 100%. This is one single factor that affects the morale or determines how hardworking the instructors are in their institutions to offer quality training. This implies if instructors have a scheme of service and are guaranteed upward job mobility, they will be highly motivated to carry out their duties. Diversification of income generating activities and starting production units got 20 (76.92%) and 21 (80.77%) respectively of the 26 respondents. Cost saving and effective measures got 15 (57.69%), Fighting corruption in management of IGAs 16 (61.53%), Seek contracts 12 (46.15%) and enroll more trainees 10 (38.46%). Others were CDF/LATF assistance 8 (30.77%), donor funding 6 (23.08%), offer more programmes 4 (15.38%) and lastly, organize harambee which got 3 (11.54%).

The study concluded that there is need for the government to increase funding to the youth polytechnics and also the youth polytechnics will have to diversify their source of income to be able to achieve their targeted goals. The findings shed some light in financing education in that youth polytechnics can devise innovative ways to generate extra income for smooth running of their programmes. This will be in tandem with UNESCO (2004) which proposes that schools should generate extra income through hiring school facilities to the community for example, halls, vehicles or play grounds. The findings also reveal that the respondents are aware of the potential of income generating activities and careful management of these projects to benefit all stakeholders and as such to fight graft, or embezzlement by having prudent management, accountability and well kept records of account.

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