



Repoa Brief

The Work, Information, Skills and Education Nexus in the Transition from School to Work

By Paschal B. Miho, Donald E. Mmari and Jamal B. Msami

This brief summarises the theoretical chapters in the book on *Youth Transition from School to Work: A Case Study of VETA in Tanzania* whose aim is to increase understanding about the barriers to youth employment and transition to work in the context of Tanzania's new industrialization drive. The brief concentrates on key factors that influence youth transition from school to work, mainly the way they are prepared for the world of work, graduate expectations *vis a-vis* the real situation on the labour market and the interface between work, information, skills and education.

KEY POINTS

- Education is the key to increased learning capacity, youth employability, employment stability and increased productivity especially if it imparts knowledge and skills relevant to existing and evolving jobs in rapidly changing job environments.
- Adequate knowledge of the existing working conditions on the labour market is essential in conditioning youth expectations and shortening their transition from school to work.
- Vocational education and training are crucial to youth skill development and employability and need to be supported to be in line with developments in the industrial and service sectors.
- A combination of technical, theoretical and soft skills coupled with training which is demand oriented, community conscious and location specific has the potential to increase youth employability and shorten their transition from school to work.

Introduction and Background

It is estimated that only 50,000 to 60,000 of the one million youth that enter the job market every year manage to secure jobs in the formal sector. This leaves an overwhelming majority of more than 900,000 youths engaged either in a continued search for employment, self-employment or working in the informal sector. This latter group has to contend with a prolonged wait and search for gainful opportunities often in absence of livelihood and tenure security, productive engagement, a fair income, safe working conditions, social protection etc. Transition refers to the amount of time a person spends between completing schooling and first entry into a contract based, decent and satisfactory fixed term employment (ILO, 2018). The ILO's 2013 School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) in Tanzania found that school leaving youth in Tanzania spend an average of 19.4 months in transition, 21 months in unemployment, and 37.7 months in self-employment.

prior to securing paid employment. This book examines the contribution of vocational education and training provided by VETA to the potential for employability for its graduates.

Methodology

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-method approach, involving a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 574 respondents—comprising of 210 graduates, 210 current students, 105 staff and 49 employers—were purposively sampled by the study from various councils in Tanzania depending on the physical presence of VETA institutions. These included institutions in the councils and municipalities of Arusha, Dodoma, Ilala, Ilemela, Kilosa, Kinondoni, Kyela, Lindi, Mbeya, Meru, Misungwi, Morogoro, Temeke, and Ubungo.

Findings on factors that influence the period of youth transition

Duration of education, learner expectations and prolonged job search

Prolonged periods of learning followed by periods of prolonged job search create negative perceptions about learning within communities and among job seekers especially in situations where primary and lower secondary school leavers manage to get jobs quicker than those from tertiary education. Studies in various countries indicate that there were higher rates of unemployment among secondary school than among primary school and tertiary education graduates and it was very low among those who had not attained any formal education¹.

Other research indicates that this is caused by the tendency of some institutions of tertiary education preparing young people for expectations that cannot be met in the labour markets and that vocational education, apprenticeship and traineeship prepare learners better for labour market participation².

Processes of education which are not linked to real life conditions on the labour market create a cultural shock for graduates as they keep on searching for higher income jobs which are limited or require experience and skills which they lack. This prolongs their transition.

Inadequate preparation, under-skilled and youth transition

In 2016, Kelvin Balogoun, the President of Coca-Cola for Central, East and West Africa, remarked that almost half of the ten million graduates released onto the labour market by over 668 universities in Africa do not get jobs because they lack the necessary competence and a few of those Coca-Cola takes, have to be trained at work.³ This implies such students are under-skilled. Pai Obanya has opined that education is not synonymous with schooling because people can go through the school system and acquire knowledge that leaves them knowledgeable but not adequately skilled.⁴ The emerging conclusion from various studies is that no matter the length of the duration of education or training, learners who are inadequately prepared for exiting labour market conditions tend to have prolonged periods of transition.

Youth knowledge about labour market conditions

Graduates who leave school with the hope of immediately getting employed tend to be quickly disappointed when their expectations are not immediately met. The longer they stay unemployed the more frustrated they become. Discouraged youth may develop the urge to stop job search altogether thereby becoming inactive⁵.

Culture also plays a role in influencing readiness to seek work in the locality or away from the community. In some communities, when children complete the rites of passage through informal education, they are encouraged to migrate out of their communities to seek wealth or jobs.

¹ Loprest, P., Spaulding, S. and Nightingale, D. S. (2019), 'Disconnected Young Adults: Increasing Engagement and Opportunity', RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation *Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5(5), pp. 221.

² Dockery, A., 2010, Education and happiness in the school to work transition, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, Australia. Available at: <https://files.eric.gov/fulltext/ED509308.pdf> (Accessed on 23-03-2019)

³ ACET, 2016, Unemployment in Africa. No jobs for 50% graduates, Available at: <https://www.acetforafrica.org> (Accessed on 23-03-2019)

⁴ Obanya, P.A.J., 2006, Education as An Integral Aspect of Africa's Evolutionary Process, Quality of Human Resources Education, Vol. II, Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems.

⁵ Dvouletý, O., Mühlböck, M., Warmuth, J. and Kittel, B. 2018, 'Scarred' young entrepreneurs. Exploring young adults' transition from

The culture in such communities, therefore, pushes the youth to leave their communities in search of opportunities far from their communities. This pushes them into areas where labour markets are supersaturated thereby prolonging their job search and transition. The conclusion is that schools and communities have a big role to play in shaping expectations of the youth and community involvement in student counselling can prepare them to remain in their communities on graduation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that four factors combine to accelerate or delay the transition of youth mainly: work, information, skills and education (WISE) See figure 1.

Work covers investments, enterprises and the types of jobs they create; systems of production and whether they involve static or dynamic technical and technological processes that create demand for high level and intermediate skills and whether such enterprises contribute to employment through technology and innovation.

Recommendation

Promote enterprises that invest in dynamic, productive labour receptive enterprises to increase job opportunities for youth.

Information has three important components. First is information about skills provided by vocational education and training institutions. Findings indicate that most rural people do not get adequate information about training opportunities and generally most trainees get information about the content of VET market information asymmetries exist between rural and urban populations and between disadvantaged communities in both rural and urban areas. The third component is use of information technology in the training in VET courses which was found to be very low.

Recommendation

Increase access to information about VET courses at local level and within urban and rural areas to increase reach to disadvantaged areas. In addition, increase support to VETA to develop more advanced IT based courses and practical training.

Skills provided by VETA were more geared towards generic and technical training but almost no attention was paid to soft skills and skills relevant to most of the rural activities. Furthermore, even with emphasis on core competence -based training, evidence gathered from trainers and employers' points to emphasis on skills considered to be relevant to existing jobs and not much about jobs of the future.

Recommendations

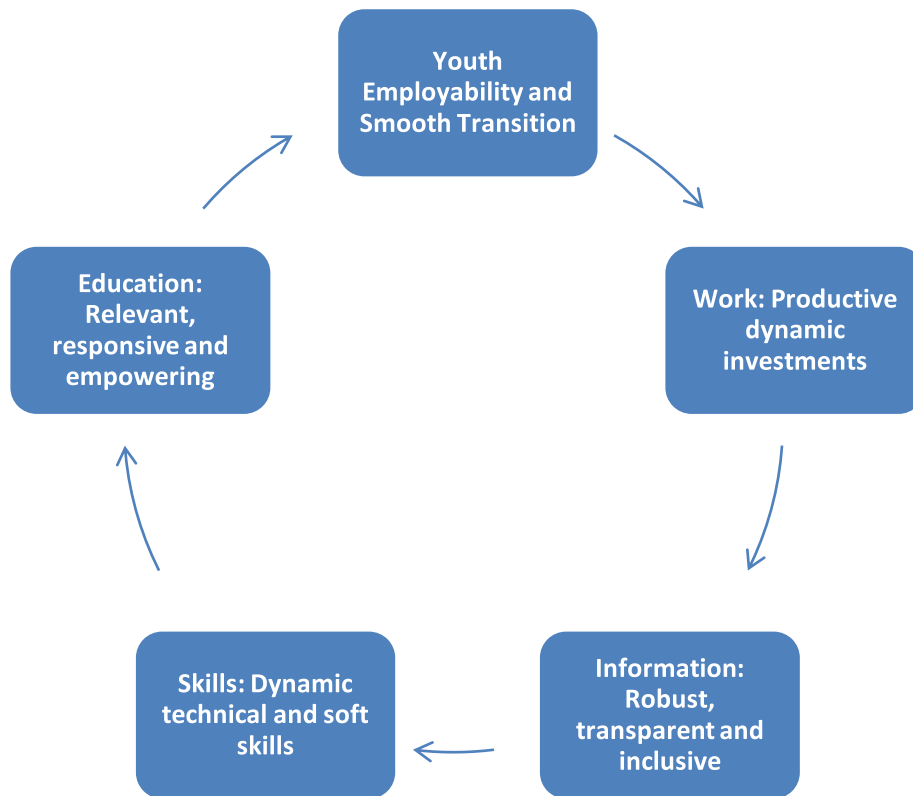
There is a need for VETA to assess the needs of producers and service providers in rural areas in addition to urban industrial communities because the bulk of productive activities are in agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, fishing, livestock, apiculture, horticulture and other rural economy-based activities. In addition, there is a need to support VETA to create more hands-on expertise through practical training, internships and adequate filed attachments.

Education is the key to knowledge and skill development. Our findings indicate that schooling and education are assumed to be the same. Schooling may equip the learners with knowledge but the knowledge or its application may not be relevant to their communities. The conclusion was that education needs to go beyond schooling and create society conscious youths capable of supporting their own development and that of their communities. The study found that most VET institutions do not consider individual and community development together. Soft skills that are critical to individual development and help individuals to apply technical skills appropriately are not given much emphasis in training.

Recommendation

Training and regulatory institutions have to be fully aware of and responsive to the needs and demands of the sectors for which they are preparing the learners and they should be able to predict the shifts in demand for skills and prepare the learners to fit into the changes in the labour market. Furthermore, client orientation needs to be apparent in the curriculum and the skills imparted should prepare the learners for the present and future jobs.

Figure 1: Schematic Link between Work, Information, Skills and Education (WISE)



REPOA

157 Mgombani/REPOA Streets, Regent Estate, P.O. Box 33223,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

2nd Floor Kilimo Kwanza Building,
41105 Makole East, Kisasa,
Dodoma, Tanzania

Tel: +255 22 2700083 Cell: +255 75 409 1677 Fax +255 22 2705738
Website: www.repoa.or.tz Email: repoa@repoa.or.tz