

Keeping Cars on the Road: Obstacles and Opportunities in Vocational Education and Training Processes in Kenya for the Motor Vehicle Service and Repair Industry

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Abstract: This paper examines opportunities and obstacles in training processes in the motor vehicle service and repair industry (MVRSI) in Kenya. The paper is a response to on-going debate in the media, the business community and training practitioners to the perceived mismatch between the skills offered by the training institutions and the skill needs of the industry. These challenges have also been raised by the Government of Kenya in two documents: the 2005 Kenya Educational Sector Support Program (KESSP) document Delivering Quality Education and Training to all Kenyans and the Kenya Vision 2030 blueprint (GoK, 2007). Data for this study were collected from previous research papers, government documents and business editorials and reports. In addition, primary data were collected from 19 MVRSI businesses, four vocational education and training (VET) institutions and from four education officers drawn from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoHEST) and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and eight VET trainers. Observations were made in the VET institutions and businesses that took part in this study. The findings suggest that VET in Kenya has suffered from six major obstacles: low program funding; duplication of training services; insufficient trained personnel; limited methods of training needs analysis (TNA) data gathering and analysis; inadequate quality control, monitoring and evaluation; poor communication of TNA results to the main stakeholders; and, obstacles within the national training objectives. This paper proposes the following opportunities that the VET sector can take to improve its status: the establishment of a training fund; creation of a training coordinating body for the many providers; strengthening the mandate of KICD to include recruitment, training and remuneration of its personnel; incorporating more methods of TNA data gathering and analysis; strengthening methods of national training objective formulation; and, improving monitoring, evaluation and quality control.

Key words: human resource development; vocational education and training; training needs assessment; training processes

JEL code: M53

1. Introduction

In any economy road transportation plays a vital role in not only transporting goods but also services and people. Kenya is no exception to this, and with a population of 42 million people and a road network of 63,291 (Kenya roads

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Board [KRB], 2013) and 1,221,083 registered cars in 2009 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2013), the automotive industry is a very vibrant one. Moreover, this segment of industry is important because owning a car in Kenya is a status symbol and therefore many people, especially the middle classes, go to great lengths to acquire a car irrespective of its age or mechanical condition. Relatively “new” cars are most likely to be imported as reconditioned models, which require ongoing repair and services. The poor state of roads and alarming rate of motor vehicle accidents (GoK, 2003a) compound the problems of motor vehicle owners in Kenya. The Motor Vehicle Repair and Service Industry (MVRSI) is therefore a thriving industry, and it is not uncommon to find a six-acre yard (e.g., Kigandaini in Thika town) with several small open-air garages in towns across Kenya (Kinyanjui, 2000).

With increasing technical sophistication, the human resource in the MVRSI requires continuous development of technical and interpersonal skills necessary for them to remain relevant in their practice. Barber (2003) advanced three reasons for the importance of technical training: changes in administrative structures, technological advancement and tougher occupational health and safety laws. He provides an example of a vehicle repair mechanic who has to undertake extensive ongoing training to maintain and fix the latest models of cars with computer-operated parts, keyless entry, global positioning systems, automated stabilizing systems, and other related inventions. In Kenya United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2010) observed that most VET institutions used very old models of vehicle engines for their automotive practical training. Thus, the graduates are confronted with challenges at the workplace because their training is not aligned to the technological know-how required for the industry (Wachira et al., 2009).

To align the skills taught at the VET institutions, it becomes necessary to identify what the industry needs, the type and level of skill—that is the human resource that is necessary to propel the industry in line with global standards. Identifying these needs is best done through conducting a comprehensive training needs assessment (TNA) which is designed to answer questions about the type of skills required, for an organization or a country, be it communication, teamwork and leadership or technical job specific skills. TNA identifies the training problem which includes specific areas that require training, who needs the training and how the training will be designed. At a national level, TNA is necessary to ensure that appropriate training processes, are used and to anticipate any external hindrances that may limit the transferability of skills from the institutions to the workplace (Wagonhurst, 2002).

Brown J. (2002, p. 569) defines TNA as “an ongoing process of gathering data to determine what training needs exist so that training can be developed to help the organization accomplish its objectives”. Research such as (Budria & Telhado-Pereira, 2009; Daleb et al., 2010; Rosti & Chelli, 2009; Tannenbaum & Yuki, 1992) shows that an adequate needs assessment justifies the need for a training decision and identifies why and how training process should be carried out and if the training is indeed the solution to the given organizations’ needs. Green (2000) recommends three areas that a comprehensive TNA should address: firstly, identification of the training activities and those involved; secondly, clarifying learning goals and learner needs; and, thirdly, identifying necessary skills and knowledge.

One of the most vital documents that a thorough TNA can be useful is documenting a skills inventory and a skills gap analysis. Developing the training policy for an industry levels, requires a skills inventory that identifies skills shortages by understanding the available skills, anticipated skill needs, current and future labour demands, technological and economic factors, and internal and external competition (Wagonhurst, 2002). A skills inventory eliminates haphazard and unnecessary programs, improves productivity and cost benefits for a country. Alternatively, if a country ignores technological advances, global trends and its people’s aspirations, a mismatch between the skills produced and those that are needed will always persist (Kitainge, 2003; Stone, 2010; UNDP,

2010). The mismatch will be exhibited in skill-related productivity deficiencies, persistent vacancies in some skills and competences, surpluses in others and training in jobs that no longer exist (Fluitman, 1999).

This paper examines the formal training processes in Kenya and questions their adequacy in light of the job related skills and competencies that are exhibited by VET graduates in the MVRSI. Data were gathered from key stakeholders that included: employers, employees, trainers, trainees and education officers in Kenya. Findings of the obstacles are grouped into six main areas: low funding, duplication of services, personnel, limited methods of data gathering, communicating results and national training objectives. Suggested opportunities that can alleviate these obstacles are outlined in the subsequent section.

2. Problem of Research

The MVRSI sector in Kenya has had to deal with frequent introduction of new technologies in automotive engineering, and which require a prompt response. These changes necessitate analyses of contemporary and future proficiency needs and requirements that enable the mechanics to cope at the workplace. As a provider of industry training, it is important for the government to anticipate the employment realities of VET graduates. Regrettably, in Kenya, there is no evidence of a skills inventory that the training providers can rely on to determine priority areas (UNDP, 2010). The training system is supply driven because providers are faced with the challenge of accurately predicting which skills are required; and, sometimes they train with the belief that whatever skills are attained will find some use.

Government papers indicate that some analyses have been done due to a perceived need: “A Rapid Appraisal on the Status of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TIVET) In Kenya” (Government Of Kenya [GOK], 2003b) was prepared in response to a political shift from one party to multi-party democracy, to address problems within the education system. Its findings comprised the VET investment program in the “Kenya Educational Support Sector Programme” (KESSP) document and the sessional paper No. 1 of 2003. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and that of Higher Education Science and Technology in collaboration with UNDP, commissioned another appraisal that was specific for the youth polytechnics: “*Skills Gap Analysis for Graduates of Youth Polytechnics, Vocational Training Centres and out of School Youths*” (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2010). The findings were used as a guide in revamping Youth Polytechnics (YP) that had suffered neglect for a long time. Although these analyses are applicable, they are ad-hoc and not comprehensive enough for the entire industry. In addition, because most of these assessments were based on advisory committees that brought together players in the industry to deliberate on the issues at hand, the findings depended on the competency and the perceived knowledge of that particular group of people. Conversely, diverse approaches are useful in effecting a TNA, with a combination of both objective methods like performance standards, tests, questionnaires; and subjective methods such as interviews, surveys, advisory committees and focus group discussions usually producing more reliable results (Brown E., 2003; Wagonhurst, 2002).

Numerous government reports have observed that VET in Kenya lacks relevance to the demands of industry (GoK, 2003b, 2005, 2008). The Kenya Vision 2030 document notes that matching skills obtained in the vocational institutions in the country to market demand is a challenge at all levels of the education system, attributing this position to inadequate facilities as well as poor methods of needs identification (GoK, 2007). To be relevant therefore, a training system should be demand-driven to include all the country’s contemporary and imminent skill needs and opportunities. This is because:

A national training system may be considered to lack relevance if it does not produce, or no longer produces, enough of the skills that contribute in one way or another to meeting macro-economic and social objectives such as income growth and equity; or if it does not respond adequately to changing circumstances, notably those in the labour market (Fluitman, 1999, p. 57).

This paper will therefore be useful to government training agencies, VET training providers, business organizations, employers and employees in the MVRSI. In addition scholars with an interest in human resource development will find this paper resourceful.

3. Research Focus

The KESSP document highlighted the low participation of the private sector and other stakeholders in TNA, curriculum design and implementation (GoK, 2005). In response to this assertion and the concerns expressed in the “Kenya Vision 2030”, this study involved key stakeholders in the industry, training institutions as well as the technocrats in the relevant Ministry in examining the process of VET. It concentrated on the MVRSI because it is a skill-based industry comprising mechanics, tuners, welders, electricians, tailors (to make car upholstery). Training in the MVRSI has been identified as a problem by key stakeholders in the industry (Kenya Private Sector Alliance [KEPSA], 2010), and by the government in its review of VET (GoK, 2008), necessitating research on key components of a training system, to discern issues that may hinder effectiveness in that particular sector. This study therefore, looks at the training process in the MVRSI from the stakeholders’ perspective by addressing the following question:

What are the obstacles and opportunities of training processes in the motor vehicle sector in Kenya from key stakeholders’ perspective?

4. Methodology

To examine the research question, the researcher sought the views on training processes from a sample of major stakeholders: nineteen business employers and fifty seven of their workers, four training institutional managers, four automotive engineering trainers, thirty two trainees and four government officers responsible for curriculum design, implementation and supervision. The education officer’s details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Education Officers Codes

Education officer	Code
Former officer at MoEST	EO1
Current officer at MoHEST	EO2
MoHEST consultant	EO3
KIE assistant director	EO4

This study employed the use of semi-structured interviews which were carried out with the education officers, employers, employees and trainers. Although semi-structured interviews rely on pre-formulated questions for guidance, they allow respondents to talk about those things that are of interest and importance to them (Baker & Foy, 2008). Four focus group discussions (FGD) of eight students each were used to gather data from final year learners of each training institution under study. FGDs allow shared opinions of a particular defined subject that is of interest to a group of individuals who have had certain shared experiences (Myers, 2009). They attempt to answer the “how” and “why” questions that produce rich, multifaceted, nuanced and even challenging interpretations of how people

attribute meaning to and construe their understandings (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011).

Observation was used in the institutions and businesses under study to discern the day-to-day processes and activities. In the businesses observations were made on working conditions, relationships among employee, employer and customers, equipment in use and occupational health and safety issues; and in the training institutions, equipment, other physical facilities, relationships and documents mounted on walls. Baker and Foy (2008) observed that observations “. . . avoid the possibility of distortion that may arise when people are asked to report their own behaviour” (p. 147). In addition, the researcher gathered data from government documents, and archival records in line with the six types of information recommended by Yin (2004): archival records, direct observations, documentation, interviews, and physical artefacts that bring a contextual understanding by relying on multiple sources. Content analysis, a systematic method of qualitative data analysis that seeks structures and consistencies (Myers, 2009), was used to deal with the enormous amount of data. This involved coding data using thematic areas of training processes and training objectives and then further segregating them to smaller groups.

5. Results of Research

This section presents findings of the research, which were derived from the interviews, focus group discussions, observations and backed up by research from government documents and other research papers.

5.1 Demographics

The profiles of the employers and the businesses that took part in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Employers' Profile

Employer gender	Male	Female			
No. of employers n = 19	19	0			
Employers' age (years)	26-30	31-35	36-40	Over 40	
No. of employers n = 19	1	0	2	16	
Highest level of education	Primary school	Secondary school			
No. of employers n = 19	4	15			
Employer pre-employment training	Informal	Apprenticeship	Craft	Technician	Technologist
No. of employers n = 19	6	1	8	4	0
Age of the business	0-3	4-6	7-9	9-12	Over 12
No. of businesses n = 19	0	5	6	4	4
No. of employees in each business	0-5	6-10	11-20	Over 20	
No. of businesses n = 19	3	12	3	1	

All the employers were male, which reflects that ownership and leadership in MVRSI is predominantly a male affair. The relatively mature age of the owners suggest that most employers started in paid employment and, after acquiring experience and capital, set up their own garages. As one of the employers observed, VET graduates join paid employment to acquire skills and gain capital with the expectation that, later on, they will open up their own businesses. Of the 19 employers interviewed, 21 percent had a primary school education, and 79 percent had a secondary school education and since 68.4 percent of all employers were formally trained, an implication that higher levels of education and formal VET are considered favorable factors in business ownership. Higher education enables a person to obtain more information from print and other forms of media, and, to interpret written documents such as those with financial details, besides assisting one with research and social mobility.

The 19 businesses employed 148 workers: 134 (90.5%) male and 14 (4.5%) females. Of the 148, only 40 (27%) had been formally trained; the other 108 (73%) had received informal training, starting as “spanner” boys before graduating to more challenging roles and responsibilities. Table 3 below presents further details.

Table 3 Employees’ Profile

Total number of employees in the 19 businesses	Male	Female			
N = 148	134	14			
Pre-employment training of all employees	Formal	Informal			
N = 148	40	108			
Gender of employees who participated in the study	Male	Female			
No. of employees n = 57	43	14			
Age of participating employees (years)	26-30	31-35	36-40	above 40	
No. of employees n = 57	22	24	9	2	
Highest level of education of participating employees	Primary school	Secondary school			
No. of employees n = 57	4	53			
Pre-employment training undertaken by participating employees	Informal	Apprenticeship	Craft	Technician	Technologist
No. of employees n = 57	29	3	24	1	0
Length of time in employment of participating employees	0-3	4-6	7-9	9-12	Over 13 years
No. of employees n = 57	24	25	7	1	0

From the data gathered from the above stakeholders this study identified the following obstacles in the training processes in the MVRSI in Kenya.

5.2 Training Processes Obstacles

Low funding: EO2 observed that inadequate funding has inhibited VET systems from carrying out adequate needs assessment, research, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. According to EO1, the system need funding to train personnel to acquire data gathering and analytical skills requisite for successful outcomes in a TNA and training activities. An officer at the KICD admitted that, although a needs assessment is a crucial stage in the curriculum development process, the KICD does not carry it out often enough due to inadequate funding. One trainer observed that low funding did not allow for frequent curriculum reviews in line with the technological changes taking place at the global level. Furthermore, KICD is not able to attract or retain experts with technical competence due to poor remuneration.

Public institution trainers and managers conceded that inadequate funding to the institutions had impacted negatively on their quality of training. The trainers observed that the government had the responsibility of funding public VET programs, but with difficult economic conditions, funding had been difficult to source. With the lack of external financial support and limited government funding the public training institutions relied on student fees as the main source of funds to sustain their programs. Student fees had proved to be largely insufficient because most trainees experienced financial difficulties. The trainers observed that scarce funding of this sector was a major cause of inadequate trainee exposure to modern machines and technology

Duplication of services: A review of government papers showed that VET in Kenya is run by over twelve ministries, local governments, private providers and international organizations, which has led to competition for scarce resources and a general lack of ownership of the training. Indeed one trainer observed that there

. . . is the typical dearth in information, replication and duplication of government ministries' policies and other administrative agencies dealing with VET (e.g., Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources). This causes confusion and uncertainty in the sector.

The results of this over governance are issues such as: inability to address problem areas, research is rarely done, curriculum review and updates are ignored and provision of ample facilities is lacking.

Personnel: EO4 indicated that the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) does not have the authority to recruit its own personnel and relied on the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). As the national centre for educational research and curriculum development, KICD staff require training to the highest level, but even when they are recruited and trained, there lacks a structured program to develop their research and curriculum development skills (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2006). Another related problem that was mentioned by EO4 was that the syllabi development is done through a panel system that is unsuitable for MVRSI training because it takes too long to respond to the rapid changes in the industry. The officer observed that in some instances, some institutions predominantly private ones develop and implement their own curriculum without reference to the KICD. Inflexibility of the training program shuts out prospective learners who are unable to follow its strict routine, thereby missing out on the chance to upgrade their skills and competencies.

Trainers acknowledged that although they were initially trained, they do not update their skills frequently enough to keep up with technology at the workplace; nor are they able to carry out research, tracer studies and TNAs. The government lacked clear in-service programs for them, leaving them to fend for themselves, resulting in a myriad of training levels because the instruction depended on the enthusiasm, innovativeness and skill knowledge of the trainer.

Insufficient monitoring, evaluation and quality control: All the stakeholders identified insufficient monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms in Kenya as the reason for the existence of countless certificates offered by questionable training providers. This has perpetuated the skeptical nature with which the VET graduates are viewed by the industry. Furthermore, trainees complained that inflexibility of the program shuts out prospective learners who are unable to follow its strict programs, thereby missing out on the chance to upgrade their skills and competencies. This study established that some VET courses in Kenya, such as those covering the hotel services, are serving the needs of the tourism industry due to the higher level of development in this sector. This is in contrast to the wide gap in training experienced in the manufacturing sector within which the MVRSI falls (UNDP, 2010).

Trainers had very strong views of the process of program monitoring, inspection, quality control and evaluation by their ministries. One trainer noted that the presence of the technical staff at the ministry was only felt when they acted as "fire-fighters", going to the institution when there was a crisis such as student strikes, or when closing down unregistered institutions. Another one observed that graduate monitoring mechanisms are weak, unstructured and ad hoc. Indeed, the researcher found very little evidence from the institutions that the graduates are ever monitored, or any kind of information about them kept. In addition, EO1 affirmed that apt monitoring of curriculum implementation processes help to gauge the rate of progress and obtain feedback for addressing weak areas. However, this has not been done adequately, due to a lack of policy concerning the frequency of curriculum monitoring and evaluation, inadequate staffing levels and insufficient funds.

Limited methods of TNA data gathering and analysis techniques: Employers attributed the problems in the MVRSI VET to their inadequate representation in the curriculum design and implementation. Most of them sought more collaboration between the training providers and the industry (future employers) so that the providers

could assess the industry's skill needs accurately. Although all the employers indicated that they carried out some form of training, they could not adequately provide a structure for it preferring to assess their training needs through observations of industrial trends, and by copying their colleagues in the industry.

In Kenya, EO3 revealed that TNA is routinely done by advisory committees and examination results that shut out major stakeholders in the industry. These methods cannot address core areas like tracer studies or follow graduate pathways. Government officers ought to collect data on training programs from the industry, training providers, current and prospective trainees and government officers.

Poor communication of skill gaps analysis: Although training needs analysis was acknowledged by all the stakeholders in the MVRSI as a fundamental part of VET in Kenya, most respondents observed that this was not done adequately as a skills inventory that would guide training providers was missing. Since the aim of VET is to enable its graduates to find suitable jobs, it is essential to link the curriculum to the labour market demands through a program that is appropriate and responsive to the industrial demands. Training institutions, both public and private, in Kenya and the industry all complained of the lack of a skills inventory that would form the basis of an efficient use of scarce resources. Data collected for this study show a hiatus in the conduct of TNA in all sectors of the Kenyan program. KICD, Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoHEST), the industry and the institutions expressed a desire to conduct more TNAs to identify and actively respond to the identified gaps, but were unable to due to a variety of reasons. Inadequate communication channels between the training needs assessors and stakeholders compound the confusion in the industry.

Obstacles within the national training objectives: EO3 specified that curriculum and examinations for the artisan courses are designed and tested by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT); the craft and diploma courses are designed by the KICD and examined by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) whereas universities manage their own courses and examination. According to EO4 most of the private colleges follow the curriculum designed by KICD, but some follow foreign curricula and exams. One trainer explained that there are two curricula on offer at the VET institutions: the old curriculum and the new curriculum, where the former trains the workers to enter the job market, whereas the latter is designed for advancement to the next level. In theory, with the new curriculum one can move from the artisan level to the highest technologist level.

EO4 contended that KICD is delegated to design the VET curriculum, acknowledging that the curriculum design methods are obsolete and attributing the obsolescence partly to over-reliance on donor funding, which was conditional and infrequent, causing major delays and inconsistencies. In addition, the syllabus framework was inflexible, emphasizing institution-based, full-time training and long course programs. She added that the structure fails to accommodate the entry of graduates from other educational program components, such as non-formal education, industrial training, on-the-job training, trade tests, and horizontal movement from one trade to an allied trade. EO3 recommended that training processes, evaluations and assessment ought to categorize areas that necessitate updating and revising of curricula to safeguard its relevance and make optimum use of available resources.

Information gathered from the trainers indicated that curriculum design has been neglected in Kenya to the point where the artisan course was still using curriculum designed in the 1980s. Furthermore, the duration of formal VET courses is determined by the central government and is harmonious throughout the country ignoring the geographical diversity of the country, different skills demands and needs of prospective trainees.

6. Discussion

In this section, is a discussion and interpretations of the findings of this study as informed by the identified obstacles of the VET program. VET is an expensive venture that calls for innovative resource deployment mechanisms, which are critical to the achievement of policy objectives (Bennell, 2000; Zideman, 2003). Further, technological developments necessitate skilful personnel and expensive equipment and, consequently, outcomes often may not be realized for a long time (UNDP, 2010). According to Bennell (2000), the high investments and running costs of providing VET in many African countries is borne by the trainees, who are required to pay for the program. This leads to expensive courses which most high school leavers cannot afford, deterring many potential entrepreneurs. Coupled with this, Kenya lacks a structure for loan facilities for students joining technical institutions, unlike their counterparts at the universities who benefit from funding through the Higher Education Loans Board (Nyerere, 2009).

Kenya, like most African countries, faces difficulties in funding VET due to competing demands in other areas like health and agriculture. Very few governments in Africa have the capability to finance VET to adequately support quality training and learning (Afeti, 2006). For example, of the total country's expenditure, the following percentages go to VET: in Ethiopia only about 0.5%, Ghana about 1%, about 2% in Kenya, Mali 10 % and 12.7% for Gabon (African Union [AU], 2007); apart from Gabon this is not sufficient for a quality training system. Where funding for training is low, activities that may be deemed insignificant are left out or done insufficiently; and TNA seems to fall victim.

Labour market dynamics have expanded the VET objectives from being simply economic to embracing the social aspect, including that of fighting poverty and generating youth employment (Johanson & Adams, 2004). While there is a need for most African governments to expand VET to increase productive labour, the lack of physical facilities, materials and equipment needed means that the envisaged productivity will not be achieved (UNESCO/UNEVOC, 2008). This situation is not helped by the fact that there is increasing pressure, both internal and external, for developing countries to meet "Education for All" (EFA) goals by the year 2015. Thus, most resources are mobilized to attain universal primary education and expand the universities, yet "the rhetoric over skills and the value of VET continues" (UNEVOC, 2008, p. 35).

Duplication of the VET program and lack of ownership by the line ministries could account for the laxity in curriculum development in Kenya. UNESCO suggests that updating and revising of curricula in most African countries mostly takes place after a major crisis in the labour market or critical problems of graduates' unemployment (UNESCO, 2009). In addition, there is a lack of proactivity in most countries, and the response to curriculum challenges is ad hoc and lacks the capacity to address industry needs.

In the last decade, VET in Kenya has experienced some positive adjustments like: establishment of two ministries in the 2005 to deal specifically with the sector; free training for all students in all youth polytechnics in the country; and subsidies in technical training institutes, training institutes and polytechnics; free training to women taking engineering courses; and the elevation of the two national polytechnics to universities to train technicians and technologists. The recent amalgamation of ministries by the jubilee government and the passing of the TVETA (technical, vocational, education and training authority) bill promises even better services, but this is too early to tell the gains that this new structure will make. The TVETA bill is expected to pave the way for the creation of a VET coordinating body.

Different training programs require different implementation times that are dictated by the training content,

available resources and the reasons behind the training objectives (Ngure & Njiru, 2013). Competency based courses that address specific skills and proficiencies require less time than comprehensive programs like diploma or degree courses. Flexible courses like evening and weekend classes cater for those trainees who are already at the workplace, and who want to upgrade their skills or change them altogether. A needs assessment in this area would assist the government to identify the programs that are appropriate for the MVRSI.

The MVRSI employers do not support VET training program, since they lack information on its perceived benefits; and are ignorant of its training objectives. Although most indicated that they took in trainees who were on attachments, they viewed the slow ones as an added burden to train and monitor, while those who exhibited good skills were viewed as added labour, ready to be exploited. Most employers and employees did not upgrade any of their skills at the formal institutions because of the observed deficiencies in the graduates, yet the MVRSI is particularly vulnerable to frequent changes in technology with new models of vehicles being introduced to the market every so often. Life-long learning which acknowledges that skills in the workforce are not stagnant but evolve in their relevance and practicability needs to be promoted. Sensitizing employers and business managers on the need to update and refresh their skills to improve their workplaces process would be particularly helpful.

Training institutions, both public and private in Kenya complained of a lack of skills inventory that would form the basis of efficient use of scarce resources. Training providers require information on the offering for jobs and the emerging skills and competences demanded by the industry. Lack of a skills inventory is an indication that the government attempts to solve human resource skill shortages and performance through training without addressing the actual skill problem and labour demands (Ngure, 2013a). Tragically, VET employment figures in Kenya were not available in the relevant ministries during data collection for this study. Sampled training institutions indicated that they lacked the capacity to follow the employment pathways for their graduates, citing lack of funds. Available government documents that address unemployment do not provide figures of trained unemployed youth: for example the UNDP document that addressed skill gaps of the youth indicate that 62% of Kenyan youth are unemployed, but did not specify how many had a skills training (UNDP, 2010).

At a national level, accurate assessment of skills is an important prerequisite to any training because of widespread and contrasting factors that require particular attention. Kenya has a variety of contrasting geographical, economic and climatic conditions, which necessitate accurate identification of specific training needs. Thus a national skills assessment will require more planning, higher funding, more expertise and methods of data gathering that cater for a wider population, such as interviews, advisory committees, surveys and questionnaires, examinations and tests, document reviews and the use of assessment centres to achieve comprehensive results (Hauer & Quill, 2011).

Data gathering techniques dictate the reliability of the TNA results and subsequently the quality of the T&D process. For instance, to ensure the reliability of the results of their study on fall-prevention among carpenters, Kaskustas et al. (2010) used multiple assessment methods at different levels, such as: focus group discussions, surveys and observations using a standardized tool. In addition they made use of a large sample of respondents and collaborated with a variety of stakeholders, such as university researchers, carpenters' union leaders, construction contractors, and providers of apprenticeship training programs. Data-gathering techniques and their interrelationships are usually presented in the form of models that assist the design of training processes.

In the *Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Strategy (TIVET)*, the Kenya government identified inspection, monitoring and evaluation as the weak elements in the implementation of the VET curriculum as technical inspectors are largely absent at the provincial or district level and only minimal

representation exists at the ministry's headquarters (GoK, 2008). EO2 admitted that the situation had not changed much since identifying these elements, but added that plans were underway to recruit one inspector for every county (there are 48 counties in Kenya) as a starting point to deal with inadequate staffing levels.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to examine the obstacles and opportunities that exist in conducting training processes in the MVRSI sector in Kenya from key stakeholders' perspectives. Data were collected from 19 MVRSI repair service businesses, four VET institutions and four education officers. The findings suggest that VET in Kenya has suffered from: low funding; duplication of services; insufficient personnel; limited methods of TNA data gathering and analysis techniques; inadequate quality control, monitoring and evaluation; poor communication of training processes; and obstacles within the national training objectives.

This paper proposes the following opportunities that the VET sector can consider to develop its human resource capacity: the establishment of a training fund; fast-tracking the creation of VET umbrella body; strengthening the mandates of KICD to including recruitment, training and remunerating its personnel; incorporating more methods of data gathering and analysis; strengthening methods of objective formulation, and improving monitoring, evaluation and quality control. These opportunities are discussed below:

Establishment of a training fund: There is a need for the Kenyan government to increase funding for routine and comprehensive needs assessment and training activities in core ministries, KICD and training institutions. The vital role that a needs assessment plays ought to be communicated to VET providers, so as to budget for this exercise with the same importance as other processes. A possible source of additional funds could be the establishment of a training fund from employer's payroll levies to support skills development. Although this is a tall order, if communicated effectively to employers showing them the perceived benefits; and, involving them in designing training programs this can easily be achieved. Ngure S. (2013a) observes that if the composition of boards of governors had more representation from the industry, then the particular representatives would be an important part of the communication processes. Further, the Kenyan government needs to put measures in place to encourage and support prospective trainees and enable VET to meet its strategic objectives.

Fast-tracking the activities of the newly created umbrella body: To compound the recent gains that VET has enjoyed like the passing of the TVET bill, the Kenya government needs to move forward and actualize the creation of an umbrella training body to coordinate the multiple training providers; develop standards for training validation, create national VET qualification structures and proficiency levels; and, certification and accreditation of training providers. This body could take responsibility for assessing the training skill gaps in the industry to be addressed by training institutions.

Strengthening the mandates of KICD to including recruitment: The government needs to strengthen the KICD to recruit, train and remunerate its personnel to ensure that appropriate staff is retained to carry out data gathering and analysis; and, do more research and apply apt measures in revision and updating of curriculum. Since they are expected to carry out research and trace the destination of their graduates, trainers need to be equipped with the necessary research skills.

Incorporating more methods of data gathering and analysis: More methods of TNA data gathering and analysis need to be incorporated to allow key stakeholders participate in the VET training processes. Surveys and questionnaires are particularly useful as their reach is wider than other methods. Further, training institutions need

to be strengthened to do frequent tracer studies of graduates of VET to track their employment destinations. In addition, training gaps analysis can be communicated through circulars, newsletters, government publications and the internet. These methods will ensure that all stakeholders such as the industry, training providers and donors can use this information to improve training systems.

Strengthening methods of objective formulation: Since the primary purpose of training is employability, objectives that give the trainees assurance of being absorbed to the labour market ought to be adequately formulated. Employability presumes the attainment of skills that correlate with the labour market demands. An accurate assessment of training gaps and objective formulation will involve the examination of job analyses, current and required skill levels to guide the choices of prospective trainees and trainers alike.

Improving monitoring, evaluation and quality control: Ongoing quality monitoring and assessment present an opportunity to correct any flaws observed during the process of training instead of waiting until a comprehensive evaluation is done, which may be too late for the correction to have any real impact. In addition summative evaluation assists in designing more appropriate programs.

The Kenya Vision 2030 identifies Science Technology and Innovation as one of the foundations for social-economic transformation to propel the country to a new industrialized status by the year 2030. VET is a key ingredient in achieving this stated aim through a more responsive, flexible and appropriate training that can propel the industries to be globally competitive (Ngure, 2013b). This can be done effectively by an accurate assessment of skill needs and gaps, and documenting them to enable training providers respond through their training activities and form a benchmark for monitoring and evaluation.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all the participants of this research. Further the author acknowledges the guidance of her mentors Prof. Alan Brown and Prof. Rowena Barrett.

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