
CHALLENGING ISSUES FACED BY TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRES IN ELDORET MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenging issues faced by church-based training institutions in Eldoret municipality who offer dressmaking and tailoring skills to the youth. Data was collected from 32 students and four teachers using questionnaire and from three managers and eight students who have graduated using interview schedule and analyzed using statistics. The study revealed that female trainees seek training to gain skill for paid or self-employment. It was also revealed that the teachers were qualified and some trainees dropped out of school because of marriage and teenage pregnancy. The study further revealed that students who sit for examinations perform well and appreciated attachment in the curriculum. The study recommends that institutions start a micro-finance loan scheme to assist graduates who are interested in self-employment and vocational centres should include enterprise education in their curriculum to equip graduates with business skills.

Keywords: Tailoring, Kenya, Church-Based Training Institutions

Introduction

Some projections indicate that 50% of the graduates of the current education and training programmes in the developing world are unlikely to secure employment (Power, 1999). This therefore, calls for introducing training for employment in small enterprises, for employment and for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship in dressmaking and tailoring is therefore, an opportunity for the youth in Eldoret, a town, which has experienced rapid growth in terms of population over the last two decades. There is need for more qualified tailors and dressmakers to meet the demand created by increased population. There is also need for training institutions to equip the youth with necessary skills. Unfortunately, there is no government institution in Eldoret municipality which offers dressmaking and tailoring. There are however, Church-based vocational training centres in Eldoret town namely Ancilla Vocational Training Centre, which is Catholic sponsored, PCEA Community Centre Polytechnic and AIC Eldoret Educational Training Centre. Consequently, there is need to investigate the challenging issues these church-based training centres face as they provide this necessary training to the youth of Eldoret and Kenya at large in preparing them to take up their places in entrepreneurship in garment

design and construction.

Dressmaking and tailoring are production trades that employ people to come up with a product and in this case apparel. In developed countries, such as America many high schools, vocational schools, community colleges, technical institutes and private trade schools offer formal training in specific production areas (Unger, 1992). In Kenya, vocational education has been offered to secondary school boys and girls since late sixties to early seventies. Harambee institutes of Science and Technology were started in various provinces to train high school graduates in different skills such as garment construction (Bokongo, 1992). Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology in Nakuru is still operational and has successfully graduated skilled dressmakers and tailors who have been absorbed into the Clothing industry and into institutions of higher learning as technicians or as students pursuing degree courses.

The introduction of vocational education right from primary school in the 8.4.4 system of education was probably as a result of government's realization that vocational education was crucial for industrialization and development of the nation. The 8.4.4 system of education, designed and implemented in 1985 in Kenya, refers to eight years of primary

education, four years of secondary education and four years of university education. The change was based on recommendations of National committee of educational objectives and policies (NCEOP) (Republic of Kenya, 1986) set up to address the emerging problems of education (Republic of Kenya, 1981). The aim was to alter schooling and training so as to affect employment of the graduates. This was in response to what UNESCO stressed following World conference on Education for all, that Technical vocational education (TVE) must be seen as a lifelong process and an integral part of basic education for all. Power (1999) reports that inculcation of entrepreneurial skills that would provide workers with ability to generate employment opportunities through the creation of new business is also considered essential aspect of TVE. However, it suffered a draw back because of the cost or lack of materials for the learners to learn practical skills. Technical and vocational training was expected to play a crucial role in developing artisans, managers and entrepreneurs for the informal sector in both rural and urban areas (Kenya Government, 1986). Therefore, Eldoret having no government tertiary college offering training in dressmaking and tailoring, the focus of this study will be on the church-based institutions which are trying to fill the gap of providing the much needed skills to the youth in the area of Clothing construction entrepreneurship.

The main objective of the study was to determine the challenging issues the church-based vocational educational centres face as they offer tailoring and dressmaking skills to the youth between the ages 14 and 21 years old. This category includes primary school graduates who are unable to pursue secondary education and secondary school drop outs and also secondary school graduates, who are unable to pursue university education. The other objectives were to establish teacher's qualification, determine the aspirations and expectations of the trainees, establish technical and entrepreneurship skills trainees receive, usefulness of attachment, to determine demand and usefulness of the training and establish teacher's perception of their programme. This perception refers to teacher's opinion of the

students, the curriculum, the facilities and the future success of the institutions. The research questions were what are the teacher's qualifications? Why so the youth join vocational educational centres? What relevancy of skills taught and how do teachers view their programme?

Methods

A descriptive survey design was used to investigate the challenging issues vocational training institutions face. The study area was Eldoret town in Uasin Gishu district in western part of Kenya. In order to gather information on the training centres and challenging issues faced by vocational centres, three managers, one from each institution and eight trainees who had graduated were purposively sampled to participate in this study. Interview schedule was used to gather information from them individually. In order to gather information through a questionnaire on aspirations and expectations of trainees and technical and entrepreneurship skills offered, students who were enrolled in the training centres were sampled using systematic random sampling method.

The sample size was made up of three (100%) managers, one from each institution, four (67%) teachers out of the total six teachers, 32 (33%) students out of total of 97 students, and 8 (36%) trainee graduates out of 22 working in Eldoret.

The nature of the items in the questionnaire and interview schedule dictated scoring formats of a five-point Likert scale because it has a higher reliability coefficient than many others (Oppenheim, 1966) and it has been used by Sang, (2002) among others. The ratings on this scale were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD) Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and they were awarded 5,4,3,2, and 1 respectively. After awarding points, the mean was calculated to determine whether statements relating to satisfaction were positive, neutral or negative. The data from the interview schedule and the questionnaire was coded and tabulated before descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentages and frequencies. This was then presented in tables.

Results and Discussion

The data on training institutions revealed the following results. All the three institutions have been in operation for between seven and 11 years. Ancilla VTC was started in 1999 by the Handmaid sisters from Nigeria. It now has 70 students although it has a capacity of 100 students. It is situated on the land owned by the Catholic Church. It has five classrooms and two workshops and 25 sewing machines for dressmaking and tailoring. The two-year Grade 3 course was approved and evaluated by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development. The three-year Fashion design course is offered to Form four school leavers and graduates receive diploma certificates from the centre. According to the manager, the centre has been approved for Grade Test 2 and 1 from the year 2008.

AIC Eldoret Vocational Educational Training Centre (VETC) was started in 1997. It is under AIC Child Care department and the target group for training is needy children. Orphans and other vulnerable and needy children (average age is 17 years) are recruited and trained for one year by one teacher. Their up-keep, tuition and examination fee are paid for fully by the centre through donor funds. The vision of this institution is to see a society where there will be no orphans who are unemployed. The institution is situated on church land. It has one big room for dressmaking and has a capacity for a maximum of 30 students. It has 22 sewing machines. The ratio is one machine to one student. There are two cutting tables and two iron boxes.

PCEA community centre Youth Polytechnic was started in 1995. It has a capacity for 30 students although it currently has only 10 (33.3%) students. It has two theory classrooms and one workshop with 12 sewing machines. It also has three cutting tables and two iron boxes. It offers a Trade course and trainees that are qualified earn an Artisan certificate. There are two teachers and one of them is also the manager. The training takes one year and the average age of trainees is 17 years.

Sewing machines are essential equipment for dressmaking and tailoring. An item in the questionnaire was included to gain information

on opportunity for students to practice sewing skills.

The analysis of the findings revealed that 12 (37.5%) of the trainees get to use the sewing machine all the time while in session, while 20 (62.5%) use the sewing machine at least two to three times a day. It is safe to conclude therefore, that trainees have adequate opportunity to gain experience with the sewing machine. The information from the school managers concurs with student responses and in AIC and PCEA the ration is one sewing machine to one student, while in Ancilla the ratio is one sewing machine for every three students. The sewing machines used in these institutions are manual.

Teaching Staff

Four teachers from a total of six teachers participated in this study. Analysis of data revealed that all the teachers who participated were females. Three were diploma certificate holders- one from the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST) and another one from Kima Cutting and Tailoring College and the other a diploma from Kenya Technical Training College (KTTC). This latter one had Dressmaking Grade 3 from National Youth Service (NYS) before joining KTTC, while the remaining one had Craft 3 from Kenya Technical Training Institute (KITI). They have all taught for between 3 to 7.5 years meaning that they have experience in training the youth in their specialties, which range from tailoring, dressmaking and garment making. Table 1.0 presents the teacher's qualification and experience.

Teachers do have the skills to offer tailoring and dressmaking to the trainees but may need more training regarding teaching methods and some psychology to be able to handle the learners more effectively and professionally.

Teacher Perception

The following observations were made concerning the data on teacher's perceptions of their programme. Programme refers to the students, the curriculum, the facilities and the future success of the institutions. Three teachers strongly agreed that their students were interested in what they teach and one agree

with the statement giving a total score of 19 with an average of 4.75. All the teachers were very satisfied (“strongly agree”) with the grades their students got in the final examinations. This means that the majority of students who register for the national examinations pass.

Two respondents agreed with the statement that ‘my students found employment’ and this result indicate that most graduates of these institutions were employed or started their own business after graduation. According to one respondent (teacher and also in-charge of follow-up of students in Ancilla VTC.), seven graduating students were head hunted by employers during graduation day last year. This college is known for teacher confidence and the follow up teacher knew where all its graduates were. She was often consulted for advice by those who work in Eldoret. Twenty two of Ancilla’s graduates were either employed in institutions in tailoring business or self-employed in Eldoret town. One who was employed in Mombasa is now in South Africa and is sponsored by her employer for further studies. This is inline with Moura Castro (1999) that stressed that training is justified when it leads to jobs (demand driven training). Respondents of institutions with no follow-up were undecided on this item. In the case of AIC, their graduates are not from Eldoret town while PCEA could not trace their graduates because it does not have a follow-up programme.

On the issue of satisfaction with teaching and learning facilities, two respondents disagreed with the statement. These two were from Ancilla VCT where there are not enough sewing machines to be at the disposal of every student and the classrooms are not enough. However, the number of classrooms in Ancilla will be increased this year to seven instead of five classrooms (according to the manager). Table 2 presents teachers’ perception of their programme.

Students

Data collected from the students revealed the following results: The total sample size was 32 (33%) students from a population of 97 (100%). PCEA had 10 students enrolled in

dressmaking and seven participated in this study. Five students from AIC participated in the study (17 were on attachment busy with practical training in the trade).

Twenty students (29%) of a total of 79 students from Ancilla also participated in the study. Analysis of findings revealed that respondents joined these institutions in order to learn dressmaking and tailoring to enable them to be either in companies (14 students/44%) or be self-employed (18 students/56). Majority who indicated that they expect to be employed said that employment will help them gain experience and assist them to make money which they intend to use to set up personal business in clothing construction. This is an indication that most trainees would like to venture into entrepreneurship in the near future or immediately after college. These findings correspond with the initial aspirations of the new syllabus for Kenya Primary schools (Republic of Kenya, 1986), namely that the curriculum was concerned with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities for a growing modern economy and which further emphasized that the country required trained man-power in both self-employed and in paid employment. The number of students who enrolled in VCT institutions attests to that desire of paid and self-employment. To support students’ venture into self-employment, the manager of AIC mentioned that the management have identified a micro-finance loan scheme component to assist their graduates get tools necessary for the trade.

Skills in business management and accounting was lacking in all the three institutions although Ancilla, through the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret organized a seminar on this topic for students who graduated in 2003. The graduates who are now in business appreciated this seminar. Their appreciation demonstrates the need to include business education in the curriculum. King (1996) recommended that vocational and training institutions should include the teaching of entrepreneurship skills in their curriculum as an essential component of their training programmes.

Table 1: Teacher Qualification and Experience

Sex	Qualification	Place of Training*	Experience	What the teacher teaches
Female	Diploma	RVIST	3.5 years	Tailoring
Female	Grade 3Diploma	NYS, KTTC	7.5 years	Dressmaking
Female	Diploma	KIMA	3.0 years	Tailoring
Female	Craft 3	KITI	7.0 years	Garment making

*RVIST=Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology, KIMA=Kima Cutting and Tailoring College and, KTTC=Kenya Technical Training College, NYS=National Youth Service, KITI=Kenya Technical Training Institute

Table 2: Teachers' perceptions of the programme

Statements showing level of satisfaction	Number of responses for specific levels (scores) of satisfaction:							Total	Mean	Overall Group Perception
	SA(5)	A(4)	UD(3)	D(2)	SD(1)					
I am satisfied with:										
The interest my students have in learning what I teach	15	4	0	0	0		19	4.8	Positive	
The good grades of students in the final examinations	20	0	0	0	0		20	5.0	Positive	
My students found employment	10	8	0	0	0		18	4.5	Positive	
My students are self-employed	15	0	3	0	0		18	4.5	Positive	
The programmes that we offer in our institution.	15	0	3	0	0		18	4.5	Positive	
Confidence of my students in dressmaking after training	15	0	3	0	0		18	4.5	Positive	
The teaching and learning facilities we have	5	4	0	2	0		11	2.75	Negative	

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, UD=Undecided DA=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree

Attachment exposes trainees to real work environment, and since they work full time during this period, they have to apply the skills they learnt in college as well as learn new skills from experienced workers. Attachment is crucial for trainees in any profession, especially where skills are important in the trade. Practical experience may be acquired through attachments in small and medium-size businesses (Power, 1999). The curriculum of PCEA does not include attachment and training concentrates on theory and practical skills gained in the institution itself during their two-year training programme. However, the manager said that they encourage their students to attach themselves to tailors in town after completion of their training in order to gain experience. Students of AIC and Ancilla undergo attachment for one month. Students from AIC are restricted to attachment in town because they are accommodated fulltime in the centre's hostels. Ancilla's students go to surrounding towns for attachment. Information was gained on where enrolled students will go for attachment. The results indicate that attachment opportunities for students are available in Eldoret and the surrounding towns. The majority of students 19(59.4%) will

undergo attachment in towns up to 200 kilometre radius from Eldoret.

Trainee Graduates

Eight graduates of Ancilla (employed or self-employed in Eldoret town) were interviewed to determine their qualifications, aspirations and expectations and to further establish the usefulness of attachment. The results indicate that they appreciated the attachment experience. All the eight respondents mentioned that they gained experience in the skills learnt in college. Seven indicated that they learnt new skills in attachment, for example the construction of shorts, skirts, overalls, dust coats and also how to use electric sewing machines. Only one mentioned that she learnt how to handle customers. Some respondents have been retained for employment in the places where they were attached to.

Results of their qualifications revealed that seven had Grade Test 3 and a diploma in Fashion Design and one had Grade Test 3 only. Four respondents were entrepreneurs who have started their own tailoring businesses and also train other people, while four were employed by companies. It can be concluded that there is need for tailors and there are opportunities for

entrepreneurs with tailoring and dressmaking skills in Eldoret town.

The respondents made recommendations regarding training in Ancilla VTC. Eight respondents mentioned the inclusion of entrepreneurship training and some graduates would like to upgrade their training by taking Grade Test 2 and eventually Grade Test 1. Two respondents mentioned the inclusion of other trade courses such as embroidery and salon, and two mentioned the inclusion of micro-finance loan scheme in the curriculum.

Drop out issue

Drop out rate due to pregnancy and early marriages or enrolled students are an issue in all the three institutions. Results revealed that drop out rates were 80% in PCEA, 17% in AIC and 6% in Ancilla. Counseling and regular talks have been used to enlighten the trainees on relationships, unwanted pregnancies and HIV and Aids infections. Ancilla encourages trainees to complete the course after delivery and the low drop out rate may be attributed to this. AIC plans to have all the trainees stay in church hostels to reduce this problem.

Conclusion

Vocational Training in dressmaking, tailoring and fashion design offered by church based institutions in Eldoret town attracts the female youth in town and elsewhere who are interested in pursuing employment in related occupation.

The majority of trainees pass Grade Test 3 because institutions prepare them well for the national examinations by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource and Development.

Most of the trainees who graduate from Ancilla are in tailoring and dressmaking related employment.

Recommendations

Entrepreneurship skills should be incorporated into the curriculum because most of the trainees aspire to be entrepreneurs immediately or after

completion of the training. This training will equip them with small business management skills.

Teachers should be trained in teaching methods and vocational guidance and counseling so that they can guide the learners professionally.

All vocational training institutes should try and incorporate micro-finance loan scheme in their programmes so that when a trainee finishes she could be assisted with a loan to start up a tailoring /dressmaking business.

All vocational training institutions should have attachment in their curriculum to give students an opportunity to work in a place where they get exposure to the realities of a workplace.

At least one government institution in Eldoret town should implement a certificate and a diploma course in dressmaking/garment construction and tailoring. The results indicate that there is need because graduates of Ancilla in this trade train others in tailoring and dressmaking.

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