

## INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY : THE CASE OF KENYA

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### SYNOPSIS

The youth bulge accompanied by increasing youth unemployment has been identified as a threat to peace, prosperity, and growth in Africa. This paper presents innovative strategies adopted by the government, universities, and development partners in Kenya to enhance youth employability. Jomo Kenyatta University and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology have launched courses for small entrepreneurs and farmers which combine technical and practical skills with theoretical training. The Craft Silicon Foundation in Nairobi has started an ICT course offered on a bus in five slum areas of Nairobi. The Digital Opportunity Trust and MasterCard Foundation have developed a programme for unemployed graduates who are trained to train other youth in their communities on entrepreneurship. The study ends with a discussion of the innovative Technical and Vocational Education Voucher Programme funded by the World Bank and the Government of Kenya through which unemployed youths are funded to get trained at institutions of their choice and guided to start their own enterprises. All the initiatives covered are innovative and need to be scaled up and tried in other countries in the region.

### Introduction

Three decades of economic and political reforms in Africa have opened up new avenues for poverty eradication and wealth creation in many countries. In the area of tertiary education, new public and private universities have sprung up increasing access to higher education to many who were trapped because of limited access. However, in many countries a lot of young people are leaving school and colleges well trained and equipped with skills that do not help them to secure jobs. The African Development Bank (AfDB) realises that this is a threat to the global, regional and national efforts to reduce youth unemployment and eradicate poverty. It is

also a threat to national and regional security (AfDB 2011:1). Africa is home to the youngest population in the world with over 65% of its people aged below twenty five years and the percentage is predicted to reach 72% in 2045 (AfDB 2011: 3). The current youth bulge is taking place faster in Africa than any other continent and will accelerate in the next ten years (Hope Sr., 2012, Karkara, 2015). A study by the McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that in 2012 Africa had a labour force of 382 million and 42% of that is employed outside agriculture but only 28% are wage earners. They have predicted that by 2020 there will be 122 million workers in

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Africa, a proportion of the population higher than other regions and only 72 million new wage-paying jobs will have been created. Most of these will be young people. They also predicted that 48% of the African population will have secondary and/or tertiary education (Fine et al, 2012).

If there will be 122 million workers and 72 million jobs by 2020 it is clear that the problems of youth unemployment will continue and remain perennial. Currently 72% of the youth live on two United States dollars a day and in Kenya the percentage was 54.4% in 2008 (World Bank 2009: 3). On average 81% of the youth in Africa live in rural areas and according to the AfDB (2014), the youth constitute the biggest proportion of the estimated 60% of the Africa's population without jobs and female youth suffers the most. It is also noted that unemployment is higher among graduates and youths from wealthy families as the number of unemployed graduates shot up from 1.6 million in 1999 to 4.9 million in 2009 ( AfDB 2011: 7). Failure to tackle youth unemployment poses threats to efforts of development organizations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union(AU), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and Regional Economic Communities aimed at economic growth and poverty reduction (AfDB 2011:8). Therefore, unless systemic and fundamental changes are undertaken to address the cause of increase in graduate unemployment, which was three times higher than that of secondary school leavers in 2011 according to the AfDB report (Ibid), will go higher.

This paper examines the causes of unemployment among the youth in general and among post-secondary school graduates. The focus will be on strategies that have been put in place to address shortcomings behind this phenomenon and innovative programmes and projects that have been launched in Kenya to increase the employability of the youth.

### 1. Youth unemployment and its causes in Kenya

According to Hope Sr. (2012), demographic factors contribute a lot to youth unemployment in Kenya. High rates of population growth produce more young people than the labour market is able to absorb. Kenya's population grew at an average of 4% per year in the 1970s, dropping to an average of 3.5% since the eighties which is still high. Kenya has had a youthful population with the number of people aged between 15 and 35 years having gone up from 3.3 million in 1969 to 13.7 million in 2009. The majority of the youth in Kenya live in rural areas or in urban slums and their livelihoods depend on static agricultural production systems and informal sector activities which are insecure and do not assure them of decent working conditions and incomes.

The causes of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in Kenya, in particular, do not differ from those in many other (African) countries. The mismatch between available jobs and the number of people leaving school has been a perennial factor behind fruitless job search by the youth and disappointing recruitment drives by employers. This is aggravated by the mismatch between jobs created and demand for jobs. In 1991 only 90,000 jobs were created in Kenya yet 250,000 youths finished school that year (Johnson and Ferej, 1997). In Kenya's Vision 2030 launched ten years later, it is projected that 500,000 jobs will be created per year but in actual fact about 750,000 youth will be entering the labour market every year. This means 250,000 are not catered for in Visions 2030 (Korwa et al 2013). The problem of school drop outs still troubles Kenya's education policy circles. Most of those who drop out of school fail to secure meaningful jobs or any jobs at all. As early as 1988 the ILO estimated that one out of ten school dropouts ever gets a job in the modern sector in Kenya (ILO 1988).

Illiteracy and low levels of numeracy and loss of skills after schooling or deskilling also keep rates of employment for the youth down. Although Kenya and Uganda have higher levels of literacy and numeracy among their youth compared to Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania, in rural areas especially in the traditionally marginalized districts, levels of literacy are still low and youth unemployment is higher in those areas than in the Central and Western and Rift Valley Provinces (Osman and Mukuna 2013). Deskilling arises out of the mismatch between skills available and the new needs of enterprises. After graduation most of the youths do not get opportunities to keep on learning and upgrading their skills. As systems of service and production are changing very fast, such people either fail to continue in employment or secure jobs if employed because their skills are considered obsolete. In addition, there is the factor of wage and work insecurity. Some jobs such as teaching have become increasingly unattractive to the youth because the education sector though the biggest and most critical, does not get the support it needs in terms of regular review of wages and social protection (Mukuna 2013). In areas where human security is not assured such as North East and North West Kenya, some trained teachers are refusing to work there. There are what the youth consider to be dead end sectors such as peasant agriculture which do not attract the youth even those unemployed.

Development failure caused by excessive dependence on primary commodity exports, aid, remittances and erratic revenues from tourism affects economic growth thereby constituting the main push factor for low growth in employment opportunities in Kenya (AfDB 2011: 9, World Bank 2009). The predominance of static sectors in the rural economy especially hoe-based and rain-fed peasant agriculture reduces the possibilities of rural youth being effectively absorbed in the rural labour markets. The informal sector which is the biggest employer of the youth in urban areas has remained stunted

with low capacity for technological innovation and value addition to primary commodities being exported (AfDB 2011: 9). The large scale sectors which have a better technical and technological advantage have been recording jobless growth in spite of a bigger share of manufacturing activities in Kenya compared to its neighbours in the other four East African Community (EAC) States.

Early entry into the labour market and early entry into marriage are acute problems affecting gainful employment for the youth. In both urban and rural areas child labour is rampant in Kenya and it pushes children out of schooling and pulls them into unprotected and vulnerable labour markets. This therefore cuts them off from long term benefits of learning. It also denies them the opportunity to secure a gainful and decent work and imposes upon them long term costs of foregone education which range from aging early to problems caused by lack of education including early fertility, unemployment, superstition and crime.

Another set of obstacles to youth employment arise from the educational systems. The mismatch between knowledge, education and skills on the one hand, and jobs and needs of the various segments of the labour market on the other, is seldom misunderstood (Kinyanjui and Mbatia 2011). This has evoked defensive reaction from providers of education especially those in the tertiary sector. However, it has numerous dimensions that need to be recognized and addressed. Although policies of many African countries including Kenya have gone an extra mile in attempts to strengthen education for employability, the skills produced by the majority of tertiary education institutions are not attractive and cannot be absorbed profitably in most of the sectors. Those required by the most popular sectors such as the informal sector are not integrated to mainstream activities and curriculum (AfDB 2011: 11, Obanya 2015). In vocational training a lot of reforms have been undertaken in terms of institutions

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and curriculum but the emphasis is still exclusively on technical skills some of which are already supersaturated on the labour market. Soft and life skills which help job seekers to secure and retain jobs are not yet given the prominence they deserve. In some cases the skills imparted through vocational education are becoming obsolete due to failure by the people trained to adjust them to emerging technologies, production techniques or market needs through refresher training (Johnson and Ferej 1997, Sang, Muthaa and Mbugua 2012).

The lack of international recognition or accreditation of courses offered in the formal and informal vocational training institutions also contributes to the failure of the youth to get decent employment abroad. Although Section 38 of the Kenya Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act of 2013 requires the training institutions to apply international and national quality standards, the accreditation of institutions and courses is still limited to national qualifications bodies (Government of Kenya, 2013). As such, not many training institutions have made an effort to secure ISO 920 accreditation or certification of equivalence of the skills produced and those expected on international labour markets. There are many young people who have migrated to Europe from Kenya who hold certificates and diplomas from hospitality, crafts and mainstream technical and vocational training centres who cannot be lawfully employed because their qualifications are not recognized. They end up in illegal or so-called 'black jobs' whose pay is much lower than what they would get if their qualifications were recognized. The recognition of qualifications can be negotiated in bilateral agreements and standards for equivalence made known to all training institutions.

Apart from technical and vocational education, there is a general mismatch between education and skills produced in the mainstream institutions of higher education such as polytechnics and universities. The first cause of

this is the mismatch between quality and quantity. The number of higher education institutions has increased with every County in Kenya now establishing its own university and the number of graduates in Kenya has tripled over the last 20 years. However, the quality of higher education has gone down because of rising staff student ratios, decreasing space and teaching materials and moonlighting among staff (Opta 2013). These factors are reducing efforts in teaching and time for research. There is also the problem of lack of incentive systems that could reward efforts and extra workloads, weak leadership which has led to self-management by staff in terms of teaching time and internal brain drain caused by the proliferation of new universities (Mwiria et al 2007; Otunga 2010, Opata 2013). In order to reverse these negative trends there is a need to treat the formation of dynamic and relevant skills strategic goal.

Policy analysts based at the AfDB, the ILO and the World Bank (AfDB 2011, ILO 2011, World Bank 2009) have suggested several conditions required to make youth employability a core strategic objective and goal. First according to the World Bank it requires the integration of youth employment policies in the overall policy framework of long term development and to implement them alongside other policies on education, poverty reduction, youth development, health and other youth related issues. It has also suggested the need for setting youth employment targets and resources to support their achievement and addressing the whole issue more holistically by tackling both demand and supply side factors. The ILO also suggested the embedment of core skills in education and training. The ILO has published a detailed document in which it has spelt out the broad categories of core skills and their various components (ILO 2013). The Government of Kenya went further on this by suggesting the incorporation of entrepreneurship courses in all curricula from the primary to higher education

level (GoK 1988). It has also been suggested that in training there is need to distinguish between small business management and entrepreneurship training (Ongway 2007). There is also a need, in policy, to take a broader interpretation of employment and scope of employment by extending it beyond formal contractual employment in enclosed settings. In addition it is important to adopt a holistic approach that captures the social, cultural formation, population integration and ethnic networking factors into consideration (Hinrichs 2005, Hinrichs, Langan-Fox and Grant 2007, Ongwai 2007, GOK 2005). In the next section we examine a few innovative programmes that have been launched in Kenya to increase youth employability through a holistic approach to skill formation.

### **2. Innovative skill training programmes in Kenya**

The colonial system found in Kenya traditional crafts experts who were making tools for production and defence (hoes, machetes, hammers and spears). However, the crafts were not aligned to the needs of the colonial economy. According to King (1977) the colonial government decided to import skilled crafts workers from India to help in the construction of the Kenya – Uganda Railway. Once they settled the Indian workers started their own small businesses and began training in technical skills. The British government encouraged the formation of trade schools to equip Africans with the skills required for the colonial economy. This led to a dual system of skill formation. While the British government relied on the school system, the Indian business people used informal job training schemes (Johnson and Ferej 1997:5). Therefore as observed by Kenneth King (1977), the importation of skilled Indian workers for the construction of the railway helped to start informal skill training through apprenticeship in Kenya. This informal training was very successful for a variety of reasons. First it found in place a population eager to work for

wages and to learn by doing. Secondly the recruitment was informal based on social networks and the training was flexible mixing training and work. Third, the government did not interfere by trying to control or regulate it. Fourth, the training did not involve costs on the part of trained workers or employers. Finally those trained informally passed on the skills to others (King 1977, Johnson and Ferej 1997: 51-52).

Formal apprenticeship was formalized by the colonial government in the early 1920s. This was motivated by the need to replace Indian skilled workers with Africans because the latter were getting into business and becoming competitors with British entrepreneurs. In the introduction of formal apprenticeship the government made all primary schools vocational and to ensure compliance, funds were made available only to schools that were teaching using the official vocational curriculum. The subjects taught were production oriented and related to agriculture, animal husbandry, masonry, carpentry and joinery. Most of the learning was practical and theoretical courses were taught in the evening (Johnson and Ferej 1997). Although this system was very good and focused on linking skills and community needs, it failed to attract many young people as most of them preferred to migrate to urban areas in search of office work. The system continued until the end of the Second World War.

After the Second World War the British colonial government introduced trade schools. After primary education children were admitted to these trade schools for training taking up to two years after which they were given trade tests to assess their theoretical and practical skills and the results were used to attach them to public or private enterprises as interns or employees. The system was very useful in training youths to have practical and theoretical skills and those who were trained in agriculture worked on the large scale farms but also established their own farms. The first official regulation of industrial



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training came with the Industrial Training Ordinance (No. 48 of 1959) which came into operation on the 16th May 1960. It established the regulatory framework for industrial training in Kenya. It remained in operation until its amendment in 1971, when the regulation was vested in the National Industrial Training Council (NITC) a multi-partite body comprised of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, representatives of employers, employees and other public interests and created the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) as the Secretariat of Council. The Act also provided for the collection of industrial training levy and established a Fund from which, the employers could claim reimbursement for training under the Act. The 1971 Act was amended and replaced by Act No. 1 of 1975.

The 1975 Act continued the system of apprenticeship and set the period of training at not less than four years. It limited the training to Government Vocational Training Centres. It provided for payment of wages to apprentices while on training. Entry requirements were fixed at not less than two years of secondary education and formal proficiency examinations were provided for following the pattern of examinations in formal education. The Act introduced a levy payable by medium and large enterprises and tax benefits were provided for on the part of those enterprises which contributed and enterprises accepting apprentices were not obliged to take them onto full time employment. The 1975 Act has subsequently been amended by several Acts No.13 of 1980, No.10 of 1981, No. 34 of 2011, No.12 of 2012 and recently amended and replaced by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act of 2013. The current Act allows local and international education service providers on the one hand and local public and private vocational education training institutions to offer services in Kenya (Sections 20, 22 and 26). Among other bodies it establishes boards for accreditation registration, quality assurance and a technical and vocational

education fund. Section 31 requires all training institutions to apply national and international standards in training. The industrial training law is supported by the Industrial Training and Attachment Policy in Sessional Paper No2 of 2013. Based on these and previous legislative instruments, vocational training and education institutions in Kenya from the private and public sectors and some in partnership have mounted innovative skill training programmes which are show cased in this study.

### *2.1. One step out of Ivory Tower: The Kenyatta University Student Training for Entrepreneurship Promotion (STEP) Program*

In the last three decades institutions of higher education especially universities have been forced to think out of their ivory tower boxes on their role in skill development. With 63-65% university graduates out of jobs (ILO 2011) universities have reduced their defensive stance and gone on the offensive by establishing science parks and incubation centres. Wanderi, Kisato and Mwangi 2014 have written extensively on the experience of Jomo Kenyatta University in launching an entrepreneurship programme. The following is a summary of their findings. In 2012, the Kenyatta University launched the Student Training for Entrepreneurship Promotion (STEP) program in collaboration with Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, Leuphana University of Germany and other partners. While these are not the only universities that have established technology incubator systems to upgrade the capacity of small and emerging entrepreneurs in industry and agriculture, their initiatives go beyond a project approach adopted by other universities in Kenya and directly address the issue of skill formation combining apprenticeship and conventional vocational and technical training methods.

The initiative has taken a problem rather than a programme orientation. The difference between the two is that a problem approach is more

holistic and focuses on multiple aspects of a programme rather than simply one or two aspects. The project is funded by the BASF a German firm which supports public–private partnerships. In this light Kenyatta University has teamed up with a private initiative known as the Chandaria Business Innovation and Incubation Centre (Chandaria BIIC) based in the university. The holistic approach of the programme is that while offering mainstream courses on business management and administration, the students are given a three months course on entrepreneurship during which they develop their business projects which are incubated under the programme. It also supports students with funds for starting their businesses. (Wanderi, Kisato and Mwangi 2014).

The programme advertised its activities widely in 2011 and selected 14 innovative projects to incubate. The selected participants were trained for three months. Then it also advertised for another 200 places for students who were trained on social skills about entrepreneurship. The second batch of students were not required to develop ideas and projects for incubation but simply to be trained on how to identify business opportunities, enter into business and manage enterprises. The group in the incubation part of the programme was exposed to marketing and innovation strategies. Unlike other conventional courses, the STEP training puts more emphasis on practical skills accompanied by mentorship. This was done under the Chandaria BIIC for innovators. Mentoring was done by experienced entrepreneurs associated with the Chandaria Group of Enterprises. According to the in-depth study conducted by Wanderi, Kisato and Mwangi on the two initiatives, half of the innovators were in ICT, 21% in visual arts and the rest in either agribusiness, health or business services (Wanderi, Kisato and Mwangi 2014). The trainees were given loans of US\$ 100 each which they were supposed to pay back after 12 weeks and 90% were able to pay back. Although the seed money given was small and actually

limited the scope of the innovations, still the programme was successful and still continues to date. From the in-depth study by Wanderi, Kisato and Mwangi (Ibid), there were some constraints which the students experienced. Lack of time was one of them, as the classes were organized during day time when they were supposed to be at their normal places of business. Furthermore, the participants were not well established business people and as a result they needed training but also they needed more time with their regular businesses to make ends meet. In spite of these and other constraints, the programmes have continued attracting more and more applicants and supporters.

### *2.2. Farmers as Learners: Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology*

In a recent study by Mihyo, Brew-Hammond, Makokha and Tjihenua (2015) a very detailed discussion of the role of African Universities in the development of technical and technological capabilities for youth employment, the role of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture in which the author was the team leader, it is indicated that Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture (JKUAT) was established in 1991. It was deliberately located in the middle of the most progressive farming community in Kenya. It is mandated to translate research results into practical solutions to the problems of farmers in Kenya. It has designed its research and training activities to attract entrepreneurs from farming and small scale enterprises aligned to agriculture. It was the first institution of higher education in the East African region to embark on research and training of farming communities on the production of tissue culture bananas. It has succeeded to popularize rapid propagation of disease free, faster maturing, high-yielding bananas through tissue culture technology. Research and training on tissue culture are done simultaneously. Students are learners and researchers at the same time and they work with neighbouring communities. The technology involves the process of growing tissue culture for

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plant shoot-tips in a laboratory until they are ready for transplant and then planting them after which each tissues produces about 2000 banana plants in a short span of five months.

The tissue cultured banana seedlings are offered for sale to farmers who are given short courses before they plant them. JKUAT has established a network of farmers around the whole country in Kenya and members of this network, which consists of small groups of commercial farmers, act as technology brokers. They sell seedlings, offer familiarization courses to farmers and have helped the university to link itself up with farmer communities. Where the technology has been adapted, banana productivity has increased from 20 to 45 tons per hectare (See more in Mihyo, Brew-Hammond, Makokha and Tjihenua (2015)

In addition to this flagship technology programme, JKUAT has launched other programmes aimed at increasing the skills of artisans and operators of small and medium sized enterprises in the agricultural sector. A study by Okech (2015) indicates the the university has established a science park which offers training to agricultural entrepreneurs, links them with finance organizations, provides marketing support and provides entrepreneurs with working space. The park hosts small technology projects of young entrepreneurs and guides them on how to develop them into sustainable and profit making enterprises. Through this programme the university has developed several artisanal training programmes on block making, mushroom production, the manufacture of herbal products, toilet soaps, cosmetics, lotions, hair shampoos and conditioners, detergents, disinfectants, paints, wood preservatives and the manufacture of bio shoe polish which is environmentally friendly and developed from a natural weed that has been a common nuisance to farmers. All the products are made from locally available materials. In addition the science park project in collaboration with an Indian University and a

private enterprise from India has manufactured a walking tractor designed to be used by farmers with very low fuel consumption and suitable for all kinds of terrain. The university has mobilized four County governments to support youth to acquire the tractors when they reach the market for use. SMEs are being trained to be able to manufacture spare parts and assembling will be done in the science park. By the end of 2015 Siaya County has already ordered 40 tractors and other counties are considering making orders (Okech 2015).

What makes these two examples good case studies is that they are very rich in local content. They do not offer courses based only on theories developed in other continents or distant and different economic contexts. Secondly they target and train entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs. This is very important because their trainees are motivated by entrepreneurship courses to either improve or acquire new skills. Thirdly they also combine technical skill, management techniques, entrepreneurship and soft skills. This kind of combination is lacking in mainstream business studies which tend to be more theoretical and end up training graduates who become unemployed. Some very attractive business development programmes in East Africa have failed to create a new generation of entrepreneurs because of this deficit (See for example Eyaa 2014; Donna, Bosma and Amoros 2011).

### ***2.3. Skills Training in the Slums: The Craft Silicon Computer Training Bus in Nairobi***

A very interesting study by Yuchen Feng (2012) has brought to the fore the possibility of skills training for those not only assumed to be untrainable but who the system because of such assumptions has completely forgotten. The Craft Silicon Training Bus is funded by the Craft Silicon Foundation branch in Kenya. The objective of the Foundation's programmes is to promote global computer literacy for low income



countries and poor communities in those countries. The project targets youth living in the slum areas in Nairobi. It is funded by the Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) and managed by the Department of Computer Sciences and Systems Sciences at the University of Stockholm. The project's mission as summarized by Feng is 'to support the innovative use of ICT for development and poverty reduction through synergetic partnerships' (Feng 2012: 3). The training is done on a bus which is equipped with computer tables and solar panels. It covers Kibera, Mathare, Kangemi, Kawangware and Mukuru slums. Kibera is the second biggest slum in Africa. Training is provided for two days every week in each of these slums and it takes approximately two hours.

The courses include basic computer skills for Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point and Access. Each computer is shared by two students and the bus has three teachers who help students with practical training. Those who perform well are given an opportunity to undergo advanced training at Craft Silicon Campus in Nairobi. The courses are examined and those who pass get certificates. According to Feng (2012: 21) by 2012 there were already 5500 graduates out of who 3806 (69%) were male and 1694 (31%) female. Feng explains the gender disparities on the basis of culture dominant in Kenya and especially in those slums and women involvement in many other household and survival activities. Although there have been no systematic tracer studies by Craft Silicon Foundation, Feng estimates, that at least 26% of the graduates secured jobs and 12% started their own businesses through the Microsoft Start Up Programmes (Feng 2012: 35).

In the author's assessment the project has succeeded because of several factors. It works closely with the community leaders and their institutions. These include NGOs and faith based organizations working in these communities. Its outreach strategies involve door to door

contacts with community people. The training is done on the streets and this attracts observers who are curious to know what is going on. The bus offers free Wi-Fi internet access for non-trainees around the bus and this has made the bus very popular. In addition teachers use a few hours for consultation and inquiries from members of the community. This openness has reduced negative perceptions which normally surround such programmes when they are enclosed.

Apart from the factors discussed above, the programme has managed to retain community support because of the way it is organized, its communication strategy and type of skills produced. The communication strategy is based on use of simple language, use of open days to enable the community to be aware of the activities and potential of the programme and openness about what the programme can and cannot achieve. Students and community members are made aware that depending on available opportunities not more than 50% of the trainees will get jobs but that with seriousness and community support most graduates can start their own enterprises. In selecting trainees the programme ensures those selected are really motivated and have good knowledge of English and Maths. The skills imparted strike a good balance between technical and soft skills. Career and employment guidance is also provided especially in the advanced course. The programme has connections with potential employers and job centres which have helped it to identify and select top performing students and either getting them recruited by Craft Silicon Ltd or securing them placement in other IT companies in Kenya.

The important lessons we can learn from the Project are the following:

No group of youths should be written off without trying: the slum youths in Kenya have

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proved to be capable of being trained and securing jobs in spite of their poor background.

Access is the key: Given an opportunity, even those in remote and forgotten areas can be developed into dynamic and resourceful workers.

Innovation produces further innovation: Training youths on a bus on a street in a high density slum area is innovative and creative and it stimulates innovativeness and creativity within host communities and the trainees.

Limitations of space are an advantage in informal training: Small space on a bus or a mini or micro enterprises where everything is explained to everyone and which allows learners to copy, listen and learn from each other, facilitates easy team working and cooperation.

The computer training bus is a dream bus for most trainees: It saves slum dwellers the cost of travelling to training centres. Training is free and the training bus moves to the five slum areas going after the trainees instead of them going after it. The computers are solar powered and the slum dwellers access internet through Wi-Fi.

The project is replicable: The project is funded through corporate social responsibility with a good champion can be easily popularized within the public and private sector. The model is attractive because it is low cost and community focused.

In spite of these factors there is need to bear in mind that employability depends on availability of jobs and that depends on macroeconomic policy. It is also important to note that knowledge in the area of ICT keeps on mutating and to cope with changes education and training have to be life long and successful training requires continuous practice and access to computers and connectivity. Finally soft skills cannot only be learnt in a classroom. Some of the skills are imparted at the household and community levels. There is need to give

awareness training to the broader population on the need to train children for creativity, perseverance, resilience, cooperative competition, competitive and cooperation, because such people pick such traits as they grow.

### *2.4. Youth to Youth Skill Training: The Digital Opportunity Trust Internship Program in Kenya*

The Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) is a Canadian NGO which operates in several African countries including Kenya. It has several programmes for improving digital skills for the youth in developing countries. In a very interesting report produced by DOT and MasterCard Foundation, a very interesting story is told about the digital youth to you peer learning programme funded by both organizations (DOT and MasterCard Foundation 2012). The next paragraphs summarize the activities in that report. The peer to peer learning programme targets young university and college graduates who indicate elements of passion for entrepreneurship and change. They are given training and after qualifying they are deployed in their communities to train other youth. The key philosophy of DOT is that the youth should be treated as beneficiaries, partners and leaders. As beneficiaries they have to be supplied with all the necessary information and their needs have to be thoroughly assessed. As partners they have to be consulted and treated as equals and as leaders they have to be equipped to train their fellow youths. The innovative aspects of the DOT programme is that it combines skill training, access to credit, employment counselling, soft skills and youth to youth training by those already trained. It has a mentorship programme which runs concurrently with training, and the private sector is involved in curriculum development and programme evaluation. The programme has also formed partnerships with financial institutions.

The training provided by DOT prepares the trainees for youth leadership roles and trains

them to become mentors of other youth and role models in their respective communities. The interns are expected to train between 100 and 200 other youths before they are supported to establish their own enterprises or helped to get employed. The project activities are community focused and the interns are encouraged to remain in their communities while on training and when deployed to train other youths. This is very critical for local content not only of the skills imparted but also skill enrichment they get from the grassroots as they undertake training of other youth. The period of placement for DOT interns is for 10 to 12 months of intensive training and interaction with youth in the community supported by entrepreneurs and leaders in those communities. It is indeed an intensive training process and no wonder averagely about 90% of the interns end up either getting employed or starting their own businesses (DOT and MasterCard Foundation 2012). In the author's assessment, this youth to youth training programme is innovative and has become successful due to reasons indicated below.

**Building on local institutions and strengths:** the program hires local experts to work with the management team and in the selection of experts it puts emphasis on proficiency in entrepreneurship skills and training, familiarity with local culture and institutions and acceptability within the local community.

**Local content:** The curriculum is locally designed taking on board local contexts, case studies, and examples and translated into local languages.

**Community belonging:** The selection of participants pays particular attention to applicants' commitment to local development and community leadership.

**Leadership traits and training:** The emphasis on community leadership and the opportunity for trainees to train other youths in their communities and become role models has a big empowerment effect on the interns on the one

hand and the youths and the community at large on the other.

**Contracts and rewards:** To ensure the internship programmes and activities are taken very seriously by all parties involved DOT issues internship contracts in which among other things, a monthly stipend is included.

**Unique components of the programme:** The training is very holistic as it seeks to empower learners through confidence building and helping them to discover their talents and hidden or trapped capabilities. It imparts 21st century skills focusing on critical thinking, research, project formulation and management, communication facilitation, counselling, coaching and enterprise knowledge. These create enabling conditions for survival in the business world of neck break competition.

These innovative interventions are worth trying in other African countries. The Government of Rwanda has already adopted the DOT approach in training as part of its Youth Employment Global Opportunities (YEGO) Strategic Plan which was launched in March 2012 by the Ministry of Youth and ICT. It provides for the establishment of youth centres to promote youth entrepreneurship and employment initiatives. Other countries in which DOT has similar programmes are Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania. (DOT and MasterCard Foundation 2012)

### ***2.5. Innovative Funding for Youth Skill Development: The Technical and Vocational Voucher Programme***

This short case study is based on the on-going research by Joan Hamory Hicks, Michael Kremer, Isaac Mbiti and Edward Miguel (2013). The Technical and Vocational Vouchers Programme (TVVP) is an initiative of the Kenya Government and the World Bank. The study by Joan Hicks and others set out to find out how the randomized provision of vouchers was affecting formal sector employment, labour market

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earnings, participation in the informal sector and agricultural entrepreneurship etc. The part of the programme they studied was implemented in Busia, Bunyole and Samia Districts in the Western Province of Kenya. The programme covered 2160 out of school youths aged between 18 and 30 who applied for vouchers after they were advertised through the media and community channels. Out of the 2160 applicants selected vouchers worth US\$ 460 each were awarded to 1108 and the remaining half were used as a control group. Half of the vouchers issued were restricted for use at public technical and vocational training centres and the remaining half could be used at either a public or private institution of the holder's choice. The programme was community focused and applicants had to be vetted by their community administrations.

The training institutions were given information manuals to supplement their curricula. The information covered labour market conditions such as earnings per skill specialization, success stories of women and men in small businesses and advice to women to enter into specializations dominated by men. The research findings indicate that public technical and vocational training institutions were better resourced and equipped than private ones; their instructors had averagely higher levels of skills than private institutions and teachers in public vocational training institutes spent more time on practical training while the teachers in the private institutions spent more time on theory than practical training. As a result of these differences, the researchers found that 56% of the voucher holders selected public institutions and 44% private ones; 78% of voucher holders chose long term courses lasting two or more years and those who were not given vouchers chose short term courses. Another finding of importance was that those who got vouchers completed 0.6 years more of vocational education than those who were not given vouchers who completed only 0.36 years of vocational education. Furthermore according to

the results of this research, vouchers led to 166% increase in vocational education attainment (Hicks et.al Ibid).

The research team concluded the following:

The cost of vocational training together with credit constraints are major impediments to increased vocational education attainment in Kenya.

Public technical and vocational training institutions offer longer courses and therefore contribute to increased or higher vocational education attainment.

Training supplemented by information packages on labour market conditions helps in shaping choices.

Vouchers are an effective mechanism for investing in vocational education as they help awardees to overcome fee and credit constraints.

Lack of start-up capital is a major impediment to entrepreneurship development and therefore there is need for complementarity between human capital and financial capital development strategies.

The TVVP was not the only innovative VET financing initiative in Kenya. A similar programme which was launched in 1997 is the Jua Kali Voucher Programme. It was started under the Micro and Small Enterprise Training and Technology Project. Vouchers were issued to unemployed youths and they were allowed to choose which training institutions to enrol in. Participants were asked to pay 10% of the cost of the vouchers. 37,606 vouchers were issued between 1997 and 2001. According to Jonson and Adams (2004) the scheme had a significant impact on employment, acquisition of assets and establishment of businesses but it was complex and costly and phasing out vouchers was very difficult. The World Bank (2009:19) has suggested that for such programmes to be effective, they should be administered by the

private sector, trainers should be trained and upgraded, trainees must commit to pay for training and there should be an exit strategy.

### Conclusion

The case study presents some of the innovative skills development initiatives in Kenya. Some of the skills are There are many more such those related to social entrepreneurship which have transformed rural areas through solar energy by training rural youths to install and service solar panels and batteries in some of the most remote areas of Kenya (Mihyo 2015 b); public –private partnership programmes such as the Kenya Youth and Empowerment Project and many others that deserve more space in their own right (Honorati 2015). The common characteristics of the initiatives covered in this study is that they target youths out of school and out of work; they are community focused; they are holistic; they are rich on local content and seriously address supply and demand side factors behind youth unemployment. If scaled up at national level and given a long term programme orientation, they can really ease the transition from school to the life of work for many youths in the region.

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