

5] Effectiveness of Non Formal TVET Programs in Developing Social Skills Competencies among the Vulnerable Youth in Nakuru County-Kenya

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Abstract

Most developing countries are in the process of strategizing TVET programs upon realizing their importance in supporting the socio-economic development of a nation. Recognizing that technical and vocational skills are crucial in enhancing competitiveness and contribution towards social inclusion, decent employment, and poverty reduction has been a strong incentive for TVET reforms. Kenya like most of the developing countries is working towards improving access the quality level of skills for majority of the youth. It is therefore important to explore on the most effective instructional methods to develop specific competencies while training the vulnerable youth. National youth policy in 2007 envisioned a society where the youth between the ages 18 to 35 years have equal opportunities to realize their full potential and participate in self and national development. To enable the youth achieve this national mandate, non-formal training programs play a crucial role in supporting the governments' efforts to address youth unemployment especially the vulnerable youth. This paper discusses results of an action research that studied the effectiveness of interactive learning methods for vocational skills in enhancing social skills among the vulnerable youth in Nakuru County. Training on selected vocational skills was conducted to 60 members from vulnerable youth groups. Interviews and observation check list were used to assess the level of social skills among the trainees before and after the training. Qualitative data obtained was coded, analyzed and presented in frequency tables, while quantitative data was analyzed using Pearson chi square test for association. The findings revealed that there was a significant association between the training methods used and the acquisition of ability to communicate and listening skills, team building, time and resource management as well as ability to develop practical solutions to solve specific problems. However the methods used did not enhance self-concept and self-confidence among the trainees. The findings are important to community and technical trainers who would wish to enhance social skills among their learners. Further investigation into the most appropriate methods to enhance other skills among the vulnerable youth was recommended.

Keywords: Social skills, non-formal, vulnerable, interactive learning

Introduction

Education and training is critical in reducing social and economic inequality, improving functional and analytical ability among the youth. It provides opportunities for wholesome individual development; hence the training process should not be undermined. Instructional methods bridge the gap between the trainer and the trainees

thus coalescing the content, the trainee, the learning environment and the trainer to achieve the desired outcomes (Dgebuadze & Giorgdze, 2017). Over the years selecting of instructional methods has been determined by the content with very little emphasis on the nature of learners especially in practical skills. Instructional methods can be interactive where the trainees are actively involved and the trainer acts as a facilitator - transmissive where information flows from the trainer to the learner or transactive with minimum participation from the trainees. Interactive learning is more concerned with the nature and process of learning than the material being learnt. It is an effective tool for widening and increasing social participation and improving the overall gains from learning especially through practical skills (Dgebuadze & Giorgdze, 2017). Education and training empowers all youth with skills, knowledge and attitudes to build innovative and creative approaches towards sustainable economic, social and environmental well-being (Brown, & Slater, 2018). The paper presents the research findings on enhancing acquisition of social skills among the vulnerable youth in Nakuru County giving the related literature, methodology, results as well as conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

Vulnerable Youth

Vulnerable youth refers to the youth who dropped from the school system or never attended at all, and do not receive any form of care or support from parents or government. Their normal progression and transition is complicated by several challenges resulting to failure and disconnection from the society consequently lifelong economic and social hardships (Zweig, 2003). Failure to provide them with opportunities not only shuts down a key economic window to national development, but exposes the society to political and social insecurity as these youth seek for alternative engagements (Adrienne & Fernandes, 2014). Non formal training programs may contribute towards circumventing the long term challenges of vulnerable youth and the revenue used in correction centers would be channeled to other developments initiatives.

Barriers to learning among the vulnerable Youth

Barriers to Learning among the Vulnerable Youth

UNESCO, (2012) identifies financial cost in terms of fees and upkeep, child security and personal support while learning as some of the major barriers for the vulnerable youth to engage in formal learning programs. Course content and format including the style of learning, relationships with teachers/ trainers, the learning environment, and a lack of enjoyment or interest are other barriers, which may have denied them the opportunities to education. The youth often find class room style of learning repetitive and uninteresting, resulting in lack of motivation and a negative view to the value of learning. Negative attitude towards self or the course, lack of learning skills or formal qualifications as well as problems associated with crime, homelessness, substance abuse or a lack of confidence act as barriers to successful engagement in learning (UNICEF, 2011).

Youth Training and Skills Development

Youth training and skills development are vital ingredients to youth empowerment. Youth who acquire competencies across the domains are likely to achieve desirable outcomes, leading to educational, professional, social and economic success. One of the key challenges facing the Kenyan youth is lack of necessary and relevant training, knowledge and skills required to lead sustainable lives especially among the vulnerable youth (Omolo, 2010). Youth in Kenya lack in vocational, transferable/social and lifelong learning skills, which may include: Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and innovation, planning & organization and self-motivation among others UNDP (2012). Not all the youth have the opportunity to join formal skills training programs due to poverty, lack of required entry qualification or family responsibilities that they cannot negate. Kamau and Mwangi (2010) observe that investing in youth training and skills development is investing in national social security and economic development and will enable the country address unemployment problem among all the youth. Kenya's vision 2030 is anchored on economic, social and political pillars to propel the country's economic growth. For this to happen, the youth are to provide the bedrock for the transformation of necessary human resource skills for technological and industrial growth in both rural and urban set ups (GoK, 2008). The vulnerable youth may not be able to contribute to the realization of this vision as they are not empowered. Kenya needs an all-inclusive youth training program to support productivity and engagement of all youth.

Social Skills

Social skills which are transferable are competencies that are not subject specific and can be applied in diverse situations (Misug, 2014). Social skills are among the transferable skills also referred to as latent or interpersonal skills. Snell, *et al.*, (2016) consider the skills as comprising of 'soft' skills such as communication, team work, problem-solving, self-initiative, self-management and enterprise leadership. These skills are non-job specific and highly transferable and help in supporting technical, industrial and vocational skills and are applicable in different life context. In most cases these skills are embedded in formal training programs which make them like any other academic subject and inaccessible to those not in the school system. This study isolates the following attributes as the most crucial social/interpersonal skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, planning and organizing, creativity, innovation and adaptability. Snell, *et al.*, (2016) argue that since the importance of social skills for occupational mobility and employability is commonly noted by educators, careers counselors and labour market analysts, the concern should then be on how best to inculcate the skills into the trainees. The same sentiments were expressed by Davidson, *et al.*, (2012). who pointed out that most of the traditional teaching learning process is concept based and it is difficult to inculcate social skills through this process and therefore poses a question as to whether '*social skills can be acquired through actual experiences or through appropriate learning methods to support specific fields of knowledge*'. Enhancing social skills among

the vulnerable youth groups may increase group cohesion, team building and good customer relations, which may increase their ability to produce and market their products and services and improve their livelihoods. While recognizing the important role played by institutionalized education and training programs, vulnerable youth require a deliberate, open and flexible training program to enhance skills acquisition and assist them deal with personal development and the challenges in their lives.

Methodology

Quasi experimental design with non-equivalent groups was used. The sample size was 60 members drawn from 10 youth groups in the county, which were purposefully selected. The sample was divided into two groups of 30 youth each. One group was used as the treatment group and another as control group. The treatment group was trained in craft skills through SGLM while control group was trained using traditional methods. Mixed methods approach to data collection was adopted. Semi structured interview and observation check list were used to capture individual significant changes which could have resulted from learning interactions during the training on craft skills. The mixed methods approach allowed sufficient interaction between the researcher and the trainees for a better understanding of any form of transformation. During the semi structured interviews it was possible to probe verbal narratives from the participants, while the observation checklist helped the researcher capture specific attributes which could have resulted from the use of SGLM. The instruments yielded both qualitative and quantitative data, which was analyzed using Pearson chi square as a test for the level of association.

Findings

The objective of the study was to enhance acquisition of social skills and determine the association between the training methods and the level of acquisition of the skills among the vulnerable youth. The selected facets of the skills were categorized into two; the first was interpersonal skills in; communication, listening skills and team work. The second was problem solving through; creativity and innovation, planning and organization and self -confidence and expression

Communicating, Listening and Responding to Question

An observation checklist was used to collect data from the treatment and control group during training and the results recorded. The instrument sought for observed performance related to the selected facets. The skills level of acquisition was rated as poor, fair, good or very good and the obtained results are as reported in the following sections. Table 1 shows the results obtained from trainees on their ability to communicate listen and respond to questions.

Table 1

Ability to Communicate, Listen and Respond to Questions

Communicating, Listening and Responding to Questions					
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Total
Treatment	0	1	10	9	20
Training Control	3	18	10	0	31
Total	3	19	20	9	51

The results show that 19 (95%) out of the 20 trainees from the treatment group were rated as having acquired the skills in ability to communicate, listen and respond to questions though in different levels. While 18 (58.1%) of the trainees in the control group were rated 'fair' and 10 (32.3%) 'good' out of the 31 trainees who participated. Majority (95%) in the treatment group acquired this facet of social skill. The results can be interpreted to mean that there was a high level of acquisition of skills in communicating, listening and responding to questions among the trainees in the treatment than in the control group. To test if there was a statistically significant association between the training method and skills acquisition in communicating, listening and responding to questions a chi square test was done and the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Chi-square Test and Strength of Association for Skills in Communication Listening and Responding to Question

	Value χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Phi cramer's v-value	Approx. Sig. P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	26.050 ^a	3	.000	.715	.000
Likelihood Ratio	32.749	3	.000	.715	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.958	1	.000		
Number of Valid Cases				51	

The calculated results for the Pearson Chi Square test give a χ^2 value of 26.05 and a p less than 0.05. This implies that there is a statistically significant association between the training method and acquisition of skills in communicating; listening and responding to questions. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected. The results are consistent with the World Bank report (2015) that facilitative training methods could develop employability skills among the youth. However, Jongetal (2006) observes that traditional methods enhances listening skills, but not communication and responding to questions as the learner is passive during the learning process but mostly engaged listening and taking notes. These skills are important to people involved in businesses as most of the customers place their orders through verbal descriptions, which require one to have good listening, and responding skills as well as asking questions for clarification of details. The skills are also useful as they assist one with ability to engage the customer in a conversation. The skills are important in marketing especially for youth engaged in various businesses. Inability to listen and communicate with customers may lead to poor sales or even loss of customers and business.

Ability in Team Building and Coordination

Ability for team work and coordination is also a facet of social skills. The observed acquisition on these facets was rated as poor, fair, good and very good based on the performance during group tasks. The results are presented on Table 3.

Table 3

Ability in Team Building and Coordination Confidence

		Team Building and Coordination			
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Training	Treatment	4	4	7	4
	Control	5	18	3	0
Total		9	22	10	4

The results show the levels of acquisition of skills in team building and coordination. In the treatment group 4 (21.1%) trainees rated very good and 7 (36.9%) were rated at good levels of acquisition of these skills. In the control group, 18 (69.2%) trainees were rated to have fair level of acquisition, 3 (11.5%) good, while 5 (19.3%) were rated to have poor acquisition of skills in team building and coordination. These results can be interpreted to mean that both the treatment and the control groups acquired the skills but at different levels. However, the trainees in the treatment group were better in terms of acquisition of the skills compared to those in the control group. To test for association between the training method and acquisition of this facet of the skill, a Pearson chi square test was done and the results are as shown on Table 4.

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests and Strength of Association for Team Building and Coordination

	Value χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	P-cramer's v- Value	Approx.Sig. P- Value
Pearson Chi-Square	13.867 ^a	3	.003		.003
Likelihood Ratio	15.845	3	.001		.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.258	1	.012		.012
Number of Valid Cases	45				

The results show the calculated test of association, Chi square test result is 13.867 with a p- value of 0.003 which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level. The result shows that there is a statistically significant association between the training method and acquisition of skills in team building and coordination. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Ability to team build and coordinate are important facets of social skills and are crucial in enhancing unity, cohesion, leadership and ability to make positive decisions concerning one's life (Davidson, *et al.*, 2012). The skills are important among the youth in helping them work together and manage their scarce resources for sustainability. The skills are important in enhancing group cohesion which determines sustainability of their networks for social support. In today's world it is hard for one to work and live in isolation, the heterogeneity of groups working together has increased over the years. People, especially the youth, have been moving to other continents in search of better work opportunities. At workplaces, teams with diverse backgrounds work with newer communities and groups. These heterogeneous groups need not only the specific expertise for the job, but also need to be sensitive and empathetic to the teams and groups that they work with. This perception is also supported by Sharma (2016) and Raymond & Romanczyk (2008) that in team work interacting with each other directly and effectively improves relationships, functionality and efficiently enabling members to exchange skills profitably.

Developing Practical Solutions to Problems

The trainees performance was rated during learning tasks and the results are as shown on Table 5.

Table 5

Ability to Develop Practical Solutions to Problems

		Developing practical Solutions to Problems				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Total
Training	Treatment	0	6	10	3	19
	Control	11	20	0	0	31
Total		11	26	10	3	50

The results show the observed performance on trainees’ ability to develop practical solutions to problems during production. The results indicate that in the treatment group 6 (31.58%) rated fair in acquisition, 10 (52.63%) rated good and 3 (15.79%) rated very good. While in the control group 20 (64.5%) rated fair acquisition of this employability skill and 11(35.5%) rated poor. This means that of those trainees in the treatment group trained using interactive methods, majority were able to acquire the skill but at different levels. However in the control group that used expository methods of training 64.5% acquired the skill fairly and 35.5% were rated to have poor

acquisition. A chi square test for statistical significance in association between the training method and skill acquisition was carried out and the results are as shown on table 6.

Table 6

Chi-square Tests and Strength of Association for Ability to Develop Practical Solutions to Problems

	Value χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Phi cramer’s v-value	Approx. Sig. P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	30.410 ^a	3	.000	.780	.000
Likelihood Ratio	38.316	3	.000	.780	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	25.445	1	.000		
Number of Valid Cases	50			50	

The calculated Chi square test result is equal to 30.41 with a p- value of $0.000 \leq 0.05$ significant level, which shows that there is a statistically significant association between

the training method and acquisition of practical skills to solving problems. The null hypothesis was rejected.

This finding is consistent with Snell, *et al.*, (2016) who observes that group tasks enables the youth gain confidence and initiative in solving problems within the group or work related. Such youth are able to apply a range of strategies or approaches to solve problems which may include addressing personal and business related issues. The skills are acquired through identifying a problem and looking for ways to address the challenges. The finding is also supported by Schwarz and Yair (2010) who observe that training in vocational skills in non-formal set up enhances creativity and innovation which is an ingredient to solve problems, risk-taking and identifying opportunities as well as entrepreneurial characteristics.

Ability to Manage Time and Resources

The observed performance was rated as poor, fair, good and very good. Data obtained from the observation check list was analyzed and the results are as shown on table 7.

Table 7

Time and resource and Management

		Time and Resources Management				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Total
Training	Treatment	0	3	15	1	19
	Control	8	21	2	0	31
Total		8	24	17	1	50

The results on table 7 shows that 19 trainees in the treatment group acquired the skill at different levels, 3 (15.8%) rated fair, 15 (78.9%) good and 1 (5.3%) very good. Trainees who were in the control group were rated as 21(67.7%) fair, 2 (6.5%) good and 8 (25.8%) poor in acquisition of skills to manage time and resources during production. The results implies that the trainees who in the treatment group showed enhanced acquisition of skills in ability to manage time and resources during production than those in the control group who used expository methods. To test for significant association between the training methods and acquisition of this skill a chi square test was done and the results are shown on table 8.

Table 8

Chi-square Test and Strength of Association for Time and Resource Management

	Value χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Phi cramer's v-value	Approx. Sig. P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	31.368 ^a	3	.000	.792	.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.006	3	.000	.792	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	25.720	1	.000		
Number of Valid Cases	50			50	

Table 8 shows the calculated Pearson Chi square test result is equal to 31.368 with a Phi, Cramer's value of 0.792. P value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significant level set for the study. This result shows that there is a statistically significant association between acquisition of skills in time and resources management during production and the training method used on the treatment group. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings are consistent with UNESCO, (2012), and Raymond and Romanczyk (2008) that interactive and participative methods of learning could develop learners' ability to manage time and resources and also contribute to individual's effectiveness and accountability in different ventures. According to National Quality Council (2010) these skills can be manifested in different forms such as ability to manage resources, allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff. Majority of the youth intend to start small businesses to improve their lives; hence the ability to manage time and meet deadlines is very important in building trust and business relationship with customers.

Ability to Develop Self Confidence in Expression

This is also an attribute of social skills and help to build the self- concept necessary for the youth. An observation checklist was used to assess skills among the trainees and the level was rated as poor, fair, good and very good. The results are as shown on table 9.

Table 9

Developing Self Confidence In Expression

		Developed Confidence in Expressing Self				Total
		Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	
Training	Treatment	0	11	8	1	20
	Control	2	19	7	3	31
Total		2	30	15	4	51

The results on table 9 show that in the treatment group, the trainees level of skill acquisition rated was; 11 (55%) fair, 8 (40%) good and 1 (5%) very good. While in the control group, 19 (61.3%) were rated fair, 7 (22.6%) good and 3 (9.7%) very good and only 2 (6.5%) were rated poor. The result implies that though all the 20 trainees from the treatment group acquired skills in developing confidence and expressing self but in different levels. There was a higher level of acquisition of this skill among the control group that was taught using expository methods. Table 10 shows the results of the chi square for association between the method and skills acquisition.

Table 10

Chi-square Test and Strength of Association for Developing Self Confidence in Expression

	Value χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Phi cramer's v-value	Approx. Sig. P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	2.965 ^a	3	.397	.241	.397
Likelihood Ratio	3.654	3	.301	.241	.397
Linear-by-Linear Association	.526	1	.468		
N of Valid Cases	51			51	

The calculated Pearson Chi-square test results indicate a p-value $.397 \geq 0.05$ level of significant set for the study. This implies that there is no statistically significant association between the training method and acquisition of skills in developing self-confidence and expression. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted. The result implies that more trainees in the control group were able to develop skills in self-confidence and expression than the treatment group. This could be associated to the fact that developing self-confidence and expression is a personal attribute than a collective one. The

acquisition could be associated with the appreciation and compliments that the members received during product exhibition and presentations. The interpretation is inconsistent with Davidson, *et al.*, (2012) who observed that vocational skills develop self-esteem and confidence in a trainee, which is an accomplishment that is normally complimented by those who view the product raising the individual's confidence and self-esteem. This means that the ability to produce a tangible product motivates the person raising a sense of self-worth and excitement.

The compliments and appreciation of the product may have improved the self-worth on the control group which in return enhanced confidence in self-expression. It is also important to consider that the type of social background of the vulnerable youth have greatly eroded their self-worth over time, which in return affects their personality, confidence and self-expression. It may therefore require much more than just a training method to enhance the level of self-confidence and ability to express self. This is consistent with Morton (2011) and Kelly (2003) who observed that to adequately improve the self-concept of the youth a psychological approach is also required to back

the training. The explanation is consistent with the European Commission report (2013), that some facets of social skills are much more indescribable and difficult to quantify and to formally develop; they also relate to issues of creativity, self-initiative and self-control. However, every person possesses some degree of social skills that need to be developed and nurtured (Kim, 2013; Weeden, 2011). From the findings and discussion, it is evident though interactive training methods improves acquisition of social skills there are facets of the skills that were not improved. There may be other factors that contribute to acquisition and development of social skills but beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant association between the interactive training methods and acquisition of most of the selected facets of social skills namely; ability to communicate and listening skills, team building, time and resource management as well as ability to develop practical solutions to solve specific problems. However the interactive methods used did not enhance self-confidence and self-expression among the youth. The vulnerable youth may require psycho socio support to adequately benefit from skills development programs.

Recommendations

The following are suggestions for enhancing the acquisition of social skills among the vulnerable youth:

- Educators and policy makers in youth development should set up recognized non-formal programs to accommodate the vulnerable youth.
- Further research should be conducted on how to improve self-confidence and esteem among the vulnerable youth

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