

## **Assessment of Alternatives of Financing Youth Polytechnic's Activities in Imenti South District, Meru County**

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### **Abstract**

*The role of youth polytechnic in the provision of middle level education cannot be overemphasized. Most learners who cannot proceed to high schools and other tertiary institutions resort to youth polytechnics to gain skills which they use mainly in the informal sector. While the potential for quick expansion of youth polytechnics programs are there, there are a number of factors that are hampering their growth. The ministry of education does not fund youth polytechnics but only gives them grants to pay instructors' salaries. There is a challenge in funding education sector since resources are scarce. The government has been allocating a lot of funds to other levels of education and very little is allocated to the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This study sought to assess alternatives of financing youth polytechnics activities and how income so generated is used to offer quality training in Imenti South District- Meru County. The researcher adopted descriptive survey design. The study targeted the two polytechnics in Imenti South District. Purposive sampling was used and a sample of 27 respondents was identified. Piloting was done in the polytechnic not involved in the study. Spearman's rank order correlation was used to compute reliability. Data was collected using questionnaires, observation guide and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics were presented in form of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was presented using theoretical descriptions. The study revealed that there are varied ventures in income generation activities that youth polytechnics are involved in. It was also found out that much of the income from IGAs is not accounted for, or there are no records kept both by the management and the staff. The polytechnics that are well endowed were producing more income than those which were less endowed. The income generated is used to improve the quality of education. However there are few production units in the polytechnics. The study recommended that Youth polytechnics should build sustainability of income generating activities such as running them as business enterprise. Vibrant production units should also be set up. This is key in increasing the income generated by the youth polytechnics.*

**Key Words:** Income Generating Activities, Quality Training

## INTRODUCTION

### **Cost of Technical Vocational Education and Training in Kenya**

According to Olembo (1986), education is a non-material good that cannot be free because to provide it, money is required for the training of personnel, employment of professionals, acquisition of land, buildings and teaching and learning material. As a durable good, education is costly. Ngerechi (2003) confirms this and observes that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a very expensive undertaking in terms of equipment, physical facilities such as workshops, training materials and teacher's salaries. However, it has a multiplier effect in that it benefits the government, society at large, the family and individuals (Kimenyi *et al.*, 2002). It is a producer as well as a consumer good and still it is a commodity to sell in order to enhance one's life and to be bought for the learner's benefits.

The children's, act of 2001 identifies education as one of the basic rights. Also articles 28 and 29 of the United Nation convention on the rights of the child (1989) states that, it is the right of every child to have access to education. Eshiwani (1993) observes that in its effort to provide education for all citizens; the government's expenditure on education in Kenya continues to rise and requires both the parents and beneficiaries to contribute towards it. Since independence, this has been done through *'Harambee'* (fund raising activities) that helped to lower the government development expenditure on education.

The presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond (Republic of Kenya, 1988) recommended the cost sharing policy. Parents and community were to supplement the government effort by providing equipment and funds to procure teaching and learning materials.

### **Income Generating Activities in Youth Polytechnics in Kenya**

Financing of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs has always been shared amongst government, local communities, beneficiaries, religious and private organizations, donors and private business (Orodho, 2003). Orodho (2002) observes that the ministry does not give youth polytechnics grants for building physical structures and general operation but gives grants in the form of instructors' salary. Also due to cost sharing and the general low economic growth and poverty, the institutions cannot make ends meet unless they introduce production units to supplement the fees they collect. It was found out that a few of the well-off youth polytechnics and the more established ones had viable production units.

Olembo and Harold (1992) note that a school should provide supplementary finance through Harambee or a loan system. Moreover, Gravenir (1991) observes that over emphasis on education in terms of allocation from the budget will not only generate in-equilibrium in social –economic development but, will also affect education adversely in that the education system will be producing graduates from each of its levels at a faster rate than the economy can absorb. He suggests that cost sharing and generation of extra funds by institutions as a solution.

Ziderman and Albrecht (1992) observe that funding mechanisms work well when resources are plentiful but once resources are scarce, budgets can fluctuate significantly, seriously interfering with the stability and efficiency of institutions. This is what has happened in youth polytechnics in Kenya. To contain this situation, therefore, a diversified funding base comes in to minimize dependency on traditional sources of education finance and hence reduce on potential shocks of eventual changes in available public resources. Njihia (2005) found out that income generation in national polytechnics goes a long way in provision of teaching and learning facilities and also supplementing lecturers' salaries hence lifting their morale to teach and train students. His findings support Muthaa (2004), Nderitu (2006), Wesonga (1997), Riechi (1993), Kiugu (1990) and Mwiria *et al.* (2007).

The KESSP document of 2005 noted that youth polytechnics can provide more facilities and equipment if they can generate some income of their own from income generation activities. Secondly, most youth polytechnics lack adequate facilities and equipment and materials due to inadequate funds. Thirdly, managers may be willing and able to initiate income generating activities and other initiative to generate more finances and lastly, youth polytechnics with diversified financial sources have better teaching and learning resources. Therefore, income generation is crucial for sound management and running of youth polytechnics.

Ngerechi (2003) notes that enhanced management will ensure that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs are well coordinated. In addition, promotion of the TVET sector has yielded positive results in other countries in the region such as Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia and South Africa. He further noted that few youth polytechnics in Kenya have realized Income Generating Activity (IGA) projects and it is only to a very small scale. There is need to strengthen the existing ones and encourage other youth polytechnics to consider starting feasible IGAs soonest possible. The Kenya Vision 2030 proposes intensified application of science technology and information to raise productivity and efficiency (GoK 2007)

There are various viable IGAs including product sales, undertaking contract work, renting out work tools and equipment, providing various community services, undertaking zero grazing and animal husbandry among others. The various large tracks of unused land can be put to proper use and can guarantee self reliance in future. To add to that a line of quality commercial production is equally good and therefore youth polytechnics should be encouraged to venture into viable endeavors in this regard.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Exploratory approach using a descriptive survey design was used. The study was carried out in the two youth polytechnics in Imenti South District of Meru County. The study targeted 1 District Youth Officer, 2 youth polytechnic managers and 43 instructors in the two youth polytechnics.

The researcher applied a purposive sampling technique where the District youth officer (1), the two youth polytechnic managers (2) and a total of twenty four (24)

instructors from the two youth polytechnics especially those who head income generating and production units were selected. The entire sampling matrix yielded a total sample size of 27 respondents for the study.

These respondents were best placed to furnish the researcher with relevant information regarding alternative financing mechanisms in the youth polytechnics in Imenti South District.

The data for the study was collected using questionnaires, observation guide and interview schedule. The research instruments were piloted at Kiamakoro Youth Polytechnic which was not involved in the actual study. The study was carried out during 2009 and 2010 period.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The study revealed that there were varied ventures in income generation activities that youth polytechnics were involved in. From the findings it was revealed that some of the income generating activities such as garment making, building contracts, welding, motor vehicle repair, and electrical wiring were serving a dual role of generating income for institutions as well as giving the students practical experience. The idea of production units is not new as it was a major recommendation of the report of the National committee on the educational objectives and policies (RoK, 1976). Also, Ngerechi (2003) noted that skills so developed would lead to self-reliance and enhance Kenya's industrialization process.

Further the research also sought to find out what was the average annual income generated from internal income generating activities in the previous financial year (2009). In youth polytechnic A the income was Kshs 63,000 per annum which was merely 2.27% of the total income which was Kshs 2,781,000 while in youth polytechnic B the average annual income was Kshs 556,000 per annum i.e. 8.48% of the total income which was Kshs 6,596,000. Therefore, the total average annual income from IGAs in the previous financial year was Kshs 619,000 which was 6.6% - less than 10% of the total income Kshs 9,377,000 in the two institutions. The well endowed institution was generating more income than the less endowed one. The disparity on the income raised was explained using chronology and geographical location. The older the institution the better established it is, the more facilities it had, the bigger student capacity and hence the higher the income. Also the one located in the middle of the district head quarters had more opportunities to get additional income from the town dwellers.

The research also sought to find out whether the generated income from IGAs was utilized in offering quality education and training (enhance teaching/learning in the youth polytechnics). Majority of the respondents agreed that the income was utilized in offering quality education and training through supplementing instructors' salaries and procurement of training materials.

The research further sought to find out in what ways had income generating activities enhanced provision of quality education and training. The findings showed that IGAs

and income accruing from them had enhanced the creation of a favorable learning environment. However, from the findings, remuneration was an issue that kept popping up in relation to quality training in the youth polytechnics.

From the foregoing, without better terms of service for the instructors, their motivation to offer quality training to the trainees was negatively impacted. This observation concurs with Njihia (2005) who noted that the lion's share of income from IGAs in National polytechnics supplements lecturers' salaries while, Nishimura and Orodho (1999) reported that low salary package was a demotivating factor which caused frequent resignation of well-qualified instructors. Also with institutions initiating internal mechanisms of financing their training, the quality of training offered in the youth polytechnics in the district will definitely improve to a great extent and this will ensure trainees are well prepared for the job market.

### **CONCLUSION**

The youth polytechnics had few IGAs and income accruing was used to acquire teaching and learning materials and supplementing instructors' salaries.

The IGA is playing a double role of income generating as well as providing opportunity for the trainees to gain practical knowledge. However, the income generated by IGA is still little compared to the total annual income.

Most institutions lack production units. This does not augur well for these institutions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Youth polytechnics should build sustainability of income generating activities to ensure continuity, for example having viable vibrant production units that would serve as source of income and also as a place for students' practical attachments.

Income generating activities should be run as business enterprises and the benefits that accrue be used to improve training programmes.

There should be prudent financial management in the youth polytechnics. This will ensure that the monies generated are used to expand the polytechnic programs.

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## **BIO-DATA**

Rodgers Cherui is a currently a PhD candidate in the School of Education at the University of Eldoret.