

**THE IMPACT OF FORMALLY TRAINED MIDDLE-LEVEL GRADUATES OF
CONSTRUCTION ON CONTRACTOR ACTIVITIES IN THE
CONSTRUCTION SECTOR: A CASE STUDY OF FOUR
TOWNS IN WESTERN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

There is an emerging emphasis on self-employment as a major objective of formal training institutions in developing economies. Technical and vocational training systems and institutions are being called upon to offer programs that respond to the growing demand for self-employment. The study examined the training backgrounds of construction contractors operating within four towns in western Kenya. These were Kisumu, Eldoret, Kakamega and Kitale.

A field survey of a sample of 180 respondents from the four urban areas was conducted. The major instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Contingency tables were generated by cross-tabulating various aspects of training levels and geographical areas in which the subjects operate. The tabulated findings were then analyzed using the chi-square tests for one way and two way for the hypothesis testing items. Other items were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

The findings revealed that although a majority of construction entrepreneurs possess a formal training background (89.4%), the participation level of formally trained middle-level graduates fell short of what would be proportionately expected. Formal lower-level training emerged dominant with 76.1% of the formally trained contractors. The distribution of contractors with different levels of training was found to be regionally uniform. The practical performance of formally trained middle-level graduates was not different from that of their formal lower-level trained counterparts. Generally, it emerged from the findings that training background has minimal influence on the activities of construction contractors. Other factors such as availability of contracts and access to finances were considered more influential in the success of a construction enterprise.

Major recommendations of the study included a closer re-examination of the formal middle-level training program in construction with focus on the entrepreneurial content, the review of the training objectives at specific levels of technical training to redefine the role of technical training graduates in the construction industry and conducting more post-training follow-up surveys of technical training graduates in industry to evaluate

their participation and performance. It is envisaged that these findings will provide a framework for restructuring the methods and strategies employed by formal training institutions charged with training the construction industry labour force.