



PSIPSE Regional Themes and Challenges: Transforming Secondary Education in East Africa to Embrace Entrepreneurship, Vocational Training, and Life Skills

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The **Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE)** aims to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, including Central Square Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, Human Dignity Foundation, Intel Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Marshall Family Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, and an anonymous donor. Project durations are one to three years, and are located across East Africa (encompassing Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), India, and Nigeria. Results for Development has been selected as learning partner, and will work with three local learning partners to monitor the funded projects, draw out and share important learnings from the efforts, and use these learnings to inform future programming.

Center for Social Sector Education and Policy Analysis (CSSEPA) is a public interest development organization founded in 2011 and specializing mainly in capacity development, project evaluations, policy reviews, action research, monitoring service delivery and reforms. CSSEPA serves as the East Africa local learning partner for PSIPSE.

Introduction and Background

This paper focuses on three areas: entrepreneurship, vocational and life skills. It explores ongoing non-state efforts in transforming secondary education and vocational training and roots for far reaching reforms to transform education policies, plans and programmes aimed at improving the employability of youth graduating from secondary schools and middle level colleges across the East Africa sub-region. It is significant to note that most of these reforms are underway, spearheaded by the respective Kenyan, Tanzanian, and Ugandan governments. These reforms are trying to embrace a range of new learning experiences which are relevant to active citizenship, industry and the world of work and may occur in a variety of contexts including communities, schools training institutions and workplaces.

The main focus of new secondary and post-secondary education policies should be to achieve active/responsible citizens and workforces trained and certified to acceptable standards, stimulate innovations, promote self-employment, create investments, contribute to the improved productivity, competitiveness and prosperity of individuals, enterprises, nations and the wider East Africa Community (EAC). Such policies should further seek to provide quality and inclusive vocational training with a focus on gender equality and requisite technical competencies, especially to disadvantaged groups including learners with disabilities and marginalized and rural populations.

Challenges and Issues of Entrepreneurship, Vocational and Life Skills in Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

Every year East Africa loses most of its primary graduates who fail to gain admission to secondary schools (in Kenya for example, the figure stands at an average of 350,000 annually, Macharia and Ngigi 2006). This calls for two pronged approach – expanding and reforming secondary education and revitalizing vocational training so as to make it superior and relevant across the sub-region. This will mean pushing East African governments to increase secondary education opportunities and revitalize technical training institutions across the board. In addition, review of technical education curricula to make it more flexible and relevant and less standardized with more technical orientation at national and local levels will be necessary. For purposes of this paper we see vocational and life skills as two sides of the same coin – different concepts but both should be integrated into secondary education delivery.¹ In all the three countries examined in this paper (namely Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania), there are strong initiatives focusing on livelihoods, leadership development, behavior change and life skills. The challenge of non-state actors is to find strategies of establishing or strengthening partnerships with state and non-state agencies having a strong track record of offering quality skills development for young people. Some of the institutions here may include ecumenical groups like Don Bosco and government-led technical training institutes across the sub region. More examples are in the next section under ongoing non-state efforts.

¹ We should take vocational training to mean technical-job-oriented skills development meant to build competencies in artisanship, while functional life skills have to do with being an active and useful member of ones society by participating in public affairs & community development – citizenship, environment, governance, rights, among others.

In the sub-region, it is evident that women are disadvantaged in basic education (primary and secondary levels), training opportunities and in the workplace. Studies have shown that individuals who lack education opportunities early in life subsequently suffer gross limitations in securing employment opportunities later in life. This is the fate that befalls most girls and women as the labour market openly discriminates against them. Cultural norms have resulted in many girls and women being trained for jobs traditionally reserved for females like beauty therapy, tie and dye, confectionary, cooking, and computer and secretarial services. Meanwhile, men are trained for jobs like masonry, motor mechanics, carpentry, and plumbing. Moving forward with development of vocational and technical training, non-state actors should work with relevant agencies and authorities to stop such stereotypes and encourage youth to pursue available technical courses irrespective of gender.

Across the sub-region, the main challenges facing secondary schools and vocational training institutions are more or less similar and include limited access to quality skills training, including psychosocial skills like communication, problem solving, and decision making.. There is a lack of progression from basic training to advanced or more advanced levels. In addition, many training programs lack standardization, assessment, certification, quality assurance measure and institutionalized coordination mechanisms to ensure systematic dialogue between the training institutions and the employment agencies. A number of these institutions are under-resourced with inadequately equipped training facilities and ill-skilled trainers in relation to the needs of the economy and those of trainees. Most worryingly, many institutions are inaccessible to females

There is partial saturation of the market through constant supply of the same technical and vocational skills as a consequence of years of basic-level trainings resulting in limited employment opportunities. The trainings are not demand-driven and value-added. They also lack credit access and technical advisory services for small-scale business starters after training; there are also marginal opportunities for employment within the formal sectors (often requiring advanced skills and knowledge beyond what secondary graduates can demonstrate).

Efforts and Initiatives for Entrepreneurship, Vocational Training and Life Skills Development in East Africa

Vocational programmes for youth are very vibrant across the sub-region. Examples of successful stories stretch from efforts of International agencies to activities of local non-state actors like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), many of them supported by the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE). In Uganda for example, ChildFund, Educate, and Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) are organizations with innovative and promising TIVET initiatives.² **ChildFund** is promoting the concept of attaching trainees to either local artisans and/or local institutions, for both mentorship and apprenticeship through which programs develop the skills of trainees in a more cost effective way. The programme also emphasizes components of leadership and functional life skills blended with practical vocational training in or through a more integrated curriculum.³

² TIVET means Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training

³ In order to learn more about one can contact ChildFund Uganda national office in Kampala or field offices in Jinja and Mbale or visit their website – www.childfund.org;

Educate! delivers a practical and relevant model of education comprised of a leadership and entrepreneurship course, interactive teaching, intensive mentorship, experience with enterprise start-ups, and access to out of school networks and resources to 16-20 year old youth in Ugandan schools.⁴ Through advocacy and direct service to schools, they are working for reforms to incorporate their model in the secondary education system in the country. **PEAS Uganda** focuses on a scale-up of an enterprise-based secondary education programme where they use innovations to expand income-generating activities (IGAs), improve teacher training, and roll out their Citizen Education Curriculum (CEC). Some of their innovative strategies include: management contracting of government schools as a new way promoting public-private partnership in education; linking IGAs to improve student performance and change of attitude of parents to supporting education, especially girls education; integrating CEC to provide holistic education to students around politics, financial management, environmental protection, and entrepreneurship.

In Tanzania, **Sazani Associates** builds on their existing work and relationship with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Institutes in Zanzibar to support improved access to basic education through improving the quality of teaching and learning of basic and life skills with teachers. Their projects focus on four main areas: promoting life and enterprise skills; adapting creative curriculum using ICT and media literacy; facilitating basic skills learning pathways; and building professional quality learning communities.⁵

For the wider East Africa sub region, **Mercy Corps** (in partnership with local partners) is working to support at least 15,000 youth in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Somalia to become more economically self-reliant with supportive systems through improved access to quality secondary education. This is blended with vocational and high quality skills development services in support of business start-ups for young entrepreneurs and building improved linkages to the private sector in the next three years. Another cross-border project relevant to this area is by a consortium comprising **Save the Children**, **Windle Trust** and the **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**. Through this project, the consortium is implementing a number of initiatives in Kenya and Uganda aimed at improving delivery of secondary education and facilitating out of school youth to have access to relevant youth education packs (YEPs), accelerated learning programmes, ICT and life skills interventions. These will enable more children and youth of secondary age access relevant education and training in local secondary schools, vocational training institutes and community YEP centers. They also lobby for curriculum reviews to ensure continued relevance. After trainings all



With Sazani Associates, students learn to prepare food for their schools' Breakfast Club. These are income-generating activities for schools that Sazani Associates supports. Photo property of Sazani Associates.

⁴ www.experienceeducate.org

⁵ Sazani, Asante and PEAS projects are part of PSIPSE (Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education) in East Africa, being supported by R4D and CSSEPA.

successful graduates are provided with start-up kits to be able to start their enterprises or businesses as soon as they are able to complete their various courses.⁶ The majority of these agencies have made good progress in integrating life skills in their TIVET programmes.⁷ The table below contains a summary of some of these skills:

Life Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive health knowledge and HIV/AIDs prevention • Risk awareness, prevention and self-protection • Communication and mutual understanding • Project development and organizational skills • Environmental awareness and actions at school and community level • Civic awareness for active citizenship, including rights awareness and participation • Cultural awareness on traditions as well as intercultural, societal and national identity • Gender awareness: self, family, school, community, society • Social action projects for family, school, and community improvement • Conflict management and peace building • Context analysis and advocacy • Tools to build understanding of his/her community • Social entrepreneurship: models for leadership • Team and peer support • Respect and responsibility for self, family, school, community and society (intercultural tendencies or traits)

In all these programs, increasing the agency of children and young people is critical in promoting good entrepreneurship and vocational training. This has a lot to do with space, self-empowerment and voice for children and youth to raise concerns, participate actively in design and implementation of courses, and develop perspectives which seek to inform and influence development initiatives and processes within their own communities and institutions. These call for an adoption of strategies which foster a holistic approach to working with youth, such as providing opportunities for young people to make their own contribution, building caring and trusting relationships, and finally engaging in activities with them that set high expectations.

Policy Responses and Recommendations

All the East African Community governments have either developed or in the process of finalising National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) that build linkages and pathways between livelihood skills and vocational/technical training and mainstream/formal curricula.

⁶ These are going on under SERD Programme Interventions by Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council and Windle Trust as part of the Second Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP II) for Kenya and Somalia with support from EU, EuropeAid/132-542/L/ACT/SO/KE; European Union, 2012.

⁷ Adapted from Daraja CIF's Training Guide for School Teachers for the Urban Slums Basic Education Programme (www.darajacif.org)

These are meant to ensure that TIVET programmes are accessible to all with NQF providing pathways into and out of formal education. These would allow children of 14 years and above to enter skills training programmes, ranging from those catering for illiterate learners (possibly incorporating literacy/numeracy curricula) to programmes for post-primary learners.

The nature of technical and vocational courses differs within secondary education curriculum as far as the combination of theoretical knowledge and labour market related skills acquisition is concerned. Most significantly, alternative provision of basic education has not been streamlined but it is hoped that with clear qualifications frameworks for linkages, progression and skill improvement this will be addressed. However, a quick read or review of reports of past studies in this area reveal that entrepreneurship, vocational and life skills are still largely under different management systems and structures (specifically, mainly public, faith-based organisations (FBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector).

The first recommendation for policy makers to consider would be to have well-resourced and fully equipped community training centres in different areas for sustainability and longer term visioning. This will make it possible for the programmes to develop longer term structures and plans, sustain and build up equipment, encourage more practical lessons and have most if not all courses under one roof. This, if adopted, will replace the current system where equipment is given out each time an artisan is identified, as is common in Uganda; such equipment is never recovered even when artisans pull out from the programme.

Second, secondary and post-secondary enterprise-based courses should include 6 to 12 months of practical business experience through industrial attachments, internships and apprenticeships. This will enable youth to sharpen their technical skills, learn the requirements of running a business, interact with customers, and build general professional skills. Successful outcomes in vocational and technical programmes require both technical understanding of relevant trades, but also a basic business management understanding to fit in the world of work or for graduates to start their own enterprises.

Conclusion

It is important to note that some cursory examination of some non-state supported vocational and technical programmes in the sub-region indicate that the most successful and in-demand programs are those enterprise-based trainings embedded with life skills. Looking at a summary of life skills outlined in the table on page 5 confirms why entrepreneurship programmes which integrate life skills have become more popular with learners and employers alike. Employers are now asking for more than just the traditional skills and vocational competencies and are paying great attention to additional social skills. These are crucial for employees to become community aware and active citizens capable of solving life problems, resolving workplace conflicts, improving their own environments, leading advocacy for community level changes and making enterprises or companies closer and more relevant to host communities. This has meant that training colleges, institutes and agencies have had to review their training designs and curricula to accommodate such a paradigm shift. Because of such new demands for hard (vocational) and soft (social) skills by the industry, learners now prefer TIVET programmes which integrate and embed life-skills.

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