

## Panel G41

### Improving Use of Evidence to Increase Impact of TVET in Kenya

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## 1 Introduction

Kenya is a youthful nation with an estimated 61% of the population composed of children between the age 0-14 or youth between the age of 15-24 (United Nations, 2017). The youth population is slightly more than 20% of the total population creating a 'youth bulge', which presents both opportunities and challenges to the growth of Kenya's economy. If utilized well, they form a valuable asset that the country depends on to build the economy for the current and future generations. However, without proper planning and the right economic conditions, they form a potential risk to the anticipated growth (United Nations Development Programme, 2013). For Kenya to turn its youth into an asset to advance its developmental agenda, it has to invest in achieving appropriate education and creation of job opportunities for them (British Council; 2017).

Kenya's investment in education is guided by Vision 2030. The education sector policy stresses on the need to produce a properly trained workforce that is not only internationally competitive but also capable of stimulating employment to contribute to improved productivity, competitiveness and prosperity of individuals (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Kenya has to invest in technological innovation to stand a chance of realizing the aspirations of Vision 2030 and break into and maintain the middle income status. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been one target sector for development of these innovative skills for the fast evolving labour market including building the capacity of the youth for self-employment. One of the interventions has been increasing access to TVET institutions with an aspiration of achieving a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 30% by the year 2030 (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2018). As a consequence, there have been massive reforms and expansion since 2013, driven by the government and a growing community of investors, including Kenya's private sector. Increasingly, more resources have been made available with political commitments to have TVET centres in all the 47 counties (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Akala & Changilwa, 2018).

The support that the TVET subsector enjoys has led to growth in the TVET infrastructure. In the period 2016/17 and 2018/19 academic year, TVET institutions grew by 76.1% from 1,300 in 2016/17 to 2,289 in the 2018/19 (KNBS, 2019). The growth in the institutional numbers translated into a sharp upsurge in the enrollment estimated to have increased from 275,000 youth in 2017/18 to 506,000 in the 2019/20 academic year, not counting the numerous youth training initiatives outside of the mainstream system. The challenge of exponential growth witnessed in TVET enrolment in Kenya has to do with the capacity of the system to maintain and/or improve the quality of education. This is because investment in other related areas such as quality and quantity of instructors, infrastructure and curriculum learning materials has not been commensurate to the rise in the enrolment.

The other critical systemic challenge in the country has been that while the TVET sub-sector in Kenya has witnessed growth in terms of access as demonstrated above, the system carries the burden of past failures particularly on how to promote employability of their graduates and the productivity of their both formal and informal sectors. Kenya has to invest in two critical things to address unemployment among the youth; development of appropriate skills for the job market and creation of job opportunities within the economy. Unfortunately, the numbers of graduates from TVET institutions transitioning to work remains minimal (KNBS, 2017; IEA, 2018). One of the factors singled out for this low trend has been the shrinking macroeconomic growth as the economy no longer produces adequate numbers of productive jobs in comparison to the qualified graduates. In a stable economy, the demand and supply chain of the workforce should balance. However, in general terms, this has not been the case in Kenya. For instance, in 2017, Kenya created approximately 102,300 formal jobs (KNBS, 2017) against the documented 650,000 youth that joined the labour market (World Bank, 2018). What however, is more critical is the lack of a clear understanding of the skill levels among the youth against the industry needs. The country has not mapped out the existing skill levels among the youth necessary to run an effective labor market information system (Ministry of Youth & Sports, 2012) that inform on the development of appropriate policy to tackle the unemployment. This is a gap likely to exacerbate the country's negative effects of 'youth bulge'. How will the state address the growing unemployment among the youth and increase their job prospects without hard data on the types of the youth in terms of their skills and therefore the sector of the economy that needs to grow to absorb them?

Kenya's Vision 2030 demands production of a knowledge-driven generation as an asset for Kenya's ambition of achieving middle income status by the year 2030. However, the high and growing rate of unemployment puts to question the effectiveness of the reforms put in place to improve the job prospects for the youth. Yearly, Kenya releases about 500,000 to 800,000 youth who join the labour market (British Council, 2017). Kenya had to create on the minimum, around 900,000 jobs annually now and the year 2025 to accommodate the growing numbers of youth joining the industry. The country has failed to keep pace with the new job entrants as the country's latest official unemployment rate stands at 9.3% (KNBS, 2019). It is thus difficult to justify the rationale of continuous investment of the taxpayers' money into TVET education without job opportunities after training. If the country is not careful to take appropriate measures to improve employability of the youth, Kenya risks increasing youth frustration 'qualifications without work'. The high levels of unemployment and youth frustrations will undermine the country's potential for development as it leaves youths' energy and resourcefulness untapped while raising dependency levels among the most active proportion of the population (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2012).

TVET institutions have a key role to play in addressing the runaway unemployment among the youth. They have to promote acquisition of skills that meet the demands of the workplace as well as self-employment. The focus has to be on enhancing relevant skills and competences among TVET students. This is because the ability of students to fit into the existing and emerging market requires quality training. Whereas many factors will account for quality training at TVET, characteristics of the instructors, curricula, learning facilities and learning environment are among the key factors. One of the

key areas is the appropriate courses and curriculum to address today's and the future jobs. However, empirical studies in Kenya have raised concerns on the capacity of the current curriculum to address the market needs (Kerre, 1992; Kirior, 2017; Ngware, et al., 2018). Industry players claim there are existing glaring skill gaps as their recruitments rarely identify market ready graduates (Gachugu & Mattingly, 2019). The other aspect of the curriculum and course that has been identified to be inadequate has been the concept of 'Whole Youth Development (WYD) Skills'. WYD skills have been identified as capable of helping young people transition to the world of work, retain employment and remain productive. Therefore, investment in WYD skills targets not only the current job opportunities but the employment opportunities for the future labour market (Ngware, et al., 2018). As the debate on the appropriate curriculum that would supply industry with relevant skills intensifies, we deliberate on how the two key stakeholders in TVET education (TVET institutions that inculcate skills and industry that utilizes the skills) share their experiences to inform each other of the relevant skills needed for today and future jobs. This means exploring the existing partnerships between the training institutions and industry and how the linkages work to promote prospects of youth employment.

Linkages, partnerships and networks between the TVET institutions and industries will enhance the quality of training in Kenya. Proper linkages will enhance leveraging of the existing strengths and help promote improved pedagogy where practical skills are inculcated in the training which also addresses the relevance of the curriculum and the general approach to course delivery. The close relationship between the industry and the training institutions is the key to ensuring TVET institutions train for the current and future job market. What is encouraging are the recent developments that target to consolidate the fragmented TVET sector in Kenya. The country has prioritized participation of the private sector in the designing and implementation of the TVET curricula (German Development Cooperation in Kenya, 2017) and this will improve skill development going forward.

TVET education has also been associated with poor performers in Kenya's education. The attitudes of the society towards TVET courses has therefore been a barrier to access to TVET (Simiyu, 2009; Ferej, Kitainge, & Ooko, 2012). This was exacerbated by lack of well-articulated pathways for those who would wish to enroll for further education. For a long period of time in Kenya, TVET education was not recognized as one of the natural routes to university. However, with enactment of TVET Act, 2013, TVET programmes have become an alternative route just like academic education to access lifelong learning, including higher education. The Kenya National Qualification Authority (KNQA) has provided 10 different pathway levels and the various entry points and qualifications to achieve this.

## **2 Focus of the Current Paper**

At the heart of the youth problems in Kenya are twofold; the growing levels of unemployment and the reported shortage of youth with appropriate job skills. The enrollments and graduates completing TVET institutions have increased because of the massive investments directed towards the TVET subsector. However, the industry still struggles to recruit employees with the right skills. What is known is that for graduates from training institutions to succeed at work, employers, education providers, state and other key stakeholders such as CSOs have critical roles to play. However, there exists little, if any, hard data on

the level of engagements among these key stakeholders. For instance, there is no clarity on skills required for employment and how the training institutions deliver them, what skill levels are needed by fresh graduates for a smooth transition to the world of work among other key areas that will enhance access to job opportunities by the youth. Without this evidence, the country will struggle to identify practices that promise to promote youth employment and a training framework that is sufficient for production of such market ready graduates.

The concerns in this paper therefore is how the country has invested in the capabilities of their young generation to ease their transition to work. We frame our argument to speak to two main challenges that stand out: a) ensuring that TVET adapts to equip youth with the capabilities demanded for work and life today and into the future, and b) optimizing the transition to employment to reduce the prevailing youth frustration. We argue that central to addressing these two challenges is the need to build an evidence ecosystem that largely informs policy and practice for greater youth employment upon graduation from TVET institutions. Therefore, this paper investigates the extent to which evidence based decision-making within a coordinated ecosystem exists in the TVET training in Kenya as a response to the growing unemployment rate among the youth.

### **3 Methodology:**

The study findings are based on data collected from two studies; a survey of skills among youth working in formal and informal sectors, and those in self-employment referred therein as Study 1 and a nationwide household survey of skills among Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) referred therein as Study 2.

#### **Study 1: Youth Working in Formal and Informal Sectors**

The study was conducted by Aga Khan University and targeted youth aged between 18-30 years working in the formal and informal sectors, including those in self-employment. The study was conducted in 24 counties that accounted for over 85% of Kenya's formal sector business establishments. A total of 6,362 employed youth and 693 self-employed youth at entry-level were reached.

The study involved employers and employees both in formal and informal sectors. For the formal sector, the sample included 1,000 organizations/employers and 3,000 employees. The sample was proportionally distributed across the 24 counties guided by the KNBS Census of Formal Establishments, (2017). In each sampled establishment, the interviews targeted three entry-level staff (18 - 30 years) and a representative of the employer such as the owner, director, manager, supervisor or human resource officer. Out of the target of 3000 employees and 1,000 organizations, 3,267 employees and 1,138 organizations were reached respectively.

For the informal sector, the sample included 1,000 businesses/employers and 3,000 employees. The 1000 organizations were purposively sampled from the 24 counties to take care of the spread of informal establishments by county. Similarly, in each sampled establishment the interviews targeted three entry-level staff and a representative of the employer such as the owner, manager, or supervisor.

Out of the target of 3,000 employees and 1,000 organizations, 3,095 employees and 1164 organizations were reached respectively.

For the self-employed youth, the target was youth in both for both formal and informal individual enterprises. The study reached out to 693 self-employed youth across the 24 counties, exceeding the target of 500. Owing to lack of data on the distribution of self-employed youths by county, the 500 sample was proportionally distributed across the 24 counties guided by the KNBS Census of Formal Establishments in both formal and Informal sectors.

### Study 2: Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

This study was a cross sectional survey utilizing a number of methodologies conducted by Dalberg. Utilising a multistage sampling, the study selected 250 Enumeration Areas (EA), based on probability proportionate to size (PPS), stratified by rural-urban. In each of the sampled EA, all households with youth were listed and using a systematic random sampling generated a household list. In each EA, 10 youth aged between 15-25 years were identified. Households with more than one eligible youth, only one respondent was randomly sampled using the last-birth approach. The study reached 2,361 youth.

The youth were of different age categories, among them 4% of between ages 15-17, 40% of 18-21 and 56% of ages 22-25. Data on the highest level of education showed that 96% had primary school education, only 59% went further for secondary education and only 7% reached post-secondary education. Majority of the youth (52%) lived with their parents, 38% were living alone and 10% with their other relatives. A half of the youth NEET had either children or expecting a child.

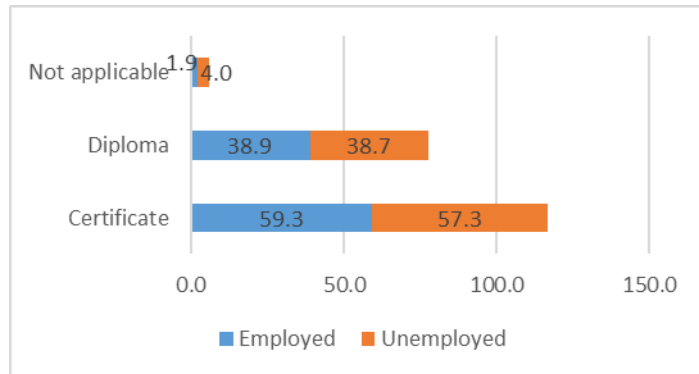
## 4 Findings on the Disconnect between Youth, Training and Employment.

**Highest Level of Education:** Competitiveness of the labour market has seen high qualifications associated with better jobs. There is an assumption that unemployment rates are higher among the lowly educated than those with high skill qualifications. However, Study 1 & 2 show that this might not be the case in Kenya. According to Study 1, 67.3% of the entry-level staff in the informal sector had a minimum of secondary education as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Perceptions on Qualification and Employment

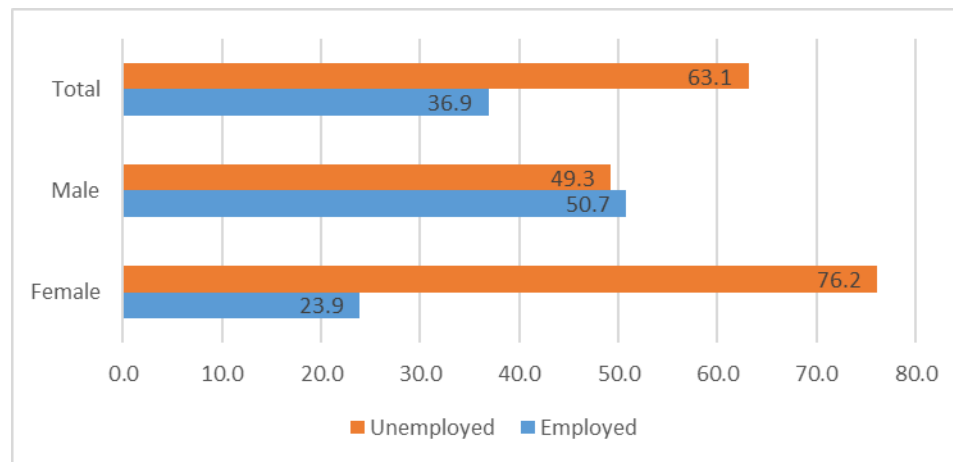
The Figure shows that the country is witnessing a significant proportion of highly qualified graduates opting for a career in informal and self-employment sectors. Findings of Study 2 on the influence of TVET training on access to employment corroborate Study 1 findings. Unemployment affected both graduate with diploma and certificate as shown in Figure 2.



The proportion of the certificate and diploma holders who are unemployed is high (57.3% for the certificate holders and 38.7% for the diploma holders). This might mean high qualification does not necessarily serve as an advantage in access to better employment opportunities at the labour market.

**Figure 2: Influence of Training on access to employment**

**Gender and Access to Employment:** Study 2 estimated the unemployment rate among the youth NEET at 63.1%. Gender was a major determinant to access to employment among the youth in Kenya as was shown in Figure 3.

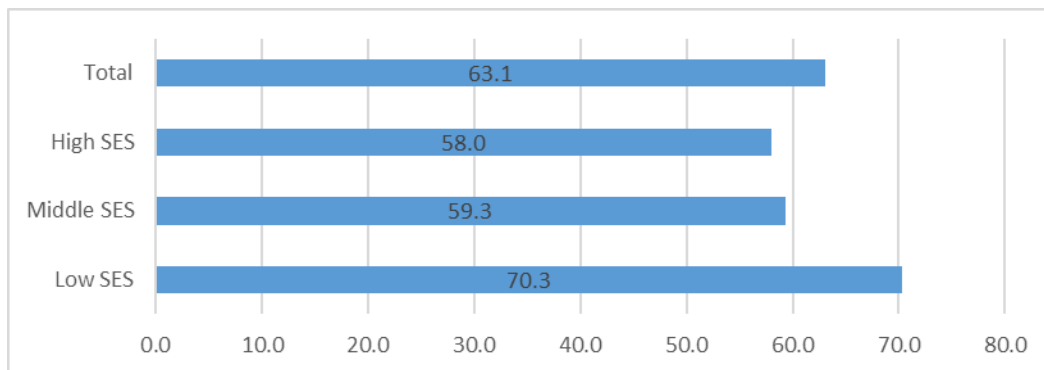


**Figure 3: Gender and Employment Opportunities**

Significantly, more women (76.2%) than male (49.3%) were unemployed. Kenya has done well to increase access to TVET opportunities but transition to employment has to ensure equity and inclusion as required by the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

**Socioeconomic Status and Access to Employment Opportunities:** Besides gender, Study 2 showed that income levels of households of the youth NEET affected access to employment. Youth from poor

backgrounds were more likely to be unemployed than those from higher socioeconomic status as was shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Socioeconomic Status and Employment Rate Among the Youth**

Youth from higher socioeconomic status (SES) were four (4) times probability chance of getting employed than those from poor backgrounds. For Kenya to address the growing poverty levels among the poor, successful policies are those that will ensure job distribution reach the poor in the society. However, study 2 findings show that inclusion in employment opportunities has not been achieved.

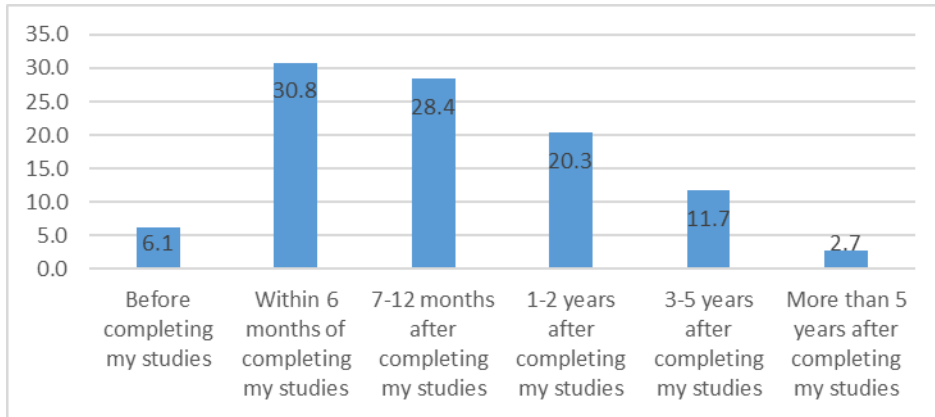
**Skills Distribution in the Formal and Informal Sectors:** Formal and informal sectors are key in providing employment opportunities to youth in Kenya. Informal sector alone accounts for 84% of all the jobs in the country, making it a key target for interventions likely to reduce unemployment. Study 1 examined the skill distribution as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Technical Skills Between Formal and Informal Sectors**

Type of Sector (%)	Technical Training (%)	No Technical Training (%)
Formal	88.4	70.2
Informal	11.6	29.8

There was a homogeneous distribution of technical skills across the formal and informal sectors in Kenya. The formal sector had 88.4% of the skilled workforce compared to the 70.2% of the informal sector. Out of these skilled workforce, 51% in formal and 40% in informal entry level staff had attained either a diploma or a certificate as their highest level of professional training. These findings challenge the assumption that informal sector in Kenya attracts youth with minimal or no technical skills.

**Time Taken to access Employment:** Study 1 explored the average time taken for youth to get employment. The available labor characteristics for the formal sector revealed that jobs are not readily available for youth in Kenya as presented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Duration Youth Take to get a job**

Only 6.1% of the employees reported to have found a job before completing their studies and a further 14.4% took over 3 years after graduation to find a job. Better synergies between the industry and training institutions will see more than 6.1% of the youth from training institutions access job opportunities before graduation and generally reduce the time taken between graduation and access to employment. These findings corroborate Study 2 findings on the prevalence of high unemployment among the youth in Kenya. Approximately, 25% of male and 18% of female NEET youth reported that the main cause of their state of unemployment was the inability to get any job offer (could not find any job).

**Job Mobility:** Study 1 revealed that, even youth who get employed do not stay long. When asked how long they had worked at the current organization, higher retention was only reported in self-employment (69.7%) and least in the informal sector (22.7%) as shown in Figure 6.



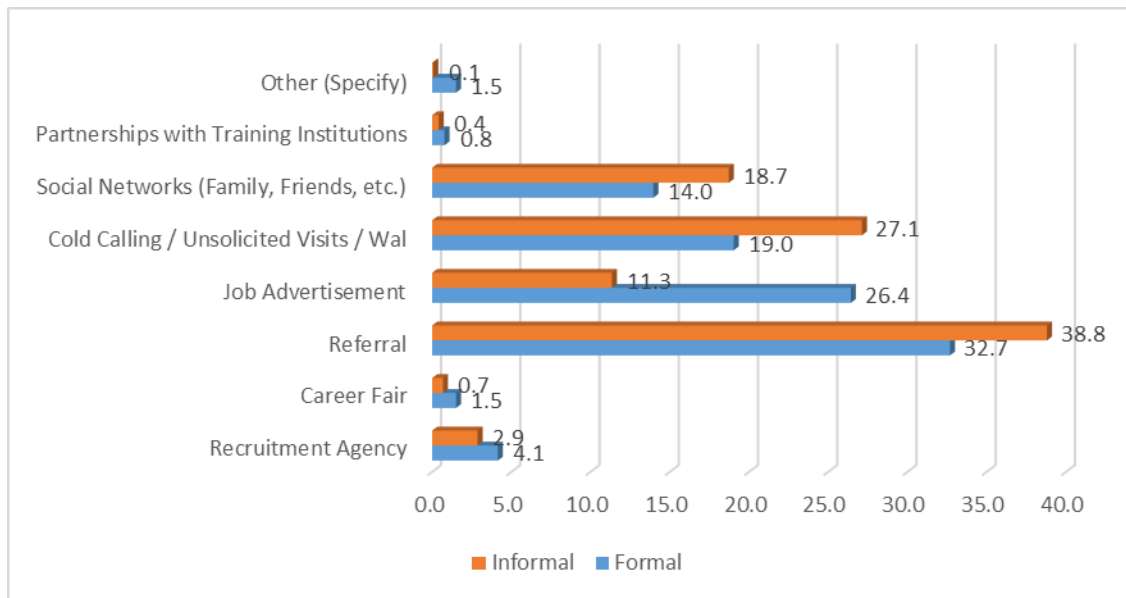
**Figure 6: Duration on the Current Employment**

The workforce mobility structure also reveals that employees in the informal sector have the highest attrition rates. Approximately 77.3% of informal sector employees had worked for less than a year in their current jobs. The instability in the informal sector could be as a result of the prevailing laws that do not cover them as far as minimum wage is concerned. The Regulation of Wages, General Amendment



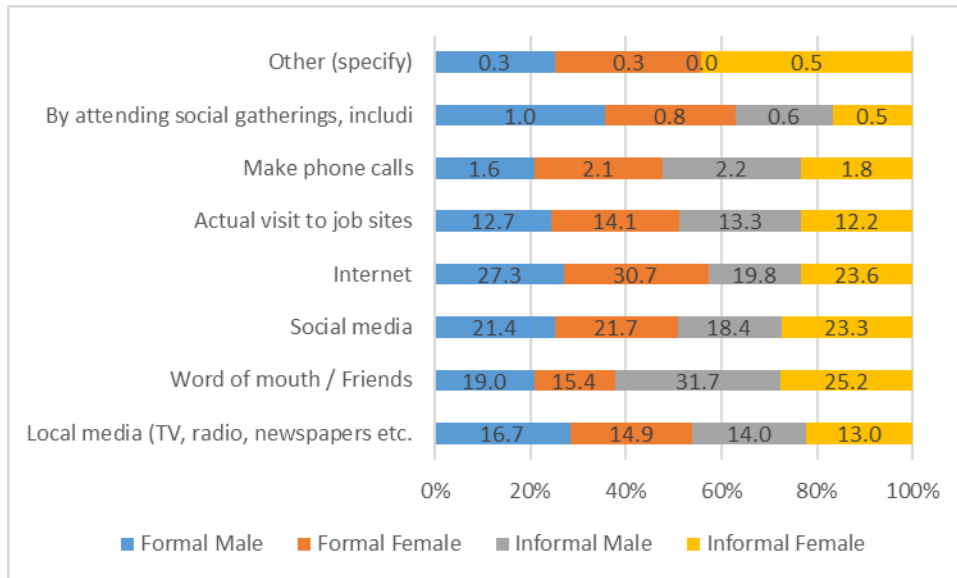
Order (2018) provides Basic Minimum Monthly Wages (exclusive of housing) at around 136 USD/month but for the formal sector alone. This sounds ironical given that the informal sector houses the majority (84%) of the jobs in Kenya; with more of the jobs in the rural areas (65%) than urban areas 35%).

**Avenues for Accessing Employment Opportunities:** Study 1 examined avenues youth use to access job opportunities. The findings were as shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7: Avenues for accessing employment opportunities**

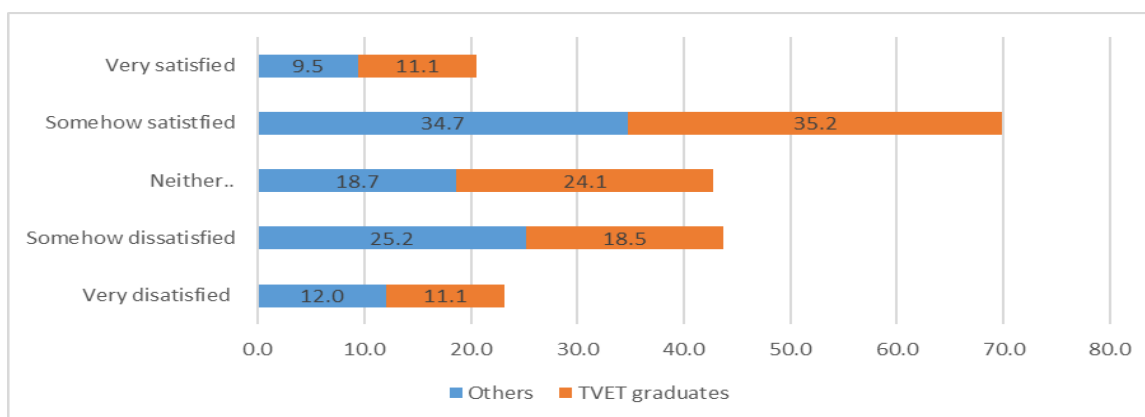
Referrals were popular means of getting jobs among the youth with 38.8% and 32.7% of them in informal and formal sectors respectively indicating that they got their jobs through referrals. Further, the findings on sources of information on job opportunities identified the internet as a key source of information by the youth as was shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Communication Channels for Job opportunities**

The internet (male at 27.3% and women at 30.7%), social media (male at 21.4% and women at 21.7%) were the preferred channels of accessing job vacancies. The disconnect arises from the fact that while the internet and social media are popular among the youth as avenues for finding job vacancies, the industry still utilises the mainstream avenues such as newspaper and radio advertisement for job vacancies.

**Job Satisfaction:** According to Study 2, 3 out of every 10 youths interviewed were highly dissatisfied with their jobs. The levels of dissatisfaction were as shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: Level of Job Satisfaction**

The level of dissatisfaction explains why the majority of the youth (77.8% TVET graduates and 79.5% from other areas) indicated their willingness to change their jobs as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Youth who want to change job**

	Others	TVET graduates
Not sure	8.7	11.1
No	11.8	11.1
Yes	79.5	77.8

The industry has fewer jobs, and youth with jobs are frustrated and are ready to change. An investigation on the push factors for changing jobs among the youth were as shown in Table 3.

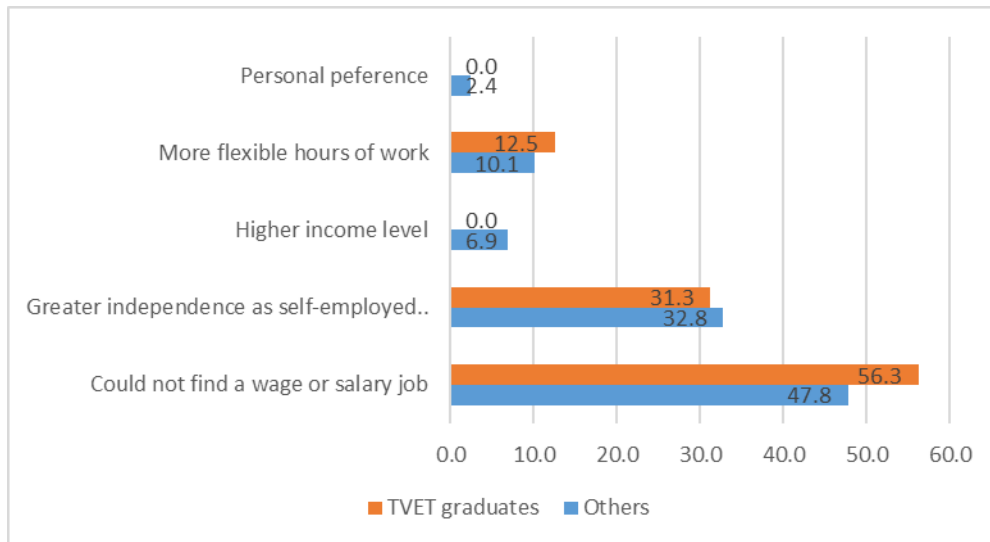
**Table 3: Reasons for changing jobs**

	Others	TVET graduates
To be able to better combine work with other things	1.9	4.8
To be able to continue with education	0.5	0.0
To be able to do what I like to do	9.6	7.1
To be able to do what I was trained in	0.8	14.3
To get a higher pay	58.6	47.6
To have better career prospects	11.3	11.9
To have better working conditions	16.4	11.9
To take care of one's health	0.5	0.0
To venture into self-employment	0.6	2.4

The three main motivation for changing jobs were to get better income (47.6% for TVET and 58.6% for others), to have better working conditions (11.9% for TVET and 16.4% for others) and to have better career prospects (11.9% for TVET and 11.3% for others). Among the TVET graduates, a significant proportion of the youth reported that they wished to change their jobs to be able to get a job that would enable them to practice what they had learned in TVET institutions.

These findings on levels of satisfaction among the employed youth and the reasons for their willingness to change jobs, highlights the real disconnect among the youth, training institutions and employment in Kenya. While many youths struggle to find a quality job that is appropriate for the acquired skills, many employers cannot find people with the right skills to fill the existing jobs. For Kenya to bridge the gap between the demand of the labour market and the supply of training and education providers, avenues for feedback between these stakeholders would have to be enhanced.

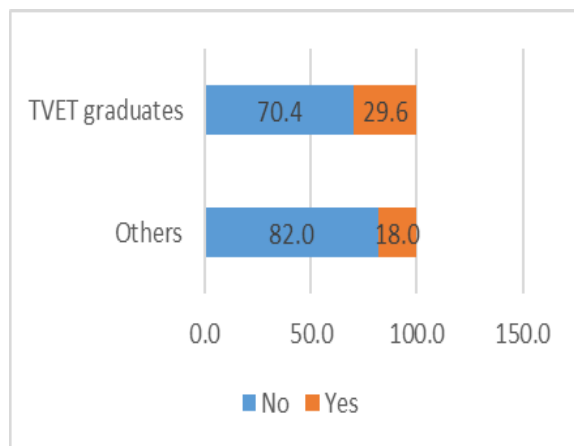
**Self-Employment among the Youth:** The shrinking economy has led to calls for self-employment as a viable option to address challenges of youth unemployment and help the country create more wealth and improve youth' living standards. In recognition of this, Study 2 explored the reasons why youth opt for self-employment. There were varying reasons as shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 10: Reasons for Self-Employment among Youth**

The study found out that self-employment is not seen as a viable option of economic development by youth but only chosen because of lack of opportunities for salaried jobs. There were very few NEET youth who identified self-employment as a preference (none in the TVET graduates and only 2.4% for other graduates) or a sector that promised higher income returns (none in the TVET graduates and only 6.9% for other graduates).

The government identifies self-employment as a better option for economic development for the youth while the youth see it as an option for those who lack salaried positions in the society. This put to scrutiny the strategies the state has put in place to engage youth on how they can utilise their skills and facilitating environment for self-employment as viable option for productive youth.



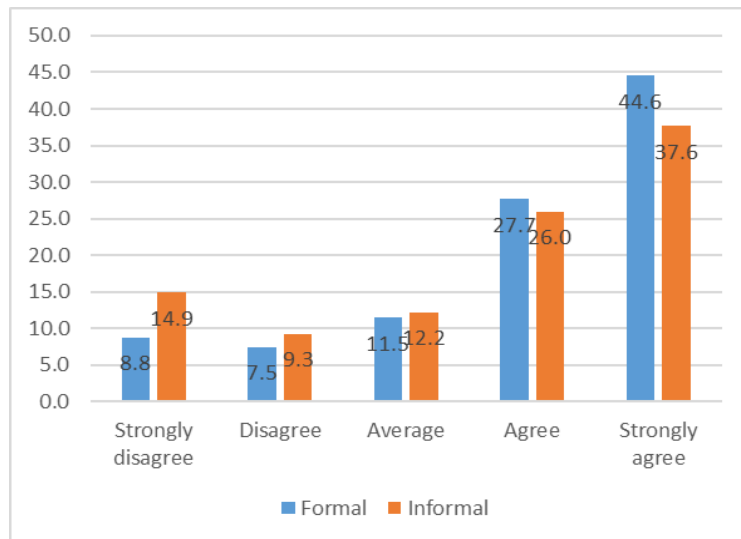
**Attitude of the Youth to the Available Job Opportunities:**

The findings from Study 2 showed that the high level of unemployment in Kenya is as a result of lack of opportunities within the economy than the attitude of the youth. When the NEET youth were asked if they had ever refused a job, the majority (70.4% for TVET graduates and 82% for other areas) indicated that they have never turned down a job offer as shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Refusal of available job offers**

Lack of job opportunities for the youth was further reiterated by the surveyed youth when 26% of the youth identified 'not enough jobs available' as the main obstacle faced by the youth in finding a job. The government has a role in providing more job opportunities for qualified youth.

**Skill Development in Training Institutions and Labour Market Skills:** One of the claims in Kenya noted to contribute to unemployment has been a mismatch between the skills that youth have and the available opportunities at the labour market.



Study 1 explored the congruence between skills acquired and the jobs of the selected employees. The findings show that 16.3% of youth in the formal sector and a further 24.2% in the informal sector believe that the training institutions do not supply the market with employees who have adequate related skills for their jobs as shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Youth Skills and Jobs offered**

The curriculum in use in colleges should relate with the industry needs if training institutions have to produce quality graduates who can easily access relevant job opportunities. In AKU study, employees were asked if the courses they studied in schools/apprenticeship related to the kinds of jobs and current work environment, majority of the employees at 72.6% and 63% in the formal and informal sectors respectively believe that the curriculum was relevant to their jobs. The findings were as shown in Figure 11.

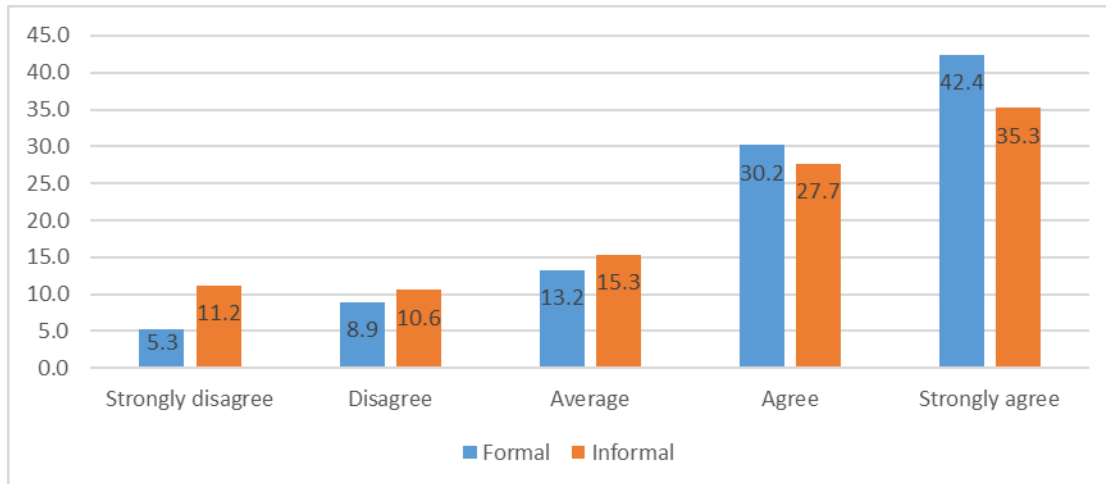


Figure 11: Perception of the Relevance of the Curriculum to the Market Needs

However, 2 in every 10 employees in formal and informal sectors indicated that the curriculum used in the training institutions was not relevant to the skills needed for their current jobs. These figures relate closely to what Dalberg study had highlighted as the lack of a link between training institutions and industry. 17% of the male respondents in the Dalberg study linked their unemployment to lack of employer's requirements which was quantified as lack of appropriate qualifications, training and experience. This highlights the concerns that the demand and supply side of skill development in Kenya have not cultivated the much needed synergies to enhance youth chances of getting employed after training. The supply side (the training institutions) have not streamlined necessary policy changes that promote quality education guided by the industry demands to help industries employ more of their graduates after training.

Training institutions have to prepare graduates adequately for the job market. When employees were asked whether the training they had received during their studies/apprenticeship prepared them adequately for the job market, the majority of the employees felt the preparation was adequate as shown in Figure 12.

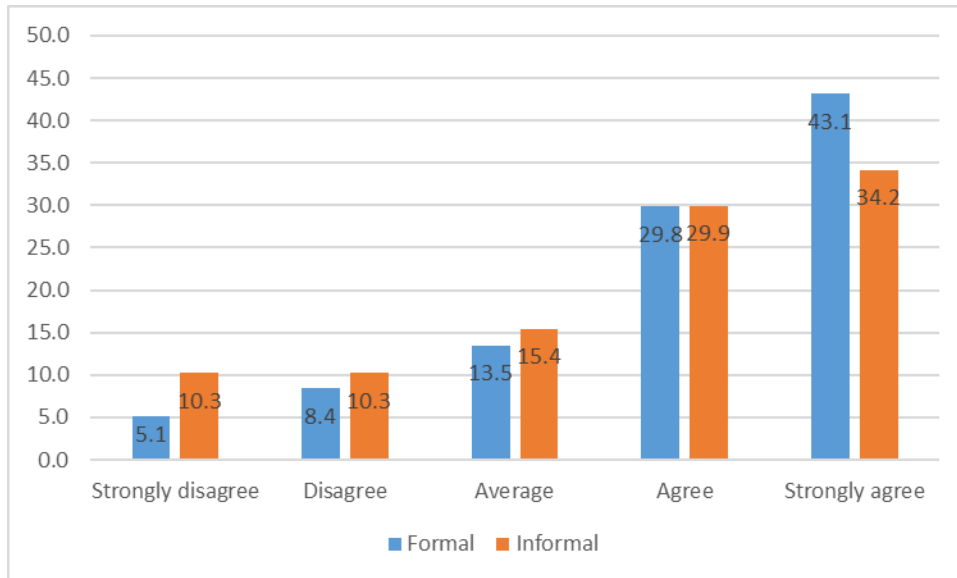


Figure 12: Skill Preparation for the job Market

However, 20.6% of employees in informal sector and 13.5% in formal sector reported that the preparation in the training institutions was not adequate for the job market.

The skill development in training institutions against the labour skills were as shown in Figure 13.

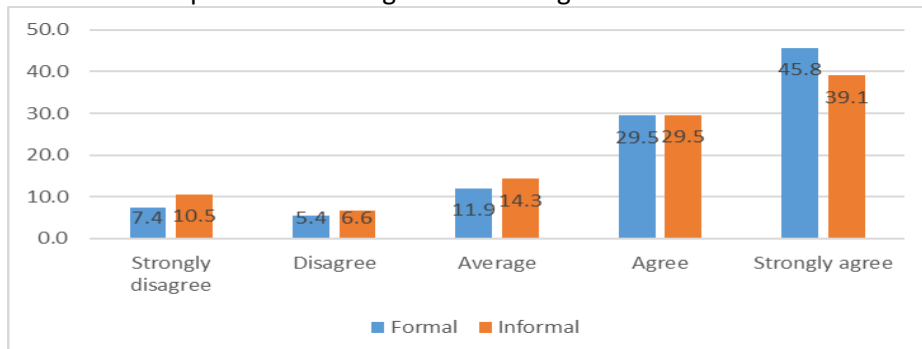
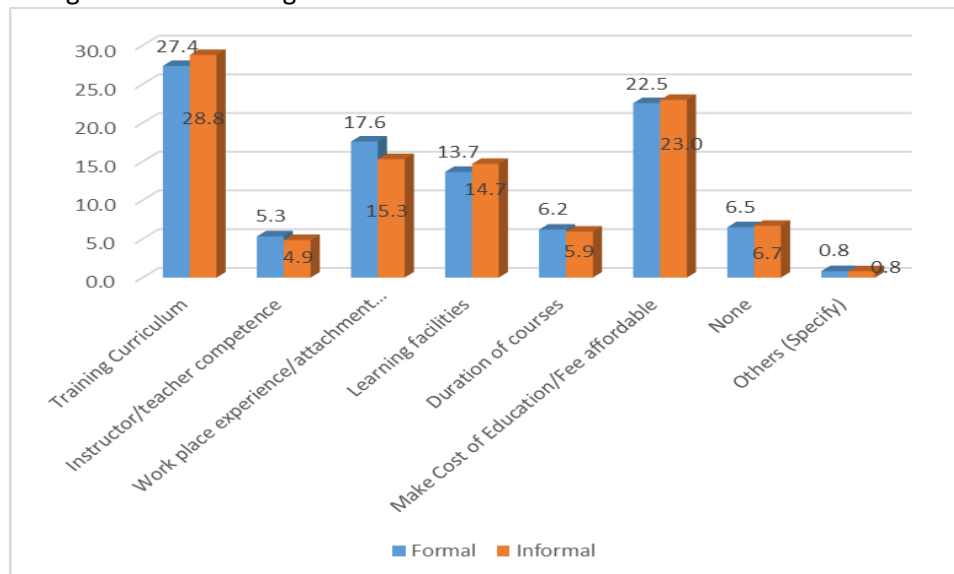


Figure 13: Skill Development in Training institutions

The Figure shows that 30% of the employees in both formal and informal employment indicated that their skill match to the job recruited was either average or poor. The findings show that there exists a weak collaboration between the training institutions and the industries who benefits from the skill development in the institutions. This equally explains the reason for the mismatch of the skills in the training institutions and skills needs as dictated by the labour market. The AKU study found out that only 20% of formal employers and 10% of informal employers give feedback to training institutions on the progress and proficiency of their students and only 10% of formal employers and 2% of informal employers collaborated with training institutions. With the established lack of conversations in the training environment of the youth, one wonders how the job prospects of the youth can improve when the key stakeholders are not engaged with each other.

Working youth were asked on what they would want to be changed in the training institutions. Youth in both formal and informal sectors identified the curriculum as one area that they would like to see changed as shown in Figure 14.



**Figure 14: Proposed Changes on the Curriculum**

The four critical areas in training institutions that were identified by the youth for changes were the training curriculum, the cost of education, attachment/work experience and learning facilities. The curriculum in use in training institutions have been noted to need change and learning facilities in some of the training centers are in poor conditions that will require refurbishing.

## 5 Initiative's Theory of Change as Proposed Solutions to the Identified Gaps

The two studies established that the demand and supply side of skill development in Kenyan TVET institutions have not cultivated the much needed synergies among the key stakeholders to enhance youth employment. At the centre of the skill development problem in Kenya is lack of data to inform policy makers and TVET stakeholders. Yet availability and use of data and evidence are critical for improvements to happen quickly and effectively at all levels of the system from policy-makers to leaders of TVET institutions to employers. This allows actors to understand problems and implement effective solutions. Some of the data challenges facing TVET sector in Kenya include:

- Existing evidence and data are hard to find and rarely in a form that is accessible to a non-specialist audience. The impact of individual research efforts hardly outlive the short periods of time funded for dissemination. Sometimes dissemination is not prioritized at all and the research remains on funders' and researchers' hard drives.
- Little synthesis is happening. Each new study is presented on its own terms and is not set in the context of the existing body of evidence. Various datasets have no common place to sit, making joint analysis almost impossible. At the same time, research efforts are disjointed.
- There is poor coordination of research efforts. Opportunities for research are missed while other research efforts are duplicated. Training institutions are graduating more than 200,000 youth



per year, but data on their employability and transition to employment is non-existent, and we can hardly tell which skills are available in the market, and those missing.

- Research in the TVET sector is often low quality and low status. New research methods that would help to understand the needs of dynamic job market are not used and universities have not been fast in building TVET research capacities.
- Capacity to understand and use evidence and data by employers, TVET institutions and policymakers is low.

As a result:

- Investment is held back by a lack of understanding. For example, in 2019, Zizi Afrique was approached by a leading Kenyan foundation willing to put in one million USD in TVET scholarships for the most excluded youth. They wanted to target up to five skill areas and partner with up to ten training institutions to produce these skills. Unfortunately, no evidence could be traced to answer to the question – ‘Which skills are missing most on the Kenyan labour landscape’?
- Evidence that does exist is failing to influence policy and practice. The National Employment Authority and the Employment Department under the Ministry of Labour, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the Kenya Private Sector Alliance are not using data to inform youth employability, or give feedback to training.

Recent efforts have been launched to support creation of appropriate data to inform practice. For instance, around 10 National Polytechnics are hosting ‘National TVET Research Conferences’, to share findings from TVET research, annually. In these conferences, many papers (though mostly from graduate students) are presented, generating tonnes of recommendations on improvements to TVET. Just in 2019, more than 7 reports from national TVET studies have been launched by Zizi Afrique, Aga Khan University, African Population and Health Research Centre, Dalberg, Colleges and Institutes Canada and the CAP-Youth Employment Institute (CA-YEI) among others. This is a welcome move to help build data that will support quality training in TVET. These are the fora in which data and evidence will start to change policy and practice. But without support and coordination, these nascent initiatives will struggle to achieve the desired impact.

In order to make sure that all stakeholders in the TVET system have the evidence and data they need to make good decisions, that this information is not only useful but also useable and used, we propose the establishment of a **Knowledge Broker for TVET**. This model, common in the health sector (e.g. WHO), is critical for coordinating users and producers of evidence and data. It connects demand with supply, while at the same time collating, synthesising and translating evidence for use by non-specialists. The Broker works largely off-line, creating **physical spaces where people can come together** to make sense of the evidence and understand what it means for their daily practice. Alongside this work, the Broker would build and maintain a **digital platform that provides a permanent home** for the evidence and tools for practitioners.

The proposed knowledge broker for TVET fits well in the larger efforts within African continent to avail accurate data to support decision-making processes. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, a group of actors in the field of education across Africa has convened to push for increased access to data. These actors all have ownership or influence over education data from early childhood, through basic and secondary education to tertiary. The continent-wide challenges mirror those seen within the Kenyan TVET sector and fall into three broad categories:

- Data accessibility and analysis: key challenges include finding and sharing data and data quality and interoperability
- Data use: key challenges include the relevance and packaging of data and nurturing evidence use cultures
- Data capacities: key challenges include capacities for analysis of large scale data and collecting quality data

By coming together, this group has found specific opportunities to mobilise existing resources. In particular, the Humanitarian Data Exchange, part of the UN infrastructure, has a mission to make data easy to find and use for analysis and has the capacity to be that central repository for data on education from all sources.

Such a platform could provide the basic data infrastructure that would then enable the broker, as described above, to cost-effectively find, translate and analyse available data in a way that would be useful for specific stakeholder groups, such as the Kenyan TVET sector. Such a broker would also contribute back to the platform by convening local owners and influencers of data and facilitating the uploading of data from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), consultants and funders as well as governments, onto the platform.

## **6 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Glaring disconnect between the training institutions, graduates and employers was noted. Youth report lack of job offers leading to unemployment yet employers indicate inability to get youth with appropriate skills for the available jobs; social media and internet are youth preferred avenues for getting information about job vacancies and yet employers still using the mainstream channels such as advertisement to reach the youth, self-employment fronted by the government as an alternative for wealth creation yet youth see self-employment as a last option for those who fail to get a salaried job etc. At the centre of the disconnect is the absence of data ecosystem which helps stakeholders in isolating the issues to enable viable solutions. We therefore recommend establishment of a ‘knowledge broker for TVET’. This targets stakeholders engaged in TVET education to provide the bridge between the demand and supply side of skill development, while at the same time collating, synthesising and translating evidence for use by all the stakeholders. To trigger appropriate policies that will tackle unemployment among the youth, training institutions and the industry have to identify skill systems needed for the current and future employment while government to find innovative ways to provide job opportunities for the youth.

Guiding the investment in TVET education should be research that brings together the government, the training institutions, industry, research institutions including the universities and the Non State Actors. This will ensure access to quality and relevant education in the training institutions with a supportive environment that enhances youth chances of employment. For instance, the training institutions work on management and pedagogy challenges, the quality and relevance of the curriculum in use for the current and future job market and where necessary integrate effective activities outside of course structure to expose the students to the real problems in the industry. In addition, see the role beyond providing knowledge but actively share data on employment, skills and productivity. The industry is a major player and therefore should occupy a significant space in skill development within the knowledge broker for TVET. They ought to invest in evidence-based HR policies on internships and apprenticeships

and where necessary advocate for better policies with the relevant institutions. Equally, the industry should run an effective employment data where vacancies, skills and productivity is informed by evidence. Higher education including research institutes where a lot of research is taking place should be accommodated. The investment should be on how to improve quality of the on-going research so that it is usable. For the government, the knowledge broker ensures that the state is provided with evidence which guide resource allocation, development of relevant policies based on evidence and regular monitoring and evaluation for the existing policies with a view of improving them.

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