

# **SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THIKA TECHNICAL TRAINING INSTITUTE**

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**Theme of the paper:** “Empowerment in action, within Thika TTI and its community “

## **Background**

Poverty alleviation has been on Kenya’s national agenda since country adopted multiparty system of Government since 1992. Kenyan’s main focus of poverty alleviation and eradication is on build the capacity of the poor by improving their access to education and skills development The Kenyan government attaches great importance to TVET in realization of this main focus.

Skill development and vocational training has proven to increase the capacity of the poor thereby increasing their income to address poverty, government of Kenya is giving financial support ,providing better and collaborating local and foreign bodies to enable address the skills gap thereby helping to stimulate economic growth among the youths

Thika Technical training Institute is one of the TVET institutions in Kenya .It was started in1887 and has trained over 7000 learners in diploma and certificate courses. This comprise of young people who enter formal employment .They train through full time attendance mode.

Thika TTI operation is guided by the following vision and mission

## **Vision**

To be a centre of excellence in Technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training

## **Mission**

To provide training, research and outreach programmes that impart skills and utilize applied knowledge to spur economic growth and solve problems in society

## **Collaboration COL**

Commonwealth of learning (COL) started this humble collaboration with TVET Institutions in November 2009 during Commonwealth association of polytechnic in Africa (CAPA) conference in Nigeria .Since then COL has contributed to Thika TTI lecturer's capacity building in the following areas:

- Flexible and blended (FaB) teaching approaches
- Instructional design
- Use and making of Audio and visual teaching and learning materials
- Course design
- FSD managers course
- Flexible teaching and learning for TVET (FlexTL)
- Developing and teaching online course –Africa (DTCO- Africa )
- Moddle admin course

## **Empowerment in action for TTI Administration**

Thika TTI board of governors recognized the need to change its institutional management and capacity planning. The institute has so far developed flexible skill development (FSD), Open and distance ODL) and women in technical education (WITED) gender policy

These led to the creating of flexible skills development centre in January 2011 that controls and coordinate skills development for people working in the formal and informal sector.

The centre coordinates and cascade informal and formal skills acquired by the lecturers during COL workshops. The centre has FSD coordinator who work closely with departmental FSD champions

The centre is fully equipped with appropriate ICTs tools for lecturers and learners to learn and embrace flexible and blended approaches through application ICTs in teaching and learning activities. The board engaged fulltime ICT support person from 1 January, 2011 to ensure efficient, effective internet and computer operation is in place in all the departments.

The institute administration created FaB lab for informal skill development. This is the room that link Thika TTI with its community and community use this room to gain skills relevant in line with the demands in the society. Our lecturers and other lecturers from neighbouring institution use this room for skill training. They learn how to use FaB approaches to teaching and learning activities. So far, we have cascaded training to about 18 lecturers.

### **Empowerment in action for Thika TTI lecturers and learners**

Since contact with COL, some lecturers have experienced complete transformation. The training through COL workshop and cascading through the FSD centre has empowered lecturers and learners in the application of ICTs and use of Open education materials (OERs). Before this contact, some lecturers did not know the purpose of using ICTs for neither personal use nor for teaching and learning and important of developing informal short courses

Majority of the lecturers are experiencing rebirth in their ways of doing thing hence “Empowerment in Action”

### **Impact of collaborating with COL on Thika TTI lecturers and learners**

Life has become much easier for both lecturers and learners. Lecturers have been empowered to become facilitators of knowledge and not authors, guiders in learning process and not controller’s .learners have been empowered to become active learners not passive, independent and not dependent learners .Both learners and lecturers have been empowered to interact through use of ICTs other than relying on the traditional face to face

The performance of the student has improved since. This is attributed to the self paced learning though use of OERs and ICTs application. Learners have been empowered to understand content material through regularly interaction, at their own pace and will and not memorise hence, “Empowerment in Action”

The use of visual teaching and learning attracts their attention leading to high level of concentration and focus. It is on Thika TTI academic record that units facilitated through application of ICTs gets 100% pass. This is unlike before when getting 70% was a big task.

### **Empowerment in action for youths/ adults within Thika TTI community**

Youths within Thika TTI community gain informal skill in readiness to employment or self employment while adults gain informal skill to sharpen their existing skill.

This was realized after COL empowered Thika TTI lecturers through course design workshop at Thika technical training institute between 27<sup>th</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> ,March,2012 and Kenya technical teachers college between 15<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.

After the workshop COL empowered lecturers through online support platform by name INVEST Africa. Through this support Thika TTI lecturers embarked on developing 10 short courses for the informal sector.

The courses were indentified after a quick market scan that reviewed the gaps in the current market. This includes hospitality, customer relation and sales, home management skills, bio gas production, communication skills, basic financial skills, entrepreneurship, life skills, basic ICTs skills and Generator operation

Among the nine developed short courses , eight short courses for the informal sector have been enrolled and produced graduates namely, bio gas production ,hospitality and customer relation and sales and basic ICTs skills , communication skills ,basic financial skills , entrepreneurship and life skills are taught as common units

### **Recruitment**

Thika TTI advertised the nine short courses through local audio and print media programs, collaborated with local church leaders , Thika youths officer, Leaders of Thika business community and other group organization that deals with youths with Thika TTI community.

Recruitment of learners in Bio gas production and basic ICT Skill has been on one to one based on learners request and demand. We had one seventy (170) applicants for hospitality and corporate social relations (CSR).

## **Admission**

Admission for Basic ICTs skills and Bio gas production is done on demand basis and at convince of the trainee. We use open admission criteria but must be able to hear, communicate and demonstrate understanding and performance of the set criteria. The age criteria for this two short courses is open as majority of the client are working in their specialized field

This has been going on since February 2013. We managed to train 25 (15 females and 10 males) in Basic ICTs skills coordinated by FSD centre and 22 Bio gas producing (19 males and 3 females) coordinated by Agriculture Engineering departments. Generator operations 15(all males) learners, coordinated by Automotive and electrical departments .In all this three informal short course, learning is controlled by the demand and student flexibility

In Late March 2013 we did admit 37 (20 females and 17 male) learners in hospitality coordinated by FSD centre, and 34 (12 females and 22 males) in corporate social relations (CSR) coordinated by Business department .We use open academic entry, ability to hear and communicate, those from less disadvantaged families and within age bracket of 18-25years .Majority of the applicant were needy but some proved to be needy than others. Since , they came from single parent /both parents who are jobless/ailing with terminal illness, victims of tribal clashes , orphaned youths with elderly guardians, youth who head their families due to death of parent/s, abandoned/neglected youths by own parents due to poverty /other familial reasons.

## **Training of various informal sector short courses**

### **Bio gas Training**

The target learners are school leavers with masonry background, social workers interested daily farmers and agriculture teacher's .The training is done through a model below finally, learner's visits our training site for practical on bio production and usage

### **Hospitality and customer relations and sales Training**

The youth training started in April early 2013 through regularly mode. We have set two rooms for this noble engagement.

The youth training in the informal sector use same facilities with our diploma and certificate students. These youths interacted freely with our regularly learners. In fact some diploma and certificate learners are demonstrating great interest of learning a skill for the informal sector along their academic training.

### **Collaboration with Thika TTI community business stake holders**

The youths come from disadvantaged families hence starting won business is a big is uphill. This necessitated the need to link up with various business stake holders to accommodate in the view of started own small enterprises once they gain capital.

We did market our youth in hospitality and customer relations and sales to super markets, medium size good and service outlets, hotels. The business stake holders were a bit hesitant upon learning that our youth had trained for 2 months only.

We did convince them, the youth have gained basic employability skills. Hence, needed their collaboration to help them practice the gained skills in real working world

Finally but coldly, majority agreed to offer placement for our youths in the month of June 2013. We placed 69 youths in various business outlets while 2 opted to start own business, for rabbit farming and a small food outlet.

### **Empowering youth with jobs after placement**

Thika TTI business community was delighted by our youths. They commended them for their good performance and employable skills. All the 69 were taken for employment starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

### **Impact of youth training Thika TTI Business Community**

The current employers have placed a big list demanding our youth trainee. Unfortunately all are employed and we are promising them of the next group. The news has spread to the rest of the employers increasing the demand day by day

### **Impact of the training the youths**

The youths are overjoyed and full of life. They feel, they have life and a future .The reason is that these youths, were it not for this training, they would not have landed in their current employment .This is attributed to their disadvantaged background hence poor networking. They now look forward to a bright future of supporting themselves and their families

### **Impact of the youth training on families**

The joy radiated by the 71 families of these youths for acquiring training and job placement is so real and fulfilling. Their families demonstrate sign of hope and relief.

### **Impact of informal short course training on Thika TTI community and nation**

Thika TTI community is enjoying service of our trainee who is contributing to its sustainability through application of various gained skills and nation economic development. So far we have 133 (83 males and 50 females) graduates in informal sector short courses

### **Impact of this training on Thika TTI lecturers and administration**

When COL came with the idea of developing short courses for informal sector, we did know the idea can be reality and a solution to many. Now, it is so evident and real. The impact is so real and practical. We feel proud and energized to push on.

### **Empowerment in action for women and girls technical education**

This chapter was launched on July 31, 2013 through COL initiative. Its main objective is create awareness on issue pertaining women and girl in technical education namely: Increasing education access, Flexible mode of learning, Delivering competitive skill for formal /informal sector, increasing awareness through modelling and Development of women affirmative action. It is lead by a coordinator and departmental champion.

We wish to embark on developing informal and formal skills women and girls for accelerated economic development

### **Challenges from adult learners**

Some adult learners do request to take a specialized area of study to sharpen their existing skill in the informal sector. This is a challenge currently. They wish the program to be in the designated areas where they work to avoid lots of time wastage. Closing their business to learn is a major obstacle bearing in mind they are in a complete "jua kali" business.

### **Challenges in the youths informal short course training**

Due to their disadvantaged background, it posed a challenge. They needed some document to qualify placement, for example, one month insurance cover, medical test, certificate of good conduct and fare to and fro the institute. We had to come in and aid some learners

## **Recommendations**

Skills development for the informal sector and application of ICTs is the key to transition of new economy and transforming labour market and years of neglect of vocational education system.

## **Conclusion**

Skills development for the formal sector and application of ICTs is one way of mitigating poverty leading to citizens improved economy and quality of life

## **Abbreviation**

COL – Commonwealth of learning

CAPA- Commonwealth association of polytechnic in Africa

FSD-flexible skill development

FaB- flexible and blended

WITED- Women in technical education

ICTs-information communication technology

TTI- Technical training Institute

FlexTL - Flexible teaching and learning

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