



COL's Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)

ABUJA - NIGERIA
2nd to 6th December, 2013

Paper by Pauline N. Chege and Rose Kiiru, Thika TTI

Email address; chegepauline@yahoo.com

kiirurose@gmail.com

Lecturers: Thika Technical Training Institute in Kenya.

Co Author: J.N.KARIUKI, Principal, ThikaTTI

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

ABSTRACT

For many years on end, teaching and learning has been confined within the classroom walls. This has been the case due to the fact that the traditional curriculum design has been unresponsive and rigid. Usually, developed for full-time class attendance but with little concern to non-full-time groups such as the working class, the informal sector groups, and the marginalized groups among others.

Thanks to the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) which is working with the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) to strengthen institutional capacity to adopt flexible and blended (FaB) delivery approaches in technical and vocational skills development (TVSD). One of its objectives being, increasing access in education to non-full time groups.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The preoccupation of this paper will be to unveil skill development realized under Flexible Skills Development (FSD) activities through Commonwealth skills development initiative program in Africa, Thika TTI, Kenya.

DISCUSSION

The paper will stress on activities, outputs, outcomes and impact of flexible skills development (FSD) realised in Thika TTI among lecturers, learners and community at large. The paper will demonstrate how use of appropriate ICT tools has played a major role in this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Skills development for the formal and informal sector and use of appropriate ICT tools is the key to transition of new economy and transforming labour market and years of neglect in vocational educational system.

1.0 Background of the case study: Thika TTI.

Thika Technical Training Institute (Thika TTI) is a government Tertiary Institution under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. It has two thousand students (2000) and one hundred and forty five (150) lecturers. It was started in 1949 as a Vocational Training Centre for the former World War 11 service men offering elementary bookkeeping, masonry and dressmaking. It was elevated to a Technical Training Institute in 1987. The Institute offers both Technical and Business courses at artisan, certificate and Diploma levels through face to face mode of learning. Through Flexible Skills initiative, it has adopted FaB approach in teaching and learning and developed short courses for the informal sector:

Its Vision

To be a centre of excellence in Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training

Its mission

To provide Training, Research, and Outreach Programmes that impart skills and utilize applied knowledge to spur economic growth and solve problems in the society.

1.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THIKA TTI

Like any other TVET institution, Thika TTI, follows the laid down government policy in implementation of curriculum that is oriented towards the formal sector. Thus, the current TVET curriculum is inflexible and not responsive enough to the changing needs of the labour market. The result is that there is a mismatch between the skills learned in TVET institutions and skills demand in the industry. It leaves out those groups that cannot enrol for full time learning and those in the informal sector. As such, FSD comes in handy as it provides new approaches to teaching and learning. It aims at increasing access to education to those constrained by space and time both in the formal and the informal sector.

Flexible learning refers to the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode

Adoption of FaB in Thika TTI was initiated after needs analysis survey was conducted through the mandate of the Kenya Ministry of higher education in the year 2010. The report of the survey revealed that there were serious gaps that needed to be filled. First, skills that are relevant and responsive to the job market. Secondly, teaching and learning process that would be responsive than the traditional teaching. Thirdly, there was need to reach out to the informal sector and other disadvantaged groups. As such, Thika TTI through partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) adopted FaB approach.

2.0 USE OF LOGIC MODEL FOR DESCRIBING FSD SUCCESSES IN THIKA TTI

The paper will explore practitioners experiences and will use Logic Model in analysing activities that Thika TTI has engaged in plus the outputs, outcomes, Performance Indicators and the Impact that have so far been realized through implementation of Flexible Skills approach IN Thika TTI.

2.1 Flexible Skills activities in Thika TTI

2.1.1 Building Institutional Capacity

- Teachers involvement in Community Learning Network (CLN) –it has 63 members
- Thika TTI first established a Flexible Skills Department that is headed by the Institute FSD Champion. An FSD committee was then constituted with members from every department.
- An FSD policy was then formulated that would provide guidelines as far as FaB adoption is concerned.

- Aligned policy to activities that facilitate FaB approaches i.e regular programmes now start as from 7.00 am to 1.30 am to cater for part time programmes for those groups of people that are constrained by time and space such as the working class.
- Creation of a FaB Lab for FSD programmes

2.1.2 COL online courses

Teachers are engaged in Learning online courses through Flexible Skills Development (FSD) initiative. The following courses continue to be rolled out.

- FlexTL 1 & FlexTL 2 Flexible Teaching and Learning in TVET; A Common Wealth of Learning/UNESCO
- Online course for TVET policy Makers and Institutional managers- Common Wealth of Learning/UNESCO

Topics covered:

1. Institutional ICT Policy in Education
2. Integration of ICT in Education

- UNESCO Bangkok e-learning series on Information and Communication Technology in Education

Modules covered:

- 1) Essentials in use of ICTs
- 2) Decision-Making in use of ICTs

2.2.3 COL Workshops

Teachers have attended and continue to attend COL workshops through FSD initiatives. They include:

- FaB workshop, Mombasa TTI
- Instructional design in Zambia
- AV 1 & AV 2 (Use and Making of Audio and Visual teaching and learning materials at Maasai TTI in Kenya.
- ODFL policy at Utalii Hotel, Kenya
- Rapid Course Development at KICD , Nairobi
- OER-upcoming at Utalii Hotel ,Kenya

2.2.4. Outputs realized

After online training and attendance of capacity building workshops, the following outputs have been realized:

- Digitalization of the curriculum content in the Institute. Yellow notes are now obsolete. A lot of teaching and learning material is drawn from other sources such as internet, You tube, and OER sites.
- It has made teaching and learning flexible; learners enjoy independent learning and interact with learning materials at their convenience and comfort. This is slowly changing them to self driven learners
- A distant learning programme in the HRM department has been started in order to increase access to education through use of ICTs.

- Cascading flexible skills to other TTI through e-tutoring mentorship.

2.2.5 Outcomes realized

The skills acquired through COL online courses and workshops have made it possible for the short courses to be designed, developed and mounted through FSD initiatives. They include;

Biogas production, basic Hospitality and customer Relations & sales and Home Management Skills. More so, opening of a town campus which has increased enrolment by 153 students so far.

At the same time, the Institute has started People With Disability programme. Three colleagues have been trained to use Braille.

The WITED chapter has been started in order to look at gender equality in TVET education. This chapter was launched on July 31, 2013 through COL initiative. Its main objective is creating awareness on issues pertaining women and girls 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 led by a coordinator and departmental champion.

2.2.6 Impact of Flexible Skills Development on Teachers and Learners

Life has become much easier for both lecturers and learners. Lecturers have been empowered to become facilitators of knowledge and not authors or controllers in the teaching and learning process.

About twenty six Lecturers use FAB approach in teaching and learning. Learners have been empowered to be 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 approach.

The performance of the students has improved. This is attributed to the self paced learning through use of OERs and ICTs application. Learners have been empowered to understand content material through regularly interaction and at their own pace.

The use of ICTs in 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 get 100% pass while before getting 70% was a big task.

Five short courses have been developed for the informal sector. They include; Biogas production, basic Hospitality and customer Relations & sales, Basic ICT skills and Home Management Skills.

In addition an ODL programme for the HRM department has been mounted and three learners have so far registered and are learning.

Due to the FSD skills that I have acquired, I have been absorbed as a Master Trainer of TOTs in the Implementation of ICT Integration in Primary Education (Government Laptop project In Kenya).

In future we plan to mount the following courses which have already being developed; Manicure and pedicure, mobile repair and Food Safety and Hygiene.

3.0 EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR.

3.1 Defining Informal Sector

The concept of informality may be defined as the sum total of income-producing activities in which members of a household engage, excluding income from contractual and legally regulated employment. The concept covers an ample field, which includes direct subsistence production, non-contractual wage employment, and independent business ventures in industry, services, and commerce.

3.2. Recruitment of learners for the informal sector short courses

Thika TTI advertised the five short courses through local audio and print media programs, collaborated with local church leaders, Thika youth officers, Leaders of Thika business community and other organizations that deal with the youth within 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 customer relations and sales.

3.2 Admission of learners in the informal sector short courses

Admission for Basic ICTs skills and Bio gas production is done on demand basis and at the convenience 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 maintenance and repair 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 males) learners in hospitality coordinated by FSD centre, and 34 (12 females and 22 males) in Customer Relations & sales. 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 applicants were needy. They came from single parents /both parents who are jobless/ailing with terminal illness, victims of tribal clashes, orphaned youth with elderly guardians, youth who head their families due to death of parent/s, abandoned/neglected youth due to poverty /other familial reason

3.3 Training of informal sector short courses in various department, ThikaTTI

3.3.1 Bio gas Training

The target learners are school leavers with masonry background, social workers interested daily farmers and agriculture teachers. The training is done through a Biogas model. Then learners visit our training site for practical lessons on bio gas production and usage.

3.3.2 Hospitality and Customer Care relations and Sales Training

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. The youth interacted freely with our regularly learners. In fact, some diploma and certificate learners are demonstrating great interest in learning skills for the informal sector alongside their formal academic training.

3.3.3 Generator maintenance and repair

This targets learners who work or wish to work in firms with generators. The learners acquire generator maintenance and repair skills.

3.3.4 Collaboration with Thika TTI community business stake holders on informal sector short courses

The youths come from disadvantaged families hence starting their own businesses is an uphill. This necessitated the need to link up with various business stake holders to accommodate learners so that they can accumulate finances for starting their own small enterprises.

We did market our youth in Hospitality and Customer Care Relations and Sales to proprietors of super markets, medium size goods and service outlets, hotels.

3.3 IMPACT OF THE MOUNTED INFORMAL SECTOR COURSES ON VARIOUS TAKEHOLDERS LISTED BELOW.

3.3.1 Thika Business Community

This was realized after COL empowered Thika TTI lecturers through course design workshop at Thika technical training institute between 27th -3rd ,March,2012 and Kenya technical teachers college between 15th - 22nd 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 six short courses for the informal sector.

The courses were indentified after a quick market scan (2013) that reviewed the gaps in the current market. This includes Hospitality, Customer Care Relations Sales, Home Management skills, Bio gas production, Basic ICTs skills and Generator operations

Among the six developed informal sector short courses , five 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).

After training the youth, they were employed by Thika TTI business community. The business community was delighted by our youth. They commended them for their good performance and employable skills. All the 69 were taken for employment starting July 1st, 2013.

The current employers have placed a big list demanding for our youth trainees. 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.

3.3.2 The Youth

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

3.3.3 Families

The joy radiated by the 71 families of the youth who acquiring training and job placement and gaining skills for self-employment so real and fulfilling. Their families continue to demonstrate a sign of hope and relief.

3.3.4 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

3.3.5 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.

4.0 CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FSD PROGRAM IN THIKA TTI

4.1 Challenges faced in FaB implementation

Resistance to change to the new FaB approach, Lack of time for staff to develop new materials as it requires time to prepare, attitude, students are uncomfortable with new technology -they prefer to be taught and finally lack of adequate ICT infrastructure.

4.2 Informal sector.

4.1.1 Training 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.

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 from the institute. We had to come in and aid some learners.

The business stakeholders 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 two opted to start own business, for rabbit farming and a small food outlet.

5.0 Conclusion

Without doubt, FSD approach is making a difference in transforming skills both in the formal and informal sector. The impact is enormous. Lecturers have been trained and are using the skills to integrate ICT tools in education. Further, they have designed and developed courses for the informal sector which have impacted not only on the learners but employers and the community around Thika TTI. The Institute has gone ODL which is a big step in increasing access in education. Designing and development of competence based courses for the informal sector should be enhanced as the market demand for informal skills is high. Ways and means of overcoming challenges experienced in implementing the courses should be looked into so that FSD initiatives carry the day.

6.0 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. The courses developed should be made online in order to make them accessible to a larger community.

There is need for Public and private partnership initiatives in order to mitigate some the challenges as expertise in the area of training and cost-sharing.

In order to make the initiative sustainable for development and peace, the approach should be cascaded to all the departments and even in other Institutions.

Abbreviation and terminologies

COL – Commonwealth of learning

FSD- flexible skill development

FaB- Flexible and blended

WITED- Women in technical education

ICTs- Information communication technolog

TVET- Technical vocational education training