

# **The Role of Technical and Vocational Skills in National Development in Kenya**

**Morang'a Erick Moseti**

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## **Introduction**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the education and training that give skills, knowledge and competency for gainful employment or entry into business. This can also be summarized as preparing and mentoring graduates for work. Once the technical and vocational education and training has been fully assimilated it will play a big role in making youth productive workforce.

These remarks are largely borrowed from my book *Practical Dressmaking* (2019) that I wrote while drawing on my invaluable experience in training dressmaking, tailoring and garment construction in Kenya.

## **The Role of Technical and Vocational Education in National Development**

1. Creation of employment – technical education equips learners with marketable skills for self-employment through establishment of their own businesses. For instance, a student who has successfully completed their dressmaking course would be able to be employed in textile firms or to start their own dressmaking establishments.
2. Improve the standards of living – graduates from TVET institutions once employed or start their own businesses will earn some income that can afford them basic needs, further education, and leisure activities for themselves and for those under their care.
3. Earn foreign exchange – exporting products and services made through the use of skills acquired in the TVET programs. This can be done by use of locally available raw materials or recycling of already used products. A country would also conserve foreign exchange by avoiding importation by making local products through utilization of TVET skills. A country would also be able to export labor to other countries that are in need.
4. Increased innovation capacity through acquisition of knowledge and skills from TVET programs. These will make the graduates to become innovative, leading to invention of new products and technologies. Skill shows and exhibitions organized by TVET institutions and their partners play a major role in developing students' skills and awareness of real life needs thus making them innovative. For instance, a trainee who has carefully read and practiced the content in my *Practical Dressmaking* (2019) book should be able to make various garments and products for the market and for themselves.
5. Industrial development – technical education produces qualified skilled graduates capable of utilizing available technologies. This would spur industrial development in a country.

When a country is able to develop its industries more products and services will be made through utilization of locally available materials. The TVET programs are also able to develop competent labour needs of a country.

6. Economic development - TVET programs would enable a large number of youth to be employed in the formal or informal sectors that will be paying taxes to the government in form of VAT, PAYE and other government levies. This would enable the government to be able to fund its projects.

#### **Some Challenges Facing TVET in Kenya**

- a. Students are trained using outdated equipment that are available in the TVET institutions since most of these institutions cannot afford the hi-tech equipment available in the industry.
- b. Inadequate learning facilities in the technical institutions due to large number of trainees admitted.
- c. Teaching using outdated curriculum thus making employers to retrain fresh graduates.
- d. A lot of emphasis has been put on the white collar jobs by the society, with TVET programs presumed to lead only to blue collar jobs.
- e. Some TVET programs are perceived as meant for people who do not perform well in academics.

#### **Some Interventions on the Challenges Facing TVET in Kenya**

1. Government to fund TVET institutions to enable them to acquire adequate training facilities.
2. Partnership between TVET institutions and industry practitioners. The partnership would inform the TVET institutions on the skills needed in the job market.
3. Curriculum review to include the latest technology and the needs of the industry.
4. Creating awareness on the importance of the TVET programs to the society and the country at large.
5. Government to create an enabling TVET friendly environment in the country.