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The Role of Higher Education on Graduates' Self-Employment in Tanzania's Industrial Era: A Need for Reviewing Educational Curricular

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Abstract

Education is an important component in social economic development of nations. Through education people acquire skills, knowledge and competency vital for their personal benefits such as employment and reliable income. The government benefits by having employees who will be engaged in various development activities and eventually benefits through tax. This article aims at investigating the relationship between Higher education and self-employment among the graduates. The article will ascertain the factors which facilitate graduates to have employment or fail to get employment opportunities in the labour market. In discussing this topic, the authors will apply human capital theory as a lens to understand the argument put forward. This article argues that there is mismatch between higher education and labour market requirement in Tanzania. Hence, it suggests that for graduates' effective self-employment or employment, they have to be proactive to learn soft skills required by employers. Nevertheless, universities have to collaborate and spared the process with the other stakeholders such as Industry and the government.

Keywords: Higher education; Self-employment; Graduates; Labour market; Educational curricular; Soft skills

1. Introduction

In recent years, Tanzania has witnessed an increasing number of school enrolments in both primary and secondary schools. According to the United Republic of Tanzania [URT] (2018), there was an overall increase of enrollment of 31.6 percent from 2004 to 2017 for primary schools. The author elaborates that the increasing trend was associated with the implementation of Primary Educational Development Plan I & II that promoted educational access for rural children. Moreover, the author confirms that there was a substantial increase in enrollment in 2016 due to free-free basic education policy. URT (2018) statistics reveal that ordinary secondary education enrollment increased in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2014, 2016 and 2017. The increase was linked to the government policy to build secondary schools at ward level and the free basic education policy of 2016–2017. Along with the increased enrollment in ordinary secondary schools, URT (2018) states that the net enrollment rate increased from 0.5 percent in 2004 to 2.7 percent in 2012 in advanced secondary education. It is obvious that the increased enrollment rates in secondary schools imply the increase in demand for higher learning institutions.

According to the Tanzania Commission for Universities [TCU] (2020), Tanzania has 74 Higher Education Institutions

(HEIs), out of which 10 are public universities and 15 are private. Moreover, there are 36 public colleges and non-university institutions as compared to 13 private colleges and non-university institutions. Similarly, data from TCU (2019) on students' admission for full-fledged public and private universities was 30,596 and 10,919 students from 2012/13–2017/2018 respectively. For the same period, public and private colleges admitted students a total of 4560 and 1621 students respectively. In addition to that, admitted students to public and private university campuses, centres, and institutes were 2120. Thus, during the five years period (i.e., 2012/13-2017/18) a total number of 44091 students were admitted to higher education institutions. This number of admitted students is higher as we compare to the number of teaching staff in these higher-learning institutions. In terms of staff, private universities have 36.9 percent of required staff as compared to 63.1 percent for public universities (TCU, 2019). With this statistical comparison between high rates of admitted students and the number of teaching staff, it is obvious that the quality of teaching and learning process in general is doubtful.

According to Mphongwa (2013), most of Higher Education institutions lacked qualified staff, a thing which affects the quality of graduates. The author added that Private higher learning institutions face financial and infrastructure

constraints. Similarly, the TCU (2020) confirms that private universities have also shortage of staff as compared to public higher education institutions. These constraints imply that the quality of HEIs is at stake. As a result, most graduates from HEIs search for jobs instead of creating self-employment opportunities because of lacking skills needed in the labour market as confirmed by Amani (2018). Despite increased enrollment rates, little attention has been taken to the quality and match of skills in the labour market by HEIs (Amani, 2017). Consequently, there have been large numbers of unemployed graduates, especially in large towns and cities searching for white-collar jobs in different companies and organizations with no focus on creating jobs (self-employment).

According to ILO (2020b), there were about 34 million unemployed people in Africa in 2019, of whom 12.2 million were youth of between 15-24 years. The author further states that the region has 6.8 percent youth unemployment rate as compared to 5 percent global youth unemployment rate. Moreover, The National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (2020) denotes that unemployment in Tanzania stands at 9.6 percent. The stated unemployment trend signifies that unemployment is a serious labour market problem in African countries, including Tanzania. Therefore, regarding the background information provided on higher education and self-employment, this article argues that there is mismatch between higher education and labour market requirement in Tanzania.

In accomplishing the above-stated argument, authors use the human capital theory as a lens for understanding the question of Higher education and self-employment. Regarding methodology, authors used desktop study approach. The argument is divided into seven parts. The introduction, the theoretical perspective used for understanding self-employment, the higher education system and development in Tanzania, higher education and the quest for employment in the industrial era in Tanzania, and challenges facing graduates in the labour market. Finally, the article provides the conclusion and recommendations respectively.

2. Theoretical Perspective

The importance of theory in research is one of the central themes among scholars. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), theory is important in a study as it informs the study and serves as a lens to viewing a particular topic. On the same lines, Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieth (2010:14) state that “a theory organizes the findings from separate observations and investigations into a framework that provides explanations of phenomena”. Thus, this study uses the Human Capital Theory [HCT] to discuss issues pertaining to the role of higher education on self-employments in the industrial era in Tanzania.

According to Tan (2014), the term “human capital” has a long history that dates back to 1950s. The term was developed by two American academicians at Chicago School of Economics namely: Theodore, Schultz and Gary Becker. In that period, the term was criticized by the liberals because of negative connotation from slavery which was still a fresh and bitter experience among Americans. Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) postulated that the main premises of human capital theory is that education enhances productivity and job

performance; as a result, it provides marketable skills and a better chance to the individual to be more successful in the labour market in terms of income and job opportunities.

Moreover, Cai (2012) notes that the major function of education is to groom people attain the needs of the labour market. Subsequently, Gillies (2015) adds that there are mainly two reasons to promote investment in education: first, an individual will benefit through income accrued from either employment or self-employment; and second, the government will benefit through employment and economic growth. The argument is congruent with Berker (1993:12) that “more highly educated and skilled persons almost always tend to earn more than others.” The author states that such phenomena apply in both developed and developing countries. On the other hand, Varghese and Bray (2011) remark that expenditure towards education is an investment and its returns are higher than physical capitals. For that reason, remunerations from educated people motivated private individuals to invest in education expecting for rewarding jobs and upward mobility in the society.

According to Gillies (2015), the HCT has a number of weaknesses. It undermines and also narrows humanity to economic terms and reduces people as mechanical objects. Moreover, the theory also undermines the concept of education and humanity. That means, education is not just an instrument for personal gain, but has broader aims and intention including imparting acceptable values to individuals to be better citizens. Subsequently, Levhari and Weiss (1974) as cited in Cai (2014) remark that the theory is based on perfect assumptions on education attainment and direct relationship with employment. Unfortunately, not all employers are able to objectively assess employees or job seeker’s ability; as a result, the attainment of education may not result to employment as expected by job-seekers. Additionally, there is a labour market uncertainty, shortcomings on individual characteristics and quality of schooling which impede job-seekers to have employment opportunities.

Despite the aforementioned weakness, authors have selected the HCT because of its wider scope and application in the area of focus. The theory discusses the investment in human capital through education and training. The two components are vital for attainment of knowledge, skills, and competencies required for employment and self-employment. For this reason, people are investing heavily on human capital and expect returns from such investment now and in the near future.

3. Higher Education System and Development

Higher education institutions are entrusted to groom human capital through: training, abilities, attitude, skills and knowledge. Importantly, higher education plays a vital role in countries’ social economic development. According to Alemu (2018) higher education entails different levels of higher-learning institutions including universities. The author further notes that, “a university is a source of universal knowledge and highly skilled human power for the professions” (p.10). Other learning institutions are concerned with technical and professional training. On the same line, Ndyali (2016) contends that one of the goals of Higher learning institution in Tanzania is to impart students with physical and intellectual skills that could make them self-

supportive in their lives. In that respect, it is a responsibility of the higher learning institutions to invest in human capital in order to have an educated society as one of the attributes which Tanzania expects to attain by 2025 as indicated in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1995).

It is a societal general assumption that, after finishing higher education, university graduates should be capable for successful transition from institution of higher learning and to become a productive worker, self-reliant entrepreneur, responsible citizen and a leader (Ndyali, 2016). It is also assumed that graduates would have developed skills and experiences which are required to boost their opportunities and capabilities in life (Ndyali, 2016). Basing on the prescribed aims and functions of Higher Education Training Institutions (HETIs), governments and companies depend on the scholars and their products from HETIs in designing various policies, projects and other development frameworks. Chetty and Archer (2013) show that higher education institutions are industries to produce professionals in various fields with high skills leading them to employability either as self-employed or the opposite, for both individual and national development. However, the actual situation in the field is the opposite. As graduates from Higher Education Institutions fail to be absorbed in the labour market, the question is why does the situation prevail?

Moreover, the fact remains that the foundation of development of any country depends on the development of human resources which depends on the good system of education. It depends on the good system of education producing highly capable and creative thinkers for their development built on good policies and curricular. This is to say that if the education dedicated to be provided regarding policies and curricular does not impart students with skills capacitating them to be employed or self-employment, it is thus blurred to proclaim for '*education for development*'. In URT (1995:ix) it is written that "the relationship between education and development depends on the extent to which the kind of education provided and its methods can meet the expectations of the individual and needs of the society. This implies that good skilled manpower depends on good policies and curricular devoted to produce good skilled manpower. This also means that if we want to proclaim about '*education for development*,' we need to first think of the kind of education we offer with reflection to social dynamics and current global trends. In this stance, we can believe that if we have poor policies and curricular, from the bottom to top, it consequently leads to poor and incompetent outputs which definitely can hardly achieve the desired development goals in different aspects of life from individual to national level.

4. Higher Education and Employment in the Industrial Era

Higher education institutions all over the world produce many qualified graduates in different disciplines every year. Many scholars delved in discussing higher education and national economy. According to URT (2017) education plays a driving force in human development. Moreover, Varghese (2016) explains that, higher education has substantial role in production and distribution of national income. On the same line, Varghese and Bary (2011:89) remark that "knowledge is central to development, and education is central to

production of and distribution of knowledge". Similarly, Varghese and Anupam (2019) posit that higher education is a key element in promoting economic growth. Thus, education proves to be central element in human development intervention and for economic growth through employment that provides individuals an income whose effect can trickle down to the population and country at large.

It is undeniable fact that, as in other countries, youth unemployment in Tanzania has been growing despite national (as indicated by URT [2016] FYDP II, objective number 3 that insists on promoting available required industrial skills) and international policy efforts (ILO,2020b). This phenomenon regarding youth unemployment is a critical social issue because it relates to a multitude of societal aspects, including: economic development, social stability and welfare, and building human capital and its delivery system. This third point is an education dilemma; and it is important for educators to proactively participate in policy interventions by suggesting what and how education can contribute to a solution (Yamamoto, 2011). That is the case because for most employers, an academic qualification is no longer a guarantee for graduate's employment. This change in employment terms has been the result of technological change and economic extension. Currently, employers employ candidates who have set of skills that match with their needs. Strong emphasis is directed to mastering technical skills (hard skills) and employability skills to graduates because of current technological development in the world. Even though various organizations and institutions advertise various job vacancies, these vacancies are only filled by part of the graduates (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014; Tanius & Susah, 2015).

On the same discourse, employability has been a concept that drew the attention of different scholars (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Harvey, 2001; Suleman, 2018; Mgaiwa, 2021). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) employability means an individual's capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in the labour market, also the individual's capability to be successful in a wide range of jobs. Harvey (2001) express that employability is an inclination of an individual to get employment. That means, some people may decide to get employed and others may incline otherwise. On the one hand, current thinking on the subject is documented by Bennett (2016) and Suleman (2018). Bennett defines employability as a capacity to find, create and sustain meaningful work within considerable span of time in a different working environment. On the other hand, Suleman (2018) solidifies the argument that, employability is a possession of skills, knowledge and other attributes obtained as a result of university education which can help an individual to get an employment.

Graduate employability is another specific topic of concern to scholars. Paadi (2014) views graduate employability as the ability of graduates to secure jobs in the labour market; equipped with most of the skills required by the employer and have the ability to participate and contribute to the knowledge economy. That is because technology change has dictated the ways in which human beings work in the industry. According to Jackson (2013), graduate employability is measured in simplistic terms such as whether a graduate has secured a job within the first six months of graduating; however, the measurement is not accurate because we do not understand clearly what the

graduate has gained. He further goes on saying that we need to know if the graduate is in fact using the skills, knowledge and understanding gained in their certificates, diplomas and degree studies. On the other hand, graduate employability is multifaceted and encompasses academic performance, career management skills and labour market awareness (Paadi, 2014).

Regarding the context of this article, let us pay attention to self-employment (entrepreneurial spirit) as a result of higher education system, especially in this industrial era. There is a relationship between possession of self-employment skills and industrialization. Literature show that the world organizations are shifting from a top-down hierarchical structure to a flatter structure as there is a shift toward a knowledge-based economy (ILO, 2020a). This means that there is shifting towards autonomy and self-directed behaviours of an employee as a more recognized and required spirit in the working context. With this spirit, it becomes easier to start new industries and explore or implement new ideas, for both self-employed entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs within the organization. The view is supported by Etzkowitz (2008) who remarks that for modern HEI, anybody in the university can be an entrepreneur ranging from students, working staff and professor. It is through this context of shifting towards autonomy and self-directed behaviours of employees where industrialization materializes. These industries have proved to grow rapidly and expand employment, especially for youths although most employers are now looking for candidates that having a set of skill that match with their needs especially in this technological industrial era (Stiglitz as cited in Yamamoto, 2011; Audretsch & Thurik, 2000).

There are many reasons for countries to engage in industrial development. One reason is that industries play complementary role to natural resources by creating jobs. Second, industries contribute to poverty reduction. Lastly, industries have multiplier effects in the economy (Page, 2016). Nonetheless, it should be born in mind that the foundation of industrialization is knowledge-based economy. Knowledge-based economy is built by those with employability skills especially those with autonomy and self-directed behaviours (self-employment spirit). The autonomy and self-directed behaviours do not come as a surprise; they need a long time investment, which in the context of education means developing these behaviours to students from lower levels (primary & secondary schools) to higher levels (Higher Education Institutions). This investment is successful in developed countries unlike developing countries having abundant sources of labour but lacking skilled labours that are able to compete in the modern economy mostly dominated by industrial economy (Yamamoto, 2011). This investment is associated with self-employment spirit development.

The modern economy which associates with industrial economy attract people because it has an innovative advantage over larger counterparts in industries where high innovation is necessary (Carree & Thurik, 2003). In this case, in order to achieve an industrial economy, Third World countries, as is for first world countries, need to purposefully adopt a strong and reasonable systematic training strategy that will help prepare and hence produce competent self-employed individuals from lower to higher levels of education. On the other hand, we can call this kind of

education as education for self-reliance which is the foundation of self-employment. Many developing countries proclaim to adopt and practice an industrial economy as is for developed countries, but the fact remains that most of these developing countries are not serious in this business. This is because their education systems are not enough structured to prepare and produce competent and self-directed individuals. The experience shows that most graduates from both lower and higher levels of education think of being employed in offices for collar jobs when they graduate their studies but hardly think of job creation (self-employment), which is the fundamental of industrial economy. For instance, in our experience, as university lecturers, when we ask our students about their employment expectations after their graduation, most of them show high expectations of being employees in various organizations, institutions and companies, and not expecting to introduce their own enterprises. In this case, for a country to have an industrial economy it might be a daydream because industrial economy and self-employment (education for self-reliance) determination are twins.

Unfortunately, enormously most graduates become frustrated or desolate because they cannot secure jobs in the labour market and some have huge students' loans to settle (Paadi, 2014); and in that respect, Tanzania is no exception. As it is for other world countries, youth unemployment has been growing despite national and international policy efforts in Tanzania. Youth unemployment is a critical social issue because it is related to a multitude of societal aspects including: economic development, social stability and welfare, and building human capital and its delivery system. This third point is an education dilemma; and it is important for educators to proactively participate in policy interventions by suggesting what and how education can contribute to a solution (Yamamoto, 2011). This is due to the reason that currently, to most employers, an academic qualification is no longer a guarantee for graduate's employment because of technology and economic extension. Employers are now looking for candidates having a set of skills that match with their needs. The strong emphasis, especially in this current world of development – technological era, is put on mastering technical skills (hard skills) and employability skills to every graduate. Even though various organizations and institutions are advertising various job vacancies, these vacancies are only filled by part of graduates (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014; Tanius & Susah, 2015). Thus, the question of employability for higher education requires to be handled with great care.

In the context of Tanzania, the government, in its daily execution, is aspiring to be an industrial economic state. For instance, the fifth government under His Excellency the late Dr. John Joseph Pombe Magufuli, the then President of URT, among other things, in his first speech to the parliament in 2015 emphasized industrialization, particularly of manufacturing industries like textile, agro-based industries and aspired that manufacturing industries will absorb forty percent of all new jobs by the year 2020. However, he remarked that, poverty and unemployment remain the biggest problems in the country (Shaw, 2016). But when we examine the criteria of the industrial economic state as demonstrated by Yamamoto (2011); Audretsch & Thurik (2000); Carree & Thurik (2003) and other literatures, the fact remains that because of its education system, it will quite take a long period to be recognized as an industrial economic state. The history of Tanzania shows that when we had education for self-reliance, we had many industries of different

businesses. It is in this period when we had graduates from lower to higher levels of education who were able to employ themselves in different socio-economic activities such as agriculture, small industries, etc., unlike today. Nevertheless, should the period of education for self-reliance continues, the song of Tanzania of industries we hear from government officials today could be valid.

However, these changes of education system in Tanzania have been due to unnecessary frequent changes of education policies which in totality affect the curriculum design and its implementation at all levels of education. These unnecessary frequent changes of education policies to a large extent are influenced by the political interests. According to Kasunga (2018) in 2006 the Minister for Education by then Mr. Mungai made unpopular decision on school curriculum. The decision led to omitting some subjects and merging others; whereby Physics and Chemistry were merged at lower secondary levels. The decision was opposed by teachers and eventually revoked.

On the same lines, Nkyabonaki (2013) asserts that any curriculum is influenced by the political system in place. Politicians, through the parliament decide on fund allocation to all sectors. The parliamentary decisions directly affect the education policy and curriculum in particular. Moreover, Her Excellency, President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania when addressing the 12th Parliament on 22nd April 2021 explained that the government is on the move to reviewing the national educational policy of 2014 in order to be competency based and aligned with a labour market (Hassan, 2021). Based on these facts, it is obvious that Tanzania's education policies are, to large extent, determined by politicians as compare to other stakeholders such as professional policymakers, parents, students at all levels of education and community. These changes have made the whole education system of Tanzania blurred, hence making the dilemma of the quest of education system and its consequence for self-employment, especially to higher education graduates in this industrialization era. This being the case, current graduates facing various challenges in the labour market regarding the education they have received in colleges is palpable.

5. Factors for Graduates Unemployment

Graduates unemployment is a global concern which causes a hot debate amongst scholars (Msigwa & Mpesha, 2013; Boateng, 2016; Alawad, Kreishan & Selim, 2020; Koloba, 2017; Flugence, 2015; NBS, 2019; Sicherman, & Galor, 1990; Mbah, 2014; Rwejuna, 2013). Amani (2017) discusses the following factors as causes for graduates' unemployment in Tanzania. First; Job skill mismatch causes graduates unemployment in the country. ILO (2014:6) defines job matching skills as an "imbalance between skills offered and skills needed in the world of work.". The second factor is career guidance and counseling that is not effective in higher learning institutions. The third factor is the choice of field of study which relates to graduates' future and substantially determines their employability. Lastly, graduates lack confidence and poor communication skills. The author states that shortcoming is confirmed by employers who find the graduates poor English proficiency and confidence during interview. Hence, we are convinced that, the quality of graduates is blurred.

Msigwa and Mpesha (2013) associate youth unemployment to gender difference. They mean that women are more prone to unemployment than men. Other factors include geographical locations-whereby unemployment is more pronounced in urban areas, education, and level of skills and experience of an individual. This stance is supported by Baah- Boateng (2016) and added two other factors which are lack of experience and educational status of family. The former is used by employers as criteria to assess new entrants in the labour market, while the latter can be used as a leverage to get employment or vice versa.

On the same line, Alawad, Kreishan & Selim (2020) explain Jordan constraints on youth employment. They identified three major factors which are mismatch between education and labour market requirement, inability of both public and private sectors to accommodate new entrants, and lastly lack of quality vocational training that could impart transferable skill. The authors added that high level of unemployment is an indicator for country's economy failure to utilize its resources particularly human resource. Moreover, Sicherman & Galor (1990) further elaborate the factors that undermine youth employment as paying little attention on on-job training which results to poor transferable skills in workplace. Mbah (2014) brought to the discussion a new component that is lack of orientation for graduates before joining Higher education. Most of the graduates had the conception of being employed by either public or private organization than self-employment. The failure to orient and counsel students on the path to follow forces students to pick any course which is not required in the labour market. As a result, they regret spending a lot of time in a course that is not applicable on the field.

On the other hand, Flugence (2015) adds that graduates lack labour market realities, especially skills required by employers. They are affected by inappropriate curricular which do not respond to market requirement. Moreover, they are affected by lack of relationship between HETIs with the stakeholders during curricular development. Rwejuna (2013:54) confirm the scenario of inappropriate curricular which are insensitive to the labour market by stating that, "since its establishment, OUT has not comprehensively reviewed its curriculum." That situation means that some courses are outdated and not relevant in the job market; as a result, they contribute to graduates unemployment. This situation can be the same to other Higher Education institutions in the country. Additionally, graduates are lacking entrepreneurial skills which can be substantial on self-employ. For instance, Datta (as cited by Flugence, 2015) remarks that the nature of work has shifted from specialization to versatility (ability to adapt or be adapted to many functions or actions). Alongside, Pfeifer, Brown, Green, Launder and Sakamoto (as cited in Flugence, 2015) contends that the prevailing dynamic and competitive environment requires workers with diversified skills including entrepreneurship so that they can manage labour market flexibility.

Etzkowitz (2008:10) explains poor linkage among universities, industry and government; what he termed as "trilateral interactions." The situation contributed to graduates unemployment as everyone is working in silos. It is a high time for the identified innovative way of collaboration with stakeholders (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016). Consider this collaborative agreement as University Industry Linkages

(UIL), which was defined by Anon and cited by Ankrah, Burgess, Grimshaw, and Shaw (2013:50) "as interactions between all parts of the higher educational system and the industrialising economy." These linkages are vital for making universities practical and responsive to society needs. As per principle: university trains, and engages in technology transfer and becomes a source of product development; as a result, the university become a centre for entrepreneurship according to academic mission integrated in teaching and research. In so doing, the university comes close to industry.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article argued that there is mismatch between higher education and labour market requirements in Tanzania. This situation prevails because higher educational curricular are not aligned with the labour market requirement. Moreover, students have a mentality and belief of being employed after graduation and not being self-employed. Thus, the kind of thinking closes doors for their creativity and innovation during and after university studies. The result of this closure is that they find themselves not prepared to employ themselves by using skills and competencies acquired through university education. As of now there is a crisis regarding unemployment amongst graduates, which is the major cry amongst parents and graduates in particular. As regard to this situation, the need to redefine the curricular for higher in Tanzania is imperative.

Therefore, the article puts forward some key recommendations to alleviate the situation. First, Higher Education institutions should put more emphasis on soft skills, which are demanded by the labour market in order to enable graduates secure employment. Second, alignment of higher education institutions curricular to labour market requirement is urgently recommended. The alignment will enable graduates to be easily employable in the labour market. Third, career counseling for new university student is inevitable. The higher education institutions should establish career counseling centres. Centres can help students to access to career counseling in order to have informed choices for the courses/programmes to undertake. Thus reduces the possibilities for students to regrets picking courses/programmes that are not marketable and applicable in the real life in their respective areas. Fourth, the government should ensure that educational policy from lower level focus on education for self-reliance, which is an important ingredient for self-employment advocated in this Article.

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