

Influence of Industrial Attachment on Trainees' Completion in Vocational training centres: A Case of Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

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Abstract

Industrial attachment (IA) is a very important component in most programmes at different levels of training. This study investigated the influence of industrial attachment (IA) on trainees' completion in selected vocational training centres (VTCs) in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Vocational training centres were previously referred to Youth Polytechnics in Kenya up to 2013 when the country adopted the new name through an Act of Parliament. This was a further study to a research conducted in 2015 by Kiplagat, Ferej, and Kafu which established that industrial attachment was one of the institution-based factors that negatively influenced completion levels of trainees in vocational training centres. Hence, this study was conducted to ascertain the nature of the influence. This study adopted descriptive research design. The present study was conducted in two well-established vocational training centres in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The data was purposively collected from VTC Managers, Deputy Managers and industrial attachment coordinators using semi-structured questionnaires. This target group was purposively selected because of their respective positions that were assumed to give valuable information for this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data presented for analysis. The findings of this study revealed that industrial attachment influenced trainee low completion in vocational training centres because some trainees never went back to VTCs after the end on industrial attachment. During the industrial attachment exercise, some of the trainees got pregnant, married early, employed, or felt that they had acquired adequate skills hence saw no need to go back. These made trainees not to go back to vocational training centres immediately after the end the attachment exercise or even not at all later to complete their studies. This study recommended that vocational training centres and parents should enhance guiding and counseling of trainees, vocational training centres should register trainees for examination before going for the attachment, parents should enhance financial support for their children on attachment, industrial attachment firms should release trainees back to the vocational training centres at the end of the attachment, among others.

Key words: *Vocational training centres, industrial attachment, trainees*

Introduction

Industrial attachment (IA) exercise gives students/trainees an opportunity to apply theory into practice. Further, IA exposes students to real expectations of the world of work (Bukaliya, 2012). A similar study by Matamande, Nyikahadzoi, Tarerera, and Mandimika (2013) observed that industrial attachment enhances student industry exposure. Their study further argued that attachments are a platform for

students to assimilate theory into practice. In further highlighting on the benefits of industrial attachment, Kiplagat, Khamasi, and Karei (2016) revealed that majority of the respondents (students) in their study liked the knowledge, skills and experiences acquired. According to Beck and Halim (2008), internships are considered beneficial to students, learning institutions and prospective employers/host organizations. Similarly, industrial attachment training exposes students to real work environment and helps them to apply theory into practice (Ayarkwa, Adinyira, & Osei-Asybey, 2012).

The study of Mgaya and Mbekomize (2014) demonstrates how IA benefits host organizations/attachment firms. The authors reported that the benefits include: fulfillment of corporate social responsibility, enhancement of corporate image, gaining of new ideas, and cost savings. On the other hand, Andoh, Boadi, Minlah, and Spio-Kwofie (2016) stated that the benefits of the attachment to students include; scheduling of activities in line with area of specialization, exposure, familiarization with workplace routine, building network of contacts and opportunities for career development/sharing of ideas. The reviewed literature has clearly demonstrated the benefits that are accrued from an industrial attachment exercise.

Despite the benefits shown in the previous studies, attachment was found to be one of the factors that influenced trainee low completion trends in vocational training centres in Kenya (Kiplagat, Ferej, & Kafu, 2017). The authors observed that instead of trainees coming back to vocational training centres after the end of IA exercise, they remained to work in the IA firms. Hence, this paper sought to investigate further on the influence of IA on trainees' completion in VTCs.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design. According to Burns and Grove (2003:201), descriptive research “is designed to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally happens. For the purpose of this study, descriptive research design was used to obtain responses from the respondents on the influence of industrial attachment on trainees' completion in VTCs. Data was collected from VTC managers, deputy managers and industrial attachment coordinators/liaison officers using semi- structured questionnaires. The study sites were Iten and Chepkorio vocational training centres. These two sites were well-established and were longest operational VTCs in Elgeyo Marakwet County and it was therefore assumed that they would provide the needed information for this study. The target group was purposively selected to participate in this study because of their respective positions and was assumed to give valuable information for this study. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and presented in form of charts while qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents percentage of trainees who did not come back after the attachment, who did not return back immediately after based on sex, percentage of those who returned later after the attachment and lastly, how to curb non-reporting of trainees immediately after industrial attachment. This study further presents other challenges facing attachment exercise and their possible solutions.

Percentage of Trainees who came back against those who did not After IA Exercise

The findings of this study as shown in Figure 1 indicate that 6% of the trainees did not come back while 94% came back immediately after the end of the attachment exercise. However, this may not be a small percentage to be ignored. Hence, there was need for an in-depth investigation to establish the underlying factors so as to institute appropriate actions to address this issue

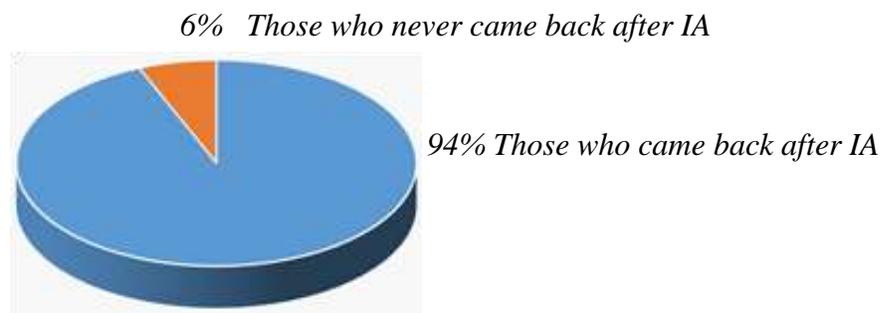


Figure 1: *Percentage of trainees who came back immediately after industrial attachment against those who never came back.*

Reasons for Trainees not Coming Back after Industrial Attachment

This study sought to establish the reasons for trainees not reporting back to vocational training centres immediately after the end of attachment exercise. It revealed that the following underlying issues:

- i). Pregnancy
- ii). Employment
- iii). Early marriages
- iv). Lack of fees
- v). Feeling of having adequate skills/experience
- vi). Incentives/tokens/payment given during industrial attachment

The payment of allowances during industrial attachment helped students assisted in the budget and cost of living (Sasila & Mahmood, 2017). Similarly an earlier study by Bukaliya (2012) agreed with this position when he argued that industry

that offers on-job training (OJT) should give some allowances as a small token to cover students' daily expenses. With these observations, it can be argued that, with proper guidance and counseling, payment of incentives during Industrial a attachment can be a source of financial support to students/trainees. According to Barbaresi (2016), students will not be permitted to take part in field work after a certain number of weeks of pregnancy. This implies that a student will not continue with field work and other academic engagements such as attachments until sometime later. In a study done in India, Jain, Bisen, Singh, and Jain (2011) observed that early marriage deprives a girl freedom, opportunity for personal development and other rights. In the present study, early pregnancy deprived the female trainees their opportunity to continue with the attachment exercise which eventually made them not to report back to vocational training centres to continue with their studies.

Trainees who did not return after Industrial Attachment based on Sex

This study further sought to establish the percentage of trainees who did not come back to vocational training centres immediately after the end of the attachment exercise based on sex. As shown in Figure 2, 50% of the respondents indicated that non-reporting affected both males and females, 33% pointed out that it affected females while 17% stated that it affected male trainees. On keen observation the findings reveal that slightly more female trainees than males were affected by non-completion.

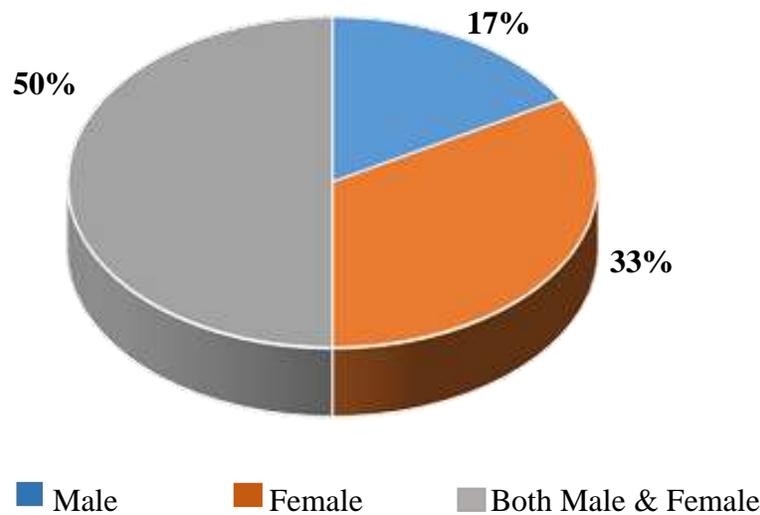


Figure 2: *Trainees who do not return immediately after IA based on sex*

Percentage of Trainees who returned later

The respondents were asked to state whether those trainees who missed to report back immediately after IA ever come back later. As indicated in Figure 3, majority (4) of the respondents indicated that between 25 and 49% of the trainees who did not report back immediately after the end of the attachment came back later, 1 of the respondents stated that between 1 and 24% of the trainees returned later, while

1 respondent observed that none of the trainees who failed to report immediately after end of attachment ever came back later.

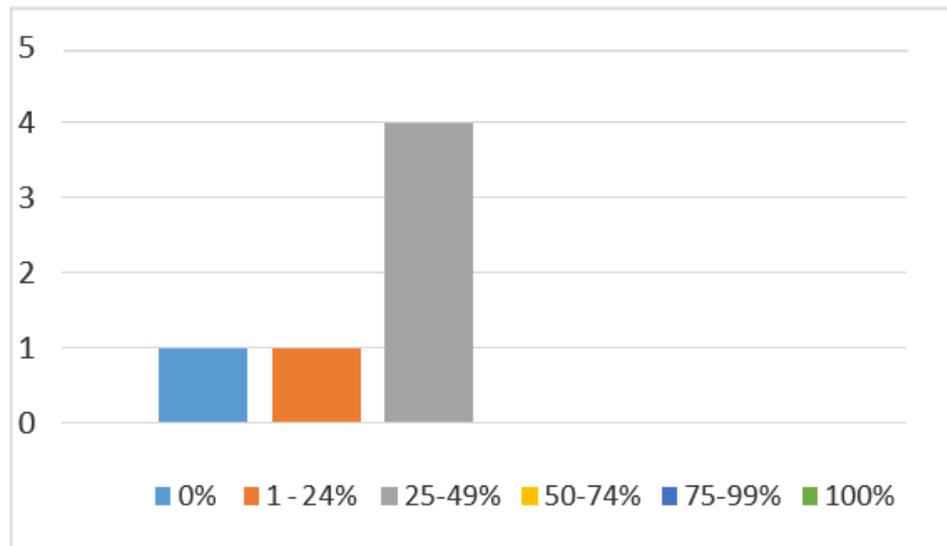


Figure 3: *Percentage of Trainees who returned later after Industrial Attachment.*

How to Curb Non-reporting of Trainees Immediately after the End Industrial Attachment

One of the qualitative items on the questionnaire sought views from the respondents on ways in which non-reporting immediately after industrial attachment could be avoided. Majority of the respondents stated the following ways to ensure trainees returned to vocational training centres after the end of attachment exercise:

- i. Enhancing guidance and counseling for the trainees to value completion of programmes/exams.
- ii. Registering trainees for exams before going for IA. This approach would compel trainees to go back to vocational training centres.
- iii. Parents and guardians should be involved in ensuring that trainees went back to vocational training centres after the end attachment.

Other measures mentioned include:

- i. The attachment firms should release the trainees after the end of IA to go back to complete their courses.
- ii. Vocational training centres and other stakeholders should identify sponsors to support the needy trainees.

- iii. The vocational training centres should assist attach the trainees to firms.
- iv. Vocational training centres should make attachment post-class work.
- v. Attachment firms should avoid giving incentives to trainees on attachment without proper guidance and counseling.

Other Challenges facing Industrial Attachment Exercise

The other challenges established were:

- i. Inadequate finances to pay training, insurance, accommodation and transport fees
- ii. Trainees were unable to secure attachment places. This is because attachment firms saw them to be of lower academic ability. It was also reported that attachment firms gave priority to trainees pursuing diploma programmes and above.
- iii. Inadequate funds for supervision/assessment.
- iv. Attachment firms assigned trainees duties which did not match their training
- v. Trainees were unable to fill log books during attachment.
- vi. Lack of rubber stamps for trainees attached to Jua Kali/Informal sector.
- vii. Poor communication from the trainees to the vocational training centres during attachment.

The findings of study by Pillai and Yusoff (2007) in Malaysia closely relate to those of this study that was done in Kenya. The authors observed that securing placement for attachment was a very competitive endeavour because of the small number of trainees taken in by attachment organizations at any given time. In such situations, organizations sought trainees who had high grade point averages and those who were proficient in English. The Kenyan experience as reported in this study showed that trainees pursuing diploma programmes and above were given priority for attachment places. As a country, this issue may need to be looked into so as not kill programmes below diploma level. In another related study in Ghana, Donkor, Nsoh, and Mitchual (2009) observed that lack of free access to machines and equipment, amount of money spent traveling to and from the work place, and time spent on finding placement were the perceived challenges faced by students on attachment. Further, Sasila and Mahmood (2017) reported that one of the major issues faced by students was organizations assigning them tasks not related to the specialization of their studies.

The findings of this study further closely support those of Mabhanda (2016) which established that shortage of attachment places, financial problems, inadequate training, inappropriate attachment places and sexual harassment were the

challenges faced by attachees in Zimbabwe. Further, lack of adequate guidance and support to students, and lack of adequate funds for supervision were some of the challenges that faced IA exercise. Munyoro, Nyandoro, and Musekiwa (2016) established that securing attachments, student allowances, lack of resources to cover supervisors' transport and accommodation costs were the main challenges affecting attachment exercise in Chinhoyi University of Technology in Zimbabwe. Similarly, Howard, Simpson, and Kemevor (2014) stated that the notable challenges that confronted students on attachment were financial, accommodation, less attention from the places of attachment and others accounting for disrespect from workers in Ghana. Other challenges in this study were that some trainees not going for attachment, there was inadequate accommodation facilities and also social issues.

Possible Solutions to the above Challenges

This study also sought to establish the possible solutions to the above challenges that affect attachment exercise. The respondents highlighted the following:

- i. The trainees should be taught on how to fill the log books when performing practical lessons in vocational training centres.
- ii. Industries attachment firms should consider taking in trainees for industrial attachment. This is because trainees' coverage in vocational training centres is 90% practical.
- iii. Industries should charge less fee for IA or collaborate with the government in making training fees affordable.
- iv. Trainees should be assisted to find accommodation during attachment.
- v. Parents should enhance financial support for trainees on attachment.
- vi. Trainees should not get attached to Jua Kali sector without rubber stamps and other requirements for trainees on attachment.
- vii. All stakeholders should be involved in the training process of trainees to ensure that they have a positive attitude towards trainees looking for IA places.
- viii. National Industrial a Training Authority (NITA) should develop proper and clear rules and regulations towards IA for all levels of learners.
- ix. County government should provide funds for assessment and training.
- x. Both National and County governments should encourage attachment firm owners to accept the VTC trainees for IA
- xi. VTCs should emphasize to the trainees on the need for proper communication while on Industrial a attachment.
- xii. Trainees should observe VTC and attachment firms expectations while on Industrial attachment exercise.
- xiii. Parents should be involved in Industrial a attachment process to be able to guide their children. This will ensure that the learners understand the benefits of Industrial a attachment versus real employment.

In trying to curb the challenges faced by students on Industrial a attachment, Mabhanda (2016) recommended adequate resources should be mobilized towards students' attachment and that colleges should have project establishments to help in relieving attachment places. The author also recommended that partnerships with industry should be developed to ease placement of students, and to deploy attachees under supervision of qualified and experienced mentors. Further, the author argued that there was need for support from government, private sector and other stakeholders.

In addressing the challenge of trainees paying for training fee, Andoh, Boadi, Minlah, and Spio-Kwofie (2016) recommended that the Ghanaian government should have a special incentive package (e.g. tax rebate) to companies to cause them accept students on Industrial a attachment. Similarly, Koskey (2013) opined that the government of Kenya should support the student attachment programme.

Conclusion

This study has established that Industrial a attachment as a component of training in Vocational training centres in Kenya contributes to low completion. This study further revealed that there are some issues that manifest themselves during Industrial a attachment, hence negatively affecting trainees' completion levels. These include: employment, pregnancy, early marriages, incentives, feeling well equipped/skilled for employment, among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Vocational training centres and parents should enhance guidance and counseling. This will make trainees to value completion of their programmes and consider social aspects of life
- ii. Vocational training centres should register trainees for exams before going for Industrial attachment. This approach it will compel them to come back to complete their studies.
- iii. Vocational training centres should place trainees for Industrial attachment, make IA post class work, teach trainees on how to fill log books, encourage trainees to effectively communicate while on Industrial attachment, identify sponsors to support the needy trainees, and involve all stakeholders so as to have a positive attitude towards VTC training.
- iv. Parents/guardians should enhance financial support for trainees on IA and ensure that trainees come back after industrial attachment exercise.
- v. Training firms should consider VTC trainees (90% practical-oriented) for IA, release trainees after industrial attachment, charge affordable training fee, give trainees incentives with proper advice, and assigning trainees appropriate tasks while on attachment.
- vi. The national government through National Industrial a Training Authority and County governments should encourage training firms to accept VTC trainees for

attachment, provide training fee, insurance fee and assessment fee to VTC trainees.

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