

Youth unemployment has remained a serious problem in many Third World Countries during the past three decades. Efforts to solve the problem have included initiation of education and training programmes for youths both in school and out of school. Among these programmes is the Youth Polytechnic Programme of Kenya initiated by the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCKC) in 1968 and originally known as the Village Polytechnic Programme. A village polytechnic was envisaged as a low cost informal training programme initiated, financed and managed by the local community to impart practical skills for self-employment to primary school leavers.

This study attempted to assess the contribution of the Programme to youth employment in Kenya by:

- (a) Measuring the impact of the Programme on the provision of training opportunities to primary school leavers.
- (b) Assessing the relevance of YP courses to the supply of jobs.
- (c) Investigating post-training experiences of YP leavers
- (d) Determining the utilization of skills learnt at YPs for life long occupations.

The study focused on a population of 1277 leavers of 1980-83 from 12 YPs in Kakamega (Western Kenya) and Kiambu (Central Kenya) Districts. Data were collected from a sample of twelve YPs, eleven YP managers, sixty two YP instructors and 184 YP leavers. Additional data were collected from a number of Kenya Government officers associated with the YP, Programme as well as records of the Kenya Government Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the Ministry of Education Headquarters and the Kenya National Examination Council. The original leavers' sample of 291 was determined using a table for determining sample sizes by Krejcie and Morgan (Appendix B). The actual sampling of leavers was however by proportionate stratified area sampling-using lists of names of leavers supplied by YP managers.

Research instruments used included three checklists for data from records; one questionnaire for YP instructors; and five interview schedules, three for Government officers, one for YP managers and one for YP leavers. Data from the field were collected by the researcher and five research assistants and analysed for basic descriptive statistics by the University of Nairobi Institute for Computer Science using the Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Programme.

The main findings of the study are:

1. The YP Programme catered for a very tiny fraction of the unemployed primary school leavers.
2. A narrow spectrum of the possible skills needed in the rural areas were taught, while some of the skills offered such as tailoring and dress making and home economics were not high demand.

3. Training equipment and materials were inadequate both in quantity and quality in most YPs in the sample.
4. YP instructors seemed indifferent to the Programme.
5. YP leavers understood the objectives of the Programme and had a very positive attitude to it.
6. YP leavers seemed to have mastered production skills in their particular trades but they did not have sufficient training in business management.
7. While early literature on the YP Programme suggested that school and YP leavers looked to urban areas for employment, this study suggests that YP leavers had changed their attitude to rural areas and looked to their home areas as the future places of employment. This change of attitude may have been created partly by general socio-economic improvements in the rural areas and partly by the deliberate emphasis the YP Programme put on self-employment

Most YP leavers in the study utilized their YP skills to earn a living and some were able to create jobs for other youths. However a larger percentage of female leavers (43.9 percent) were found to be unemployed compared to only 18.9 percent among the male leavers. The main explanation seemed to be the fact that female trainees were limited to tailoring, dress making and business education trades only.

9. Although the study revealed several cases of incomes below the statutory minimum wage of K.sh. 565. Most YP leavers in wage employment earned over K.sh. 600 while in self-employment the mode was K.sh. 500.

10. Most YP leavers had a very positive view of the YP programme as a preparation for a life long career and preferred to use their skills mainly in self-employment. Surprisingly, very few leavers preferred wage employment and the attitude to work groups was very negative.

11. The main problem facing YP leavers seemed to be financial in that they lacked capital to start business enterprises or expand existing units to become more viable. An additional problem observed by the researcher was lack of skills in business management.

12. Reflecting on the implication for the YP programme of the 8.4.4. System of Education, the study found that the primary curriculum of the 8.4.4. System did not duplicate the YP Curriculum and Concluded that the two programmes were complementary.

Based on these findings, the study recommends the following:

1. The YP Programme should be improved so that more displaced primary school leavers can benefit from it. Such improvements include provision of better equipped workshops, adequate supplies of training materials and greater emphasis on practical business management. An improved programme might attract more youths to enroll and complete the course.

2. There is need to encourage women trainees to enroll in 'male only' trades in order to increase their chances of acquiring more marketable skills.
3. A wider range of trades should be offered based on skill needs of the local communities and the country as a whole.
4. Schemes for helping YP leavers to acquire tools and capital which are based within the YP have a greater chance of success than the proposed centrally controlled Kenya Association of Youth Organizations (KAYO) sponsored scheme. Individual YPs should be urged to revive the leavers' fund scheme and explore other types of schemes.
5. Areas that require further research include:
  - (a) The attitude of the YP instructors to the programme.
  - (b) The attitude of the leavers to self-employment and work groups
  - (c) The dropout phenomenon.
  - (d) Implementation of the work Programme Training approach.