

One of the negative externalities of the education system in most developing countries, and particularly in Kenya, has been the rising level of educated unemployment. Although education is not in itself fully responsible for the problem of unemployment, it nonetheless, has been criticized for creating unrealistic aspirations among school leavers and a structural imbalance of matching employment opportunities and expectations.

The response of most governments to the problem of educated unemployment was mainly geared towards curriculum reforms by which the school curricula were diversified and vocationalized so as to offer broad based education leading to competency in a variety of skills. The main point of contention centered around the need to coordinate rather than separate general and vocational education so that formal education institutions can prepare students for productive activities after graduation.

The introduction of the 844 system of education in Kenya and its curricula prescriptions was a response towards the country's needs for development by providing students with varied opportunities for pursuing self employment, wage employment or further training.

Economics, that was formerly offered at form five and six, was then included in form three and four as an optional subject in the secondary school curriculum under the 844 system of education. In echoing the general philosophy of this system of education, the secondary school economics education generally aims at equipping the learner with knowledge and skills that will enable him to participate in income generating activities.

This study attempted to assess whether secondary school economics education prepared students for self-employment business activities in Kenya by:

1. Investigating on the cognitive business skills that were used by self-employed entrepreneurs to run their business.
- 2 finding out the opinions of teachers and students of economics on the relevance of the course for self-employment
- 3 assessing the teaching learning approaches regarded by teachers and students of economics as relevant to preparation for self-employment
- 4 analyses and assessing the extent to which entrepreneurial skills were measured by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) Economics examinations.

The study was carried out in Kisii District, Nyanza Province in Kenya in 1991. Data were collected from a sample of 24 secondary schools that were offering economics at form four by 1990, 29 economics teachers, 218 form four economics students, 50 self-employed entrepreneurs in Kisii Township and the 1989 and 1990 K.N.E.C. economics examinations.

The district was stratified into seven educational divisions. Stratified random sampling using the lottery technique was used to select the samples for schools and students. A scheme for determining sample sizes from a given population size, that was developed by Nwana (1982),

was used for determining the sample sizes for schools and students. All economics teachers in the samples of Schools participated in the study. On the other hand a purposive sampling method was applied in getting the sample of self-employed entrepreneurs.

These research instruments were used for collecting data, the questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for students; an interview schedule for self-employed entrepreneurs and a checklist for analyzing the 1989 and 1990 economics examinations items. The cognitive domain of the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom 1956) was used as a guide in item analysis. Data from the field were collected by the researcher and analyzed manually by developing a codebook.

The main findings of this study were: -

1. The self-employed entrepreneurs were positive about vocationalising the school curriculum and providing students with skills for self-employment in business activities.
2. Most of the cognitive business skills that were being used by the self-employed people were covered in the secondary school economics curriculum.
3. Knowledge of business skills was positively associated with the level of educational attainment.
4. Both the teachers and students had a positive perception of self-employment, where 72.4% of the teachers and 73.4% of the students perceived self-employment as a very useful form of occupation.
5. Most of the subject had moderate feeling about the relevance of economics to self-employment activities. Most of the topics in the current syllabus were identified as relevant to self-employment business activities by most of the subjects. Topics in Microeconomics were most regarded while topics in 'Economic Problems' in Macroeconomics were regarded least relevant to self-employment. For purpose of improving the course for self-employment, economics teachers gave recommendations, which included the introductions of 'Business Economics' and entrepreneurship education at the secondary school level.
6. Economics teachers were not using teaching approaches according to their order of effectiveness and relevance to self-employment. Most of them relied on the straight lecture method, which was regarded as least effective. None used project teaching, while few used business demonstrations and discussions, methods that were regarded as more effective for preparing students for self-employment. Students needed more practical and activity-centered approaches of learning.
7. Most of the teachers indicated that they attempted to inculcate in their teaching some of the entrepreneurial skills required in self-employment. Some of them did this through the use of local business examples, project assignments, problems solving techniques and guidance on business activities. However, the level of emphasis was moderate towards little. Similarly, only

36.2% of the students could mention at least one of the skills. This meant that the skills to be learned had not been articulated by the teachers and students.

8. Most of the teachers used written tests for assessment. A significant proportion also used oral tests and project exercises, though infrequently, as measurement devices. Examination items tended to emphasize on recall of factual knowledge, but a significant proportion of the items, particularly in paper 1 were measuring a wider base of skills and the application of knowledge to business situations. Most of the subjects seemed to recommend the use of project exercises for assessment and the inclusion of the project paper (section) and data response items in the economics examinations in future.

Based on these findings, the study gave a number of recommendations that were mainly centered on making secondary school economics education more relevant in preparing students for self-employment. Areas that require further research were also identified.