

# Assessment of Trainees' Perceptions and Satisfaction of Vocational Training and Skills Acquisition in Vocational Training Centres in Tana River County

Ooko James Opiyo<sup>1\*</sup>, Isaac Nangendo<sup>1</sup>, Sophia Ali<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Technology Education, University of Eldoret, P.O Box 1125, 30100, Eldoret Kenya

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\*Corresponding author: Ooko James Opiyo

Department of Technology Education, University of Eldoret, P.O Box 1125, 30100, Eldoret Kenya

## Abstract

Since vocational education gives young people the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workforce, it is crucial for human development. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how satisfied trainees were with their vocational training and skill development in Tana River County vocational training facilities. Data were gathered using a descriptive research approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods. There were nine Vocational Training Centres in Tana River County, with a total of two hundred and fifty trainees. The trainees were chosen at random. Trainee data was gathered using questionnaires. The SPSS version 26 was used to analyze, code, and critical quantitative data. Pie charts and graphs were used to display the data that had been analyzed. The results of the study showed that the trainees believed academic education was superior and that vocational skills were for failures.

**Keywords:** Perceptions, Satisfaction, trainees', Vocational training, skills acquisition, Vocational training centres.

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to its usefulness, vocational education continues to get a great deal of attention in many different parts of the world. Vocational education is defined by Tum (1996) as an official training program that equips students to work in a particular trade. Vocational education is defined by Van Ark (1992) as a kind of training intended to get students ready for careers in the industrial or commercial sectors. Achieng (2012) defines vocational education as the learning of specialized skills for career advancement or self-employment, such as working in fields like dressmaking, carpentry, masonry, and cookery. This type of training meets both the demands of the community and the individual's needs (Metto, 2016).

The U.N. General Assembly now acknowledges vocational education and training programmes as being crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Mayombe, 2023). Operational goal 4.4 of the SDGs, by 2030, will ensure a substantial level of state capabilities of equipping its citizens with vocational skills,

employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship due to reduced job opportunities that can be offered by the state (UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, Setiyawami *et al.*, (2019) have elucidated that vocational education is meant to provide opportunity to youth enabling a future of professional, well-mannered and competent generation. The study was conducted in Indonesia. In 2021, Nasir, Alvi, and Tarar evaluated TVET's role in fostering youth employment in Pakistan. Their findings showed that since TVET helped young people gain important skills, it was essential to helping them create income and boost their employment rate. According to Opoko *et al.*, (2018), who examined TVET's role in Nigeria's national building, it is essential, particularly in terms of socioeconomic development—which includes reducing poverty and creating jobs and income thus reducing the cases of rural urban migration and improvement of local technology.

Despite the importance of vocational training institutes to individuals and society as a whole, there have been challenges with trainee satisfaction and perception. Many students believe that these institutions

are for academic failures, particularly elementary school dropouts (Nyerere, 2009). This influences student enrollment in such facilities, which in turn affects the training facilities' intended goals and aims. McLeod (2007) and Gregory (1970) both defined perceptions as psychological theories. An initial generalization is known as a hypothesis. Prior experiences, idea comprehension, and beliefs shape perceptions. In this scenario, perceptions may stem from society's attitude toward such organizations, which has a detrimental impact on prospective candidates. The training they have received, the institution's facilities, and the trainers' qualifications can also shape trainee perceptions.

On the other hand, the quantity of learners enrolled in the training facility may be a measure of satisfaction. According to Koirala *et al.*, (2016), retaining a competitive advantage can be significantly aided by trainee satisfaction. To differentiate itself from other training organizations and establish a sustainable competitive edge, a training institute should place a high priority on service quality (Moore, 1987). Trainees are the "customers" of a training school, claims Huang (2009). Training institutions should prioritize the creation of satisfied trainees, according to Seymour (1993). It is essential to raise student satisfaction at the training facility level. If this is accomplished, the training institute's strategic goals will be more effective (Koirala *et al.*, 2016). Measuring training satisfaction can help organizations and training institutes identify their areas of strength and improvement (Koirala *et al.*, 2016). Beyond the more focused teaching assessments, satisfaction ratings cover more aspects of the trainee's learning experience (Koirala *et al.*, 2016). It takes an understanding of the factors that contribute to trainee satisfaction in addition to knowing how satisfied trainees are to fully appreciate the complexity of that learning experience (Koirala *et al.*, 2016). As a result, this study aims to investigate trainees' attitudes towards vocational training and learning new skills in Tana River County vocational training institutions.

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Concerns regarding enrolment are mounting, notwithstanding the rationale for the establishment of vocational training centres—namely, to provide young people with employable skills. While the percentage of students moving from primary to secondary school stays close to 70%, there is still a low enrollment in vocational training centres (MOYA, 2010). The principal aim of vocational training centres was to impart desirable vocational skills to teenagers who were not able to continue their education into secondary school. However, there remains a gap in the market because students must register for courses at these centres. There are concerns about why students aren't receiving the job-related training they need at these vocational training facilities. One reason is attitudes and satisfaction; as previously mentioned, many students, particularly primary school dropouts, perceive these centres as places for academic failures (Nyerere, 2009). This may influence students' perceptions of the training centre despite their enrollment, interfering with overall contentment, as generating satisfied trainees is the primary purpose of the training institute and is critical. The current study assessed the perceptions and satisfaction of individuals who had previously enrolled in vocational training centres. It focused on their experiences with vocational training and skill acquisition within their respective training centres.

## METHODOLOGY

### The Study Area

The study was conducted in Tana River County. The study was conducted in 9 selected vocational centers. The selected training centers for the study were situated within different sub-counties: Galole, Bura, and Tana Delta.

**Table 1: Selected vocational centers and number of trainees**

| No | Name of Institutions | Trainees   |
|----|----------------------|------------|
| 1  | Tarasaa VTC          | 55         |
| 2  | Odha VTC             | 50         |
| 3  | Naja VTC             | 80         |
| 4  | Garsen TVC           | 54         |
| 5  | Maziwa VTC           | 70         |
| 6  | Kipini VTC           | 65         |
| 7  | Garsen VTC           | 30         |
| 8  | Hola VTC             | 48         |
| 9  | Tumaini VTC          | 48         |
|    | <b>Total</b>         | <b>500</b> |

The target population included nine vocational training centres and 500 trainees.

### Research Design

A descriptive research design was used for the research assessment. This design was deemed the most convenient as the study aimed at the assessment of trainees' perceptions and satisfaction with vocational training and skills acquisition in vocational training centres in Tana River County. According to McCombes

(2019), a descriptive research study aims to identify the who, what, where, when, and how much of an issue is present. A descriptive survey was deemed appropriate since it enabled the study to collect significant data required for generalization.

### Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The research sample was chosen using purposive, simple random and proportional sampling techniques. Out of the 670 trainees, 250 were selected as a sample.

**Table 2: Sampling Framework**

| No | Name of Institutions       | Expected sample of Trainees |
|----|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1  | Tarasaa VTC                | 21                          |
| 2  | Odha VTC                   | 13                          |
| 3  | Naja (Private)             | 17                          |
| 4  | Garsen TVc (National Gov.) | 12                          |
| 5  | Maziwa VTC                 | 59                          |
| 6  | Kipini VTC                 | 48                          |
| 7  | Garsen VTC                 | 10                          |
| 8  | Hola VTC                   | 25                          |
| 9  | Tumaini VTC                | 45                          |
|    | <b>Total</b>               | <b>250</b>                  |

### Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires were distributed to the intended respondents in order to seek and collect primary data. The questionnaire included open- and closed-ended items and utilized a Likert scale to collect respondents' perceptions and satisfaction. The questionnaires were physically distributed. This approach was chosen as it was less time-consuming, less expensive, and encouraged a high percentage of individual responses, enabling detailed data collection (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015).

### Data Processing and Analysis

In order to establish behaviour patterns and particular outcomes seen during the research process, the obtained data was analyzed. Depending on whether the data was quantitative or qualitative, the raw data was coded, categorized, and organized. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) was used to analyze the data. While Pearson correlation was used for inferential statistics, percentages, and frequencies were used for descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

### Perception of trainees' towards vocational training and skills acquisition in vocational training centers

The study evaluated the trainees' level of contentment with the trade areas they were pursuing and the factors behind their selection of a particular course. The respondents' views and opinions are displayed in the table below.

**Table 3: Trainee's Level of Contentment in the Trade Areas they pursue**

| Level of Contentment | Frequency  | Percent    |
|----------------------|------------|------------|
| Highly contented     | 20         | 9.6        |
| Contented            | 7          | 3.4        |
| Not contented        | 150        | 72.5       |
| Neutral              | 30         | 14.5       |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>207</b> | <b>100</b> |

Lopez-Bonilla *et al.*, (2012) proposed that for trainees to be satisfied and motivated in their selected courses, they must have professional goals. The findings revealed that 150 (72.5%) of the trainees were dissatisfied, with 13% reporting satisfaction and 14.5% staying indifferent about their comfort with their selected trade areas. This shows that many trainees needed more motivation or had a negative attitude about their selected professional options. Schoon (2007) and Schoon and Polek (2011) found that trainees with high career goals and positive attitudes performed better than those with low career aspirations and negative inclinations. Willcoxson and Wynder's (2010) positive opinions are good predictors, as trainees with the correct attitudes will be more interested in their coursework. In Tana River

County, vocational training institutes are still seen unfavourably by the local community as "Schools for Academic Failures," meaning that they are exclusively designed for students who did not perform well in regular academic programs. As a result of these negative attitudes in the communities, trainees in the pursued courses have shown a lack of desire.

**Factors Influencing the Choice of Courses Pursued by Trainees**

The study sought to understand the influence behind the trainees' course choices in the training. Questionnaires were provided to trainees to reveal what propelled them to select a particular course.

**Table 6: Trainee's Choice of Trade**

| Trainee's Choice of Trade  | Frequency  | Percent      |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Selected by School         | 30         | 14.5         |
| College Alumni             | 26         | 12.6         |
| Trainees' own choice       | 46         | 22.2         |
| Sponsor/Guardian influence | 105        | 50.7         |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>207</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

The research findings indicate that 50% of the trainees were influenced or persuaded by their sponsors to enroll in the training programs. This suggests that these trainees did not enroll voluntarily but rather due to external pressures or obligations. Only 22.2% of the trainees enrolled on their initiative, indicating a relatively small proportion of individuals actively pursuing the courses. Furthermore, the statistics show that just 14.5% of the trainees received their courses through the college selection and admission department, indicating that the traditional approach of selecting and enrolling in courses independently was not widely used. 12.6% of trainees sought advice and persuasion from college alumni, indicating that feedback from previous graduates had a minimal part in most trainees' decision-making processes. These findings highlight the lack of voluntary enrollment in the training centres and suggest that

external factors such as sponsorships, obligations, and influences hold substantial sway over the trainees' decisions. It is critical to explore the significance of these findings to understand trainee motivations and preferences better and ensure that suitable measures are implemented to encourage a more informed and voluntary approach to course registration.

**Degree of Satisfaction among Trainees Towards Vocational Training and Skills Acquisition**

The second research goal examined the trainees' level of satisfaction with their vocational training and skill acquisition at Tana River County's vocational training centres. The respondents were presented with a satisfaction scale consisting of five statements—four being strongly agreed, three being agree, two being disagreed, and one being severely disagreed.

**Table 4: Degree of Satisfaction**

| Degree of Satisfaction  | N   | Mean        | Std. Deviation |
|---|-----|-------------|----------------|
| I am satisfied with the courses offered   | 207 | 2.35        | 1.126          |
| I am satisfied with the training methodologies                                    | 207 | 1.94        | 1.258          |
| I am satisfied with the workshops and work benches & in the respective department | 207 | 2.14        | 1.257          |
| I'm pleased with the equipment available.   | 207 | 2.64        | 1.127          |
| I am satisfied with the library and learning resources.                           | 207 | 2.23        | .925           |
| <b>Averages</b>   |     | <b>2.26</b> | <b>1.1386</b>  |

The scores were given under a scale of  $1 \leq x \leq 4$ , signifying that a mean score of  $1 \leq 1.95$  equals to disagree strongly;  $2.0 \leq 2.95$  disagree;  $3.0 \leq 3.95$  Agree, and  $39.5 \leq 4.0$  strongly agree. The average mean score was 2.26, indicating that all the trainees disagreed, signifying they were unsatisfied with the training and skills acquisition process. The VTC manager's need for well-equipped workshops and laboratories, as well as the

absence of learning resources, incubation centres, and reference materials, contribute to trainee dissatisfaction. Additionally, trainees are given an excessive quantity of work, especially in theoretical and support areas. The County Directors of Vocational Training also noted low instruction quality, a need for a clearly defined policy for partnering with industry and higher TVET institutions, and inadequate facilities, including classrooms,

workshops, labs, instructional materials, tools, and equipment.

Poor standards or state of the existing facilities absenteeism by both trainers and trainees in the VTCs is attributed to leisure seeking and peer pressure with the resultant consequence being school dropout and poor performance in the skills acquisition, no VTCs available to cater for students with special needs such as the deaf or mentally handicapped, lack of school fees, child

labour, and teenage pregnancies, even though the VTCs were available, they are few and inaccessible due to their uneven distribution within the county leading trainees to walk for about 2 hours, clashes among the communities The study findings contradict the viewpoint expressed by Seymour (1993). Seymour posited that the primary objective of training institutions is to create satisfied trainees by providing up-to-date resources for skill acquisition.

**Table 5: Trainees' response regarding Trainers Qualification on skills Acquisitions**

| Availability of Trainers | Frequency  | Percentage    |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Yes                      | 155        | 74.9%         |
| No                       | 52         | 25.1%         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>207</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

Most trainees, 155 (74.9%), expressed concerns about the insufficiency of trainers, particularly in technical courses, which significantly compromised the quality of training and hindered skill acquisition. 52(25.1%) of the trainees felt there was no trainer shortage. According to Sang *et al.*, (2012), inadequate trainers are the leading cause of trainees' limited development of practical skills and interpersonal abilities in vocational training facilities; inadequate trainer coverage leads to inadequate syllabus coverage; this is a serious issue that needs to be addressed right away.

The high dropout rates among trainees further underscore the negative impact of this issue, as young people become dissatisfied with the training centres and spread negative perceptions about the quality of training provided. The research findings corroborated those of another study (Kiplagat, 2020), which discovered that excessive workloads for trainees, particularly in theory and support subjects, as well as a lack of adequate, qualified, and trained staff to handle guidance and counselling matters, were the leading causes of low completion rates in VTCs. Trainees were negatively impacted by Board of Management (BOM) instructors' inadequate pay.

According to the VTC managers, there was a shortage of trainers in each specialized field designated by the county government. As a result, the centres had to hire instructors who lacked official certification as trainers but possessed technical expertise in specific fields. This indicates a deficiency in the training program's quality, leading to inadequate acquisition of

vocational skills. These findings were consistent with the observation made by Kirui (2022) that the majority of TVET facilities or centres operate with insufficient training personnel. Addressing the issue of inadequate trainers in vocational training centres is crucial for improving the quality of training and enhancing skill acquisition among trainees. These, in essence, affect the trainees' level of satisfaction with these institutes.

**Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables**

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient assessed the relationship among the study variables. The task assesses both the strength of the link and the direction of the variables. This implies that as these variables change, the development of vocational skills follows a similar trend. According to Mhadavi (2013), a connection is considered very weak if it is less than 0.3, weak if it is between 0.3 and 0.5, and moderate if it is between 0.5 and 0.7. A relationship is considered vital when the correlation coefficient is more significant than 0.7. The trainee perspective showed a strong correlation ( $r = 0.859$ ) with the learning of vocational skills. With  $r = 0.800$ , there was a significant correlation between trainees' satisfaction levels and their learning of occupational skills. The study showed a strong correlation between trainees' perceptions and their acquisition of skills. Vocational training institutions should endeavour to establish a good learning environment that stimulates motivation and involvement in order to improve the trainee perspective. Encouraging students to expand their knowledge and skill sets will improve their attitude towards training.

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis**

| Variables                   | Pearson Correlation | Acquisition of Vocational Skills |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Trainees perception         | Pearson Correlation | .859**                           |
|                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                             |
|                             | N                   | 207                              |
| Trainees Satisfaction Level | Pearson Correlation | .800**                           |
|                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                             |
|                             | N                   | 207                              |

| Variables  | Pearson Correlation | Acquisition of Vocational Skills |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Acquisition of Vocational Skills                             | Pearson Correlation | 1                                |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                                  |
|  | N                   | 207                              |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                     |                                  |

## CONCLUSION

According to the study findings, trainees were not passionate about the trade areas chosen. This shows that most trainees were not motivated or had a positive outlook for vocational education. Vocational courses were seen negatively in Tana River County. Vocational centres were characterized as "Schools for academic failures" that did not achieve well in formal education. Because of this negativity, communities shunned these institutions, preferring to send their children elsewhere but not within Tana River County. Satisfaction is associated with a favourable perception from trainees and trainers, depending on the learning environment. Trainees in Tana River County vocational training centres are dissatisfied with the courses they are pursuing and the services offered to them. This dissatisfaction was caused by a lack of modern equipment, no reference materials, and no assessment feedback, and the training process was not monitored and evaluated.

## RECOMMENDATION

Advocate for policy interventions that can change negative perceptions and promote the value of vocational education.

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