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The Impact of TVET on Ghana's Socio-Economic Development: A Case Study of ICCES TVET Skills Training in Two Regions of Ghana

Ninette Afi Pongo

Department of Design and Technology
College of Technology Education- Kumasi
University of Education, Winneba

Bernard Effah

Department of Interior Architecture and Furniture Production
Kumasi Polytechnic

Benedict Osei-Owusu

Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
College of Agricultural Education – Mampong
University of Education, Winneba

Elizabeth Obinnim

Faculty of Art and Design
Ho Polytechnic

Francis Kwame Sam

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Technology Education- Kumasi
University of Education, Winneba
Ghana-West Africa

Abstract

Integrated Community Centre for Employable Skills (ICCES) is an agency under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare with policy objective of filling the gap in employment generation by developing the young human resources in line with the poverty alleviation goal of the government of Ghana. The purpose of the study was to find out how the ICCES training programmes are achieving their purpose of increasing access of young person's to skills acquisition and empowerment for productive employment. To harness the needed information, questionnaire, interview and observation, were employed in gathering data from the subjects. The results suggest that participants in the survey had all conferred that the programmes have being helpful to the communities in securing suitable employment that allows them to generate income within the social, family and financial constraints that they face in their communities and as such their social and economic status has being impacted positively.

Key Words: ICCES, TVET, socio-economic impact, unemployment, Ashanti region and Brong Ahafo region

1.1 Introduction

There is an urgent awareness among policy makers in many African countries and the international donor community of the critical role that Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) can play in national development. The increasing importance that African governments now attach to TVET is reflected in the various Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers that governments have developed in collaboration with The World Bank (African Union, 2007). One of the most important features of TVET is its orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills. TVET delivery systems are therefore well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Africa needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty (AU, 2007).

Another important characteristic of TVET is that it can be delivered at different levels. This means that TVET institutions can respond to the different training needs of learners from different socio-economic and academic backgrounds, and prepare them for gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods. The youth, the poor and the vulnerable of society can therefore benefit from TVET. As the economic, cultural and technological changes unfold, the active youth all over the world need to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills. TVET plays a very important role in the economic growth and development of countries and well-trained and motivated workforce maximizes output to expedite socio-economic development.

The African Union (AU) has a vision of “an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa, driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy.” This vision is predicated on the development of the continent’s human resources. The AU recognizes the importance of TVET as a means of empowering individuals to take control of their lives and recommends therefore the integration of vocational training into the general education system. The AU also recognizes the fact that vast numbers of young people are outside the formal school system, and consequently recommends the integration of non-formal learning methodologies and literacy programmes into national TVET programmes (African Union, 2007).

It is within this framework that the African Union Commission is spearheading the development of a new strategy to revitalize TVET in Africa. Poor people, especially women and children, suffer most from various forms of social and economic deprivation, including hunger and malnutrition, inadequate healthcare, limited access to education, and low self-esteem. Young unemployed people without any productive usage of their time are easily entrained into crime and violence (World Bank, 1991). The risk is greatest with unemployed youth in conflict or post-conflict areas. Poverty is therefore a threat to national stability and good governance. All over the world, governments have embraced the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aim to significantly reduce the number of people living below the poverty line, improve access to education, promote gender equality, improve maternal and child health, ensure environmental sustainability and promote global partnership between developed and developing countries. The first goal of the MDGs is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. And the key to poverty alleviation is economic growth and the creation of employment for all. However, poor people without employable skills cannot benefit from the growth process. The challenge then is to raise the productive capacity of the poor, the youth and the vulnerable of society through the acquisition of specific job competencies (World Bank, 2011).

The UN Millennium Development goals also underpin Technical and Vocational Education and training and it has been established that productive unemployment and self employment are the best weapons for fighting poverty. TVET taps the resources of people and enterprises to contribute to economic dynamism. TVET helps people develop capacities and competence which are necessary for the implementation of policies in sections such as health, energy, environment and rural development and for ensuring their broad based impact in society (Seyfried, 1998).

Integrated Community Centers for Employable Skills (ICCES) is an agency under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare with policy objective of filling the gap in employment generation by developing the young human resources in line with the poverty alleviation goals of the government of Ghana through the establishment of community-based vocational training centers throughout Ghana with the view to making the youth employable within and around their own communities. In spite of all these, the vision to combat youth unemployment and rural-urban drift has not yielded the best of results.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The economic systems of countries are marked by a complex mixture of urban and rural areas, modern economic sections, traditional crafts, traditional trade and an often very important informal sector. Ghana is no exception and under the present TVET system in Ghana, several agencies have been mandated to carry out TVET policies. Most TVET agencies are responsible for the training of employable skills to the youth in their communities so as to prevent rural-urban drift as well as to alleviate poverty to the minimum. One such agency is ICCES, which provides training to people in their communities.

With all these trainings, the problem of rural-urban drift and high unemployment rate still continues coupled with its corresponding poverty. It was therefore expedient to assess the impact ICCES training programmes has had on the people they have trained and how far they had carried out their mandate.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

As the economic, cultural and technological changes unfold, the active youth of Ghana need to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills. TVET plays a very important role in the economic growth and development of countries and well-trained and motivated workforce maximizes output to expedite socio-economic development. The purpose of this study is therefore, to find out how far the ICCES training programmes are achieving their purpose of increasing access of young person's to skills acquisition and empowerment for productive employment. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the economic situation of the communities before and after implementing ICCES programmes, alongside the impact of vocational training for individual graduates based on their standard of living.
2. To determine the overall social impact of the ICCES system at the societal level in terms of its entrepreneurial, social cohesion, sustainable development, active citizenship and community building.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the economic situation of the communities before and after implementing ICCES programmes?
2. What is the social impact of the ICCES system at the societal level in terms of its entrepreneurial, social cohesion, sustainable development, active citizenship and community building?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The population of the country is fast growing with its corresponding unemployment rate and a study of this nature will be beneficial and useful to ICCES, government agencies, educational institutions, the society and the nation as a whole.

Among the significance of the study are:

1. The outcome of the study will add to the stock of knowledge already established about TVET.
2. The results of the study will reveal to communities the significance and importance of TVET.
3. The findings will reveal the employment and unemployment situations in the communities involved.
4. The upshot of the study will pave way for further research to be carried out on the evaluation of ICCES training programmes.
5. Finally, the result, suggestions and recommendations of the study will go a long way to improve ICCES training programmes and decrease rural-urban migration as well as reduce high rate of poverty.

1.6 Integrated Community Center for Employable Skills (ICCES)

According to the ICCES Charter (2004), Integrated Community Centre for employable Skills (ICCES) is an agency under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW) with policy objective to increase access of young persons' to skills acquisition and empowerment for productive employment. **The vision of ICCES** is to combat youth unemployment, rural-urban drift and contribute to the development of micro and small- scale enterprise among the youth.

ICCES exists to fill a major gap in employment generation by developing young human resources in line with the poverty alleviation goal of the government of Ghana through the establishment of community-based vocational training centers throughout Ghana (ICCES, 2004). The centers train the youth in particular with the view to making them employable within and around their own communities. ICCES is currently providing employable skills training of 2 to 3 years duration in various trades to about 5,000 youths in Ghana. The organization currently has about 63 Centers in 50 Districts in 9 out of the 10 Regions of Ghana.

ICCES provides flexibility in entry level in terms of age, place, pace and duration of study. The centers use multimedia teaching-learning packages which include self-instructional print and audio-video materials, face-to-face counseling, workshop training, hands-on experience, interactive radio counseling, and the use of mobile phone for instant messaging and practical / practice teaching at selected programme centers. Below are the programmes run by ICCES;

Technical Courses

- *Building Trades* Block laying and Concreting, Carpentry and Joinery, Plumbing, Steel Bending Painting and Decorating, Draughtsmanship

- *Electronics and Electricals Trades*
General electrical house wiring, Radio and TV repairs, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning
- *Metal Works:*
Welding and Fabrication, Blacksmithing
- *Auto General Works*
Auto Mechanics, Auto Electricals, Auto Body Works
- *Business Studies*
Secretarial Studies, I. C. T Studies

Vocational Courses

Food processing/Catering, Hairdressing, Dressmaking and Tailoring, Batik and Tie/Dye making, Kente Weaving, Textiles, Rattan and Bamboo Crafts, Bead making, Pottery and Ceramics, Leather works, Soap making, Pomade making.

Vocational Agriculture

Fish farming, Beekeeping, Mushroom farming, Poultry and Livestock, Snail farming Vegetable food crop

ICCES also provides short courses of 3-6 months duration in the following:

Batik, tie& dye/screen printing, Rural Crafts, Bamboo and Rattan Crafts, Soap/Pomade making, Food Processing, Agriculture/ Snail/Mushroom/Grass cutter, Beekeeping

2.0 Methodological Approach

2.1 Research design

The study was a case study of the two regions so as to know the situations at the ICCES centers. A case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources (Yin, 2003). It is also an evidence study which probes deeply and analyses interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth. The strategy gives a rich understanding of the context of a research and the processes being enacted. It also has a considerable ability to generate answers to questions ‘why, what and how’, and provides sources of new research questions. To harness the needed information, a questionnaire was employed in gathering data from the subjects. The research undertaken in the framework of this study also focused on a close review and a critical analysis of evaluation studies and documents which had been available in the regions. The research was concerned with the impact of TVET and Ghana’s socio-economic development. The study engaged multiple strategy of both exploration and explanation of ICCES TVET as the ordinal measure. The Research was an evaluation case study conducted by a survey. The study was conducted in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana. In all, thirteen (13) ICCES centers were involved; ICCES staffs and ICCES students were assessed. The population comprised of all ICCES staffs and students in the two regions.

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire, interview and observation were employed in gathering data from the subjects. The data and findings were gathered and assimilated according to the profiling indicators set forth in the questionnaire guidelines. In addition to conducting a review of available programme documents from the ICCES centers, questionnaires were drafted with the intention to collect mainly qualitative and inferential data. However, a portion was included for quantified and enumerated data reflecting personal and demographic information of the subjects who were interviewed, and should help to construct a general purview of the socio-economic situation facing ICCES programme participants. In all, the researchers studied a sample of two hundred and ninety-six (296) respondents.

A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into three section; bio-data, economic impact and social impact. The questionnaire items were close ended form as they ranked alternatives based on how one feels about the issue and checked it against the suggested responses. The questionnaire was used mostly because of the uniformity of questions for all participants and also anonymity of respondents. The second instrument used by the researchers to request information was structured and unstructured interview. Interview was used alongside other instruments in order to have a face to face situation with participants to obtain reliable and valid measure of behaviours and attitudes.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The research team comprised of the lead researchers and five research assistants, who conducted one-on-one interview with individual respondents to gather information on the social and economic impact of ICCES vocational training programmes. The sample respondents were all interviewed and consulted through structured guidelines developed for the questionnaires administered during field activities by the lead researchers and research assistants. The interviewers were charged with conducting simultaneous translation of the questionnaires from English into Spoken “Twi” for some of the respondents who gave all responses and remarks in “Twi”, which was then translated and recorded into written English on the individual questionnaires. All of the data collected in the field and recorded on the questionnaires were gone over collectively by the lead researchers and the research assistants.

3.0 Results

Table 1 revealed the demographics information of respondents where 33.8% were staff of ICCES and 66.2% being students of ICCES programmes. There were 29.7% males and 70.3% females comprising of both regions, thus Ashanti region (37.8%) and Brong Ahafo region (62.2%). Majority (29.7%) of the respondents were between 24 to 34 years old, while those above 55 years constituted the minority (5.4%). About 41.9% have completed basic education and 32.4% also having completed tertiary education.

Table 1: Demographic Results of Respondents

	Statistics	Frequency (%)
Status in ICCES	Staff	100 (33.8 %)
	Students	196 (66.2 %)
Gender	Male	88 (29.7 %)
	Female	208 (70.3 %)
Age	55+	16 (5.4 %)
	45-54	64 (21.6 %)
	35-44	32 (10.8 %)
	25-34	88 (29.7 %)
	18-24	72 (24.3 %)
	Less than 18	24 (8.1 %)
Educational level	No education	40 (13.5 %)
	Basic	124 (41.9 %)
	Secondary	36 (12.2 %)
Region of school	Tertiary	96 (32.4 %)
	Ashanti Region	112 (37.8 %)
	Brong Ahafo Region	184 (62.2 %)

Table 2 shows the economic impact of ICCES programmes. The mean rating of each of the items under consideration were computed as presented in Table 2. The computed means were then compared with the theoretical mean rating of 3.0 to determine the economic state of the programmes.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Economic Impact of ICCES Programme

No.	Items on the economic impact of ICCES	Mean
1	What was the economic situation of the community before the start of the ICCES programme?	1.61 (Bad)
2	What is the economic situation of the community now?	4.20 (Good)
3	What was the state of livelihood of the people in the community before the ICCES programme?	1.62 (Bad)
4	What is the state of livelihood of the people now?	4.20 (Good)
5	What is your impression of the ICCES programme economically?	3.51 (Good)
6	To what extent is the ICCES programme matching supply with demand?	3.30 (Good)
7	How will you rate the linkage of TVET to traditional trades and livelihoods in the community	3.30 (Good)
8	How does the ICCES programme addresses the basic skills deficits and illiteracy	3.27 (Good)
9	What is the disparity rate between ICCES graduates and others	3.85 (Good)
10	What is the overall impact of the ICCES system at the societal level in terms of its entrepreneurial, sustainable development, active citizenship and community building?	3.59 (Good)

From Table 2, majority of the respondents responded in the affirmative for all the items but one which indicated the bad economic state of the communities involved before the start of the ICCES programmes in those areas.

The remaining items showed that the programme have improved the economic standards of the communities concerned. The social impact of ICCES programmes is shown in Table 3. Respondents were asked to rate items on a yes and no basis of their perception on the social status contributions of the programmes. As depicts in Table 3, respondents were positive (yes) of majority (7) of the items as against three that they responded negative (no).

Table 3: Mean ratings on the Social impact of ICCES programme

No.	Items on the Social impact of ICCES	Mean
1	Has the programme reduced the rate of social vices in the community?	1.14 (Yes)
2	Has the attitude of the youth been impacted in any way?	1.24 (Yes)
3	Are employers involved in ensuring that the ICCES programme corresponds to labour market demand?	1.38 (Yes)
4	Are there measures to assess the impact and relevance of the ICCES programme?	1.09 (Yes)
5	Is the community involved in defining outcomes, assessments and certification?	1.66 (No)
6	Is there a means where outcome and monitoring results feed into policy making?	1.84 (No)
7	Has ICCES programme socially impacted this community?	1.15 (Yes)
8	ICCES graduate are highly recognized in this community	1.24 (Yes)
9	Are there other impacts (social cohesion, democracy) which can be recognized which may not have been formally sought?	1.38 (Yes)
10	Are there (unintended) negative impacts (migration) of the programme?	1.85 (No)

The difference between the two regions on the socio-economic impact of ICCES programmes were assessed with one-way ANOVA.

Table 4: ANOVA on the Socio-Economic Impact of ICCES between the Two Regions under Consideration

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.24649	1	0.24649	0.173113	0.6797	4.098172
Within Groups	54.10687	38	1.423865			
Total	54.35336	39				

The ANOVA between Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions on the socio-economic impact of ICCES activities did not show any statistical significant difference between the two regions, $F(1, 38) = 0.173$, $P > 0.05$.

Difference between staff and students were also looked at. As proved in Table 5, there was no statistical significant difference between ICCES staff and students, $F(1, 38) = 0.070$, $P > 0.05$.

Table 5: ANOVA on the Socio-Economic Impact of ICCES between Staff and Students

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.093122	1	0.093122	0.070217	0.792454	4.098172
Within Groups	50.39622	38	1.326216			
Total	50.48934	39				

4.0 Discussions

From the results, it is clear that the provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a necessary intervention in attempts to empower people and reduce poverty. This makes it clear that if people, especially the youth, are equipped with employable skills with which they can access labour markets, then the incidence of unemployment, poverty and other consequences of social and economic exclusion would be reduced in Ghana (Famiwole, Oke & Amadii, 2012).

As indicated by the survey results, all the issues relating to the economic status of the communities involved proved that the economic state of the respondents was not the best before the start of the programmes. It was also evident that the state of livelihood in the communities was now better than before and this is not the case in the two regions as argued by Emeka (2011), that the result of unemployment has attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. As to how far the programme has being able to address the basic skills deficits and the matching of supply with demand was also a great impact that the communities had realised and this substantiated what Johanson and Adams (2004), that TVET should concentrate on the actual needs of labour market and focus on the output, design flexible programmes that serve the needs of production and service sectors and design practices and learning experiences that best serve job requirements.

TVET is expected to mobilize resources needed to face the present problems and future challenges but if it fails and create mismatch between institutional training and the needs of industry then there will be serious implications for the employability of graduates from the TVET institutions. This condition, according to Afeti, Baffour-Awuah and Budu-Smith (2003), ultimately has implications for the nation's economy. Ironically, it's not all ICCES graduate who become prepared for the job market or self-employment, thereby as Gondwe and Walenkamp (2011) also added that if the actual content of the TVET programmes does not meet the needs of the workplace and for that matter ICCES must review their programmes from time to time.

We largely accept that TVET must equip men and women for the job market or self-employment, thereby increasing their self-reliance and self-confidence. This may be seen as a means to promote human resource development and consequently, can be regarded as a panacea to combat the ever increasing poverty problem in Ghana as the overall impact of the ICCES programmes at the societal level in terms of its entrepreneurial, sustainable development, active citizenship and community building has all being impacted positively.

According to the ILO (2000), TVET prepares people for employment since it is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude for the world of work. It does also shape the social fiber of the society. Thus, the main goal of TVET is to increase the employability of TVET graduates. The participation in the labor force of the TVET graduates is an indication of intent to actively engage in the production of goods and services. This is a necessary step towards employment and social well-being. Most of the respondents agreed that the social status of their communities has improved at the backdrop of high poverty incidence which meant insufficient economic and market activities and opportunities for economic growth and participation of the population. The economic and social performance of the regions has seen substantial impact on labor force participation of TVET graduates from the ICCES programmes. In the view of Usman and Tyabo (2013), Vocational education and job training programme has been an integral part of national developments strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resources development, productivity, and economic growth.

More modern machines, tools and equipment should be used in the training programmes as well, and graduates should have better access to procuring modern machines and equipment for use in their businesses. Any form of training should be based on improving the life and livelihoods of men and women who are without the means of viable and meaningful skills development and workplace training according to the best way of carrying out workplace functions and the performance of jobs (UNESCO, 2002). Once people are actively engaged in employment there will be the need for the development of partnerships with other organizations as well as financial and technical support for programme operations as well to students and graduates so as to curtail the issues raised by African Union (2012), that majority of African youth continue to face unemployment, underemployment and poverty due to lack of skills, lack of relevant education, denied access to capital, and many unmet expectations.

5.0 Conclusions

This study has shown in a comprehensive preview of the social and economic impact of the ICCES vocational training program in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana. The figures and descriptive information have provided an overall synopsis of the impact of the ICCES vocational programmes. While the information specified here was not intended to provide statistical accuracy in relationship to the sample of respondents, all of the information gathered has relevance to the subject herein which is how students and staff feel about the success and effectiveness of the ICCES training relative to the changes it has brought about in their lives respectively. By and large, majority of the cases in the assessment have all agreed that the programmes have being helpful to people in securing suitable employment that allows them to generate income within the social, familial and financial constraints they face in their communities.

While the increase in subsistence from income generated under employment activities sustained by the training received from ICCES may in fact seem slim to marginal, overall, the personal testimony given shows that, this seemingly slight increase in household income and sustenance has made not only an obvious impact on the lives of the bulk of ICCES graduates, but this impact as revealed by the programme participants themselves shows this perceived subtlety to be a profound change in the lives and livelihoods of people utilizing the skills training that they have received. In conclusion, there is a very genuine opportunity to support the programmes of ICCES and in an attempt to craft a comprehensive programme that can be demonstrated as a feasible and readily available model for workforce capacity building, skills training and livelihoods development in other deprived communities.

The scope for a considerable up-scaling and expansion of programming maybe possible, and with the appropriate linkages, technical support and design for the future course of strategic programming, ICCES shows the potential to become flagship programmes in Ghana on how to demonstrate an effective capacity building program for livelihoods development, and skills training through technical and vocational education.

6.0 Recommendations

Technical and Vocational education and training in Ghana is changing in terms of structure, programs, processes, and practices in order to be effective in improving the quality of learning outcomes, making it more accessible and attractive to all, and ensuring it is relevant and connected to the world of work. Therefore, it is recommended that:

A good number of ICCES graduates were women who tend to be interested to work in their homes in self-employed businesses. In this respect, if these women are unable to secure the necessary resources, they will be unable to successfully start their businesses. This is mainly due to a lack of access to capital. In addition, there are not enough employment opportunities particularly for women, the majority of whom want to work independently from within their homes and are in need of start-up capital or access to credit to purchase materials for initiating business activities. The state should therefore have a system to support these women.

Secondly, the donor community has a role to play in helping to harmonize the TVET system. The current practice whereby each donor works separately and leaves when specific projects ends does not help the country very much in terms of vocational training. Continuity and sustainability hardly occur in practice because efforts are not pulled together to consolidate interventions.

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