

Development of Vocational Education in Uganda: The Potential of Internationalisation

Aurelia Atukwase

MVP, Researcher
Faculty of Vocational Studies,
Department of Art and Industrial Design,
Kyambogo University
aureatukwase@gmail.com

Tiivistelmä

Katsausartikkelissa tarkastellaan kansainvälisyyden roolia ammatillisen koulutuksen kehittämisessä Ugandassa ja kuvataan millä tavalla kansainvälistyminen paikallisen ammatillisen koulutuksen sektorilla on toistaiseksi toteutunut. Erityisesti huomiota kohdistetaan ammatillisen koulutuksen kehittämisessä olennaisiin avaintekijöihin. Katsauksessa päädytään havaintoon että ammatillisen koulutuksen kansainvälistyminen on ollut vaatimattominta erityisesti useimmissa teknisen alan oppilaitoksissa. Sen sijaan Kyambogon yliopisto, joka on yksi paikallisista valtion yliopistoista, on

ollut aktiivinen toimija ammatillisen koulutuksen ja kansainvälistymisen kehittämisessä. Kirjoittaja on huolissaan ammatillisten oppilaitosten jäämisestä sivuun tästä kehityksestä. Katsauksessa päädytäänkin kysymään kriittisesti eri sidosryhmiltä: olisiko kansainvälistymisen syytä saada enemmän huomiota ja painoarvoa paikallisen ammatillisen koulutuksen piirissä?

Asiasanat: *amatillinen koulutus, Uganda, kansainvälistyminen, kehittäminen*

Introduction

In this piece of writing the author focuses mainly on two constructs: - internationalisation and vocational education (VE). Anyway can internationalisation of VE contribute to development of the sector? How can we organise teaching and learning to cater for the internationalisation aspect. Internationalisation in this respect is more specific to bi-lateral links between governments and vocational institutions in different countries for collaboration in curriculum development, research and student/staff exchange aspects. This is because internationalization in the current world “is much broader than the export of education services; it involves scholarship, research and management issues as well as staff, domestic student and curriculum issues” (Hamilton, 1998, p.1). No doubt this new understanding is often recognised across the globe (UNEVOC, 2006; World Bank, 2012). However, trying to marry internationalisation with VE development is quite complicated. One may even wonder whether the internationalisation of VE will automatically lead to the development of the sector or not.

This paper therefore assesses the role of internationalisation towards the development of VE in Uganda. With respect to curriculum development, research and student/staff exchange, the author expounds on the concept of internationalisation. The paper is organised under four sections. The first section is a debate about whether internationalisation is a VE development issue or not. In the second section a description of key salient facts about the level of internationalisation of Uganda’s VE sector is provided. The third section highlights the factors

influencing the development of VE. The last section is a way forward in relation to what policies might be adopted to improve the development of VE in Uganda.

Is Internationalisation a VE Development Issue?

Internationalisation is always seen as another way of development especially at institutional levels (World Bank, 2012; UNEVOC, 2006). However, the question of whether internationalisation is a development issue in the vocational sector takes the centre stage. In this paper the writers argue that much as internationalisation is a key indicator of development, this does not necessarily mean that for any educational institution which incorporates the aspect of internationalisation is automatically developed. This is because the concept of development varies across time and space (DFID, 2007). For instance in the Millennium Development Goals for Uganda, internationalisation is among the key development goals to be achieved by the year 2040 (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2013). In view of VE, this can be taken to mean that the way an educational institution understands internationalisation in this contemporary world will automatically explain whether it is a development issue or not.

Level of Internationalisation of VE

In Uganda internationalisation is not a new concept in the history of VE. However, so far there is barely any empirical data in Uganda which clearly stipulate the extent of internationalisation of the VE sector. Most of the recent studies in Uganda tend to tackle interna-

tionalisation in form of real life of projects with less emphasis on VE curriculum, research development and student/staff exchange concerns (Kyambogo University, 2008; Nahamya, 2014). Although the BTVET Act, 2008 in its objective three (3) expressed the need for promotion and coordination of BTVET in objective three, the objective is not clear about the level of internationalisation; it is only specific about the levels of training mainly from certificate up to diploma.

Despite of the above facts, Kyambogo University (KyU) being a centre of vocational studies in Uganda has implemented a number of projects in view of internationalisation. For instance in 2007, NOMA (Norwegian Masters Abroad) project, a Masters programme in Vocational Pedagogy was launched (Mjelde, 2008). The programme since 2008 to 2013 has been a collaborative initiative between three countries: Uganda - KyU; South Sudan - Upper Nile University; and Norway - Akershus University of Applied Sciences. Currently NOHRED project is also an initiative supporting learners who enroll for Master of Vocational Pedagogy (MVP). In addition, other projects like FK – a vocational teacher exchange program has had great impact of the development of VE at KyU. Likewise ReWell is still an on-going project at KyU which seeks for new curricula and pedagogy for regional collaboration between universities, adult and vocational education institutes. Despite the noted progress through the various projects, the current VE policy and practice in Uganda lack conceptual and empirical analysis of internationalisation in relation to development of VE. Moreover most researchers who attempt to assess the extent of internationalisation of VE curricula in their countries often testi-

fy that it not easy to justify (Back, Davis and Olsen, 1997; Harman, 2005; Leask, 2002). Yet globally debates pertaining to internationalisation of VE have been attracting attention of researchers (CIMO, 2009; DFID, 2007; UNEVOC, 2006; World Bank, 2012).

Factors Influencing the Development of Vocational Education

Although internationalisation can be considered to be ‘pertinent’ for vocational education providers all over the globe, there is need to assess the factors responsible for ‘positive’ and ‘negative consequences on the side of vocational institutions in the less developed countries like Uganda. No doubt it is more probable that optimists will point to Germany, Japan, Norway, Finland, and Switzerland as a demonstration of what can be gained from internationalisation of vocational education. On the other hand, pessimists will remind us that most of the vocational institutions especially in Sub-Saharan Africa have so far gained little from internationalisation and may even have suffered colossal decline as a consequence. For instance most writers who analyse Uganda’s VE system often associate its low quality with the effect of colonization and more so the donors influence (Government of Uganda, 1992; Lutalo-Bosa, 2007; Okinyal, 2006; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). Does this mean that in Uganda concerns about the benefits of internationalisation is longer a question of development in the vocational sector? Some scholars who have so far given thought the aspect of internationalisation voice out that it is today regarded as a key aspect in the development of vocational education (Kyambogo University, 2008; Lutalo-Bosa, 2007; Nahamya, 2014). Much as the pe-

dagogy employed in Uganda's education system still borrow a leaf from the then curriculum developers, it is also important to point out that now authorities like Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) in conjunction sister institutions like National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), National Council for High Education (NCHE) and Uganda Business Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB) are playing a fundamental role in realizing the development of vocational education in Uganda. In addition, the donor aid is also playing a major role in the realization of internationalisation of vocational education (Kyambogo University, 2008). In other words, internationalisation is increasingly becoming a development issue especially in the vocational sector.

It is also reported that in Uganda the national research policies, structures and systems are quite sufficient (DFID, 2007; World Bank, 2012). However, in view of an internationalized VE curricula and matters pertaining to student/staff exchange there is limited scholarly evidence. Recently international collaborations and academic staff exchange in Uganda have facilitated research in universities (Nahomya, 2014). Nevertheless most vocational institutions have not yet benefited from international collaborations especially in research and student/teacher exchange. Yet today in Uganda VE is seen as the only way through which society can be skilled (MoES, 2011).

The development of VE in Uganda has always been hampered by a number of factors. These challenges have been summarized within the Business Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Strategic Plan entitled "Skilling Uganda" (MoES, 2011) and other

research materials as provided hereunder.

- Weak national economies, high population growth and a growing labour force (African Union, 2007),
- Shrinking or stagnant wage employment opportunities especially in the industrial sector,
- Huge numbers of poorly educated, unskilled and unemployed youth,
- Uncoordinated, unregulated and fragmented delivery systems,
- Teachers Incompetency (MoES, 2013),
- Low quality VE programmes and stifled academic freedom,
- Poor public perception of VE,
- Geographical, gender and economic inequities (African Union, 2007; MoES, 2011),
- Changes in the labour market (ILO, 2010) in terms of skills required, technology advancements and globalization threats,
- Weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (MoES, 2011) and,
- Inadequate financing, poor management and ill-adapted organisational structures (African Union, 2007).

It would be a blunder for one to consider that the development of VE in Uganda is associated with the negative factors *per se*. In so doing, we cannot ignore the fact that there are also positive factors that have led to the development of VE in Uganda.

Important to note is that due to the general skills mismatch by VE graduates, various reforms have been initiated in order to enhance the development of VE in Uganda. These include the Uganda Vocational Qualifications (UVQF) as provided for in the Business Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act of 2008. Likewise in 2011, a 10-year

BTVET Strategic Plan was approved to examine the labor market context as well as the performance of the present BT-VET system (World Bank, 2012).

Role of Internationalisation in the Development of Vocational Education

Uganda like any other country can benefit from regional collaborations and internationalisation of the VE sector (Nahamya, 2014). This paper argues that internationalisation influences the development of VE.

Internationalisation can help students to operate in an international vocational education field and hence future opportunities to have a successful career and life (Paronen, 2014). In addition, a good VE international relations team brings together the international activities from different levels of training and they become the core operation for the whole institution (CIMO, 2009). On the contrary, it is on record that most vocational institutions across the globe are still grappling with how to create a built-in system for the internationalisation given the resource change (UNEVOC, 2006). Paronen (2014) found that one of the challenges and obstacles to internationalisation is also the nature of VE international activities coupled with student's background, dictate on their involvement. No doubt this situation is increasingly intensifying in Finland but also in other countries including Uganda.

Conclusion and Way forward

The analysis of available literature in Uganda demonstrates a negligible attention to internationalization of VE especially with respect to

curriculum development, research and student/staff exchange concerns. With this documentation, the Government of Uganda should enact policies with due attention to internationalisation of VE curriculum, research and student/staff exchange. Research on the level of internationalisation of VE should be emphasized. In addition, through research, the government should ensure that the internationalisation strategy is implemented and that the necessary steps are taken with respect to monitoring and evaluation of the entire process. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in union with DIT, NCDC, UBTEB and NCHE should design a VE operations model for international activities. This should act as a guide for vocational institutions and hence the realization of internationalisation in form of curriculum development, research and student/staff exchange. The Government of Uganda should also provide enough funding to the vocational sector. This is because the VE sector was and is still known to be the least financed, yet it is expensive. Finally, the Government of Uganda should commission institutions like; NCDC, BTVET, DIT and NCHE to develop an internationalized VE curriculum. The components of the curriculum should: clearly define the standards for international accreditation of programmes; facilitate the international exchange of students and staff; encourage the development of international co-operation on VE innovation and research.

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