

# Establishing Quality in Technical and Vocational Education in Burundi: Contribution of the National Education Forum, Edition 2022 and in Employability in Burundi

## Sennel Nduwimana, Ildephonse Sindayigaya

Ecole Doctorale, Université du Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi Email: nduwimanasennel@gmail.com, isinda1986@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Burundi, a party to the UN engaged to the development of youth education targeting to diminish the situation of youth unemployment and underemployability. It has on June 14-16, 2022 organized a national education forum to search for means to face youth issue in the field education especially technical and vocational education. This article aims to analyze solutions held over the forum towards youth employability through technical and vocational education and training. The documentary method was used throughout this article in data collection while a deduction technique helped during their analysis. Results showed that through that gate, youth employability increase is possible but requires involvement of all sub-sector actors and stakeholders in the design of training programs, participation of professionals throughout the curriculum and program development process, diagnostic eye on the current curriculum with a view to improving it, employers' association call up in job referential establishment which has a better grasp of the job market, programs revision in line with the real needs of the job market, and the connection between schools and universities and the professional environment to define together the training offer and the output profile.

# **Keywords**

Youth Employability, Professionals' Involvement Programs, Curricula Revision Utilities, Vocational Education

# **1. Introduction**

Bringing young people into productive work has been revealed as a key on the labor market challenging in both developing and developed economies, and a multitude of labor market interventions have been implemented to assist vulnerable youths (Kluve et al., 2019). Countries like India have adopted the online skills certification for engineering graduates using a regression discontinuity design and this has produced a positive result maintaining youth competitive on the labor market, especially in technical and professional trainings (Sengupta et al., 2023).

The Burundi General Education Forum also known as "Etats-Généraux de l'Education" was held from June 14 to 16, 2022, under the theme "Building a high-performance system for a better future for Burundi". A large number of issues were discussed, including the organization of curricula and the employability of young people, the management of the education system to improve the quality of education, the promotion of technical education, vocational training and teaching of trades, flow management, the rational management of human resources, school and university infrastructure and equipment, the financing of education and the role of research (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). In order to deepen the discussions, 4 panels were organized on the above-mentioned themes. After three days of intense interaction and reflection, twenty-nine recommendations marking the end were issued, and a roadmap for their implementation was defined, with the aim of building an education system capable of giving new impetus to Burundi's integral development.

Burundi like all African countries part to the African youth charter consider young people as all human being aged between fifteen and thirty five years (African Youth Charter). Youth in Burundi is marked by a long legacy of scarcity and inequality and is seen as a powerful and dangerous political constituency for, during the war time, young people served as the force that can confirm or jeopardize the status quo, especially by means of violence and the threat thereof (Berckmoes, 2015). In the aftermath of civil war, young people in Burundi experience their livelihoods and preparations for independent households after becoming women and husbands being aware of the unsustainability of practices of land inheritance and farming, they orient to other livelihood possibilities whilst maintaining an aspiration to a farming future (Berckmoes & White, 2016). As youth cannot be left with the only profession of farming is a narrow and small country of Burundi, the National education forum seeks for solution to youth employability by helping quit the wartime mindsets but enter in the social and vocational world (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). Avoiding the ongoing of the phenomenon of street children (Sindayigaya, 2022) among youth, Burundi has already made a big step programming the curricula of technical and professional training made of seven steps inside which youth are getting performance in the domain (Nduwimana & Sindavigaya, 2023).

Competitiveness, youth employability and entrepreneurship is a key to the development since they work in network and the country tends to mobilize and support youth organizations to work collaboratively, to build and strengthen their capacities, and to raise funding for their projects (Ngubane & Kanyangara, 2018) including women. Thus, youth skills needs be raised to fit to the need of labor market and employability project (Baramboneranye, 2019). Representing more than 30% of the total population, youth employment problems continue to pervade in all EAC countries, marking a disproportionate large number of young women and men exposed to unemployment or else that are limited to term work in informal sectors (Semboja & Hafidh, 2021). It is however noticeable that the influence of a youth economic empowerment projects on youth employability (Magali & Mbagwa, 2022) has a useful meaning.

This article targets to analyze the impact of the technical and vocational training in Burundi as achievement or aim to which the implementation of the curricula has promised.

# 2. Methods and Methodology

This article is a result of documentary technique (Tight, 2019) in data collection with a focused eye to the Burundian report of the national education forum edition 2022 and any documents in regard to youth employability in Burundi. The analysis of the results was carried out using the deductive method (Gilgun, 2019; Siponen & Klaavuniemi, 2020) starting from the comparison of facts and contents of administrative reports and policies about youth employability through education on professions to conclude all similar cases in the field of youth employability. Zotero softaware helped with referencing.

# 3. Results

Results from the conclusion of the National education forum showed that technical and vocational training are favorite to the employability of the youth in the context that they pass through different phases as:

- ⇒ Involve all sub-sector actors and stakeholders, including researchers, in the design of training programs;
- ⇒ Ensure the participation of professionals throughout the curriculum and program development process;
- ⇒ Diagnose the current curriculum with a view to improving it;
- ⇒ Set up a job referential involving the employers' association, which has a better grasp of the job market;
- ⇒ Regularly revise programs in line with the real needs of the job market;
- ➡ Connect schools and universities with the professional world to define together the training offer and the output profile (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022).

# 4. Discussion

Under this section, we analyze the importance of the stakeholders' involvement in the design of curricula (4.1), the role played by the participation of professionals throughout the curriculum and program development process (4.2), the diagnosis for the curriculum improvement (4.3), the involvement of employers' in job referential setting up (4.4), the programs revision in line with the needs of the job market (4.5) and the schools and universities connection with the professional practitioners (4.6).

## 4.1. Stakeholders' Involvement in the Training Programs Design

Managing the education system to improve quality at all levels, from basic to higher education, is a major challenge for the credibility and recognition of training organized by public and private educational institutions. Thus, it is obviously necessary to involve all stakeholders from the step of designing the curricula. This implies sub-sector actors and stakeholders and academic researchers.

#### 4.1.1. The Role of Sub-Sector Actors in the Design of Curricula of Technical and Vocational Training and Youth Employability

Employability calls for the intervention of stakeholders who intervenes in any case where it is required to:

- Propose strategies to promote the quality and efficiency of technical and vocational education and training in Burundi;
- Propose strategies to promote the employability of graduates of the Burundian education system through the professionalization of teaching;
- > Make proposals for the integration of ICT throughout the education system
- Propose strategies to improve the financing of the education sector (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022).

Despite a constrained economic context, Burundi has chosen to invest in its youth and its future and over the past five years, it has spent its quarter-budget and one third of its recurrent expenditure on education and training, well above the average for sub-Saharan Africa (Education and training in Burundi: Priorities in a Constrained Environment, 2021). This means certain activities should be made available with an in-depth examination of the situation in various education sub-sectors, in order to initiate reflection on defining relevant education policies for the development of education in Burundi achieving to youth employability (Institut international de planification de l'éducation, 2021). Education sub-sectors played an important role in like it is clearly verified in tourism education and skills training issues in relation to youth employment and development in South-Africa (Booyens, 2020) or digital media and creative economy in Kenya (Muchira, 2023).

#### 4.1.2. Academic Researchers' Role in the Training Design and Youth Employability

The report on the national education forum 2022 cites researchers like Dr. Nestor NIYONZIMA and Mr. Donatien MURYANGO stating that in Burundi, "the technical education, vocational training and trades sub-sector in Burundi has been neglected in recent years, even though it is one of the main pillars of human resource preparation, skills development, economic growth and social inclusion at all levels. The aim of the TVET sub-sector, in complementarity with all the other sectors of the national economy, is to qualify training seekers cognitively, professionally and socially. It also contributes to the social and professional advancement of the working population by developing workers' professional skills and increasing the competitiveness of companies" (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022).

Very dynamic and varying across countries, the contribution of research about technical and vocational education and training to employment has attracted much interest from actors from different domains such as researchers, policy-makers, and academia over the years (Hamdard, 2019). Researchers intervening in youth employability in domains like agriculture in Zambia have been of great value for agriculture is an open gate to youth (Mulema et al., 2021). The same situation has been proved in Botswana and Namibia where the great role played by UNESCO was a key to influencing youth employability through globalization, mass education, and technical and vocational education and training (Galguera, 2018).

Involving researchers in the field of technical and vocational education and training will help to fight against challenges that are:

- Lack of suitable equipment;
- Insufficient qualified human resources to design and deliver specialized courses;
- Insufficient consumables;
- Lack of prioritization of fields in relation to outlets/lack of added value for village tradesmen/Low level of innovation or innovative techniques;
- ➢ No support structure for graduates of this program;
- Setting up production facilities in unsuitable locations;
- > Existence of documents unfamiliar to both students and teachers;
- Guidance of students in non-job-creating fields;
- Absence of a national policy specific to technical education and vocational training (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022).

Not only fighting these challenges, but academic researchers also play an undoubtable role in the support of developing understanding and finding the way forward for the improvement of the technical and vocational education sector as it is has been witnessed in Nepal (Renold et al., 2018).

Lack of suitable equipment handicaps the technical and vocational education and training as long as, targeting to go the job market, they have to do much practices and learning using computers (Sanusi et al., 2022) which are not available in Burundi the same as for teachers as for learners in the pedagogy of integration (Dinc, 2019). Teachers, therefore, are the most important to handle the challenge of insufficient qualified human resources to design and deliver specialized courses (Kipper et al., 2021).

## 4.2. Participation of Professionals throughout the Curriculum and Program Development Process

In the contemporary world of work, job security and lifetime employment are no longer the norm (Blokker et al., 2019). Thus, it has been realized that Burundi must gather contributions from various stakeholders at the deconcentrated level to improve young people's employability and socio-professional integration, thus proposing strategies to strengthen young people's entrepreneurial skills and effective exploitation of new opportunities offered by the rapidly evolving job market (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). Burundi is following the example of Burkina Faso where the contribution of entrepreneurial support structures has been remarked to the self-employment of young people with a big importance in productivity (Lompo & Sawadogo, 2021). There is no doubt, Burundi must be afraid of the fact that the lack of entrepreneurial interest of professional thoughts drew to failure like in Comoros (Anriddine, 2023). Reality is that the integration of professionals in the field of technical and vocational education and training for this is a key to the transversal competencies leading to youth employability due to the intervention of professionals with flexible and varied skills (Belchior-Rocha et al., 2022). The economic and social development of societies, bringing together a set of social, economic and cultural determinants in each society is the target of the humanity in wholesome and Burundi cannot be left alone or isolated itself.

#### 4.3. Diagnosis for the Curriculum Improvement

The technical education, vocational training and trades sub-sector in Burundi has been neglected in recent years, even though it is one of the main pillars of human resource preparation, skills development, economic growth and social inclusion at all levels (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). With a view to improving the technical and vocational education and training, a set of project for training professional skills for future teachers of technological education is indispensable (Bahodirovich & Romilovich, 2021). Targeting to address youth unemployment and underemployment which remains central to the efforts of the World Bank globally and specifically in Ghana (Dadzie et al., 2020) Burundi needs have a retrospective eye on the existing style of the technical and vocational education and training. This is then, a "good factor for the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups, especially young people, and can be a truly powerful educational tool in promoting social inclusion and professional integration" (Said & Amine, 2022). Diagnostic of existing way of technical and vocational education and training help countries and people to meeting in the Middle Programs' education and employment, linking them at different stages of development (Caves et al., 2021). It impacts positively the role of higher education institutions in promoting the development of competences for youth laureate of such curricula to their employability (Abelha et al., 2020). With the view to revitalize this sector, the Burundian government has just defined national strategic orientations and objectives for the development and effective implementation of technical and vocational education and training policy (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022).

#### 4.4. Employers' Association Involving Setting Up a Job Referential

In Burundi, underemployment is predominant in rural areas, where the unemployment rate is virtually cannot easily be rated but with 56% of employed people in rural areas affected by underemployment, while in urban areas, the underemployment rate is estimated at 27.7% (ISTEEBU, 2022). Like any other country, Burundi is wondering how to drop or quench unemployment or underemployment by involving professionals' ideas in planning job referential as a revolutionary perspective (Benitez et al., 2020). This way, it is a best way of flow management; rational management of human resources, school and university infrastructure and equipment rethinking by financing education and planning the role of research as it has been discussed in the national education forum (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). Countries among which Burundi search for adequate strategies that companies, public administrators and organizations in the education industry should undertake means to face the challenges of digital transformation in a regional or international innovation system (Brunetti et al., 2020). Sustainability programs require involvement of stakeholders (which are namely, employers' associations) target the solution to laureate of technical and vocational education and training system (Brundiers et al., 2021). Mostly, in as much as "internship phase consists of helping mostly with the practices of the theoretical knowledge acquired by the student" (Nduwimana & Sindayigaya, 2023), the call-up of employers' involvement is a key to facilitating the internship in companies to sharpen the vocational training centers' laureates.

## 4.5. Programs Revision in Line with the Needs of the Job Market

Burundi intends to develop and expand priority training courses in technical schools and vocational training centers [as food industry technology (TIAA), industrial electricity and renewable energy, hospitality and tourism, clothing techniques, transport, tanning, plumbing, car mechanics, brick-making, mining and ICT] being harmonized with those of the East African Community countries due the free persons movement within the community (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022). Implementation of total quality management plays a vital role in achieving the success of the organizations (Alzoubi & Ahmed, 2019). Such as the way it in Pakistan, updating the technical and vocational education and training to the need of the job market is essential (Ahmed, 2019; Asad et al., 2023). Considering that the main challenges facing Burundi's education system, namely overcrowded classrooms, insufficient educational resources, and higher education that creates more unemployed than job

creators (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2022), there is no doubt revision of programs is a key to implementing entrepreneurship among youth by reviewing programs achieving to this purpose. Employed youth will escape the street life phenomenon (Sindayigaya, 2022) among poor families' children due to poverty in households (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020; Salihu, 2019).

#### 4.6. Schools and Universities Connection with the Professional

Research on teacher education programs in Chile, Cuba, Finland, Norway, and the United States has shown that the strongest and most effective teachers' education programs integrate theory presented and discussed at university seminars, and school practice (Brevik et al., 2019). Synergy among teachers and professionals in the field of technical and vocational education and training opens the door to the development of both principles and methods of forming professional, communicative, intercultural competences and in the process of teaching for professional purposes in the conditions of engineering, economic and other non-linguistic specialties at technical university (Rustamov & Mamaziyayev, 2022). Co-operative systems for learning between teachers and professionals lead to a decommodification of work (tradition/innovation; theory/practice), reconstruction of relationships with "the other" (individual/collective); and with nature (capitalism/degrowth) (Espinet et al., 2023).

## **5.** Conclusion

Burundi held in 2022 a national education forum to search for solutions in education in general and especially in technical and vocational education and training. By means of documentary technique, the lead to employability of young people through technical and vocational education and training must be obedient to some principles unveiling their entrepreneurial competencies on one hand and their employability on the other hand.

# **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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