ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SKILLS ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS: A CASE OF NAKURU TOWN, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to show the role of information technology skills on sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Nakuru Town. Youth unemployment is a critical issue amongst the youth in the developing nations as it has led to high costs of living due to the fact that they have to be supported by the minority of employed individuals. Unemployment has brought about major issues like poverty, drug abuse, immorality and crime in the country. A closer look at the problem of unemployment shows that there is a major issue with skills development in terms of youths not possessing the rightful skills to run businesses to boost on employment and alleviate the unemployment problem. This has therefore brought about youths engaging in unsustainable projects. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of information technology skills in youth empowerment projects in Nakuru Town. The study was guided by four objectives: to examine how entrepreneurial training on information technology skills enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects, to assess how online financing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects, to determine how internal controls enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects and to establish how online marketing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects. Four theories have been put forward to show how information technology skills influence both social structures and transformations in business production and trade. These are Joseph Schumper's Entrepreneurship & Innovation theory which views technological innovation as the source of economic growth, Schumpeter argued that economic change revolves around innovation, entrepreneurial activities and market power, technological determinism theory which assumes that a society's technology and especially productive technology determines its social structure and cultural values, signaling theory which shows how technology based entrepreneurs manage to transform their ideas into viable businesses and technological revolution theory which shows the effects of technological change on global economic structure in the way companies and nations organize production, trade goods, invest capital and develop new products and processes. The conceptual framework shows how information technology assists the youth to achieve their goals in project sustainability. There is therefore a gap in terms of use of information technology skills in running of youth projects. Since no adequate research has been carried out in Nakuru town on use of information technology skills to tackle the youth unemployment problem, this study sought to explain the role that information technology skills plays in sustainability of youth empowerment projects. The research was a case study. The research design was descriptive and questionnaires were used to collect data. The target population was the youth projects based in Nakuru town. The sample size was estimated at 150respondents who were drawn from various projects. Data collection was by use of questionnaires. Data was later analyzed using statistics in percentages and frequencies. The findings from the study was that entrepreneurial skills, online financing, internal controls and online marketing influence sustainability of the youth empowerment projects. Suggestions and recommendations were done based on the findings. This was mainly on skills development, government intervention and to policy makers on interventions on youth empowerment Also there should be considerations in terms of female involvement in group leadership. Age, level of education

and aims for staring business should also be put into consideration when coming up with youth projects.. Youth empowerment projects are seen as an avenue of opportunity for young people. It is an innovative way of integrating the youth into labor market. This is a valuable additional strategy to creating jobs and improving livelihoods and economic independence of young people. Skills in Information technology is thus seen as a way to enable youth acquire skills and jobs to start new projects and to bridge the unemployment gap.

INTRODUCTION

Information technology has been on the rise as a way of solving practical problems especially in commerce and industry. The current economy is characterized by globalization, outsourcing, increased competition, speed of delivery of goods and services and intangible assets such as knowledge which are key drivers for enterprises. In this technology-driven business environment, due to the complexities and changing dynamics of businesses, they are often compelled to utilize technologies and tools extensively. Businesses are aimed at providing products and services that bring about operational efficiency. With a common experience that many businesses fail (Williams 2005), this gives the importance of the need to improve on businesses processes. Information technology has enabled a new world of entrepreneurs, using the latest digital technology, to disrupt old ways of doing business while streamlining business operations and processes in more established enterprises.

It's hard to believe that 30years ago, entrepreneurs were starting up businesses without a computer, mobile phone or internet connection in sight. The start of technology revolution that changed business processes can be traced back to the early 1980s when the mobile phones, MS-DOS and the apple Mackintosh emerged that changed everything (Rob Hunter,2015).Youth unemployment around the globe has become a major challenge in the 21st century. According to the world Youth Report (2005) approximately 88million youth around the world are unemployed. Kenya as a country is no exception. There is an increasing trend of young labour force with limited economic growth. Out of the thousands of youth completing tertiary education only a few are absorbed into the labour market.

The increasing unemployment rate of the youth is mainly due to the high number of youths completing education compared to the available chances of gainful formal employment. It is estimated that one in every five unemployed Kenyans are youths. This clearly indicates that the unemployment problem in Kenya is basically for the youth. Significantly youth are engaged in the informal sector which is largely unregulated and workers are therefore subjected to low incomes and long working hours without formal contract. The constitution of Kenya defines youth as an individual between the age of 18and 35years.This is a critical sector of the population as it is characterized by enthusiasm, energy and dynamism.

This means that youth is the backbone of the country and this is where the economy can derive progress. Lack of jobs for the youth means that the economy will lag behind at a very high rate. This would in turn bring about high burden to the economy as it struggles to ensure that all citizens

are catered for. This is because the high number of the unemployed will depend on the few employed for sustainability. This lowers investment and thus instability, crime and drug abuse comes in. Majority of the unemployed youth have formal education but no training in specific areas that would assist them get jobs. Therefore you find that the major problem is not getting jobs but having the rightful skills that would enable the youths to get placements. This leads the youths to informal sector which has a lot of instability and poor working conditions as well as low earnings. The large number of youths thus remains poor.

The Government through the ministry of youth affairs and sports (MOYAS) in 2006 thus established the Youth Enterprise Development Fund(YEDF) which had the premise of curbing youth unemployment in Kenya. It was of the view that youth unemployment had a socioeconomic and political impact and the initiatives would thus bring a huge impact on job creation for the youth. The fund would provide revolving fund, through provision of cheap loans to the youth for business formation for starters and boosting of already existing businesses. This would bring about youth empowerment as well as economic stability which is one of the vision 2030 pillars. In 2009 the Government of Kenya (GoK) acknowledged the importance of youth empowerment by introducing the Kazi Kwa Vijana Initiative (KKV),the work for youth programme whose main aim was to keep the jobless youths busy. Its main aim was to employ both rural and urban youths in labour intensive public works projects like roads maintenance, water harvesting, afforestation and waste collection.

The government also through the initiative supports a fund providing young people with finances for self employment and entrepreneurial skills development. The local youths are involved in management and implementation of the projects. The junior staff are allowed to make decisions without being micro managed. The constitution of Kenya of 2010 incorporated the youth as an important portion for economic development and Article 55 states specific obligations towards the youth. This includes ensuring that the youth have access to education, training and employment, can participate in political and economic spheres and representation of the youth in various governance levels through direct nomination. These governance levels include the senate, national and county assemblies.

A lot of resources have therefore been directed towards empowerment. This has therefore led to the development of youth empowerment projects. The development and growth of youth empowerment projects in Kenya is important as it is aimed at improving social and economic growth. The concept of youth empowerment projects has however faced some challenges. According to Ongeri (2012), in a study of factors influencing sustainability of youth groups noted that issues of group management, participation of members of the group and extent of implementation of youth projects are some of the challenges that hindered youth groups from achieving their objectives. Njeri (2012) in a similar study established that marketing, technological skills, education level and personal factors as influencing sustainability of youth projects.

The issue of information technology skills thus comes in as a solution in hindering most of the challenges encountered by the youth. It plays a very critical role in that it enlightens up the youth in finding paths to exercise their already acquired knowledge as well as their innovativeness. The kind of Information technology skills that the youths incorporate in their projects enable them to achieve their goals and render them sustainable. Some of the skills include: communication skills, organizational skills, writing skills, problem solving skills, trouble shooting skills, project management skills, planning skills, customer service skills and research skills. These skills to a

great extent enable the youth to startup projects that are self sustaining and that can create more employment. Innovation curbs the issue of unemployment by encouraging the youth to startup projects that can bring about sustainability.

Self employment and micro and small business creations are routes that young people can explore to forge their future. Thus projects and enterprises are where the jobs are (Haftendon and Salzano,2003).The specific needs of the youth and particularly their entrepreneurial potential as well as their critical contribution to economic and social progress are underestimated (Irene,2009).The development of small projects and enterprises is often overlooked and viewed as an alternative to joblessness. Youth projects and enterprises in Kenya cut across all sectors of the economy and provide one of the main source of employment and generate widespread economic benefits(GoK,2005).Youth projects especially in entrepreneurship has therefore gained more importance in many countries as a way of boosting economic competitiveness and promoting regional development. Studies carried out show that in Asia and Latin America about 60% of the youth find it difficult to get job opportunities and to start up businesses. This is mainly because most of the youth have a secondary education and lower.

The role that entrepreneurship plays in the socio-economic development of a country is well acknowledged and as a result, a large number of programmes to support entrepreneurship to fulfill its economic and societal roles designed by the governments and international organizations have been established.. However due to the perceptions that the concepts of entrepreneurship and youth entrepreneurship are interchangeable, youth entrepreneurship remain somewhat unaddressed in many countries while considerate attention has been made upon entrepreneurship in general. Globally, about 85% of the world's youth live in developing nations and majority are growing up in the cities. With over 200million youth living in poverty, there is a clear need to specifically engage and support the youth by empowering them.

According to the international labour office (2005) projection, youth unemployment is more than 21per cent. In a report issued by the   International Labour Organization in 2017,Youth unemployment stand at 18% in Europe,10% in USA,11.2% in Asia,12.1% in the United Kingdom. In Sub Sahara Africa, the youth unemployment rates stand at 53% in South Africa, 24.6% in Zambia and 13.6% in Malawi. In East Africa the youth unemployment rate stands at 3.3%% in Rwanda and 4% in Uganda, 7.6% in Ethiopia and 22.1% in Kenya. In Sierra Leone, the youth account for one third of the population. Youth Employment and Empowerment programme (YEEP) was initiated in 2011 which built on UNDP's intensive post-war experience supporting the empowerment of Sierra Leone youths.

It was built to strengthen national policy, strategy and coordination for youth employment and seeks to provide basic support services for youth across the country, including business development and career advice and guidance. The programme was focused on three components: Institutional and policy development which focused on sufficient technical capacity of the Ministry of Youth Affairs(MOYA) and National Youth Commission(NAYCOM) to facilitate policy development, ensuring that relevant policies are coherent and harmonized and have a positive impact on employment creation, Youth, Youth Empowerment which focused on promoting youth empowerment and leadership primarily through the strengthening of chiefdon and District Youth Councils and Employment Promotion which focused on assisting youth in their transaction from

school to work through provision of employment provision services in internship opportunities and support to micro, small and medium sized business development.

According to economic survey of 2003, the small and medium projects and enterprises accounted for 74.2percent of the total persons engaged in employment and contributed upto 18.4percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and sports(MOYAS) strategic plan 2008-2012 is linked to the vision 2030 and its first medium term plan, was prepared to cater for youth and development. It has the responsibility of raising the labour participation in the country to 85percent by other projects promoting an entrepreneurial culture and developing infrastructure for SMEs. Given the importance of small projects and enterprises to the youth and their economies in the developing countries, the research efforts will be directed towards understanding how information technology skills fosters creation and growth of youth projects in the region.

That is understanding the concept of youth employment and income generation through projects in the context of Nakuru town based in Nakuru County. According to the 2009 census, Nakuru town has a population of about 298,254 with youth of ages between 15-35 comprising approximately63% of this population .Lack of or low technological skills, capital, unwillingness as well as low entrepreneurial spirit have led to high levels of unemployment, poverty and idleness among the youth. Most of the youth have tried on group businesses which have ended up failing. The question therefore is why the high failure rate and what are the success factors.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major problem facing the youth in Nakuru town is that much of their economic activity is concentrated within a limited number of sectors and mainly in the transport industry. Most of the youth are in the matatu, bodaboda and tuktuk industry which hinders their exposure to the global trends and therefore unable to meet their needs. This industry is mainly low growth interms of skills development and sustainable livelihood on the youth and as such the youth tend to lag behind economically. The major reasons as to why this trend persists is due to low education levels and low quality of education whereby most of the youth have the formal education with no kind of training in specific skills and the quality of such education is very low as compared to the developed nations. Lack of skills in other areas of activities whereby the youth are not able to come up with unique products or processes (IEA,2013), lack or limited finances to startup businesses due reliance on family members and friends as well as low information on available sources(Njeri,2012). Funding from self and family members as well as friends is the primary source and as such if its limited then the youth end up being frustrated and give up easily. According to Njeri,2012, lack of ready markets for the products or services is also another challenge which is due to limited information on available markets both locally and internationally. Selling of undifferentiated products and services in overtraded markets makes it extremely difficult for young entrepreneurs to generate a profit and will rarely lead to viable business creation over the long term. The use of information technology by the youth in businesses in areas like network marketing and product differentiation is generally low which impedes competitiveness on their products and services with other entrepreneurs leading to low profits. Many young entrepreneurs run their businesses from home or on the streets which significantly limits their access to suitable markets. While use of online platform could enable the many home businesses to expand their market reach, the cost of internet access can be prohibitive. Improving information technology infrastructure would allow for a reduction in the cost of technology thus the potential to reach new markets and this could have a

significant impact on the suitability of youth businesses. Youth empowerment projects have emerged as an important tool of socioeconomic development aimed at youth empowerment, strengthening livelihoods and poverty alleviation (MOYAS,2008). They have been formed for entrepreneurial development to engage young people in economic activities, create self employment and enable the country become a globally competitive and prosperous nation by the year 2030.To attain this course, a number o efforts and strategies have been made by the Kenya Government to initiate youth development programmes, such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund established on the premise that micro, small and medium enterprise development initiatives are likely to have the biggest impact on job creation and thereby address the problem of unemployment (MOYAS,2008). A close look at the resources the government has set aside to uplift youth enterprise initiatives indicates that the youth projects have not lived upto this expectation. The anticipated impact on job creation is economic empowerment of the target groups is yet to be established. The youth empowerment projects are incapable of maintaining themselves for a long period of time. Official reports indicate that most of the youth projects do not mature in the first three years. Despite efforts by the government and other stakeholders investing in the youth enterprises, very few of these projects go beyond implementation stage (Kenya Vision 2030).The challenge on sustainability of youth projects is mainly as a result of group leadership, internal controls in the group, level of education of the group members. Other activities which are carried out in Nakuru mainly the agribusiness, construction, electrical and mechanical businesses are not competitive as well since the youth view this as for the older generation. These are activities with high potential for growth but this can only be achieved by use of information technology in order to keep the businesses at pace with the emerging trends and to improve on the processes. Majority of the youth in Nakuru use information technology mostly on the internet and mobile applications not for business improvement but rather on other purposes like for watching movies and other unimportant uses just to pass time. Lack of the youth commitment to embrace information technology is one of the major causes of unemployment, poverty and idleness in Nakuru town. The current trend of unemployed young graduates from tertiary institutions do not have the necessary entrepreneurial abilities, competencies, exposure and values that will help them to adapt and integrate to the world of business. Many entrepreneurs who tend to establish and be independent in their own way often fail in the world of work and this can be associated to their little knowledge of what it takes to be an entrepreneur. The economically active citizen that is the youth are also affected by lack of or insufficient funds (Njeri,2012) low resources and lack of entrepreneurial skills. These problems are mainly associated with inaccessibility to loans, poor infrastructure and development facilities, inadequate funding by the government. All these are requirements to acquiring the necessary skills and competencies needed for proper adaptation and integration within the environment of competitive rivalry. Though the government has through the private sector tried to encourage entrepreneurship, low progress has been made up to date. This can be associated with low or poor attitude, low level of understanding and perceptions among the youth towards entrepreneurship. Most universities and tertiary institutions in Kenya produce graduates to an economy that is already overpopulated. Most youth and especially the graduates prefer white collar jobs after their education. Experiences show that most of these youths spend much of their time moving from office to office to look for jobs in order to earn huge salaries. On getting to the jobs they get disappointed on learning the vice versa and thus remain frustrated looking for other means to make ends meet. It is for these reasons that the Government through the Vision 2030 recognizes the role of science, technology and innovation (STI), in which new knowledge plays a central role

in boosting wealth creation, social welfare and international competitiveness. The elements that allow effective exploitation of knowledge are: an economic and institutional regime, that provides incentives for the efficient use of existing knowledge, the creation of new knowledge and flourishing of entrepreneurship (Kenya Vision 2030). An educated and skilled population that can create, share and use knowledge well, a dynamic information and communication infrastructure that can facilitate processing, communication, dissemination and an effective innovation system that is a network of research centres, universities, private enterprises and community groups that can tap into the growing stock of global knowledge, assimilate and adapt it to local needs, while creating knowledge and technologies as appropriate. However if the youth can embrace information technology as a source of information for their own sustainability and for economic growth, then this may go a long way in bringing about positive change in the society

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to show the role of information technology in youth empowerment projects   in Nakuru Town.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine how entrepreneurial training on information technology skills enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects.

2. To assess how online financing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects.

3. To determine how internal controls enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects.

4. To establish how online marketing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Joseph Schumper's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Theory

Schumpter was probably the first scholar to theorize about entrepreneurship and innovation. In his theory Schumpter argued that innovation and technological change of a nation come from the entrepreneurs. He asserted that the doing of new things or doing of things that are already done in a new way stemmed directly from the efforts of entrepreneurs, (Pol & Carroll, 2009). He was the most influential thinker to argue that long cycles are caused by innovation. In his view, technological innovation is at the cause of both cyclical instability and economic growth. In his view, technological innovation is at the cause of both cyclical instability and economic growth. Fluctuations in innovation cause fluctuation in investment and those cause cycles in economic growth.

The technological view of change needs to demonstrate that changes in the rate of innovation governs changes in the rate of new investments. Schumpeter identified innovation as the critical dimension of economic change. He argued that economic change revolves around innovation, entrepreneurial activities and market power. He sought to prove that innovation-originated market power can provide better results than the invisible hands and price competition. He argued that technological innovation often creates temporary monopolies, allowing abnormal profits that would

soon be competed away by rivals and imitators. These monopolies were necessary to provide the incentive for firms to develop new products and processes.

This theory is important in this study in that any developing nation's interest is to maximize innovativeness among young people. This is brought about by empowering young people by giving them the chance to start their own projects and business opportunities where they have the autonomy to give products and services which are unique and which adds value to the economy. Kenya young people have the capability to exploit available opportunities, are risk takers and are capable of innovating renowned products and services.

Technological Determinism Theory

This theory assumes that a society's technology determines the development of its social structure and cultural values. The term is believed to have originated from Thorstein Veblen(1857-1929),an American sociologist and economist. The first major collaboration of a technological determinist view of socioeconomic development came from the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, whose theoretical framework was grounded in the perspective that changes in technology, and especially productive technology, are the primary influence on human social relations and organizational structure, and that social relations and cultural practices ultimately revolve around the technological and economic base of a given society.

Technological determinism seeks to show technical developments, media, or technology as a whole, as the key mover in history and social change. It is a theory scribed by hyper globalist who claims that as a consequence of the wide availability of technology, accelerated globalization is inevitable. Therefore technological development and innovation become the principal motor of social, economic or political change. According to Merritt Roe Smith, technological determinism is the belief in technology as a key governing force in society. Technology changes the way people think and how they interact with others and can be described as "technology determines history".

The idea of progress is centralized around the idea that social problems can be solved by technological advancement and this is the way that society moves forward. Technological determinists believe that we are unable to control technology (Lelia Green).This suggest that we are somewhat powerless and society allows technology to drive social changes because societies fail to be aware of the alternatives to the values embedded in it. A technical determinist view holds that the uses made of technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself, that is its functions follow from its form (Neil Postman).
Signaling Theory

This theory shows how technology based entrepreneurs manage to transform their ideas into viable businesses. Technology based entrepreneurs are highly regarded as targets of economic policy(Lerner,2010).When considering what makes technology based entrepreneurs different, different scholars have mostly proposed to decipher what type of resources configurations or combinations would explain the success or failure of the technology innovations of so many promising ventures. In technology entrepreneurship context, scholars focused on understanding firm resources that might be useful when competing to capture value but not have paid sufficient attention to the other side of the board, where actions are critical in a value-creation context are occurring (Priem et.al, 2011). This theory views what entrepreneurs deal with resources and how

their actions could actually impact the market (Priem et. al, 2011).The first step is to understand that not all actions could convey information that impacts the potential market demand. This theory was introduced by Spence (1973),to explain how job applicants would disclose details that were interpreted as signals of their qualities to recruiters. The assumption here is that new technology based ventures, with no past transactions in the market, no track record of successful product development, and offering untested novel technology products, might have to rely on symbolic elements to convince their potential customers. In this sense, the capacity of entrepreneurial to act and convey the right signals, regardless of the uncertainty and resource limitations, is expected to provide additional clues to understand the technology project   process.

Three types of signals are perceived as valuable: that is market, technology and social capital signals. Market signals include actions that are related to raising awareness of new venture and its reputation, This may include publications in the magazines that are mainly read by everyone.
Technology signals are built upon unique technological resource of the new venture. This could include patents which would contribute to a market differentiation strategy.
Social capital signal includes endorsements by institutions both public and private, development and research partners, and even connectors with well-known investors. Social capital signals are observed to be used to influence both access to resources and market activation.
Technological Revolution Theory

The effects of technological change on the global economic structure are creating immense transformations in the way companies and nations organize production, trade goods, invest capital and develop new products and processes. Sophisticated information technologies permit instantaneous communication among the far-flung operations of global enterprises. As put forward by Morris Tanenbaum, there is a period of discontinuous change as the breadth of technological applications expands and the time scale of change becomes shorter. This process has placed new demands on organizations as they strive to obtain quick and effective market information and access, recoup their research and development investment more quickly and recognize the importance of sharing technological capabilities.

Government plays a central role in technology issues at the national level. Technology has now become a part of almost every political discussions as politicians have realized the impact of technology on world events. Governments vary in the way they influence and exploit technological changes for example through regulation, procurement, protectionist's policies and support research and development. Public attitudes among various countries also differ and can affect governmental technology policy. Given the fact that there is no correct way of dealing with technologies, which is applicable to all countries, *SirRobin Nicholson* commented that each country must find its optimum way depending on its history, institutions and public attitudes.

Ramo argues that it is only the government that can perform the regulatory functions necessary for the smooth operation of free enterprise activity that makes use of new technologies. It is also the government that will be the primary obstacle to diffusion of the benefits of technology to world society. Globalization will bring about the emergence of many small and medium size multinational firms that will rely on a network of technology alliances. Governments will provide oversight and strategic direction. The impact on developing countries will be enormous. With the help of new

technologies, third world countries can transform their raw materials into value added commodities and thereby accelerate economic development without dysfunctional effects.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This involves a set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing set of variables specified in the research problem. Such includes the methods used to collect data, sampling tools and strategies and time as well as costs involved in data collection and analysis. A descriptive survey method was used to collect data relating to the role of technology as a source of youth empowerment in entrepreneurship. This helped in collecting original data from the youth and also gave both numerical and descriptive data that was used in measuring the relationship between variables that was studied. This was done by use of questionnaires.

Target Population

This refers to the specific group relevant for this study. According to Mugenda et al.2003 a population is a group of individuals or objects that have the same form of characteristics. In this study the target population was 150youths in both Nakuru East and Nakuru West sections in Nakuru town. This study focused on Nakuru town because much of entrepreneurship activities and technological advancement is done in town by the youth. Whereas areas like agriculture may be seen from the outskirts, much of the business takes place in town.

Sample Size and Sample Selection

A sample is a smaller number from the population that is used to make conclusions about the whole population. Sample size selection is determined by among other things, the purpose of the study, population size, risk of selecting, the allowable sampling error, data analysis plan and the method of study. Probability sampling was used in this study and the sample size was approximately 60percent of the target population. I obtained a list from the ministry of youth and gender and randomly selected the projects but ensured I obtained the sample size required for my study.

Research Instrument

A research instrument is a measurement tool designed to obtain data from research subjects. It is designed before collecting data. If data collection relates to interview then interview schedule guides are designed for collecting data. An interview schedule guide is a set of questions that the interviewer will use to collect data. If a survey will be carried out then questionnaires will be designed. This could be done on paper or online. The data collection methods depends on the purpose and aim of the study. In this study data was collected by means of paper questionnaires inorder to ensure that more respondents are reached physically in order to get adequate feedback.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection started when the proposal document was approved by the supervisor. The researcher used questionnaires which had both open and closed ended questions. This was to enable the researcher to obtain more information about certain variables of the respondents. The questionnaires were coded and later distributed to the selected respondents who would provide data by filling the

questionnaires. The filled questionnaires were collected at a later date. This was to ensure that the questionnaires were fully filled. Where possible the questionnaires were filled and collected the same day. The researcher tried to ensure that as much as possible the questionnaires were filled and returned.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis involves examining, categorizing and tabulating the evidence to address the initial prepositions of the study. The data collected is usually unorganized and thus difficult to give observations on. According to Leedy,1993, questionnaires are analyzed using open coding which involves breaking down, examining, comparing and categorizing data. Thus patterns can be observed and conclusions drawn. The questionnaires received were first coded and quantitative data entered into the computer for analysis using descriptive statistics, to get the percentages and frequencies. Data was presented using frequency tables and analyzed by interpreting the percentages. Observations made were explained which included any qualitative data which was necessary for this study.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to establish the role of information technology skills on youth empowerment projects in Nakuru Town. Based on the objectives of this study, the first objective being to examine how entrepreneurial training on information technology skills enhance sustainability of the youth empowerment. It sought to establish how the youth had benefited from entrepreneurial training and if it had brought about sustainability of the projects. It sought to establish if good communication is enhanced in the project operations, if information technology skills is essential for empowerment of youth in business projects, if the projects have policies to ensure proper time management to avoid wastage, if there is county support in training on information technology skills of the youths, if the youth group capitalizes on new business opportunities and if the group stresses on efficiency in the project operations.

The study established that 70% of the respondents disagreed that there was good communication within the groups. The study also established that 86.66% of the respondents disagreed that there was empowerment of the youth project members on the projects objectives. The study also established that 93.33% of the respondents disagreed to having policies to ensure proper time management in the business. This greatly led to misuse of the projects time and thus poor performance. If appropriate entrepreneurial skills were acquired on how to run these projects, it would go along way to ensuring that the projects were successful. Proper communication would be enhanced, time management would be given a priority as well as proper policies and procedures. Every member would feel as having an obligation to ensure that the project works.

The second objective was to assess how online financing enhanced sustainability of youth empowerment projects. It sought to establish if the youth projects had access to credit from the Government youth fund and other financiers, if the projects had online platforms for accessing credit and if the projects were able to repay and view loan disbursements and repayments online It was established that 70% of the respondents did not have accessibility of funds from the Government Youth fund and other financial institutions. It was further established that 63.33% respondents did not have online platforms for accessing credit facilities. This made it very tedious

and time consuming to access these funds. This meant that timelines were not met as expected. Further analysis established that 70% were not able to repay or view disbursements and repayments on loans online which was very time consuming as they had to move to the financiers to do the repayments as well as seek clarity on repayment progress. Online financing was seen to be very crucial as it would enable any member to view their credibility status and even ask questions. With the manual system, funds could be misappropriated by a few members who would bring failure to the whole project.

The third objective was to determine how internal controls enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects. It sought to establish if the youth projects had a vision and mission, if they maintained reliable accounting records, if the projects had online internal controls to assist them in monitoring and implementation of the projects. It was established that 80% of the youth empowerment projects agreed to have vision and mission. These however were not clear on the youth members. It was also established that 63.33% of the youth projects did not maintain reliable accounting records. This therefore created friction within the group members. It was also established from the analysis that 60% of the respondents disagreed to having a monitoring mechanism of the project's operations. This therefore meant that the internal controls needed to be looked into to take care of all the participants by introducing the online internal controls which could be accessible to every member. This would bring more and proper understanding of the company vision and mission. Record keeping would also be enhanced thus preventing loss of project funds. The members would be in a position to monitor project's performance.

The fourth objective was to establish how online marketing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects. It sought to establish if the youth projects had online platforms for accessing markets both locally and internationally, if they focused on customer opinions in branding and packaging their products and if they were able to differentiate their products to make them suitable to the customers. From the analysis it was established that 63.33% of the respondents did not use online platforms to access markets for their products. This was established to be characterized by increased costs in internet usage as well as mobile phone applications. This difficulty in accessing discouraged the youth from accessing wider markets locally and internationally. The study further established that only 30% of the respondents focused on customer opinions when it came to branding and packaging. This hindered marketability of their goods since they did not have a clear picture of what the customers really wanted. This was mainly due to the high cost of getting customer feedback online. Further analysis indicated that 60% disagreed to differentiating their products to fit the market demands. This was due to lack of internet skills on how to differentiate their products as well as the high costs involved in designing unique products. This therefore means that the cost of accessing online information needs to be looked into and government intervention will be of great help to ensure that this information can be easily accessed at minimum costs.

From the study, the results indicate that majority of the youth projects have not taken advantage of information technology skills to improve their business operations. From the first objective which is to examine the role of entrepreneurial training on information technology skills to enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects, it is evident that there is poor communication, poor or no policies and thus no evident empowerment on the youth projects members. A good business requires good and open communication, proper policies and procedures which enables the project to

maximize on profits. This actually shows how lack of entrepreneurial training led to most youth empowerment projects failing. This can however be enhanced by use of information technology skills to enable the projects set up proper policies which can be accessible to all members. This will also bring about empowerment as members will feel part of the project.

In the second objective which was to assess how online financing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects, the study revealed that majority of the youth projects did not have accessibility to credit. There was also low online platform usage on the projects to access credit and information on ready financiers to boost the projects. This greatly hindered expansion of the youth projects since very minimal funding could be raised by the members. This as well meant that a lot of time was wasted in applying and receiving funding from the financiers. Most lending institutions require online registration which means that most of the projects had difficulties in accessing funds. Information technology skills on online financing is therefore very vital in remedying this. Use of online platforms will enhance maximum time utilization and efficiency in accessing, utilization and repayment of loans.

In the third objective which was to determine how use of internal controls enhance sustainability of the youth empowerment projects, it was observed that majority of the youth projects had vision and mission statements. However these were not clear to most of the members. They did not understand what the strategic goals of the projects were. This meant that they were not enthusiastic to meet the projects objectives. Most of them did not seem to understand what visions and missions were. It was also observed that reliable accounting records were not kept and therefore bringing a lot of misuse of projects funds. Accountability was not being practiced and this lead to conflicts as no one could understand the records kept. Further studies revealed that monitoring of the projects was only done to a certain extent. This meant that projects time would be misused or the business would head in the wrong direction for not being monitored properly. Proper monitoring would also ensure that resources are used as planned.

The fourth objective was to establish how online marketing enhance sustainability of youth empowerment projects. From the analysis it was established that only 36.67%   projects used the online platforms for marketing their products and accessing information on any new market strategies. It was also established that just 30% of the youth projects focused on customer opinions before branding and packaging of products. Most of the youth groups did not differentiate their products to fit the market needs. This means that the youth groups did not utilize the available opportunities. The online platforms are very useful in providing market information and what products are demanded most. If the youth groups utilized the internet in a better way, they would be able to provide products that are fast moving and this would enable them to plan their resources well and enable them to settle the loans efficiently.

CONCLUSIONS

Youth projects are an important driver of economic change and progress. They lead to job creation and empowerment of the young generation. According to MOYAS 2008, youth projects enable economic activities by creating self employment activities. However from the study it can be realized that these youth projects are affected by various factors which derail them from meeting their goals. Most of these projects have been in operation for between 1 to 3years.This means that they are still in their initial stages and need to be boosted so that they could operate effectively. This

could be through capital enhancement as well improvement on entrepreneurial skills coupled by technological advancements.

Most of these projects are not able to access funds as and when required and majority also have not acquired the necessary entrepreneurial skills to run the projects. There is need to gain skills on online financing so that these resources can be accessed easily and efficiently. Most of the Youth projects are male dominated. They have taken much of the leadership positions thus demolorising their female counterparts. There is high female population and they need to be empowered inorder to assist in economic progress. About 40% of the youth projects are in the commercial retail businesses. This means that the youths are not innovative enough to come up with unique activities inorder to penetrate the market. There is need to empower them to be in a position to come up with unique ideas to boost the economy. This empowerment will come along with information technology skills which will enable them come up with very unique products and services.

The retail businesses deal with similar products and services and this may bring about loses as customers would not be moved. Most of the youths are between the age of 25 years to 29years and majority in this group have gone upto secondary school education. This means that they have not gained enough skills to be in a position to take up high roles. This has greatly contributed to mismanagement of these projects. Those who have gone to tertiary levels are very minimal as compared to the required numbers to spearhead and take control of the projects. At this age group the youths are normally very energetic and need much roles to explore on their potential. This means that the youths need to be very much engaged and skilled properly so as to sustain these projects. Much of the required skills are technology based so that they can explore on opportunities and any new information in the markets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that most of the youths have gone up to secondary school education. There are recommendations that entrepreneurship skills be made to be part of secondary school curriculum. This will enhance knowledge on wider areas on entrepreneurship.

The age, gender, level of education, reason to start up the youth project and members duration in the project greatly affect the prosperity of the project. There should be great consideration when it comes to setting up the projects to ensure that all these factors are put into consideration. When a youth group is coming up and being registered, the ministry concerned should look into this to ensure there is continuity of the program and to avoid these projects from falling off after few years of operation.

Government funding agencies should make it easy for the youth projects to access funds. There should however be prudence in issuing these funds such that misappropriation could be avoided. Accountability should be key and before the groups are financed, some background checks need to be carried out to avoid issues of groups getting funds and failing to repay back. Continuous monitoring of the activities of the groups is key to ensure that they are operating within their mandates.

The study also established that youths have accessibility to information on technological advancements but are reluctant to utilize such information because of reasons like high costs on internet usage, and lack of technology based equipment like computers and mobile phones which

can support such information. There is need for the government to invest much on information technology and innovation so as to enable easy access as well as maintenance of these equipment at low costs. The government needs to lower the internet charges to empower the youth to access new markets and raw materials for their businesses.

According to the study, the youths mainly start new projects for employment purposes. Most of these businesses are commercial which means that they are not competitive enough since they deal with what is already available. This is the reason why the youth need to be innovative enough and with the use of information technology they can go a long way in attaining this. The government also needs to come up with talent identification and mentorship programmes whereby individual talents can be established early enough and taken care of until the youth are old enough to start on projects. The private sector also needs to come in handy to assist the upcoming youths who have the capabilities to move the economy forward.

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