



TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING AND YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN UGANDA

Assessment of the possibility of a hairdressing model in Northern Uganda

¹Irene Oryema, ²Samuel Opono

¹Independent Researcher, ²Lecturer and Researcher
¹Formally in the Department of Business Management
¹University of East London, London, United Kingdom

Abstract: This study assesses the possibility of implementing a plan in Northern Uganda to build an established brand with Vocational Education and Training (VET) Enterprise in Hairdressing and Barbering in Northern Uganda. The study took a single case study approach on Northern Uganda. Secondary method of data collection was used. Data sources included data from organizations providing VET in Northern Uganda, government websites, relevant internet sources and reports on VET and hair dressing on Northern Uganda and Uganda more generally. The techniques of analysis used in this research followed the feasibility criteria- things that make a hairdresser flourish- which also formed the themes for analysis: legal acceptability, market, economy, technical acceptability, the right location, convenience and satisfaction to customers. The research finds that a conducive and supportive environment of operation of VET exist in Uganda. Laws and policies support VET, there is a booming market for hair and beauty products although cheaper products dominate the mass market for lower class people, economy is improving although Northern Uganda still lags behind, the preferred location for hairdressing and barbering business is Kampala city followed by urban areas around the country. Income of Kampala residents are two to three times more than the income of people in Northern and Eastern Uganda. Conclusively, it is possible to establish a hairdressing and barbering business and VET training center in Northern Uganda, in spite of economic, technical and market challenges. The conducive environment outweighs the challenges.

Key words: Youth, employability, technical skills, hairdressing, Northern Uganda

I. INTRODUCTION

Millions of youth around the world are unemployed (Goldin, et al, 2015) and more than 169 million youth remain poor due to unemployment (UN, No date). In Uganda, unemployment among the youth is an immense challenge (ACODE, 2014:2 and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBoS), 2016). Youth suffer from unemployment more than the older generation. Uganda's level of unemployment is 3.2%, yet youth unemployment is 22% - 7 times higher than the national rate (Journalism Connected, 2015). Sixty-five percent of educated and uneducated young people aged 20-24 years (11.8 million) do not have jobs, over 90% of the population above the 25 years are jobless, and dependence rate is as high as 103% (UBoS, 2014 and Walubiri, 2014). Youth in Northern Uganda are worst off because of the insurgency that ravaged the region for more than two decades. Many youths were abducted and conscripted into the rebel insurgents. Children were exposed to violence and they had very little access to primary education and virtually no secondary or tertiary schooling (Mbazzi & Lorschiedter, 2009 & Women's Refugee Commission, 2009).

To help curb the youth unemployment challenge, Uganda's government emphasizes training in Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET), to inculcate the culture of job creation (Brookings, 2014). This study, therefore, assesses whether it is possible to implement a plan in Northern Uganda to build an established brand with Vocational Education and Training (VET) Enterprise in Hairdressing and Barbering that encompass all key aspects of Natural Hair services, product knowledge and sales for both Afro and European, men, women and children; a high quality standard performance and the delivery of the long-term vision for the business that will act as a platform for the expansion of further projects, education, and employment. This proposed Hair and Barbering Project will learn from other VET programmes attempted in the region so far, forming the study purpose and objectives below.

The Purpose of the study is to investigate the possibility of establishing a complete model of a technical skill training on youth employability in Uganda.

The objectives of the study are: to assess the effects of technical skills training on youth employability in Uganda; to explore the challenges of technical skills training in Uganda; and to identify the mechanisms of improving technical skills training in Uganda. The remaining parts of the report are structured to explain the research methodology, and conclusion.

The remaining parts of the paper are structured into four chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature; chapter three explains the research methodology; chapter four discusses the findings; and chapter five concludes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review logically synthesises the major discussion surrounding vocational, technical training skills in relation to employment improvement among the youth. Summarily, the discussion supports the fact that millions of youth around the world, including Uganda, are unemployed and this negatively affects the societal stability and youth contribution towards national development. Therefore, policies that support education with relevant skills' trainings to improve youth employability, should be developed. The review is logically organised from the global perspective, regional (African) perspective, National (Uganda) to Northern Uganda perspectives where the researchers intend to initiate skills training project for the youth.

Education is a perspective for basic human rights and a factor for development, and has been a point of discussion for international policies (MDGs, 2008 & UNESCO, 2008). Governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) across the globe are prioritising educational accessibility. However, there is a challenge of content of quality of education provided, as governments focus on enrolling students and putting less emphasis on quality and relevance of education in skilling participants (Zeelen, et al, 2010).

Millions of youth around the world cannot find reasonable work to help themselves, their families and their countries. Any kind of unemployment lags the economy and the country behind, and the unemployment of the youth exacerbates this when they are unproductive (Goldin, et al, 2015). Mainstream education and vocational training both within and outside schools integrated with apprenticeship, are the prerequisites for youth employment and being productive (World Development Report, 2013). One of the prominent areas of skills relevance and improving youth employability is Vocational Education and Training (VET).

VET has no single meaning, but can be used to refer to:

"... more or less organised or structured activities whether or not they lead to a recognised qualification. The qualification aims to provide people with knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary and sufficient in order to perform a job or set of jobs. Trainees in initial or continuing training thus undertake work preparation or adapt their skills to changing requirements. VET is independent of its venue, of the age or other characteristics of participants, and of their previous level of qualification. The content of VET could be job-specific, directed to a broader range of jobs or occupations, or a mixture of both; VET may also include general education elements" (Descy, 2009:3).

VET has the potential of contributing towards socio- economic development of countries (Akoojee, et al, no date; Dempsey, 2013: 18). However, capacity deficiency in providing VET exists even in developed countries. With a robust research covering all parts of the country of Australia, Dempsey (2013) asserts that the deficiency to provide for the needs of a wide range of learners to apply the new technology, exists, and raises the degree of stress and pressure on trainers to produce better results. The capped qualification for trainers does not provide sufficient skills to allow them adjust to new evolutions in VET. Trainers should, thus, be considered for further training.

In analysing documents, interviewing key informants and visiting relevant institutions in 7 countries in Southern Africa, Akoojee, et al (no date) argue that VET increases opportunities of acquiring jobs, and this has led to the increasing need to change the curriculum in favour of VET, and addressing the challenges in the informal sector. However, there are funding challenges of VET programs, and the role of national authorities are unclear. Private sector is increasingly being accepted as provider of VET, although public institutions are still dominant. Furthermore, there are equity challenges in the provision of VET. Women, the disabled and HIV positive people are discriminated against in accessing VET services. The aspect of discrimination is consistent with Hartl (2009) that many VET initiatives do not meet specific needs of women, who are also less enrolled in formal training programs, and are always given traditional reproductive related jobs. Inadequate interventions are taking place to bring VET in rural areas, especially for women. Lack of participation of women in VET is also due to under-schooling and perpetual illiteracy. Additional quality investment is paramount in VET for youth in rural locations, with special consideration for women.

In Nigeria, West Africa, a study of 370 out of 5000 students provided with vocational skills, concluded that exposing students to Entrepreneurship Education (EE) pays off. It influences students at higher level of education to be self-employed, providing them with requisite knowledge, skills and courage of beginning, developing and owning of businesses and to employ others; and positively influence their perception of being self-employed. Entrepreneurship Education engenders practicalities in education and learning to people and the country at large, thereby dealing with the challenges of unemployment and negativities associated with it. The research recommends integration of EE in all institutions of learning in Nigeria (Egunsola, et al, 2012). In Tunisia, the first study investigating how effectual entrepreneurship skills training was among the university students and providing "experimental evidence" to that effect, concluded that entrepreneurship pathway was effectual in adding the self-employment drive among the students who took it, but the impact remains generally minimal. The employment rate among the candidates remain the same, just a little change from "wage employment" to being self-employed (Premand, et al, 2012).

In focusing on documenting policy trends in Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Sub-Saharan Africa, Atchoarena & Delluc (2002) concluded that there is demand for a policy focus in TVE in English speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly due to employment challenges and need for economic growth. In French speaking countries, the reform has been drastic, with a focus on skills promotion, developing informal sector, promoting entrepreneurship, setting qualification benchmark and increasing tax to support skills funding.

Uganda's government has, since independence, been behind vocational studies, until early 2000 when the expenditure for vocational studies dropped, due to challenges in other sectors of the economy. Because vocational studies are costly with many dynamics, there is need for institutional collaboration, collaborating with private sector and the education recipients for planning and resource utilisation (Okou and Humphrey, 2002).

Uganda's population is predominantly youthful, yet the majority of youth reside in rural areas and are largely unable to access vocational education with facilities mainly in towns (Jacobs Foundation, 2012). Uganda is a poor country with many vulnerable youth and orphans. Some NGOs and private sector are stepping in to contribute towards filling the youth's skills gap. Hands Around the World built a vocational training centre, training the youth in tailoring and carpentry. The centre also teaches basic literacy, numeracy and business skills, as a source of livelihood (Hands Around the World, 2012). Other vocational skills projects have provided HIV/AIDS youth with skills that help them disengage from risky behaviour like drinking, drug abuse... (Rotheram, 2016).

Using SWOT analysis and participatory approach in Western Uganda, and reviewed papers on Sub-Saharan Africa, Tukundane (2014) concludes that VET programmes should be locally contextualised to the economic situations, job market, and local values. VET students have succeeded to a considerable degree, especially in finding jobs or establishing personal business. Nevertheless, the present Uganda's VET programme does not: address the challenges of negative attitudes, reflect the needs of the local market;

emphasise practical skills acquisition, linking with the job markets, and being flexible and guiding learners. Based on the above, the full potential of VET programme in Uganda in relation to employment creation to the youth is not being realised. The author recommends insertion of more resources in education focusing on relevant skills.

Due to limited intervention in Uganda, Early School Leavers (ESL) rarely re-join formal learning, but resort to acquiring basic skills for survival, mainly in VET, finance services, youth networks, subsistence agriculture; carrying out manual jobs in hard conditions with meagre income, and other survival choices. Respondents expressed desire to re-join technical or secondary schools, if they had the opportunity. The study recommends easing ways of accessing practical skills to empower them and make them less vulnerable, marginalised or excluded. The paper supports vocational studies and trainings integrated with work experience (Ibid)

In Northern Uganda, conflict interfered with the social fabrics, devastated livelihoods and jobs chances. Accessibility to primary and post primary education has been minimal in Northern Uganda, due to high degree of exposure to conflict and consequent trauma (Bidwell, et al., No date and Baines, 2006:3). The displacement of over 1.6 million people greatly changed the structures of education in Northern Uganda. Children can go to school; however, schools, equipment and teachers are grossly inadequate (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC) (2005:1 and 10). Communities based projects do help but they are incapacitated to undertake long-term initiatives (Baines, 2006: 2). Education is one of the major sources of hope for the betterment of conflict ravaged Northern Uganda (WCRWC, 2005:8). Technical schools to provide specific skills exist, but the coverage is very low (Ibid: 10). Some secondary schools have incorporated technical and vocational skills among the subjects taught. These include: "building, carpentry, joinery, mechanics, tailoring, agriculture, technical drawing, home economics and small business training" (WCRWC, 2005:8). Apprenticeships and distributing toolsets to the technical graduates could help them access jobs and work (Ibid: 10). This research, therefore, with a focus on Northern Uganda, critically assesses the impacts of technical skills training on youth employability in Uganda.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The literature review revealed that millions of youth around the world including Uganda, are unemployed. Therefore, policies that support education with relevant skills' trainings to improve youth employability should be developed. The review supports the contextualisation of VET programmes to the local economic situations, job market and values. This research is therefore contextualised on Uganda, and the method used in assessing whether it is possible to implement a plan in Northern Uganda to build an established brand with VET Enterprise in Hairdressing and Barbering, are discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

This study takes a case study approach. Case study refers to "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson, 2002:28). Single case study focuses on individuals, group of individuals, a society, offering a great understanding of a phenomenon or an intervention (Robson, 2002:22 and Dee, 2014). This research, therefore, applies a single case study approach using Northern Uganda as a case study, to assess whether it is possible to implement a plan in Northern Uganda to build an established brand with VET Enterprise in Hairdressing and Barbering. It assesses the impact of vocational training provided to the youth of Northern Uganda so far, and the possibility of providing further skills training, specifically in hairdressing business and training that the researcher intends to establish in Nwoya district in Northern Uganda.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data

The method of data collection used in this research is desk-based, that is, the use of secondary data. According to Alvesson and Skölberg, 2007 and Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), secondary method of data collection involves using a variety of printed and electronic documents, articles, newspapers, organisational reports, government reports. In this research, these range of data are thoroughly and purposively reviewed and triangulated with careful consideration of their credibility and reliability, in order to offset the bias of absence of a primary voice.

3.3 Theoretical framework

Thematic analysis is used. Themes and sub-themes are discussed as they emerge from the reading and grouped accordingly (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2007:22-23). The common themes that emerged from the literature on the things that make a hairdresser flourish include: customer satisfaction, the right location, a clean and safe atmosphere, convenience, qualified trained personnel, economy, market and local laws (Dontigney, 2017; Fulbright, 2017; James, 2014; Furgison, 2017; Swan & McDonough, 2011). A brief explanation of these feasibility criteria are: market acceptability (possibility of job market for vocational graduates); legal acceptability (is the project in alignment or in conflict with the laws?); technical feasibility (availability of technology and technical expertise - human resource - to handle the project; operational possibility (Does the project solve unemployment problem? Does the project fit into the business environment? Will people accept the project or there will be resistance?)

IV. FEASIBILITY REPORT FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the main findings, following the themes on the factors necessary to flourish in hairdressing, and highlight the findings based on the research objectives: the impact, challenges and mechanisms for improvement of VET, which we can learn from and base decision on whether to establish a hairdressing and barbering project in Northern Uganda. The presentation starts with legal acceptability.

4.1. Legal acceptability

The legal acceptability of hairdressing and barbering in Uganda can best be viewed from the policies that guide vocational skills training more generally. These policies encourage skills training as a means of eradicating unemployment in the country especially among the youth. This gives a legal go ahead to the hairdressing and barbering project.

Due to high unemployment in Uganda (UBoS, 2014), the government is refocusing on vocational skills as a means of tackling high unemployment among the youth. The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010-2015 (ESSP) set the goal to “improve relevance and quality of business, technical, vocational, training and tertiary education” (Global Partnership for Education, 2017). Furthermore, Uganda’s government developed a strategic plan 2011-2020 called *Skilling Uganda* with a plan to focus more on BTVET, to comprehensively develop a system to enhance skills, productivity, create jobs and increase employment, rather than mere academic qualification (Twebaze, 2013:19; UNESCO & UNEVOC, 2014). BTVET Act was passed in 2008. It created qualification framework and acknowledges the diversity of BTVET and the roles of different VET providers - formal and informal, government, private sector and NGOs- as important stakeholders in skilling Ugandan youth throughout the country (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011; Ministry of Education and Sports 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

4.2. Technical feasibility

Equipment and tools for hairdressing business and training are available in Uganda. They are usually imported from Dubai, Europe and USA (Africa Business Pages, 2017; Beauty Africa Magazine, 2015). Technical expertise that we can draw the staff of hairdressing and barbering project from, exists. There are institutes that provide hairdressing courses like Mulago Vocational Training Centre (MVTC), YMCA Comprehensive Institute, Tiner International School of Beauty, Oriflamme’s, Beauty Academy, among others, offer certificate, diploma and advanced diplomas in beauty-related courses. “Short training courses are also offered at the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) which has a dedicated skin care section with a fully equipped laboratory and offers free hands on training” (Beauty Africa Magazine, 2015; Ugandan Spiritans, 2017). All these training institutes and schools are located in Uganda’s capital, Kampala, in central Uganda.

Kyambogo University has established VET trainers’ courses for instructors, where private VET providers mainly recruit their teachers and trainers from, but are criticised for having little practical or teacher training experience (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014: 11). However, there are new initiatives, including Nakawa Vocational Training Institute (VTI), The Uganda Association of Private Vocational Institutions (UGAPRIVI), Instructor Training department at Jinja VTI established in November 2013, all to undertake huge training need, to help the government fill the training gap and take on teachers willing to upgrade through in service programme (UNESCO and UNEVOC, 2014:11).

4.3. Operational possibility

The operational environment for hairdressing and barbering and general VET in Uganda is favourable. The 2010-2015 ESSP supports BTVET (Global Partnership for Education, 2017). The 2008 BTVET Act acknowledges the diversity of skilling and the roles of formal and informal providers, government, private sector and NGOs (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014). Due to conducive environment of operation of non-government schools, private training centres, institutes and schools, outnumber the government ones (Twebaze, 2013:24; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014). There are NGO run training centres. NGOs normally sponsor VET participants and offer additional material support. Individuals and religious groups run VET private training centres, schools and institutes (Women Refugee Commission, 2007:2).

The private entities providing VET are very important stakeholders of VET in Uganda, owning more than 1000 VET institutions, comprising 81% of all VET institutions in Uganda, while government owns a little over 110. Uganda’s government is committed to assisting the private VET providers in accessing available support schemes like subsidies extended to VET institutions, especially if the private VET providers invest and operate in a vulnerable region in providing relevant skills (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014: 9-10). The state minister for finance emphasised in a public speech, the importance for Ugandans to acquire vocational training to get hands-on skills required in the labour market.

It enables one to become employable at any level in Uganda or elsewhere. This kind of education is practical and students can apply to work in the formal sector or create their own jobs; as government, we continue to encourage more private partners to invest in education. When you invest in education, we only tax the profits you make out of the investment (New Vision, 2016).

In spite of relatively high number of VET institutions in Uganda, there is a special need for VET training centres in Northern Uganda. In terms of attitude towards VET, the survey conducted by the Women’s Refugee Council revealed that Southern part of Uganda view VET as a low standard choice of profession, while in the North VET is viewed positively, especially by the older youth who were affected by the conflict and have no hope of further education, but take VET as opportunity for further education and self-reliance (Women’s Refugee Council, 2007:3).

In a study exploring the hairdressing sector in the second largest Northern region town of Lira, after Gulu (now cities), there existed not any “dedicated professional training centre” in town (Mallet and Atim, 2014:28). At the time of the study, there existed only one “non-accredited training centre for hairdressing” started by a female salon owner (Ibid). There were other vocational training centres occasionally providing hairdressing skills, but did not have proper tools and trainers, and often collaborated with other salon owners to provide hairdressing skills to their trainees. The hairdressing training centres available did not provide official certification. The training usually takes three months with training fee of Uganda shillings 300,000= (\$115), which is very difficult for the poorest to afford. Most trainees are usually young women who are NGOs sponsored. However, the graduates complained that the training period (3 months) was insufficient to master the skills to enable them compete favourably in the job market (Mallet and Atim, 2014:28 & 30).

Friends of orphans, an organisation in Pader district that originally was rehabilitating former abductees and child soldiers, now provides services to expanded groups, including child mothers, orphans, HIV/AIDS positive adolescents, the chronically ill and the very poor. The organisation provides VET services including hairdressing (Fenkart, 2015:11). The organisation uses radio stations and the local leaders when they want to recruit new entrants in their training programs. One councillor at the organisation explained:

The number of the last applications was overwhelming. We were looking for 600 beneficiaries and got 3750 applications, which clearly shows the great need for such programs. In order to select who is to benefit and who is to leave out they use

various categories of vulnerability... it is very difficult to make this selection because all the applicants actually do need this kind of training (Fenkart, 2015:12).

VET has had positive impact so far. Saferworld under their Northern Uganda Youth Development Programme (NUYDP), conducted a survey about their training opportunities in motor vehicle mechanics, motorcycle repair, hairdressing, agriculture, catering and hotel management, to the youth of 15 districts of Northern Uganda. The survey had 733 respondents which were either interviewed or were involved in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). In their survey, 55% of the total participants said the training opportunities were "adequate" or "very relevant", the number rises to 75% when considered those who know whether the graduates were working or not. Most graduates were either working in NGOs, private sector or self-employed (Saferworld, 2012:14).

With regards to economic gains, hairdressing pays off. In a research conducted in hairdressing in the Northern town of Lira, female participants interviewed earned between USH 4000 to 10000 daily, but in good season, especially festive season, they earned up to USH 25000- 50000 daily. Young men who run their own salons can earn twice this amount (Mallet and Atim, 2014: 29). It is therefore more progressive and financially rewarding to own a salon than to work as an employee.

Challenges exist in hairdressing and barbering sector in Northern Uganda. Youth face the challenge of high cost of starting a saloon and acquiring the necessary tools (Mallet and Atim, 2014:28). Some members of the society view the young people working in the hairstyling business as immoral: the male hairstylists as "charlatans (locally called oyai)", and the women as prostitutes; the negative attitude has however significantly changed (Mallet and Atim, 2014:28).

In terms of improvement, provision of start-up kits could improve the ability of vocational graduates to start-up their own hairdressing and other business. For example, Women Development Centre, under the Diocese of Northern Uganda of the Catholic Church, with financial assistance from the stakeholders abroad, handed over graduation kits to 40 tailoring graduates and 25 hairdressing graduates. Every student got a start-up kit comprising of either "a brand new sewing machine for tailoring or items for the hairdressing students to start a salon including a mirror, two plastic chairs, shampoo" among others. The students were happy of the kit, one student Acaa Irene Acire confessed: "Now I have hope of supporting myself and my children, I will no longer be a beggar" (Diocese of Northern Uganda, 2017).

Our hairdressing and Barber training centre can collaborate with several organisations and businesses already operating in the area, for advice and learning. These may include: The Diocese of Northern Uganda that, through their *Women Development Centre* (The Diocese of Northern Uganda, 2017); Heritage Safari Lodge for tourist in Pakwach adjacent to Nwoya where our business will be located (TripAdvisor, 2017); Knit for charity which "collect and redistribute wool to help those who need it" by way of connecting to other charities that need knitted items to help the "homeless shelters, hospitals, care homes, charities for the elderly, animal rescue centres, premature baby units, children in developing countries" (Knit for Life, 2017), among others.

3.4. Market acceptability

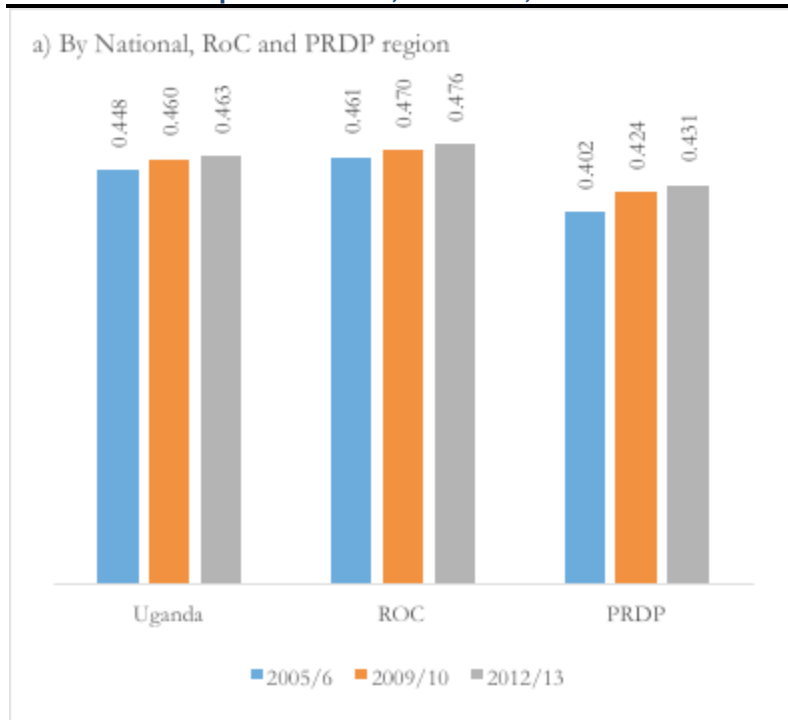
Hairdressing and beauty products have a booming market in Uganda. The growth in the sale of beauty and care products in Uganda between 2009 -2014 was up by 16% (\$210 million). The highest selling product categories are Hair Care and Bath & Shower products. Per capita expenditure was at \$5.6 in 2013 in Uganda, lower than Kenya at \$13, and a little higher than Tanzania at \$4.3. Cheap local products dominate the mass market for low class consumers, but there is middle and upper class consumers who buy more expensive international products for luxury and prestige (Beauty Africa Magazine). A significant portion of sales come from unisex products. Because of high demand and sales for low price products to local consumers, counterfeit products are common in the market (Beauty Africa Magazine, 2015). The Afro Business Trade Fair held in Uganda, surprised cosmetics traders of the high interest in cosmetics products in Africa (Africa Business Pages, 2017). Uganda's largest population group is below the age of 18, women comprise more than 51% of the total population, and the population growth rate is among the highest in the world. Uganda's government target is for Uganda to upgrade to a middle income status by 2021 (UBoS, 2014; Enumerator International, 2014; Beauty Africa Magazine, 2015). This presents a high potential market demands for hairdressing and beauty products and other products in the country.

In a perception survey conducted by Saferworld, radio and posters are the most popular and most appropriate way to advertise or announce training opportunities in region (Saferworld, 2012). Our project will take up these to advertise the initiative.

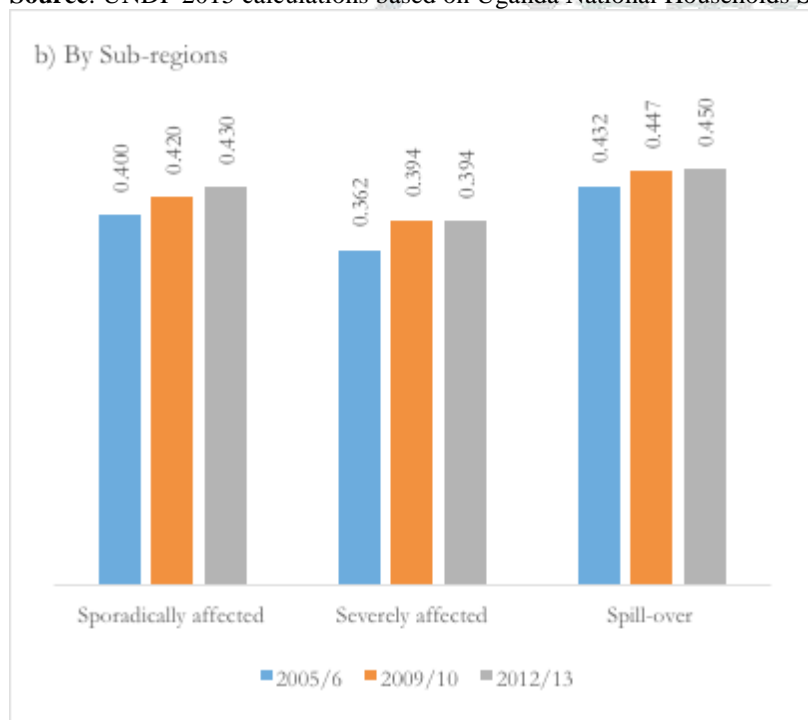
3.5. Economy

Uganda is among the 20 potential markets for consumer goods companies worldwide in a foreseeable future. It is among the highly improving economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The government improved its inflation performance, the GDP is projected to grow at 7%, putting Uganda among the fastest growing economies in Africa from 2013-2020 (Enumerator International, 2014).

However, economic recovery of Northern Uganda has been slow. The National Household Survey of 2009/2010 found that 46% of people from northern Ugandan lived below poverty line, unlike 11% in the central region, 24% in the east, and 22% in western Uganda. Northern Uganda had the lowest literacy level in the whole of Uganda (UBoS, 2010). The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) for Uganda, measuring education health and national income level, have been improving overtime. HDI improved from 0.448 in 2005/6 to 0.463 in 2012/13, an improvement of 0.5% annual growth. Poverty is reducing and income gaps among the regions of the country is also reducing. However, in spite of several post-conflict reconstruction interventions, Northern region Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) region- still lags behind the other regions of the country and there are disparities in the areas of income, education and health. The areas that were severely affected by the conflict are worse off, followed by the areas with conflict spillover effect, then the Rest of the Country (RoC) (UNDP, 2015: 17, 19, 25-30). The graphs below illustrate these disparities.



Source: UNDP 2015 calculations based on Uganda National Households Survey (UNHS) data of 2005/6, 2009/10 and 2012/13.



Source: UNDP 2015 calculations based on Uganda National Households Survey (UNHS) data of 2005/6, 2009/10 and 2012/13.

Even by 2020, Northern Uganda, followed by Eastern Uganda, remain the poorest regions in the country (Owori, 2020). In spite of the economic and welfare gaps, there is relative peace in Northern Uganda, farmers are cultivating again, children are studying again, and people are engaged in different economic activities (UNDP 2015: 4 and Dagne, 2011:12).

One of the factors to consider in a business is the availability of money in the region of operation. If the economic activities are down, consider starting the business on a small scale, consider general products other than specialised activities, and consider products that will be demanded even if economy is depressed, if not wait until the economy improves with more money in circulation (Swan & McDonough, 2011).

3.6. The right location

The location is vital for the flourishing of any business. In hairdressing business, success requires a strategic location: in the busiest streets, the shopping mall, locations with high foot traffic, and those in the proximity of complementary businesses, like shoes and clothing stores (Dontigney, 2017). The location should be convenient to customers, visible, high traffic, and accessible to staff and cost effective (Dontigney, 2017; Fulbright, 2017; Furgison, 2017; James, 2014). In that regard, the best location for hair salons in Uganda is in Kampala capital city, other cities and towns around the country. These are busy areas with more people, more economic activities and more money circulating, as noted that “the hair care industry is arguably one of the most popular, fastest growing, lucrative businesses in town” (AllAfrica, 2017:1). Additionally:

The hair care industry is arguably one of the most popular, fastest growing, lucrative businesses in town. On a busy Kampala street or in any suburb, one is always likely to find several beauty salons and an advert of another to be opening soon. In places like Wandegaya and Makerere where there is a high student population with an extremely inelastic demand for vogue hairstyles, there are as many salons as an army of safari ants (Monitor, 2007).

Kampala has an average population of 2 million people, with average income and expenditure 2-3 folds higher than those living in the country site, especially in Northern and Eastern Uganda. Even though Uganda lags behind Sub-Saharan Africa in per capita expenditure, its' capital city, Kampala, harbours very rich individuals. Kampala, therefore, provides a better market for hairdressing and beauty products in Uganda, compared to the country sites (UBoS, 2014; Enumerator International, 2014; and Beauty Africa Magazine, 2015). Basing on this analysis, one can consider establishing a hairdressing business in Kampala first, while planning to establish a VET centre, for example, in Nwoya district of Northern Uganda for the vulnerable youth who need VET skills.

3.7. Health

Even though there is no direct law specifically addressing the undertaking of hairdressing, the Uganda's Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006, provides guidelines to be followed at all work places. Generally, the Act obligates any employer/s to ensure health, safety and welfare of any person at his/her workplace, and failure to comply can attract penalties or closure of the business. The relevant clauses to hairdressing are:

...where toxic materials or substances are present or used, the number of employed persons exposed to risk shall be kept to a minimum and where there is a recognised antidote, supply of the antidote shall be kept readily available (Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006, Part XIII, Number 85, Section 2).

without prejudice to any other requirement for washing facilities, where there is a risk of health from contamination of the surface of the body, washing facilities shall be provided and maintained and conveniently situated near the place where the toxic material or substance is used (Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006, Part XIII, Number 85, Section 6).

We will consider this at our expected hairdressing business to be established in Nwoya town, for the health and safety of our employees and customers who come into contact with chemicals used in hairdressing. Our enterprise will further be committed to Green Technology and it will embrace Ecological practices, and adapt good dumping practices.

3.8. Convenience

Saloons that provide a variety of services at the same place have advantage over saloons that provide one or two services. Most customers like their hair, face and nails done in the same place instead of a trio area. A hairdresser can specialise in one service, but offering a variety can work to the business advantage (Fulbright, 2017).

3.9. Satisfaction to customers

Success in hairdressing relies on the ability of the hairdresser to constantly satisfy the customers. The hairdressing business can flourish if it provides high quality service, quality products, comfortable atmosphere and affordable price to its customers. Customers are willing to pay more money if they are satisfied with the service in terms of their physical appearance. Satisfaction breeds trust between the clients and the business; the clients turn into repeat customers and advertise and win more people into the business (Fulbright, 2017). This and the preceding factors that make a hairdressing flourish should form part of holistic decision to undertake a hairdressing business and/or training in Nwoya district, Northern Uganda, where conflict affected youth are in dire needs of VET skills.

V. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to assess whether it is possible to implement a plan in Northern Uganda to build an established brand with VET Enterprise in Hairdressing and Barbering. The research used feasibility criteria - the factors that are necessary to make hairdressing flourish. These were: Legal acceptability, technical feasibility, market, economy, location, convenience, and satisfaction to customers.

The research finds that there is favourable environment to run vocational trainings in various fields and particularly hairdressing and barbering. Policies like the ESSP 2010-2015, 'skilling Uganda' 2011-2020, show the government's commitment to focus on VET and the government recognises NGOs and private VET providers, formal and informal, as important stakeholders of VET in Uganda. In terms of technical feasibility, equipment are available for hairdressing operation; there are institutes that offer general VET and particularly hairdressing; one Government University trains in different areas of vocational skills. These provide the required personnel, although they are criticised of being too academic. In terms of operational possibility, people are in need of training centres, few NGOs and private providers operating in Northern Uganda are not enough. In terms of market, a ready market for hair and beauty products exists, although the demand for cheaper products are more than very expensive ones - low income earners are more than the middle class and the rich.

Uganda's economy is improving, the per-capita expenditure is improving, although Northern Uganda still lags behind the rest of the country. Therefore, a prospective business person has to start small, keep on growing depending on the market response, and bring in the general products that will be demanded by our clients or the training areas requested for, even if they are outside hairdressing and barbering. The best locations for establishing hairdressing business are Kampala capital city, other cities, towns and urban centres. Kampala dwellers on average earn and spend 2 to three times more than people in Northern and Eastern Uganda. Very rich people live in Kampala too.

This research used secondary method of data collection. There could have been certain aspects of the feasibility of hairdressing in Northern Uganda that were not captured in the secondary data, but could have been captured if primary data were collected. Notwithstanding, the information were gathered from varied secondary sources, and triangulated depending on their availability and reliability, to offset the bias of absence of a primary voice. The research is limited by word count, but the information is sufficient enough to provide a clear picture of VET in Northern Uganda and Uganda as a whole, and a decision of whether to establish a hairdressing and barbering project in Northern Uganda can be based. All in all, the environment to operate VET is favourable and the favourability outweighs the challenges of operation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment. 2014. Youth unemployment and job creation in Uganda: Opportunities and challenges. Kampala: ACODE.

- [2] Akoojee, S., Gewer, A. and McGrath, S. no date. Vocational education and training in Southern Africa: A Comparative Study. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- [3] AllAfrica. 2017. Uganda: Hair raising tales of the beauty business. (Online): <http://allafrica.com/stories/200701310959.html> Accessed on 04/04/2017.
- [4] Alvesson, M. and Skolberg, K. 2007. Reflexive methodology: new vista for qualitative research. London: Sage Publications.
- Atchoarena, D. and Delluc, A. 2002. Revisiting technical and vocational education in Sub-Saharan Africa: An update on trends, innovations and challenges. Paris: UNESCO.
- [5] Baines, E., Stover, E., and Wierda, M. 2006. War-affected children and youth in Northern Uganda: Toward a brighter future. An Assessment Report, May 2006. Chicago: MacArthur Foundation.
- [6] Beauty Africa Magazine. 2015. Uganda: The market for beauty products & cosmetics. (Online): <http://beauty-africa.com/uganda-market/> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [7] Bidwell, K., Galbraith, C., Haddad, L., et al. No date. Youth and sustainable livelihoods: Linking vocational training programs to market opportunities in Northern Uganda. New York: Columbia University.
- [8] Brookings. 2014. Youth unemployment challenge in Uganda and the role of employment policies in jobs creation. Washington, DC: Bookings.
- [9] Dagne, T. 2011. Uganda: Current Conditions and the Crisis in North Uganda Ted Dagne Specialist in African Affairs. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- [10] Dee, C.R. 2014. Single-case research design and analysis: Counseling applications, Journal of Counseling & Development, (93), pp. 394-402.
- [11] Dempsey, M. 2013. Impacts of the changing nature of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system on educators within the VET system in Australia. Joondalup: Edith Cowan University.
- [12] Descy, P., Tchibozo, G., & Tessaring, M. 2009. A comprehensive review of current socio economic research related and relevant to VET and skill development. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training report. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- [13] Diocese of Northern Uganda. 2017. Celebrating seven years of ministry of the rt. rev. Johnson Gakumba: The Long awaited baby is now delivered. (Online): <http://dioceseofnorthernuganda.blogspot.u/> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [14] Dontigney, E. 2017. The 8 Steps to Starting a Cosmetology Business. (Online): <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/8-steps-starting-cosmetology-business-16010.html> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [15] Egunsola, A.O.E., Dazala, I.U. and Daniel, J. D. 2012. Entrepreneurship education and attitude of undergraduate students to self-employment in Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Journal of Education and Practice, 3 (8): 95-102.
- [16] Enumerator International. 2014. Markets of the future (Online): <http://www.euromonitor.com/markets-of-the-future-in-uganda/report> Accessed on 04/04/2017.
- [17] Fenkart, S. 2015. If two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers: Perceptions on the rehabilitation process in Northern Uganda after the LRA insurgency.
- [18] Fulbright, J. 2017. How to Start a Hair and Beauty Salon Business. (Online): <https://www.powerhomebiz.com/business-ideas/start-hair-beauty-salon-business.htm> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [19] Furgison, L. 2017. How to Open a Successful Hair Salon. (Online): <http://articles.bplans.com/how-to-open-a-successful-hair-salon/> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [20] Global Partnership for Education. 2017. Education in Uganda. (Online): <http://www.globalpartnership.org/country/uganda?lb=9i7b6oqasdmr> Accessed on 23/02/2017.
- [21] Goldin, N. & M., Glick, P., Lundberg, M. and Puerto, S. 2015. Toward Solutions for Youth Employment: A Baseline for 2015. Solutions for Youth Employment: Washington D.C.
- [22] Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. 2007. Ethnography: principles in practice 3rd ed. London and New York: Routledge.
- [23] Hands Around the World (2012) Vocational training in Uganda. Monmouth: Hands Around the World.
- [24] Hartl, M. 2009. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development for poverty reduction – do rural women benefit? (Discussion Paper). Rome: IFAD.
- [25] Jacobs Foundation. 2014. Uganda Brighter job prospects for youth through agriculture. Zurich: Jacobs Foundation.
- [26] James, M. 2014. How to start a hair and beauty salon. (Online): <http://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/knowledge/articles/2014/09/how-start-your-own-hair-and-beauty-salon/> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [27] Journalism Connected. 2015. Youth unemployment in Uganda, February 24, 2015. (Online) URL: <http://ofcourse.oru.se/~waf-e/maukah141/?p=71> Accessed on 16/11/2016.
- [28] Knit for Life. 2017. A Charitable Company registered with HM Revenue & Customs under reference no. XT34818 in the UK.
- [29] Mallet, R. & Atim, T. 2014. Urban labour market participation: evidence from the catering sector in Lira, Northern Uganda,
- [30] Working Paper. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.
- [31] Mbazzi, F.B. & Lorschiedter, A. 2009. Psychosocial support to vulnerable youth in vocational schools in northern Uganda. Intervention 7, (2), pp. 130 – 137.
- [32] McGrath, S. 2012. Vocational education and training for development: a policy in need of a theory? International Journal of Educational Development, 32(5): 623-631.
- [33] Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force. 2008. Delivering on the global partnership for achieving the millennium development goals (Online) URL: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Gap%20Task%20Force%20Report%202008.pdf> Retrieved on 14/12/2016.
- [34] Ministry of Education and Sports. 2011. Skilling Uganda, BTVET Strategic Plan 2011-2020. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- [35] Ministry of Education and Sports. 2012. Ministry of Education and Sports, Directorate of Industrial Training. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- [36] Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. 2002. Uganda National Action Plan on Youth. Kampala: Government of Uganda.

- [37] Monitor. 2007. Uganda: Hair raising tales of the beauty business. (Online):<http://allafrica.com/stories/200701310959.html> Accessed on 04/04/2017.
- [38] Nakawa Vocational Training Institute & Ministry of Education and Sports. 2007. The project for instructors training for vocational and training. Kampala: The Project for Instructors Training for Vocational and Training.
- [39] New Vision. 2016. Ugandans encouraged going for vocational training, 25th, March 2016. (Online): http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1420468/ugandans-encouraged-vocational-training Accessed on 23/02/2017.
- Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006.
- [40] Okou, J.E. and Humphrey, H. 2002. Meeting the challenges of technical/vocational education: The Ugandan experience. Kampala and Pennsylvania: Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports and Penn State University.
- [41] Owori, M. 2020. Poverty in Uganda: National and regional data and trends. Bristol and Wilmington: Development Research Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd & Development Initiatives Poverty Research America Inc. online at <https://devinit.org/resources/poverty-uganda-national-and-regional-data-and-trends/> Accessed on 22/08/2020
- [42] Premand, P., Brodmann, S., Almeida, R., Grun, R. and Barouni, M. (2012) Entrepreneurship training and self-employment among University Graduates: Evidence from a randomized trial in Tunisia (IZA DP No. 7079). Bonn: IZA.
- [43] Robson, C. (2002) Real world research (2nd ed). Oxford: Blackwell.
- [44] Rotheram, M.J. (2016) Reducing HIV risk among Ugandan youth. Los Angeles: Center for HIV Identification, Prevention and Treatment Services (CHIPTS).
- [45] Saferworld (2012) Perception survey of Northern Uganda Youth Development Centre. Kampala: Saferworld.
- [46] Shim, J and Chang, H. (2012) Critical review on human capital theory and its applicability on vocational education (Conference Paper 2012).
- [47] Swan, W.A. and McDonough (2011) 7 Factors to Consider When Starting a Business. (Online): <http://www.brighthub.com/office/entrepreneurs/articles/38870.aspx> Accessed on 01/04/2017.
- [48] TripAdvisor (2017) Heritage Safari Lodge. (Online): https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Review-g3320787-d5848769-Reviews-Heritage_Safari_Lodge-Pakwach_Northern_Region.html Accessed on 04/04/2017.
- [49] Tukundane, C. (2014). Education and skills for development: Transforming support programmes for early school leavers in Uganda. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- [50] Twebaze, J. (2013) The oil and gas industry in Uganda: Employment trends, vocational education and training, and skills needed (Working Paper). Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- [51] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census 2014 final results. Kampala: UBOS.
- [52] Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstracts (various issues). Kampala: UBOS.
- [53] Uganda National Bureau of Standards (2010) Pre-export Verification of Conformity Standards. Kampala: UNBS.
- Ugandan Spiritans (2017) Mulago Vocational Training Training Centre. (Online): <http://www.ugandanspiritans.com/ministries-ad-intra/mulago-vocational-training-centre> Accessed on 03/04/2017.
- [54] UN (No date) Youth Stats: Hunger and Poverty. New York: United Nations.
- [55] UNDP (2015) Uganda Human Development Report 2015: Unlocking the development potential of Northern Uganda. Kampala: UNDP.
- [56] UNESCO (2008) Overcoming equality: Why government matters. Education for all global monitoring report. Oxford: UNESCO Publishing/Oxford University Press.
- [57] UNESCO Evaluation Report (2006) Non-Formal Education and Livelihood Skills for Marginalised Street and Slum Youth in Uganda. Nairobi: UNESCO.
- [58] UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2014) World TVET database: Uganda. Nairobi: UNESCO-UNEVOC.
- [59] Walubiri, M. (2016) Census: Unemployment biting hard, March 29, 2016, New Vision. (Online) URL: http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1420713/census-unemployment-biting-hard Accessed on 15/12/2016.
- [60] Women's Commission for Refugee (2007) Vocational training and market demand in Northern Uganda: Preliminary research findings. New York: Women's Refugee Commission.
- [61] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005) Learning in a war zone: Education in Northern Uganda. New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.
- [62] Women's Refugee Commission (2009) Field testing: Market assessment toolkit for vocational training providers and youth: Linking vocational training programs to market opportunities in Northern Uganda. New York: Women Refugee Commission.
- [63] World Development Report (2013) Youth Unemployment and Vocational Training (Background Paper). Washington D.C: World Bank.
- [64] Zeelen, J., Linden, J. van der, Nampota, D., & Ngabirano, D. (2010). The burden of educational exclusion. Understanding and challenging early school leaving in Africa. Rotterdam: Sense Publications.