

Exploring Employment Opportunities for Youths Completing Universities and Colleges in Tanzania

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Abstract

This article reviews literature about unemployment and possible ways to reduce it among youths completing universities and colleges in Tanzania. The article argues that since God is the first worker with agriculture at the Garden of Eden and ordered humanity to engage in work with the Garden to till and keep it, Tanzania can reduce the unemployment status to a minimum a level as possible if available resources for self-employment are used effectively, including engagement into agricultural activities. This means that the fight for unemployment among graduates in Tanzania can hardly be limited to the creation of white-collar jobs rather than encouraging graduates to create entrepreneurial activities for self-employment.

Keywords: Agriculture, Employment, Youths' unemployment, Employability skills

1.0 Introduction

Working is very essential for every human being because of the many needs to each individual human being in the world. Some of the important human needs, according to Mwalimu Nyerere, the former president of the United Republic of Tanzania, are food, shelter, and clothes (Sanga & Pagnucco, 2020). There are so many other human needs; some of them are travelling, school fees, and buying books and magazines. Therefore, all these needs require a person to be employed in order to cater to them. According to the International Labor Force Survey (ILFS) (2006), the employment status of graduates in Tanzania is categorized into three: employed, unemployed, and inactive. This status represents the possible outcome in the study model which seeks to examine the probability of graduates being either employed, unemployed or inactive given several demographic characteristics. In the ILFS (2006), it is reported that “employed status in Tanzania included paid employees, self-employed people outside traditional agriculture, unpaid family helpers and traditional agriculture workers” (Ndyali, 2016:118). The first two categories make formal graduates employment category while the last two make informal graduates employment category.

Several studies have been conducted worldwide regarding the question of youth unemployment (Alwald, Kreishan & Selim, 2020). In Africa, studies include Ali and Jabeen (2016), Cloete (2015), Gwala (2007), The African Capacity Building Foundation (2017), and Kassa (2012). In Tanzania, researches include that of Ng’atigwa, Hepelwa, Yami and Manyong (2020) who investigated youth involvement in horticultural activities in Njombe Region. Moreover, Peter (2013) dealt with the nature of unemployment in urban Tanzania and its

subsequent challenges and consequences. Similarly, Mjema (1999) surveyed the nature, magnitude youth unemployment and the possible solutions. In addition to that, Mwakyembe (2012) analysed youth employment opportunities, whereas Mbalamwezi (2015) investigated the various perspectives and voices on youth unemployment in Dodoma Region. Msigwa and Kipesha (2013) analysed the determinants of unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa drawing some evidences from the Tanzanian context. On the other hand, Salum (2014), Amani (2017) and Philbert (2017) examined the factors causing unemployment of youths in Tanzania. Ndyali (2016) focused on the nature of Tanzanian educational system and the resurgence of jobless graduates in the market, while Karawa (2016) assessed the unemployment crisis among Tanzanian graduates and the role of education received in higher-learning institutions, and REPOA's report which concentrated on the transition of youths from school to work places among Vocational Education Training in Tanzania (Mihyo, Mmari & Msami [eds.], 2020). Indicating the seriousness of the problem, Mihyo, Mmari and Msami (2020:7-8), state that:

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, while the total youth unemployment rate declined from 13.2% in 2006 to 11.7% in 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015), the percentage of rural youth out of employment increased from 7.9% to 8.2% in the same period. The increase was more profound among rural females who saw a 1.3%-point increase in their prospects of being unemployed between 2006 and 2014... This is confirmed by recent data indicating that youth unemployment had increased since the last Integrated Labour Survey published in 2014. According to Trading Economics (2016), the general unemployment rate in Tanzania decreased from 10.7%

in 2012 to 10.3% in 2014, and the unemployment rate has been higher among the youth rather than among adults having continuously stood at 13.7% between 2010 and 2013 and increased to 14.9% in 2014. Also, while the general unemployment rate is projected to fall to 8% in 2020, youth unemployment is projected to be 12.65 % by that time... A comparison of female and male youth also indicates that youth unemployment is higher among females than their male counterparts at 14.3% among females compared to 12.3% among males. In urban areas, it is estimated at 22% against 7.1% in rural areas.

The above statistics indicate that unemployment among youth stands as one of the overarching problems in Tanzania that require serious and intentional strategies. Moreover, Stephen (2021) studied the reasons which cause most graduates from higher learning institutions in Tanzania to be unfit to compete in the labour market. Stephen discovered that ineffective teaching and the types of curricular used to execute education in higher-learning institutions were the main reasons for students graduating with the low capability to compete in the labor market requirements. Therefore, Stephen is of the opinion that a competency-based education should be highly emphasized in order to enhance graduates' capabilities to compete in the labour market requirements.

However, most of the above-listed studies are not theological. Only a few studies done in South Africa reflected on the question of unemployment among youths theologically (Cloete, 2015; Gwala, 2007). Moreover, despite being not theological, studies that were done in Tanzania mostly focused on determinants and factors for unemployment among youths in general. Very few of them focused on graduates and their

predicament of joblessness (Amani 2017; Karawa, 2016; Ndyali, 2016). The inadequacy of theological studies on the issue of youth unemployment clearly shows the need for a study reflecting on the issue in the Tanzanian context also touching theological issues.

Based on the preceding background, the major problem facing youth completing universities and colleges in Tanzania is the lack of sufficient employment opportunities relating to their specialization. This lack of employment makes them stay jobless in the streets or move here and there with their certificates in search of employment opportunities in white-collar jobs after their graduations. How does this situation affect their individual dignity as educated people in the country? How does this situation imply about the quality of education provided in Tanzania? Does it really prepare university and college graduates to be competent competitors in the labour market? What does God speak to graduates in this situation? Our thesis is that it is possible for the Tanzanian country to decrease the unemployment rate among people graduating from universities and colleges to the minimum level possible through encouraging them to use God-given potentials for self-employment. To defend the stated thesis, this essay discusses the following issues: the possible definition of the concept of unemployment, provision of appropriate support to rural youth activities, strengthening institutional linkages and capacity building, rectifying types of education, and lastly rehabilitating agriculture as a major means of income-earning in rural areas.

1.1 The Concept of Unemployment

The difficulty with the concept of unemployment is based on providing a satisfactory definition and categorizing who is employed and who is not employed. It is difficult because every human being in this world at least has something to do that makes him or her have survival (Mncayi, 2016). Employment and unemployment are concepts highly contextually bound. According to Karawa (2016), “Unemployment is a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full-time employment.” However, Mncayi (2016:10) asserts that unemployment is a situation where one is willing and able to work but cannot find a job. In most cases, the individual will have gone to school or have gone through training to make themselves employable and yet due to circumstances in the economy the individual remains unemployed. Here, the important aspects in the definition of unemployment are the following: the individual is without work, the individual is available for a particular work, and the individual seeks work (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2005). If a mother left work to bring up a child, or if someone went into higher education, such people are not working but cannot be classed as unemployed because they are not actively seeking employment (Tejvan, 2010). According to the ILO, unemployed people are those people who have not worked more than one hour during the short reference period but are available for and actively seeking work. Unemployment also involves the number of people in a country who are willing and able to work but cannot find jobs. Therefore, unemployment is a problem because people need but hardly attain it.

1.2 Possible Ways for Solving the Youth Unemployment Problem in Tanzania

The way to solve this problem is to undergo certain procedures when youths are in schools or colleges or universities. Solving the problem can involve teaching them more practical than theoretical subjects and teaching issues directly related to the kind of job they are going to do after being employed. Juma (2007), as cited in Mbalamwezi (2015:35), suggests some practical ways to be used towards solving the problem of youth unemployment; some of these ways are equipping youth with the necessary support to enable them to change their mindset and develop skills to enhance self-employment and increase their employment opportunities through expanding the private sector investment. For example, setting up skills development centres within rural areas is another way of increasing employability skills. These centres will likely help most youths acquire skills that can enable them to be self-employed and employed easily.

Juma's suggestion above is vital in eradicating unemployment for university graduates because it helps to reduce the consequences of youths' being unemployed. When youths complete their education, they become idle; so they start engaging themselves in bad gangs. Some of them, especially girls, sell their bodies to earn a living. For example, during the nighttime at Mafiati in Mbeya Region, one finds girls half-necked waiting for males to buy the service of sex. Referring to Dar es Salaam, Peter (2013:21) states that the "Presence of brothels, a researcher observed a number of brothels in Manzese area commonly known as *'Uwanja wa Fisi'*, which means 'hyena ground' whereby about 70 rooms accommodate commercial sex workers, as one of the respondents said, *'There*

are many girls here (Uwanja wa Fisi)....When you have argued with your girl, you go to such places you get one girl to have sex with.”

Peter (2013:21) further continues “Most male respondents reported having sex in rented rooms, guest houses or public spaces surrounding the brothels at night. As one participant stated: “in our areas, there are many narrow paths so the person may finish his stuff [have sex] there. Some male respondents reported engaging in inconspicuous sexual intercourse in dimly lit camp rooms during nighttime. Some male respondents reported engaging in inconspicuous sexual intercourse in dimly lit camp rooms during night times.” Peter’s presentation of all these illicit activities indicates that youths are jobless and possibly lack self-employment skills despite graduating from universities and colleges. At this point, we agree with Mncayi (2016:10) that “The role of education in increasing chances of finding employment, or rather lowering unemployment, is also supported by empirical evidence.” For instance, the background work of Giuliano and Tsibouris (2001) find that persistent unemployment decreases with the level of education. In other words, the more people further their education, the better are the chances of securing a job. However, the fact that unemployment has been increasing over the years shows that education cannot guarantee employment, pointing to issues of job market mismatches.” Therefore, following the above statement, graduates from universities should not have absolute hope of being employed in white-collar jobs just because of their education. Suppose youths in universities are equipped with self-employment skills and become busy with work after graduation, either employed or self-employed. In that case, it

can more likely reduce much of their engagement in ethically unacceptable activities, including those discussed below.

Drunkenness and drug use are some of the aspects that desperate people turn into as their solutions to worldly predicaments. Youths consider engaging in drunkenness and drugs to reduce the acute feelings of unemployment and make them comfortable. However, the comforting ability provided by such activities is just for a short time; when the power of alcohol and drugs end in their bodies, they find that the problems are twice as much, making them go and retake such drugs and drinks again. In the end, they become addicted. Various researchers report that youths report engaging in drug use and excessive alcohol as their way of comforting themselves to the extent of becoming addicted to alcoholism and drug use. The problem becomes worse among urban youths because of deteriorating effects on their personal and social life. Addiction leaves alcoholics unable to maintain practical interpersonal skills/relationships essential towards searching for jobs to sustain lives. Chronic alcoholic behaviour results in physical damages and financial and spiritual bankruptcy (Osaki *et al.*, 2018; Mbatia, Jenkins, Singleton & White, 2009; Matowo, 2013). Hence, taking much alcohol and the use of drugs make people unfit physically and mentally; so, it cannot be possible for them to get jobs and do their work.

Youths' engagement in prostitution, alcoholism, and drug use makes them uncontrollable to practise unsafe sex. These situations lead them to acquire contagious diseases, such as TB and HIV. Scholars have documented that most people diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB) were mainly youths in the current research. In this analysis, significant cities and towns such as Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Mbeya, Shinyanga, Morogoro,

Tanga, Iringa, Arusha, Mara, and Kilimanjaro region are highly affected, diminishing the power of most youth to work effectively (Majigo *et al.*, 2020). As the ability of these youths diminishes and deaths increase, it leads to a fall in the economic situation in the country. It also leads to the rise in monetary inflation of the country. This situation further leads to the increase in the price of different commodities, making life challenging for the majority in a particular society.

1.2.1 Provision of support to rural youth activities

Unemployment rate is higher for youths who live in rural areas than those in urban areas. The government should put considerable effort into that area. The efforts like teaching them the skills that can make them become self-employed and some of them employing others. Some scholars assert that the provision of appropriate support to rural youth livelihood activities and strengthening of access of young—men and women—to technical and financial services together with access to market-related information is important to be disseminated for expanding rural employment chances for the betterment of rural youths' livelihoods (Lindsjo, Djurfieldt, Isinika & Msuya, 2020; Trivelli & Morel, 2019). It means that the government has to strengthen institutional linkages and capacity building to address the challenges of youths' unemployment in rural areas. Therefore, we contend that through the proper provision of support to rural youth activities, the unemployment rate will diminish to a large extent because most of the graduates returning to rural areas will benefit from this support.

1.2.2 Opening up export market

The government has to open the export market for products, mainly from rural areas. This is important because many

people, especially youths, are unemployed. However, there is a need to provide industries to process products from rural areas. Opening up export market opportunities for local products, including increasing investment in processing and manufacturing and relaxation of restrictive conditions in the international trade, will enhance productivity because people will be sure of the market for their products. In that case, products from rural areas will be sold at high prices because the demand will increase, benefitting people living in rural areas, including the youth.

1.3 Type of Education in Tanzania

Every person must acquire adequate education. Education is the eye-opener for everything to be done in this world. Education is a necessary step to prepare people to be ready for work. In education, people get knowledge, skills and positive attitudes towards work. The World Development Report 2007 (World Bank 2006; cf. Ntawigaya, 2021) shows fewer individuals attain the required competencies skilled set despite improved primary education completion rate. According to this report, fewer individuals attain competitive skilled sets because students who need to be studying at a certain level hardly attend classes due to different reasons, as indicated below.

Some students are not attending classes because their parents hardly afford to provide standard school requirements. The URT (2016) reports that the impact of poverty on out-of-school children is assessed by studying children from households of different wealth levels. Based on equivalent *per capita* adult consumption, households are classified into five levels: lowest, low, medium, high and highest, representing poorest, poor, middle, rich, and richest households respectively. This

consumption quintile was possible by 2011/12. Therefore, if a student does not go to school for any reason, she/he cannot get the competitive skilled set for employment in the labour market.

1.3.1 Disability

Some students hardly manage to attend classes regularly because of particular help. Some of these students are unable to see, write, and some are unable to hear. According to the URT (2016), data on disability was collected during the 2012 census. In total, the census listed six types of disabilities: albinism, seeing, hearing, walking, remembering, and self-care. Any child with at least one disability is considered a child with a disability. Therefore, these students with different disabilities need special help to have the required competitive skill set as the other students.

1.3.2 Students having no parents or single parent

Some students fail to go to school because of no people to help them due to the orphanage; these students do not have parents, and some have single parents. Mainly these kinds of students hardly obtain essential school needs, and others live in a challenging environment. The URT (2016) reports that in Tanzania mainland, about 57.5 per cent of children aged between 7 and 17 live with both father and mother, 6.2 per cent live with mother only (father dead or missing), 1.3 per cent live with father only (mother dead or lost). The rest belongs to 33.3 per cent. Another category has either mother or father alive but lives outside the household. Therefore, students of this kind will not be very likely to have good results and attain the academic credentials required in the competitive market arena. We suggest that the government makes policies favouring these

kinds of students. The questions of employment and unemployment face both able and those with disabilities.

1.3.3 Early marriages

Some students are married before completing their education. For instance, there are those who are married before completing primary education. Others go to secondary schools but are married on the way before completing even the ordinary level secondary education. According to the URT (2016:39), “In Tanzania, before the age of 15, about 4 per cent of children are engaged in some form of marriage. From the age of 15, this figure starts to rise; and at the age of 18, about 22.1 percent are engaged in some form of marriage. From then on, the married percentage rises rapidly. By the age of 20, half of the Tanzanian girls are married or engaged in some form of marriage, even after joining colleges and universities.” Due to early marriages, students forfeit their right education and leave schools, hence failing to obtain the necessary competitive skilled set.

1.3.4 Child labour

It is the practice when children, instead of going to school, engage in work at an early age. Most children hardly go to school as required by their school rules. Dakar (2012) says that many Tanzanian children have been economically active from a very early age. This is the case for children in school in school and children out of school. However, according to the URT (2016), Out-of-school children are more likely to be working, particularly when they are ordered. At the lower secondary ages, about 84.2 per cent of out-of-school children are economically better, whereas in children who attend school the percentage is about 52.7 per cent. Therefore, these students will hardly afford to study efficiently; hence, they hardly attain the

required competitive skill set as they proceed to university levels.

For these reasons—child labour, early marriage, living with a single parent or without a parent, and disabilities—it will be difficult for all students completing a certain level of education to attain the required competitive skilled set in those levels. Therefore, we suggest a need for changes in curricular and teaching methods to inculcate in students critical thinking, communication and entrepreneurial skills aspects, which are in high demand in current workplaces (cf. Ntawigaya, 2021). We agree with the REPOA’s research conducted to investigate the transition of students from school to the world of work among Vocational Education Training in Tanzania (VETA) and the barriers to youth employment as Tanzania moves to industrialization. REPOA’s research opines that the education provided in Tanzania’s primary, secondary and tertiary institutions hardly prepares students to fit in the skills required by the world of work after graduation. One important factor that hinders their suitability is the Content-based Curriculum which the Tanzanian education system has embraced for a long time despite the shift to Competency-based Curriculum since 2005. REPOA’s research edited by Mihyo, Mmari & Msam [eds.] (2020: xiii) states:

Earlier evaluations have found the high levels of youth unemployment in Tanzania to be paradoxical because of Tanzania’s relatively high economic growth and spending on education, which in theory ought to have translated into rapid job creation and an abundance of well-educated youth. In exploring the paradox, the evaluation found an explanation in the dominance of content-based learning in the education system with

limited application in the labour market. Content-based learning focuses on rote memorization of factual knowledge. Despite being replaced by a competency-based curriculum in 2005, the learning curriculum has continued to be content-focused because of policy and institutional bottlenecks (cf. Stephen, 2021).

According to this statement, for education to prepare youths for the world of the labour market, it is important to inculcate in them the necessary knowledge and skills that are characterized by change and in constant demand by employers. It is hoped that liberating graduates from memorizing the contents of what is taught to practical-based teaching will increase their employability. Having skills alone is hardly enough; proper use of skills obtained is the most important factor to make them fit in the labour market. To teach students the practical skill required by the world of work, a competency-based curriculum and its tenets require being highly emphasized in all levels of education instead of just theoretically claiming to be using it while practically remaining to the former content-based curriculum.

1.4 Agriculture, the Major Means of Earning Income in Rural Areas: A Theological View

What do Scriptures say about agriculture and self-employment? Scriptures tell us that the first work that God ordered to be done by humanity was connected to agriculture: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Keeping and tilling the land means working on it. This was an important activity even before the Fall. After the Fall, the concept of agricultural work was more emphasized and intensified: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you,

‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil, you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground...” (Genesis, 3:17–19). The created human being was chased from the garden planted by God (Genesis 2:8) and became oblique to cultivate and plant his own plants in a cursed land. Therefore, despite education and employment in other sectors of human life, agriculture stands as the primary employment opportunity to humanity; Agriculture was a solution for the joblessness of the first created human being and remains a solution for the jobless people of today.

Apart from the total shift from the Content-based Curriculum suggested in the above subsection, the focus should be on entrepreneurial jobs for self-employment innovations, including those based on agriculture. Agriculture is the sector that employs more people than other sectors. This sector employs many people because it does not select who have to do agriculture. It does not care about one’s education, age or place of abode. Any person of any age can do agricultural activities and earn a living out of it. One’s education hardly matters to perform agricultural activities well. Most farmers are small-scale farmers or peasants. Informal and formal employment categories are used to represent employed graduates; however, we limit the informal category to traditional agricultural workers. Even though informal employment in Tanzania accounts for more than eighty per cent (80%) of the country’s economic activities, the inclusion of this category in the labour market analysis has been under debate (Lindsjo, Djurfieldt, Isinika & Msuya, 2020; Wamuthenya, 2010). This debate has arisen due to the nature, size, and output of informal sector

employment in Tanzania where agriculture is characterized by small-scale peasant farming. Therefore, all people disregarding their age and education can engage in farming activities providing a big and reliable solution to the problem of unemployment in Tanzania.

2.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In this article, we have discussed the possibility of Tanzania decreasing the unemployment rate to the minimum level possible. Several aspects have been discussed in defense of this thesis including the provision of support of rural youths' activities, opening up of export markets for products from rural areas, a total change in the type of education provided in the country, and an emphasis on agriculture as one of the major means of earning income for the majority people in Tanzania. We suggest that the Tanzanian government should increase the annual budgets for agricultural activities, especially in rural areas, and direct more experts towards these activities. However, it is better to train people from particular areas, the rural areas in particular, because doing so reduces costs and provides youth graduates from universities in such areas with the necessary skills to be self-employed, hence reducing the unemployment rate to a greater extent.

Theologically speaking, the primary task which God commissioned humanity after creation was tilling and keeping the land planted by God. Agriculture was the first valuable entrepreneurial God's work to be given to humanity. It was self-employed work that was further intensified after the fall. Since people of all levels of education can do agriculture; it is one of the best areas of self-employment to enhance Tanzania reduce unemployment to the minimum level possible. Therefore, entrepreneurial innovations for self-employment

among graduates should also include agricultural activities instead of dependence on other sectors.

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