

COMPETENCE-BASED EDUCATION: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS AFTER SCHOOLING IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated views from secondary school students on their employment expectations in the course of competence-based education [CBE] in Tanzania after schooling. Specifically, the study investigated expected future job plans among secondary school students and how CBE has oriented them to achieve their expected future job plans. A total of twenty four (24) secondary school students were involved in the study. Data were collected using focus group discussions and documentary review. The study revealed that CBE has oriented secondary school students to endeavor in small scale entrepreneurship enterprises and continue with further studies. The study recommends transitional programmes among secondary students so as to achieve their expectations as soon as they complete their schooling.

KEYWORDS

Students' employment expectations, competence-based education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preparation of students for the world of work (formal or self employment) is a primary concern of several education systems in the world. In due regard, countries the world over have focused on identifying employment expectations among students, due to the recognition made by people that emerging to adulthood is a complex and fundamental period that requires attention [1]. The author adds that at this time students strive to establish more adult roles, goals, interests or plans, aspirations, fears and responsibilities in terms of job interests, education, participating in social networks and romantic relationships [2]; [3]; [7]; [14]; [35]; [47]. These students' roles, job interests and responsibilities require profession, education, career exploration and work-related curriculum as they are uncertain events to happen that are influenced by family related job interests, personal characteristics, opportunities available, teachers, school environment and education system [3]; [16]. Competence-based education [CBE] has been acknowledged as a crucial strategy introduced in different countries in the world to orient students basing on their employment expectations. Therefore, this study investigated secondary school students' views on their employment expectations after schooling through CBE.

2.STUDENTS EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

The problem of youth unemployment, cyclical (lack of jobs and job growth caused by changes in economic policy) or structural (a mismatch between available jobs and skill requirements) is a global issue [38]. This is evidenced through various reports including those by International Labour Organization [ILO] [18]. [18] for example, reports that about 12.9% of students in 2015 were unemployed and the number is estimated to increase to about 13.1% in 2017 world-wide. In Sub-Saharan Africa [SSA], youth unemployment was estimated to be 10.8% in 2017 [18]. The irrelevance of the education systems has been identified to be the major cause affecting the entire need of equipping young people with competences that are related to their career competences essential for competing in the labour market [6]; [43]. Therefore, schooling must meet the needs of all students so that they can successfully develop to their expected career interests [7].

Researches point out that understanding of secondary school students' views on future employment expectations is very important to both educators and recruiters [22]. This is due to the fact that the knowledge and insights gained can be used to guide instructions, advice and recruiting tactics. Again, they can act as the basis for students' active and productive involvement in their life [15]; [22]. Also, listening to their expectations enables school and community environment to provide appropriate tools and other aspects necessary for them to survive and succeed [15]. [39] add that their expectations may simply reflect accurate forecast about education attainment.

3.THE CONCEPT OF CBE

CBE is widely agreed to have started in the United States of America [USA] in the teacher education reform since the 1920's before it spread to the UK and other parts of the world [11]; [44]. Its application in classroom instruction is associated with the research work by [5] which took place between the 1950s and 1970s to students in Chicago which resulted into the introduction of mastery learning [44].

[44] inform that, the basic principles and intentions of the CBE have remained the same since its first introduction in education system in the 1960s. According to [44], these principles include: distinguishable outcomes or mastery; greater workplace relevance; observable competences; assessments as judgments of competence and for learning; improved skills recognition; and improved articulation, competence transfer and orienting students basing on their expectations [45]. [44] and [35] view orientation of students in terms of their competences and expectations as essential than coverage of learning contents which seem to be more granular and narrow [7]. The emphasis on students' expectations in schooling is also acknowledged by [45] who argues that orienting students basing on their expectations offer a clear ground for setting goals, planning, exploring options and making commitments on education, career and family.

Elaborating on workplace relevance and students expectations, [32] and [25] argue that students facilitated through student-centred and diversity approaches are able to apply the academic competences in the real-world problems and meet their career expectations rather than through lecture and memorization [27]; [35]; [46]; [50]; [53]. These teaching and learning approaches such as project based, jigsaw, group work, enquiry and problem solving enable students to engage in learning activities that build up their expectations [25]; [27].

Advantageously, CBE has been considered to be a leading paradigm for innovation in several countries including the USA and Finland. This is due to the fact that CBE has created multiple pathways to graduates and provided staffing patterns in the USA and Finland [20]; [21]. Notably, [10] inform that the CBE is a multifaceted concept that has related terms such as Competence Based Learning [CBL], Competence Based Education and Training [CBET] and Competence Based Education Strategies [CBES]. In all these concepts students are acknowledged as the centre for effective teaching and learning and their future employment expectations [23].

For example, in 2005, Tanzania embarked on the implementation of the CBE in SE [19]; [28] aimed at improving access, quality, relevance of education for poverty reduction, and strengthening government efforts of preparing students for the world of work upon graduation [29]; [33]. It was further expected that through CBE at SE, students would become critical and creative thinkers, competent in oral and written communication, understanding quantitative aspects, independent thinkers, having personal and social values, and technological literacy. In spite of these good aims of CBE in Tanzania, authors such as [4]; [6]; [26]; [28]; [48] believe that secondary education curriculum does not adequately orient students with relevant employment expectations based on their views. This study, therefore, investigated secondary school students' views on employment expectations after schooling through CBE.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

This study was guided by one research question as follows:

What views does students' hold on their employment expectations through CBE in Tanzania?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches show that about 66% of secondary education students had never prepared on employment expectations as the task of preparing them was left to vocational or career and technical education programmes [22]; [42]. Nevertheless, about a half of students are working in jobs which they are not satisfied with [22]. [8] shares that schools must equip students to make informed decisions about their employment expectations throughout their school lives as they will begin acquiring workplace competences that will make them confident when they start working. [40] investigated future expectations of Brazilian youths and discovered that both boys and girls expected family-related, occupational and education goals. [1] in Israel studied whether students got what they expected and it was discovered that 90% were quite confident that they would have good jobs, cars and apartments. It was moreover found that 20% would be unemployed and 15% would have mental difficulties in the future [1].

[24] in a study conducted in Romania to 905 students using a questionnaire revealed that 66% expected to join college, 76% expected to find their partner, 80% had expected having a good job, 67% earn good money and 74% having a nice house, 5.9% did not expect to pass their examinations, 7.6% expected to be involved with the law and 14.4% expected to have a serious car accident.

6. METHODOLOGY

The study was mainly conducted in four secondary schools found in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Those schools were Kinyamwezi, Buyuni, Jangwani and Azania which were

purposely sampled to share their varied experiences. A total of 24 secondary school students were involved in the study. These students were selected because they possess special knowledge about their future employment expectations.

The students were selected through the assistance of academic masters who were asked by the researcher to identify 6 best academically performing students in each school from Form Three and Form Four students. The reasons were that these students had stayed in the schools for a long time and were able to air out their views about their future employment expectations freely.

The study used FGDs, and documentary review to collect data. The use of two methods (triangulation) in this study was to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected. Four FGDs were employed to the secondary school students. Each group was formed by 5 to 7 students. In all the four secondary schools the discussions were conducted in the school contexts; some in rooms that are not used for instructions and some under the trees. Each FGD was done in the morning for a duration of about an hour.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data for this study whereby ethical issues were considered. The researcher had a research clearance and permit from these offices: Vice Chancellor of the UDSM, Regional Administrative Secretaries and Regional Education Officer of Dar es Salaam then through the District Administrative Secretaries. Informed consent of the participants was observed and alphabetical letters and numbers were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants.

7. FINDINGS

In light of the expected job plans after schooling and how CBE has influenced their plans the study revealed that majority of secondary school students pointed out that CBE has helped them to plan for engaging in entrepreneurial and social projects for earning wages and rendering services for free in the community after schooling. Students explained that with CBE in some subjects they have learnt, it has assured them to successfully strive and compete with the environment since the teaching and learning approaches being used have placed them responsible for their learning and future goals. With regard to this students elaborated that they planned to engage in entrepreneurial projects such as launching tuition centres, engaging in agricultural activities such as animal or poultry keeping and gardening, small-scale soap making and manure industries, small shops and cafes. One secondary school student pointed out the following in FGD:

I think in various subjects where CBE concepts have been integrated, I learn simple related job activities. In Physics, for example, I learn to use simple machines to engage in agriculture, fishing, barber shop, selling drinks, and water. Such machines are trucks, swords, hooks, scissors, openers, and hoes. Additional to that in Chemistry, Biology and Geography I learn how to produce gas, acid and manure; all these will help me for environment conservation (FGD 2, 27th September, 2018).

Another student added that:

Through CBE classroom presentations and group discussions, I have gained competence of launching a tuition center since I am confident in presenting ideas in front of other people (FGD 3, 22nd October, 2018).

It can be noted from the students' views that implementation of CBE in subjects such as Chemistry, Biology, Geography, and Physics were closely linked with their future job plans. They were comfortable with the teaching and learning approaches and subjects in some topics such as environmental pollution, reproduction, chemical processing, gas, acid and manure production since the topics and approaches fostered their engagement and interaction in learning due to the fact that they were applicable in their daily life activities. They explained that the topics were easy to be applied in their expected real life since the tools attached were locally available and accessible at reasonable cost and capital.

Other related job plans they expected to engage in were volunteering in educating and counselling the community members in various aspects such as gender issues, good citizenship, corruption, drug abuse, good use of social networks, environmental conservation and medical education. One student made the following argument:

Through secondary education where I learn English language and Biology I am capable of reading various medicine instructions such as 'keep away from children' as well as doctors' instructions for medicine usage. Therefore, I will volunteer to advise the community to have first aid kits from the skill I got from laboratory rules in Biology (FGD 2, 27th September, 2018).

This demonstrates that students thought of rendering services by choice for free for the benefit of the wider community without necessarily expecting monetary gain or appreciation. They explained that they expected to engage in volunteering as it would help them and the community in developing new competences in their careers, expanding work experiences, increasing self esteem, building strong social networks and connections, fostering good citizenship and encouraging more people to be active in civic engagement. These volunteering activities seemed very important and easy to implement through their positions as role models and active participants in the community since they learnt how to volunteer through CBE classroom group works and projects.

The FGDs also revealed that students expected to pass their final examination and continue with further studies for academic and career purposes. Majority of the students were of the view that secondary education through CBE was not enough for making them competent in their careers which, eventually, continuing with further education such as advanced secondary, certificates, vocational colleges, bachelor degrees and above was inevitable. Few of them expected to pass their final examination so as to have a certificate that employers would use to assess their academic capability while securing employment. Others expected to join further studies to reach their career goals. One secondary school student pointed out that:

One day I plan to be a doctor of which I expect to help my fellow human beings to relieve their pains and suffering but, at my school during learning I don't practice anything related to my plan (FGD 2, 27th September, 2018).

It can be deduced that students are typically oriented for passing their final examinations as an assurance for continuing with further studies, a point of reference for employers, prestige, satisfaction and a way of expressing their acquired knowledge, thoughts and ideas through schooling. Again, they planned for further studies purposely for realizing their career and professional interests achievement. In light of their expected career plans, secondary school

students mentioned varied occupations such as doctors, engineers, pilots, advocates, journalists, and military forces. One secondary school student argued that:

We always do simple projects in Cookery and Needle-Work in Home Economics at my school. I know how to sew various types of dresses and torn clothes; indeed I know to prepare various snacks, in which after schooling, I will confidently help my mother in her café as a chief cooker (FGD 4, 29th October, 2018).

Secondary school students expounded doing simple projects as a CBE teaching and learning approach has oriented them into real life domain as it has helped them to their future investment satisfaction in catering and tailoring industries. Further, CBE has helped them in identifying their career paths through subjects of specialization they choose and daily oral questions about their future plans administered by their teachers, parents and relatives. These students explained that their future job plans were influenced much by their teachers who practically implemented CBE teaching and learning approaches as they facilitated their positive behaviour during guidance and counseling, teaching and learning processes. Students pointed out that they got inspiration from their teachers as they copied interaction, dressing codes and all activities around them from early stages of joining schools and during classroom sessions. In emphasizing the point two secondary school students argued that:

I expect to engage in teaching activities like my teacher because he is a good person, he impresses me how to behave and interact with other peoples (FGD 5, 16th July 2018).

In form three we are all allocated in class streams depending to their subject of specializations. Some are allocated in science where we have subjects such as Biology, Chemistry and Physics and some in arts subjects such as Geography and History. In these streams we initially identify our future expectations as for example, from science classes we expect to have engineers, and doctors; as well from arts we expect to have lawyers, and journalist (FGD 4 , 29th October 2018).

The statements underscore that through students imitations from teachers, question and answers and subject of specialization choices, students can realize their future expectations as they can engage in coping various activities and career occupations from their teachers during their schooling. Again, from the questions like *'what will be your future occupations? What is your future dream? What activities do you expect to do after your secondary school graduation?'* they were asked by their teachers, students freely mentioned their plans, interests of the activities and occupations they expected to engage with during their future life which in turn provides a base for determining their future activities and responsibilities to themselves and their community development.

8. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study concur with those by [49] which investigated students' expectation after graduation and found that more students expected to engage in activities outside their chosen areas of study particularly in paid employment. Such activities were entrepreneurship, holdings like agricultural, horticultural, landscape gardening and other kinds of holdings [49], contrary to the findings discovered by [17] that secondary school students expected to engage in armed forces activities after schooling. Again, the findings correspond and contradict with those

by [40]; [1] which discovered that students expected to have good jobs, cars, apartments, stable marriages and friends, engage in military services and attain higher education. Nevertheless, the study concurs with [52] which revealed that disabled students expected to have good-paying jobs that enabled them live independent lives. It concurs and contradicts also, with the study conducted by [13] which discovered that students expected to engaged in economic activities such as paid and unpaid works, take care of others, household tasks, sleeping and leisure.

9.CONCLUSION

Thinking about the students' future life and individual self-projection play big role in adolescent life. Students hold views towards learning and school when they participate in activities and experiences that provide meaningful opportunities for identifying their life expectations. Therefore, school learning should start with the exploration of students' future preferences, goals, plans, interests, needs and employment expectations through CBE school-based learning orientations, transitional programmes, guidance and counseling. This essentially, provides opportunities to determine how students construct their future employment expectations in relation to significant context around them so as to be productive secondary school graduates.

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