



## **Vocational Education and Training Perception on Integration of Prisoners into the Society**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author CMM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors BWK and AF managed the analyses of the study. Author KMK managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to evaluate Vocational Education and Training (VET) perception on integration of prisoners back into the society. The study was undertaken in Mombasa County with a primary focus drawn to Shimo La Tewa main prison and Shimo La Tewa Medium Security Prison. Questionnaire instruments were used for data collection. Different questionnaires were administered to different response groups. The groups included the prison administrators, the trainers, trainees and ex-prisoners. Sample selection method was majorly purposive for all groups except for the trainees who were selected randomly from a pool of those who undertook VET. The information was coded, cleaned and analyzed using the Predictive Analytical Software (PASW). Mixed methods such as qualitative and quantitative techniques were used as the data collected was both qualitative and quantitative. To facilitate the data collection that was qualitative in nature open ended questions were captured in the questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to deduce meaningful information. Regression analysis was done to assess the perception on integration of prisoners into the society. The model was found to be statistically

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significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the degree of linear relationship ( $R = 68.6\%$ ) while the total amount of variation explained by perception was significant ( $R^2 = 47.0\%$ ). Other perceptions deduced to impact on integration back into the society, societal point of view on the released persons, the prison administration point of view on the role of VET for inmates in prison and finally, the perception of trainers based in remunerative impact of VET on them. The research recommends that an orientation programme on importance of VET be conducted for prisoners before they can make choices on the types of courses that they wish to undertake, civic education for the society should be done for it is an integral part in ensuring successful re-entry for the prisoners, policies to reduce discrimination against prisoner need to be formulated and enacted, there is need to enhance human resource capital in prisons and finally, material resources to facilitate implementation of VET need to conform with market requirements.

*Keywords: Vocational education and training; perceptions; integration; recidivism; reoffending.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recidivism is the tendency of an offender to return to criminal behavior after release. It is through the recidivism rates that the effectiveness of correctional institutions can be measured. Higher rates of recidivism signify that the state of the correctional institutions has failed while low rates indicate that they are effective. The propensity of an individual to return to criminal behavior is defined or determined by factors such as the socio-economic status of the prisoners, gravity of crime committed, access to work, and the level of educational attainment by the offenders [1].

According to Spaul [2], VET is instrumental in filling the gaps by low transition rates from one level to another. In Spaul's findings, it was established that approximately 60 percent of the South African youth could not access post-secondary education. This necessitated the introduction of VET with the intention of reducing recidivism and assisting the youths who could not transition to college or university levels to attain skills that could help them access employment. Further noting, Spaul indicated that there was high correlation between the levels of educations by the youth and quality of jobs that they were able to access. Higher literacy levels attracted higher wages in the labor market and the converse was found to be true. In the same regard, it was established that low literacy levels were associated with higher crime rates [3]. Gagliano [4] also established that most of the trainees pursuing VET were found to have literacy levels estimated at 60 percent.

There is significantly a high level crime rate that is associated with low literacy levels. Western [5] noted that the incarceration rate for black men in the USA was estimated to be about 40 percent.

More than half of the incarcerated individuals were high school drop outs and had been incarcerated in their early 30 years of age. This, they explained, was prompted by the fact that they had no regular income yet those who were employed were of low average income [6,7] The same case was observed in Uganda in a report by Uganda Human Rights Commission [8]. Over 90 percent of the prisoners in Uganda did not have high school diplomas while over 85 percent of them had not pursued VET. The low levels of education experienced in Uganda corresponded with a higher incarceration rate. The report further indicated that the introduction of VET in Ugandan prisoners saw a reduction in the incarceration rates as the inmates were able to access meaningful employment after they had been released from prison. It further established that prisoners who did not pursue VET had a recidivism rate of about 65 percent to 75 percent.

According to a study by Coley and Barton [9], about six hundred and fifty thousand inmates were released every year from federal, state and private prisons into the society. Upon release the inmates seek basic means of livelihood such as employment. However, Coley and Barton [9] noted that the deliberate efforts by prisoners to access employment was hindered by low literacy levels. In a three-year study involving 1,205 released individuals, the findings showed that there was a positive relationship between inmates obtaining education of any kind in prison and the decrease of chances of reoffending [10]. Since education has been shown to reduce recidivism, prisons in the US opted to offer correctional education to the prisoners. Some of the basic correctional education programmes include Adult Basic Education, General Education Diploma (GED) preparation and vocational training [9].

## 2. PERCEPTION OF VET

Perception is essentially the manner in which people are able to see, hear, sense and understand a given construct or phenomenon [11]. Kasim and Fachriah [12] defined it as the assessment and understanding of the manner in which people tend to understand things based on their knowledge and understanding of them. Adaptations based on such constructions are then exhibited by the individuals who manifest different feelings and attitudes towards them. Perception of VET among the citizens was found to be a major determinant of its uptake [12]. They further identified three basic processes which include selection, organization and interpretation derived from the different sense that the involved people decipher.

VET was introduced to help rehabilitate prisoners and would be helpful in providing them with a good quality of life after prison. Bloom [13] noted that VET was found to be instrumental in helping inmates to cope and integrate back into the community. This was majorly achieved by providing the inmates with a platform to gain meaningful employment and increase their chances to regain financial independence after incarceration. However, much this was found to be true, the tainted criminal past of an individual undermined their ability to gain meaningful employment [14]. Bushway [15] indicated that the predicament was made easier by the fact that released individuals had been equipped with personal skills which they could apply at an individual level. Despite the progressive steps made, at a corporate level, the ex-convicts had to struggle with justifying their eligibility in the world of work to prospective employers [16]. Other challenges faced by the ex-convicts in the world of work are that they are perceived to be of low education standing in the society and that VET was not necessarily a good enhancer [17].

In many ways the societal perception of ex-convicts shapes the way in which they would perceive VET. In Europe for example, most people believed that individuals who had gone through vocational training did have skills that were required in the workplace [18]. A number of countries studied in the research had the same trajectory and perception in terms of the attractiveness of the VET. 83 percent of the people in Europe indicated that VET was relevant for economic progress. 55 percent of the respondents believed that those with vocational

skills were well paying while 72 percent of the respondents believed that VET enhanced the chances of one accessing quality education. In spite of the many contributions that the Europeans have towards VET, the formation of the same in the process of rehabilitation is somewhat obscure as perceptions the society has on criminals or ex-convicts limits the proliferation of VET in prisons.

There is a rich historical context associated with perception of VET. According to Anyanwu et al. [19], the idea of incarceration in Europe began in early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Before the start of imprisonment, criminals were ex-communicated and even deported to other countries. The whole idea behind imprisonment and deportation was targeted at getting rid of all the offenders from the society. The generally conceived notion based on these early practices in the European nations has shaped the idea of rehabilitation in negative light. Hawley, Murphy and Souto-Otero [20] however, identified that a shift has since been observed in terms of the approach taken towards restorative justice. As such, the idea of prison education was championed on the premise of providing education to all as a humanitarian principle. This was sanctioned in November 2011 and member states were required to adopt the policy recommendations for prison education. The report by Hawley, Murphy, and Souto-Otero [20] indicated that reduction of low skill adults and youth led to reduction in crime.

According to Chikadzi [21], there are several challenges that prisoners face from within the society and on a personal point of view. Upon release, it is presumed that formerly incarcerated individuals have reformed and recovered from their criminal behavior. However, the society perceives them to be hostile. They are viewed to be hostile and interaction with the said people is limited by a great extent by these perceptions. Chikadzi [21] further noted that the government, in the time, could classify individuals as unfit for service. Because of this, such persons stood no chance for formal employment even though they may have fully reformed and even gained the confidence of the society. Felon disenfranchisement was noted to be a common practice in the American society [22]. These actions by government reverses the ideal corrective measures championed through time. Most felons are marginalized in this system. They are unable to participate in any political decisions as their rights to vote are revoked. This

makes them isolated and second-rate citizens and may be perceived negatively by the society.

Felon disenfranchisement is derived from the medieval European “civil death” analogy [23]. The perception of these laws as applied, has an equivocal ambience transferred from repressive governments where humanitarian rights were held in low regards. The implication of such is that there is historical aspects that the corrective systems that continue to influence the manner in which incarcerated individuals are treated in the society. According to Pinard [24], the society is responsible for shaping recidivism. By labelling them individuals as convicted felons, they are pushed to own this status. Such levels of stigma changes the individuals’ perception on access to employment and housing [25]. Besides these shortcomings, the contribution of VET both for the general population and prison population is encouraging.

Based on Anyanwu and counterparts [19] perspective, previously convicted individuals are perceived to have different recidivism rates from one country to another. In the USA for example, Steurer, Smith and Tracy [26] studied about 3,170 men and women who were previously convicted in the states of Minnesota, Ohio and Maryland. The study established that among the 1,373 (43 percent) people had undergone Correctional Education (CE) offered in prison. There were generally low recidivism rates observed among those who had gone through CE compared to those who hadn’t with a re-incarceration rate of 21 percent among those who had taken CE compared to 31 percent of those who did not in three years after release. Colorado, a study was done to assess the recidivism rates among incarcerated women by Esperian [1]. In their findings, they established that 8.75 percent of the women who had taken VET reoffended and 6.71 percent recidivism rates were observed among those who had taken GED. About 26 percent recidivism rates were observed among those who did not undertake any VET course or General Education Diploma.

In summary, there are several challenges that influence re-integration of prisoners into the society. Demuth [11] noted that one of the greatest determinants of re-integration of prisoners into the society is defined by the perception of VET by the prisoners. However, the criminal past that an individual has in some way negates the process of successful re-entry [14].

In more progressive societies, prisoners have been successfully restored while others face varied challenges. The Special Eurobarometer 369 [18] report however indicated that the societal profiling of criminals has served to limit their access to work and retention of the same. The rates of recidivism however for those that had gone through the VET programs were lower compared to those who had not [1]. Based on these findings, the paper sought to investigate the manner in which perception influences the chances of successful re-integration of prisoners into the society.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted at Shimo La Tewa Main prison and Shimo La Tewa Medium Security Prison which are located in Mombasa County, Kenya. The overall number of prisoners in the two prisons were 1700, the trainers and administrators were 25 and 10 respectively. Identification of ex-prisoners was majorly dependent on their availability but 10 of them were targeted. The study used descriptive survey as it is the most ideal method available to the social science researchers as it focused on gathering data from a population subset for describing a large population [27]. The procedure allows researchers to gather flexible data with no room for interference of the respondents [28].

Research instruments are described as tools that can be used to collect information about a population in a systematic manner [28]. A questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument used in the study. The instrument offers flexibility of collecting both closed and open ended questions. Open ended responses allow the respondents to provide in-depth feelings about a phenomenon under study. By virtue of this provision, the researcher is able to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. The sample comprised of prisoners engaged in VET programme, the trainers, prison administrators, and the ex-convicts. The distribution of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

At the onset of the data collection exercise, the researcher applied for an authorization permit at the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). NACOSTI’s main objective is to regulate the quality scientific information arising from different researches and advocates for policy formulation to the government on the basis of the study

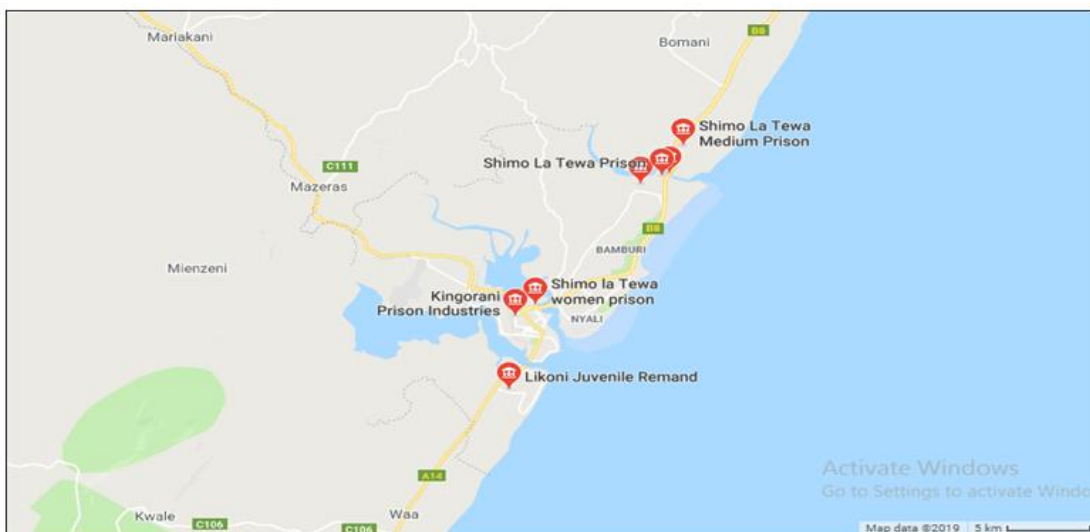
**Table 1. Distribution of respondents across categories**

| Category               | Target population | Sample population | Percentage | Sampling strategy |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Prisons Administrators | 10                | 10                | 100%       | Purposive         |
| Prison trainers        | 25                | 25                | 100%       | Purposive         |
| Prison trainees        | 1700              | 369               | 22%        | Systematic random |
| Trained Ex-Prisoners   |                   | 50                |            | Purposive         |
| Total                  |                   | 454               |            |                   |

findings and recommendations. After having obtained the authority to conduct the study, the researcher sought authorization from the Kenya Prison Service headquarters in Nairobi as well as consent from administrators at Shimo La Tewa Prison and Shimo La Tewa Prison Medium Prison. The data collection process was then set for start. Before this however, the purpose of the research was communicated to the administrators and later on to the respondents. Confidentiality of the respondents was assured as they were informed that their participation was voluntary and they were assured that the information would be used for the purposes of the study only.

Purposive sampling method was used to select the prison administrators, the trainers and the ex-convicts while simple random sampling was used to identify respondents from the trainees (Prisoners undertaking VET). After having sampled the respondents, the data collection exercise was started. The questionnaires for the administrators, trainees and the trainers were dropped and picked after they had finished

entering the data under supervision of prison administrators and trainers. Tracking and allocating the ex-prisoner in the world of work was assisted by the existing records in the prisons and also Non-Governmental organizations currently assisting trained prisoners in the world of work. Collection of information from the ex-prisoners was a bit challenging considering that they had to be followed to their communities. The data was then coded and entered into the Predictive Analytical Software package (PASW). This was followed by a data cleaning process where wrongly captured entries were corrected. Having cleaned the data from all the response sets, quantitative data from trainers and trainees were analyzed using PASW. Descriptive data presented in table forms summarized in means, frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistics was done using the linear regression model. Quantitative data analysis was done using content analysis for all the response sets. However, the data collected from prison administrators and the ex-prisoners was majorly qualitative in nature.



**Fig. 1. Prisons in Mombasa County**  
Source: Google Maps

#### 4. RESULTS

Relevance of Vocational Education and Training was measured and its significance determined by their mean scores. The Likert measurement scale ranged from 1- 'not at all', 2- 'to a little extent', 3- 'I don't know', 4- 'to a great extent', and 5- 'to a very great extent'. Theoretical understanding, practical understanding, and self-employment once released from prison had means 3.14, 3.64, and 3.59 respectively. The scores indicate that the trainers thought that VET was relevant in the respective listed items. Academic development and community development had means of 2.14 and 2.86 respectively. The two constructs were therefore not significant and therefore not relevant when it came to evaluating its relevance with regard to VET. See Table 2.

When the ex-prisoners were asked the relevance of the VET courses they had undertaken, most of them responded positively. It was noted that the training aided them apply the skills they acquired to help them improve on their ability to master the courses. This is in tandem with the perceived relevance on practical understanding that was asserted by the trainees. They further indicated that the courses had been helpful in helping them gain employment despite the hardships experienced at first when they had been released. Also, this married well with the idea that the trainers believed that the courses would help them in their pursuit of self-employment and self-reliance in the field of work.

The inmates' perception on the specific courses and their role in preparing ex-prisoners to integrate back into the society were also evaluated. The study assumed a mean scales obtained from the 5-point Likert Scale of 0.5-1.5 for 'not at all' rating, 1.5-2.5 assumed 'to a little extent' rating, 2.5-3.5 for 'I don't know', 3.5-4.5 for to a great extent and finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated 'to a very large extent'. Mat making, stone carving, leather work, fashion and design, tailoring and number plate making had mean scores between

1.5 and 2.5. Among courses that trainers noted that they did not know if they influenced the integration of ex-prisoners into the work environment were carpentry, metal work, painting, building and construction and finally, motor vehicle mechanic which rated between 2.5 and 3.5. See Table 3.

When the administrators were asked on their perception of trainers and trainees towards VET, there were both negative and positive responses that were given. It was reported that some of the positive perceptions was that the courses were helpful to the trainers since most of the trainees reduced recidivism because they are empowered. On the downside, it was established that VET could be viewed negatively by trainers as was reported by the administrators. Some of the reasons given were that most of the trainers are often overworked. They work as wardens and also double up as trainers. The additional responsibilities were reportedly not compensated. This then demotivated the wardens which may in turn affect their performance and even the will to execute VET programmes successfully. The same question was posed to the administrators regarding the responses by their perception on VET. Again, both positive and negative perceptions were noted. VET was noted to be key item to early release from prison. This is because one of the main reasons that most offenders were incarcerated was attributed to poverty. Skills attained, could help the prisoners gain meaningful employment and have an honest living. On the downside, most inmates were found to only commit themselves to the programmes for early release and not necessarily consider it an avenue for rehabilitation. Additionally, the inmates took this as means to become busy and forget about most of their troubles. This therefore could fail to serve the purpose because of such ill consideration and misrepresentation of intent by the prisoners. One of the administrators noted that prison institutions sought to profit from the inputs from prisoners while exploiting the readily available labor from the prisoners.

**Table 2. Mean in relevance of VET by trainers**

|                                                                      | Mean | S.D   | Decision     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|--------------|
| Theoretical understanding                                            | 3.14 | 1.207 | Relevant     |
| Practical understanding                                              | 3.64 | 1.706 | Relevant     |
| Self-employment once released from prison                            | 3.59 | 1.098 | Relevant     |
| Academic Development (Lifelong learning-become continually educated) | 2.14 | .468  | Not Relevant |
| Community Development                                                | 2.86 | 1.283 | Not Relevant |

**Table 3. How VET prepares the ex-prisoners in the World of work**

| <b>Courses</b>         | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. deviation</b> | <b>Average rating</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Upholstery             | 2.82        | 1.468                 | I don't Know          |
| Fashion & design       | 2.00        | .632                  | To a little Extent    |
| Tailoring              | 2.38        | 1.557                 | To a little Extent    |
| Carpentry              | 3.11        | 1.779                 | I don't Know          |
| Metal work             | 3.09        | 1.514                 | I don't Know          |
| Stone Carving          | 2.38        | 1.557                 | To a little Extent    |
| Leather work           | 2.22        | 1.093                 | To a little Extent    |
| Mat making             | 1.89        | 1.269                 | To a little Extent    |
| Motor vehicle mechanic | 3.00        | 1.958                 | I don't Know          |
| Number plate making    | 2.00        | .707                  | To a little Extent    |
| Painting               | 2.77        | .927                  | I don't know          |
| Building construction  | 2.85        | 1.625                 | I don't know          |

Finally, the administrators and some of the ex-prisoners noted that VET helped to sort out some of the institutional problems. This was a positive impact that the administrators brought about. Some of the reduced behaviors identified included violence among the inmates, gang activities, trauma and hopelessness, among other challenges. VET is means for proper utilization of time and this is key in ensuring that the prisoners put their time in constructive activities. Duwe [29] noted that VET helped to manage or control issues that added up to prison misconduct which is in agreement with the views of the administrators.

In terms of how the prisoners perceived the contribution of VET towards their integration into the world of work, several constructs were evaluated. Among the constructs were theoretical understanding of different VET courses undertaken, practical understanding of the courses, how the course helped them get self-employment upon release, how their academic proficiency was improved and community development. Theoretical understanding of the courses were believed to help the inmates with 218 (60.7%) of the respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing. 182 (52.3%) believed that practical understanding of VET courses would help them in the world of work, and 165 (47.4%) respondents believed that the courses would assist them gain self-employment once released. Academic development were rated by most of the respondents on the disagreement scale and they did not believe this to influence their integration to the world of work. See Table 4.

Table 5 shows the impact that different challenges have in preparing trainees for the world of work. Based on the averaged responses, the assumed a mean scale of 0.5-1.5 was for the response 'not at all' rating, 1.5-2.5

assumed the response 'to a little extent' rating, 2.5-3.5 for 'I don't know', 3.5-4.5 for to a great extent, and finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated 'to a very large extent'. Among the challenges which influenced the preparation 'to a little extent' were entrance behavior, absenteeism of trainees, lack of trainers, and irrelevant training materials. Lack of enough training materials was rated one of the leading challenges on average with a mean of 3.64. See Table 5.

#### 4.1 Regression Analysis

The paper sought to determine whether there was a linear relationship between prisoners' integration back into the community and the perception of VET by prisoners. Linear relationship was described using the Person R Square statistic. Higher values of Pearson R Square statistic is an indication of higher degree of linearity between the dependent variable and the independent variable while lower values show a low level of linear relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. The Pearson R Square statistic has scores falling between -1 and 1. The model was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the degree of linear relationship ( $R = 68.6\%$ ) while the total amount of variation explained by perception was significant ( $R^2 = 47.0\%$ ).

#### 4.2 Regression Coefficients

A linear equation model obtained from the model was as follows.

$$Y = 2.125 + 0.632X_1$$

Y = Integration of prisoners back into the society

$\beta_0 = \text{Constant}$ ,  $\beta_1$  is the linear regression coefficient

$X_1$  = Perception of prisoners on VET

**Table 4. Perception of VET by trainees**

|                                                                      | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |          | <b>Disagree</b> |          | <b>Neutral</b> |          | <b>Agree</b> |          | <b>Strongly agree</b> |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
|                                                                      | <b>Count</b>             | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>    | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>          | <b>%</b> |
| Theoretical understanding                                            | 45                       | 12.9%    | 36              | 10.3%    | 49             | 14.1%    | 122          | 35.1%    | 96                    | 27.6%    |
| Practical understanding                                              | 36                       | 10.3%    | 74              | 21.3%    | 56             | 16.1%    | 82           | 23.6%    | 100                   | 28.7%    |
| Self-employment once released from prison                            | 65                       | 18.7%    | 38              | 10.9%    | 80             | 23.0%    | 65           | 18.7%    | 100                   | 28.7%    |
| Academic Development (Lifelong learning-become continually educated) | 78                       | 22.4%    | 74              | 21.3%    | 69             | 19.8%    | 73           | 21.0%    | 54                    | 15.5%    |
| Community Development                                                | 65                       | 18.7%    | 78              | 22.4%    | 72             | 20.7%    | 67           | 19.3%    | 66                    | 19.0%    |



**Table 5. Challenges and their impact on preparation of trainees for the world of work and reduction of recidivism**

|                                                                          | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. deviation</b> | <b>Average rating</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Low trainee's motivation                                                 | 22       | 3.41        | 1.368                 | I don't know          |
| Entrance behavior                                                        | 22       | 2.55        | 1.011                 | To a little extent    |
| Too much emotional stress                                                | 22       | 3.18        | 1.435                 | I don't know          |
| Poor programme goals not stated clearly                                  | 21       | 3.14        | 1.153                 | I don't know          |
| Irregular transfer of trainees                                           | 21       | 3.29        | 1.521                 | I don't know          |
| Lack of trained Trainers                                                 | 21       | 3.33        | 1.155                 | I don't know          |
| Absenteeism of Trainers                                                  | 22       | 2.82        | 1.893                 | To a little extent    |
| Absenteeism of Trainees                                                  | 22       | 3.50        | 1.263                 | To a little extent    |
| Lack of adequate training materials                                      | 22       | 3.64        | 1.529                 | To a great extent     |
| Irrelevant training materials                                            | 22       | 2.91        | 1.342                 | To a little extent    |
| Lack of regular capacity building                                        | 22       | 3.27        | 1.241                 | I don't know          |
| Large class sizes during training period                                 | 22       | 2.95        | 1.618                 | To a little extent    |
| Weak linkages with job market/world of work                              | 22       | 3.14        | 1.521                 | I don't know          |
| Poor training methodologies                                              | 22       | 2.73        | 1.120                 | To a little extent    |
| Poor administration of examination/projects (cheating in exams/projects) | 13       | 2.54        | 1.664                 | To a little extent    |

**Table 6. Regression**

| <b>Model summary</b> |                   |                 |                          |                                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Model</b>         | <b>R</b>          | <b>R square</b> | <b>Adjusted R square</b> | <b>Std. error of the estimate</b> |
| 1                    | .686 <sup>a</sup> | 0.47            | 0.366                    | 0.43                              |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of prisoners on VET

| <b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b> |            |                       |           |                    |             |                   |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Model</b>             |            | <b>Sum of squares</b> | <b>Df</b> | <b>Mean square</b> | <b>F</b>    | <b>Sig.</b>       |
| 1                        | Regression | 31.354                | 1         | 31.354             | 225.0022607 | .000 <sup>p</sup> |
|                          | Residual   | 48.215                | 346       | 0.139349711        |             |                   |
|                          | Total      | 79.569                | 347       |                    |             |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of prisoners on VET

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of prisoners on VET

| <b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b> |                                |                                    |                   |                                  |          |             |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| <b>Model</b>                    |                                | <b>Unstandardized coefficients</b> |                   | <b>Standardized coefficients</b> | <b>T</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|                                 |                                | <b>B</b>                           | <b>Std. error</b> | <b>Beta</b>                      |          |             |
| 1                               | (Constant)                     | 2.125                              | 0.138             |                                  | 13.638   | 0.000       |
|                                 | Perception of prisoners on VET | 0.632                              | 0.035             | 0.606                            | 14.189   | 0.000       |

a. Dependent Variable: Integration back into the society

It was therefore determined that at 95% confidence level, the Perception of prisoners on VET on the integration back into the society was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This meant that for a unit increase in the scores

on perception on VET would lead to increase of 0.632 increase in the integration of released inmates back into the society. Both the constant and the regression coefficient were found to be statistically significant in the model  $P < 0.000$ .

### **4.3 Perceived Challenges in VET Implementation as per the Office Administrators**

Prison administrators provided different challenges that they faced in the implementation of VET. One of the challenges is lack of up to date training materials. They noted that the currently installed or procured materials used in VET are mostly out of date materials installed during colonial times. This is because there have been several changes and technological advances in the sector since the passing of colonial times. The use of old and traditional materials was noted to impact negatively on the integration of prisoners into the society because the tools they have familiarized with were not within their scope and mastery. Other challenges faced in VET implementation were lack of training spaces and trainee transfers from one prison to another.

Competing obligations was also another challenge that introduced limitation to successful implementation of VET. It was established that most of the trainers were employed as wardens. This therefore meant that they have to oscillate between the two jobs which is very strenuous to the trainers. Besides, some of the cadets may not have the required specific skill qualifications to perform some of the course work they are assigned to train. Since employment of professionals with specific qualifications has not been executed, compromise is made and the trainers are forced to instruct the inmates and also learned on the job as they progressed. Finally, recidivism was one of the key challenges that were observed to largely affect the inmates. One of the administrators reported that the chance of the released inmates re-offending was about 60%-65%. He noted that with the high recidivism rate the quality and success of the programmes would greatly depend on the administration of VET by NITA.

There were several proposed mitigation strategies for the challenges identified by the administrators. With regard to ensuring smooth transition into the society, the administrators suggested that a trust fund should be set up to provide business capital for ex-prisoners once they were released. Another suggestion was the establishment of "half way home" initiative where the prisoners would be encouraged to familiarize with the challenges they will face when they integrated back into society. This way adaptive strategy could be instilled in them. Additionally, a

well-funded follow up programme should be set up aside from the initiation given to them by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime Programme and the Father Gorol Welfare project (FGWP). In fact, some of the prison administrators from Shimo La Tewa prison noted that UNODC has been in a partnership with the prison authorities to help improve education material and offering construction training to interested inmates. The institution also helps the prisons improve their own facilities through the "self-implemented" projects. This was notably achieved through equipping the prison's engineering and technology department so that they can improve their structures. In the process, the inmates are able to practically apply the skills gained from VET and even gain experiences on how to use the new technologies supplied. Apart from the "self-implemented" projects, the institution made the necessary follow-ups to ensure that the inmates were well settled in the society. In order to facilitate ease and applicability of the skills acquired in prison, it was suggested that market driven materials should be supplied and finally, suggestions to have enhanced capacity building for trainers to be able to execute the VET programmes.

In terms of the institutional drive to combat the challenges, there were several strategies that were identified. Administrators reported that the institution was mandated with the responsibility of soliciting funds to purchase and even improve the tools and equipment available. This was reportedly achieved through creation of partnerships with different non-governmental and governmental institutions. Other levels of engagements for the partners were centered on follow-ups for the prisoners and provision of the necessary support in terms of further training and business establishments.

### **4.4 Perception on Follow up Programmes to Help Inmates**

#### **4.4.1 Office administrators**

Whereas, it was believed that training would help the inmates integrate back to the society, the administrators noted that there were also weak linkages to the job environment. Much as it was found to be weak, efforts to help the prisoners back into the society was mainly driven by two organizations in Kenya; The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and the Father Gorol Welfare project (FGWP). The

organizations were reported to be involved in providing teaching materials to Prisons, provided education and counseling services to help the released persons integrate into society with ease, and also tools and equipment that they need in order to start production once released to the world of work.

#### **4.4.2 Perceived challenges faced by ex-prisoners in the outside World**

According to the Prison administrators, some of the challenges that negatively impacted on the ex-prisoners included the fact that there were no sufficient resources to help sustain businesses. This aside, the society had a tendency to criminalize ex-convicts because of their prior criminal behavior. This negated their comfort in the society which potentially limited their access to jobs. It was reported that the general state of poverty in the outside world also affected the ability of the trainees to advance their economic positions and even that of the general society.

When the same question was asked of the ex-prisoners, several challenges were identified. The process of integration into the society was derailed by the lack of basic needs and commodities. One of the ex-prisoners noted that upon release, they had no money as there was no mechanisms to monetize the work they had done as inmates. As such affording basic needs such as food and clothing was a challenge, this sentiment was also echoed by another ex-prisoner. Coupled with this shortcoming, the respondent noted that there was a general rejection from the society and there was neither friends no relatives to help him through his time of need. This was considered as stigma by a number of respondents. Because of the void created, access of business capital and even minimal support from friends became very hard.

With regards to some of the suggestions that could help improve the adaptation of the prisoners outside prison, several suggestions were provided by the ex-convicts. One of the ex-prisoners noted that there was need to improve on the level of learning from traditional into learning of computer aided tools and machinery. This would help the inmates to enhance the relevance of their programmes in the world of work. Other forms of learning suggested included entrepreneurial studies, modern designing programmes, retention and upgrading of knowledge and skills among the inmates especially when it comes to familiarization with

modern machinery. It was noted that the retention in terms of skills was to help them to adapt easily into the outside job market because people with skills could easily apply them regardless of the changes made on materials or tools used.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Perception of VET is an important determinant of the uptake of VET. From within the prison environment, the uptake of VET was attributed to administrative challenges as well as technological issues. The Prisoners who decided to undertake VET did work for little or no pay. Incentives to encourage the inmates were either unavailable or minimal. This led to negative uptake of the VET courses since there was no drive at an individual level. With regard to the trainers' perspective, most of the additional tutelage responsibilities did not attract additional remuneration. This affected the learning process as the trainers also lacked motivation to give their whole. Both trainers and trainees perceived the VET system as unrewarding which reduced the level of dedication they had towards the programs.

The reasons for undertaking VET determined the level of uptake of VET. One of the reasons that inmates chose to undertake the courses was because it was an opportunity to gain early release from prison. It was assumed, on the part of the administration, that once a person had demonstrated to have gained meaningful skills, it meant that the person has reformed. It is an erroneous assessment of the individuals since they can cheat the system so that they can gain early release and not necessarily be diligent in the picking of the courses. Instead, dedication and desire to harness the skills by the inmates needed to be demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt. Additionally, the courses were thought to help tame aggressive behaviors from the inmates as they were kept 'busy' within the program. Much as this was a positive perception by the administrators, it needs to be considered a prerogative derived from successful rollout of the program.

Relevance of VET is key in determining the perceptions that the inmates develop. It was deduced, key areas of relevance included academic development, theoretical understanding, practical understanding, self-employment when released from prison and community development. Theoretical

understanding shaped perception of VET significantly and in the same breath influenced the practical understanding of the prisoners on the courses that they undertook. The nature of the acquired skills was taught theoretically in the training sessions. The translation in terms of practical understanding and application in the world of work varied from one course to another. The efficiency of the respective programmes in societal integration was perceived to be of “a little extent”. Bloom [13] was insistent on the fact prisoners should be given platforms to enable them gain meaningful employment in the society. In a way the relatively low perception that the different VET programmes are in part contributed to by the low view that the society have on the prisoners. Gumi [30] established in his study that 43% of the prisoners did not believe that VET would equip them with relevant skills in the job market. Gumi’s findings found the main course of the challenges to be derived from funding but this study established that the main source of this problem was from the society and the manner in which the society viewed them.

There are several contributors to how perception of VET’s affects the ability to integrate prisoners back into the society. As identified by Hamilton-Smith and Vogue [22], the society is instrumental in determining how released individuals can integrate back into the society. Because of their past criminal activities the ex-prisoners are received with some degree of hostility and mistrust. They are perceived to be dangerous because of their past criminal behavior. Chikadzi [21] noted that the level of mistrust on released prisoners by the public was a deterrent factor in terms of employability and job retention. Despite the efforts made by the corrective systems, most of the prisoners find it hard to integrate back into an impermeable society. In the US for instance some of these challenges are sanctioned by the government through felon disenfranchisement [24]. The society assumes the notion that the government sets and as such denies the inmates the right to employment because they are deemed dangerous and unfit for the society [22]. This notion affects the person’s ability to gain meaningful employment and even in social interactions. In Kenya, the same is observed with the manner in which the society treats released felons.

Much as the society is considered instrumental in shaping the integration of trainees into the society, there are certain perceptions that are limited to trainees themselves. Trainees

perceived VET to increase their theoretical understanding within the courses they are undertaking. Others believed that the courses improved their practical understanding as well as increasing their chances to self-employment once released from prison. Negative perceptions of VET were in areas of academic development and community development. It is apparent therefore that the role of VET in the academic progression of individuals was considerably low. According to the findings by Kachnowski [17], low academic standings influenced the uptake of VET courses. This is because technologically advanced courses requires theoretical understanding. However, the academic standings of the prisoners does not guarantee this. In India, the government formulated strategies to enable the inmates gain basic literacy levels as well as advance ones where appropriate [31]. The same strategy could be recommended for the prisoners in Kenya at different levels of education. This way, the inmates’ ability to fully understand VET is limited. However, this is compensated by the belief that practical understanding was of prime concern to them. The resulting effect is that the prisoners are not able to learn the courses which are technology oriented.

With the negative societal reception of released prisoners, there is little that has been done to help them integrate back into the society. Since the inmates gain little value for the work done while in prison, they are released back to the society with little or no financial capacity. More often, they do not have the necessary resources to purchase the tools that they require to practice the skills that they acquired while they were incarcerated. It is a form of ripple an effect scenario. Murage [31] noted that it is in the government best interest to allocate resources to fund different re-integration programs for the sake of enhancing successful reformation of prisoners. This will serve to ensure successful implementation of the programmes as well as reduce recidivism. Much as this is the case, Kenya’s decision to employ trainers has not been optimized [29]. The intrinsic challenges associated with this are pictured in this study. Most inmates perceive VET in a negative light in terms of it empowering them academically and so negates their chances to shun criminal behavior and re-enter the society.

Finally, the kind of challenges faced by ex-prisoners influences them as they try to integrate back into the society. In most instances the

perceptions were shaped by the resources that were available and the methodologies that were employed in training on the side of the inmates. Agufana [32] noted that some of the challenges that affects implementation of vocational education were limited infrastructure in schools, lack of teaching materials and in general, poor financing of the programmes. In the study, some of the challenges perceived to impact the delivery of VET were; absenteeism of the trainers, absenteeism of trainees, inadequate training materials, irrelevant training materials, the methodologies employed by trainers and finally, the manner in which evaluations are administered. The implementation of these programmes face inherent challenges over time yet minimal efforts have been made to improve the situation. The trainees identified one of their main challenge to be competing obligation. Training of VET was treated as an additional responsibility to which no additional payments could be drawn from. Since there is no financial gain value made from teaching VET, the trainers do not prioritize this obligation resulting in absenteeism.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we identified several aspects in which perception shaped integration of prisoners into the society. These perceptions are derived from the society as well as from the correctional facilities. In prison, perception was shaped by the administrative aspects of VET and also prisoner's perspective on VET. The administrative determinants of perceptions that inmates had on VET was attributed to the levels of resources available for VET. The relevance of the resources materials used was considerably a factor that shaped whether the inmates believed that the VET programmes would to help them gain employment in the world of work. Issues tied with irrelevant training equipment only allowed the inmates to utilize the skills attained within the confines of prison. The materials used were outdated and irrelevant in the outside world which then raised the questions in terms of the methodologies used for training. Clearly, the methodologies used are also outdated and cannot match the technological changes in the outside market. This makes it hard for the inmates to compete effectively with those that train in mainstream VET colleges in the outside world. This does not encourage the inmates as little value can be derived from programmes where the inmates had a negative perception of

the methodologies used. This view was asserted by the trainers who believed that the materials used in training were outdated and could not help the inmates beat the competition that the world of work offered.

The perceptions by inmates were more or less individualistic. The educational background of the trainees and individual impacted on the manner in which such individuals were able to absorb the courses for posterity. This was majorly defined by entry behavior. The general education levels of the inmates were considerably low and therefore it reduces the ability of the prisoners to master theoretical understanding of the courses that they undertook. The setback causes the inmates to focus more on practical understanding of that which is available to them. Given the fact that these materials are relatively outdated, the inmates do not gain flexibility in the world of work since not every tool will be available for their training. This then follows that their perception in terms of securing employment in the world of work is significantly impaired.

Generally, for VET to attract the desired effect in rehabilitating ex-prisoners, there are several factors that must be considered. First, VET must be accorded the seriousness it deserves. The inmates must be properly oriented on the importance of VET and how impactful it can be in improving their lives as well as that of their families. This way they will make choices based on value and not the early release incentive that comes along with it. Secondly, the society's perception on the released inmates needs to be redefined through civic education. Third, there is need for the government to formulate policies that will help gag the discrimination of released inmates in workplaces. Fourth, there is need empathize with the formally incarcerated with the government leading the way in defining the manner in which their matters should be handled in the specific roles that they should participate in within the society. This means that they should not be denied access to basic rights as conferred by international humanitarian principles. Finally, the prison administration to provide incentives that could help the inmates experience first-hand the importance VET in their lives during practical learning experiences in Prison.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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