

## Short Research Article

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PERCEPTION ON INTERGRATION OF PRISONERS INTO THE SOCIETY

#### Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the impact of 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 prison and Mombasa 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. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to deduce meaningful information. Regression analysis was done to assess the impact of perception on integration of prisoners into the society. 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 ( $R^2 = 47.0\%$ ). 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. 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, and finally, human resource and material resources to facilitate implementation of VET need to conform with market requirements.

**Key Words:** Vocational Education and Vocational Training, Perceptions, Integration, Recidivism, Reoffending

**Comment [D1]:** In which country?

**Comment [D2]:** Which qualitative instrument did you use? Its missing here

**Comment [D3]:** Break complex sentence into simple sentences with clarity

## 27 **1. Introduction**

28 Recidivism is the tendency of an offender to return to criminal behavior after release. It is through the  
29 recidivism rates that the effectiveness of correctional institutions can be measured. Higher rates of recidivism  
30 signify that the state of the correctional institutions has failed while low rates indicate that they are effective.  
31 The propensity of an individual to return to criminal behavior is defined or determined by factors such as the  
32 socio-economic status of the prisoners, gravity of crime committed, access to work, and the level of educational  
33 attainment by the offenders (Esperian, 2017).

34 According to Spaul (2015), VET is instrumental in filling the gaps by low transition rates from one level to  
35 another. In Spaul's findings, it was established that approximately 60 percent of the South African youth could  
36 not access post-secondary education. This necessitated the introduction of VET with the intention of reducing  
37 recidivism and assisting the youths who could not transition to college or university levels to attain skills that  
38 could help them access employment. Further noting, Spaul indicated that there was high correlation between  
39 the levels of education by the youth and quality of jobs that they were able to access. Higher literacy levels  
40 attracted higher wages in the labor market and the converse was found to be true. In the same regard, it was  
41 established that low literacy levels were associated with higher crime rates (Huttunen et al., 2019). Gagliano  
42 (1989) also established that most of the trainees pursuing VET were found to have literacy levels estimated at 60  
43 percent.

44 There is significantly a high level crime rate that is associated with low literacy levels. Western and Bruce  
45 (2007) noted that the incarceration rate for black men in the USA was estimated to be about 40 percent. More  
46 than half of the incarcerated individuals were high school drop outs and had been incarcerated in their early 30  
47 years of age. This, they explained, was prompted by the fact that they had no regular income yet those who were  
48 employed were of low average income (Harlow, 2003; Solomon et al., 2004). The same case was observed in  
49 Uganda in a report by Uganda Human Rights Commission (2015). Over 90 percent of the prisoners in Uganda  
50 did not have high school diplomas while over 85 percent of them had not pursued VET. The low levels of  
51 education experienced in Uganda corresponded with a higher incarceration rate. The report further indicated that  
52 the introduction of VET in Ugandan prisoners saw a reduction in the incarceration rates as the inmates were able  
53 to access meaningful employment after they had been released from prison. It further established that prisoners  
54 who did not pursue VET had a recidivism rate of about 65 percent to 75 percent.

55 According to a study by Coley and Barton (2006), about six hundred and fifty thousand inmates were released  
56 every year from federal, state, and private prisons into the society. Upon release the inmates seek basic means  
57 of livelihood such as employment. However, Coley and Barton (2006) noted that the deliberate efforts by  
58 prisoners to access employment was hindered by low literacy levels. In a three-year study involving 1,205  
59 released individuals, the findings showed that there was a positive relationship between inmates obtaining  
60 education of any kind in prison and the decrease of chances of reoffending (Haer, 1995). Since education has  
61 been shown to reduce recidivism, prisons in the US opted to offer correctional education to the prisoners. Some  
62 of the basic correctional education programmes include Adult Basic Education, General Education Diploma  
63 (GED) preparation, and vocational training (Coley & Barton, 2006).

## 64 **2. Perception of VET**

65 Perception is essentially the manner in which people are able to see, hear, sense and understand a given  
66 construct or phenomenon (Demuth, 2013). Kasim and Fachriah (2018) defined it as the assessment and

**Comment [D4]:** Good but does not link it to the study. The aims, objectives, purpose and importance of the study must be interwoven with the literature discussions

**Comment [D5]:** How do you make a case from these figures in your study? How do they show the relevance and/or the need for your study?

67 understanding of the manner in which people tend to understand things based on their knowledge and  
68 understanding of them. Adaptations based on such constructions are then exhibited by the individuals who  
69 manifest different feelings and attitudes towards them. Perception of VET among the citizens was found to be a  
70 major determinant of its uptake (Demuth, 2013). Kasim and Fachriah (2018) identified three basic processes  
71 which include selection, organization, and interpretation derived from the different sense that the involved  
72 people decipher.

73 VET was introduced to help rehabilitate prisoners and would be helpful in providing them with a good quality  
74 of life after prison. Bloom (2006) noted that VET was found to be instrumental in helping inmates to cope and  
75 integrate back into the community. This was majorly achieved by providing the inmates with a platform to gain  
76 meaningful employment and increase their chances to regain financial independence after incarceration.  
77 However, much this was found to be true, the tainted criminal past of an individual undermined their ability to  
78 gain meaningful employment (Walters, 2003). Bushway (1998) indicated that the predicament was made easier  
79 by the fact that released individuals had been equipped with personal skills which they could apply at an  
80 individual level. Despite the progressive steps made, at a corporate level, the ex-convicts had to struggle with  
81 justifying their eligibility in the world of work to prospective employers (Visher, Winterfield, & Weiman,  
82 2004). Other challenges faced by the ex-convicts in the world of work are that they are perceived to be of low  
83 education standing in the society and that VET was not necessarily a good enhancer (Kachnowski, 2005).

84 In many ways the societal perception of ex-convicts shapes the way in which they would perceive VET. In  
85 Europe for example, most people believed that individuals who had gone through vocational training did have  
86 skills that were required in the workplace (Special Eurobarometer 369, 2011). A number of countries studied in  
87 this research had the same trajectory and perception in terms of the attractiveness of the VET. 83 percent of the  
88 people in Europe indicated that VET was relevant for economic progress. 55 percent of the respondents believed  
89 that those with vocational skills were well paid while 72 percent of the respondents believed that VET enhanced  
90 the chances of one accessing quality education. In spite of the many contributions that the Europeans have  
91 towards VET, the formation of the same in the process of rehabilitation is somewhat obscure as perceptions the  
92 society has on criminals or ex-convicts limits the proliferation of VET in prisons.

93 There is a rich historical context associated with perception of VET. According to Anyanwu et al. (2018), the  
94 idea of incarceration in Europe began in early 18th century. Before the start of imprisonment, criminals were ex-  
95 communicated and even deported to other countries. The whole idea behind imprisonment and deportation was  
96 targeted at getting rid of all the offenders from the society. The generally conceived notion based on these early  
97 practices in the European nations has shaped the idea of rehabilitation in negative light. Hawley, Murphy, and  
98 Souto-Otero (2013), however, identified that a shift has since been observed in terms of the approach taken  
99 towards restorative justice. As such, the idea of prison education was championed on the premise of providing  
100 education to all as a humanitarian principle. This was sanctioned in November 2011 and member states were  
101 required to adopt the policy recommendations for prison education. The report by Hawley, Murphy, and Souto-  
102 Otero (2013) indicated that reduction of low skill adults and youth led to reduction in crime.

103 According to Chikadzi (2017), there are several challenges that prisoners face from within the society and on a  
104 personal point of view. Upon release, it is presumed that formerly incarcerated individuals have reformed and  
105 recovered from their criminal behavior. However, the society perceives them to be hostile. They are viewed to  
106 be hostile and interaction with the said people is limited by a great extent by these perceptions. Chikadzi (2017)  
107 further noted that the government, in the time, could classify individuals as unfit for service. Because of this,

108 such persons stood no chance for formal employment even though they may have fully reformed and even  
109 gained the confidence of the society. Felon disenfranchisement was noted to be a common practice in the  
110 American society (Hamilton-Smith and Vogue, 2012). These actions by government reverses the ideal  
111 corrective measures championed through time. Most felons are marginalized in this system. They are unable to  
112 participate in any political decisions as their rights to vote are revoked. This makes them isolated and second-  
113 rate citizens and may be perceived negatively by the society.

114 Felon disenfranchisement is derived from the medieval European “civil death” analogy (Chung 2013). The  
115 perception of these laws as applied, has an equivocal ambience transferred from repressive governments where  
116 humanitarian rights were held in low regards. The implication of such is that there is historical aspects that the  
117 corrective systems that continue to influence the manner in which incarcerated individuals are treated in the  
118 society. According to Pinard (2010), the society is responsible for shaping recidivism. By labelling them  
119 individuals as convicted felons, they are pushed to own this status. Such levels of stigma changes the  
120 individuals’ perception on access to employment, and housing (Van Olphen et al., 2006). Besides these  
121 shortcomings, the contribution of VET both for the general population and prison population is encouraging.

122 Based on Anyanwu and counterparts (2018) perspective, previously convicted individuals are perceived to have  
123 different recidivism rates from one country to another. In the USA for example, Steurer, Smith, and Tracy  
124 (2001) studied about 3,170 men and women who were previously convicted in the states of Minnesota, Ohio,  
125 and Maryland. The study established that among the 1,373 (43 percent) people had undergone Correctional  
126 Education (CE) offered in prison. There were generally low recidivism rates observed among those who had  
127 gone through CE compared to those who hadn’t with a re-incarceration rate of 21 percent among those who had  
128 taken CE compared to 31 percent of those who did not in three years after release. Colorado, a study was done  
129 to assess the recidivism rates among incarcerated women by Esperian (2010). In their findings, they established  
130 that 8.75 percent of the women who had taken VET reoffended and 6.71 percent recidivism rates were observed  
131 among those who had taken GED. About 26 percent recidivism rates were observed among those who did not  
132 undertake any VET course or General Education Diploma.

### 133 3. Materials and Methods

134 The study was conducted at Shimo La Tewa and Mombasa maximum security prisons located in Mombasa  
135 County in Kenya. The study used descriptive survey as it is the most ideal method available to the social  
136 scientist researchers focused on gathering data for describing a large population (Babbie, 2010). Qualitative and  
137 quantitative responses from the target sample were collected using questionnaire instruments. The sample  
138 comprised of prisoners engaged in VET programme, the trainers, prison administrators, and the ex-convicts. The  
139 distribution of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

**Comment [D6]:** You mean you used the questionnaire also as an interview guide? Please, clarify.

141

142 **Table 1: Distribution of respondents across categories**

**Comment [D7]:** Where are the percentages?

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

143

144 Purposive sampling method was used to select the prison administrators, the trainers, and the ex-convicts while  
 145 simple random sampling was used to identify respondents from the trainees (Prisoners undertaking VET). A  
 146 questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Data entry and cleaning was done using the Predictive  
 147 Analytic Software (PASW) after which data analysis was done on the same statistical platform. Both descriptive  
 148 and inferential statistics were used to derive meaningful information about the respondents' views.

149 **4. Results**

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

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

164

165 **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

166 The inmates’ perception on the specific courses and their role in preparing ex-prisoners to integrate back into the  
 167 society were also evaluated. The study assumed a mean scales obtained from the 5-point Likert Scale of 0.5-1.5  
 168 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  
 169 extent, and finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated ‘to a very large extent’. Mat  
 170 making, stone carving, leather work, fashion and design, tailoring, and number plate making had mean scores  
 171 between 1.5 and 2.5. Among courses that trainers noted that they did not know if they influenced the integration  
 172 of ex-prisoners into the work environment were carpentry, metal work, painting, building and construction, and  
 173 finally, motor vehicle mechanic which rated between 2.5 and 3.5. See Table 3.

174 **Table 3: How VET Prepares the Ex-Prisoners in the World of Work**

Courses	Mean	Std. Deviation	Average Rating
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

175 When the administrators were asked on their perception of trainers and trainees towards VET, there were both  
 176 negative and positive responses that were given. It was reported that some of the positive perceptions was that  
 177 the courses were helpful to the trainers since most of the trainees reduced recidivism because they are  
 178 empowered. On the downside, it was established that VET could be viewed negatively by trainers as was  
 179 reported by the administrators. Some of the reasons given were that most of the trainers are often overworked.  
 180 They work as wardens and also double up as trainers. The additional responsibilities were reportedly not  
 181 compensated. This then demotivated the wardens which may in turn affect their performance and even the will  
 182 to execute VET programmes successfully. The same question was posed to the administrators regarding the

**Comment [D8]:** Present some of the quotes from the administrators. Let’s hear the voices of your respondents.

183 responses by their perception on VET. Again, both positive and negative perceptions were noted. VET was  
 184 noted to be key item to early release from prison. This is because one of the main reasons that most offenders  
 185 were incarcerated was attributed to poverty. Skills attained, could help the prisoners gain meaningful  
 186 employment and have an honest living. On the downside, most inmates were found to only commit themselves  
 187 to the programmes for early release and not necessarily consider it an avenue for rehabilitation. Additionally, the  
 188 inmates took this as means to become busy and forget about most of their troubles. This therefore could fail to  
 189 serve the purpose because of such ill consideration and misrepresentation of intent by the prisoners. One of the  
 190 administrators noted that prison institutions sought to profit from the inputs from prisoners while exploiting the  
 191 readily available labor from the prisoners.

192 Finally, the administrators and some of the ex-prisoners noted that VET helped to sort out some of the  
 193 institutional problems. This was a positive impact that the administrators brought about. Some of the reduced  
 194 behaviors identified included violence among the inmates, gang activities, trauma and hopelessness, among  
 195 other challenges. VET is means for proper utilization of time and this is key in ensuring that the prisoners put  
 196 their time in constructive activities. Duwe (2017) noted that VET helped to manage or control issues that added  
 197 up to prison misconduct which is in agreement with the views of the administrators.

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

207 **Table 4: Perception of VET by Trainees.**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
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%

208  
 209 Table 5 shows the impact that different challenges have in preparing trainees for the world of work. Based on  
 210 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

**Comment [D9]:** Why are you not discussing the opposing views? These are very important

**Comment [D10]:** What reasons did they give?

211 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  
 212 finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated 'to a very large extent'. Among the challenges  
 213 which influenced the preparation 'to a little extent' were entrance behavior, absenteeism of trainees, lack of  
 214 trainers, and irrelevant training materials. Lack of enough training materials was rated one of the leading  
 215 challenges on average with a mean of 3.64. See Table 5.  
 216

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

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Average Rating
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

219  
 220 ***Perceived Challenges in VET implementation as per the office administrators***  
 221 Prison administrators provided different challenges that they faced in the implementation of VET. One of the  
 222 challenges is lack of up to date training materials. They noted that the currently installed or procured materials  
 223 used in VET are mostly out of date materials installed during colonial times. This is because there have been  
 224 several changes and technological advances in the sector since the passing of colonial times. The use of old and  
 225 traditional materials was noted to impact negatively on the integration of prisoners into the society because the  
 226 tools they have familiarized with were not within their scope and mastery. Other challenges faced in VET  
 227 implementation were lack of training spaces, and trainee transfers from one prison to another.

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



236 recidivism rate the quality and success of the programmes would greatly depend on the administration of VET  
237 by NITA.

238 There were several proposed mitigation strategies for the challenges identified by the administrators. With  
239 regard to ensuring smooth transition into the society, the administrator suggests that a trust fund should be set up  
240 to provide business capital for ex-prisoners once they were released. Another suggestion was the establishment  
241 of “half way home” initiative where the prisoners would be encouraged to familiarize with the challenges they  
242 will face when they integrated back into society. This way adaptive strategy could be instilled in them.  
243 Additionally, a well-funded follow up programme should be set up aside from the initiation given to them by  
244 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime Programme and the Father  
245 Gorol Welfare project (FGWP). In fact, some of the prison administrators from Shimo La Tewa prison noted  
246 that UNODC has been in a partnership with the prison authorities to help improve education material and  
247 offering construction training to interested inmates. The institution also helps the prisons improve their own  
248 facilities through the “self-implemented” projects. This was notably achieved through equipping the prison’s  
249 engineering and technology department so that they can improve their structures. In the process, the inmates are  
250 able to practically apply the skills gained from VET and even gain experiences on how to use the new  
251 technologies supplied. Apart from the “self-implemented” projects, the institution made the necessary follow-  
252 ups to ensure that the inmates were well settled in the society In order to facilitate ease and applicability of the  
253 skills acquired in prison, it was suggested that market driven materials should be supplied and finally,  
254 suggestions to have enhanced capacity building for trainers to be able to execute the VET programmes.

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

261 **Perception on follow up programmes to help Inmates**  
262 *Office Administrators*

263 Whereas, it was believed that training would help the inmates integrate back to the society, the administrators  
264 noted that there were also weak linkages to the job environment. Much as it was found to be weak, efforts to  
265 help the prisoners back into the society was mainly driven by two organizations in Kenya; The United Nations  
266 Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and the Father Gorol Welfare project (FGWP). The organizations were  
267 reported to be involved in providing teaching materials to Prisons, provided education and counseling services  
268 to help the released persons integrate into society with ease, and also tools and equipment that they need in order  
269 to start production once released to the world of work.

270 **Perceived Challenges faced by Ex-Prisoners in the outside world.**

271 According to the Prison administrators, some of the challenges that negatively impacted on the ex-prisoners  
272 included the fact that there were no sufficient resources to help sustain businesses. This aside, the society had a  
273 tendency to criminalize ex-convicts because of their prior criminal behavior. This negated their comfort in the  
274 society which potentially limited their access to jobs. It was reported that the general state of poverty in the

275 outside world also affected the ability of the trainees to advance their economic positions and even that of the  
276 general society.

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

285 With regards to some of the suggestions that could help improve the adaptation of the prisoners outside prison,  
286 several suggestions were provided by the ex-convicts. One of the ex-prisoners noted that there was need to  
287 improve on the level of learning from traditional into learning of computer aided tools and machinery. This  
288 would help the inmates to enhance the relevance of their programmes in the world of work. Other forms of  
289 learning suggested included entrepreneurial studies, modern designing programmes, retention and upgrading of  
290 knowledge and skills among the inmates especially when it comes to familiarization with modern machinery. It  
291 was noted that the retention in terms of skills was to help them to adapt easily into the outside job market  
292 because people with skills could easily apply them regardless of the changes made on materials or tools used.

293

## 294 5. Discussion

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

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

312 Relevance of VET is key in determining the perceptions that the inmates develop. It was deduced, key areas of  
313 relevance included academic development, theoretical understanding, practical understanding, self-employment  
314 when released from prison, and community development. Theoretical understanding shaped perception of VET  
315 significantly and in the same breath influenced the practical understanding of the prisoners on the courses that  
316 they undertook. The nature of the acquired skills was taught theoretically in the training sessions. The  
317 translation in terms of practical understanding and application in the world of work varied from one course to  
318 another. The efficiency of the respective programmes in societal integration was perceived to be of "a little  
319 extent". Bloom (2006) was insistent on the fact prisoners should be given platforms to enable them gain  
320 meaningful employment in the society. In a way the relatively low perception that the different VET  
321 programmes are in part contributed to by the low view that the society have on the prisoners.

322 There are several contributors to how perception of VET's affects the ability to integrate prisoners back into the

323 society. As identified by Hamilton-Smith and Vogue (2012), the society is instrumental in determining how  
324 released individuals can integrate back into the society. Because of their past criminal activities the ex-prisoners  
325 are received with some degree of hostility and mistrust. They are perceived to be dangerous because of their past  
326 criminal behavior. Despite the efforts made by the corrective systems, most of the prisoners find it hard to  
327 integrate back into an impermeable society. In the US for instance some of these challenges are sanctioned by  
328 the government through felon disenfranchisement. The society assumes the notion that the government sets and  
329 as such denies the inmates the right to employment because they are deemed dangerous and unfit for the society.  
330 This notion affects the person's ability to gain meaningful employment and even in social interactions. In  
331 Kenya, the same is observed with the manner in which the society treats released felons.

332 Much as the society is considered instrumental in shaping the integration of trainees into the society, there are  
333 certain perceptions that are limited to them. Trainees perceived VET to increase their theoretical understanding  
334 within the courses they are undertaking. Others believed that the courses improved their practical understanding  
335 as well as increasing their chances to self-employment once released from prison. Negative perceptions of VET  
336 were in areas of academic development and community development. It is apparent therefore that the role of  
337 VET in the academic progression of individuals was considerably low. This is compensated by the belief that  
338 practical understanding was of prime concern to them.

339 With the negative societal reception of released prisoners, there is little that has been done to help them integrate  
340 back into the society. Since the inmates gain little value for the work done while in prison, they are released  
341 back to the society with little or no financial capacity. More often, they do not have the necessary resources to  
342 purchase the tools that they require to practice the skills that they acquired while they were incarcerated. It is a  
343 form of ripple an effect scenario. In most cases released prisoners tend to go back to their criminal past which in  
344 turn increases the chances to recidivate.

345 Finally, the kind of challenges faced by ex-prisoners influences them as they try to integrate back into the  
346 society. In most instances the perceptions were shaped by the resources that were available and the  
347 methodologies that were employed in training on the side of the inmates. Some of the challenges were;  
348 absenteeism of the trainers, absenteeism of trainees, inadequate training materials, irrelevant training materials,  
349 the methodologies employed by trainers, and finally, the manner in which evaluations are administered. The  
350 trainees identified one of their main challenge to be competing obligation. Training of VET was treated as an  
351 additional responsibility to which no additional payments could be drawn from. Since there is no financial gain  
352 value made from teaching VET, the trainers do not prioritize this obligation resulting in absenteeism.

## 353 **6. Conclusion**

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

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

376 Generally, for VET to attract the desired effect in rehabilitating ex-prisoners, there are several factors that must  
377 be considered. First, VET must be accorded the seriousness it deserves. The inmates must be properly oriented

378 on the importance of VET and how impactful it can be in improving their lives as well as that of their families.  
379 This way they will make choices based on value and not the early release incentive that comes along with it.  
380 Secondly, the society's perception on the released inmates needs to be redefined through civic education. Third,  
381 there is need for the government to formulate policies that will help gag the discrimination of released inmates  
382 in workplaces. Fourth, there is need empathize with the formally incarcerated with the government leading the  
383 way in defining the manner in which their matters should be handled in the specific roles that they should  
384 participate in within the society. This means that they should not be denied access to basic rights as conferred by  
385 international humanitarian principles. Finally, the prison administration to provide incentives that could help the  
386 inmates experience first-hand the importance VET in their lives during practical learning experiences in Prison.

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