

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PERCEPTION
ON INTEGRATION OF PRISONERS INTO THE SOCIETY**

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 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.

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

28 **1. Introduction**

29 Recidivism is the tendency of an offender to return to criminal behavior after release. It is through the
30 recidivism rates that the effectiveness of correctional institutions can be measured. Higher rates of recidivism
31 signify that the state of the correctional institutions has failed while low rates indicate that they are effective.
32 The propensity of an individual to return to criminal behavior is defined or determined by factors such as the
33 socio-economic status of the prisoners, gravity of crime committed, access to work, and the level of educational
34 attainment by the offenders (Esperian, 2010).

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

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

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

65 **2. Perception of VET**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

115 Felon disenfranchisement is derived from the medieval European “civil death” analogy (Chin, 2011). The
116 perception of these laws as applied, has an equivocal ambience transferred from repressive governments where
117 humanitarian rights were held in low regards. The implication of such is that there is historical aspects that the
118 corrective systems that continue to influence the manner in which incarcerated individuals are treated in the
119 society. According to Pinard (2006), the society is responsible for shaping recidivism. By labelling them
120 individuals as convicted felons, they are pushed to own this status. Such levels of stigma changes the
121 individuals’ perception on access to employment, and housing (Van Olphen et al., 2006). Besides these
122 shortcomings, the contribution of VET both for the general population and prison population is encouraging.

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

134 In summary, there are several challenges that influence re-integration of prisoners into the society. Demuth
135 (2013) noted that one of the greatest determinants of re-integration of prisoners into the society is defined by the
136 perception of VET by the prisoners. However, the criminal past that an individual has in some way negates the
137 process of successful re-entry (Walters, 2003). In more progressive societies, prisoners have been successfully
138 restored while others face varied challenges. The Special Eurobarometer 369 (2011) report however indicated
139 that the societal profiling of criminals has served to limit their access to work and retention of the same. The
140 rates of recidivism however for those that had gone through the VET programs were lower compared to those
141 who had not (Esperian, 2010). Based on these findings, the paper sought to investigate the manner in which
142 perception influences the chances of successful re-integration of prisoners into the society.

143 **3. Materials and Methods**

144 The study was conducted at Shimo La Tewa Main prison and Shimo La Tewa Medium Security Prison which
145 are located in Mombasa County, Kenya. The overall number of prisoners in the two prisons were 1700, the
146 trainers and administrators were 25 and 10 respectively. Identification of ex-prisoners was majorly dependent on
147 their availability but 10 of them were targeted. The study used descriptive survey as it is the most ideal method
148 available to the social science researchers as it focused on gathering data from a population subset for describing

149 a large population (Babbie, 2007). The procedure allows researchers to gather flexible data with no room for
150 interference of the respondents (Maina and Mugambi, 2019).

151 Research instruments are described as tools that can be used to collect information about a population in a
152 systematic manner (Maina and Mugambi, 2019). A questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument
153 used in the study. The instrument offers flexibility of collecting both closed and open ended questions. Open
154 ended responses allow the respondents to provide in-depth feelings about a phenomenon under study. By virtue
155 of this provision, the researcher is able to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. The sample comprised
156 of prisoners engaged in VET programme, the trainers, prison administrators, and the ex-convicts. The
157 distribution of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

158 **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		

159 At the onset of the data collection exercise, the researcher applied for an authorization permit at the National
160 Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). NACOSTI's main objective is to regulate
161 the quality scientific information arising from different researches and advocates for policy formulation to the
162 government on the basis of the study findings and recommendations. After having obtained the authority to
163 conduct the study, the researcher sought authorization from the Kenya Prison Service headquarters in Nairobi as
164 well as consent from administrators at Shimo La Tewa Prison and Shimo La Tewa Prison Medium Prison. The
165 data collection process was then set for start. Before this however, the purpose of the research was
166 communicated to the administrators and later on to the respondents. Confidentiality of the respondents was
167 assured as they were informed that their participation was voluntary and they were assured that the information
168 would be used for the purposes of the study only.

169 Purposive sampling method was used to select the prison administrators, the trainers, and the ex-convicts while
170 simple random sampling was used to identify respondents from the trainees (Prisoners undertaking VET). After
171 having sampled the respondents, the data collection exercise was started. The questionnaires for the
172 administrators, trainees, and the trainers were dropped and picked after they had finished entering the data under
173 supervision of prison administrators and trainers. Tracking and allocating the ex-prisoner in the world of work
174 was assisted by the existing records in the prisons and also Non-Governmental organizations currently assisting
175 trained prisoners in the world of work. Collection of information from the ex-prisoners was a bit challenging
176 considering that they had to be followed to their communities. The data was then coded and entered into the
177 Predictive Analytical Software package (PASW). This was followed by a data cleaning process where wrongly
178 captured entries were corrected. Having cleaned the data from all the response sets, quantitative data from
179 trainers and trainees were analyzed using PASW. Descriptive data presented in table forms summarized in
180 means, frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistics was done using the linear regression model.

181 Quantitative data analysis was done using content analysis for all the response sets. However, the data collected
182 from prison administrators and the ex-prisoners was majorly qualitative in nature.



183
184 *Figure 1 Prisons in Mombasa County, Source: Google Maps*

185 **4. Results**

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

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

200

201 **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

202 The inmates' perception on the specific courses and their role in preparing ex-prisoners to integrate back into the
 203 society were also evaluated. The study assumed a mean scales obtained from the 5-point Likert Scale of 0.5-1.5
 204 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
 205 extent, and finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated 'to a very large extent'. Mat
 206 making, stone carving, leather work, fashion and design, tailoring, and number plate making had mean scores
 207 between 1.5 and 2.5. Among courses that trainers noted that they did not know if they influenced the integration
 208 of ex-prisoners into the work environment were carpentry, metal work, painting, building and construction, and
 209 finally, motor vehicle mechanic which rated between 2.5 and 3.5. See Table 3.

210 **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

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

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

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

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

243 **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%

244

245 Table 5 shows the impact that different challenges have in preparing trainees for the world of work. Based on
 246 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

247 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
 248 finally those greater than 4.5 to represent scores which were rated ‘to a very large extent’. Among the challenges
 249 which influenced the preparation ‘to a little extent’ were entrance behavior, absenteeism of trainees, lack of
 250 trainers, and irrelevant training materials. Lack of enough training materials was rated one of the leading
 251 challenges on average with a mean of 3.64. See Table 5.

252

253 **Table 5: Challenges and their impact on preparation of trainees for the world of work and reduction of**
 254 **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

255

256 **Regression analysis.**

257 The paper sought to determine whether there was a linear relationship between prisoners’ integration back into
 258 the community and the perception of VET by prisoners. Linear relationship was described using the Person R
 259 Square statistic. Higher values of Pearson R Square statistic is an indication of higher degree of linearity
 260 between the dependent variable and the independent variable while lower values show a low level of linear
 261 relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. The Pearson R Square statistic has scores
 262 falling between -1 and 1. The model was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and the degree of linear
 263 relationship ($R = 68.6\%$) while the total amount of variation explained by perception was significant($R^2 =$
 264 47.0%).

265

266 **Regression Coefficients**

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

268 $Y = 2.125 + 0.632X_1$

269 $Y =$ Integration of prisoners back into the society

270 $\beta_0 =$ Constant, β_1 is the linear regression coefficient

271 $X_1 =$ Perception of prisoners on VET

272 It was therefore determined that at 95% confidence level, the Perception of prisoners on VET on the integration
 273 back into the society was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This meant that for a unit increase in
 274 the scores on perception on VET would lead to increase of 0.632 increase in the integration of released inmates
 275 back into the society. Both the constant and the regression coefficient were found to be statistically significant in
 276 the model $P < 0.000$.

277
 278 **Table 6: Regression**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.686 ^a	0.47	0.366	0.43		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of prisoners on VET						
ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	31.354	1	31.354	225.0022607	.000 ^b
1	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						
Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	2.125	0.138		13.638	0.000
1	Perception of prisoners on VET	0.632	0.035	0.606	14.189	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Integration back into the society						

279
 280 ***Perceived Challenges in VET implementation as per the office administrators***
 281 Prison administrators provided different challenges that they faced in the implementation of VET. One of the
 282 challenges is lack of up to date training materials. They noted that the currently installed or procured materials
 283 used in VET are mostly out of date materials installed during colonial times. This is because there have been
 284 several changes and technological advances in the sector since the passing of colonial times. The use of old and
 285 traditional materials was noted to impact negatively on the integration of prisoners into the society because the
 286 tools they have familiarized with were not within their scope and mastery. Other challenges faced in VET
 287 implementation were lack of training spaces, and trainee transfers from one prison to another.

288 Competing obligations was also another challenge that introduced limitation to successful implementation of
 289 VET. It was established that most of the trainers were employed as wardens. This therefore meant that they have
 290 to oscillate between the two jobs which is very strenuous to the trainers. Besides, some of the cadets may not
 291 have the required specific skill qualifications to perform some of the course work they are assigned to train.
 292 Since employment of professionals with specific qualifications has not been executed, compromise is made and
 293 the trainers are forced to instruct the inmates and also learned on the job as they progressed. Finally, recidivism
 294 was one of the key challenges that were observed to largely affect the inmates. One of the administrators

295 reported that the chance of the released inmates re-offending was about 60%-65%. He noted that with the high
296 recidivism rate the quality and success of the programmes would greatly depend on the administration of VET
297 by NITA.

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

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

321 **Perception on follow up programmes to help Inmates**

322 *Office Administrators*

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

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

331 According to the Prison administrators, some of the challenges that negatively impacted on the ex-prisoners
332 included the fact that there were no sufficient resources to help sustain businesses. This aside, the society had a
333 tendency to criminalize ex-convicts because of their prior criminal behavior. This negated their comfort in the

334 society which potentially limited their access to jobs. It was reported that the general state of poverty in the
335 outside world also affected the ability of the trainees to advance their economic positions and even that of the
336 general society.

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

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

353

354 **5. Discussion**

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

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

372 Relevance of VET is key in determining the perceptions that the inmates develop. It was deduced, key areas of
373 relevance included academic development, theoretical understanding, practical understanding, self-employment
374 when released from prison, and community development. Theoretical understanding shaped perception of VET
375 significantly and in the same breath influenced the practical understanding of the prisoners on the courses that

376 they undertook. The nature of the acquired skills was taught theoretically in the training sessions. The
377 translation in terms of practical understanding and application in the world of work varied from one course to
378 another. The efficiency of the respective programmes in societal integration was perceived to be of “a little
379 extent”. Bloom (2006) was insistent on the fact prisoners should be given platforms to enable them gain
380 meaningful employment in the society. In a way the relatively low perception that the different VET
381 programmes are in part contributed to by the low view that the society have on the prisoners. Gumi (2014)
382 established in his study that 43% of the prisoners did not believe that VET would equip them with relevant skills
383 in the job market. Gumi’s findings found the main course of the challenges to be derived from funding but this
384 study established that the main source of this problem was from the society and the manner in which the society
385 viewed them.

386 There are several contributors to how perception of VET’s affects the ability to integrate prisoners back into the
387 society. As identified by Hamilton-Smith and Vogue (2012), the society is instrumental in determining how
388 released individuals can integrate back into the society. Because of their past criminal activities the ex-prisoners
389 are received with some degree of hostility and mistrust. They are perceived to be dangerous because of their past
390 criminal behavior. Chikadzi (2017) noted that the level of mistrust on released prisoners by the public was a
391 deterrent factor in terms of employability and job retention. Despite the efforts made by the corrective systems,
392 most of the prisoners find it hard to integrate back into an impermeable society. In the US for instance some of
393 these challenges are sanctioned by the government through felon disenfranchisement (Pinard, 2006). The society
394 assumes the notion that the government sets and as such denies the inmates the right to employment because
395 they are deemed dangerous and unfit for the society (Hamilton-Smith and Vogue, 2012). This notion affects the
396 person’s ability to gain meaningful employment and even in social interactions. In Kenya, the same is observed
397 with the manner in which the society treats released felons.

398 Much as the society is considered instrumental in shaping the integration of trainees into the society, there are
399 certain perceptions that are limited to trainees themselves. Trainees perceived VET to increase their theoretical
400 understanding within the courses they are undertaking. Others believed that the courses improved their practical
401 understanding as well as increasing their chances to self-employment once released from prison. Negative
402 perceptions of VET were in areas of academic development and community development. It is apparent
403 therefore that the role of VET in the academic progression of individuals was considerably low. According to
404 the findings by Kachnowski (2005), low academic standings influenced the uptake of VET courses. This is
405 because technologically advanced courses requires theoretical understanding. However, the academic standings
406 of the prisoners does not guarantee this. In India, the government formulated strategies to enable the inmates
407 gain basic literacy levels as well as advance ones where appropriate (Murage, 2011). The same strategy could be
408 recommended for the prisoners in Kenya at different levels of education. This way, the inmates’ ability to fully
409 understand VET is limited. However, this is compensated by the belief that practical understanding was of
410 prime concern to them. The resulting effect is that the prisoners are not able to learn the courses which are
411 technology oriented.

412 With the negative societal reception of released prisoners, there is little that has been done to help them integrate
413 back into the society. Since the inmates gain little value for the work done while in prison, they are released
414 back to the society with little or no financial capacity. More often, they do not have the necessary resources to
415 purchase the tools that they require to practice the skills that they acquired while they were incarcerated. It is a
416 form of ripple an effect scenario. Murage (2011) noted that it is in the government best interest to allocate
417 resources to fund different re-integration programs for the sake of enhancing successful reformation of
418 prisoners. This will serve to ensure successful implementation of the programmes as well as reduce recidivism.

419 Much as this is the case, Kenya's decision to employ trainers has not been optimized (Maina and Wambugu,
420 2019). The intrinsic challenges associated with this are pictured in this study. Most inmates perceive VET in a
421 negative light in terms of it empowering them academically and so negates their chances to shun criminal
422 behavior and re-enter the society.

423 Finally, the kind of challenges faced by ex-prisoners influences them as they try to integrate back into the
424 society. In most instances the perceptions were shaped by the resources that were available and the
425 methodologies that were employed in training on the side of the inmates. Agufana (2011) noted that some of the
426 challenges that affects implementation of vocational education were limited infrastructure in schools, lack of
427 teaching materials, and in general, poor financing of the programmes. In the study, some of the challenges
428 perceived to impact the delivery of VET were; absenteeism of the trainers, absenteeism of trainees, inadequate
429 training materials, irrelevant training materials, the methodologies employed by trainers, and finally, the manner
430 in which evaluations are administered. The implementation of these programmes face inherent challenges over
431 time yet minimal efforts have been made to improve the situation. The trainees identified one of their main
432 challenge to be competing obligation. Training of VET was treated as an additional responsibility to which no
433 additional payments could be drawn from. Since there is no financial gain value made from teaching VET, the
434 trainers do not prioritize this obligation resulting in absenteeism.

435 **6. Conclusion**

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

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

458 Generally, for VET to attract the desired effect in rehabilitating ex-prisoners, there are several factors that must
459 be considered. First, VET must be accorded the seriousness it deserves. The inmates must be properly oriented
460 on the importance of VET and how impactful it can be in improving their lives as well as that of their families.
461 This way they will make choices based on value and not the early release incentive that comes along with it.

462 Secondly, the society's perception on the released inmates needs to be redefined through civic education. Third,
463 there is need for the government to formulate policies that will help gag the discrimination of released inmates
464 in workplaces. Fourth, there is need empathize with the formally incarcerated with the government leading the
465 way in defining the manner in which their matters should be handled in the specific roles that they should
466 participate in within the society. This means that they should not be denied access to basic rights as conferred by
467 international humanitarian principles. Finally, the prison administration to provide incentives that could help the
468 inmates experience first-hand the importance VET in their lives during practical learning experiences in Prison.
469
470

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