
Effectiveness of Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centres (IPRC) on youth empowerment: Case Study of IPRC South.

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Abstract

Background: Based on the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) surveys, Sabiiti (2017) wrote that current data indicate the general unemployment rate of 13.2% in Rwanda with the high levels of unemployment among the university graduates. The creation of Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centres (IPRCs) was one of the governmental strategies to overcome unemployment by conducting professional and entrepreneurial trainings.

Aim: This study was aiming at finding out the effectiveness of IPRCs in youth empowerment with the case study of IPRC South.

Methods: This study was conducted via a descriptive design. Data was collected by the means of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The sample size was composed of 80 respondents. Data analysis was done through Content Analysis Technique and Statistical analysis.

Results: The findings showed that the cases of jobless and economic inactivity are generally observable in the country. People are not able to take advantage from various work opportunities because of insufficient know-how, and it is difficult for youth to invest in income generating activities, which impact considerably on their self-esteem and hope in future and their lower contribution in the country economic development. It has been noted that youth join IPRC south in various domains of training since its creation: VTC and Advanced diploma programs. IPRC south provides skills for independent living and entrepreneurship activities. Graduates do find easily jobs in various institutions of Huye and elsewhere in the country and the employers appreciate the performance of IPRCs' graduates. The study found that few graduates have been managed to start up their own business although the lack of resources is still a challenge. The study recommended the government to avail funds for fresh graduates' entrepreneurship.

Keywords: IPRC, youth, empowerment

Introduction

Many countries in the developing world today, faces the challenge of a growing youth population that is entering the workforce but does not find a matching demand on the employment side due to lack of foundation skills, transferrable skills, technical and vocational skills. In many sub-Saharan African countries, at least half of young people ages 15 to 19 lack foundation skills, often because they had never attended school or they dropped out of school

before gaining basic literacy or numeracy (UNESCO, 2012). In eastern Africa, 37 percent of girls and 32 percent of boys of lower secondary-school age are not attending school. In some countries, however, the situation is much direr: In Niger, 83 percent of girls and 74 percent of boys are not in school. Some leave school to work in low-skill jobs where the possibility of advancement is limited, and national education systems provide little opportunity to gain these critical skills in the future (Clifton and Hervish, 2013).

The deficiency of jobs for young people has therefore been remarkable in last years. Between 2000 and 2008, only about a third of the 74 million jobs created in Africa were for people ages 15 to 24 (African Economic Outlook, 2013). This challenge causes young people to settle for less-than-ideal employment, such as jobs that are low-paying, temporary, or unsafe, or ones for which they are overqualified. The private sector, which should absorb a large number of the workforce, is only beginning to develop itself and the public sector can only retain a small number. This situation poses as a major challenge for the youth who have to face the realities of unemployment, and also for the Government, which continuously seeks to set up the appropriate environment for its people to flourish.

Building a knowledge-based economy is one of the major priorities of the Rwandan government, which has led set up technical and vocational training schemes and various other efforts to build the skills of its people, and more particularly its youth (Republic of Rwanda, 2012). Providing such skills to youth should lead them to be more marketable for local and regional opportunities through employment or job creation. It is in that perspective that the Integration Polytechnic Regional Centres (IPRCs) have been created in order to provide professional training that provides an innovative and excellent education for the knowledge-based economy and sustainable development of the country. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate in Rwanda has risen from 3.4 in 2012 to 13.2 percent in February 2016 (Sabiiti, 2017).

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of IPRCs in youth empowerment with the case study of IPRC South. The specific objectives are: (i) to assess the extent to which unemployment affect youth in Huye district; (ii) to identify the skills provided to youth by IPRC South in Huye district; (iii) to assess the level of employment and appreciation of employers for IPRC graduates in Huye district and; and (iv) to analyse the entrepreneurial achievements of IPRC South graduates and challenges faced.

Methodology

Research Design and Approaches

This study was conducted through a descriptive research design and a mixed research approach. Descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way (Shuttleworth, 2008). Although this design is used in qualitative research, descriptive research is often used as a pre-cursor to qualitative research designs, the general overview giving some valuable pointers as to what variables are worth testing quantitatively. Hence a mixed research combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches was preferred in order to provide those two types of analysis.

Study Population and Sample size

The study population was composed of all IPRC South academic staffs, all the IPRC's graduates (pioneers) and Huye District leaders and private employers where IPRC graduates

are working. Due to the fact that the current location of IPRC south graduates and their employers are not known; the management of IPRC south advised to consider an approximate number of accessible population of 800 individuals comprising 97 academic staff of IPRC south, 600 IPRC south graduates and 100 employers living and operating in Huye District, plus 3 senior leaders of Huye District.

Non-probability sampling techniques (purposive sampling and convenience sampling techniques) were used to determine whom to include in the sample. Selection criteria such as being an IPRC staff, IPRC graduate, the local leader in charge of socio-economic affairs at sector or district level in Huye District, employers of IPRC graduates; and willing to participate in the study, were established. Those who fulfilled those purposively determined criteria were selected through probability sampling (simple random sampling) and hence the sample size of 80 individuals (10% of the accessible population) was attained.

Data Collection and Analysis

Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The main research instruments were questionnaire, structured interview guide and document analysis. The questionnaire was prepared for each category of the respondents but the interview was conducted for a little number of the respondents including Huye District senior leaders, IPRC south academic staff and graduates. The findings have been organised in frequency tables and cross tabulation for the analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse, interpret and discuss data, and the calculation of Pearson's r and Spearman's rho allowed the assessment of the association between the performance of IPRC south graduates and employers' satisfaction.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of respondents

This section concerns with the description of respondents, presentation and analysis of the results and their discussion in relation to the objectives of the study.

Table1. Distribution of the respondents by gender

No	Respondents	Gender		Total
		M	F	
1	IPRC staff	6 (7.5%)	4 (5%)	10 (12.5%)
2	IPRC graduates	27 (33.75%)	8 (10%)	35 (43.75%)
3	Local leaders	3 (3.75%)	2 (2.50%)	5 (6.25%)
4	Employers	25 (31.25%)	5 (6.25%)	30 (37.50%)
Total		49 (76.25)	31 (23.75%)	80 (100%)

Source: primary data, 2017

As indicated in Table1, the study sample was composed of 80 individuals comprising 10 staff of IPRC South, 35 individuals who graduated from IPRC South, 5 local leaders and 30 employers of IPRC graduates. The gender dimension was taken into account and among the sampled cases, 76.25% were male while 23.75% were female. Male is dominating in the number of the population study, especially among the IPRC students (see Table3) and

employers. It has been confirmed by IPRC staff that among the IPRC students, males outnumber females.

Youth Unemployment in Huye District

The available percentages of 2011 about the economic activity were summarised from EICV3 in the following table. The table presents the level of economic activity by capturing the employment rate, unemployment rate, and economic inactivity rate.

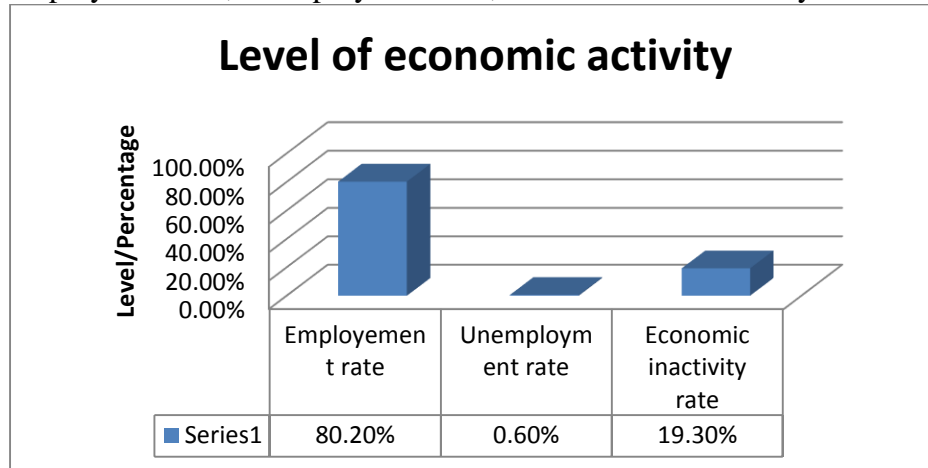


Figure1. Level of economic activity in Huye District

Source: Secondary data (NISR-EICV3 District Profile, 2013)

As it is shown in Figure1, the overall employment rate is 80.20% of the resident population aged 16 years and above in Huye district; the unemployment rate is 0.60% and the economic inactivity rate is 19.20%. Comparing with the national employment rate which is 84.2%, the unemployment rate is 0.9% and the economic inactivity rate is 15.8% (NISR, 2013), Huye district was ranked six last of all districts by employment rate in 2011.

From 2011, the country unemployment rose surprisingly from 0.9%, to 3.4% in 2012 and curiously to 13.2% in 2016. As it was recognized by the National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda, the past figures were calculated with an inaccurate rating system up to 2011. In a recent NISR pilot survey, unemployment levels are higher among educated Rwandans contrary to Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV4) released in 2015. The new figures calculated using the 2013 International Labour Organisation (ILO) measurements demonstrated that unemployment among Rwandans who completed upper secondary is the highest at 23%, followed by the unemployment among graduates of tertiary education with 18% (Sabiiti, 2017); all these data show how youth unemployment among university graduates is high.

Apart from the secondary information depicted in Figure1 showing an alarming 19% of inactivity rate in 2011, the primary data collection provided the information according to which, many cases of unemployment are noticeable in Huye district, although no recent statistics are available.

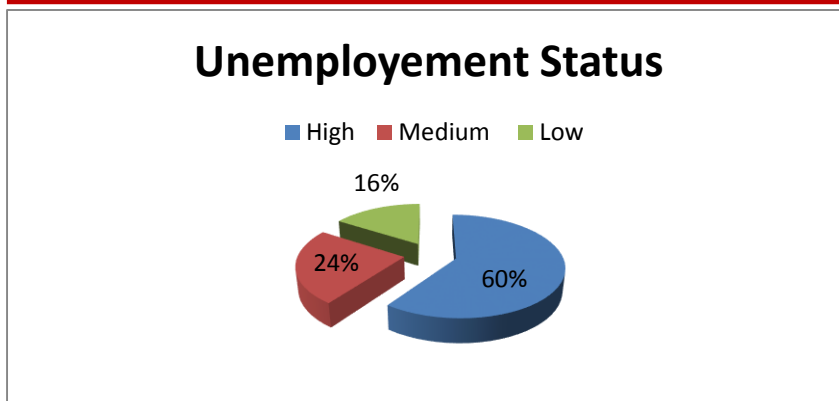


Figure2. Views of respondents on unemployment status in Huye District

Source: primary data, 2017

The study respondents provided their position regarding the level of unemployment in Huye District. Majority of them (60%) declared that unemployment is high, 24% said that it is medium while 16% said that it is low. When they tried to explain their opinions, some of them said that almost all the fresh graduates do not afford to find a job in one year following their graduation time while others said that it is not easy to find a job in relation to their profession. They also stressed on the fact it is not easy for fresh university and secondary school graduates who did not do professional programs to start their own businesses. District leaders declared that this decreases the youth self-esteem and confidence as they cannot cater themselves for their life and prepare for future. They said that it is also a big loss for the country’s economic development; that is the reason why the government has set up for various strategies such as the implementation of Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centres (IPRCs).

Skills and Competencies of IPRC South Graduates

IPRC South provides various professional skills through its two programs which carry out training that leads to awards of Advanced Diploma and Certificate in Vocational Training, through Vocational Training Centres (VTC).

- **Advanced diploma Departments:** Civil engineering/construction Technology; Electrical, Electronics and Telecommunication Technology; Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)
- **Certificate/ VTC Department:** Plumbing, Welding, Masonry, ICT, Carpentry, Hospitality (Culinary Art, Food & Beverage services, Front Office, Housekeeping), Domestic electrical installation, Irrigation Technology, Agricultural Mechanization.

In all these programs 1094 students have already graduated: 626 VTC graduates and 468 polytechnic graduates.

Table2. IPRC South graduates

	Advanced Diploma		VTC	
Graduates	468		626	
Gender	M	F	M	F
Percentages	84.60%	15.40%	87.6	12.40%

Source: primary data, 2017

IPRC South has organised one graduation ceremony so far, with a total of 1094 graduates comprising 468 graduates in Advanced Diploma programs and 626 graduates in Vocational

Training programs. Considering the female-male ratio, the graduates in the advanced diploma programme were 84.6% male and 15.4% female, Vocational Training Programs; the ratio is 87.6% male and 12.4% female.

It was shown that the number of male graduates bypasses the number of female. One explanation is that although Rwanda is emphasizing on education for all and sensitization of females to learn the so called male options (applied sciences, vocational and technological options); there is still a long way to go. Girls remain few in practical and physical energy demanding options. Regarding the duration of the programs, one may see that short-term programs are the most appreciated by students given the higher number of graduates in VTC. As detailed previously, there are many options in VTC where students may do from 3 months and come back with marketable certified skills.

The most valuable effect of IPRCs on youth empowerment is that they don't train only students who completed secondary schools. They give chance to those who stopped at any level of their studies. They have even opened a short-term program where they train youth from southern districts. They make calls every term (each three months-period), and young people come to register for that program for free. That program provides certificates to testify students' achievements and thereby help them to find jobs.

Employment of IPRC south graduates and Appreciation of Employers

Most of the IPRCs graduates do not stay long time searching for employment; they get jobs just after graduation. The IPRC staffs declared that almost 90% are employed in various institutions such as ICT companies, Construction firms and Agricultural industries, hotels, motels and guest houses. Graduates themselves declared that they hold necessary competences to fulfill their duties. As confirmed by both graduates and academic staff, they do not require any other professional internship because they learn through practices.

Table3. IPRC graduates' performance and employers' satisfaction cross tabulation

Count		Employers satisfaction			Total
		Low	Moderate	High	
Graduates' performance	No	2	1	0	3
	Yes	2	8	17	27
Total		4	9	17	30

Source: primary data, 2017

As depicted in Table3, all employers who participated in the study completed and returned the questionnaire, no missing data. 17 employers declared that they are highly satisfied with the IPRC graduates performance. 8 employers are moderately satisfied while 2 indicated a low satisfaction. In total 27/30 employers are differently satisfied with IPRC graduates' performance. Only 3/30 employers declared that they are not satisfied by their performance and proposed more efforts in language proficiency for those who intend to work in hotels. Customers come from different countries and do speak mainly English and French, and the East African integration obliges the basic knowledge of Kiswahili.

Apart from the content analysis where a clear appreciation of employers was noticed, the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) and Spearman rho provided a relationship between variables.

Table4. Correlation between IPRC Graduates' Performance and Employers' Satisfaction

		Value	Asymp. Error ^a	Std. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval	by Pearson's	.512	.155	3.157	.004 ^c
Interval	R				
Ordinal	by Spearman	.470	.132	2.814	.009 ^c
Ordinal	Correlation				
	n				
N of Valid Cases		30			

Source: primary data, 2017

The calculation of Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient provided moderate positive values. Pearson's collection coefficient which equals to 0.512 indicates a moderate positive linear relationship, while Spearman rho of 0.470 indicates a moderate monotonic relationship between the variables. The two correlation coefficients led us to conclude that the association of variables is moderate and progresses in the same direction. As the IPRC graduates' performance increases/decreases, the employers' satisfaction also increases/decreases; they simply vary together.

IPRC south has contributed a lot in the matter of empowering the youth of Southern Province by professionalizing the commonly so-called unskilled jobs and nowadays employers are satisfied with their performance. They noticed a difference between IPRC south graduates and other employees who did not do such professional training.

Entrepreneurial achievements and challenges faced

As noted by the academic staffs and graduates, IPRC south trains individuals professionally and equips them with the necessary entrepreneurial skills and competencies. They declared that some of IPRC south graduates have been empowered enough to start their own business industries and companies such as ICT companies, construction and carpentry workshops. This has been also written by Rwembeho (2014) who said that the school offers youth transferable skills and tailors them to the needs of the local and regional market.

University graduates who did not find jobs immediately have joined IPRC south in order to follow some professional training. One woman who graduated followed a three-month-training of culinary confirmed that she holds a university degree in sociology but had failed to get a job. After the training, she currently started preparing food in some ceremonial events and gets paid. Another young university graduate declared that he followed a three-month-training in agricultural mechanization and had therefore improved his agricultural business based. He is growing tomato plantations and confirms that he has a big market.

The entrepreneurial aspect of IPRC south graduates was also mentioned by the academic staff. They confirmed that their students make them proud via their entrepreneurial achievements. They asserted that some graduates have started their own business instead of search for jobs in other institutions.

The challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in Huye District are mostly lack of sufficient resources and fear of risk taking.

Table5. Challenges faced by IPRC Graduates

No	Challenges	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Lack of resources	75	93.75
2	Fearing risks	72	90
3	Availability of customer	10	12.5
4	Limited skills	2	2.5

Source: primary data, 2017

Majority of the respondents (93.75%) declared that most of the fresh graduates do not possess enough resources to invest in the business of their dream. 90% mentioned that fresh graduates do not afford to take risks due to deficit of experience in entrepreneurship. Referring to the percentages depicted in the table, lack of resources and fear of risks are major challenges faced by IPRC south graduates in their entrepreneurial path. The availability of customers and limited skills do not affect them significantly considering how those items scored less, 12.5% and 2.5% respectively.

These responses of the research participants meet the conclusions of other scholars such as Taremwa, Butera and Butera (2015) who found that lack of capital and fear of risk taking do affect the enhancement of a sustainable knowledge based-economy through private sector led-development. They also emphasized on the fact that the graduates of Rwanda Higher learning Institutions (HLIs) do not have enough financial means to start their own investments.

Conclusion

The IPRC south empowers youth by providing various certified vocational trainings and advanced diploma courses. It has been seen that most of the graduates completed short and mid-term vocational trainings. IPRC south does not train only high school graduate but also those who complete primary schools. This empowers the majority of young generation who are not highly educated by acquiring them with necessary skills to find jobs. The employers of IPRC south graduates are satisfied by their performance although they have mentioned the improvement in foreigner languages' proficiency due to the integration in East Africa and the variety of the customers. Some of the IPRC south graduates have managed to start up their own business but the study recommends the government to avail enough funds for youth entrepreneurship. These funds would be of great benefit for those who do not possess enough resources after their graduation.

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