

Conceptualising TVET in South Sudan

Gibson Francis Waru, PhD.

Ministry of General Education and Instruction Republic of South Sudan, Directorate of TVET.

***Corresponding Author**
Gibson Francis Waru, PhD

Ministry of General
Education and Instruction
Republic of South Sudan,
Directorate of TVET.

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Abstract: South Sudan became an independent country in 2011 following many years of struggle against marginalisation in Sudan. However, the independence era has been preoccupied with efforts to establish education systems in the country, including the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system. As the system is being established and strengthened, efforts are also being exerted to convince the youth and communities to embrace skills development, since they believe that a 'degree programme' is better than a 'certificate or diploma' obtained through skills training.

Secondly, using the gender lens, gender equality is problematic in vocational education as most females prefer soft skills like tailoring and hairdressing (Habler et al., 2020), and hate hard-core skills in trades such as building and construction. Therefore, gender equality is essential in skills training in South Sudan.

This article is the first attempt to enlighten stakeholders on the significance of TVET to both male and female students, trainees, parents, and employers, so that the government and stakeholders can encourage the youth to embrace it and improve female participation in skills considered fit only for males.

Qualitative desk research methodology and textual analysis have been employed in this research. The social capital (Mikiewicz, 2021) and the feminist theories (Eyayu & Mihrete, 2018) have also been used as the lenses for conceptualising TVET in this research.

Generally, previous research indicates that TVET is vital for livelihood, and female participation in skills training is paramount. Skills form the backbone of livelihood and development, and should therefore be developed to promote equal participation in nation- building.

Keywords: Technical education, skills training, trades, vocational education, social capital theory, feminist theory, development, and livelihood.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Definition of TVET

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a compound noun denoting technical education at the secondary school level, a formal type of education with four (04) levels equivalent to four years of formal secondary education. Vocational training relates to the empowerment of individuals with employable skills for livelihood, as well as economic growth and infrastructural development. This type of education has two levels below the formal one: "the foundational and the intermediate levels" (UNESCO, 2022). However, within the context of South Sudan, TVET is an expression used to explain three concepts (Atari et al., 2010):

- 1- An alternative formal education entirely dealing with technology.
- 2- a non-formal education dealing with unplanned skills training, which is closely related to the employability of its beneficiaries, and
- 3- An informal education involving the acquisition of skills and knowledge through interaction with experienced individuals in a domain, attachment to an expert, workplace practice/on-the-job training, or other learning experiences.

Generally, TVET concerns three types of learning: formal, informal and non-formal (Atari et al., 2010). Formal education is where learning is organised, while informal education is unorganised training obtained from attachment, affiliation to someone else, or in

a workplace (Habler et al., 2020). Non-formal learning is an unorganised type of education that is provided in the form of training for a short period (ranging from 3 to 9 months to 3 years) to impart knowledge or skills for employment, livelihood, and economic and infrastructure development.

In South Sudan, and Sub-Saharan Africa, this type of education is difficult to understand as the appellations differ across countries: it is generally known as “technical and vocational education and training” or “TVET” within the African context, yet in some countries like South Africa (Field et al., 2014), both appellations: vocational education and training (VET) and TVET are applied which complicates the former understanding of TVET. In this regard, TVET or VET is a generic term combining learning and training education for lifelong learning (Habler et al., 2020; Ramadan & Xiaolui, 2019). Generally, TVET is an essential type of education that empowers learners with skills for employment, livelihood, and innovation for national development and economic empowerment (Pompa, 2014; Ramadan & Xiaolui, 2019; Okebukola, 2019).

This article aims to explain the role and importance of TVET to learners, the government, the industry, employers and TVET stakeholders, and to emphasise the need for female participation in all types of skills training. The rationale behind this is that for every locality or country to develop, the development should be done by the sons and daughters of that particular place or country (Atari et al., 2010). As a result, the youth need to be trained in skills that enable them to perform developmental activities such as building and construction, plumbing and pipe fitting, carpentry and joinery, welding and metal fabrication, and other activities, to transform the nation into a desirable level.

1.2 Problem Statement

From the above definitions of TVET, it can be deduced that it is a type of education characterised by innovation and creativity, applying chemistry, physics and mathematics. The discourse here is that TVET is not for dull people but for creative thinkers who can technically create new ideas, things, models and designs. Of course, those are not dull students or people. Despite this positive concept of TVET, South Sudanese consider it as an alternative education that provides a second chance for children who can't perform well academically (Commings and Falcao, 2019). Secondly, in addition to the fact that not many females prefer skills training, they do not enrol in hardcore skills training like building and construction, mechanics, carpentry and many others; they only go for soft skills such as tailoring, hairdressing, catering (cooking), and agriculture (crop production) to mention but a few (Atari & McKague, 2014; Habler et al., 2020) whenever they chose to acquire skills.

This article is guided by a few research concerns to keep it on track. The following are the four (04) research questions that direct the study. The research methodology and scope of the study will be discussed in the following section.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the process of this article:

- 1- When did technical and vocational education and training begin operating in South Sudan?
- 2- What are the benefits and importance of TVET?

3- What are the issues of TVET in South Sudan?

4- How significant is investing in TVET?

1.4 Methodology

The researcher employed qualitative and Internet desk research methodologies, incorporating textual analysis, in this study. Though there are scarce documents on TVET education in South Sudan, the researcher relied on the few available ones. The social capital (Mikiewicz, 2021) and the feminist theories (Eyayu & Mihrete, 2018) have been employed as the lenses for conceptualising TVET in this article.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

Documents for this article were collected from websites such as the full free PDF, research gate, academia portal, and Google advanced search engines using the following search titles: the development of TVET in South Sudan, the importance and benefits of TVET, the history of TVET in South Sudan, skills/vocational training in South Sudan, and the financing/support to TVET in South Sudan. The researcher focused on “TVET in South Sudan” with minimal search on TVET in Sub-Saharan Africa and the world for general information about the discipline.

Following the introduction, the author will present TVET in South Sudan, according to research. The presentation will focus on the history of TVET before and after independence, exploring its relative issues, its importance, the reasons why investing in TVET matters, and finally, the conclusion and recommendations for practical application and future research.

2. TVET in South Sudan According to Research

Most researchers who have examined issues of TVET in South Sudan have discovered many facts about the discipline. For instance, the following issues have been highlighted in research:

2.1 The History of TVET in South Sudan

According to Atari and colleagues (2010) and Atari and McKague (2014), TVET development in South Sudan is categorised into five (05) phases:

- i- Phase one occurred when Sudan was colonised by the Ottoman Turks and the British from 1820 to 1956. During this period, the missionaries established many Church schools for academic studies, including a few technical schools and vocational training centres in Juba, Torit, Lainya, and Tonj. These technical schools and training centres were of poor quality and did not benefit Southern Sudanese in the field of technology and innovation.
- ii- Phase two started during the joint independence with Northern Sudanese from the colonial era, which ignited the Southern movement for liberation from Arab influence in Southern Sudan. During this period, all technical institutions in the South ceased to function from 1956 until 1972, when the Addis Ababa Accord was signed. Following the agreement, skilled Southerners returning from exile formed the backbone of the skills repository, which would contribute to skills training at the Juba Multi-Purpose Training Centre (MTC).
- iii- Phase three began from the Addis Ababa peace agreement to the outbreak of the SPLM/SPLA movement in 1983. This

period witnessed a comeback in the development of TVET, as the institutions closed during the Anya 1 movement reopened for skills training. In this period, skills development thrived to some extent before halting within eleven years of operation due to the short period of stability.

- iv- Phase four was another dark era for developing TVET in South Sudan, as all technical centres and schools were closed due to the ensuing instability that erupted in 1983.
- v- The final phase is the era of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in which skills training institutions and technical schools reopened, and the process of developing TVET began to take shape. From this time onwards, TVET institutions began to increase gradually, and development processes ensued until the current stage of strengthening TVET in the country, which is an attempt to establish a unified governing system because its service delivery had been fragmented: many ministries offer skills training to the youth without unified policy or curricula.

Following the history of TVET in South Sudan, it is better to highlight the issues influencing the development of the discipline in the next section.

2.2 Issues of TVET in South Sudan

TVET faces several challenges in South Sudan, including insufficient institutions, untrained instructors, poor staffing, low demand for skilled staff, a mismatch between acquired skills and industry, inequality, a fragile system, a negative perception of TVET, and inadequate funding. These issues will be explored in the following sections.

2.2.1 Insufficient Training Institutions, low Capacity and staffing

Generally, issues with TVET in South Sudan include inadequate operational training institutions despite the high demand for skills training to empower youth for livelihood, economic independence, and infrastructure development (Atari et al., 2010; Atari and McKague, 2014; UNESCO, 2022). This is coupled with a lack of government willingness to focus on establishing TVET institutions with the requisite infrastructure, which includes training facilities and equipment, a lack of policies, the absence of synergy between government, private institutions and the industry, a low estimate of TVET by citizens, a lack of appropriate skills in the labour market that could empower youth with livelihood, and low capacity of training managers (Atari et al., 2010; Price & Ornert, 2017; UNESCO 2022; Akec, 2021; Ramadan and Xiaolui, 2019).

To document the impact of youth employment in South Sudanese cities, the World Bank Group (2020) highlights issues to be addressed for efficient and effective TVET service delivery in the country. Among these are issues on the importance of TVET, training requirements, challenges, and strategies to improve its service delivery, which include:

- 1- Review of the existing curriculum of TVET;
- 2- High demand for skills education to meet the needs of the market;
- 3- High costs of training and low demand for skilled labour in South Sudan; and
- 4- The need to match the skills training curriculum with the skills

needed in the industry.

Low demand and mismatch of skills have been highlighted as the issues affecting TVET service delivery in South Sudan.

2.2.2 Low Demand and Mismatch of Skills

The World Bank Group (2020) discovered that most graduates from training institutions do not get employment, partly due to the low demand for the skills they have acquired. Secondly, the authors concluded that the failure to be employed by the industry may be due to a mismatch between the skills acquired and the skills demanded by the industry.

Another problem is gender imbalance in skills education and training in South Sudan, preventing women from actively contributing towards development.

2.2.3 Gender Inequality

In South Sudan, women and girls do not have full access to skills training; they only have minimal access to a few soft skills such as hairdressing, catering and hospitality (cooking), tailoring and fashion design, and agriculture/crop production. Commins and Falcao (2019) discovered that girls did not benefit from TVET services in South Sudan. In addition to the gender gap in TVET, people with special needs do not benefit from skills training (Pompa, 2014).

Previous researchers have also given accounts of how TVET operates, including the extent of its entry points, which will be presented in the next section.

2.2.4.1 TVET System in South Sudan.

According to UNESCO (2022), the TVET system and institutions in South Sudan, including its pathways, legal frameworks, qualifications framework, governance, and resource mobilisation, are not well established and strengthened because the implementation has been fragmented, thus necessitating the unification of TVET service delivery.

Regarding TVET pathways (entry points and progression), the formal learning cycle comprises four levels, equivalent to four years of secondary education in the academic cycle. Students in formal TVET are recruited from primary school leavers, while trainees for non-formal TVET have no educational requirements, provided they have attained the age of 14 years. Vocational/skills training ranges from three (03) to nine (9) months, and the maximum duration is three (03) years. In non-formal training, courses are modularised based on occupational standards to enable participants to be employed at the end of the training (UNESCO, 2022).

In a nutshell, every training cycle has packages for full-service delivery known as 'employable skills' modules.' This section of TVET is associated with 'literacy and numeracy,' to enable trainees without a good educational background to enter the formal TVET after assessment of literacy and numeracy skills, following completion of foundational and intermediate skills/technical training in building and construction, carpentry, plumbing, agriculture, to mention but a few.

What is worth noting is that the four (04) levels, the equivalent of four years of secondary education in the academic cycle, have different certificates: level 1, equivalent of senior one, is called 'proficient' certificate, and this continues through artisan, craft, and technician' certificate, the highest certificate after the fourth

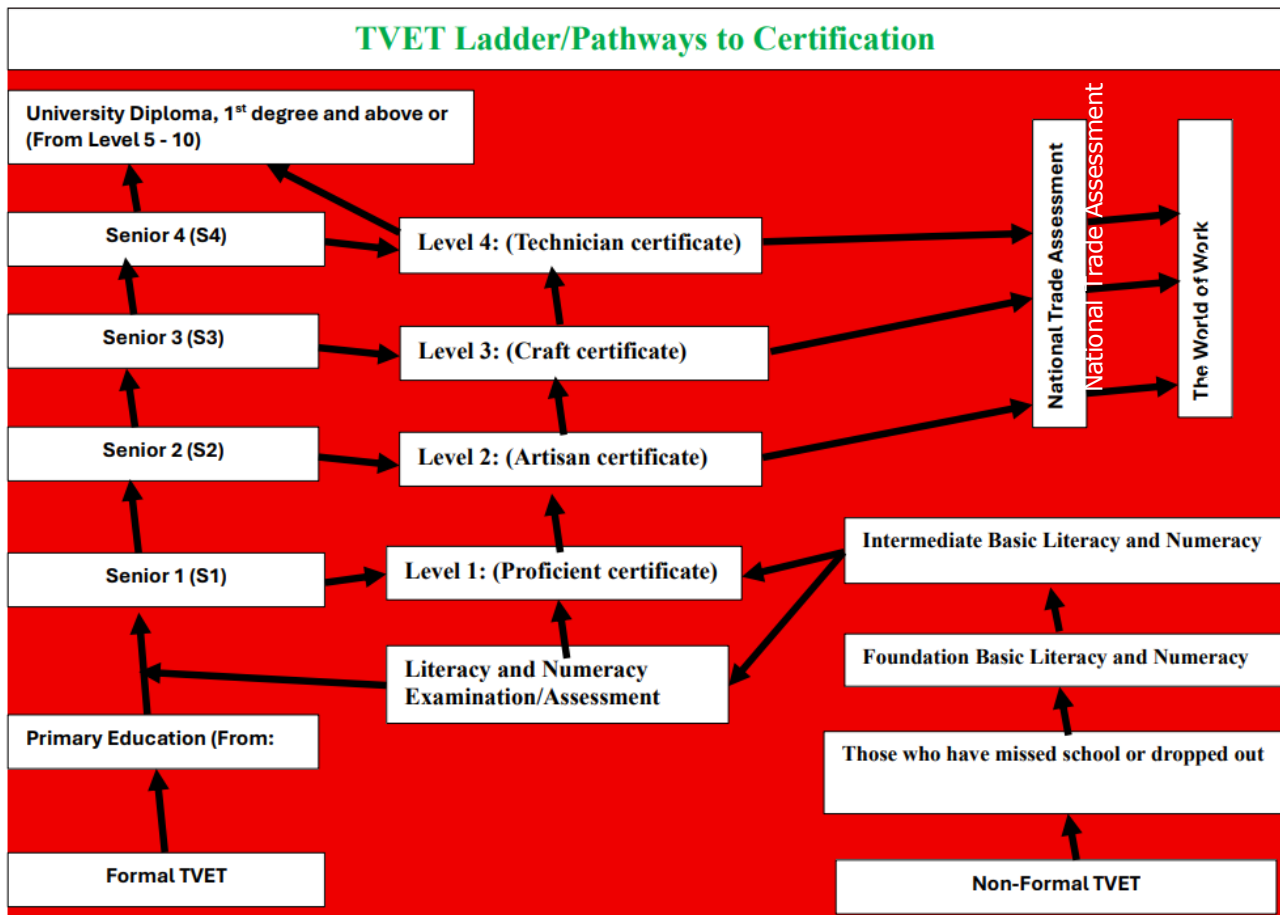
year (Level 4). At the end of four years, a national trade assessment, equivalent to the South Sudan Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (UNESCO, 2022), is conducted, after which a candidate can join the labour market/work or continue with further technical studies from level 5 to 10 (from Diploma to PhD. In Technology: details not included in the figure below).

What is challenging for TVET entry points is the convergence of primary school pupils, trainees from skills training centres,

students from formal academic secondary schools, those from technical schools, and higher technical institutions. At this juncture, there is an imbalance because students from technical training institutions have gone further in skills acquisition than those from formal education, and their coming together may present curriculum and skills inequalities and difficulties.

The figure below explains the TVET pathways mentioned in the preceding discourse.

2.2.4.2 The TVET Ladder/Pathways to Certification.



Adopted from UNESCO (2022).

The next issue of TVET in South Sudan is how it is conceptualised among youth, parents, and communities. Detailed explanations will be presented in the following section.

2.2.5 The Perception of TVET in South Sudan

Generally, the most significant barrier to TVET in South Sudan is the youth's aversion to vocational training, who believe that skills training is reserved for students who do not excel in formal education. This negative perception of TVET among young women and men is due to a lack of awareness about the importance and benefits of skills training for trainees and the nation (Atari et al., 2010; Commins and Falcao, 2019). The only available enlightenment mechanism for TVET is the BBC Media Action, which informs the youth about the importance of TVET (Ibid). Secondly, like most African countries, parents in South Sudan do not value TVET for their children (Adewale, 2014; Field et al., 2014).

The negative perceptions of TVET among parents and children in South Sudan have left an indelible mark on TVET, as it is perceived as a discipline of less importance to its beneficiaries, which cannot render them useful within the South Sudanese communities or society. This mindset can only be eradicated through enlightening stakeholders to mobilise a skilled labour force for the labour market and development.

Supporting the TVET sector is another challenge in developing the discipline to empower the youth with employable skills. Funding strategies will be explained in the next section.

2.2.6 Support/Funding to TVET

Commins and Falcao (2019), while analysing the educational opportunities for young people in South Sudan and shedding light on the current issues of vocational education in the country, discovered that vocational training was being supported jointly by

the stakeholders (government, donors and international organisations). On the other hand, Akec (2021) highlighted that inadequate financing of TVET is one of the crucial issues in South Sudan, leading to underdevelopment of this sub-sector and the relative lack of infrastructure development to promote skills training in the country.

Atari et al (2010) and Atari and McKague (2014) also discovered that the government, non-governmental organisations, and communities were not supporting technical education and training in South Sudan to foster skills training as expected. Therefore, the authors recommended that all TVET stakeholders should endeavour to support and develop skills training for the youth. Of course, the insufficient funding of TVET contributes to its poor development in South Sudan, leading to a lack of technical schools, training centres, and equipment (UNESCO, 2022).

It is also beneficial to emphasise the importance and benefits of TVET for children, youth, and the communities of South Sudan in the following section.

3. The Importance and Benefits of TVET

Technical education is important in every setting because it empowers citizens with technical know-how and innovation to solve national and community issues that deserve technical solutions. Secondly, for every country to develop its infrastructure and use technology, there is a need for technical education for the youth (Adewale, 2014).

Vocational training equips youth with skills in specific areas for employment, livelihood, economic empowerment, and infrastructure development within a short time: six months or more (Adewale, 2014; Atari and McKague, 2014; Pomp, 2014; Akala et al., 2016). Vocational training provides a skilled labour force for a nation, creates jobs to eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment, promotes self-employment, conserves the environment (Atari et al., 2010; Field et al., 2014), and supplies the labour force to the market and industry (Afeti, 2018).

TVET promotes sustainable development in a country, based on the skills acquired by individuals through training in specific trades/disciplines. Technical and vocational training is the only tool that encourages citizens to raise their living standards to a higher level, subsequently bringing their country to a productive stage for revenue generation (Ramadan & Xiaolui, 2019).

McGrath (2019) has applauded UNESCO for emphasising TVET as an important facet for transforming nations through skills and production for economic growth. Technical and vocational education and training give birth to industrialisation as graduates set out to compete in the labour market and to find solutions to local challenges in the modern era of technology.

Finally, it is assumed that TVET is an alternative for children who fail to perform academically; hence, craftsmanship and entrepreneurial courses can provide them with livelihoods, thus making a positive stride in life. This assumption is common among most South Sudanese regarding TVET (McGrath, 2019).

Cognisant of the issues of TVET in South Sudan vis-à-vis its importance and benefits to the youth, the industry, and the entire country, it is necessary to explore how previous researchers perceived investing in it. The following section highlights investment in technical and skills education.

4. Investing in TVET

Investing in TVET has been proven paramount to skills development in a country.

Technical education and vocational training are expensive as they involve the provision of modern equipment, the establishment of a conducive training environment, the supply of various training materials, curriculum and ICT development, the conduct of labour market assessment to identify available local skills, and the training of teachers and instructors to deliver quality skills training to the youth (Ramadan & Xiaolui, 2019; Habler et al., 2020).

Furthermore, according to the above authors, investing in TVET would bring technical schools and training institutions closer to every community for equal and sustainable development. As a result of the claims mentioned above, the conclusion is that the government, donors and implementing partners engaged in TVET service delivery in South Sudan should focus on mobilising resources to address the missing imperatives that would strengthen its implementation and empower the youth to ensure effective development of the country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this section, the author will summarise the findings of this research and give recommendations for future implementation. This will be followed by the overall conclusion of the article, including suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Conclusion

Of course, previous researchers did not focus on enlightening citizens of South Sudan about the importance of TVET for livelihood, economic empowerment, and infrastructure development. Secondly, they did not focus on encouraging female participation in skills training alongside their male counterparts. Those are the two gaps the author has endeavoured to fill in the bid to promote skills training and technological innovation in the country.

Additionally, this paper investigated the extent to which TVET has been established in South Sudan. In this regard, the following challenges have been discovered:

- 1- Lack of technical and vocational infrastructure: this includes classrooms and workshops, as well as modern equipment for skills training;
- 2- Insufficient funding to the TVET sector, as well as a lack of scholarships for anticipating TVET students and trainees;
- 3- The absence of qualified TVET teachers and instructors;
- 4- Gender inequality in skills training;
- 5- Negative perception of TVET by children, parents, youth, and the community;
- 6- Mismatch of skills to the labour market due to the lack of labour market assessment to identify skills gaps;
- 7- Unemployment of TVET graduates due to insufficient industries, necessitating linking training to the industry;
- 8- The absence of a considerable number of policies, manuals, guidelines, and curricula to advance the TVET system in South Sudan;

- 9- A lack of maximisation of awareness about the importance of TVET to stakeholders;
- 10- The government's willingness to advance TVET in South Sudan is lacking.

Finally, research indicates that both non-formal and informal TVET are alternative education that can accommodate students who have failed academically (Commings & Falcao, 2019; McGrath, 2019). For example, trainees who are trained for only six months can immediately join the labour market, compared to students who spend many years in formal education but are unable to get employment.

In fact, for formal TVET, performance, talent, and innovation can be the bottlenecks that can prevent children from joining technical education. In this regard, there is always confusion between nonformal, informal, and formal TVET. However, talent and innovation are the key factors that contribute to the essence of TVET.

Therefore, TVET should not be conceptualised as a discipline for children who have failed in formal education. It should rather be considered as a discipline for talented children who are innovators and local problem solvers within their communities and society.

Previous researchers made commendable strides, drawing the attention of TVET stakeholders in South Sudan to improve the discipline. This would enable the youth to realise the need to lay an effective and efficient TVE foundation for service delivery, to foster self-reliance, sustainability, and development. However, they did not emphasise sensitising South Sudanese on the importance of skills education and training, female participation, and investing in TVET.

What must TVET stakeholders do to enable every citizen to embrace the discipline for self-reliance, economic empowerment, infrastructure development, environmental management, innovation, and sustainability?

5.2 Recommendations for Practical Application

Following a critical analysis of the literature review, the researcher drew four recommendations for practical application, which include funding TVET, sensitisation, promotion of public and private partnerships, and development of policies on outstanding TVET issues. These pieces of advice will be explained in the next sections.

5.2.1 Increased Funding for TVET.

Financing TVET is imperative because it will empower the youth with employable skills for self-reliance, economic growth, and infrastructure development in South Sudan.

Once TVET is supported with financial resources, its managers, teachers, and tutors will be trained to deliver quality teaching and training to beneficiaries. The availability of funds will enable the labour market assessment to identify available skills for curriculum development, to expand the scope of skills training and find solutions to local or community issues. Finally, funding this sector will facilitate the provision of more training institutions and equipment, and it will also permit planners to allocate funds for scholarships to train more youth for livelihood. Financing TVET depends on the government's political willingness to encourage skills training to minimise youth involvement in criminal activities because of idleness.

Finally, it is also imperative for donors and partners to increase investment in TVET as a support to South Sudan to get rid of idleness and enhance security, once violent gang groups cease to exist.

5.2.2 Sensitisation about the Importance of TVET.

Sensitisation about the importance of TVET in South Sudan will be an added advantage to attract the youth to enrol massively in technical and vocational education and training. Everyone, including churches, media houses, and gatherings, is advised to advocate for skills training and technological studies to empower the youth to transform and take the country to a certain level. The national discourse should focus on sensitising the communities to embrace TVET or skills training.

The invaluable readers of this article are earnestly urged to be advocates for skills training in South Sudan.

Female participation in skills training is equally important. Therefore, women and girls should be encouraged to participate massively in any skills training so that they are economically empowered to care for their families and contribute towards the development of South Sudan.

Applying the capital theory, community engagement in TVET is another sensitive aspect that should be emphasised to the citizens of South Sudan to encourage them to value skills training. Not only that, but they should also participate in TVET curriculum development to raise issues needing technical attention.

If only everyone engaged in raising awareness among South Sudanese communities, then the negative perception of TVET would change. It is not for students who have failed academically, but for talented children who are problem solvers within the respective communities.

5.2.3 Promotion of Public-Private Partnership.

This refers to promoting synergy between the training institutions and the industry. In this regard, training is conducted according to skills needed in the labour market, to provide employment and internship opportunities to TVET graduates. This is a direct response to the contributing factors preventing TVET graduates from opportunities to practise the skills they have acquired, and subsequently be employed in the available industries, because their skills match the industry requirements.

5.2.4 Development of Policies on Outstanding TVET Issues.

Since there are many policies on various pertinent TVET issues yet to be developed, like policy on resource mobilisation, the recognition of prior learning, ICT in education, and many issues necessary for advancing TVET in South Sudan, those policies should be developed as soon as possible to expedite the process of strengthening the TVET sector in the country.

5.3. Recommendations for further Research

This research has been conducted using a desktop internet research approach, and therefore, first-hand data collection is necessary to examine the impact of technical education and skills training on the youth in South Sudan, to account for the quality of the available equipment in TVET schools and training institutions, to assess the capacities of instructors, to assess the employability of graduates, to examine how TVET skills respond to local issues, and finally, to investigate the coping relationships between students joining

technical education from academic schools. Of course, one of the aims of skills education is to address communal challenges such as processing available resources into finished goods or adding value to raw materials (McGrath, 2019; Atari & McKague, 2014; Fin et al, 2020).

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