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Vocational training has a future. It is most effective as part of a broader educational campaign – findings from Kenya.

Africa has a young population and good economic prospects – prior to the coronavirus pandemic, at least. The challenge lies in using the young people's potential to support continued economic development. The most successful way to achieve this is via practice-oriented vocational training because it can create maximum synergy between young citizens and the growing economy. However as Kenya's example shows, vocational training manages this most effectively when it is well-connected to other parts of the education system.

Strong reform progress

In recent years, Kenya has made significant progress on reforms, achieving good results in its economic and social development. The successes primarily stem from a new constitution in 2010 which had a transformative impact and resulted in the redistribution of power within the country. This led not only to political reforms, but also to economic reforms which resulted in higher levels of investment and a more stable economic situation, with a sound profile overall.

Accordingly, the rate of growth has been around 5% in the past five years, and much higher in some years – such as 6.3% in 2018. This has placed Kenya among the fastest-growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Without the coronavirus pandemic, it could have been looking forward to a highly promising era. Forecasts from a range of institutions predicted a continuation of positive development over the next five years similar to that in the recent past. The changes that COVID-19 will bring to

Kenya are – as everywhere – still very difficult to assess. However, it is clear that there will be some decline, not least because tourism, an important pillar of the economy, has come to an at least partial standstill. Nevertheless, Kenya is relatively robust compared to other countries in the region, and it should make a quick return to pre-crisis levels as the pandemic abates.

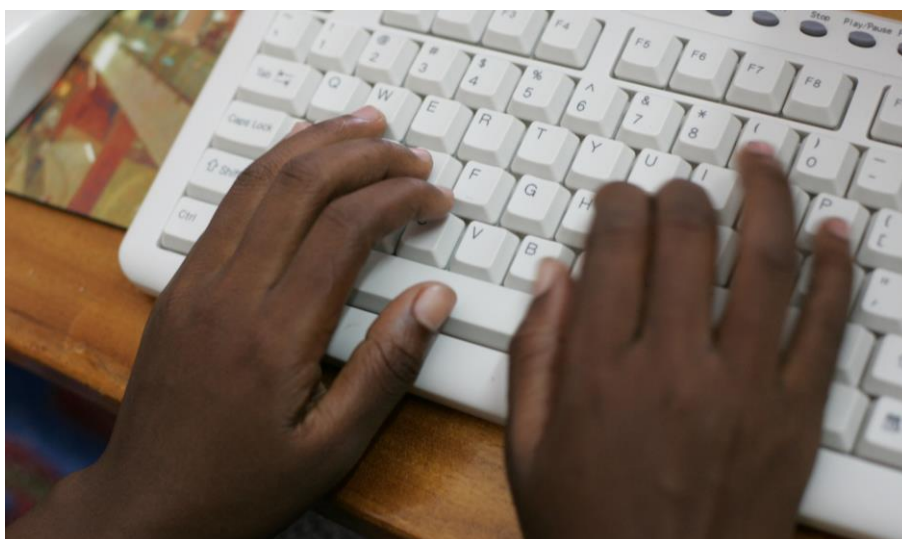
Huge need for employment

Despite progress, unemployment levels have remained high in recent years nonetheless, with the official figure standing at over 9%. The rate among young people was even higher, at more than 22%. In addition, there are millions of people in informal employment. Figures from the African Development Bank indicate that they make up around four fifths of the workforce. Furthermore, demographics mean that up to one million young people enter the labour market every year. The World Bank predicts that Kenya will therefore need to

create around one million additional jobs per year by 2025. This will be most important for the formal sector outside of agriculture, which has previously accounted for only 6% of jobs. It is also crucial to create new jobs in cities with fast-growing populations. At the same time, however, there is a lack of specialists to maintain the pace of growth.

Vocational training as the key

Practice-oriented vocational training can assist here; it is seen as key to reconciling the growing number of unemployed people with the demands of the economy. And this goes beyond Kenya; in Africa as a whole we are seeing a young population and pent-up demand across the board, usually in conjunction with high rates of unemployment. At the same time, the continent requires more well-educated employees and specialists for its continued economic development. Most African countries would have sufficient



Individuals' skill acquisition and development improves employment prospects.



Training to become electricians in a training workshop.

employment opportunities for young people: in the development of modern infrastructure, in the growing number of businesses or as part of digitalisation, for example. Yet applicants frequently lack the relevant skills.

Vocational training rises to this double challenge by offering a sensible way to link supply and demand: on the one hand, it helps to cover the demands of the labour market; on the other, it provides upcoming generations with prospects for the future. Young people not only acquire competencies for use in a professional environment, but they can also develop their personal and social skills. This creates more opportunities for them to participate in the processes of society.

However, successful vocational training requires that some important criteria be fulfilled:

- **Training according to standards:** Vocational training should meet specified quality requirements. To achieve these, the relevant training providers should be well-equipped and organised. They require qualified teaching staff, modern curricula and appropriate learning resources.
- **Market proximity:** Although vocational training systems must suit the particularities of each country, it is always the case that the closer to industry they operate, the more successful they are – as per the approach in the German dual system. This is most successful when employers are closely involved in the

planning and delivery of learning content, ensuring that the training does not fail to meet their requirements.

- **Part of a holistic approach:** Vocational training cannot stand alone and should not be viewed in isolation. It must fit into the overall education system.

If these criteria are met, vocational training can create a useful bridge between the demands of the economy and the needs of young people.

Germany is the largest donor

Vocational education and training have seen a resurgence internationally in recent years. Demographic change is making it increasingly important. Germany is by far the largest donor in this area, not least due to its successful dual vocational training model and its comparatively low rate of youth unemployment. KfW implements relevant programmes on behalf of the Federal Government.

Although KfW has not had a clear geographical focus for vocational training in the past, the promotional activity is concentrated in Asia and Africa. In the past, most funds went to Asia. Here, however, development and promotional loans play an important role. Africa has received the most budget funds in recent years.

As well as the growing youth population, one reason for this is the Federal Government's special focus on Africa,

which is reflected in initiatives like the "Marshall Plan with Africa". The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) wants to use this to strengthen African development efforts such that economies there can grow sustainably, generating jobs and wealth.

All of these factors have contributed to a significant increase in KfW funds for vocational training in recent years – the volumes for ongoing programmes have increased from around EUR 195 million in 2008 to over EUR 1.5 billion in 2019. KfW Development Bank's portfolio currently includes 85 ongoing vocational training projects in 38 countries and regions. The geographical range extends from China and Vietnam, through Kenya and Ethiopia to Honduras and Guatemala.



Wide-ranging engagement in Kenya

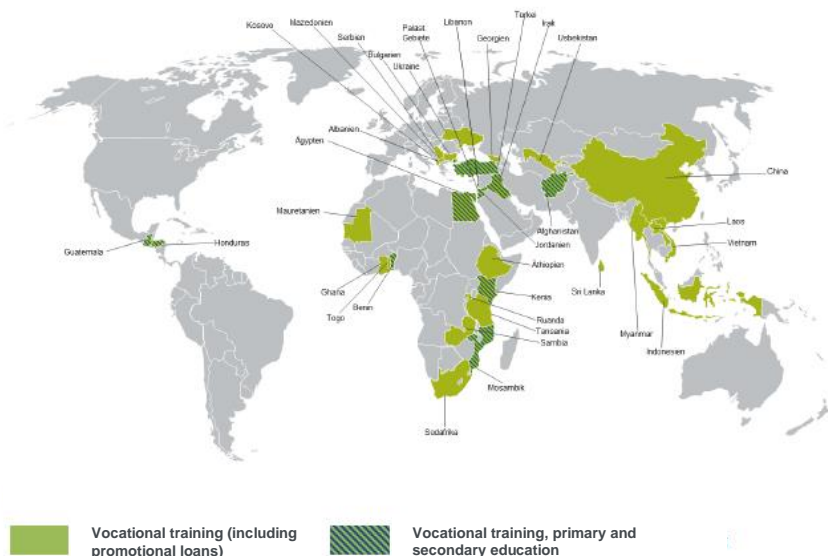
KfW's commitment to vocational training in Kenya is broad. It is divided into different sections which build on or complement one another. Overall, it aims to equip young people for future employment. It is important to highlight that the funding is not limited to vocational training, but also covers start-up financing, primary and secondary education, and a range of other social programmes and aspects.

Schools for poorer areas

Since 2004, KfW has been supporting schools in poorer urban areas. This is now in its third phase. State primary and secondary schools in poor districts of four cities, Kisumu, Nakuru, Nairobi and Mombasa, have been renovated, extended or rebuilt and better equipped. As well as the classrooms themselves, sanitary facilities, kitchens, offices and child-friendly play and sports facilities have been installed.

Vocational training by country

Focus on Asia and Africa



The idea behind this is, firstly, to increase capacity in educational facilities in general, and secondly, to create a supportive, disruption-free learning environment and “safe haven”, even in less privileged districts. The measures also intend to improve access to secondary education for poorer children. The programme is being expanded to include a country-wide scholarship system co-financed by KfW.

Impact:

12 of the planned 13 school building projects are now complete. By the end of the programme, 20,000 school places will have been created or improved.

Scholarships for secondary schools

The programme grants scholarships to gifted girls and boys attending secondary school. It is called “Wings to Fly” because it aims to give young people the boost they need for a successful educational career and to take advantage of subsequent opportunities. The measure aims to use scholarships to enable young people with excellent grades to attend an appropriate secondary school and (pre)vocational training courses. This allows them to gain qualifications which would not have been an option otherwise. The programme also includes mentoring, extra-curricular events, careers advice and health care. It is intended to not only offer scholarship students the opportunity to obtain qualifications, but

also to strengthen their sense of social responsibility.

Impact:

Since “Wings to Fly” began in 2010, more than 17,000 pupils have received a scholarship. In the new phase, more than 3,200 vocational students will receive support.

“Wings to Fly” initially concentrated on secondary education. The programme has now expanded to include scholarships for vocational training, to promote sound vocational training as a high-quality, feasible alternative to university studies. This is because, despite the high demand for qualified specialists, vocational training does not have a good reputation in Kenya. Most young people who complete secondary education are likely to pursue further academic studies. One goal of the scholarship programme is to counteract this.

Another goal is to support girls, who continue to be discriminated against in both secondary education and vocational training in Kenya. In accordance with the G7 decisions taken at Elmau and with SDG 5 (gender equality), 60% of the scholarships are awarded to girls and young women. The programme is implemented by a charitable trust at the Kenyan Equity Bank, the Equity Group Foundation; KfW participates as a co-financier on behalf of the Federal Government.

Practical vocational training

Kenya has a few thousand state and private vocational schools, some of which are run at community level and some by various ministries. The Ministry of Education works to establish coherence among the different providers, but the Kenyan vocational training landscape is still inconsistent. Furthermore, many of them are poorly equipped, insufficiently practice-oriented and do not have enough qualified teachers.

This is why the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development launched the Kenyan-German vocational training initiative in 2017. Its core function is to support state vocational training institutions and to develop them into centres of excellence. They receive funding for buildings and suitable equipment, including computers and technology, as well as funding to improve the quality of teaching and administration.

Impact:

In the three centres of excellence for vocational training there are now new workshops with connections for a full range of technical equipment, adequate workspaces and modern facilities. This creates a total of 560 workshop spaces to be used by 800 trainees each year.

Initially, three schools in the Nairobi area were selected: Kiambu Institute of Science and Technology (KIST); Nairobi Technical Training Institute (NTTI); Thika Technical Training Institute (TTI). Others are due to be added in future. Once they have received the support, these centres should be in a position to offer high-quality training and education that is relevant to the labour market, as well as making more traineeships available and thereby increasing access to these educational facilities. Young Kenyans will have the chance to complete traineeships there to become specialists in fields with proven demand. To ensure that the training meets the needs of the market, private sector companies are heavily involved. International companies like VW, KVM and Krones support the programme and offer practical training phases in their companies. They also help to develop the curricula, determine equipment standards, set exams and provide instructors.

Business incubator

There are plans for a business incubator in Nairobi. As part of working towards getting young people into employment, the funding will be supplemented by this new centre. Alongside traditional vocational training aimed at employment in the formal sector, it is intended to provide routes into self-employment as well. Young people aged between 18 and 35 can seek advice here and access a range of measures to support them in starting their own company. Small and growing SMEs can also receive assistance. This mainly takes the form of vouchers, including for further training and coaching, and financing. An accompanying image campaign seeks to highlight the value of self-employment.

Impact:

A business incubator is being set up in Nairobi. It aims to establish itself as a first point of contact for questions from people planning to become self-employed, or who have already started down that path. The aim is for 50,000 young people to have received advice, assistance and support from the business incubator by 2024.

Its main, although not exclusive, target group is graduates of the centres of excellence, and the business incubator will connect with them directly. It plans to set up and maintain offices within these educational institutions. In general terms, the aspiration is to bundle information and provide young people with a “one-stop shop” for information on all relevant materials to do with setting up and expanding a business. The programme runs parallel to a GIZ project which primarily aims to advise start-ups.

Youth-friendly services

Because education is about more than just consulting a book or working in a workshop, KfW has also designed a programme on behalf of the Federal Government which provides young people with support in addition to the actual curriculum and strengthens their social skills, covering topics like health, sport, education and contraception, as well as social activities. KfW works with other stakeholders to deliver this, namely the German charitable trust Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) and the Dutch charitable trust Triggerise, which offer relevant services such as access to

healthcare, courses or other activities, sometimes through voucher schemes.

Impact:

By the end of the programme, a total of 18,000 young people will have participated in sports schemes or other educational and life skills activities.

Conclusion and outlook

Practice-oriented vocational training has a future. On the one hand, it is an effective tool for improving the employability of young people. On the other, it helps to meet increasing demand in the economy for qualified workers, especially in Africa. However, it is not enough to develop institutions offering vocational training. It requires an integrated approach with industry in which vocational training plays an important role but is not the only aspect. In addition, there should be robust primary and secondary education, as well as other educational formats like business incubators or scholarship programmes and financing offers.

Vocational training must, put simply, be embedded within a larger education and employment campaign, based on a robust education system, and together they must pursue an overarching goal of training young people such that their skills and requirements match those of the economy, thus meeting the needs of both sides in the most effective way possible. During this process, it is also important to maintain a particular focus on young women and girls, as per the 2017 decision of the G7 countries in Elmau, and to go further than traditional educational formats by offering additional youth programmes, including health and leisure programmes. KfW, on behalf of the Federal Government, is already having some success in this area in Kenya, thanks to a variety of programmes that complement and build on one another. There is still work to be done on this in other countries.

In the long term, it will be about making better use of digitalisation for vocational training, providing more comprehensive support for the transition to employment and developing appropriate promotional programmes for this. The question of how to set up vocational training in fragile contexts also takes on new meaning against a background of record refugee numbers and various crisis

situations. Finally, there is the question of sustainable financing, which is needed if practice-oriented vocational training is to become and remain a successful model in the long term, without placing an excessive burden on stakeholders – the state, the economy, trainees. In conclusion, one thing is clear: a commitment to vocational training is worthwhile. But it is also worth continuing to develop the promotional approaches that have been used in the past.



Young man in a training workshop.

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