

Chapter III

Challenges of Training Motor Vehicle Mechanics for Changing World Contexts and Emergent Working Conditions: Cases of Kenya and Australia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is an extract from a study that examined how institute-based automotive training in the retail, service and repair (RS&R) sector could be made more responsive and effective to the changes in workplace demands and new technology. It dealt with the promotion of vocational relevance in the training of motor mechanics in the contexts of a changing world and emergent working conditions. It was an applied learning study that followed a comparative case study research design aimed at advancing reciprocal lessons between the two regions of Kenya and State of Victoria, Australia. The research was propelled by the fact that technology used in this area is now changing faster than at any other time in modern history and is impacting upon most of the human lifestyles. This chapter deals with a summary of the main issues that were researched. Specifically the chapter deals with relevance of institute-based automotive training, stakeholders' involvement in programs development, and program transfer from one region to another: and learning for work and at workplace. It highlights the views of trainers, trainees and industry practitioners on equity in program development, relevance to workplace requirements and ownership of the automotive training programs. It was found that Australian trainers felt somehow sidelined in the program design while the Kenyan trainers complained of being left alone by relevant industry in the program development venture. None of these two cases produces optimal results since participation in program design should be equitably distributed among the stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is reshaping almost every economy in the world and specifically touching on all aspects of education and training. The world we live in is becoming one in many ways. The impact of globalization is being felt by all nations, developed and developing alike. Originally there were divisions based on the proximities and alignments. However, what is now common is the formation of coalitions aimed at forging a strong force to influence the whole world order and orientations. This is due to the openness and the integration caused by globalization. The world economies are increasingly operating in a global market. This is a market with higher standards, higher demands and with a lot of interdependence. Changes are accruing within the industry structures, up to the extent of having relocations as a way of being internationally competitive and on the cutting edge. Vocational education and training is not shielded from these forces and particularly so the mechanics who have to repair cars with different technological complexities.

High performance workplaces are demanding higher level skills of their workers (Maldonado & Farmer, 2007). As such many developed and developing nations are looking at their Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems to provide solutions to and increase responsiveness to the changes in the global economy (Finlay, 1998). This demand is not unrealistic since it has happened before. For example, Rau (1998) attributes the more than sixty times economic transformation of Taiwan from the 50s to the late 90s to the development of a VET system that produced professionals in sufficient numbers to be able to contribute to the rapid growth. In doing so, VET contributed to the transformation of Taiwan from agriculture dependence to industrial export dependent economy. This is the kind of transformation that suits many developing countries in which population growth has stretched the utilization of the arable land to the extreme with Kenya

being an example. It has all along depended on agriculture but due to demographic changes it is high time alternatives were found.

This research focused on issues dealing with education, training and work in the automotive industry. It deals with the issue of vocational relevance in the training of motor mechanics in the context of a changing world and emergent working conditions. It is a comparative case study research design aimed at advancing reciprocal lessons between the two regions of Kenya and state of Victoria, Australia. The study explored how institute-based automotive training in the retail service and repair (RS&R) sector could be made more responsive and effective to the changes in technology and workplace demands.

BACKGROUND

This research was an international comparative case study; a field that Keating, Medrich, Volkoff and Perry (2002) say is the richest in the VET area. It is related to the considerable interest on the part of policy makers in international developments that involve bodies like United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNEVOC which is the International Project on Technical and Vocational Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and the international labor organization (ILO), Australia Aided International Development (AUSAID) and United States Aided International Development (USAID) funded projects. This international interest in VET is related to the impact of global economic and social change. On the other hand, VET is highly dynamic and is closely linked to economic strength and employment issues. A better educated and trained workforce has higher fiscal impact on the economy. Education and training therefore, is the basis for improving human performance at work (Maldonado & Farmer, 2007). As a result, the challenge of international

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