



HOW TO LEVERAGE ON UNIVERSITY – INDUSTRY COLLABORATIONS TO PREPARE YOUNG TANZANIAN GRADUATES FOR THE WORLD OF WORK?

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SUMMARY

Young people in Tanzania navigate so many broken systems in the transition from school into the labor market. Higher learning institutions are being blamed for not preparing young graduates for the transition and life in the job market. This policy brief outlines the systemic barriers that young people face and have to overcome, and highlights how university-industry collaborations offer interventions that will reduce these barriers and better prepare young graduates for the job market. The policy brief also provides best practices to successfully design and implement impactful university-industry collaborations.

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving global knowledge economy, the gap between university education and industry demands is widening, inhibiting young graduates' smooth transition to employment. Tanzania is no exception, the gap is very evident, with the majority of graduates struggling to navigate so many broken systems in the transition from university into the labor market shaped by joblessness growth, long transition to employment, gap between skills needed in the labor market and those possessed by graduate job seekers. Every year, about 900,000 young people enter the job market to compete for 100,000 jobs.¹ While the situation indicates the need for more jobs and/or income generating opportunities to be created, policy makers and employers have placed the blame on graduates and their lack of employability skills.² Bringing into question the ability of higher education institutions in preparing employable graduates.

¹ Mulokozi, G. (2023, January 16). *Agribusiness in Tanzania: A solution to youth unemployment. The Chanzo*. <https://thechanzo.com/2023/01/16/agribusiness-in-tanzania-a-solution-to-youth-unemployment/>

² Mohamedbhai, G. (n.d.). *Quality of graduates in Africa. Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/world-view/quality-graduates-africa>



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Despite the dire labor market outlook, most young people do their best to tirelessly look for opportunities in the face of, lack of credible information, lack of social networks, lack of capital, and exorbitant internet costs. The situation is even more stringent for young women whose barriers to work-seeking are higher and harder than they are for young men due to systemic patriarchy.³ Equally young people from poor backgrounds face more barriers to work-seeking than their counterparts from higher income backgrounds.

There are many reasons for these failures. However, most are entrenched in outdated assumptions about how people move from education to employment⁴. Institutions, policymakers and even the youth themselves, overwhelmingly assume that:

- The reason for unemployment is a deficiency of skills among work-seekers.
- That “work” means a stable career in the formal economy.
- Training providers know what employers need and how to deliver it to students and trainees.

These assumptions are increasingly at odds with global transformations towards a non-linear, non-traditional future of work and learning.

Further compounding the barriers to employment are recruitment practices that rely on exclusionary indicators of capability like prior work experience. These forces create mutually reinforcing structures of exclusion that make the task of transitioning from school to work so hard and so slow for the majority of young women and men.

While most young Tanzanians struggle with getting jobs in the formal economy, other young Tanzanians opt to hustle as they search for jobs while others delve into the informal economy fully starting micro-enterprises that help them make ends meet. However, lack of capital, higher taxes and unclear business registration conditions make it difficult for many to formalize and grow their businesses, leaving them stuck in the informal sector that is characterized by low productivity and intense competition⁵.

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEF

This policy brief aims to communicate to stakeholders (higher learning institutions, employers, and policy makers) on how to leverage university – industry collaboration to prepare young Tanzanian graduates for the job market.

³ Institute of Development Studies. (2018, June 1). *Mapping Women's economic exclusion in Tanzania* - Institute of Development Studies. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/mapping-womens-economic-exclusion-in-tanzania/>

⁴ Ruge Mutahaba Foundation (2023) *What could we do better to solve youth unemployment*. (RMF Publication 002) www.rugemutahab.org

⁵ Mulokozi, G. (2023, January 16). *Agribusiness in Tanzania: A solution to youth unemployment*. *The Chanzo*.

<https://thechanzo.com/2023/01/16/agribusiness-in-tanzania-a-solution-to-youth-unemployment/>



APPROACH AND RESULTS

Approach

The 2023 EALAN Conference organized a policy dialogue on University – Industry collaboration and focused on how leveraging university – industry collaboration can support preparing young Tanzanian graduates for the job market. The session was preceded by a key note address on University – Industry Collaboration in Eastern Africa States. The policy dialogue session picked up conversation from the key note address. It attracted land governance practitioners and academics, practitioners from various fields including technology, business and real estate. The discussion that ensued informed this policy brief.

Emerging Issues

During the policy dialogue it came out clearly that that university-industry collaborations were helpful in preparing students for the job market in areas of building work experience, employability skills, and in promoting entrepreneurial ventures. While majority of the practitioners leveraged university-industry collaborations to solve youth unemployment, universities used it to improve their teaching staff's skills and experience, and put their research into use or research capability into use. Others leveraged university-industry collaborations to increase their revenues.

It was also observed that the most impactful university-industry collaborations were clear on their 'why' and were accompanied by regulatory support at the institutional level, people and mindset change as well as mutual benefits between the university and industry partners. They were also inclusive, considering various groups, female and male graduates, as well as socioeconomic backgrounds in their implementation.

From the discussions it was noted that University- industry collaboration interventions took different forms including:

- Short courses offered by private sector practitioners certified by universities such as the real estate agency course run by the College of Business Education.
- Short courses offered by universities for practitioners in the industry.
- Incubation Hubs designed to put research into action and to use to support job creation/self-employment or to support industry with evidence-based insights on existing challenges.
- Internships through long-term partnerships between universities and industry to support prospective graduates to gain on-the-job experience.
- Lectures/talks: Having chief speakers giving talks during lectures.
- Adjunct professorship: bringing in practitioners (not academics) to teach special elective courses from an industry perspective.
- Secondments: sending lecturers to work in industry for short terms.

From the study, it was apparent that the more innovative approaches came from the younger practitioners, under 35 years and outside of academia. This finding highlights the importance of bringing in youthful perspectives into the university-industry collaboration discourse. It was also clear that given the lack of jobs, university-industry collaborations needed to focus on creating solutions for job creation and support to entrepreneurs who will create more jobs, and less on building employability skills and work experience.

Conclusion

The employment environment in Tanzania like in many other countries is manifested by young people navigating so many broken systems in the transition from university into the labour market. Conversely, higher learning institutions are put into blame for failing to prepare the young graduates for this transition. University-Industry collaborations offer opportunities to support young graduates' transition into the job market are increasingly becoming vital. Findings from the policy dialogue point to the fact that by aligning academic programs with the often-changing needs of the job market, university-industry collaborations have a positive impact on preparing young graduates entering the job market. The collaborations offers avenues for equipping graduates with skills, attitude and professional networks important for survival in the workplace. As such the collaborations should be extensively leveraged. The research results provide best practices worth considering in designing and implementing university-industry collaborative partnerships.

Policy Implications



Youth-related challenges can best be resolved by bringing on-board young people to inform decision-making platforms like university boards and committees. Policies to support the onboarding of youth in and out of academia into boards may be worth considering.



There are no jobs and unemployment levels keep on rising, therefore more jobs need to be created. Typically, this would not be a concern of the university. However, if considered from a point of fostering entrepreneurial skills and practice among prospective graduates in preparation for life after university then it presents an opportunity for universities to become entrepreneurial and innovative hubs that produce solutions needed by communities and that will be consumed by industry. Policies looking into developing entrepreneurial graduates from a practical and market-driven perspective are key in addressing the challenges faced.



There is a critical need to create comprehensive policy frameworks that create an enabling environment for universities, graduates as well as employers. The policies should be oriented towards fostering collaboration and partnerships between the private sector and universities to ensure that curricula developed by universities are relevant to the ever-changing demands of the job market. Through putting into place clear guidelines, incentive structures and support systems, the policy frameworks can inspire and support universities to review curricula, incorporate practical training and improve career services that prepare graduates for the workplace. The frameworks can promote short term field placement, internships, exchange programs and work placement programs. On the other hand, employers and the private sector should be provided with incentives to entice them to provide opportunities for real world experience. By considering the roles of these key stakeholders, the frameworks can be instrumental in addressing the gap between education offered and employment, ensuring the university imparts the necessary skills needed by employers to its graduates and at the same time creating a strong workforce for the economy.



Mainstreaming youth employment into national development frameworks.

REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

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