

INFLUENCE OF WORK BASED LEARNING ON YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN KIHARU SUB COUNTY, MURANG'A COUNTY

BY

* Faith Nyambura Ng'ang'a¹, Dr Patrick Asango Okanga², Dr Violet Simiyu³

**The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya*

Abstract

Despite the growing emphasis on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Kenya, youth in Murang'a County continue to experience high levels of unemployment and limited economic participation. While TVET institutions aim to equip young people with practical and marketable skills, there is insufficient evidence on how effectively these skills translate into employment, self-employment, or entrepreneurship. This study explored the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation in Kiharu sub county, Murang'a county, Kenya. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory and Entrepreneurship Theory. The study targeted 182,030 youth participants and 30 key informants. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques was used in selecting 399 youths and 21 key informants. The sample size was 420 participants. Data was collected using questionnaire and interview guide. A pilot study was conducted with 42 participants (10% of the sample) from Gatanga Sub-County. Content validity was ensured through expert review by supervisors and peers, while reliability was established using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.7 considered acceptable. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 30 through descriptive while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic content analysis. Ethical standards were strictly. he study found that work-based learning significantly enhances youth economic participation by improving workplace experience, employability, practical problem-solving skills, workplace readiness, and employment prospects in Kiharu Sub-County. The study concludes that effective work-based learning, supported by quality industry placements, adequate workplace exposure, and structured mentorship, is essential for improving the transition of youth into employment and self-employment. The study recommends strengthening partnerships between TVET institutions and industry, expanding access to quality internships, industrial attachments, and apprenticeships, and enhancing workplace supervision to improve youth economic participation.

Keywords: Work-Based Learning, Youth Economic Participation, Kiharu Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

1.0 Introduction

Youth economic participation is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth, poverty reduction, and social inclusion. However, despite increased access to education, many young people continue to experience unemployment and underemployment due to inadequate workplace experience and limited job readiness (Baxter et al., 2022). According to Adely et al. (2021), the transition from education to employment remains difficult because graduates often lack practical competencies demanded by employers. Work-based learning (WBL), through internships, apprenticeships, industrial attachments, and workplace mentoring, has become an essential component of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(TVET) for improving employability and facilitating successful school-to-work transition (Dasgupta, 2022). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the effectiveness of work-based learning is constrained by weak collaboration between training institutions and industry, resulting in inadequate workplace exposure for many TVET learners (Allais, 2022). Similarly, Adanma and Ogunbiyi (2024) observed that graduates often complete vocational training without the practical competencies required by employers. In East Africa, limited internship opportunities and weak industry partnerships continue to undermine the contribution of TVET to youth employment and entrepreneurship (Ayiro et al., 2023).

Kenya has strengthened TVET through the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)

framework and increased investment in vocational institutions to enhance practical skills development (KNBS, 2023). Nevertheless, Simiyu et al. (2026) reported that many graduates still face difficulties securing employment because industrial attachment opportunities and employer linkages remain inadequate. These challenges are also evident in Murang'a County, particularly Kiharu Sub-County, where limited industrial opportunities may restrict effective workplace learning (Muriithi, 2023). Despite the acknowledged importance of work-based learning, empirical evidence on its influence on youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County remains limited.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite increased investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, youth economic participation in Murang'a County remains low (Ngugi et al., 2025). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2023) reports that youth unemployment remains between **17% and 22%**, with most employed youth engaged in low-productivity informal work. In Kiharu Sub-County, many young people continue to rely on small-scale agriculture, retail trade, and casual labour as their primary sources of livelihood (Mwangi, 2024). Although TVET enrolment and completion have improved in Murang'a County (Murithi et al., 2025), many graduates struggle to transition into employment or self-employment. Edward (2024) attributes this challenge to inadequate work-based learning opportunities, including limited industrial attachments, internships, and weak collaboration between TVET institutions and industry. Consequently, many graduates lack the practical workplace experience required by employers, limiting their economic participation (Ngware et al., 2024).

While previous studies have linked work-based learning to improved employability (Motuka, 2024; Simiyu et al., 2026), limited empirical evidence exists on its influence on youth economic participation at the sub-county level. This study therefore examined the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Youth unemployment remains a major challenge in Kiharu Sub-County despite increased investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Although work-based learning is intended to provide

practical workplace experience and improve youths' transition into employment and self-employment, many TVET graduates continue to experience limited economic participation. This study was therefore necessary to examine the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya.

The study was guided by Human Capital Theory and Entrepreneurship Theory and adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to generate quantitative and qualitative evidence. The findings provide insights into how work-based learning influences youth employment, self-employment, and income-generating activities. The study contributes evidence to support policy and strengthen collaboration between TVET institutions and industry to enhance youth economic participation.

1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Human Capital Theory

This study was anchored on Human Capital Theory, developed by Schultz (1961) and later advanced by Becker (1964). The theory posits that investment in education, training, and workplace experience enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and productivity, leading to improved employability and economic outcomes. Human capital is therefore viewed as an asset that increases an individual's capacity to participate effectively in productive economic activities.

In the context of this study, work-based learning enhances human capital by exposing trainees to real work environments where they acquire practical competencies, workplace experience, and occupational skills that complement classroom learning. Recent studies support this proposition. Goldin (2024) argues that investment in education and workplace training remains fundamental in improving labour market outcomes, while Maclean and Jagannathan (2024) observe that experiential learning strengthens job readiness by enabling learners to apply theoretical knowledge in real work settings. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022) emphasizes that structured workplace learning enhances young people's transition from education to employment by improving practical competencies demanded by employers.

A major strength of Human Capital Theory is that it provides a clear explanation of how education and

workplace training contribute to employability and productivity. However, the theory has been criticized for assuming that skills automatically translate into employment. Sen (1999) argues that individuals may possess relevant competencies but still fail to achieve favourable economic outcomes due to structural barriers such as limited employment opportunities, weak institutional support, and labour market constraints. Despite this limitation, Human Capital Theory remains relevant because it explains how work-based learning enhances the productive capacity of youth and improves their participation in economic activities.

Entrepreneurship Theory

The study was further guided by Entrepreneurship Theory, proposed by Schumpeter (1934), which views entrepreneurship as a process through which individuals identify opportunities, innovate, and create economic value. The theory argues that practical experience, creativity, and innovation enable individuals to establish and sustain enterprises, thereby contributing to economic development.

Work-based learning is consistent with this perspective because it provides trainees with practical workplace exposure, enabling them to develop entrepreneurial competencies, identify business opportunities, and build the confidence required for self-employment. Ncube and Matlala (2024), contend that TVET should prepare learners not only for wage employment but also for enterprise creation through experiential learning. Likewise, Lantu et al., (2022), emphasizes that workplace learning promotes entrepreneurial thinking by exposing trainees to real business environments, while López-Rubio et al. (2021) found that practical entrepreneurship training significantly improves business start-up intentions and enterprise sustainability among youth.

Although Entrepreneurship Theory explains how individuals convert skills into economic opportunities, it has been criticized for placing greater emphasis on individual initiative while giving limited attention to external factors such as access to finance, markets, and supportive government policies (Israel, 2024; Mbetjiha, 2025). Nevertheless, the theory remains appropriate for this study because it explains how practical workplace experience acquired through work-based learning enhances entrepreneurial capability and supports youth economic participation.

Human Capital Theory and Entrepreneurship Theory therefore complement each other in explaining how work-based learning strengthens practical competencies, enhances employability, promotes self-employment, and ultimately improves youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Work-based learning is increasingly recognized as a critical pathway for enhancing youth economic participation because it provides structured opportunities for practical skills acquisition, workplace exposure, mentorship, and industry engagement (Johnson, 2024).

Stöterau et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis of vocational training interventions in Germany, found that apprenticeship-based work-based learning significantly improved employment rates, earnings, and career mobility among young people. The study further established that workplace exposure develops problem-solving ability, adaptability, and professional confidence, findings that support those of Johnson (2024). Methodologically, the use of meta-analysis strengthened the reliability and generalizability of the findings by synthesizing evidence from multiple studies. However, the study was conducted in a developed economy with well-established apprenticeship systems, limiting its applicability to developing countries such as Kenya, where workplace learning opportunities are comparatively limited.

Using a mixed-methods approach, Majola (2024) found that structured work-based learning programmes in South Africa enhanced job placement, employability, and professional networking among TVET graduates. The findings are consistent with those of Stöterau et al. (2022), suggesting that workplace exposure facilitates labour market integration. Unlike the German study, however, Majola incorporated qualitative evidence, providing deeper insights into participants' experiences. Nevertheless, the study focused mainly on formal employment and post-secondary graduates, giving limited attention to rural youth and long-term economic participation through self-employment.

Onyiorah (2026) examined work-based learning among university students in Nigeria and reported that

workplace exposure enhanced self-employment intentions, problem-solving ability, and professional networking. These findings reinforce those of Majola (2024) regarding the contribution of experiential learning to economic participation. However, the study concentrated on university students rather than TVET trainees and was conducted in urban settings. Consequently, its findings may not adequately explain the experiences of vocational trainees in rural contexts where labour market opportunities and workplace learning structures differ significantly.

Herano (2024), in Ethiopia, established that participation in work-based learning improved youth employability, income generation, and economic resilience. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized positive outcomes, Herano demonstrated that programme quality, supervision, and access to placement opportunities significantly determine the effectiveness of workplace learning. This finding suggests that work-based learning alone may not improve youth economic participation unless supported by strong institutional arrangements. The study therefore extends Human Capital Theory by highlighting the importance of contextual factors in translating workplace experience into economic outcomes.

In Kenya, Mwangi (2024) found that participation in work-based learning improved entrepreneurial orientation, market awareness, and youth engagement in economic activities. These findings corroborate those reported by Herano (2024), indicating that workplace exposure enhances both employability and self-employment. However, Mwangi identified weak industry partnerships, limited placement opportunities, and inadequate supervision as major implementation challenges. Although the study provides important evidence within the Kenyan context, it was conducted in Nairobi County, where labour market dynamics differ considerably from those of predominantly rural counties such as Murang'a.

Similarly, Muchira et al. (2023) reported that TVET trainees who participated in work-based learning were more actively engaged in income-generating activities than those without workplace exposure. The findings agree with those of Mwangi (2024) and other international studies, reinforcing the argument that workplace learning promotes youth economic participation. Methodologically, however, the study

adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which limits conclusions regarding long-term effects. In addition, its urban orientation leaves uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of work-based learning in rural areas characterized by fewer industries and limited placement opportunities.

The reviewed studies demonstrate broad agreement that work-based learning positively influences youth economic participation through improved employability, entrepreneurial engagement, and income generation. However, they differ regarding the factors that determine its effectiveness, with some emphasizing workplace exposure itself and others highlighting the importance of program quality, institutional support, and industry partnerships. Methodological differences, including the use of meta-analysis, mixed methods, and cross-sectional surveys, further explain variations in findings. Despite the growing body of evidence, limited empirical research has examined the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation in rural sub-counties such as Kiharu, Murang'a County. This contextual and empirical gap informed the current study.

3.1 Methodology

The study adopted **convergent parallel design**, which enabled the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analyze them separately, and integrate the findings during interpretation (Zhou, 2026). This design was appropriate because it facilitated the examination of the relationship between variables in a study while capturing the experiences and perspectives of participants.

The quantitative component employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation at a single point in time (Levin, 2020). The study targeted 182,030 youth and 30 key informants in Kiharu Sub-County. Using simple random sampling for the youth and purposive sampling for key informants, a sample of 420 respondents comprising 399 youth and 21 key informants was selected. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to the youth. The instruments were adapted from previous TVET and youth employment studies and reviewed by experts to ensure content validity. A pilot study involving 42 respondents (10% of the sample) was conducted in Gatanga Sub-County. Reliability was

assessed using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable.

The qualitative component adopted a phenomenological approach to explore stakeholders' experiences and perceptions regarding the contribution of work-based learning to youth economic participation (Ary et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected TVET administrators, instructors, county government officials, and industry representatives. Trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023).

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee before data collection. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

3.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Sampling involves selecting a representative subset of the target population to generate findings that can be generalized to the entire population (Verma & Verma, 2020). This study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The study targeted **182,030 youth** and **30 key informants** involved in Technical and Vocational Education and Training program in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County. The sample size for the youth was determined using **Yamane's (1967) formula** at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, yielding a sample of **399 respondents**. In addition, **21 key informants** were selected from the target population of 30, resulting in a total sample size of **420 respondents**.

The study employed **simple random sampling** to select the 399 youth to ensure that each eligible respondent had an equal probability of inclusion in the study. **Purposive sampling** was employed to select the 21 key informants, comprising TVET administrators, instructors, county government officials, and industry representatives, based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation of work-based learning programs. The combination of the two sampling techniques ensured that both representative quantitative data and rich qualitative insights were obtained.

3.3 Data Collection and Procedures

Consistent with the convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently (Lardieri, 2020). Structured questionnaires were administered to the sampled youth to collect data on work-based learning experiences and youth economic participation. Semi-structured interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from purposively selected key informants regarding the implementation of work-based learning programs and their contribution to youth economic participation.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee, followed by a research permit from NACOSTI. Permission to access respondents was obtained from the Murang'a County Government and the management of the selected TVET institutions. The researcher conducted pre-visits to schedule appointments and familiarize respondents with the study.

Questionnaires were administered directly to the sampled youth, while face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and accorded equal priority to facilitate integration during interpretation.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately before integration, consistent with the convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were checked for completeness, coded, and entered into SPSS Version 30 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and perceptions of work-based learning.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. The transcripts were coded, similar responses were grouped into themes, and the emerging themes were interpreted in relation to the study objective.

Following separate analyses, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through triangulation to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation. The integrated findings enabled comparison of statistical results with participants' experiences, thereby enhancing the

credibility, validity, and overall richness of the study findings.

4.1 Findings, Interpretations and Discussions

The study assessed the influence of **work-based learning** on youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements relating to work-based learning, including the **number of**

internships, attachments, or apprenticeships completed; duration of practical work experience; relevance of work experience to acquired TVET skills; and supervisor feedback during work-based learning. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where **1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.** The findings are presented in **Table 1.**

Table 1: Response on Work-Based Learning

n=372

Statements	SD % F	D % F	N % F	A % F	SA % F	Mean	Std Dvt
Internship or apprenticeship programs have improved my work experience.	4.1 (15)	7.8 (29)	10.2 (38)	47.6 (177)	30.3 (113)	3.92	0.95
Work-based learning has enhanced my employability in the labor market.	4.6 (17)	8.6 (32)	11.0 (41)	46.5 (173)	29.3 (109)	3.87	0.98
Work-based learning opportunities in my area are limited and difficult to access.	26.9 (100)	31.2 (116)	17.5 (65)	16.4 (61)	8.0 (30)	2.48	1.18
I have acquired practical problem-solving skills through work-based learning.	3.8 (14)	7.5 (28)	10.8 (40)	48.1 (179)	29.8 (111)	3.92	0.94
The duration of my work-based learning experience was not sufficient to build practical skills.	27.4 (102)	30.9 (115)	16.7 (62)	16.1 (60)	8.9 (33)	2.47	1.21
Industry exposure has helped me understand workplace expectations.	4.3 (16)	8.1 (30)	11.3 (42)	47.0 (175)	29.3 (109)	3.88	0.96
Work-based learning has increased my confidence in handling professional tasks.	4.5 (17)	8.3 (31)	10.5 (39)	48.4 (180)	28.3 (105)	3.87	0.97
I struggle to connect classroom learning with workplace practice.	25.5 (95)	32.0 (119)	18.3 (68)	16.7 (62)	7.5 (28)	2.52	1.19
I am more likely to gain employment after participating in work-based learning.	4.1 (15)	7.8 (29)	10.8 (40)	48.1 (179)	29.2 (109)	3.89	0.95
Mentorship received during practical training has guided my career decisions.	4.4 (16)	8.6 (32)	11.0 (41)	46.8 (174)	29.2 (109)	3.88	0.96
Work-based learning has not significantly improved my chances of employment.	27.7 (103)	31.5 (117)	16.9 (63)	15.9 (59)	8.0 (30)	2.45	1.20
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.66	1.01

Source: Field Data (2026)

As shown in Table 1, the findings indicate that **work-based learning plays a significant role in enhancing youth economic participation** in Kiharu Sub-County. A majority of respondents, **177 (47.6%) agreed** and **113 (30.3%) strongly agreed**, that internship and apprenticeship programmes had improved their work experience. In contrast, **38 (10.2%) were neutral**, while **44 (11.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**, suggesting that although most youth benefit from

workplace exposure, a small proportion may have experienced limited or less meaningful placements. **K19** reinforced this finding, noting that *"students who go through attachments understand how work actually operates, unlike those who only rely on theory,"* implying that practical workplace exposure equips trainees with competencies required in the labour market. This finding supports Johnson (2024), who argues that internships and apprenticeships facilitate

the transition from training to employment by exposing learners to real workplace environments. Similarly, respondents acknowledged that work-based learning enhances employability. A combined **282 (75.8%) agreed or strongly agreed** that workplace learning had improved their employability, while **49 (13.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed** and **41 (11.0%) remained neutral**. These findings suggest that practical workplace experience enhances labour market readiness and increases the likelihood of securing employment. The findings corroborate those of Plasman and Thompson (2023), who observed that structured workplace learning improves employability by strengthening the alignment between acquired competencies and labour market requirements.

Regarding access to work-based learning opportunities, the findings reveal a different perspective. A majority of respondents, **216 (58.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed** that workplace learning opportunities were limited, whereas **91 (24.4%) agreed or strongly agreed**, and **65 (17.5%) remained neutral**. This suggests that although workplace learning opportunities are generally available, access may not be equitable for all trainees. The qualitative findings support this interpretation. **K12** observed that *"short attachments often limit meaningful skill acquisition, while longer exposure builds competence and confidence,"* indicating that the challenge is not only access but also the quality and duration of workplace exposure. These findings are consistent with Stöterau et al. (2022), who argue that the effectiveness of work-based learning depends on the strength of institutional partnerships and the availability of quality placement opportunities.

The study further established that work-based learning strengthens practical problem-solving skills. A majority, **179 (48.1%) agreed** and **111 (29.8%) strongly agreed**, that workplace learning had enhanced their problem-solving abilities, while only **42 (11.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**. This demonstrates that experiential learning enables trainees to apply theoretical knowledge to real workplace situations. Similar observations were made by Majola (2024), who found that workplace learning develops critical thinking and practical problem-solving skills that enhance youth productivity.

The adequacy of the duration of workplace learning was also examined. Most respondents, **217 (58.3%)**

disagreed or strongly disagreed that the duration of work-based learning was insufficient, while **93 (25.0%) agreed or strongly agreed**, suggesting that the majority considered the period of workplace exposure adequate. Nevertheless, the responses indicate that some trainees still require longer workplace engagement to maximize skills acquisition. This finding concurs with Onyiorah(2026), who emphasizes that the effectiveness of work-based learning depends on sufficient duration and structured workplace supervision.

Industry exposure also emerged as an important contributor to workplace readiness. A combined **284 (76.3%) agreed or strongly agreed** that industry exposure improved their understanding of workplace expectations, whereas **46 (12.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**. Supporting this finding, **K3** explained that *"when trainees are placed in environments related to their training, they easily transition into employment or self-employment,"* highlighting the importance of relevant workplace placement. This finding is consistent with Herano (2024), who established that workplace exposure enhances understanding of organizational culture, work ethics, and professional expectations.

Similarly, **285 respondents (76.7%) agreed or strongly agreed** that work-based learning had increased their confidence in handling professional tasks. Only **48 (12.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**, indicating that workplace experience strengthens self-confidence and preparedness for employment. Comparable findings were reported by Mwangi (2024), who found that workplace exposure improves confidence, adaptability, and readiness among TVET graduates entering the labour market.

The study further found that respondents generally rejected the assertion that they struggled to connect classroom learning with workplace practice. A majority, **214 (57.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed**, compared to **90 (24.2%) who agreed or strongly agreed**. These findings suggest that work-based learning effectively bridges the gap between theory and practice. Muchira et al. (2023) similarly observed that strong collaboration between training institutions and industry enhances the application of classroom knowledge in workplace settings.

Employment prospects after workplace learning were also perceived positively. A total of **288 respondents**

(77.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that participation in work-based learning increased their chances of gaining employment, while only 44 (11.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 283 respondents (76.0%) acknowledged that mentorship received during workplace learning positively influenced their career decisions. K19 emphasized that *"constructive feedback helps trainees correct mistakes early and improves their professional behaviour,"* illustrating the critical role of workplace mentorship in career development. These findings support Johnson (2024) and Plasman and Thompson (2023), who argue that workplace mentorship enhances career readiness and facilitates successful transition into employment.

Respondents generally disagreed with the statement that work-based learning had not improved their employment opportunities. A majority, 220 (59.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 89 (23.9%) who agreed or strongly agreed, reinforcing the positive contribution of workplace learning to labour market participation.

Findings indicate that work-based learning positively influences youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County. Participation in internships, industrial attachments, and apprenticeships enhanced workplace experience, employability, practical problem-solving, workplace readiness, and employment prospects. However, disparities in the quality, duration, and accessibility of workplace placements suggest that the benefits of work-based learning are not uniformly realized among all youth.

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of work-based learning on youth economic participation in Kiharu Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya. The findings revealed that work-based learning significantly enhances youth economic participation by improving workplace experience, employability, practical problem-solving skills, workplace readiness, employment prospects, and career development. Participation in internships, industrial attachments, and apprenticeships enabled youth to apply classroom knowledge in real work environments, thereby facilitating their transition into employment and self-employment. However, disparities in the quality, duration, and accessibility of workplace learning

opportunities limited the extent to which some trainees benefited from these programmes.

The findings further demonstrated that relevant industry placements and constructive supervisor feedback strengthen skill acquisition and increase labour market readiness among TVET graduates. These findings affirm the relevance of Human Capital Theory, which views work-based learning as an investment in productive skills that enhances economic participation, and Entrepreneurship Theory, which emphasizes experiential learning as a foundation for opportunity recognition and enterprise development.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that TVET institutions strengthen partnerships with industry to expand access to quality internships, industrial attachments, and apprenticeship opportunities aligned with trainees' fields of study. Employers and workplace supervisors should provide structured mentorship and regular feedback to enhance practical skills development and workplace readiness. In addition, national and county governments should support work-based learning through policies that promote stronger industry–TVET collaboration and establish quality standards for workplace training to improve youth economic participation.

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