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## **The question of skills development for employability of early school leavers in central Uganda**

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### **Abstract**

Working with capability approach, the aim of the paper was to examine the proportion of early school leavers who obtained employment after skills development. Drawing from a cross section design, descriptive survey methods through questionnaires as a tool supported the quantitative study. In-depth interviews supported the qualitative study. Statistical packages of social sciences supported the analysis. In so doing, it was established that many of them were working, but the quality of employment was low as well as a narrow outcome of capability. This paper thus recommends a practical empowerment to cause social change, universalisation of central human capabilities, with cultural relativism which forms a human rights perspective to improved quality of life and national competitiveness.

**Keywords: skills development; employment; early school leaving**

### **1. Introduction**

Employment in Uganda is a critical concern (Ministry of Education and Sports MoES, 2011; National Development Plan NDP III, 2020-2025; Uganda Bureau of Statistics UBOS, 2016; Uganda labour Market Profile, 2016). Uganda envisioned addressing employment concern through the National Development Plan of 'Strengthening Uganda's Competitiveness for Sustainable Wealth Creation, Employment and Inclusive Growth' (NDP III, 2020-2025). The development strategy is modelled around international agenda such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015 (UN, 2015).

Uganda is however, lagging behind in terms of its progress towards achieving goal eight (decent work and economic growth) and goal four (ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning) of the sustainable development goals (UN, 2015). Despite the provision of skills, employment concerns are persistent. They manifest in form of time-related underemployment (17 percent), skills related (4 percent connoted as those below senior four) and 8 percent for wage-related or low pay (UBOS, 2016). The soaring paradox here is the youth unemployment rate (13.3 percent), which is slightly higher than the ILO regional average of 12.4 percent (ILO, 2014). More female young persons (36 percent) were more underutilised compared to the male (30 percent) between the ages of 15-29 (UBOS, 2016, p.39).

Research has attributed employment concerns to Early School leaving (ESLg) (Tukundane et al, 2015; Zeelen et al, 2010). Fifteen years on from the World Conference on education for all in Jomtien-Thailand; education for all policies supported by UNESCO (2000) started to result into some of the largest cohorts of early school leaving. Tukundane & Blaak (2010) posits that majority of them become passive citizens, unable to improve their own livelihoods and to make a positive contribution to the development of their communities. In agreement, Combat Poverty Agency (2001) insist that People leaving education without recognized qualifications and skills are at a disadvantage in the labour market, have their personal and social development curtailed and are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion in the labour market.

In Uganda, while the primary education system is supposed to provide the basic education and skills, the secondary education system is supposed to provide skills oriented instructions (UBOS, 2010). The reality is actually different as the education system has not been able to deliver the anticipated skills (MoES, 2012; UBOS, 2010). They leave without employable skills and suffer from marginalization in the labour market (Kanyandago et al.; 2015; Palmer, 2007; Uganda Labour Market Profile, 2016; Zeelen et al., 2010).

Marginalisation of ESLg is rising yet, some of the Sub-Saharan governments cannot provide employment opportunities and income generating opportunities for its populations. The dilemma that most SSA countries have with following education for all policies is that there is “no possibility of offering employment for all” (King, 1996, p.1; Palmer, 2007, p. 21). Uganda Labour Market Profile (2016) thus recommend Business, Technical Vocational Education and Training (BTVET)skills development programmes (SDPs) to marginalize youth as a result of inadequate skills for employment.

This research acknowledges previous research concerning employment of Early School Leaving (ESLs) in Uganda, but rarely focusing on employment of ESLs who enrolled for SDPs in central Uganda. The research thus questions how many male and female ESLs enrolled on SDPs obtained employment.

Scholars since the 1960s and 1970s, started analysing training in skills development for employment from the human capital theory perspective (Becker, 1962; 1964; Todaro, 1985). Human capital theory proponents focus on the instrumental and economic importance of education or training for employability and economic growth (Hiekkila, 2008). Human capital theorists suggest that education or training raises the productivity of the labour force by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising the labour force future income by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1964). However, this approach has been criticised for being “functionalistic” and “productivist” in nature (Fleischhauer, 2007; Livingstone, 1997; Sweet land, 1996). Consequently, Amartya Sen proposed the human capability approach which focuses on people’s well-being and entitlements through a broader interpretation of development.

Nussbaum (1993) supplements capability approach by introducing the central human capabilities. Although her contribution seem to be polemic to Sen’s, there seems to be similarities in terms of their core ideas of capability approach. Contradictions only occur in terms of arguments regarding capabilities, groundness of the theory and the concept of cultural relativism. These three major aspects in the Sen, and Nussbaum’s capability approach therefore separate their views in implementing the approach. This brings out the debate between the wife [Nussbaum] and the husband [Sen].

Gasper (1997) criticised Sen’s version of capability approach for not giving any particular capabilities that need to be owned by a person; but rather, only an optional framework of utility or commodity-focused welfare economics and moral philosophy. Nussbaum insisted that every citizen should be guaranteed or promised a social minimum security whereby these capabilities are available to them as other human life infrastructures. She insists that, religious, labor and government institutions have a role to ensure that these threshold levels of capabilities are achieved.

Consequently Maboloc (2008) supported Nussbaum’s version of capability approach because he felt that Nussbaum’s argument on capabilities would be beneficial to everyone regardless of their gender, social status or any other variables. DeMartino (2011) was in agreement with Nussbaum’s elaboration of capabilities based on neo-Aristotelian and Marxian perspective. He mentions that, capabilities have the ability to provide an intensive framework of what is a true human life and enabling citizens to receive a minimum secured life with important capabilities. Yet, Robeyns, (2003), on the other hand, argue that, Nussbaum’s well-defined “central human capabilities” and the list implemented through constitutions reflect that her approach is universalistic.

### **Theoretical considerations**

This paper transcends the neo-liberal approach of promoting a democratic liberalization to a broader, more humane interpretation of development. It introduces the individual’s quality of life by responding to calls by leading human development theorist such as Sen, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2004; Nussbaum, 1993, 2011; and other scholars (See for example, Blaak et al., 2013; collier, 2007; Tukundane, 2015; Van der veen & preece, 2005; Youngman, 2000). Beyond human capabilities, the paper, engaged learners with a focus on the quality of life which helped to analyse desirable skills development outcomes which can exceed not only preparing for the labour market, but also for empowering ESLs which has not been done by previous researchers.

Drawing from Sen (2004) capability approach, emphasis of applicability to this paper is on capabilities, functioning’s and agency of an individual. ‘Capabilities are the opportunities or choices that one values. Functioning’s are what one is able to do with the opportunities or the choices’ at his/her disposal. Agency is a person’s ability to pursue, and realize goals she/he values and has a reason to value (also in Robeyns, 2003, p. 100-103).

Capabilities are not ends in themselves, but together with associated freedoms, they are means to develop people's well-being and quality of life (Sen, 2004). This implies that, development is not only implemented by governments and development agencies, but also individuals can become agents of development (Sen, 2001). In development activities '... people have to be seen ... as being actively involved... given the opportunity... in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programmes' (Sen, 1999, p. 53). To Sen (2001) the value and/or worth of education, is in "reading, communicating, arguing, in being able to choose in a more informed way (p.294). We thus argue that, educators at that level would be challenged to become facilitators, empower learners through dialogues and critical thinking for the individual or collective national development. This emphasizes that educators play the role of facilitators which forms the basis of Freire's empowerment ideology.

As the world is constantly changing, education and training need to act in response to these changes within societies (Jarvis, 2006). Therefore, educators at this level should be challenged to act not only as facilitators, but also '...support learners to ...learn the subject and achieve their potential' (Jarvis, 2006, p. 25). This facilitation of knowledge moves education from the previous provision of 'static knowledge to a dialogical relationship (Freire, 2005, p.72), where knowledge is co-created' (Jarvis, 2006, p. 99).

Nussbaum (2011) introduction of the central human capabilities to be legalized with in a cultural relative perspectives is important for human flourishing and human dignity as a human right for all. This implies becoming citizens with entitlement to demand for skills and make the government accountable for the provision of skills.

## Methods

A cross-sectional design using a mixed method approach was employed to obtain an overall picture (Babbie, 1989, p. 89). A multi-level mixed method sampling technique was thus adopted with probability and purposive techniques used at different levels of research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a, p. 712).

At level 1: central Uganda and only government institutions were purposively selected for formal and non-formal skills programmes with information access and government funding. At level 2: stratified random sampling was used (Neuman, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 1990). With stratified sampling, the population was partitioned into non-overlapping groups called strata and a sample was selected using probability sampling within each stratum. The population was divided into sub-populations (strata) on the basis of supplementary information for each institution. In this research, the population was divided into two mutually exclusive categories depending on the type of skills (formal (level 1 and level 2) and non-formal). At level 3: when participants gathered in one room for the exercise, systematic random sampling (SRS) was employed to come up with the  $n$ th number (interval). That is total population of those in the room, divide by the sample size to determine the width of the interval. The first number of the first interval was selected ( $n$ th number), and the same order number would be selected from each subsequent interval. In some institutions, when the numbers were low compared to the sample, snow ball would be employed where one alumnus would lead us to another. The number of participants who received skills and graduated was obtained from the released results book of MoES & Directorate of Industrial Training (2016), verified and cross-checked at the institutions that offer skills development programmes.

Data sources were mainly primary and secondary. Primary data was collected directly from the six selected government institutions. Secondary data information was to: i) determine the institutes that offer SDPs and the kind of skills offered by the institutes; ii) to understand the ESLs that received skills for the population sample to be studied. Suitability of the data in the documents was analysed by scrutinizing the years of examination, government institutions, number of participants in the course and the type of SDPs offered. Table 1 shows the breakdown of quantitative sample size.

Table 1. Quantitative Sample Size for the Research

| Institutions         | Formal     |           |           |           | Non-formal |           |           |           |                |            |            |           |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|
|                      | Level 1    | (n)       | M         | F         | Level 2    | (n)       | M         | F         | Non-formal (n) | M          | F          |           |
| <b>Institution 1</b> | <b>06</b>  | <b>02</b> |           |           | <b>05</b>  | <b>02</b> |           |           | <b>36</b>      | <b>14</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary Services   |            |           | 01        |           |            |           | 01        | 01        |                |            | 11         |           |
|                      |            |           |           | 01        |            |           |           |           |                |            |            | 03        |
| <b>Institution 2</b> | <b>28</b>  | <b>11</b> |           |           | <b>12</b>  | <b>05</b> |           |           | <b>24</b>      | <b>09</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary Services   |            |           | 03        | 05        |            |           | 02        |           |                |            | 04         | 01        |
|                      |            |           | 02        | 01        |            |           |           | 03        |                |            |            | 04        |
| <b>Institution 3</b> | <b>18</b>  | <b>07</b> |           |           | <b>06</b>  | <b>02</b> |           |           | <b>99</b>      | <b>38</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary Services   |            |           | 07        |           |            |           | 02        |           |                |            | 22         | 11        |
|                      |            |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |                |            |            | 05        |
| <b>Institution 4</b> | <b>16</b>  | <b>06</b> |           |           | <b>20</b>  | <b>08</b> |           |           | <b>73</b>      | <b>28</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary Services   |            |           | 02        | 01        |            |           | 04        | 03        |                |            | 12         | 08        |
|                      |            |           | 01        | 02        |            |           | 01        |           |                |            |            | 08        |
| <b>Institution 5</b> | <b>00</b>  | <b>00</b> |           |           | <b>187</b> | <b>71</b> |           |           | <b>72</b>      | <b>27</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary            |            |           |           |           |            |           | 61        | 10        |                |            | 19         | 08        |
| <b>Institution 6</b> | <b>12</b>  | <b>05</b> |           |           | <b>00</b>  |           |           |           | <b>42</b>      | <b>16</b>  |            |           |
| Secondary Services   |            |           | 02        | 01        |            |           |           |           |                |            | 02         | 01        |
| Primary              |            |           |           | 02        |            |           |           |           |                |            | 09         | 04        |
| <b>Sub-total</b>     | <b>80</b>  | <b>31</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>346</b>     | <b>132</b> | <b>79</b>  | <b>53</b> |
| <b>Population(N)</b> | <b>656</b> |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |                |            |            |           |
| <b>Sub-sample</b>    | <b>119</b> |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |                |            | <b>132</b> |           |
| <b>Sample (n)</b>    | <b>251</b> |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |                |            |            |           |

A descriptive survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 251 SDPs graduates from the 6 government institutes. (10 male and 10 female were also interviewed to understand certain occurrences). The rationale and choice of usage of a “descriptive survey” is because it generalized findings in relation to frequency of particular attributes (Oppenheim, 1992, p.21). A descriptive survey also responded to the question of ‘how many?’ (Oppenheim, 1992, p.31) revealing what proportion of ESLs enrolled in SDPs obtained employment. Contacts of the SDPs graduates were obtained through; Mobile phone contacts, tutors, and snow ball. A descriptive survey was appropriate where we needed to scan a wide field of issues in order to measure or describe any generalized features (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Mwingi, 2008).

Data analysis was descriptive in nature. The reason was to provide general characteristics of the participants and to obtain answers to the research question of ‘how many’ were employed. In this research: for categorical variables; descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to describe and summarize the data. SPSS software aided the data analysis. Descriptive statistics provided simple summaries of the characteristics of the sample such as measures of central tendency, dispersion and variability (Smiley, 2011). However, they have a limitation of not showing the relationship among the variables and the influence that each variable may have on the response.

Analysis was done in relation to the total number of ESLs who enrolled in skills development programmes of cohort 2014. The reason for 2014 was because this was the available data/ or results released by MoES & DIT at the time of data collection for PhD thesis (August, 2018). Again, it would give the participants’ ample time to actually determine who was successful in finding employment and who was not successful after almost two and half years. This enabled us to make a generalized conclusion as regards to whether skills development programmes can help the ESLs to find employment.

Data quality control involved ensuring that the research was valid and reliable. Validity was ensured by making accurate interpretations from the test scores (Burke & Larry, 2004). The questionnaires were designed in such a way that they were measuring what they were set out to do (Kumar, 2005, p.159). This was through making a logic link between the objective of the research and the questions used in the instrument. Reliability on the other hand ensured the extent to which the instrument was without bias and therefore ensured consistent measurement across time and across the various items suggesting that the finding would be consistently the same if the research was done over again (Amin, 2005).

## Findings

This chapter reports results obtained during a descriptive survey conducted on SDPs graduates. The aim was to determine how many ESLs enrolled in SDPs obtained employment. Research data by means of questionnaires was collected from 251 SDPs graduates of formal and non-formal SDPs which represents (100 percent response of the target population). Names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of SDPs Graduates

|  |                    | Gender |         |        |         |
|--|--------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|  |                    | Male   |         | Female |         |
|  |                    | Freq   | Percent | Freq   | Percent |
| Age  | 18-20              | 29     | 17.9    | 14     | 15.7    |
|  | 21-23              | 36     | 22.2    | 28     | 31.5    |
|  | 24-26              | 41     | 25.3    | 20     | 22.5    |
|  | 27-30              | 56     | 34.6    | 27     | 30.3    |
| Marital status   | Single             | 111    | 68.5    | 52     | 58.4    |
|  | Married            | 51     | 31.5    | 35     | 39.3    |
|  | Widowed/widower    |        |         | 2      | 2.2     |
| Location   | Rural              | 97     | 59.9    | 68     | 76.4    |
|  | Urban              | 65     | 40.1    | 21     | 23.6    |
| Highest level of education before pursuing development programme | Incomplete primary | 4      | 2.5     | 2      | 2.2     |
|  | Primary seven      | 48     | 29.6    | 36     | 40.4    |
|  | 'O' level          | 110    | 67.9    | 51     | 57.3    |
| Skills programme   | Formal             | 81     | 51.3    | 37     | 41.6    |
|  | Non formal         | 77     | 48.7    | 52     | 58.4    |
| Who paid for your skills development programme?                  | Parent/guardian    | 101    | 62.3    | 45     | 50.6    |
|  | Government         | 50     | 30.9    | 36     | 40.4    |
|  | Self               | 9      | 5.6     |        |         |
|  | Spouse             | 2      | 1.2     | 8      | 9.0     |
| Which sector did you acquire skills in?                          | Primary            | 10     | 6.2     | 8      | 9.0     |
|  | Secondary          | 144    | 88.9    | 56     | 62.9    |
|  | Services           | 8      | 4.9     | 25     | 28.1    |

Access and participation of young people in formal education system in table 2; shows that a high number of young people are not fully benefitting. The research revealed that more male (68 percent) than female (57percent) completed senior four level of those who were involved in the questionnaire exercise. This meant that, all ESLs who enrolled for SDPs had inadequate skills to perform in the labour market given their level of education by UBOS (2016) definition. In contrast, more female than male dropped out of formal education after completing the primary school level, despite the government introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) 1997and Universal Secondary Education (USE) 2007 (MoES, 2014). Despite the government effort to deconstruct the gender subordinate position of women for not demanding education where poverty and economic pressures on households are increasing (Bennel, 1999): it is often but not said as always that; with limited household resources, it is unlikely that female members will be accorded high priority compared to male members (Kabeer, 1997).

Government efforts to provide universal education does not rule out the fact that the poor, especially female from rural families would be denied access in formal education because of fees attached (MoES, 2005; UBOS, 2016; UNESCO, 2012, 2013). Betty (F/21) explained that *I dropped out of school because I did not have scholastic materials such as books, and uniform* (rural Kyotera, 5/9/2017). The implication is that, lowering the costs or no costs attached where government does not provide scholastic materials would increase both female enrolment and retention in formal education and SDPs.

No costs attached reveals a higher level of female enrolment in non-formal (6.4 percent) in comparison to formal SDPs (table 2). A higher female enrolments (9.7 percent) gap in comparison to male in non-formal SDPs was also realized. This explains why more female (40 percent) than male (31 percent) were supported by the government in non-formal SDPs. In contrast, the reverse is true for formal SDPs with a (9.7 percent) gender gap because of fees attached. The field of studies and choices are diverse between genders. Regarding specialised fields, there were more specialization in secondary sector than other sectors but with notable gender disparities. More male were in secondary than female while more female were in services, than male, yet agriculture provided a balanced number of participants.

Statistics on marital status show that almost more than half of the young people were single (58 percent). There was a greater proportion of male (69 percent) than female (58percent) who were single. This could be attributed to young girls in rural areas were majority of them (76 percent) marry off at an early age compared to boys. That is why more female (8 percent gender gap) than male were married, yet 2.2 percent of female were widows. When we asked from interviews why female from rural areas marry early, Moses (M/22) answered that; *...because of culture, a girl at age 18, who is not in school, is as good as a marriage material for bride price, yet for boys, it is work* (Masaka, 7/9/2017). From this argument, this meant that, gender intersect with different axes of differentiation to create a cocktail of financial inequalities between girls and boys (UNDP, 1989). While this finding in line with literature tend to incline that girls are in reproductive work and boys in productive work creating a cycle of poverty for women, this research indicate that, even boys are concerned with reproductive work. Robert narrated his story that; *at age 20, any rural young man who is not in school should be married...he does most of the domestic work since he is not yet working and married to a much older woman because she provided a home* (M/24,Wakiso, 12/10/2017). The implication is that, even boys/men financial situation is not any better than girls/women if one is not in productive work. This points to a shift in policy thinking and design for both male and female employment after SDPs. After the demographics, we posed a question aimed at determining the proportion of male and female ESLs enrolled in SDPs who obtained employment (table 3).

**Table 3: Employment for Skills Development Programmes Graduates**

|  |                              | Skills programme      |                           |                       |                           |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
|  |                              | Male (n=114)          |                           | Female (n=68)         |                           |
|  |                              | Formal (n=55) percent | Non formal (n=59) percent | Formal (n=32) percent | Non formal (n=36) percent |
| Sector employed in   | Primary                      | 45.5                  | 49.2                      | 25.0                  | 30.6                      |
|  | Secondary                    | 32.7                  | 39.0                      | 34.4                  | 22.2                      |
|  | Services                     | 21.8                  | 11.9                      | 40.6                  | 47.2                      |
| Location of your employment  | Rural                        | 32.7                  | 55.9                      | 43.8                  | 58.3                      |
|  | Urban                        | 67.3                  | 44.1                      | 56.3                  | 41.7                      |
| How long did it take you to get employed?                            | Months                       | 51.9                  | 62.1                      | 62.5                  | 47.2                      |
|  | Years                        | 48.1                  | 37.9                      | 37.5                  | 52.8                      |
| Would you say you are.....salaried worker, self-employed or both     | Salaried                     | 72.7                  | 77.6                      | 75.0                  | 75.0                      |
|  | Self-employed                | 27.3                  | 22.4                      | 25.0                  | 25.0                      |
| If self-employed, what was the main source of your start-up capital? | Loan from Sacco/micro credit | 40.0                  | 50.0                      | 25.0                  | 50.0                      |
|  | Informal setting             | 6.7                   | 16.7                      |                       | 10.0                      |
|  | Spouse                       | 6.7                   | 8.3                       | 50.0                  | 30.0                      |
|  | Parent                       | 46.7                  | 8.3                       | 25.0                  | 10.0                      |
| Is your current employment full time or part time?                   | Others                       |                       | 16.7                      |                       |                           |
|  | Full time                    | 80.0                  | 82.5                      | 83.9                  | 69.4                      |
|  | Part time                    | 20.0                  | 17.5                      | 16.1                  | 30.6                      |

|  |                          |      |      |      |      |
|--|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| How much are you getting paid per day?                                       | Below 1.90 dollars a day | 45.5 | 53.4 | 28.1 | 52.8 |
|  | Above 1.90 dollars a day | 54.5 | 46.6 | 71.9 | 47.2 |
| Are you satisfied with your current employment?                              | Satisfied                | 20.0 | 15.5 | 12.5 | 25.0 |
|  | Not satisfied            | 80.0 | 84.5 | 87.5 | 75.0 |
| Is your current employment in line with the skills development you received? | Yes                      | 36.4 | 53.4 | 71.9 | 55.6 |
|  | No                       | 63.6 | 46.6 | 28.1 | 44.4 |

Drawing from table 3: majority (72.5 percent) of SDPs graduates found employment with male constituting the largest share (63 percent) while (37 percent) of their female counterparts were able to find employment. However, the quality of employment was low for most of them which can result into the majority of SDPs graduates and the country failing to make the most out of their economic potential.

Regarding sector level distribution of SDPs graduates in employment, I established that primary sector sometimes dubbed as agriculture accounted for the greatest share of employment (38 percent). The share of female employed in this sector was low (28 percent) compared to male (47.4 percent). It is noteworthy that, those who would not find employment in the skills sector developed, for some reason ended up finding employment in agriculture. Jonah (M/27) who studied secondary sector related skills employed in agriculture mentioned that; *you do not necessarily need skills to take care of animals as long as you have a 'doctor' [veterinary] on call for the farm...you only need to use experience from parents* (Kyotera, 8/9/2017). This explains why agriculture first of all takes up the largest share of employment because even when you have no skills in it, you can still work. Relatedly, Andrew (M/25) echoed to us that; *In the event of no social protection for young people, subsistence farming especially in rural areas become an option for survival* (Mpigi, 13/10/2017).

This explains why more male SDPs graduates who were not employed at the time of the survey had some sort of gardens for livelihood. When I added subsistence agriculture (24 percent, and 24 percent) in both formal and non-formal, it was noticed that, agriculture took the lion's share of employment in central Uganda. The sector with the second highest employment was secondary sector with more male in non-formal than those in formal programmes (6 percent) gap. There were more male (40 percent) than female (28 percent) employed in secondary sector. Services sector with the least male employment (17 percent) took the greatest share of female employment (44 percent). Others accounted for 1.3 percent in formal, and 2.4 percent in non-formal. Upscaling of secondary and services sector in central Uganda has amounted to increased employment up from 8 percent secondary and 32 percent services in 2015 in the entire country (UBOS, 2016).

Since the main purpose of the SDPs is to provide employable skills for the labour market (MoES, 2011; UNESCO, 2012), a bigger number of those who found employment suggests that, SDPs to some extent have been able to achieve the national target. There are however, so many reasons why one finds employment or not. The biggest challenge as mentioned by Nakamatte (F/26) of SDPs graduates was *lack of start-up capital especially when you have no collateral to get loans from micro-finances or commercial banks* (Kampala, 16/10/2017). For example, those who did not find employment, but had collateral opted for loans from Sacco's (45 percent male and 38 percent female). Sacco's or micro-finance thus formed the biggest share of start-up capital for self-employment.

Nakamatte (F/26), a graduate from SDPs synthesized her way to self-employment that;

I did not complete secondary education, started working as a house girl, but latter because of the government programme of non-formal SDPs, I went for hair dressing course of 3 months. After that, I worked in a saloon but payment was very low. My employer suggested that, I still had to learn more skills in hair plaiting and weaving so I was paid less than other workers. After sometime, I realized that I had mastered the skills. I got a loan from a Sacco and started my own saloon in town(Kampala, 16/10/2017).

Noah (M/26), a graduate from SDPs also narrated that;

I completed senior four, then worked in a night club as a guard for four years...I saved some money and sponsored myself in a formal SDP of catering. After SDP, I went back to the night club as a chef this time during the day, but also opened up a road side chapatti store in the night in Mengo market. I saved some money for some time, put it together, and added some money from a microfinance using my mother's land title and I opened up my own restaurant (Kampala, 17/10/2017).

What is clear for both the narratives is that, as long as you leave school early, you will have to find yourself in informal sector, yet income is inadequate and such employment is insecure (UBOS, 2012; UNESCO,2012, Tukundane et al., 2015; Zeelen et al.,2010). What is worrying however, is the continued work in informal sector after SDPs. From those two narratives, what is important for these SDPs is to have start-up capital to begin your own enterprise. However, without collateral for one to access a loan from a micro-finance, the dream of owning business is far- fetched.

The social economic background forged a way out for start-up capital of some workers in formal skills related programmes. For example; parents (28 percent for male and 18 percent for female). Spouses (40 percent) for female and 8 percent for male. Voices such as the one of Gorret (F/26) Mpigi, 17/9/2017 that; *my man paid my fees and latter started a business for me as start-up capital* were very common among the female participants. It is also interesting to note that, some male were supported by the spouses especially for non-formal employment. Nicholas (M/27) explained that; *My 'baby' paid my 3 months course to acquire knowledge in computer skills so that I can manage the accounts of her business* (Kampala, 20/10/2017). This depicted the unsaid management of finances, and working together for the development of 'themselves' and the household.

As much as some of the SDPs graduates are self-employed, the status of employment showed that nearly three quarters of employment among the SDPs graduates are salaried workers, with an equal proportion (75 percent) of male and female in employment. Most of those in salaried work felt that they were in low quality employment manifesting in form of labour underutilization.

Labour underutilization was experienced at three levels: i) labour slack (including those unemployed, time related under employment; ii) skills related; and iii) wage related inadequate employment. Time-related under employment is where the actual hours worked, is insufficient in relation to an alternative employment situation in which the person is willing to work and available to engage (16<sup>th</sup> international conference of labour statisticians, 1998).

Unemployed labour was about 27.5 percent. As much as agriculture took the greatest share of employment, it also took the greatest share of labour underutilization. This was experienced especially with subsistence agriculture (24 percent). Time related under employment was 18 percent formal and 24 percent non-formal. Although high, this indicator only measured problems related to insufficient volume of work, but does not capture the problems related to the type of work one actually performs. Skills related labour underutilization was obtained from interview responses. Voices such as *I studied catering but now, am a waitress* (Joan, F/21, Mpigi, 29/9/2017); *I am a carpenter but now a receptionist because of limited skills to perform* (Mukisa, M/30, Wakiso, 10/10/2017). This gave an insight that, as much as the findings indicate that more SDPs are employed, there is a lot of skills labour underutilization. As noted in demographics, it is clear that, at the time of enrolment at SDPs, they were all in skills related underutilization given the UBOS (2016) definition. Wage related inadequate employment was 37 percent formal, and 53 percent non-formal. It was clear that, a less gender gap margin (0.6 percent) of female are less paid in contrast to their male counterparts of non-formal wage employment. A significant gender gap margin (18 percent) more female are less paid in comparison to their male counterparts in formal employment. One simple reason as to why this happens was given to us by Nalumansi (F/25), a graduate of SDPs who echoed that; *we do not have adequate skills for modern machines...no formal contracts and very minimal bargaining power for pay...if you ask for a contract, they will hire someone else who does not need it* (Kampala, 23/10/2017).

Relatedly, the BTVET Commissioner had this to say; *SDPs graduates have no standardized salary and so their payment in a negotiation between the employer and the employee* (Kampala, 13/11/2017).

Most of the labour underutilization was in rural areas where employment is related to vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment is characterised by inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult condition of work that undermine workers fundamental rights (UBOS, 2016).

This is explained by more non-formal programmes skills related (53.4 percent male, and 52.8 percent female) being poorly paid below \$ 1.90 a day compared to formal programmes related skills (45.5 percent male and 28.1 percent female). On the other hand however, investing in SDPs with more time duration of 3 years and above in formal programmes to master more skills bring a clear pay off in terms of higher wage potential in comparison to non-formal programmes with an average of three months. That is why more male (55 percent) and female (72 percent) in formal programmes are paid above the world bank poverty line (2.50 dollars a day) compared to those in non-formal programmes.

Despite (the 18 percent) satisfaction of SDPs graduates about their employment, majority (82 percent) claim dissatisfaction of their current employment. More male (82.3 percent) than female (81.3 percent) were less satisfied with their jobs. Reasons for dissatisfaction from interviews were largely labor underutilization manifesting in form of time related underemployment, wage related inadequate employment, low pay especially in non-formal, skills related, insecure work and precarious conditions especially in the nights for those in hotels, night clubs, stone quarries factories, agriculture sector-horticulture firms, animal firms and no formal contracts attached for most of the employees which violates their human rights.

### **Discussions and Concluding Thoughts**

From the theoretical considerations, a broad interpretation of development emerges, which points to a narrow outcome of skills development beyond human capital. While education is considered as a means to development (UNESCO, 2012); a focus on formal education system, does not seem to have desired outcomes. In sub-Saharan Africa, many children are excluded from quality education and Uganda is no exceptional (Blaak et al., 2013). Despite the striking levels of enrolment, completion rates remain low and many leave without skills for employment (Al-Samerrai & Benell, 2003; Lewin, 2009; Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; MoES, 2012a ; Palmer, 2007; Tukundane et al., 2015; Zeelen et al., 2010). Consequently, marginalisation is experienced at both formal education and the labour market. In such a dilemma, Uganda offers alternative SDPs in both formal and non-formal SDPs. Despite the present labour underutilization of formal and non-formal SDPs education in Uganda, the two cases described in this research illustrate the great potential of SDPs contributing to magnalised youth's life.

The vast majority of the SDPs graduates were employed. Findings in central Uganda revealed nearly three quarters (72.5 percent) of the SDPs graduates working compared to (85 percent) of SDPs in 2015 who were working in entire Uganda (UBOS, 2016). The findings reinforce the assertion by (Blaak et al., 2013; Tukundane et al., 2015) that SDPs can increase the chances of entering into the labour market and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, the main purpose of the SDPs is to provide skills for employment (BTVET, 2012; MoES, 2011; UNESCO, 2012, Middleton, 1991). The anticipation by BTVET strategic plan and/ or policy (2012), that those who go through SDPs would find employment or self-employment is coming to fruition in central Uganda. A bigger number of those who found employment suggest that, the national target may be achieved in the nearby future. Overall, participant's response indicate that participation in SDPs can prepare someone to become financially independent especially for self-employment. However, whether SDPs currently contribute to outcomes beyond human capability is questionable.

Human capability came out of the theoretical exploration as potential outcomes of education; the reality of formal and non-formal SDPs seem to reflect a narrower outcome. Empowerment capabilities are narrower as well given their limited bargaining power, especially for contracts and pay as confirmed by the BTVET commissioner.

It should be stated however, even in this narrow perspective, the quality of employment was low for most of them, which results in majority of the young people and the country failing to make the most of their economic, political and societal potential (Elder & Koné, 2014; ILO, 2014). The mere fact that majority of the SDPs are employed does not necessarily mean that they are living a life that they value (Sen, 1999). The implication is that, most of them might not even meet even their basic needs of life which limits them from achieving of not only human development (Sen, 2004), but also human flourishing and human rights (Nussbaum, 2001). They might also fail to become active citizens, able to exercise their fundamental freedoms, rights and dignity (Kirumira & Bateganya, 2003; United Nations, 1989; Van der Veen & Preece, 2005).

It is noteworthy that, labour underutilization is still persistent in central Uganda as posed by earlier studies (UBOS, 2016). Most of the labour underutilization is experienced in rural areas where employment is

considered vulnerable (Action Aid et al., 2012; UBOS, 2014, 2016; UNESCO, 2012), yet non-formal skills related employment is highest in rural especially in agriculture. The high shares of vulnerability is worrying given that; research shows only 18 percent male, and 19 percent female, who arrived at satisfactory employment, slightly lower than 20 percent (UBOS, 2016) research. This dissatisfaction reveals a one percent gender differential of more male, than female being less satisfied with their employment. If this trend continues, majority (82 percent) of SDPs graduates will remain in that category for a long time, and are unlikely to subsequently attain satisfactory employment. Low pay was very common among those who were employed. A gender differential (5 percent) of more female were less paid than male. This explains why more women of those living in poverty are female (UNDP, 1989). Such people are below the poverty line meaning that, they are income poor and may not even meet their most basic needs.

From Sen's perspective of human capabilities and functions, employment is not only supposed to bring monetary remuneration, but also social cohesion, self-respect, and identity (World Bank, 2012). It is rather questionable if the formal and non-formal SDPs have been able to benefit the SDPs graduates at an individual level, households and the society at large since majority of the participants are not satisfied with their current employment. In the medium term, we will, unfortunately, continue to see SDPs graduates working, but dissatisfied and could easily be co-opted into violence. What is feasible in Uganda is to invoke policy makers to design and implement policies in support of start-up capital (ILO, 1998), for self-employment leading to employment satisfaction.

Unemployment in central Uganda was slightly higher among SDPs graduates (27.5 percent) compared to (10 percent) SDPs graduates in the entire Uganda (UBOS, 2016), and 13.3 percent youth regional average unemployment (ILO, 2014). Although the unemployment rate was higher among the SDPs, the survey results indicate that; investing in SDPs especially in longer term duration of 3 years compared to non-formal programmes results into positive returns to the young people in form of wages. Nussbaum's views since 1993 to 2011 are very critical for this research especially the universalization of central human capabilities, cultural relativism which forms a human rights perspective.

Formal and non-formal SDPs manages to reach out to the educationally marginalised people through paying their fees (table 2). Besides this, formal and non-formal education seem to meet the standards required to contribute to development. However, the two cases point to weaknesses in low enrolments of female, although Uganda has taken various steps aimed at reducing the gender gap in the SDPs (no fees for non-formal). The enrolment levels of male is more than female by 29 percent in central Uganda. Data sets from UBOS (2016), seem to suggest a low gender gap of more male than female at 0.4 percent. Whereas this may be true, the circumstances in central Uganda seem to suggest a bigger gender gap. The question is under what circumstances or sectors do we see female enrolment being low or reverse? we notice in this research that male 'traditional dominated' sectors such as secondary sector registered the biggest number of male, yet the female 'dominated' sectors such as services registered quite a high number of female in SDPs in central Uganda. Female are usually interested in SDPs that meet their own immediate practical gender needs as opposed to longer term, strategic gender needs that directly tackle the basic underlying causes of female subordination (Moser, 1989). As a result, most of the SDPs that female students choose or have been advised to do are closely related to gender-stereotyped tasks, and occupations. In this research, it is noted that, the SDPs selected for women is itself part of the deeply-seated, culturally sanctioned forms of gender inequality. Moreover, Women's choices of SDPs reflect expectations of employment opportunities. It is clear, however, that over the recent years, there has been a tendency to reinforce 'traditional' female gender roles as opportunities in many male-dominated jobs in manufacturing [secondary] has declined (Rubery, 1998). This therefore calls for a gender balance through the deconstruction of the cultural beliefs that constraint female access to male dominated courses, and the reverse is true. This would thus compliment the universalization of the central human capabilities for human flourishing and human dignity as a human right with in a cultural relativism perspective (Nussbaum, 2011), as supported by (DeMartino, 2011; Maboloc, 2008; Robeyns, 2003).

These responses from participants, incite to think that SDPs in the development context should contribute to a more practical idea of empowerment. Both technical skills and soft skills especially empowerment would contribute to personal quality of life (Freire, 2005; Jarvis, 2006). Empowerment skills could include; knowledge, values and attitudes to make decisions, that directly enables him and or her to take control of his or her life.

This kind of empowerment thus manifests through individual and collective agency in which a group, or the individual is able, at their own will, take action towards national development. This is also informed

from Sen's (2001), political freedom, security and transparency freedoms for development to occur. Such people would be empowered to influence policy makers, thereby influencing higher levels of social change (Sen, 2001). While keeping in mind this social change, SDPs should not lose focus of the local needs of the participants, the wider context; national and international economic, social and political structures.

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