



Achieving Peace and Development in Post - conflict sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) through the Access and Participation of Girls and Women in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

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ABSTRACT: This is a desk review-based paper intended to incite debate within education and related fields, regarding the stance that girls and women who participate in TVET are likely to increase their chances of contributing to peace and development in post-conflict societies. Peace and development are inextricably intertwined. TVET plays an important role in the development of any nation, so its role in peace building and conflict prevention in the community can hardly be contested. On this account, the paper argues in support of the ‘notion of educating for a culture of peace through refocusing technical and vocational education and training’ programmes for the sustainable economic development of SSA; and calls on TVET institutions to do a reality check on their programmes to ensure that they are capable of delivering for girls and women the skills they need to integrate themselves in the community, and make a difference. This is important because the TVET of girls and women is essential, not only for girls and women to attain gender equality (a laudable and achievable goal!); but beyond that, to become leaders of, and contributors to, peaceful change in their countries and local communities. It is hoped that at the end of it all, this paper would have succeeded in stoking a debate on this important but often underdiscussed subject – and in the process the TVET of girls and women would have been accorded its rightful place in policy discussions in the region, and by extension, other regions of the world. The TVET system envisaged in this paper is that which is well- designed, managed and funded. This is because a poorly- designed, managed and funded TVET system should not be expected to have the same impact on its graduates and their communities. The paper’s theoretical underpinnings are derived, to varying extents, from the Social Learning Theory, the Human Capital Theory, the Sustainable Development theory and the Capability Approach.

KEYWORDS: Access and Participation; Girls and women; Peace and Development; Post-Conflict; Sub-Saharan Africa; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

INTRODUCTION

The extent of development of any society can be measured by the level of scientific, technical and vocational capacity of its workforce 1. Research evidence has long shown ‘that knowledge and skills in science, technology and vocational subjects is not only important for the satisfactory standards of living and welfare of individuals, but it is also vital for the development of any society or nation’ 1. According to Okorie and Ezeji 2 the ‘acquisition of the requisite skills is a means of increasing the productive power of a nation’ (p. 107), and those who possess these skills are considered as useful members of the society, perhaps, because they have the ability to improve themselves Okoye and Arimonu, 3 and impacting their communities. And those who do not possess these skills ‘may out of desperation become ... criminals’ (p.111) 2, or from the perspective of this paper, easily drawn into any on-going conflicts. And conflicts of any type, ‘are a great challenge for any country’s development: they do not only result in lost lives, physical and psychological injuries and substantial damages of infrastructure; they also compromise development efforts and worsen poverty’ (p. 1). 44

Available literature has shown that ‘peace and development are inextricably intertwined’ 55 (p. 2, citing UNDP, 1994), and require the participation of all to achieve it. Girls and women are an important human resource of any society hence ‘their active and full participation in ... [Technical and Vocational and Education and Training] and related jobs and careers is a necessity if ... [SSA] societies, nations and regions are to achieve fast, appropriate and relevant development [and peace] in the 21st century’ (p. 3). 1



The researchers who have examined the role of girls and women in a country's development generally agree that TVET can empower girls and women with skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to make meaningful contributions to the development of their communities. 66789 However, how the girls and women actually do contribute to peace in their communities as TVET graduates appears not to be a subject that has often been discussed in scientific literature. According to Lwamba et al. 6, there is a gap in 'evidence related to gender-specific and transformative interventions focusing ... on the active role of women in peacebuilding' (p. 3); in spite of the fact that women have been acknowledged as key actors in 'peace negotiations, peace-building, ... and in post-conflict reconstruction', with calls for 'their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace...' 10 (see also the Security Council Resolution 1325).

Nevertheless, a systematic review conducted by Lwamba et al. 6 to 'assess the effects of gender-specific and transformative interventions on women's empowerment and gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations (FCAS) ... and their contribution to building peaceful and inclusive societies' had demonstrated, through the theory of change, how TVET may improve gender equality, women's empowerment and peace outcomes. While Lwamba et al. 6 have shown the relationship between TVET, women empowerment and peace outcomes it appears a gap exists in the scientific literature, generally, relating to how girls and women with TVET exposure specifically influence peace building in their communities. This desk-review paper will attempt to fill this gap by highlighting the special role that girls and women who benefited from TVET could play in their communities. The paper will employ the social learning theory, the human capital theory and the sustainable and human capability theory to argue and explain what I consider as the pathways through which girls and women with TVET skills, knowledge, values and attitudes can impact the peace and development of their communities.

The goal of this paper is, therefore, to demonstrate that girls and women who participate in TVET programmes could increase their chances of not only helping themselves, but can also contribute to sustainable peace and development especially in SSA nations just emerging from conflicts. The expectation is that this will incite debate within education and related fields, including policy and practice, on the role that TVET, overall, can play in peace and development, and the place of girls and women thereof. This could help to put the TVET of girls and women at the forefront of policy discussions, and provide a boost to the chequered public image of TVET in SSA.

As indicated previously, multiple theories will be employed in this paper to help with the understanding of the above postulation. The first theory to be looked at is the social learning theory. This theory holds that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling [imitation] ... [that is,] from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" 1111 (para. 1, quotes Bandura, 1977, p. 22). According to Culatta, 11 'individuals are likely to adopt a modeled behaviour if it results in outcome they value' (para. 5), and 'if the model is similar to the observer and has admired status and the behaviour has functional value.' This could mean that, through 'observation and 'modelling', members of a community could admire the skill and knowledge acquired by girls and women through TVET which could help promote brotherhood among community members, and likely lead to peaceful coexistence, and the socio-economic development of the community.

The next theory to be considered is the human capital theory. Although the theory has often been criticised for emphasising skills for economic growth, nevertheless, it remains pertinent to this work, as it illuminates our understanding of the relationship between skills and development – a key preoccupation of the TVET field. The theory has been used to understand the interplay between skills, personal achievement and economic growth, and 'suggests that education and training are investments that make individuals genuinely more productive' and '[i]ndividuals who are more productive will ... also have higher earnings and be more employable' (p. 255) 12;1212 with improved image and self-confidence. 8 As a 'dominant paradigm in the economics of education' (p. 255) 1212, and an approach generally 'adopted by global financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the ILO and by national governments ...' (p. 2) 13, the theory occupies an important place in understanding the contribution of TVET to society; hence, the theory could also help throw light on how the skills and knowledge acquired by girls and women could lead to peace and development in the society.

As Tikly 13 (p. 2, citing World Bank, 2011; DfID, 2008), points out '[t]he central rationale for investing in education including TVET within a human capital framework ... lies in the contribution that different kinds of skills can make to economic growth.' According to Carneiro, Dearden and Vignoles 12, '[t]he private economic return to investing in education or training, that is, the gain to the individuals, can ... be measured by the net gain in lifetime earnings accruing as a result of their investment in



education or training (p. 255). However, it should be noted that the whole idea of skills acquisition should not be solely about economic growth; a notion which brings to the picture the contributions of the sustainable development and capability approaches in understanding the concept of skills acquisition in the TVET sector.

The sustainable development and capability approaches have criticised the acquisition of skills for the sole purpose of economic growth - a key aspect of the human capital theory - and stressed on individuals' effective opportunities to undertake actions and activities that they have reason to value, and be the person that they have reason to want to be. 13 Within the context of TVET provision, the above stance could mean that, in addition to the acquisition of skills, values, behaviours and knowledge which offer the opportunity for individuals to contribute to personal and economic growth, some people might enjoy the training they have acquired merely for the intrinsic values and satisfaction that they derive from it; and not to search for work – and this could still bring them happiness and make them feel like useful members of their communities; which could lead to the preservation of peace in that community.

On the other hand, they may choose to offer their skills voluntarily for non-remunerated roles, and still derive value and satisfaction in doing so – a choice which could still have a concomitant effect on peace building, since such an offer of service could be appreciated by members of the community, which could help promote conviviality amongst members, and serve as a foundation for development and peace building. Still within the same context of the capability approaches, it could be argued that even if those who leave TVET programmes were to fail to pick up jobs immediately 'given the very narrow [TVET] industrial base in most of the African countries, [and the] ... relatively few [TVET]-based jobs and careers than would be expected in an industrialised society ... learners [should be] assisted to realise the importance of [TVET] not only as a means to a job, but more so as a way of thinking, a way of understanding the world around us, and hence a way of life (p. 3). 1

Perhaps it is within the above context that the exponents of the sustainable development and human capability approaches criticised the exponents of the human capital theory for failing 'to see education and skills as a good in themselves' and preferring 'to see them as an objective factor in production' (p. 7). 13 They, nevertheless, agreed that 'economic growth is important' but argued that 'it is not an end in itself and human centred development needs to be conceptualised more holistically than simply in terms of increases in GDP figures and in a way that incorporates environmental, social and cultural factors' (p. 7). 13 The consideration of 'the environmental, social or cultural dimensions of skills' (p. 7) 13 in the TVET field is significant, not just because of 'the role of skills to support economic, social and environmental sustainability' (p. 7) 13, but because, in all TVET contexts, those who acquire skills and knowledge, including girls and women, can only practice their professions in communities where the role played by these factors cannot be overstated, especially their assumed impact on peace, or its absence. This emphasises the role of the community in the application of skills and knowledge acquired through TVET.

Having adumbrated on the theories that will guide the arguments put forward in this paper, the definition of peace and development comes next. According to Royce (p.103) 14, '[p]eace is a condition in which individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or nations experience low levels of violence and engage in mutually harmonious relationships.' On the other hand, development is 'a process that creates growth, progress, [and] positive change ...' (p. 90, citing sid-israel.org). 15 Further citing sid-israel.org, Moga et al. 15 point out that development has as purpose the increase in the 'level and quality of life of the population, and the creation ... [of] employment opportunities ...' 15 It has been agreed that 'peace and development are inextricably intertwined' 5 (p. 2, citing UNDP, 1994); and that '... peace enables development ...' while 'conflict or violence disrupts [it]' (p. 13). 5

TVET AS EDUCATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AND MEANS OF ENHANCING PEACE BUILDING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS IN GIRLS AND WOMEN TRAINEES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

According to Cardozo et al. 1616, 'vocational education that seeks to enhance the livelihood and economic prospects of young people has a key role to play in addressing the drivers of youth alienation and promoting their active participation in peacebuilding processes' (p. 4). Within the context of the above stance this paper recognises TVET 'as a form of peace education initiative' (Abstract) 17, and as an agent of social cohesion; and argues in support of the 'notion of educating for a culture of peace through refocusing technical and vocational education and training program' (Abstract) 17, for the sustainable economic development of SSA countries. According to UNESCO 18, TVET '... serves as a vehicle for meaningful engagement and peace-



building, while improving economic means and livelihoods through relevant skills education and training for workforce and entrepreneurial opportunities' (p. 4); and 'the interconnectedness of peace ... and development... 5 (p. 13, citing UNDP, 1994) makes it even more so - a connection which Kuwali argues 'can hardly be questioned' 5.

For the girls and women who participate in TVET to graduate with the social and technical competencies they need to succeed in the world of work, TVET providers and practitioners must take advantage of the embedded 'education for peace' elements which constitute the core of TVET offerings; and to emphasise core 'democratic principles' in its instructional strategy. This can be achieved by encouraging trainees to think critically, 13192 '[preparing them] for sustainable livelihood' and the 'development of an ethic of social responsibility' (see Tikly 13, p. 9), encouraging them to 'practice respect, empathy, understanding and mutual appreciation' (para. 8) 19; engaging in active listening 19; and emphasising the need for trainees to understand conflict and to work in a friendly and peaceful atmosphere in workshops and laboratories.

Also, such policies as engaging trainees in practical sessions out of the school environment to the real world, in communities, where they work on real projects such as during work placements '... also serve ... as an important means of building social networks' (p.193) 20; and enhance trainees 'knowledge of community mechanisms' especially in the area of 'building peace and resolution of conflicts.' This further creates in the trainees an 'understanding [of] the interdependence between individuals and societies' 21 (p. 65, citing Susan, 1999), which leads to '[p]eace and stability [which] are foundational to social progress' (para. 2). 19 Judging from the enormous responsibilities bestowed on TVET as articulated above, it is logical to say that TVET cannot fail to deliver for its adherents the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes or with relevant work behaviours that can help them succeed in the world of work.

Therefore, when 'some groups including girls [and women fail to] have ... equal access to TVET opportunities ... [t]his may ... impact on economic growth ... because a potentially highly productive sector of the workforce is not being adequately developed' (p. 7). 13 Looking from the perspective of the sustainable development approach, Tikly 13 emphasised that the above argument 'is more than simply about the negative implications for productivity. ... [rather] [t]he denial of equal opportunities to participate in TVET also impacts on the ability of women to maintain independent and sustainable livelihoods' (p. 7). The author maintains that the 'issues of poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation from opportunities to develop skills should not simply be seen ... as an obstacle to growth but normatively, in terms of the rights and entitlements that are being denied through lack of equal access to quality vocational education and training' (p. 7).

GIRLS AND WOMEN'S ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN TVET AND CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A study conducted by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and cited in Kimotho (para. 11 & 12) 22, have found that the 'empowerment of women as well as equipping them with new vocational skills brought both intrinsic and extrinsic values, increased capacity and self-worth for the beneficiaries.' According to the study, which 'successfully reached hundreds of girls and women in ... four targeted countries: Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia' (para. 11) 2222, '[t]he once disadvantaged and despondent girls and women were found to feel capable of serving society and contributing to their socio-economic emancipation as well as participating effectively in their countries' development' (para. 12). 22

The overwhelming catchphrase of each of the trainees who benefitted from the project 'was that what men can do, women can also do. This trickled into their communities where attitudes and former stereotypes began to change, and the trainees as well as community members had gained confidence in their skills' (p. 11). 23 Hence, by admiring the skills and knowledge girls and women have acquired through TVET community members, including relatives, friends or neighbours might be dissuaded from engaging in violent acts 24, and instead seek to be like the trainees. Furthermore, by observing girls and women perform tasks that were once reserved for boys and men (in the case of a FAWE and DANIDA study), this has 'opened [community members'] comprehension to previous gender roles' (p. 20). 23 According to the authors, when an employed girl who went through a TVET intervention project 'climbs to the roofs and up telephone poles' to connect 'a house to cable' 'most customers are astounded that a woman is doing the work' (p. 20).

It can be argued that because of 'the visibility of graduates performing trades using the skills learnt' (p. 20), they could serve as a source of inspiration and consequently attract support from community members, which could help strengthen dialogue



by helping community members ‘engage in mutually harmonious relationships’, when for instance, other members of the community enrol into similar programmes, leading to peaceful coexistence. To this end, FAWE and DANIDA 23 note that ‘[a]t the community level, village leaders, elders, and religious leaders have ... supported the women and their capacity to work in these fields [i.e. TVET trades] ...’ (p. 20). Furthermore, FAWE and DANIDA note that ‘...although there was initial hesitation by students, parents, and community members, [regarding the TVET project] females were fundamentally accepted into their skills training and proud to work at jobs that society had not previously accepted’²³ (p. 20). All these actions can be presumed to occur through the process of social learning. ‘Without requisite education and training, they [girls and women in conflict zones] fail to earn a livelihood and contribute to the labor market.... [hence], TVET can have a tremendous positive impact on’ (p. 8) ²³ conflict-affected countries in SSA.

Few people would doubt the ability of the TVET system in helping a country to achieve economic growth ²⁵, through the recognition of the critical manpower that it trains and the lives that it positively impacts. This has further been buttressed by the testimonies given by trainees who participated in a TVET intervention project meant

to provide out-of-school girls in countries that were just emerging from conflict the opportunity to acquire technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills in order to increase their education, economic empowerment, and prospects for employment in the formal or informal sectors (p. 1) ²⁶.

The testimonies revealed a broad range of benefits that the girls (trainees) derived from the TVET project and the impact it has on the community. For example, the trainees stated that their lives have improved, as they are now independent and can make decisions of their own; they are able to augment their family income; and are able to think as competent persons in their various trades which included masonry, mechanics, electricity and electronics (hitherto male dominated fields). They also said they can now offer their services to their communities and be appreciated. The girls and women equally think that the skills and knowledge they have acquired have given them confidence - something they have lacked prior to enrolling on the programme; and their peers and families now have high regard for them in the community.

Furthermore, the girls thought that the skills they have acquired from the TVET project have ‘opened doors for [them] to help others’ (p. 34) ²⁶ (sometimes for no charge, thus aligning with the expectations of the sustainable development and human capability approaches proponents, who see skills as good in themselves and not necessarily for work, or perhaps to seek paid employment). The trainees said the skills have also empowered them to act as role models in their communities – whereby they are admired by neighbours who wished they too would have had the same opportunities, leading some to make enquiries about the opportunities. This appears to be a case of modelling of behaviours from ‘significant others’ – the girls and women with TVET skills.

Looking through the lens of the social learning theory, therefore, when girls and women make enquiries about vocational training opportunities, or are motivated to acquire vocational skills, as indicated above, they are essentially adopting a modelled behaviour which has resulted from an outcome that they have admired – like having seen the benefits that their peers who have successfully acquired TVET skills are enjoying - such as using their skills and knowledge to help themselves and their communities. These sorts of modelling behaviours could help re-enforce peace building in the community, through encouraging dialogue, as other individuals such as boys and men might also be interested in these occupations and might want to make enquiries. In this way community members are encouraged to learn new ways of behaving and doing things from others.

It has been argued that men are largely perpetrators of violence, but that even when women do participate - and they usually do take part in violent conflicts ²⁷ – they appear to ‘assume ... masculine identities in an effort to capitalise upon the benefits such a role could offer’. ²⁸ According to Williams ²⁸, ‘traditionally ‘masculine’ characteristics such as aggression, extreme nationalism and an encouragement of physical violence were utilized [by women] in order to achieve these ends.’ Williams went further to argue that when women are caught in these acts, they ‘evoke ... ‘feminine’ personas in an effort to assuage their clear complicity in acts of [violence] ...’. What the women seems to be doing in this case, according to the social learning theory, is modeling dominant male behaviours.

In the context of this paper, therefore, it could be argued that, if girls and women could model these dominant male behaviours in order to succeed in their chosen roles in a conflict situation, then through the same social learning approaches, good



behaviours that might be beneficial to society, including in peace building and conflict prevention, could also be acquired through modeling. Especially as it has often been argued that, '[s]ince wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that peace must be built'. 29 The import of the above arguments is that when girls and women with TVET skills and knowledge practice their trades or occupations in the community they might act as 'significant others' in the community, and be 'admired' by community members; this could transform the social fabric of the community as a result of the new behaviours being imbibed by group members. From the human capital perspective, '[t]hese strong impacts on employment and earnings [could be] translated into positive impacts in other realms of the participants' lives' (p. 24) 8; such as in 'life satisfaction, self-regulation, self-confidence, and self-perceptions of social abilities' (p. 24) 8, which could have impact on peace building in the community.

It is evident that men alone cannot guarantee peace in the society 30 (citing Chairwoman of the Sudanese African National Union); in fact they are more likely to fuel conflicts, so they must work 'together and united' with girls and women to 'bring sustainable peace.' This could suggest that girls and women who acquire relevant occupational skills and knowledge could be expected to work with men as equals and partners and not as subordinates, or some type of low apprentice – to bring about peace and development in their communities, since they can perform at almost the same level in their chosen occupations with boys and men; and perchance know also that the practice of their occupations is predicated on a peaceful environment.

In other words, 'once they develop self-confidence, girls [and women] will be able to effectively participate and compete favourably with boys [and men] in all activities' (p. 51) 1, including in peace building. The possible outcome of this mutual respect, as insinuated above, is a peaceful and congenial environment which is beneficial to the exercise of the skills and knowledge they have acquired through TVET. The more there are girls and women with TVET skills and knowledge in a community, the greater the chances there could be a multiplier effect for the community as shown from the experience of the girls who participated in the TVET intervention project cited previously.

In the TVET project for out-of-school girls and women cited above, it was found that some community members so admired the trainees that they made enquiries about the programme. The outcome of such enquiries by community members could be the taking up of such training in the future – this could have a positive impact in the way members live amongst themselves, thus helping to boost the social fabric of the community with its concomitant effects.

It is worthwhile, at this juncture, to examine specific pathways through which peace building behaviour can be spread in a community (usually influenced by 'environmental, social and cultural factors') and the role girls and women with TVET skills and knowledge can play. But first, I will take a look at what makes a community before delving into how peace building behaviours can spread in a community. According to Adler 1,

Common meanings are the basis of community. Inter subjective meaning gives a people a common language to talk about social reality and a common understanding of certain norms, but only with common meanings does this common reference world contain significant common actions, celebrations, and feelings. These are objects in the world everybody shares. This is what makes community (p. 174).

I will draw more from Adler's seminal work to understand how peace can be ensured in a community due to the conscious or even unconscious efforts of those skilled individuals, such as products of TVET who desire a congenial environment to practice their occupations. According to Adler, 1 'dependable expectations of peaceful change [or living] are consequently driven by the development of trust and the formation of a collective identity' (p. 174). Relating this to TVET of girls and women, it can be argued that having trained together with other trainees, including boys and men, in a quasi-industrial setting, such as that obtained in typical TVET programmes during workshop or laboratory sessions; and conscious of the fact that the success of the application of the skills and knowledge they are acquiring, or have acquired will depend on people (community members, employers, etc.), the TVET trainees learn to build trust among themselves during (or even after) their training, and this leads to the formation of a collective identity.

When trainees now get back to their communities upon graduation (or even when they are still on the programmes), they tend to replicate these behaviours and values among the people they meet, especially those they might have to work or do business with, and form relationships which positively impact on the community – through a social learning approach. And because "trust and identity are reciprocal and reinforcing: the development of trust ... [then] strengthen(s) mutual identification ..." 11 (p. 177, quoting Adler and Barnett, 1997); where perhaps each member of a group have to look after the other for their needs – a case of



being your brother's keeper. And Adler 1 believes that "... there is a general tendency to trust on the basis of mutual identification" (quoting Adler and Barnett, 1997).

According to Adler, 1 'collective identities require people not only to identify (positively) with the destiny of other people but also to identify themselves and those others as a group in relation to other groups' (p. 177, footnote). In this respect, therefore, very strong bonds could be formed within groups – with key persons in the group, for example, being those with the required skills and knowledge in critical areas of the economy who are providing key services to the community – this could promote an atmosphere of congeniality which is amenable to peace and help prevent potential conflicts or resurgence of conflicts in the communities. It is important to appreciate the fact that an individual can belong to more than one group, and this is beneficial to TVET graduates (in this case girls and women), as it will help them to publicise their knowledge and skills to multiple groups. Explaining trust and identity further, Adler 1 quotes Jepperson et al. (1996) as saying that

Trust is a social phenomenon that depends on the assessment that another actor will behave in ways that are consistent with normative expectations. Identities are 'images of individuality and distinctiveness ("selfhood") held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant "others".

Significant others, as earlier indicated, could be the girls and women who possess critical vocational and technical skills and knowledge which the society or community gravely needs. This means that a change in an individual's skills and knowledge may attract others to seek their services and in the process, bring individuals living in one community into a group or groups to learn new rules of living together - 'dealing mainly with how they should redefine themselves in order to achieve security and economic progress' (p. 179). 1 As the TVET graduate or trainee engages in providing their services or skills 'a social fabric is woven among both' their clients and themselves, 'instilling in them a sense of community, which becomes "a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of 'we feeling'; trust and mutual consideration" (p. 215) 32; this could impact positively on any peace effort in the community in which the trainee lives or works.

But peace building might not work without communication 33. Long recognising this, Adler 1 argues that 'communication alone enables a group to think together, to see together, and to act together' (p. 179). And more importantly, communication is the social glue that enables people in a community setting to share common meanings. This means that girls and women with relevant and sellable skills must communicate and also encourage communication amongst community members as the only way they can strive in their professions. Since TVET programmes are intended to prepare trainees to serve their communities, TVET providers are expected to stress the need for trainees or graduates to always aim to foster peace in their daily lives (especially through effective communication), as the only sure way of guaranteeing a conducive atmosphere for the practice of their occupations in the future. It has been argued that 'those who participate in the communication process are often transformed by it' (para. 4). 33

For instance, an auto mechanic (of any gender) who has set up a business in a community is likely to hope for a peaceful and conflict-free environment in which to do his/her business by engaging in effective communication with clients and others. This correlates with Harber and Sakade's (p. 175) 34 assertion that the promotion and 'experience of peace arises from something that people can relate to.' Putting the above assertion further into context, one can say, for example, that for the students (including girls and women) in a TVET practical class (or workshop), the need to work in congeniality is a rallying point for peace building that everyone would want to relate to. This suggests that 'peace education [or more precisely education for peace] needs to begin in the context of intra-personal or interpersonal relationships', as "(e)ven with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding"35; in matters of peace building.

As argued earlier, through the process of social learning, if members of a community view girls and women with important technical and vocational skills as successful in some economically viable fields, especially the male-dominated ones, it could 'change ... the way that communities and societies perceived the roles of men and women in the work force' (p. 16). 23 In other words, girls and women could be accepted as an important component of the workforce that is capable of providing valuable services to the community using the skills and knowledge acquired through TVET; and this could set off a 'social contagion' (through modelling) which may involve 'the spread of a behaviour pattern, attitude, or emotion from person to person or group to group through suggestion, propaganda, rumor, or imitation' (The Free Dictionary). This diffusion of positive behaviours, in turn, could



lead to many more girls and women (and even boys and men) showing interest in TVET programmes, and the cycle goes on. The obvious outcomes of this ‘social contagion’ could be a peaceful coexistence of the individuals who are caught up in this process.

The above argument corroborates the findings from an intervention christened ‘The Technical and Vocational Vouchers Program’ that was designed ‘to study the effect of vouchers [‘Financial support to trainees through training subsidies and access to credit...’] on participation in vocational training programs and the short-term impact on job seekers’ employment choices, jobs and incomes’ (p. 24). 36 The findings of the intervention revealed that

women shown videos of women working in traditionally-male jobs, such as auto repair, and told that wages were higher in such fields, were more likely to use their vouchers differently. Given the information women were almost nine percentage points more likely to express interest in a male-dominated course ... and 5 percentage points more likely to enrol (p. 24).

The above quotation reaffirms the position taken in this paper that girls and women who participate in TVET programmes could influence their peers in varied and diverse ways, including in the area of peaceful living and working towards the development of their communities. As previously argued, it is assumed that since they (girls and women) need a peaceful environment to carry out their trades or professions – they would work hard (either consciously or unconsciously), alongside boys and men, to achieve a peaceful and conflict-free community; since it is usually from the level of the communities that conflicts are likely to erupt and then spread to the larger society; and it is equally there that the reoccurrence of conflict can be curbed. Thus the community plays an important role in how girls and women who acquire TVET skills can contribute to peace and the development of their countries.

CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this paper has been to examine how the access to, and participation of girls and women in, TVET programmes could contribute to peace and socioeconomic development in post-conflict sub-Saharan African countries through the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes they have acquired from the programmes.

In spite of the central place that TVET occupies in the development of any nation, and the ‘tremendous positive impact’ it might have ‘in countries that have faced conflict’ (para. 9) 22, yet ‘often times, the gender component of TVET in post-conflict countries has not been a major area of focus despite the vulnerabilities and marginalization of women and girls’ (para. 10). 22 In other words, ‘TVET systems are often gender-biased, affecting the selection of, access to and participation in specific learning programmes or occupations for both men and women’ (para. 4). 37 Girls and women ‘lack opportunities for skills development and decent work. Overall, women continue to suffer from higher rates of unemployment, are less likely to participate in the labour force and face higher risks of vulnerable employment’ (p. 10) 38; because they lack the necessary occupational skills, knowledge, values and behaviours to enter the labour force. 23

According to UNESCO, 38 ‘[i]n 2014, the global unemployment rate for women stood at 6.4% (versus 5.7% for men) and the global labour force participation rate of women stood at 68.7% (versus 81.7% for men)’ (p. 10). The above figures are even more dismal in 2020. According to United Nations, 39 ‘[i]n 2020, only 47% of women of working age participated in the labour market, compared to 74% of men – a gender gap that has remained relatively constant since 1995’ (para. 5). ‘As of 2021, the male labor participation rate in Sub-Saharan Africa was measured at 72.32 percent [while] [t]he female labor force participation rate, on the other hand, was around 11 percent below the male rate [61.32%]’. 40 But TVET could remedy the situation. While reporting on the results of a systematic review conducted to find out the ‘interventions [that] improve girls and women’s prospects in the workplace ...’, Thissen (para. 6) 7 noted that ‘vocational training programs increase ... the likelihood of being employed by 11 per cent, of being employed in formal sector by 8 per cent, and earnings by 5 per cent’ - see also Lwamba et al. 6

‘A growing policy dialogue around youth employment in Africa has tended to focus on engaging young men in productive work to reduce the seeming threat of conflict, crime, and civil unrest’ (p. 24). 8 Similarly, Mierke 4 cites Collier and Hoeffler (2001) to have argued that ‘there is statistical evidence for significant and substantial reduction of the risk for conflict in countries that have a higher male secondary enrolment’ (p. 16). But Adoho et al. 8 argue that ‘promoting young women’s engagement in the labor market’ ... has the potential to affect not just their employment trajectories but, through the channel of empowerment, can also transform their roles in their families and communities’ (p. 24). Reflecting on Collier and Hoeffler (2001) statement, Mierke 4 assumed ‘a similar conflict-preventive correlation ... for higher [male] enrolment in [TVET] systems and better vocational training



opportunities, since the same explanations apply.’ According to Mierke 4 the reason Collier and Hoeffler gave for the correlation between higher male secondary enrolment and conflict reduction - such as ‘... poverty reduction and future prosperity’, improvement in ‘income and social perspectives’ – which could help ‘reduce ... the attractiveness of rebel forces or extremist groups’, and the inculcation of ‘social skills and abilities to deal with arising conflicts in peaceful ways’ - can equally apply to higher male TVET enrolment. However, the author stressed that ‘no research could be identified’ (p. 16) supporting the correlation made for TVET.

It is equally assumed in this paper that similar benefits, or greater, could be expected for higher female enrolment and participation in TVET programmes - since the same explanations apply. I take this stance because TVET brings about ‘high social and economic return [and] has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable’ (para. 69). 41 This stance is further buttressed by the results of a study conducted in Pakistan to ‘examine ... the labor market outcomes of TVET which showed ‘TVET training significantly improves women’s chances of entering self-employment and wage employment, ... [with] improved earnings [for women in wage employment]’ (p. 6, citing Aslam and Rawal, 2013). 42 Furthermore, the stance is supported by the systematic review carried out by Lwamba et al. 6 which established a relationship between TVET, gender and peace outcomes.

As has been argued previously, sustainable development and economic growth triggers peace 43, just as peace impacts on economic growth 44 - see also Kuwali, p. 2. 5 It can be deduced from the arguments presented, so far, that the TVET of girls and women is essential, not only for girls and women to attain gender equality (a laudable and achievable goal!); but beyond that, to become leaders of, and contributors to, peaceful change in their countries and local communities. ‘[T]he positive relationship between female education and overall development outcomes is well established’ (para. 3) 45, and can hardly be questioned especially when they are exposed to a skills-based type of education such as TVET which guarantees them independence. This means that TVET can support governments ‘economic reform programmes and policies’ through the training of critical manpower in relevant occupations, thus contributing to both the growth of the public and private sectors. This critical manpower, in turn ‘contributes to political and social stabilisation, conflict prevention and peace-building in various ways [such as in helping to] ‘reduce social and political tensions as well as the attraction of extremist groups’ (p. 14) 4, in communities where they live and work

Generally, this paper has argued in support of the TVET of girls and women, and the impact this might have in fostering peace building, conflict prevention and the development of their communities through the social learning process, whereby the girls and women are considered as the ‘significant others’ in the relationships. It is hoped that in the end the paper would have succeeded in stoking a scholarly debate on this important - but often under discussed subject – and help stimulate the interest of policy makers and educators into taking part in contributing efforts towards ensuring that girls and women do also have the opportunity of not only accessing TVET programmes, but ‘actively participate, enjoy, and succeed in [it]’ (p. ii) 1; and in the process the TVET of girls and women would have been accorded its rightful place in policy and practice discussions in the region, and by extension, the rest of Africa.

According to Santos and Matulevich 46, ‘[w]hile TVET seem to pay off for youth who reach this education stage ... without improvements in quality its impact is limited’ (section 5). Hence, the TVET system envisaged in this paper is that which is well - designed, managed and funded – a typical model of TVET - capable of delivering for girls and women the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes they need to integrate in the community and make a difference. However, promoting camaraderie and ensuring socio-economic development can only be achieved if policy makers and practitioners work towards facilitating the access to, and participation of girls and women in, TVET programmes – including into newer fields such as ICTs, renewable energy and related engineering and technology disciplines, relevant to the development aspirations of the various countries in SSA region.

Finally, because of the observed paucity of sources in the literature on the contribution of girls and women with TVET skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to peace and development in post-conflict communities in sub-Saharan Africa, it is suggested for further research that empirical studies should be carried out to investigate some of the assumptions made in this paper.

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