

## From Deskilling to Reskilling: The Role of Technical Skills among the Youth in Kagera Region

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the source and role of skills among the youth in Kagera Region. On the one hand, it employs Burawoy (2015)'s concept of excommodification to delineate the context within which agricultural commodities decline in their value given the invention of other non-agricultural commodities. On the other hand, the paper uses the Foucault's concept of bio-politics to show that technical non-agricultural skills are bio-political techniques which provide livelihood options but also conceal youth's precarious conditions of existence. Such bio-political techniques serve to conceal and reproduce precarious conditions of existence among both the youth and the wider agricultural society in Kagera Region. The main findings are that non-agricultural skills are acquired through apprenticeship, primary and secondary schools, public and private technical colleges, training by NGOs, and they combine formal vocational training and apprenticeship. Arguably, such skills are bio-political because, while enhancing livelihood options for the youth, non-agricultural skills conceal and reproduce precarious conditions of existence among the youth in particular and the agricultural community in Kagera Region.*

**Keywords:** Tanzania, Kagera, Youth, Technical Skills, Population

## **Introduction**

The global youth population is 1.8 billion, out of which, nearly 85% live in developing countries, and which constitutes 40% of the world's unemployed people [Solution for Youth Employment Coalition (S4YE) Report, 2014:viii]. In Tanzania, since the early 2000s, the total labour force grows at the rate of 3.1%, surpassing the national population growth of 2.7%, (Wuyts and Kilama, 2014:23). As a result, the issues of employment and skills among the youth are of great concern to policy makers, development experts, and scholars. Accordingly, there are several efforts pertaining to giving the youth equal opportunities through education and employment opportunities (UNECA, 2011:26). Such efforts include, but are not limited to, training the youth formally at vocational training colleges, and also informally especially through learning by doing, in various technical skills such as carpentry, welding, mechanics, driving, and so forth. Stakeholders have been involved in youth training. Such stakeholders include central and local government, private sector and NGOs. The purpose of the training is, supposedly, to acquaint the youth with the necessary skills they need in order to enhance their employability, and increasing their chances of getting stable sources of livelihoods. The implementation of the above policies and programmes implied that the youth, whose main destiny had for many years been the agricultural sector<sup>1</sup>, were now being prepared for non-agricultural occupations.

Tanzania, like other African countries, has been undergoing different socioeconomic transformations which have varying implications on people's sources of livelihoods. Before colonialism, this type of training used to be informal education, by which young people learned from their elders. Colonialism introduced formal education in Kagera Region. The colonial education system was intended to prepare the workforce needed to fill in the low cadre posts in the management of the colonial economy like agricultural extension officers, teachers, secretaries, and messengers. The rest of the people were given agricultural skills in order to enhance production for the colonial economy. Jorgen and Rald (1975), for instance, show how the Coffee Ordinance of 1937 which focused on control and marketing was intended to modernize agricultural practices. These authors outline the steps which peasants had to abide by in the cultivation of coffee and bananas as follows:

first, uprooting all unproductive coffee trees and replacing them with new seedlings; secondly, immediate uprooting of banana stem when the bunch was harvested (to eradicate the banana weevil which was at that time causing serious damage to banana production) and thirdly, heavy mulching of that part of the kibanja<sup>2</sup> where coffee trees were growing using both banana systems and grass (Jorgen and Rald, 1975:55).

As a result, Jorgen and Rald (1975) show that coffee production increased by more than 10,000 tons from 1910 to 1932. Extension services were carried on by the post-independence government. In the decade of 1974 to 1983, for instance, “Kagera alone produced 40.5% of Tanzania’s coffee during the same period. In addition, in the same decade, of 1975 to 1984, Kagera coffee accounted about 11% of the country’s foreign exchange earnings” (Jorgen and Rald, 1975).

Contrary to what transpired during colonialism, and in the early post-independence decades, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which were adopted in the 1980s, implied, among other things, the changing pattern of capitalist accumulation, from accumulation mainly based on cash crop production to generalized accumulation. Generalized accumulation, in this case, refers to harnessing anything that could be sold/bought to make profits (Shivji, 2009). For instance, in addition to cash crops, other sectors such as mining, services especially communication, tourism, etc. have been burgeoning and hence reducing the role of agriculture in the national income. Using available data especially from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Wuyts and Kilama (2014) document the changing pattern of Tanzania’s exports, as per table 1 below.

**Table 1: Pattern Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Economic Activities for Selected Years, 1987-2014.**

Activity	Amount in %					
	1987	1996	2001	2005	2010	2013
Agriculture	50.7	48.0	32.9	16.2	14.8	15.1
Industry and construction	15.7	14.2	15.9	19.7	20.3	21
Services	38.5	41.7	48.8	39.1	40.8	41.6

**Source:** National Bureau of Statistics, 1999; 2006, & Bank of Tanzania, 2014

Additionally, ASDP-2 (2016:1) shows that “the growth rate for agriculture sector during the period of 2006 to 2014 was 3.9% while for the service and industry sectors was 8% and 7.8%, respectively for the same period”. In the same context, Amin and Bush (2014: 52) show how the number of exportable items has been increasing:

Africa is still exporting coffee, cocoa, cotton and other things, but that is losing in importance relative to the gains from opening up to the plunder of the natural resources. Natural resources today are not only oil and gas and minerals, copper, gold, bauxite, tungsten, uranium et cetera, but also the new natural resources which can be plundered to the benefit of monopoly capital: land, land grabbing and, along with land, water and whatever can be in the future produced out of that— that is, agro fuels, eventually energy, which will be exported to the north, and so on. But while that type of export is moving from the old classical, colonial to a new type of exporting natural resources, the principle remains, that is, export oriented and exclusively export oriented.

Against this background, some scholars naively celebrate the increase of non-agricultural occupations as marking an end of the notorious agrarian question and the onset of post-peasantry (Cook and Binford,1990; Kearney, 1996)<sup>3</sup>and hence, once again, calling into question, the concept of peasantry. Unfortunately, such celebration overlooks the fact that, in Africa, and in Kagera Region, in this case, de-emphasis and hence decline in agricultural skills is consistent with the decline in public subsidies for farm implements, since the mid-1980s, as underlined in Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), (Zezeza, 1997; Bernstein, 2001; Michael, 2006). Bernstein (2001:46) aptly recaps the naivety among scholars and policy makers with regard to the concept of peasantry in his assertion that:

....peasants, stallholders or farmers today are viewed as survivals of the past emblematic of backwardness, anachronistic (explicitly or implicitly) reactionary and doomed to extinction—a position that precludes rather than encourages investigation and analysis of exactly how, where and why peasants are in contemporary global capitalism.

In Tanzania, the Second Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP-2) 2015/2016 to 2025/2026, like the First Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP-1) 2001-2015, also shares the naivety and un-clarity of who the peasants and smallholders are. Such naivety is evident in the intent to transform “the agricultural sector into modern, commercial, highly productive, resilient, competitive, in national and international market which leads to achieving food security and poverty reduction”, (ASDP-2, 2016:1). This intent is naïve rather than sacrosanct because, ASDP-2 like ASDP-1, overlooks the destructive character of accumulation by dispossession<sup>4</sup> practices inherent in “corporate agriculture ...and direct expropriation of peasantries through global market forces” (Michael, 2006:407).

Beyond the celebratory accounts of possibility of post peasantry, we use the case of the youth in Kagera region to argue that what is happening is, in fact, not post peasantry. Instead, the youth among other social groups, abandon crop production related activities, in favour of yet small scale non-agricultural skills and activities. Specifically, we use the term deskilling, to denote the decline of agricultural skills resulting from declining emphasis on agricultural skills training and accessibility to farm implements, inadequate value addition, and marketing strategies, and hence declining agricultural production at least for some crops such as coffee and bananas in Kagera Region and elsewhere, (Bachwenkizi, 2009;Maghimbi, 2010). ‘Re-skilling’ denotes the process of acquainting the youth with non-agricultural skills such as carpentry, mechanics, weaving, tailoring, and driving, among others. Re-skilling follows after deskilling.

The diversification of the sources of national income beyond agriculture has, unfortunately resulted in lesser emphasis on and abandonment of some of the agricultural skills such as those which were used to rear coffee plants in Kagera Region. This is what we refer to as deskilling, the result of which is excommodification<sup>5</sup> of agricultural producers’ (including the youth’s) labour power, and, the economic growth is not matched with increase in employment opportunities, (Wuyts and Kilama, 2014). Consequently, while the contribution of agriculture to the GDP has been declining, (as shown in table 1 above), agriculture has paradoxically remained the main employer, employing more than 84% of the total Tanzania’s labour force, (Wuyts and Kilama, 2014).

Given the context of burgeoning population of the young people and expanding sources of the national income (even if the latter do not expand employment opportunities), “agriculture acts as a refuge sector of excess labour”, (Wuyts and Kilama, 1975: 41). Likewise, self-employment, particularly in the informal sector outside agriculture, employs 10.9%. It is against this context of declining productivity in agriculture and limited employment opportunities, that various organizations have started equipping the youth with non-agricultural skills which can enable the youth to make livelihoods outside the agricultural sector.<sup>6</sup> Based on this development therefore, in this article, we examine the types of non-agricultural skills among youth and the role they play to both, individual youths and society. Thus, the central question which this article seeks to address, relates to the role played by non-agricultural skills and how they are acquired.

Taking the cue from Bernstein (2001), Michael (2006) and Wuyts and Kilama (2014), we argue that much as technical skills in other sectors [such as manufacturing (furniture, welding), construction, mechanics] are important, articulation of the conditions of agricultural production and the consequent skills are also of utmost importance for one reason that agriculture in Kagera Region and elsewhere in Tanzania employs the majority of the people and hence, proper investment would impact on the lives of the majority more effectively and efficiently and hence quicken the socio-economic transformation. As shown above, following the liberalization of trade since the mid-1980s, country earnings from coffee dropped and coffee prices become unstable, the combination of which has steadily led to a decline in the volume of production of coffee, (Austin, 2017). Since Kagera was one of the largest coffee producing regions in Tanzania, we considered Kagera Region to be the best case for this study because, since the mid-1980s there has been in decline in the youths’ participation in agricultural production, especially of coffee.

### **Excommodification and Youths’ Skills as Bio-politics**

One of the main defining features of capitalism is the commodification of what Polanyi (1944) and Burawoy (2015) call fictitious commodities. Fictitious commodities refer to items such as labour power, money, land, knowledge which ought not to be commodified, but, which get commodified due to overextension of markets, (Polanyi, 1944; Burawoy,

2015). Yet, such commodification has not been instant. Instead, it has been evolving along three waves and the consequences of such commodification have been both, gradual and cumulative (Burawoy, 2013). The first wave was mainly featured by the commodification of labour; the second wave was dominated by the commodification of money marked by standardization of currency using the gold standard. The third wave is dominated by commodification of land (nature), money and knowledge.

What distinguishes marketization along three waves above, from the classical Marxian view of commodity is that, the latter was based on the productivist logic, conceiving a commodity mainly in terms of what is produced for sale. Under marketization, everything whether produced or not is brought under the rubric of the market, i.e. where every potentially profitable item is assigned market value and commodified. One of the outcomes of overextension of markets is *ex-commodification* which Burawoy (2015: 21) captures lucidly as “...the expulsion of entities from the market, entities that were formerly commodities but no longer. Excommodification captures the expanded production of waste – the idea that there are lots of useful things that, to their detriment, are expelled from the market”.

In the context of Tanzania in general and Kagera region in particular, the expansion of the real of exchange beyond cash crops to including minerals, fisheries, service sectors such as tourism, communication etc. has resulted in the increasing ex-commodification of labour power in the peasant agriculture and even traditional cash crops especially coffee and tea.

Burawoy (2015: 20) further shows that in many parts of the world, excommodification of labour has happened through dispossession peasantries implemented through commodification of land. In Kagera Region, such excommodification is through the decline of cash crop production — especially coffee, tea and bananas—which have historically constituted the economic mainstay of the region. Such decline in cash crop production implies that many people remain underemployed or unemployed with nowhere to apply their agricultural skills such that insecurity has extended to and is thus quite evident in peasant agriculture (Standing, 2011; Burawoy, 2015).

To attend to the above excommodification processes, various *bio-political techniques* have been devised. In particular, Foucault (2008: 186) defines bio-politics as techniques, procedures and mechanisms for modifying human life in order to make it manageable, productive and hence profitable. Taking the cue from Foucault, Kristensen, (2013:85) shows that under the neoliberal era, bio-politics is actualized through human capital by which “capital is no more only something that is invested, exchanged and accumulated at the market; rather, it is inseparable from the entrepreneur of the self who constitutes the very capital itself”.

Ultimately, an individual is seen not as merely in possession of labour power, but as an “ability-machine whose skills, knowledge, health, genetic make-up, and so forth are all ways of making income through their application towards different ends” (Kristensen, 2013:85). Among other mechanisms, the entrepreneurial spirit is inculcated in the youth through various forms of training e.g. in schools where entrepreneurial courses are offered, or vocational trainings such masonry, welding, and carpentry, among others. Thereafter, the youth are expected to establish their business ventures. It is within this framework that we wish to examine the types of skills among the youth and role they play.

The relevance of the concepts of excommodification and bio-politics to this article is grounded in their analytical power. On the one hand, excommodification serves to delineate the context and manner in which agricultural skills decline in their market value such that the youth opt for non-agricultural skills. On the other hand, bio-politics shows the ways in which non-agricultural skills are legitimized and used to conceal the crises in both, the agricultural sector and among the youth.

## **Methods**

Three main techniques for collecting qualitative information were used, namely, structured interviews, observation and documentary review. The in-depth interview (IDI) technique was used to collect information from the youth about their life history, skills, and employment and self-employment experiences. The intention was to gain a detailed understanding of their backgrounds and personal skills on the basis of their sources of livelihoods (sources of income). The researchers also observed some of the activities undertaken by the youth and took some photos in order to gain a deep

understanding of their skills and experiences. This technique also helped the researchers to verify the information they collected through in-depth interviews. Structured interview and observation techniques were complemented by documentary review. In total, 60 structured interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. The data were collected at the work place. Field observations were also conducted. Documents reviewed under this technique included reports such as district socio-economic profiles, nutrition and Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Reports, entrepreneurship, and the National Education Policy of 2012.

Data were analyzed thematically. The idea was to review all the data and draw some important aspects which best captured youth's personal skills, competences and livelihood seeking experiences. The interpretation was in light of the concepts of accumulation by dispossession and bio-politics. That is, while accumulation by dispossession highlights that the accumulation requirements of Kagera Region are dictated by global processes, bio-politics describes the ways in which such processes and their outcomes are legitimated through the bio-political technique of entrepreneurship and the creation of entrepreneurs.

#### **Youth's Acquisition of Non-agricultural Skills**

This section outlines three aspects with regard to youth's skills, namely: sources of skills, need for multiple skills, and need for further training. We turn to each of these aspects. Our data indicate three sources from which the youth access non-agricultural skills. These sources include (i) apprenticeship (ii) schools (primary and secondary) (iii) technical colleges (public and private) and (iv) NGOs.

#### ***Basic skills from Primary and Secondary Schools: Literacy and numeracy***

The study findings show that there is no difference in skills between those who are employed and those who start their own businesses. Some of the youth (10 respondents from Bukoba MC) who participated in this study, had started their business with very basic skills they acquired in their primary education.

Below are explanations from two respondents who explained how literacy and numeracy enabled them to be employed and start petty businesses. A

self-employed lady aged 27 years and a mother of 2 children who is divorced, narrated how the basic numeracy and literacy skills she acquired from primary education helped her to start a business of selling bananas at Kashai Matopeni as follows:

The education I received helps me a lot. In order to do banana vending business and make some profit, I apply basic arithmetic, namely, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. When I go to the market, I need to consider the price of a bunch of banana and also ask myself how many bananas I should sell at which price in order to make profit. If I buy a bunch of banana at 25,000/=Tshs for instance, I estimate the number of bananas which I can sell at 1,000/=Tshs. Then, I take that number times 1,000.0Tshs in order to establish if I can get profit or not. If I find it profitable, then I subtract transport costs in order to determine if what remains can suffice to cater for my basic needs such as paying rent, buying food, and some pocket money for my school children, etc. also, giving back the change for instance if a customer gives me 5,000/= and buys bananas worthy 3,000/=, I need to know how much change I should give back and how much I should remain with.<sup>7</sup>

Another example is given by a young lady aged 22, who is also a single mother living and working in Kyerwa. The following is her narration of how she became a carpenter:

I did not do well in the secondary school certificate examination (SCE), so I did not have any profession. After sometime, I was employed by Bunda Bus as ticket officer (mkatatiketi). Unfortunately, I got pregnant and gave birth, and at that time I had been transferred from Kyerwa to Chato. The income I was earning was too low to enable me sustain myself and my child. The hardships I was going through, taught me a lesson so I asked a carpenter there at Chato to train me. After a year, I had acquired the requisite skills and decided to come back home and open up a carpentry workshop. Currently, I am also training my two younger sisters. We work together and share what we earn. Now, I can care for my child, pay rent for my room and workshop, and help both my mother and siblings to meet some of their needs.<sup>8</sup>

Similar case was found in Bukoba MC where a young man aged 22 from Bilele Ward who was employed as a hawker (Machinga) to sell loaves of bread and doughnuts acknowledged the usefulness of numeracy skills he acquired in primary school in the following manner:

My boss buys a number of loaves of bread, say worthy 100,000/=Tshs, and sets the amount of profit he requires from those loaves. So, I ensure that I sell at prices which my customers can afford. Sometimes, I sell at good prices, get boss's money and also get my own because whole sale prices change depending on the market situation of a particular day. Some loaves for which the whole sale price is 2,000/=Tshs, I can sell at 2,200/= on some days and hence get 200/=Tshs for my own per loaf. So, I get enough money to cater for my needs.<sup>9</sup>

The basic arithmetic (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), reading and writing are basic and very important skills for the young people who do not have technical skills. Such basic skills, as shown above, are an important requirement for the youth to start up their business, find jobs, or go for technical skills.

#### ***Technical skills***

The youth have acquired technical skills such as carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, and so forth, through both, formal and informal training. They are presented here below one after the other.

#### ***Informal training through apprenticeship***

Technical skills such as tailoring, welding, carpentry, mechanics etc. are acquired after primary education, though sometimes they can be parallel acquired with their primary education in an informal training (apprenticeship) given by parents, relatives, friends, or neighbours after school hours. In many cases, such skills and competences are acquired after primary education through formal training, whereby the youth are registered in different vocational training centres. Such skills and competences enable young people to either establish their own businesses or find relevant employment. How such additional skills lead to self-employment is clearly explained by a lady aged 23 years living in Nkwenda, Kyerwa District, who is self-employed as a tailor.

After acquiring sewing skills, I decided to find a capital so that I could employ myself. My parents gave me initial capital, particularly money for buying a sewing machine. I mainly design and sew women's dresses. I get customers, though this time the number has declined but, at least, I get enough money, my personal needs and this has reduced my dependency on parents.<sup>10</sup>

In Kyerwa District (rural environment), some youths who attempt to employ themselves sometimes apply 'trial and error method' before they settle on a particular activity. They do so in search for reliable income generating activities (as petty trader, small entrepreneur) which are somehow, more lucrative than their previous businesses. An example is cited from a youth aged 22 years, who lives in Kyerwa, and who started by trying several entrepreneurial activities before he decided to be a carpenter.

After I had completed primary education two years ago, I had nothing to do. I decided to work as an assistant (as a casual labourer) to a mason. I did this for eight months, and in the process I had also gained some skills. There came a time when masonry works become hard to find. Then, I decided to join bodaboda mechanics which I did for about five months but I did not develop interest in that profession. Finally, I decided to learn carpentry especially sofa making and this is the activity which I am doing until today. I thank God that I cannot starve; I am a mason, I can ride and repair motorcycle, and now I am a carpenter.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, as mentioned above, some young people learn technical professions through apprenticeship (learning by doing). Their parents or guardians attach them to their relatives or friends with certain skills or related activities (business) for a couple of months or years to learn the same skills. Another example of a young man aged 24; living in Kyerwa ward (Kyerwa District) who learnt motorcycle mending skills from his relative narrates his story as follows:

I am a motor vehicles and motorcycles mechanic, but mostly, I repair motorcycles. After completion of secondary education my father sent me to his friend who runs a garage in Muleba so that

he could train me in repairing vehicles and motorcycles. I attended the training for two years. After acquiring the skills, I was assisted to get a driving license and returned home. When I got my own toolbox I opened up my own garage for repairing motorcycles. It is two years now, and I have employed two other young men.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, some young people start learning from experienced relatives like parents or friends and become skilled rather than going to college. One such case was narrated by a young man aged 25 from Bilele, Bukoba Municipality, who makes sandals from worn out tyres. This is what he said:

My job is to make sandals, motorcycle mudguards, and elastic straps for fixing luggage on motorcycles and bicycles. I was taught this job by my father. After completion of school, I joined him here and started learning. I started by selling elastic straps, and later he instructed me how to make sandals. I am now already an expert. I can make as many as seven pairs per day. I also have skills for estimating the number of straps which can be extracted from one tube and get profit from the sale of such straps.<sup>13</sup>

	
<p><i>Sandals made of vehicle tyres</i></p>	<p><i>Elastic straps made out of vehicle tubes</i></p>

Likewise, another young man aged 17 years who is employed as a shopkeeper at Bilele, Bukoba Municipality revealed that he obtained shop keeping skills because at his home there was a shop. He said that:

At home, there was a shop from my childhood until recently. My grandmother was keeping that shop. So even before I started school I used to stay at the shop with my grandmother observing how she served her customers. When I started school and got enlightened I continued to assist my grandmother at the shop after school hours. I attended most of the customers, and my grandmother watched how I was doing it. My grandmother would always train me on issues such as weighing flour, sugar, beans, on the beam balance, giving back the change and arrangement of things in the shop. The skills I acquired then are very useful in managing this shop.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Formal training from Public and Private Technical colleges***

All respondents had the basic skills especially literacy and numeracy from primary education. Building on the basic skills, further skills were acquired through, either, formal vocational training by attending colleges or apprenticeship, namely, learning by doing. Young people who revealed to have attended formal training in Bukoba Municipal Council, had mainly attended vocational colleges found in Kagera Region such as Vocational Education Training College (VETA) or private colleges such as Lake Zone Training College, (driving and mechanics), Josephine Bhakhita (home craft/sewing/tailoring) and KashoziNyaigando Vocational Training Centre, both owned and run by Catholic nun. The youth in Kyerwa District, who attended vocational training colleges said to have attended different colleges within and outside the Region. Those colleges include Kayanga Development Training College (KDVTC) (two of them), Nyumba ya Vijana, Nkwenda (two respondents) and one respondent trained with Chang'ombe Vocational College in Dar es Salaam. The rest of the respondents acquired vocational skills through apprenticeship. Generally, the government and the Catholic Church are the main players in imparting skills among the youth.

### ***Combining Technical College Training and Apprenticeship***

Due to financial hardships, some young people do not complete their training. They drop out of training after acquiring the basic skills and go straight into business. Apart from one girl who had dropped out due to health problems, other five (5) young people dropped because of financial

problems. One such girl aged 22 years, at Uswahilini, Bukoba Municipal had this to say:

I was attending a tailoring course at Bhakita VTC. After the first semester I was not able to continue with the training because the tuition fee was raised. English and Kiswahili were added as subjects to the curriculum, and that was the reason for increased tuition fee. I was not able to raise the tuition fees required because my mother had no money. I already had skills for sewing women's dresses, but I wanted to get further training. Currently, I am working as a shopkeeper at my brother's automobile spare parts store.<sup>15</sup>

Another case was provided at Bilele, Bukoba Municipal by a girl aged 27 years, who also had attended a tailoring course at Bhakita College but dropped out before she completed the course due to financial hardships. She narrated her experience as follows:

I attended Bhakita VTC for six months. When I acquired some skills I dropped out of college so that I could employ myself because I was facing many hardships. My parents did not have the money to pay for my further training. When I dropped from college, I got a sponsor who bought a sewing machine for me. Unfortunately, my sewing machine was stolen because I left it at the verandah. Then I decided to open up a small grocery as a means of mobilizing money for buying another sewing machine. The situation is tough though, because I currently have other responsibilities. I have a child who solely depends on me, so saving money is a challenge.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Interventions by NGOs***

Others, especially *bodaboda* riders have combined formal and informal trainings (trained and learning from friends and relatives). Few months before fieldwork for instance, Lake Zone Vocational College and Apech had organized and offered motorcycle (*bodaboda*) riding training. The purpose of this training was to equip them with knowledge and skills about road signs, regulations, and safety. The Lake Zone College provided further training on road signs, road safety, and safe driving to *bodaboda* riders.

The participation fee was 35,000/= Tshs per person. Upon completion of the training trainees were awarded certificates of participation.

Different from the *bodaboda* riders in Bukoba Urban, the case is different in Kyerwa DC. All the four *bodaboda* riders who participated in this study were not formally trained. They learned riding from friends, as a result, the findings show that none of them has a *bodaboda* riding license.

It was also found that some of the skills are gained through imitating best practices from experienced peers, parents, and elders. For instance, they gain marketing and customer care skills by interacting with customers. Such skills are gained informally through learning by doing. One young man aged 24 years from Kyerwa District shared his experience how he acquired knowledge and skills related to customer care and marketing by using the following words:

One does not need to be trained on customer care because it is part of everyday socialization in society. From childhood, it is known that when you go to a shop to buy anything you are served politely using words like 'you are highly welcome', 'a customer is a king', 'what can I help you?' Moreover, during training for instance when I was attending a course on tailoring, my instructor used to welcome his customers politely and I was watching and learning. So, when I started my own business I knew it well that I was supposed to serve my customers politely.<sup>17</sup>

Another case was given by a lady (tailor) who is aged 25 years, from Bilele, Bukoba Municipal. She explained the way how she assesses customer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction which signifies her skills and experience to manage her activities: She shared her experience as follows:

I have customers; I have been sewing their dresses often. If you sew a dress for a customer and there after the same customer gives other orders then you know she is satisfied and it pleases if you learn that your work is appreciated by your customers. At times you can sew a dress and appreciate yourself that it looks good. One of my customers told me one day that she keeps giving me more orders because I do it well.<sup>18</sup>

Some NGOs especially, Management and Development for Health (MDH), Plan international, Humuliza and Twaweza were also mentioned by the youth to have imparted various skills to the youth. MDH and Plan International recruited young people and trained them for advocacy activities (such as advocating male circumcision campaign). HUMULIZA and PLAN INTERNATIONAL equipped young people with skills for providing psychological relief to children who were traumatized by the earthquake which hit Kagera Region towards the end of 2016. TWaweza recruited and trained young people on research skills, especially data collection on children's performance in education.

**Table 2: Types of Skills acquired by respondents in Kagera Region**

Skill	Bukoba MC		Kyerwa DC		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Carpentry	2		5	1	8
Welding	1		2		3
Mechanics	3		1		4
Broking (dalali)	2				2
Shop keeping	1	1			2
Tailoring		3	2	3	8
Hawking (machinga)	1				1
Small business (genge)		5			5
Sandal making	2				2
Mobile banking	1				1
Hair cutting	1		2		3
Food vending (mama ntilie)		2			2
Bicycle transport	1				1
Bodaboda	2		5		7
Traditional (Boiled) coffee	1				1
Stationaries				2	2
Gardening			1		1
Tin Mining			1		1
Weaving(sweaters)				4	4
Poultry			1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2018

From Table 2, the leading occupations in terms of employing the youth are carpentry and tailoring, employing eight (8) people each, and *bodaboda* riding which has employed 7 people. Others, namely, poultry, mining, gardening, bicycle transport, etc. were mentioned by one person each.

### **Struggling to Evade Precarity**

Data reveals that the youth feel insecure either when they specialize in one technical knowhow, or when they are not well trained in their specialization. Insecurity stems from the fact that if one specializes in one aspect, for instance, bicycle repair, they would miss opportunities availed by motorcycle repair, and hence be more insecure. Likewise, if one is not very well trained in their area, they would miss out some of the opportunities available in that area. In the next sections, we show the ways in which the youth struggle to maximize their opportunities and minimize insecurity.

### ***Multiple skills among Youths***

The findings suggest that, some young people were skilled in variety of professions. Some were either switching from one skill to another depending on the skills demanded by the market. In other words, they have primary and secondary activities. One of such cases was given at Bilele, Bukoba MC, by a young man aged 28 years who is an electrical technician, a comedian, and an informal agent for buses commuting between Bukoba and other regions (Mwanza, Geita, Mara and Dar es Salaam). He explained the relevance of his multiple skills as follows:

Activities related to electricity and comedy are only occasional. Those related to electricity, I do wiring and lamp fixing. Customers follow me whenever they have electric al related problems. About comedy, our group is not yet well known so we do not have many activities to do. As such, most of the time, I stay at the bus stop directing passengers to their respective ticketing offices. For every passenger, the respective bus agent gives me some amount of money as a token. With regard to comedy, our group is called GALIBONAKI, and we have some performances under the same name which are on you-tube. We were once contracted by an organization called MDH in sensitizing community about male circumcision.<sup>19</sup>

Another case was provided at Bilele, Bukoba MC, by a young man aged 30 years, who after completion of primary education became a casual labourer at construction sites where he acquired masonry skills before he

shifted to real estate broking. This is what he says in regard to his own experiences:

After completion of primary education, I did not have money to pay for my secondary education because my father abandoned his family (both me and my mother). The only likely option I saw as a source of income was casual labour at construction sites. As time passed by, I was watching the way they did it and gained some masonry skills. When my skills were well developed, I started working as a mason but was earning very little income. Then, I decided to become a real estate broker in various activities such as selling houses, land, farms, vehicles, renting houses etc. also some busy people contract me to complete their compliances such as renewing licenses, paying revenues, and insurances.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, possession of multiple skills was a common phenomenon among young people. Such skills increase livelihood opportunities. The reason why many young people had multiple skills is due to the fact that most of them did not get formal training; rather, they acquired skills through apprenticeship. This means, one could learn masonry and later switch to another activity such as carpentry. This makes them the jack of many trades.

Some use the first acquired skill to accumulate capital and then switch to another business. This is justified by explanation from a young man aged 30 years from Bukoba MC who was initially employed as a shopkeeper and later switched to a bodaboda rider. He became bodaboda rider after accumulating enough capital to purchase his own motorcycle. Another young man aged 20 years from Bilele, Bukoba MC narrated how after completion of driving training at VETA he joined his brother to sell traditional (boiled) coffee. From selling coffee, he saved enough capital to purchase a new motorcycle, and he is currently a bodaboda rider. Another interesting case was given by a young lady aged 24 and a mother of one child from Kashai Matopeni in Bukoba Municipal who was an employee in a fertilizer factory. But, after saving, she established her own small kiosk at Kashai. Another young man, aged 20 years, in Nkwenda ward, Kyerwa District started as butchery, but he later on shifted to bodaboda riding after buying his own motorcycle.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by district and number skills**

		Single skill	Multiple skills
District	Ward		
Bukoba MC	Bilele	15	8
	Kashai	4	3
Kyerwa DC	Kyerwa	8	10
	Nkwenda	5	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2018

### ***Wish for further training***

Young people expressed various reasons for needing further training. There were several categories of responses based on the wishes of the respondents. Some want to improve their skills in the same activity they are currently engaged in. Others wanted to get new skills or learn another profession which they thought would enable them to do better. The findings suggest that girls, who are self-employed mainly as tailors, wish to get further training especially in designing and sewing bride dress because their experience shows that those who have such skills make much more money than those who do not have. While elaborating this view, one lady aged 27 years from Bilele, Bukoba MC said the following: “Sewing a normal dress costs between 20,000/= to 25,000/= but sewing a bride’s gown is between 100,000/= and 150,000/= depending on the quality the customer requires.”<sup>21</sup>

Other young people wanted further training to acquire new skills because they believed that their current skills cannot enable them to improve their livelihoods. One young man from Bukoba MC, aged 30 years and who is a bodaboda rider for instance, said that he wants to join VETA for further training in driving because he wants to become a driver of heavy duty vehicles in the future. Another young man aged 30 from Kashai, Bukoba MC, who runs an M-Pesa shop wanted training as computer technician because he has some expertise in that area from which he gets much money, but his problem is that his skills are low and limited to some applications. He would like to get further training as a computer technician.

Other young people revealed that they are financially constrained. They thought that if they had money to expand their businesses they would do

better. One young man, aged 29 years, from Bilele, Bukoba MC, whose occupation is making sandals, opined that:

When I get capital to boost my wife's business that will be of great help. My wife has a small kiosk where she vends some domestic amenities. In fact, this business pays us, but the problem is that the capital is small. Many customers come but miss some items they need. If we manage to increase our capital we will do better.<sup>22</sup>

Responses to the question on further training, in Kyerwa DC were divided between young people who wished for further training, and those who did not. Ten (10) out of 30 respondents do not see why they should go for training while they are doing their business better without any formal training. They feel that they do not need training. For instance, one mechanic who mends motorcycles asked a sarcastic question, that: is one trained to fashion a motorcycle at the college? If not, why should you go to the college while I can repair just like those who went to college?

Other youth need to go for further training so that they can get formal certificates as the testimony of their skills, which in turn, will help them in business or employment.

One carpenter aged 23 years living in Nkwenda ward, Kyerwa DC, had this to share in relation to vocational training:

I acquired carpentry skills from a person who is a carpenter. I make various items such as beds, cupboards, chairs/coach etc. The problem is that I don't get big tenders like those offered by the district council because I don't have a certificate to testify my skills. I cannot win any tender because there is no testimony of my skills. I would be pleased if I got a chance for training so that I can get a certificate, because it would enable me to get lucrative jobs.<sup>23</sup>

In Kyerwa District, five respondents who are self-employed wish to attend further formal training, but are faced by two obstacles. The first obstacle is lack of money for the training fee. The second obstacle is who will manage their business when they are away for training.

**Table 4: Youth's current Skill and their Needs for further training**

Current occupation		Area for further training
Occupation	No. of people	
Carpentry	2	Electricity technician
Welder	1	Mechanics
Mechanics	3	Skills for maintenance of all parts of a vehicle, rather than specialize in engine, or panel beating, etc.
Broker (dalali)	2	Business education,
Shop keeper	2	Heavy truck driving
Tailor	3	More expertise in tailoring, computer skills
Street vendor. (machinga)	1	Welding
Small business/ vendor (genge)	5	Tailoring, business education
Sandal maker	2	None
Mobile banking	1	Business course
Hair cutting	2	Computer maintenance
Food vendor (mama ntilie)	2	More cooking skills, tailoring
Bicycle transport	1	Driving
Bodaboda	2	Heavy truck driving
Traditional (boiled) coffee vendor	1	Any vocational course
Stationaries	1	Computer maintenance
Gardener	1	Business studies(marketing)
Weaver (sweaters)	4	The use of modern weaving machines
Tin mining	2	The use of modern equipment

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2018

### Conclusion

We have argued that, the skills which the youth gain through various means constitute the process of re-skilling. They constitute re-skilling in the sense that such training is intended to equip the youth with skills to enable such youth make livelihoods. The salience of such skills consists in the fact that the used to be mainstay (agricultural) skills have increasingly lost their market value.<sup>24</sup> The findings of this study have revealed that the youth obtain their skills through various sources such as schools, technical colleges, apprenticeship, and trainings by some NGOs. Such skills enable the youth to perform various activities which enable them to earn a living. In many cases, however, the youth complained that the earnings from these activities are not sufficient to meet their basic necessities. For this reason, the youth revealed two other important mechanisms which they thought would enable them to get more and reliable income. Such mechanisms are, first, seeking to command multiple skills, and, secondly, further training in the similar profession in order to widen their chances of earning more income, and on a sustainable manner.

There is no doubt that there is evidence of improvement of living conditions and livelihoods among individual youth who have acquired technical skills. Yet, some important issues about such youth and their situations remain unaddressed. For instance, our interviews with them revealed that most of the youth who go for technical training are from low income families. This implies that even the lack of skills is not uniform; instead, it is configured along the lines of social classes to which the youth belong. Secondly, the role of equipping the youth with non-agricultural skills becomes a bio-political technique because they conceal the decline of skills in peasant agriculture. Wuyts and Kilama (2014), for instance, argue that Tanzania's economic growth has not been matched by growth/increase in employment opportunities because such growth originates from capital rather than labour intensive sectors. Thus, non-agricultural skills become a bio-political technique, because, with such skills, the youth engage in income generating activities. As such, they cease to be a threat to national and international security, or are gotten out of crises such as crime and fundamentalist ideas and intents (Arubayi, 2015; Cerpenter and Mojab, 2017).

Thus, the main implication of interventions on skills among the youth, is that it conceals and reproduces the agricultural crises (low production). Yet, unfortunately, as the literature has shown, in many developing countries including Tanzania in general, and Kagera region in particular, precarity<sup>25</sup> has remained pervasive, crosscutting the entire spectrum, from the used to be very stable positions down to casual labourers (Standing, 2011; Negri and Hardt, 2004; Burawoy, 2013, 2015). As we have shown, despite the possession of skills, the incomes the youth earn in the manufacturing sector, like their counterparts in the agricultural sector, are too small to satisfy their basic needs.

While it is important to equip the youth with non-agricultural skills therefore, we should be cautious not to be carried away by ideas of like post peasantry (Kearney, 1996) and hence overlook high impact or labour intensive sectors. One of such high impact sectors is agriculture which employs the majority of the people, (Wuyts and Kilama, 2014). Since agriculture remains the leading source of employment for the majority of people, it is important that efforts are done to improve it, because, as the available literature shows, economic growth has not resulted in increased

growth in employment opportunities because growth has been propelled by non-labour intensive sectors. Thus, in order for skills acquisition to be socially meaningful, such skills should be directed or linked to labour intensive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. Thus, while the current Tanzania's endeavour to promote industrialization is a right direction, such industrialization should pay much attention to adding value to agricultural products because its agriculture which employs the majority of Tanzanians.

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### **Notes**

1. In Tanzania secondary schools were built in every ward. The ward is a level of administration next to a village which is a grassroots level. Post-primary training colleges have also emerged, run by various stakeholders from the government to private entities to non-governmental organizations to religious organizations.
2. A Kihaya name for farmland around the residential house. This land ranges between, less than one acre to more than 10 acres. It is always intercropped with bananas, yams, cassava, coffee trees and other crops which deemed compatible with the main crop which is bananas.
3. The agrarian question consists in how people who peasantry and small holder farming can be transformed into from the situation of supposedly traditionality to modernity. His question is disturbing because while some scholars think peasantry is the survival of the past which ought to be modernized, others think that peasantry is the creation of capitalism and that capitalism depends on peasantry to reproduce itself, (Bernstein, 2001).
4. This Harvey (2003)'s concept to denote “the continuation and proliferation of practices which Marx had treated as original to the rise of capitalism.

5. This is a concept used by Burawoy (2015: 21) to denote “the expulsion of entities from the market, entities that were formerly commodities but no longer. Excommodification captures the expanded production of waste – the idea that there are lots of useful things that, to their detriment, are expelled from the market. In the face of excommodification, commodification can be a very attractive prospect”. It is used here to denote the decline of the demand for coffee at both the national and global levels and hence the decline of the demand for skills needed to grow coffee.
6. Apart from the declining agricultural productivity, we also acknowledge the presence of some demand for non-agricultural skills among the youth. For example, there is an increase of people who own vehicles and hence a need for mechanics. Equally, iron products are increasingly replacing timber products in the construction sector and hence an increased demand for welders. Our emphasis, however, is that the push of the youth into non-agricultural activities due to the decline of agriculture is the main factor.
7. Selfemployed lady/BubobaMC/IDI/12/May, 2018.
8. Selfemployed lady/KyerwaDC/IDI/07/May, 2018.
9. Selfemployed youngman/KyerwaDC/IDI/10/May, 2018.
10. Selfemployed youngman/KyerwaDC/IDI/05/May, 2018.
11. Selfemployed younglady/KyerwaDC/IDI/06/May, 2018.
12. Selfemployed younglady/KyerwaDC/IDI/08/May, 2018.
13. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMC/IDI/10/May, 2018.
14. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMC/IDI/06/May, 2018.
15. Selfemployed younglady/BukobaMC/IDI/04/May, 2018.
16. Selfemployed younglady/BukobaMC/IDI/03/May, 2018.
17. Selfemployed youngman/KyerwaDC/IDI/11/May, 2018.
18. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMC/IDI/12/May, 2018.
19. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMC/IDI/01/May, 2018.
20. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMC/IDI/07/May, 2018.
21. Selfemployed younglady/BukobaMC/IDI/13/May, 2018.
22. Selfemployed youngman/BukobaMCC/IDI/14/May, 2018.
23. Selfemployed carpenter/KyerwaDC/IDI/06/May, 2018.
24. This denotes the relatively limited viability of agricultural production, following the declining demand of cash crops such as

coffee, since other sectors begin to contribute to the national economy.

25. Denotes insecurity, especially income insecurity arising from unemployment due to lack of employment or temporarily of employment or underemployment which leads to low income. With low income, some people remain insecure because what they earn cannot cater for the earner's basic needs.

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**L.R. Mugisha & H. L. Sigalla**

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