

Analysis of the Role of Community Actors towards Self-Employment Support for Higher Education Graduates in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore the community perceptions about higher education graduates' employability and community support practices towards graduates' access to self-employment. A sample of 314 community participants using systematic random sampling was used to select participants for the study. The sample involved staff from the selected divisions and departments at the district councils, wards, villages and local street government offices. The other sample was employees from selected community based organisations located in respective study regions and districts. The study used an explanatory mixed design where quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed sequentially. The results showed that, 146(46.5%) of community participants perceived higher education graduates' participation in self-employment as poor, while only 80(25.5%) perceived it as good. Further, 223(71.0%) of the studied community organs had no specific support services for graduates, 63(20.1) percent offered them for sometimes, and 28 (8.9%) said they had specific services. Results also showed that, out of the six examined factors; support from family, friends, and relatives 154(49.0%) and hard work 135(43.0%) were rated as most contributing factors to graduates' access to self-employment. The interview results showed that, negative graduates' and lack of specific support schemes highly contributed to low graduates' participation in self-employment. The study concludes that, the community support for enhancing higher education graduates' access to self-employment is poor and disorganized. Deliberate actions were recommended for the policy makers to encourage the Tanzania communities towards support for graduates' access to self-employment.

Keywords: *Employability, Community, Higher education, Self-employment, Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

Although the purpose of education may vary across philosophical stances, the most commonly shared is preparing learners for life and contributing to the country's socio-economic development. Tanzania's 'education for self-reliance' philosophy aimed to prepare learners at each level of education to contribute to the production and socio-economic independence of the country (Mbogoma, 2018; Nyerere, 1968). Accordingly, the human capital theory proposes the educational value of developing the human capital resource in a country's population (Mincer, 1958; Schultz, 1963; Sweetland, 2016). These arguments support the fact that, the end of any education system should be graduates' employability (Agrawal & Dasgupta, 2020; ILO, 2013). Despite these facts, recent employability studies (ILO, 2019; Kamuhabwa, 2019; Research on Poverty Alleviation [REPOA], 2021) explain evidence that the 21st Century higher education has been challenged by an alarming employment crisis globally. Subsequently, higher education graduates' employability is increasingly becoming a critical research topic.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2020) report on employment in Africa explains that the rate of unemployment and prolonged transition time from school to work (Rostan & Stan, 2017) is higher among tertiary education youths than those without education in Eastern Europe. Likewise, in the sub-regions of the Arab States, Asia, and Northern Africa, while employment rates among tertiary education graduates nearly reaches 38 percent, they are above 50 percent among youths with primary and those without education (ILO, 2020). Additionally, in the Sub-Saharan Africa, most employed higher education graduates, either do informal jobs in the formal sector (82.7 percent) or are employed in the informal sectors (70.4 percent) (ILO, 2020). These literatures in common explain the employability limitations of tertiary education graduates while the informal self-employment sector is at least doing better. A number of employability studies David (2014), Nandonde and Malaki (2020), propose the self-employment labour market for being a suitable resort for expanding graduates' employability. In fact, the self-employment labour market supplements the salariedlabour market absorption capacity, which is proportionally lower than the graduates' supply. For instance, in Tanzania, while the labour annual output of graduates seeking to enter the labour market reaches 1,000,000, the wage labour market sectors

had a capacity to employ only 50,000 to 60,000 (5 to 6 percent) annually (REPOA, 2021). The majority which is more than 90 percent engage in informal self-employment sectors or have prolonged periods of employment search up to 5.5 years (Danish, Trade Union Development Agency, 2022). Based on these facts, creating a supportive environment for graduates' self-employment labour market opportunities becomes inevitable. Subsequently, access to the self-employment labour market requires some community support throughout the development of capital base and businesses competitiveness. The term community may refer to a group of people who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action, and may be living in defined geographical locations (MacQueen, McLellan, Metzger & Kegeles, 2001). In this study, the term "community" refers to the combination of government ministries, departments, agencies, the private sectors and the community-based organisations engaged in serving various kinds of socio-economic, political, and humankind welfares of people in the country. Therefore, the study explored the practice of self-employment support provisions for graduates within the functionary dimensions of these community organs in selected study regions and districts.

Tanzania has various policies and programmes on higher education sector. Initially, Tanzania, through its higher education policy (URT, 1999) and the education sector development programme [ESDP] (URT, 2000) took a good step to promote equitable access to and quality of higher education in the country. There has been an increase in higher education institutions and increased enrollment rates in particular. However, plans for graduates' lives after schooling are not well articulated in the policy and the ESDP provisions. In addition, the Tanzania youths' development policy (URT, 2007) aspires to support the youths' access to employment opportunities. The policy endorses the provision of microcredit schemes for youths, business management and entrepreneurial training, and skills development. Unfortunately, the policy is likely passive about mechanisms by which diverse community groups could take part in enhancing graduates' employability support after school. In the light of these policy frameworks, it is difficult to examine the extent to which the stated initiatives are worth the expected results for higher education graduates' access to the self-employment labour market. Thus, the knowledge body about how local communities and governance systems contribute to

supporting graduates' access to self-employment is lacking in existing literature. Therefore, the study aimed to search for this knowledge through two specific objectives: (i) to explore the community's perceptions about the state of higher education graduates' self-employment and (ii) to examine the role of community support in higher education graduates' access to the self-employment labour market in Tanzania.

Methodology

The study used explanatory sequential mixed design where quantitative data were collected and analysed, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. The author administered survey questionnaires to the community respondents, analysed the data, and conducted participants' interviews for in-depth explanations built on the findings. The study was conducted in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam regions. In Dar es Salaam, the study was conducted in Ilala City council, Ubungo, Temeke, Kinondoni, and Kigamboni Municipals. In Dodoma the study was conducted in Dodoma city council, Bahi, Kongwa, Kondoa Town and Kondoa District councils. Dodoma and Dar es Salaam regions are characterized by fast-growing formal and informal sectors attracting self-employment business opportunities (Msuya, Moshi & Levira, 2020). The presence of central government headquarters and functions in these regions attracts a high influx of graduate youths seeking employment opportunities in fast growing sectors in the urban and sub-urban areas of the regions (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2022). Within the regions, urban, sub-urban and rural features were considered to select council authorities for collecting different kinds of self-employment experiences.

The study population composed of the officials and employees working in district councils, wards, streets and villages local government authorities and community-based organisations located in the study regions. The author used urban and rural clusters to select 10 district councils and systematically sampled 53 ward government authorities in the study regions. Wards were alphabetically arranged and selected at interval of 4 wards to maximize the sample size for quantitative data as suggested suitable (Gorsuch, 1983 and Kline, 1994, cited in Pearson and Mundform, 2010). A total of 314 community respondents was sampled from the listed population groups. The study used purposive and random sampling to select Community

Development Officers [CDOs] (54) and staff from the division of trade, industry, and investment (20), Ward Executive Officers [WEO] (44), ward Councilors (24), Village Executive Officers [VEO] (30), Street Executive Officers [SEO] (36), Village Chairpersons (26) and Street Chairpersons (28). Also, the study used convenient random sampling to select (52) employees from community-based organisations located in the selected wards. The study used open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires to collect quantitative data. The questionnaires were used to collect data from the CDOs, WEOs, SEO, VEO, street and village Chairpersons and employees from community based organisations followed by semi-structured interviews across the same sample groups.

Quantitative data was analysed through descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics describe the data and draw conclusions based on the set of samples used and not beyond that (Creswell, 2012). In this study, data were coded and entered into SPSS software version 21. The data was then analysed to generate frequencies, percentages, and descriptive outputs that were presented in the form of frequency tables, figures, and charts. Furthermore, the researcher used thematic and content analysis guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) three stages of qualitative data analysis. The stages include; data reduction, display, and conclusions. The author transcribed the verbatim sounds taken through a sound recorder, analyzed themes and categorised the findings for qualitative interpretations. The main themes and contents of the interview field notes were established to explain the roles of various community stakeholders towards graduates' self-employment experiences in the study areas.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings for each of the two study objectives. Objective one presents and discusses findings regarding the community awareness about the state of higher education graduates' self-employment. Findings on this objective capture community views about higher education graduates' participation in self-employment, the kind of self-Employment businesses done by graduates and factors contributing to graduates' access to self-employment. The objective two focused on role of the community on enhancing higher education graduates' access to self-

employment labour market. Findings on this objective covers knowledge about the kind of support services offered by the selected community organisations and the provision of support services specific for graduates only.

Community Awareness about the State of Higher Education Graduates’ Self-employment

Through closed-ended questions, respondents were asked to rate their views about the status of higher education graduates’ participation and competence in the self-employment labour market. The results are presented in subsequent captions. Community views about the state of higher education graduates in self-employment

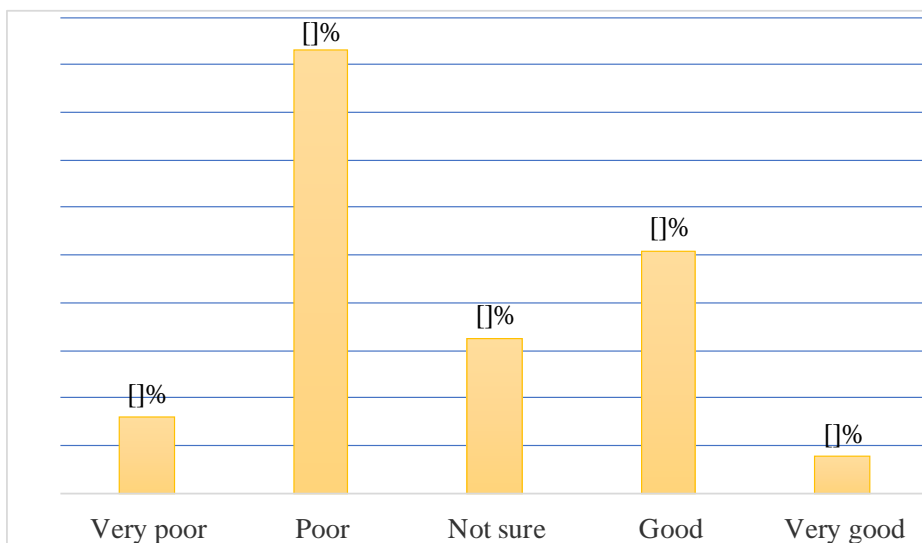


Figure 1: Community Perceptions about Participation in Self-Employment Labour Market

Data on Figure. 1 shows that 146(46.5%) of community respondents perceive higher education graduates’ participation in self-employment labour market as poor, while 80 (25.5%) perceived it as good and 51(16.2%) were not sure. Few respondents 25(8.0%) and 12(3.8%) views graduates’ self-employability as very poor or very good respectively. The results mean the community respondent are aware about the problem of poor graduates’ employability in

self-employment labour market. However, there is a good number of community participants who are not sure about the problem. Lack of clear awareness of this community group may further affect their participation to offer the support services needed by graduates.

The Kind of Self-Employment Businesses Done by Graduates

The study used open-ended questionnaire to collect data about the kind of businesses done by higher education graduates. Respondents were to mention at least one business that is mostly done by graduates in particular study area. Results are shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Kind of Self-Employment Businesses Most Done by Higher Education

Types of self-employment businesses done by graduates	Frequency	Percent
Transportation, (bodaboda, bajaji, bus transports)	50	15.9
Salon activities	53	16.9
Vender selling, clothes and other commodities	60	19.1
Agriculture, and horticulture	36	11.5
Agents telephone money business	20	6.4
Teaching in tuition centres	24	7.6
Open self or group companies	18	5.7
Online businesses	22	7.0
Stationary business	31	9.9
Total	N= 314	100.0

Data on Table 1: indicate that, higher education graduates mostly engage in vender businesses which include selling clothes, food and other movable commodities 60(19.1%), salon activities 53(16.9%) and transportation 50(15.9%). Other most listed activities are agriculture 36(11.5%) and stationary businesses 31(9.9%). These findings show that, except the stationary activities, the leading businesses are causal activities in the context of self-employment labour market in a local community area. The results rise questions about whether the higher education graduates demonstrate

competitive innovation and creativity in the self-employment labour market. Further, the results do not adequately reflect the applicability of graduates’ employability skills as fore-thought by the human capital theory.

Factors Contributing to Graduates’ Access to Self-employment

The study used a closed-ended questionnaire to explore community respondents’ perception about factors contributing to graduates’ access and performance in self-employment. Respondents were required to rate the listed factors in the Likert scales ranging from not contributing at all to highly contributing. Since each of the listed factors contribute to graduates’ access to self-employment, the study was interested to analyse the community responses across the “highly contributing scale” This could help the author to examine perceptions about the position of community support and education factors. Table 2 presents the findings;

Table 2: Community Perceptions about Factors Contributing to Graduates’Self-employment

Factors contributing to graduates’ self-employment	Frequency	Percent
Having education	72	22.9
Hardworking and commitment	135	43.0
Support from family, relatives and friends	154	49.0
Entrepreneurship education	91	29.0
Experiences learned from self-employment labour market	89	28.3

N= 314

Data in Table 2 show that out of 314 respondents, 154(49.0%), perceived support from family, relatives, and friends as the most contributing factor for graduates’ access to self-employment. Also, 135(43.0%), perceive hard work, and goal commitment as highly contributing factors, while 91(29.0%) view entrepreneurship training after school as most contributed. A few respondents, 72(22.9%), perceived having education as highly contributing factor towards access to self-employment. This implies that graduates’ access to self-employment largely relies on the hands of family, relatives, and individual friends rather than skills and education. The results also imply limited support services gained outside individual graduates’ social capital

boundaries during the self-employment labour market search. Moreover, a closed-ended tool was used to collect data about factors hindering graduates’ access to self-employment labour market. Table 3 presents the findings;

Table 3: Community Experiences about Factors Hindering Graduates Access to Self-employment

Factors hindering graduates access to self-employment	Frequency	Percent
Lack of capital	107	34.1
Lack of self-employment skills	76	24.2
Poor attitudes and lack of readiness for self-employment	42	13.4
Low political will and support policies	60	19.1
Fear and inability of graduates to face self-employment challenges	29	9.2
Total	N= 314	100.0

Data on Table 3 indicates that, community respondents 107(34.1%) perceive lack of capital as the most hindering factor for graduates’ access to self-employment. Other factors were lack of self-employment skills 76(24.2%), low political will and lack of specific supportive policies 60(19.1%) and poor attitudes of graduates towards self-employment 42(13.4%). The least is fear and inability of graduates to face self-employment challenges 29(9.2%). This implies that, most of the community services may be directed towards seeking capital. However, lack of self-employment skills, poor attitudes and fear of self-employment challenges may remain persistent even where capital is made available. Moreover, the interview data on objective one sought explanations from community stakeholders about the situation of low graduates’ performance in the self-employment labour market. Findings showed that, graduates do not have consistent choices to engage in self-employment businesses. The interviewed participants view graduates’ desires for businesses with high income, lack of information about sources of support for capital and poor attitudes towards self-employment as factors for their poor participation in the self-employment. Also, graduates’ choices for businesses that require cash capital seem to hinder their access opportunities

to workable self-employment. One of the participants had the following to share during the interviews;

The situation is not so bad...., except that many graduates are very stuck..., they choose fast cash generating works, for example here we have land for agricultural activities but many of our graduates do not prefer manual work, they want jobs that give them quick money, I think if they focus at jobs that require energy and production facilities instead of those that require capital, they may have less problems in the process of employing themselves as a strategy to self-employment" (Interview verbatim with the CDO in Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

With slightly the same views, another participant commented on graduates attitudes and shame feelings towards manual work. He commented that:

The situation is poor for example, I have my graduate son, he is at home for threeyear now, I don't know if he even gets information about the credit supports, and I don't know if he knows what he wants to do, ... the problem of attitudes and the shame of doing causal work is greater, he thinks that his younger siblings and others in the village will laugh at him (Interview verbatim with VEO in Dodoma, March 2023)

These results indicate that, both participant one and two view graduates' participation in self-employment labour market as poor. They point out poor graduates' attitude towards self-employment in terms of preferences for the kind of businesses to do and high expectations for income generation. In addition, participant two has raised an issue of poor access to information about credits support and shame feelings among graduates regarding the type of self-employment to engage in.

The Role of the Community Organisations on Enhancing Higher Education Graduates' Access to Self-employment Labour Market

This objective explored the role of the community organs towards supporting higher education graduates' access to self-employment. Findings are presented in the subsequent sections. The Kind of Support Services Offered by the Divisions, Offices and Community Based Organisations Studied

Respondents were asked to mention one main service their offices or organisations offer to support graduates' access to self-employment. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Kinds of self-employment support services Offered by Community Organisations

Types of self-employment support provided	Frequency	Percent
Employment skills' education	57	18.2
Entrepreneurship education	96	30.6
Financial loan for youths	41	13.1
Capital material loan for youth	16	5.1
Capital grant for youths (money)	21	6.7
Registering youths group companies	24	7.6
Guidance and counselling for youths	59	18.8
Total	N = 314	100.0

Data on Table 4 show that, most community organisations offer entrepreneurship education 96(30.6%), guidance and counselling 59(18.8%) and employment skills' education 57(18.2%). Other services were less provided such as financial loans for youths 41(13.1%), support and registering youths' groups of companies 24(7.6%), capital grants 21(6.7%) and capital materials 61(5.1%). Although capital was noted formerly as the main hindering factor, results in this section show that support on capital provision for graduates' access to self-employment is still low. However, community support covers education and guidance services which are important for transforming the attitudes of graduates towards self-employment.

Provision of Support Services Specific for Graduate Youths

Through closed ended questionnaire, community respondents were whether their offices or organisations offer any support services specific for graduate youths only. Results were as presented on figure 2 below.

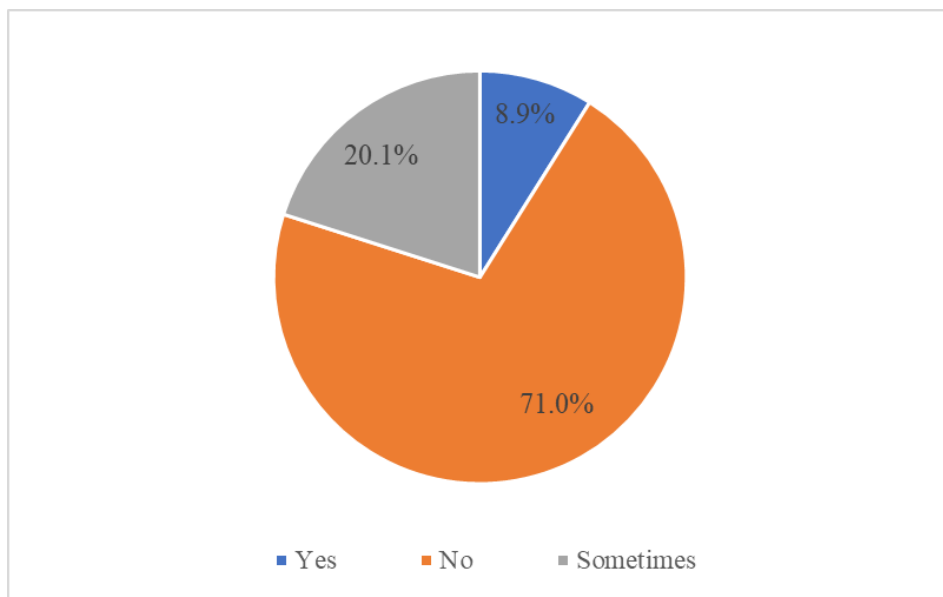


Figure 2: Status of Support Services Provided for Graduate Youths Only

Data on Fig. 2 show that, 223(71.0%) of the sampled community organisations do not have specific self-employment services for graduates while 80(20.1%) provide for sometimes and only 28(8.9%) have specific support services. This is an implication that, there is low community participation in taking initiatives to support graduates' access to self-employment. The situation further implies that, although graduates are encouraged to get self-employed, the support systems are underperforming in practice. The interview results on objective two, presents participants' views about the limitations of community support provisions for graduates' access to self-employment. Results showed that there is generally community support despite lack of specific support programmes. However, graduates' access to self-employment is hindered by other factors from the graduates themselves. These include, lack of graduates' commitment to self-employment, poor graduates' trustworthiness, and readiness for self-employment. One participant claimed;

Yes, we participate in supporting youths towards employment creation in many ways, but there is lack of specific plans for graduates alone even though they have many challenges to be self-employed. Eeuh... but there are also other factors hindering full support, for example we are even afraid

providing loans adequately because many of them either fail to repay or disappear completely after taking the money"
(Interview verbatim from a CDO in Dar es Salam, June 2023)

In the same line, the other participant condemned low graduates' readiness to fully employ themselves instead of seeking for being employed. The participant said;

It's not that there is no graduates' self-employment support programmes....., we educate them, offer youth loans and allocate entrepreneurship business areas, but, graduates themselves, I don't think if they eagerly need those opportunities, I see that they put more efforts on searching for jobs and then when they get tired, they start showing up"
(Interview notes with a WEO in Dodoma, March 2023)

Results from both participants agree that there is community support for graduates. While participant one point out weak policy discretion and lack of graduates' trustworthiness to repay loans, participant two raises the question of low graduates' readiness for self-employment.

Discussion

Community Awareness about the State of Higher education graduates' Self-employment

Findings on objective one has indicated poor participation of higher education graduates in the self-employment labour market in Tanzania. While governments and higher education institutions (HEIs) emphasise increasing enrolment rates, (URT, 1999), concerns about employment access after studies seem to be left to graduates' self-struggle. Graduates exert personal efforts to seek and make jobs for their daily survival after school. Although various employability studies present similar findings, the focus has been on graduates' lack of preparation and skills to get employment (Shimba, 2018; Tandika & Ndiujye, 2021). The current findings earmark community support initiatives to supplement graduates' skills' which has been claimed by various studies as mismatching with labour market demands. In the midst of hardships and self-employment challenges, results have shown that most higher education graduates resort to the comfort zones of informal self-employment

businesses commonly done in their areas. They engage in vending business, salon, and transportation, which are very common in urban and sub-urban areas. The implications behind this are most graduates concentrate in urban and sub-urban areas. This further means, most graduates seek a cash economy that needs more cash capital than manual work. Additionally, the fact that most businesses are not education-biased, may be provoking negative attitudes of both graduates and even the society against graduates' orientation to self-employment as noted by different studies (Semboja & Haji, 2021; Shimba, 2018). Community support initiatives should therefore seek to propose initiatives encouraging innovativeness rather than narrowing views to graduates' skills mismatch for pre-existing self-employment businesses. The fact that communities describe families, friends, and relatives as the main support sources for graduates' access to self-employment indicates low level of shared supports from diverse community stakeholders. This concurs with arguments by Davis (2014), that graduates with a good family background in entrepreneurship do better than those without. Under such a situation, some graduates may be forced to remain under family production for a long time after completing their studies.

The Role of the Community Organisations on Supporting Higher Education Graduates' access to Self-Employment Labour Market

Although most community participants are aware about poor state of higher education graduates' self-employment, there is lack of specific initiatives taken to address the situation. Semboja and Haji, (2021) condemned this situation in view of low political will and poor supportive environment for graduates' employability. The Danish, Trade Union Development Agency, (2022) and Kamuhabwa, (2019) also pinpointed evidences about unfriendly government bureaucracies, stringed business restrictions, difficult financial credits and corrupt systems that hinder youths' employment prospects. There is a concern with these findings that, community organisations have not seriously analysed the problem for solutions. A report by the Danish, Trade Union Development Agency (2022) on the labour market profile in Tanzania pointed out unfriendly bureaucracies and stringent business restrictions. In concurrence, the interview explanation presented in this article presented a lack of specific initiatives for graduates' support schemes as part of the low political will needed to shadow community concerns towards taking roles in

addressing the graduates' employability crisis. A good political will, such as efforts dedicated to financing higher education through millions of funds through the Higher Education Students Loan Board [HESLB] (URT, 2004), may be needed to tackle this similar problem. Respective policies like the higher education policy (URT, 1999) and the national youth and development policy (2007) are proper community tools expected to explicitly address the after-school life of prospective graduates.

Furthermore, results have indicated that, while entrepreneurship education is the most provided support service by the studied community organisation, lack of capital is the leading hindering factor, on the other hand. The national concern for youths' employment support through micro-credit schemes for youth (URT, 2007), such that 10% of the local government income for special group seems the known practice in terms of capital loans provided. The provision of capital loans and other supports is youths commonly referred to as "*Machinga*" (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016), whose connotation may in one way provoke the resistive attitudes of graduates for being counted into one pot as "*machinga*" Generally, the Tanzanian communities have to further re-think ways to significantly contribute to towards graduates' employability. Moreover, capital provision in the form of financial loans may hinder its access by fresh graduates due to a need for repayment, instead, emphasis should be placed in material capital.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, community in selected study areas; have made a limited contribution towards supporting higher education graduates' access to self-employment. Lack of specific support policies and services for graduates seems to be the main cause poor graduates' self-employability. Although, the community is aware about graduates' employability crises, it has not taken the crisis as a social problem that needs collective actions to address it. Henceforth, there is a need to build a holistic community awareness to take part in finding solutions for poor addressing poor employability so as to reduce the chance of having more graduates who cannot even self-employ themselves. This can be done by establishing support policies and programmes especially microfinance credits and capital material loans provision for enhancing graduates' access to self-employment after studies.

The community should also take initiatives to encourage the higher education institutions to integrate the self-employment knowledge, skills and experiences into the educational curricular. Short of that, the country may be significantly producing a number of dependent elites annually. Given that lack of capital has been noted as a big problem hindering graduates' access to self-employment, this study recommends measures by responsible government authorities and community based organisations to focus on capital materials rather than loans. The government should also establish sustainable policy frameworks that specifically address graduates' self-employment support schemes after schooling. Finally, the study recommends further research on graduates' benefits from access to self-employment opportunities through various support services offered in the country.

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