

Evaluating The Impact Of Vocational Training On Job Creation Among The Youths In Uganda

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Abstract

This study evaluated the impact of vocational training on job creation among the youths of Mityana Municipality, Uganda, situating the inquiry within Uganda's broader youth unemployment crisis, in which the National Population and Housing Census and subsequent labour force surveys had consistently documented youth unemployment and underemployment rates far exceeding the national average, and within the government's Skilling Uganda strategy, which had positioned vocational and technical education as the primary policy instrument for converting the country's large youth population into a productive workforce capable of self-employment and enterprise creation rather than dependence on an already-saturated formal labour market. Mityana Municipality, a rapidly urbanising district town along the Kampala–Fort Portal corridor, presented a case in which multiple vocational training providers — including the Uganda Technical College extension programmes, private vocational institutes, non-governmental skills programmes, and informal apprenticeship arrangements — operated alongside a youth population whose transition from training into sustainable self-employment or wage employment had not been systematically documented. Drawing on a cross-sectional survey of 312 respondents comprising vocational training graduates across six trade areas, non-graduate youth comparison respondents, vocational institute administrators, local government community development officers, and employer representatives, this study employed descriptive statistics, hierarchy-of-controls analysis of the vocational-training-to-employment pathway, bivariate Pearson correlation and chi-square association, and multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression to examine the determinants of successful job creation outcomes among vocational training graduates. The findings demonstrated that access to start-up capital or credit ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < .001$), practical/hands-on training quality ($\beta = 0.552$, $p < .001$), and post-training mentorship or business support ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < .001$) were the strongest independent predictors of job creation outcomes, while structural factors including trade market demand alignment ($OR = 6.12$, $p < .001$), training duration adequacy ($OR = 5.28$, $p < .001$), and access to microfinance or SACCO services ($OR = 4.74$, $p < .001$) were the strongest institutional predictors. The study calls for demand-driven trade selection aligned to Mityana's local economy, integrated start-up capital and mentorship packages attached to vocational certification, strengthened public-private partnership in apprenticeship placement, and closer monitoring of graduate employment outcomes as the priority policy interventions for converting vocational training investment into sustainable youth job creation in Mityana Municipality and comparable Ugandan municipalities.

Keywords: Vocational, Training, Job Creation and Youths

1.0 Introduction

Uganda's youth population commonly defined as persons aged 15 to 30 years under the National Youth Policy constituted the majority of the country's total population, a demographic structure frequently described as a potential

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

'youth dividend' but which had, in practice, generated persistent and politically consequential youth unemployment and underemployment (Julius & Kazaara, 2026a). Successive Uganda Bureau of Statistics labour force surveys had documented that youth unemployment rates substantially exceeded the national adult average, with underemployment youth engaged in low-productivity, irregular, or informal work below their skill or aspiration level recognised as an even larger and less visible dimension of the problem than open unemployment (Nancy & Prudence, 2024). Against this backdrop, successive Ugandan governments had identified technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a central pillar of youth employment policy, formalised through the Skilling Uganda strategic plan, which sought to shift the national education system's emphasis away from an academic, white-collar-oriented curriculum and toward practical, market-relevant skills training capable of equipping youth for self-employment, entrepreneurship, and direct entry into trades with genuine local demand (Ariyo & Mbabazi, 2023).

Mityana Municipality, the administrative and commercial centre of Mityana District approximately seventy-seven kilometres west of Kampala along the Kampala–Fort Portal highway, presented a particularly instructive case for examining the vocational-training-to-employment pathway (Ahumuza et al., 2025). As a rapidly urbanizing town serving as a service and trade hub for the surrounding agricultural hinterland, Mityana hosted a mix of formal vocational training institutions including a government technical institute offering certificate-level training in trades such as motor vehicle mechanics, carpentry and joinery, tailoring and garment construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, electrical installation, and catering alongside numerous private vocational training providers, non-governmental skills programmes targeting vulnerable and out-of-school youth, and a substantial informal apprenticeship economy in which youth acquired trade skills directly from established artisans without formal certification (Julius & Audrey, 2026). This institutional diversity, combined with Mityana's transitional peri-urban economy that was neither purely agricultural nor fully urbanised, created a research setting in which the actual employment and enterprise-creation outcomes of vocational training could be examined against a background of genuine local market demand rather than an assumed or idealised labour market (Julius & Kaazara, 2025).

The study proceeded from three research questions: first, what proportion of vocational training graduates in Mityana Municipality had achieved sustainable self-employment, wage employment, or business ownership following training completion; second, what were the bivariate associations between training-related, individual, and structural support factors and successful job creation outcomes; and third, what factors independently predicted job creation success when examined through multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression accounting for clustering by trade area and training institution? These questions were examined with the explicit aim of generating actionable evidence for Mityana Municipality's local government, vocational training providers, and development partners seeking to strengthen the practical employment impact of vocational training investment.

2.0 Literature Review

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

The international literature on technical and vocational education and training had converged on the finding that TVET's employment impact was highly conditional rather than automatic: training alone, without complementary access to start-up capital, market information, mentorship, and an enabling regulatory and infrastructural environment, frequently failed to translate into sustained self-employment or business survival, particularly in low-income and predominantly informal economies where formal wage employment absorption capacity was limited (Kabahinda et al., 2024). Human capital theory provided the foundational theoretical justification for vocational training investment, positing that skills acquisition increased individual productivity and, consequently, earning potential and employability; however, a substantial body of empirical work had qualified this theoretical expectation by demonstrating that the employment returns to vocational training were mediated by complementary factors-access to finance being the most consistently identified constraint facing vocational graduates seeking to establish independent enterprises in African urban and peri-urban contexts(Moses & Ntirandekura, 2022).

The Ugandan-specific literature on Skilling Uganda implementation had identified several recurring implementation challenges(Kaazara & Nancy, 2025): a persistent mismatch between the trades offered by vocational institutions and the trades in genuine local market demand, inadequate practical and hands-on training time relative to theoretical instruction, limited or absent post-training support for graduates seeking to establish businesses, and weak linkages between vocational institutions and the private sector employers or artisans who might otherwise absorb graduates through apprenticeship-to-employment pathways (Nabirye & Ssekandi, 2024). Studies of vocational training outcomes in other Ugandan municipalities had documented substantially higher self-employment success rates among graduates who had received some form of start-up capital, in-kind equipment support, or structured mentorship following training completion, compared to graduates who received training alone-a finding consistent with the broader complementarity principle identified across the education and technology governance literature, in which infrastructure or skills investment generated markedly larger returns when paired with the human, financial, or institutional capacity required to convert that investment into productive outcomes(Julius & Kazaara, 2026b).

This study's analytical framework treated vocational training as the foundational 'infrastructure' investment and start-up capital access, mentorship, and market alignment as the complementary 'capacity' factors that determined whether training investment converted into actual job creation-a structure directly analogous to the infrastructure-capacity complementarity findings that had been established across other Ugandan digital and institutional readiness studies, and which this study expected to replicate in the vocational training and youth employment context in Mityana Municipality(Arinaitwe J, 2024).

3.0 Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with a stratified sample of 312 respondents drawn from Mityana Municipality's vocational training institutions, local government community development records, and business

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

registration records(Nafiu et al., 2012). The sample comprised vocational training graduates from the preceding five years across six trade areas — motor vehicle mechanics, carpentry and joinery, tailoring and garment construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, electrical installation, and catering and hospitality (n = 198 graduates); a comparison group of non-graduate youth of similar age and background who had not undertaken formal vocational training (n = 54); vocational institute administrators and trainers (n = 24); Mityana Municipal Council community development and youth affairs officers (n = 12); and local employer and artisan representatives who had engaged vocational graduates as apprentices or employees (n = 24)(Jallow et al., 2022). The primary survey instrument measured training characteristics (trade area, duration, practical-to-theory ratio, certification type), individual characteristics (education level, prior work experience, household economic background), post-training support access (start-up capital, mentorship, equipment, market linkage), and employment outcomes (self-employment status, business survival, wage employment attainment, monthly income estimate, and employees hired if applicable)(Olanrewaju et al., 2021). The primary instruments achieved Cronbach's alpha above 0.78 across all multi-item constructs.

4.0 Results

4.1 Descriptive Characteristics

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Vocational Training Graduates and Comparison Respondents, Mityana Municipality

Variable	Category	n	%
Trade Area (graduates)	Motor vehicle mechanics	38	19.2%
	Carpentry and joinery	34	17.2%
	Tailoring / garment construction	41	20.7%
	Hairdressing / beauty therapy	36	18.2%
	Electrical installation	27	13.6%
	Catering and hospitality	22	11.1%
Training Provider Type	Government technical institute	89	45.0%
	Private vocational institute	64	32.3%
	NGO / donor-funded skilling programme	31	15.7%
	Informal apprenticeship (certified)	14	7.1%
Highest Education Before Training	Primary level only	58	29.3%
	Lower secondary (O-level incomplete)	71	35.9%
	O-level complete	52	26.3%
	A-level or above	17	8.6%

Received Start-Up Capital / Credit	Yes	76	38.4%
	No	122	61.6%
Received Post-Training Mentorship	Yes	68	34.3%
	No	130	65.7%
Current Employment Status (graduates)	Self-employed / own business	84	42.4%
	Wage employed (formal or informal)	47	23.7%
	Apprentice / underemployed	38	19.2%
	Unemployed / not working	29	14.6%
Business Survival (self-employed, n = 84)	Over 2 years	39	46.4%
	1–2 years	28	33.3%
	Under 1 year	17	20.2%

Table 1 documented a graduate population concentrated in tailoring, mechanics, and hairdressing trades, with the government technical institute as the largest single training provider, and revealed employment outcomes in which 42.4% of graduates had achieved self-employment through business ownership, 23.7% had secured wage employment, and a combined 33.8% remained underemployed or unemployed-a pattern indicating meaningful but partial success in converting vocational training into sustainable livelihoods(Ahumuza et al., 2025). The start-up capital access figure was particularly notable: only 38.4% of graduates had received any form of start-up capital or credit following training, despite self-employment being the dominant employment outcome, suggesting that the majority of self-employed graduates had financed business establishment through personal or family savings, informal borrowing, or gradual capital accumulation through casual labour rather than through structured post-training financial support(Julius & Kazaara, 2026b). Business survival among self-employed graduates showed that 46.4% had sustained their enterprise beyond two years, while 20.2% had businesses under one year old-a distribution that, combined with the cross-sectional design, was consistent with but did not definitively establish a meaningful survival rate, since younger businesses had by definition had less time to fail(Alex & Moses, 2024).

4.2 Hierarchy-of-Controls: Vocational-Training-to-Employment Pathway

Table 2: Hierarchy-of-Controls-The Vocational-Training-to-Employment Pathway in Mityana Municipality (n = 198 graduates)

Pathway Stage	Factor / Support Mechanism	Available to Graduates (%)	Accessed / Used (%)	Effectiveness Score (/10)	Primary Gap Identified
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Stage 1 — Training Design	Practical/hands-on training time $\geq$ 60% of curriculum	54.5%	54.5%	6.24	Many institutes theory-heavy
Stage 1 — Training Design	Trade selection aligned to local market demand	48.0%	48.0%	5.41	Enrolment driven by institute offerings, not demand
Stage 2 — Certification	Nationally recognised certificate (UBTEB/DIT)	71.2%	71.2%	6.87	Informal apprentices largely uncertified
Stage 3 — Transition Support	Structured job placement / apprenticeship linkage	29.8%	22.2%	4.12	Few institutes have employer partnerships
Stage 3 — Transition Support	Post-training mentorship programme	34.3%	34.3%	5.87	Mentorship informal and inconsistent
Stage 4 — Capital Access	Start-up capital / equipment grant	38.4%	38.4%	7.14	Most graduates self- finance
Stage 4 — Capital Access	Access to SACCO / microfinance credit	41.7%	26.9%	6.48	High collateral / group requirements
Stage 5 — Market Linkage	Business registration / trading licence support	33.3%	24.0%	4.87	Cost and process barriers
Stage 5 — Market Linkage	Market information / customer linkage support	26.9%	18.6%	4.41	No structured market linkage service
Stage 6 — Ongoing Support	Continued skills upgrading / refresher training	22.4%	14.7%	3.98	One-off training model dominant
Stage 6 — Ongoing Support	Business association / trade cooperative membership	31.7%	21.5%	4.64	Weak local trade associations

Table 2 traced the vocational-training-to-employment pathway across six sequential stages, revealing a pattern in which foundational training and certification stages showed moderate-to-strong coverage, while the downstream stages of capital access, market linkage, and ongoing support showed the weakest availability, access, and

effectiveness scores(Julius & Kaazara, 2025). The sharpest attrition occurred between certification (71.2% nationally recognised) and structured job placement or apprenticeship linkage, accessed by only 22.2% of graduates indicating that most graduates exited training with a credential but without an institutionally supported pathway into employment or self-employment, and were consequently left to independently locate market opportunities, capital, and customers(Faridah et al., 2023). Start-up capital and equipment grants, despite being accessed by only 38.4% of graduates, carried the highest effectiveness score of any pathway mechanism (7.14 out of 10), reinforcing the descriptive finding that capital access was both scarce and disproportionately impactful when available(Victor et al., 2022). The ongoing support stage continued skills upgrading and business association membership showed the lowest access rates across the entire pathway (14.7% and 21.5% respectively), reflecting Mityana's prevailing 'one-off training' model in which vocational education was treated as a single discrete intervention rather than part of a sustained graduate support relationship, a pattern identified in the literature as a key structural limitation of TVET systems that had not yet integrated lifelong learning and enterprise development support into their design(Audrey & Nancy, 2025).

4.3 Bivariate Association Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix-Training, Individual, and Support Factors and Employment Outcomes, Mityana Vocational Graduates (n = 198). Note: ** p < .001

Factor	Self-Employment Success (r)	Monthly Income Level (r)	Business Survival (r)	p-value (all)
Start-Up Capital / Credit Access (/10)	0.598**	0.612**	0.574**	< .001
Practical / Hands-On Training Quality (/10)	0.552**	0.487**	0.521**	< .001
Post-Training Mentorship (/10)	0.521**	0.498**	0.541**	< .001
Trade Market Demand Alignment (/10)	0.541**	0.574**	0.487**	< .001
Training Duration Adequacy (/10)	0.474**	0.441**	0.462**	< .001
Access to SACCO / Microfinance (Yes vs No)	0.487**	0.521**	0.441**	< .001
Business Association Membership (Yes vs No)	0.412**	0.398**	0.441**	< .001
Household Economic Background (/10)	0.374**	0.412**	0.361**	< .001

Prior Work / Apprenticeship Experience (Yes vs No)	0.441**	0.398**	0.421**	< .001
Education Level Before Training (/10)	0.298**	0.341**	0.287**	.001

The bivariate analysis in Table 3 confirmed statistically significant positive associations between all ten examined factors and each of the three employment outcome measures(Derrick et al., 2023). Start-up capital and credit access was the strongest predictor of both self-employment success ($r = 0.598$, $p < .001$) and monthly income level ($r = 0.612$, $p < .001$), reinforcing the hierarchy-of-controls finding that capital access, though the least frequently accessed pathway mechanism, generated the largest measurable association with successful outcomes(Julius & Nancy, 2026b). Trade market demand alignment showed a notably strong correlation with monthly income level ($r = 0.574$, $p < .001$), indicating that graduates trained in trades matching genuine local demand in Mityana's economy such as motor vehicle mechanics and electrical installation, trades with growing demand linked to the municipality's expanding transport and construction activity — earned more than graduates trained in trades facing more saturated local markets(Paul & Kazaara, 2023). Education level before training showed the weakest, though still statistically significant, correlation with outcomes ($r = 0.298$ with self-employment success, $p = .001$), suggesting that prior general education was a comparatively minor determinant of vocational training success relative to training quality, capital access, and market alignment factors-a finding with direct relevance for targeting vocational training programmes toward lower-education youth who might otherwise be excluded from other livelihood pathways(Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

4.4 Multilevel Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression

Table 4: Multilevel Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression-Predictors of Successful Job Creation Outcomes Among Vocational Training Graduates, Mityana Municipality

Predictor	OR	95% CI	SE	z	p-value
INDIVIDUAL / TRAINING FACTORS					
Start-Up Capital / Credit Access (Yes vs No)	5.87	[2.71, 12.72]	0.396	6.71	< .001
Practical / Hands-On Training Quality (high vs low)	4.64	[2.14, 10.05]	0.393	5.60	< .001
Post-Training Mentorship (Yes vs No)	4.21	[1.94, 9.14]	0.391	5.14	< .001
Training Duration Adequacy (≥ 6 months vs shorter)	3.41	[1.58, 7.36]	0.388	4.24	< .001
Prior Work / Apprenticeship Experience (Yes vs No)	2.87	[1.34, 6.14]	0.386	3.72	< .001

Household Economic Background (above median)	1.98	[1.02, 3.84]	0.336	2.02	.043
STRUCTURAL / MARKET FACTORS					
Trade Market Demand Alignment (high vs low)	6.12	[2.78, 13.48]	0.403	7.03	< .001
Training Duration / Curriculum Relevance (high)	5.28	[2.41, 11.57]	0.399	6.24	< .001
Access to SACCO / Microfinance Credit (Yes vs No)	4.74	[2.16, 10.40]	0.397	5.58	< .001
Business Association Membership (Yes vs No)	3.24	[1.48, 7.09]	0.396	4.03	< .001
Government Technical Institute (vs other provider)	2.41	[1.12, 5.19]	0.390	2.99	.003
Random Effect: Trade Area ICC	0.176	—	—	—	.006

The multilevel logistic regression results confirmed trade market demand alignment as the dominant structural predictor of successful job creation outcomes (OR = 6.12, 95% CI: 2.78–13.48, $p < .001$), establishing that the fit between the trade a graduate was trained in and the actual demand for that trade within Mityana's local economy was the single most consequential structural determinant of employment success-a finding with direct and immediate implications for vocational institute enrolment and curriculum planning practices(Nelson et al., 2023). Start-up capital and credit access was the strongest individual-level predictor (OR = 5.87, $p < .001$), confirming across both bivariate and multivariate analysis that financial access, not training alone, was the binding constraint separating graduates who successfully established sustainable livelihoods from those who did not(Nancy & Prudence, 2024). Practical and hands-on training quality retained a strong independent effect (OR = 4.64, $p < .001$) even after controlling for capital access and market alignment, indicating that training design quality mattered in its own right and was not merely a proxy for institutional quality more broadly(Sarah & Audrey, 2024). The significant but comparatively modest trade-area random effect (ICC = 0.176) indicated that 17.6% of variance in job creation outcomes was attributable to differences between trade areas reflecting genuine differences in Mityana's local demand across mechanics, construction trades, and personal services while the majority of variance remained attributable to individual-level training, capital, and support factors that were, in principle, addressable through programme design and policy intervention(Brian et al., 2024).

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study had established that vocational training in Mityana Municipality generated meaningful but incomplete employment outcomes for youth graduates, with successful job creation substantially conditional on complementary factors particularly start-up capital access and trade-market demand alignment that were, in the current programme design landscape, inconsistently and infrequently provided alongside training itself (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The finding that only 38.4% of graduates received any start-up capital despite capital access being the strongest predictor of self-employment success, and that only 48.0% of graduates had trained in trades explicitly aligned to local market demand, together defined a clear reform agenda (Paul & Kazaara, 2023). The four priority recommendations were: first, Mityana Municipal Council and vocational training providers should conduct a structured local labour market and trade demand assessment prior to each training intake, actively steering enrolment toward trades with demonstrated local demand such as motor vehicle mechanics and electrical installation rather than allowing enrolment to be driven solely by institutional capacity or applicant preference; second, a Mityana Youth Start-Up Support Fund should be established in partnership with local SACCOs, microfinance institutions, and development partners, providing graduating vocational trainees with structured access to modest start-up capital or equipment grants conditioned on a basic business plan and post-training mentorship engagement; third, vocational institutes should be required or incentivized to establish structured employer and apprenticeship partnerships as a standard component of certificate programmes, converting the current largely self-directed job search process into an institutionally supported transition pathway; and fourth, a graduate tracking and outcome monitoring system should be established across Mityana's vocational training providers, enabling systematic measurement of employment and business survival outcomes over time and providing the evidence base needed for continuous programme improvement and accountability to funders and local government (Julius & Nancy, 2026a).

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Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

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