THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Employers' Perception of the Extent to Which Skills Development Programmes Address the Skills Required for the Labour Market in Uganda

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***Abstract**:*
Limited information is known about the employers' perception of the extent to which skills development programmes address the skills required for the labour market in Uganda. 48 employers through a captive audience sampling of close ended questionnaires and 6 employers through in-depth interview guides participated in the study. The objective was to determine the extent to which skills development programmes address the skills required in the labour market from the employer' perception. A cross-sectional design with mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative approach supported the study. Human capital theory and capability approach formed the theoretical framework of the study. Results reveal that, skills mismatch is persistent in form of under skilling especially in soft skills. The study recommended a need to build a skills development programme system aimed at ensuring better matching between skills supply and demand in the labour market through upscaling and participation of employers.

***Keywords:** Labour market, skills development, skills development programmes*

1. Introduction to the Study

Labour market is a "place where labour services are bought and sold" (Fields, 2011, p.1). For labour services to be bought, it depends on the skills that one possess. Skills development therefore not only empower people through imparting applied knowledge and skills required for employability, self-sustenance in the world of work for formal and informal employment and competences (Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), 2012; Nuwagaba, 2012; World Bank, 1991); but also for increasing peoples chances of entering into the labour market, to increase income and productivity (Tukundane et al., 2015; Payne et al.,2008; MoES, 2010; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), 2012); for social inclusion and development (Bennel, 1999); and for empowering those excluded from the formal education such as the ESLs, and unemployed youth through imparting practical skills to improve the quality of life (Blaak et. al., 2013; Yassunaga, 2014). Therefore when the workforce skills do not address the skills required in the labour market, it compromises economic development (World Economic Forum, 2014).

International and national previous studies (European Union (EU), 2017; UNESCO, 2012; Business Technical Vocational and Education Training (BTVET), 2012) acknowledged in this study proposed different soft and technical skills required in the labour market, but literature does not show whether those skills proposed address the skills required in the labour market. The soft skills include employability skills, values and attitudes, and empowerment competences. This study could be seen as an attempt to address the gap in knowledge on the extent to which SDPs address the skills required in the labour market from the employers' perceptions.

1.1. Context of the Study

Skills development in Uganda since 1960s: just like many of the Sub-Saharan countries, is offered outside the mainstream education (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2002). Despite the government efforts to provide skills for employability, skills development programmes (SDPs) have not been able to yield as expected (BTVET, 2012; MoES, 2012; Nuwagaba, 2012; Wirak et al., 2003). Skills mismatch has persisted resulting to employment concerns. This is because SDPs are covering a narrow range of occupations, and not addressing the skills required in the labour market in the modern productive sectors, oriented towards satisfaction of limited industrial employment requirements, not catering for the technological requirements of the rural areas, of individuals going for self-employment, who require adequate skills to make proper use of, and maintain tools, to undertake creative or productive activities on their own with knowledge of business management methods for running even the small-scale enterprises. Soft skills required for modern work is underemphasized in the training programmes. The labour market thus faces critical skills mismatch which threaten, and

limit the growth of key sectors including; agriculture, secondary, and services sectors (Masolo, 2015; MoES, 2012; Nuwagaba, 2012; UBOS, 2016).

Uganda recognised that, one size does not fit all. Therefore, the government specifically launched the BTVET strategic plan 2012 to cater for skills development for all with low or no skills especially the ESLs for employability. BTVET consists of 133 public institutions (17 percent), 600 private training providers (81 percent), 17 apprenticeships and enterprise based training representing 2 percent (National Development Plan, 2010/2011). However, despite the provision of skills through BTVET, employers and Uganda labour market profile (ULMP, 2014) still indicate skills shortages. This has culminated the study to determine the extent to which skills development programmes address the skills required by the labour market through the employers' perception.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Skills development encompass focusing on relevant, and employable skills required in the labour market. Unfortunately, employers in Uganda have been complaining about the skills shortages of appropriately skilled, and qualified workers that constrain both production, and expansion of the economy (BTVET, 2012). Learners are ill equipped with the modern world of work and the blame has been placed on the education system (BTVET, 2012; MoES, 2012). Gyimah-Brempong & ondiege (2011), claim that the high youth employment concerns are due to skills mismatch—the educational system produces skills that are not demanded by the employers. Despite the government mandate through its BTVET strategic plan 2012 to offer skills for employability, skills mismatch is persistent (ULMP, 2014). The study thus questions the extent to which SDPs address the skills required for the labour market through the employers' perceptions.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

To determine the extent to which SDPs address the skills required for the labour market from the employers' perceptions.

1.4. Theoretical Considerations

Although human capital theory was criticised for being "functionalistic" and "productivist" in nature (Fleischhauer, 2007; Livingstone, 1997; Sweet land, 1996), the rationale to adopt it was because the study was concerned with skills required by employers to enter the labour market. The overall framework is hinged on capability approach Sen and Nussbaum- to blend it with the quality of life which is enshrined with universality and human rights perspective, and empowerment by Freire. Drawing from the 1960s and 1970s, education or training in development was largely seen from the human capital theory perspective (Baker, 1962; 1964; Todaro, 1985). That is why proponents of human capital theory focuses on the instrumental and economic importance of education or training for employability and economic growth (Hiekkila, 2008). Human capital theorists suggest that investing in education or training raises the productivity of the labour force by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising the labour force future income by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1964; Brooks & Nafukho, 2006). A higher level of education used as a proxy to measure the level of knowledge of skills also leads to higher returns. People with higher qualifications also earn higher wages (Psacharopoulos, 1994; Psacharopoulos & wood hall, 1985). The premise of human capital theorists is that, investment in "knowledge, skills and know-how" of the workforce can significantly contribute to the productivity and economic growth of a country (Brown, 2001, p.5). Kleynhans (2006) agree with this view by noting that, "human capital, can provide a country with competitive edge that would lead to economic growth and enhance everyone's welfare'' (p.55). Therefore, Kleynhans (2006) summarized those elements in humans that improve the quality of labour such as "skills, knowledge, and wisdom, which makes it worth more in the production process" (p.55).

Sens' (2001) perspective is premised on the view that, when one functions in the capabilities that have been given to them to live a life that they value leads to development. From that perspective, we notice that, when graduates' skills are able to address the requirements of the labour market, it would lead to development. Freire (2005) empowerment approach augment the study by ensuring that, learners are able to recreate knowledge and improve their self-esteem. That is why, Nussbaum (2011) ideology of legalizing of central human capabilities is important to be taken as a human right for the development of not only individuals, but also societies within their cultural context.

2. Methodology of the Study

A cross-sectional design accompanied by a mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative approaches with the support of questionnaires and interview guides as tools of data collection supported the study. The underlying philosophy is positivism and Interpretivism respectively. Ritchie & Lewis (2008) explain that, "qualitative studies emphasizes and values human interpretative aspects of knowing about the social worlds, the significance of the investigators own interpretation and understanding of the phenomena being studied" (p.7). Synman (1993), clarify that, positivism embraces the worldview that truth/reality is objective and external, and that "all scientific knowledge is based on empirically observable impressions, empirically testable and verifiable" (p.2). In the positivist inquiry, the researcher becomes detached from reality, a feature that is extensively regarded as reliable and authentic as a means to knowledge claims. 48 employers were selected through captive audience sampling and 6 employers through purposive sampling for in-depth interviews. The researcher found the closest live persons as respondents in primary, secondary and services sector of both formal and non-formal enterprises. What was lost in sampling accuracy was saved in time and money (Bailey, 2008). Data was collected in two phases: i) a brief review of literature to scan through the skills required by the labour market from the international to national level; ii) An interaction with the curriculum and 6 principles from

government institutions to confirm if the skills were offered. SPSS software and thematic analysis supported data analysis respectively. A paired samples t-test was employed to determine whether there are significant mean variations with regard to the level of importance employers attach to a particular skill and their corresponding level of satisfaction with skills development graduates' possession of the skills namely: employability skills, values and attitudes skills, empowerment competences and technical skills. A probability value of 0.05 was employed to determine the statistical significance. As such, a p-value of ≤ 0.05 indicated a skills mismatch between the requirements of the labour market and what is being offered by skills development programmes. Regarding ethical considerations, employers were contacted and a letter from National Council of Higher Education was given to them for ethics clearance. Permission was obtained from the owners, asked about their willingness to participate with signing of the consent form. Questionnaires were filled in but their names and enterprises were anonymized.

3. Presentation of Findings

The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which SDPs address the skills required in the labour market through the employer' perception. Data in table 1 shows the employer's perception on the different skills.

	Sector	**Importance**		**Satisfaction**		**mean diff**	**t-statistic**	**p-value**
		Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev			
Employability skills	Primary	1.9	0.2	1.4	0.3	0.5	6.88	.000
	Services	1.9	0.2	1.5	0.3	0.4	5.31	.000
	Secondary	2	0.1	1.3	0.2	0.7	12.27	.000
Values and attitudes skills	Primary	2	0.1	1.3	0.4	0.7	-7.59	.000
	Services	1.9	0.1	1.4	0.3	0.5	-4.79	.000
	Secondary	2	0.1	1.2	0.2	0.8	-10.89	.000
Empowerment competences	Primary	1.8	0.2	1.3	0.3	0.5	7.26	.000
	Services	1.7	0.3	1.5	0.2	0.2	3.29	.006
	Secondary	1.8	0.2	1.3	0.1	0.5	7.29	.000
Technical skills	Primary	2	0	1.6	0.5	0.4	4.19	.001
	Services	1.9	0.2	1.7	0.4	0.2	1.33	.208
	Secondary	2	0.1	1.6	0.4	0.4	3.91	.001

Table 1: A Summary of Levels of Importance and Satisfaction Employers Attach to the Different Skills
Note. Scale: 1=Not Important, 2= Important, 1=Not Satisfied, 2= Satisfied

From table 1; although many employers for all sectors attach much importance (mean=1.9 to 2) to employability skills, values and attitudes, their level of satisfaction falls below their expectations. This implies a skills mismatch in form of under skilling (figures 1 to 3) between what SDPs offer and the skills required in the labour market. Skills mismatches occur when workers have either fewer or more skills than jobs require (World Economic Forum, 2014). Under skilling is the level of skills lower than what is required to perform the job (World Economic Forum, 2014). None the less, employers in services sector employability skills on average expressed a moderate level of satisfaction (mean=1.5) compared to those in primary (mean=1.4±0.3) and secondary (mean=1.3±0.2). Even though employers expressed a moderate level of satisfaction (mean=1.5±0.2) in services sector in empowerment competences, their level of satisfaction in primary (1.3±0.3) and secondary (mean=1.3±0.1) falls below their expectation. The lowest level of satisfaction was felt in values and attitude skills. Employers also felt that, technical skills to a greater extent address the skills required in the labour market (mean=1.6, 1.7 and 1.6 respectively) for the three sectors. The highest level of satisfaction was felt in services sector of technical skills, no wonder there is a less significant variation (p=0.208>0.05). This implies that, skills offered in services sector of technical skills take the greatest share of addressing the skills required in the labour market.

Figures (1 to 4) indicate clearly that, all skills are highly required for the labour market represented as level of importance, however, the level of satisfaction falls below the employers' expectations. This means that skills offered to SDPs graduates do not effectively address the skills required by the labour market leading to skills mismatch in form of under skilling. Secondary sector exhibits the highest level of skills mismatch in soft skills, yet primary sector lags behind in technical skills.

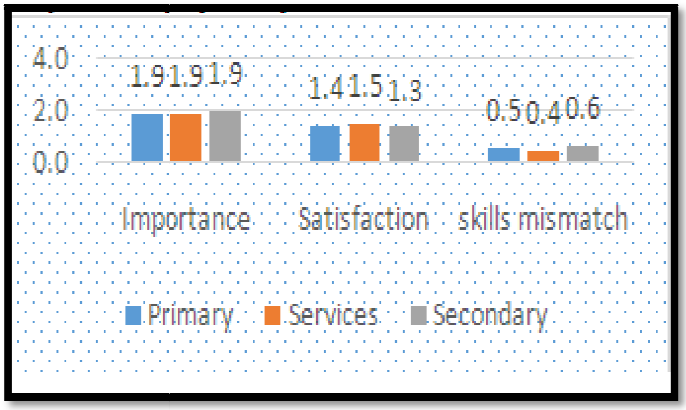

Figure 1: Employability Skills

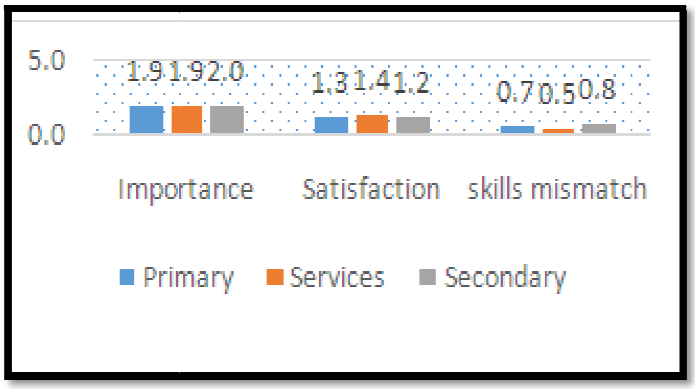

Figure 2: Values and Attitudes Skills

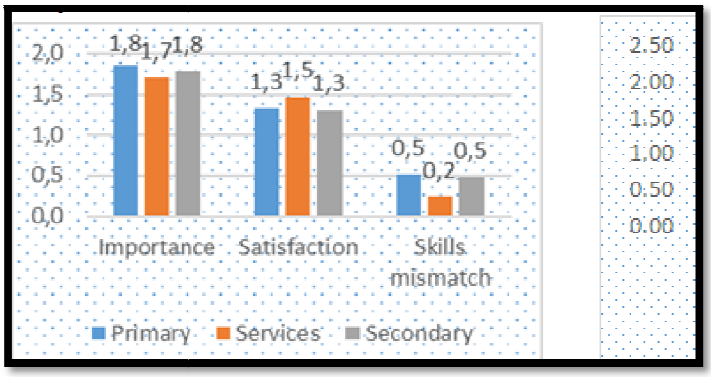

Figure 3: Empowerment Competences

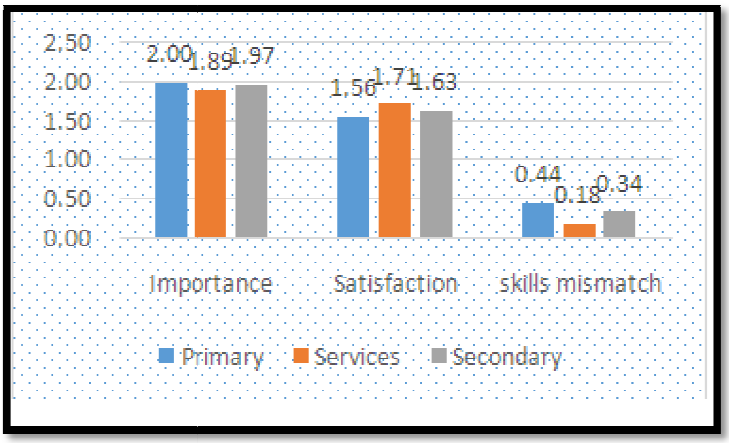

Figure 4: Technical Skills

There was a significant variation ($p=0.000<0.05$) for all except a less significant variation for services sector in technical skills offered ($p=0.208>0.05$). The implication was that, as much as there were skills mismatch (figures 1 to 4) in all soft and technical skills, the magnitude of skills mismatch was less perceived in services sector under the technical skills. Detailed account of employer's perception for every skill is seen in tables 2 to 5.

Table 2 shows the 15 employability skills. The higher mean value of importance indicates a higher level of importance or how important that skill would address the skills required in the labour market. The higher mean value also indicates the higher satisfaction levels as reported by employers. From these findings, it can be assumed that, the most important employability skills (mean=2.0) for employers in primary sector include; oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, team work, enthusiasm, and willingness to work. While employers in primary sector were more satisfied with interpersonal skills (mean=1.9±0.3), and team work (mean=1.9±0.3), they felt that SDPs systems did not do well in written communication (mean=1.4), followed with other skills with a mean of (1.2) including; enthusiasm, presentation skills, flexibility and adaptability, initiative, achievement oriented, relevant work experience, information technology, leadership, and entrepreneurship capabilities. This therefore implies that there is a mismatch between skills offered by SDPs and what the labour market requires. SDPs can already put more emphasis in those areas to improve the performance of their graduates in employability skills of primary sector.

Within the services sector (table 2), all employability skills were important for the labour market. What employers considered the most important (mean=2.0) included; oral and written communication, teamwork, initiative, and achievement oriented. Although interpersonal skills scored the second highest important skill (mean=1.9), it also satisfied employers the most (mean=2.0). Meaning that what the SDPs offered exceeded the expectation of the employers in the labour market. The least satisfactory skills (mean 1.1) included; initiative, information technology and leadership. Other skills which clearly portrayed skills mismatch (1.4) included; flexibility and adaptability, enthusiasm, and entrepreneurship capabilities yet, those with (mean=1.3) were achievement oriented, and relevant work experience. This clearly indicated a skills mismatch in form of under skilling and so such skills do not address the skills required in the labour market.

Secondary sector clearly shows that all employability skills are important, however, the level of satisfaction largely falls below the expectations of the employers (table 2). Graduates lack completely some of the skills such as information technology and entrepreneurship capabilities (1.0). What the labour market requires is completely not offered in those two skills. This is followed by those skills with a mean value of (1.1) including; written communication, flexibility and adaptability, initiative, relevant work experience, and leadership skills. Other skills which largely have skills mismatch (mean=1.2) are enthusiasm, and achievement orientation. This means that such skills do not address the skills required in the labour market. Table 2 shows the 15 employability skills.

	Sector							
	Primary		**Services**		**Secondary**		**Total**	
	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction
Oral communication	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4
Written communication	1.8±0.4	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.5±0.5	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.3±0.5
Academic results	1.9±0.3	1.6±0.5	1.8±0.4	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.6±0.5
Interpersonal skills	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.1	1.9±0.3
Presentation skills	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.5±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.5±0.5	1.9±0.4	1.4±0.5
Working in a team	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.4
Flexibility and adaptability	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.2	1.2±0.4
Enthusiasm	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.2	1.3±0.4
Willingness to learn	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.1	1.7±0.5
Initiative	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.2	1.1±0.3
Achievement oriented	1.9±0.2	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.1	1.2±0.4
Relevant work experience	1.9±0.2	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.3±0.5	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4
Information technology	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.7±0.5	1.1±0.4	1.8±0.4	1.0±0.0	1.7±0.5	1.1±0.3
Leadership	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.5±0.5	1.1±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.1±0.3	1.6±0.5	1.1±0.3
Entrepreneurship capabilities	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4

Table 2: Level of Importance and Satisfaction Attached to Employability Skills by Employers

It can be concluded that, the most important employability skills (mean=2.0) required by the labour market in all the three sectors of primary, services, and secondary were considered as oral communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, enthusiasm, willingness to work and achievement orientation. Within all the three sectors, emphasis to improve skills should be in the common least satisfactory skills of enthusiasm, flexibility and adaptability, achievement orientation, relevant work experience, and entrepreneurship capabilities.

Table 3 shows the 13 values and attitudes that are highly required in the labour market. The level of satisfaction however, is lower than the expectation of employers in primary and secondary sectors except the values and attitudes of sociability (mean=1.8). The implication is that, graduates employed in the labour market of primary and secondary lack all the other 12 values and attitudes. The skills mismatch is high and an emergency would be exercised to improve those skills. Nonetheless, employers in services sector expressed a moderate level of satisfaction in self –esteem (mean=1.6), ethics (mean=1.5), self-management (mean=1.6), sociability (1.9), a spirit of service (1.6), and accepting feedback (1.6). The other six values and attitudes in services sector also need urgent attention as their level of satisfaction is very low. Table 3 takes us to employers' perception of graduates' possession of values and attitudes.

Type of Skill	Sector							
	Primary		Services		Secondary		Total	
	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction	Importance	Satisfaction
Quality and efficiency	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.3	2.0±0.1	1.2±0.4
Self-esteem	1.9±0.3	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.9±0.3	1.3±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.4±0.5
Ethics	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.5±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5
Integrity and honesty	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4
Self-management	1.9±0.2	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.9±0.3	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.2	1.4±0.5
Sociability	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4
Initiative and dynamic	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3
Planning, and creativity	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.1±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3
Accountability	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.1±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3
Patience and perseverance	1.9±0.2	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.0±0.0	2.0±0.2	1.1±0.3
A future orientation and a genuine love for work	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.1±0.3	2.0±0.2	1.2±0.4
A spirit of service	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.4±0.5
Accepting feedback	2.0±0.0	1.2±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5

Table 3: Level of Importance and Satisfaction Attached to Values and Attitude Skills by Employers

Tables 4 and 5 reveals empowerment competences categorized into interpersonal skills and information skills respectively.

Type of Skill	Sector							
	Primary		Services		Secondary		Total	
Team work	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	2.0±0.0	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.3	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.2
Servicing customer ability	2.0±0.0	1.3±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5
Leadership	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.3±0.5	1.6±0.5	1.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.1±0.4
Negotiation and persuasiveness	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.4±0.5	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4
Democratic cooperation	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.1±0.3	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4
Working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds	2.0±0.0	1.7±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.9±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4

Table 4: Level of Importance and Satisfaction Attached to Interpersonal Skills under Empowerment Competences by Employers

All interpersonal skills under empowerment competences are regarded as highly important by employers. However; the level of satisfaction is wanting for leadership skills (mean=1.1), negotiation and persuasiveness (mean=1.2), and democratic cooperation (mean=1) except team work (mean=1.9) in primary and secondary and completely matching in services sector (mean=2.0). Meaning what the labour market needs is exactly what the SDPs offer leading to a skills match in services sector. Servicing customer ability can also be seen as satisfactory in services sector (mean=1.9) and slightly satisfactory in secondary sector (mean=1.6), yet mismatching in primary sector (mean=1.3). Culturally working with people of diverse backgrounds (mean=1.8) scores the second most satisfactory competence after teamwork in all sectors. Attention should thus be focused to improve leadership skills, negotiation and persuasiveness, and democratic cooperation competences with the skills mismatch in form of under skilling. Information skills (table 5) are considered important by employers, however, the level of satisfaction falls way below their expectation except in selection of right equipments and tools for work (mean=1.8).

Type of Skill	Sector							
	Primary		Services		Secondary		Total	
Acquiring and evaluating data	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.5±0.5	1.1±0.4	1.5±0.5	1.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.1±0.3
Organizing and maintaining files	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.4±0.5	1.4±0.5	1.5±0.5	1.1±0.3	1.6±0.5	1.2±0.4
Interpreting and communicating	1.9±0.3	1.2±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.1±0.4	1.7±0.5	1.1±0.3	1.7±0.4	1.1±0.4
Using computers	1.7±0.5	1.2±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.4±0.5	1.6±0.5	1.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.2±0.4
Selecting equipment and tools	2.0±0.0	1.8±0.4	1.8±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.9±0.3	1.8±0.4
Applying technology to specific tasks	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.4±0.5	1.4±0.5	1.8±0.4	1.3±0.4	1.7±0.5	1.3±0.4
Maintaining and troubleshooting technologies	1.8±0.4	1.2±0.4	1.5±0.5	1.1±0.4	1.6±0.5	1.0±0.0	1.7±0.5	1.1±0.3

Table 5: Level of Importance and Satisfaction attached to Information Skills under Empowerment Competences by Employers

Employers demand education credentials or certificates to be able to employ graduates of SDPs. However, the entry point is possession of occupational skills or job-related skills (mean=2.0) for all sectors of primary, secondary and services (table 6). Employers expressed that all graduates that have been recruited in their companies or firms possessed both certificates and job-related technical skills except a reluctance in job-related skills in secondary sector (mean=1.4).

Type of Skill	Sector							
	Primary		Services		Secondary		Total	
Education credentials /certificate	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	1.8±0.4	1.9±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.8±0.4	1.9±0.3	1.8±0.4
Occupational skills-job related	2.0±0.0	1.5±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.6±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.4±0.5	2.0±0.0	1.5±0.5

Table 6: Level of Importance and Satisfaction attached to Technical Skills by Employers

4. Discussion and Conclusions

From the theoretical considerations, it is doubtable that SDPs go beyond human capital from the employer's perceptions. Although skills in SDPs seem to be important to all employers, the current focus does not seem to have the desired results of addressing the skills required in the labour market nationally and internationally.

Findings indicate a moderate level of satisfaction in technical skills and services sector of employability and empowerment competences. However, the level of satisfaction falls below the employers' expectations in primary, and secondary sectors of all soft skills and services sector in values and attitudes. There was a significant variation ($p=0.000<0.05$) for all except a less significant variation for services sector in technical skills offered ($p=0.208>0.05$). The implication was that, as much as there were skills mismatch (figures 1 to 4) in all soft and technical skills, the magnitude of skills mismatch was less perceived in services sector under the technical skills. Employers were completely not satisfied with values and attitudes of graduates. However, they felt that, services sector in SDPs was satisfactory in all technical skills, employability skills, empowerment competences except in values and attitudes. Considering these results, employers had mixed feelings whether SDPs address the skills required in the labour market especially in areas of soft skills. Consequently SDPs graduates would not be able to address the skills required in both national and international labour market where the demand is high (EU, 2017). Similar studies in other countries in Africa have similar conclusions of skills mismatch (African Economic outlook, 2012), however, this current study gives the magnitude of the mismatch for

every skill to allow improvement (Figure 1 to 4). Powell (2012), ponder that, skills development is also a programme for particularly those who are excluded from formal education not only to acquire knowledge, but also skills, values and attitudes to improve their live chances, "respect, self-confidence and personal pride" (p.650). Without values and skills; learners lose out on knowledge economy (Kearns, 2001a), and would not be in position to build a culture of peace and democracy (Quisumbing, 2001). Skills mismatch therefore limits the learners to deal with today's unpredictable carrier paths (EU, 2017). This reinforce the findings of (Maclean & Ordonez, 2007) in other countries claiming that, in this era, skills sets are changing to an extent that, SDPs no longer address the skills required in the labour market. Some skills mismatches are inevitable as the labour market requires complex decisions by employers. But high and persistent skills mismatches are costly to employers, workers and society at large. That is why the World Economic Forum (2014) assert that, persistent skills mismatch leaves a "scarring'' effect on an individual's carrier (p.5). In addition, unused skills would atrophy resulting in a partial loss or waste in the initial investment in them. As a result many shortages could be addressed through changes in skills development, and upscaling.

Technical and soft skills are important assets to individuals, business and Ugandan labour market context as agreed by all employers surveyed. The importance of soft and technical skills is even more pronounced in a dynamic globalized world (EU, 2017; UNESCO, 2012) and national level by policy makers (BTVET, 2012) for economic development. While findings indicate lists of all skills required in the labour market, Uganda employers felt that there are those skills which are very important as were rated on the scale of 2.0. The implication of the most important skills was that, policy makers would enact policies to put more emphasis in development of such skills in the education sector but particularly in SDPs. The least satisfactory skills with the highest levels of skills mismatch especially in form of under skilling below 1.5 require urgent improvement. For this to be successful, there should be a relationship between SDPs and employers through internship, or work-based training.

Education credentials are important determinants for employment prospects in Uganda as suggested by employers. This reinforce the findings of similar studies from other countries (Levy & Murnane, 2001; Minnis, 2006; UNESCO, 2011). Consequently, employers expect graduates to have good academic results that would predict higher conceptual skills to address difficult tasks at the workplace and enhance their employment prospects (Fallows & Steven, 2000). It is noteworthy that, majority of the employers employ graduates from SDPs and the reasons for such include not only basic skills in technical and educational credentials but also those '*professionally qualified, incur less costs and time* required for training and more able to learn'. However, those employers who did not employ SDPs graduates claim that, 'they have not been happy with the quality of skills development qualifications especially the soft skills, and do not possess skills required to address the requirements of the labour market'. This would therefore deter their agency to individually or actively make decisions that influence social change or that influence development (Sen, 2001; Freire, 2005).

5. Implications

Labour market policies in Uganda focus on building human capital of the low skilled (BTVET, 2012). However, skills mismatches have persisted. The magnitude of skills mismatch was under skilling, meaning upscaling would not only increase the employability of SDPs graduates but also increase income. This could be done through identifying the labour market (employers, and participants), assess the labour market short, medium and long term skills required, update curriculums, design education approaches, structures, provide the demand driven education, focusing on competences, values and attitudes, employability skills, and develop the whole person to enjoy the quality of life. Universalizing soft skills including the non-formal programmes would be important and should be legalized as a human right to empower learners make decisions that influence development with in their cultural context (Nussbaum, 2011). Skills therefore are a key factor for economic development and prosperity of Uganda. For workers, skills equate for employability and access to income and social rights, yet for business, it's a major component of productivity, and for society, skills can be seen in a better quality of life. The notion of employees new on employment having all the skills required for their entire carrier is unrealistic. Employers should help employees develop their skills by utilising them. Moreover, employers must offer learning opportunities (Kevin et al, 2011). Internships in companies that employ SDPs graduates is important to learn useful skills required in the labour market. Continued interventions is necessary during the employment life-cycle targeting continuous skills development and use. Governments could also provide financial incentives (Kevin et al, 2011) to support employer-training especially with those occupations that are in skills shortages or employees that would otherwise not benefit from the training processes.

The guiding principle of skills development, is to "cultivate a sustainable development not only for the individual, but also for the organisations in terms of the organisation's goals and the individual's career development plans'' (Godat & Atkin, 2011, p. 4). "Employees who have access to training can potentially transform their performance potential, constituting themselves as strategic resources as opposed to disposable commodities"(Heyes,2000, p. 149). For "learners, the successful management of their own learning process and career could potentially be the difference between continuing employability in a rapidly changing, dynamic workplace and being left behind in a competitive labour market"(Coetzee & Stone, 2004, p. 1).

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