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## Balancing Work, Training Apprentices and Learning at Workplaces: Experiences of TVET Graduates of Motor Vehicle Mechanics

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### Keywords:

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Workplace Learning.

This study investigated the activities that graduates of motor vehicle mechanics engaged in while working in garages and how these activities are balanced. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with twelve graduates to collect qualitative data. Data was thematically analyzed and framed within the Communities of Practice theoretical framework. Findings suggest that although TVET institutions do not prepare their learners to balance work, learning, and training, graduates can perform these tasks using the knowledge acquired from their workplaces. Graduates who have a considerable level of formal education can devise strategies for balancing different responsibilities than those with low levels of formal education. However, challenges such as injuries, unprofessional conduct of garage managers, illiteracy, language barriers, and indiscipline amongst trainees constrain the balancing of these tasks. We recommend that TVET institutions train their learners to be multitasking to enhance their capacity to perform multiple tasks at workplaces. Additionally, employers need to avail time and other resources to enable graduates to learn new skills at the workplace so that they can handle multiple tasks such as repairing vehicles, training, and learning.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This article is derived from a study that investigated the work and learning experiences of graduates from technical and vocational training (TVET) institutions in Uganda. It focuses on how TVET graduates of motor vehicle mechanics balance work, training apprentices, and learning at their workplaces. It describes the activities graduates of motor vehicle mechanics engaged in at their workplaces, how they balance work, training apprentices, and learning, and the challenges they face in handling multiple tasks at workplaces. The study was conducted in four districts in Central and Western Uganda.

The study was necessary because it is not clear whether TVET institutions prepare their learners to balance work, learning, and training, and yet the nature of their everyday work requires balancing of these tasks. It is also not clear what strategies they use to balance work, learning, and training at their workplaces. What is known is that TVET institutions of motor vehicle mechanics focus on developing skills to repair motor vehicles. After training, graduates of motor vehicle mechanics gain expertise at their respective workplaces and find themselves taking part in different activities including motor vehicle repair, training new graduates and apprentices, and learning to gain more expertise. The performance of these tasks requires these graduates to balance these tasks.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studies have shown that graduates can balance work, training others, and learning. First, learning and working take place concurrently and graduates balance work training and learning. This type of learning at workplaces enables graduates to handle different responsibilities at the same time (Darrah, 1995). Workers learn together, learn from each other, and learn about each other's roles to facilitate collaboration at work and this is confirmed by a study conducted by McPherson et al. (2001) which recommends collaborative approaches between skilled and less

skilled workers at workplaces. In this context, the balancing of learning and working is sort of automatic as the two are done concurrently. Through this collaborative learning, learning at the workplace is viewed as a continuum, starting with obtaining the application of knowledge through working (Darrah, 1995; McPherson et al., 2001). The collaboration between experts and novices is critical at enabling workers to balance learning and working at the same time.

Secondly, challenging tasks are opportunities for working, learning, and teaching. These tasks may be in the form of activities that are new and require non-routine skills and behaviors. As Preenen et al. (2014) observe, such challenging tasks can give an individual the freedom to determine how to accomplish tasks, and involve high levels of responsibility. Challenging tasks can provide a platform for trying a new behavior or reframing old ways of thinking or acting. They are, therefore, good opportunities for learning, working, and training. Challenging tasks can only be performed by those employees with organizational commitment and this significantly increases the general performance (Battistelli et al., 2019).

More so, technologies have eased learning and working at workplaces especially online learning where employees learn new skills on the internet and apply them while working (Crowston, & Bolici, 2019). Many workers use media platforms and internet to acquire new competencies when they experience challenges as they perform different activities at workplaces. Workers sometimes visit the internet to obtain knowledge and procedures on overcoming certain workplace challenges making learning move hand in hand with working. The choice of learning platforms depends on the type of content the learner is interested in and the speed of the internet (Kruikemeier et al., 2018).

Balancing work, learning and training requires proper planning. Aspects of planning and organization of work at workplaces influence the type of competencies learned at work (Parding, & Berg-Jansson, 2018). The authors contend that in a country like Sweden, there is a well-planned schedule for novices to learn at work and therefore, all conditions are pre-determined and set in a plan (Parding, & Berg-Jansson, 2018). Such a development is missing in Uganda where systems are still unclear on what can or cannot be learned at the workplace. Allowing and supporting employers to decide on what skills and competencies and how they could be learned would benefit organizations immensely and also increase productivity. For learning to happen effectively in workplace, employees themselves need to take responsibility and proactively plan for work activities including learning and training (Mikkonen et al., 2017). Some workplaces employ goal programming models for workplace assignments to assist employees in managing many tasks (Banihashemi, 2022). Goal programming is a goal-oriented optimization technique designed to address decision-making problems involving many targets (Peters, & Zelewski, 2007).

Working, training others and learning is however, hampered by the inability of employers to provide all the required training to new graduates. Employers prefer to recruit workers who are already having experience in the kind of work they are assigned to do (Alkema, & Neal, 2019). Many times, TVET graduates lack this required experience and are denied work and learning on job. Chernikova et al. (2020) also supports this assertion when he reveals that most of the workplace expect employees to be ready for work.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the Communities of Practice (CoP) theory by Lave, & Wenger (1991). The theory was used to analyze and interpret how TVET graduates develop competencies in garages. Developing competencies through learning and participating in different activities is done collectively and individually in a shared

domain (Lave, & Wenger, 1991). In the context of this study, community refers to a group of motor vehicle mechanics who completed training in a TVET institution and are working in different garages while domain refers to the area of knowledge that brings the community together - motor vehicle repair. Practice refers to the application of knowledge and in this case, the use of the knowledge of motor vehicle repairing. CoPs have been used to explain learning in various fields (Van, & Brazer, 2013; Brezillon, 2011; Hod et al., 2018). The CoP theory was used as a framework to analyze and interpret how TVET graduates developed competencies in garages and how these competencies enabled them to participate in different motor vehicle-related activities such as management of garages, motor vehicle repairing and training.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative studies focus on people's views and opinions in their natural contexts (Bryman, 2008). Interpretivism recognizes that a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations (Mertens and Ginsberg, 2009). It is assumed that the different graduates may have different interpretations of the activities they engage in, how they balance them, and the challenges they face. Interpretivism was employed because reality is explained through our perceptions, understanding, and interpretations (Chilisa, & Preece, 2005). The study uses a case study design because it investigates phenomena within their real-life contexts (Rule, & Vaughn, 2011; Yin, 2014). The institution where all the graduates and tutors were from constituted the case. The units of analysis were graduates who had many years of work and learning experiences as well as graduates with few years of work and learning experiences.

A total of 12 graduates who had been in the TVET institution between 2015 and 2020 participated in the study. Among the graduates were those who were self-employed and those employed by others. Efforts to include female graduates and

persons with disabilities were made but it was discovered that none had enrolled in the program during the period under study.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and a review of the TVET curriculum. All the graduates were interviewed at their workplaces and the interviews lasted about 60 minutes. They were audio recorded and then later transcribed verbatim. All the interviews used the same question schedule but appropriate probing questions were asked to supplement the interview as suggested by Flick (2015). Before use, the interview questions were piloted to ensure that they elicited the correct responses. In addition to interviews, observations about different work activities and learning that were taking place at the same time were made. These observations focused on how they were repairing vehicles, how they were managing garages and spare part shops and how they were training apprentices and fresh TVET graduates.

Data analysis was thematic (Braun, & Clarke, 2006; Cresswell, & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2014) because of its flexibility and systematization. The analysis followed the six-step framework suggested by Braun, & Clarke (2006). The process included; becoming familiar with data and generating initial codes which were repair, breakdown, spare part shops, management, training, learning, work, multiple tasks, and challenges. These codes were used to develop categories such as activities at workplaces, balancing work and training, and challenges in performing multiple tasks. These were later used to develop themes including Activities performed by graduates at workplaces, balancing work, training and learning, and challenges faced in handling multiple tasks at the workplace.

Although the analysis was inductive, the concepts that came from the data related to CoPs framework enabled us to understand and interpret the findings.

With regard to data quality control, qualitative researchers commonly use trustworthiness, confirmability and transferability. Connelly (2016) and Rule, & John (2011), note that trustworthiness is essential in evaluating the quality of case studies in qualitative research. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through spending an adequate amount of time with participants in the field, the use of rich and detailed descriptions of the findings and peer debriefing by supervisors. Confirmability was ensured through triangulation of data collection tools whereas dependability was ensured through use of appropriate instruments for data collection, using appropriate research design and methods.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Uganda National Council for Science (approval Number **SS1507ES**) and their guidelines relating to autonomy, informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality were respected. Data sets were stored on a computer with a password to stop unauthorized access. Anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms in reports.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings are organized according to the following themes; profiles of participants, activities at the workplace, training apprentices at work, balancing work, training and learning as well as challenges resulting from handling multiple tasks.

### **Profiles of Participants**

**The following are the profiles of the participants;**

Pseudonym	Qualification	Age in years	Sex	Marital Status	Employment	Experience
<b>Graduates</b>						
Billy	DIT	33	Male	Married	Self-employed	7 years
Bright	DIT	31	Male	Married	Self-employed	7 years
Edson	DIT	28	Male	Married	Employed	7 years
Edrisa	DIT	24	Male	Single	Employed	2 years
Simon	DIT	28	Male	Single	Employed	3 years
Joab	UBTEB	34	Male	Married	Self-employed	7 years
Jerome	UBTEB	30	Male	Married	Self-employed	6 years
Seth	DIT	24	Male	Single	Employed	2 years
Naboth	UBTEB	26	Male	Single	Self-employed	6 years
Juma	UBTEB	25	Male	Single	Employed	4 years
Davis	UBTEB	26	Male	Single	Employed	5 years
James	UBTEB	27	Male	Single	Employed	3 years

Participants shown in the table above are graduates who were all male adults. Their categorization as adults is due to age, physical maturity, ability to provide for themselves and assuming responsibility for their own lives and livelihoods. Seven of the participants were single while five were married. Five of the graduates were self-employed while seven were employed by others. The working experience of the graduates ranged from 2 to 7 years but the majority had worked for seven years. The number of years the graduates had worked is adequate for them to be eligible to participate in all garage activities. This makes the information they provide reliable.

**Balancing work, Training and Learning**

Graduates engaged in multiple activities at their workplaces, which required balancing. These activities include motor vehicle repairs, handling road breakdowns, managing spare parts shops and garages, training others, and learning.

Motor vehicle repairing was the primary role of TVET graduates at their workplaces. Observations revealed that some of these repair activities included engine repair, wheel alignment, braking systems, wheel balancing, fixing accessories, fabrications, replacement of spare parts and systems, wiring, and diagnosing motor vehicle faults among others. Some of the graduates were seen repairing vehicles and

training others. A graduate mechanic in Masaka explained what he does in the following way;

*...I do engine repair and sometimes simple wiring and train one apprentice, but mainly, I repair petrol engines. That is my area of specialization (interview with Davis on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

In addition to repairing motor vehicles, graduates reported that they were also managing spare parts shops and garages. This was confirmed by observations. Some graduates, as they engaged in repairing vehicles, were managing their garages while others were managing on behalf of their employers. Those who were managing their garages had started the garages after being in employment for a long time. In an interview, one of the graduates in Masaka city narrated;

*I manage and sell car spare parts to clients. When my boss is not around, I also take charge of overseeing all garage activities. When my boss is around, I only manage this spare parts shop and also, I am in charge of the wiring section (An interview with Edrisa on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

A self-employed graduate who was managing his garage in Ibanda said;

*I have to make sure that everything is in order in my garage. I worked for others after leaving the college for three years and later*



*started my garage here after saving some money and I have been managing it now for more than two years (interview with Joab on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

This management role required specific skills and experience in bargaining with customers, trust and honesty of the graduates.

The findings further revealed that repairing of vehicles was balanced with the training of fresh graduates and youth from the surrounding communities who had not attained any level of formal education or had different levels of primary school education but were recruited as apprentices into garages where TVET graduates were working. These were referred to as 'villagers'. A graduate working in Lyantonde described this training thus;

*In addition to vehicle repair, we also train many villagers here who never went to school and like those who stopped in primary three and have never experienced knowledge in mechanics. Sometimes, that number overwhelms us, and we stop them from reducing the numbers because of space and the number of trainers (interview with Jerome on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

Graduates indicated that after spending some specified period in their respective workplaces, they also became trainers. Graduates who had taken longer in employment were found training other new garage entrants who would come to the garage either from formal TVET institutions as fresh graduates or directly from their respective communities commonly known as 'villagers' to learn as apprentices. Some of them revealed that in rare circumstances, they trained their employers in areas where they were not knowledgeable, especially those garage owners who had never attended TVET institutions. This was because such employers lacked some technical and theoretical knowledge as well as instructional language to train apprentices. This made the graduates become a good resource to manage these workplace trainings. Findings from the study also revealed that graduates trained the

apprentices in motor vehicle mechanics such as wiring, fabrication, using gas cylinders, how identifying the right spare parts, and vehicle maintenance. It was also revealed that talented apprentices learn fast and those who had prior knowledge from other TVET institutions took less time to learn and became trainers too. During interviews in Masaka city, a graduate explained how a trainer is chosen to train other new graduates and apprentices as follows;

*...whoever is experienced or has expertise in a specific activity is always tasked by garage owners to train internship students from TVET institutions, as well as apprentices who come from villages to learn skills in mechanics at workplaces and I am one of the trainers of wiring (interview with Sentongo on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

In the Sembabule district, a graduate mechanic mentioned that he preferred to specialize in training but was constrained by lack of working space and equipment to set up his garage and recruit many trainees. He noted that he was saving money to prepare and set up his training facility shortly in the following narration;

*I am still working here just because I don't have my own training space. Charging training fees from 'villagers' and new TVET graduates can make me rich even if I don't practice mechanics. I would love to specialize in training in the near future when I save enough (interview with Edson on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

Training therefore had become an activity preference by graduates who engaged in motor vehicle mechanics but found themselves training others. However, they were limited by start-up capital.

Additionally, repairing was done together with learning. Graduates learned a wide range of competencies deliberately and incidentally. Graduates deliberately learned from their seniors as they worked through observations and demonstrations. In addition, they learned incidentally as they repaired vehicles and trained

others. In that way, graduates were learning additional competencies on the job and became better motor vehicle mechanics.

Findings from workplace observations showed that almost all work activities practiced by graduates were practical. For example, it was noted that when customers brought their motor vehicles for spare part replacement or repairs, graduates would handle the motor vehicle problem, while demonstrating to the apprentices. In that way, working and training would take place at the same time. As more customers brought their vehicles having seemingly similar faults and problems, apprentices would handle such a problem leaving the expert graduate to participate in more complex work activities. A graduate reported that customer vehicles provided the best opportunity for apprentices to learn. As they were learning, they reflected on the theory learned from TVET institutions. In the process, graduate trainers also reported to have gained new knowledge from talented graduate trainees. In that way, work, learning and training took place at the same time.

Findings showed that balancing training, work and learning required skilled and experienced trainers. TVET graduates who had a considerable level of experience after staying longer in employment easily balanced work, training and learning than fresh graduates and 'villagers'. Balancing was therefore a competence acquired from the job by mostly graduates. A self-employed graduate in Ibanda recounted;

*Balancing these three activities is always hard for villagers. They have difficulties in training and identifying spare parts since they are named in English. This makes the level of multi-tasking low for a villager compared to a graduate (interview with Joab on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022).*

Additionally, fresh graduates were adequately guided on how to perform specific tasks relating to motor vehicle repair, training and learning as well. This support and guidance were provided by

experts who helped less experienced graduates to succeed in their new assignments.

The strategies that were used by graduates to balance work, training and learning included; Delegation where certain tasks were assigned to other mechanics for graduates to be able to perform other activities. For example, a graduate managing a spare part shop and garage on behalf of the employers delegated this task to another mechanic to create time to train apprentices. Some graduates acquired multiple skills and experiences to enable them to perform multiple tasks at work. It can be concluded that graduates of motor vehicle mechanics participated in multiple activities and were able to balance them.

### **Challenges Faced in Handling Multiple Tasks at Workplace**

Graduates were asked about the challenges they encountered as they worked, trained and learned at the same time. Findings revealed that graduates faced challenges resulting from handling multiple tasks, and these challenges hindered them from handling certain activities in some circumstances at their respective workplaces. One of the graduates explained;

*Wounds and injuries acquired while repairing car faults are hindrances amongst us as we participate in multiple tasks. (Interview with Seth in Lyantonde town on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022).*

Graduates revealed that injuries and wounds on their bodies acquired in the process of work reduced on the effectiveness and efficiency of graduates to perform as expected. It was found out that most of the garages were poor and could not afford to procure protective gears such as gloves, helmets, and protective shoes for graduates and apprentices thus putting their lives at risk. Due to direct exposure brought about by the failure to obtain these protective gears, many of these graduates had wounds and injuries observed on their hands, legs or faces. These injuries and wounds were not only reducing the productivity of graduates but had the possibility of exposing them to other health risks such as tetanus.

Graduates also revealed the existence of unprofessional and illiterate managers at workplaces as a challenge to graduates. Graduates noted that some bosses used to whip interns and other apprentices while training them and used abusive language when apprentices took too long to understand. To avoid being humiliated, graduates ignored to participate in learning some skills that seemed to be difficult to learn and concentrated on those that seemed less difficult. One of the graduates in Masaka reported;

*...sometimes you feel like giving up. Some of our bosses are too strict and arrogant to the extent of whipping and slapping. To avoid these canes, I had to give up on repairing gearbox and concentrate on other skills because I could not learn it in a harsh environment (interview with Simon on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2022).*

Another graduate from Sembabule noted;

*Some of us almost dropped out of school because of harsh punishments. We come to the garage and we are harassed too; you feel demotivated. (Interview with Davis on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022).*

Language barrier was also cited by graduates as one of the challenges they faced while handling multiple tasks. It was argued that some graduates who were unable to speak the commonly spoken languages of Runyankore and Luganda faced challenges in communication while repairing customer vehicles who were unable to communicate in English. More so, non-literate trainers faced language problems in training graduates who had problems speaking native languages. Graduates were also found to be training other new graduates and some other apprentices who had not acquired any formal education who paused a challenge due to communication barriers arising out of different languages in use.

A graduate mechanic in Lyantonde tried to explain the challenges related to the language barrier while working with their customers as follows;

*Some people don't understand English, both customers and apprentices from the village. Like when a customer brings his car for repair, you find challenges in communicating with him. Even if you can easily detect the car problem, issues of bargaining require two people to agree. You find yourself missing out on this customer just because of the language differences (interview with Jerome on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022).*

## DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that balancing work, learning and training at the workplace depends on several activities that graduates are involved in and these include repairing motor vehicles, management roles, training apprentices and learning on the job. Learning at the workplace is key in solving immediate challenges or repairs brought in by the clients and this takes different forms including observation, searching online for help and asking for help from senior and experienced motor vehicle mechanics. To take part in different activities, graduates devise different strategies. Whereas the learning that takes place at workplaces enables graduates to perform certain tasks, the performance of these tasks also provides learning opportunities meaning that learning and working is cyclic.

Certain simple tasks are assigned to new mechanics for graduates to be able to perform other more complex activities. For example, a graduate managing a spare part shop and garage on behalf of the employers can delegate this task to another mechanic to create time to train apprentices. Another example is when some customers prefer having their vehicle repaired by specific mechanics because of perceived competence in a mechanic but find them doing tasks that are not highly specialized. These competent mechanics delegate simpler tasks to less experienced mechanics to attend to the clients who need more complex repairs, a strategy recommended by Ugoani (2020). The process of delegation involving more experienced mechanics transferring less complex tasks to less experienced mechanics is an accepted practice (Griffin, 2022).



Having multiple skills and experiences enables graduates to balance work, learning and training (Lee et al., 2010). For instance, a skilled graduate can demonstrate to different apprentices how a motor vehicle fault can be identified. In doing so, he is also working on the vehicle itself as well as discovering new techniques of repairing vehicles as the process continues. While doing this, the trainees are encouraged to ask as many questions as possible whenever there is a task assigned to them or when learning from the graduates. Possession of multiple skills is therefore a tool for skilled graduates to perform multiple tasks at the same time without having difficulties. Sodhani et al., (2021) argue that engagement in many tasks can improve the performance of a single task.

Using working experience is also used as a strategy for balancing multiple tasks. Graduates who have worked for a short time in employment are more suited to working and learning at the same time while those who have worked for a long time are more suited to working and training. Fresh graduates therefore, are eager to engage and learn from their seniors and to prove a point to their employers or customers to be assigned tasks in the future. It has been argued that people's experiences allow them to perform multiple roles (Lee et al., 2010) and that responsibilities should be assigned according to one's level of experience (Kuntu, 2018).

Adequate guidance is key in enabling graduates to perform specific tasks relating to motor vehicle repair and learning as well. Adequate support and guidance are necessary for the graduates to succeed in their new assignments including balancing work, learning and training. Support is particularly of effect as the graduates transition from their instructional classes to the garages where the actual work is done. The provision of guidance is key, especially in the initial stages of the graduates starting to work as it helps them gain confidence by working in the presence of their mentors and trainers. Mchete, & Shayo (2020) note that guidance provided during induction informs new people at the workplace about the important aspects of their work. Additionally,

Catterall et al. (2014) report that access to teachers [in this context tutors] and resources by TVET graduates make their success more assured. Guidance can help graduates perform a variety of tasks including balancing work, learning and training. It has been argued that mentorship, which is a form of guidance is an important aspect of learning how to perform many tasks at the workplace (Eby, & Robertson, 2020).

Those with prior TVET training can devise means of balancing work, learning and training compared to those who learned in garages without prior formal education. As the findings of this current study have shown, those without prior training in TVET ('villagers') take longer time to learn specific competencies while those who joined after completing TVET training come with some experience and grasp aspects of mechanics quite easily compared to the 'villagers'. Some of the techniques that are grasped by graduates include balancing work, learning and training. When it comes to learning new skills, graduates use a wealth theory learned from TVET institutions to learn new competencies easily compared to villagers, and consequently, graduates learn to train others in a short period.

As the graduates engaged in repairing motor vehicles, training and learning, the encountered challenges such as injuries resulting from lack of protective gear, unprofessional and illiterate managers, use of abusive language and harsh punishments. One of the challenges identified is injuries. This is in agreement with Gautam et al. (2021) who notes that those using bare hands because of lack of protective equipment are prone to injury. They then propose use of personal equipment such as overalls, helmets and gloves to eliminate the risk.

The other challenges encountered by graduates are unprofessional and illiterate managers, use of abusive language and harsh punishments that Mbandlwa, & Fagbadebo (2020) explain as unethical behaviors. They further argue that 'Ethical managers see themselves as role models in the workplace, as managers make ethics noticeable by modeling ethical conduct to their

employees' (Mbandlwa, & Fagbadebo, 2020 p. 1644). This means that unethical mechanics will train graduate mechanics and apprentices in unethical behaviors. Additionally, Majeed (2021, p. 28) decries unacceptable ethical behaviors and mentions them as 'Offensive behaviors, offensive and abusive language, unwelcoming behaviors and annoying questions, beating and becoming violent'. These are likely to produce mechanics that may not perform their duties ethically. Some of the unethical behaviors are likely to result in poor quality work, thus putting the lives of those who take their vehicles for repair at risk. Risk reduction at the workplace through the use of protective gear and ethical behaviors can enable graduates to perform multiple tasks without worry. This is likely to improve learning and enhance productivity.

In the context of the CoP framework, when learners graduate from the TVET institution, they find a need to learn how to perform additional tasks such as management of garages, managing spare part shops, training others and learning. They learn in a community of practice of motor vehicle mechanics. In the process of learning these competencies, some of the TVET graduates, because they are graduates and considered more knowledgeable, do not start learning at the periphery (Wenger, 1991). But for practical tasks, the fresh graduates lacked experience and those they found were more experienced and were teaching these fresh graduates. This means that in the same CoP, the same category of learners can have multiple identities. In terms of practical skills, the fresh graduates started at the periphery and moved progressively towards the center where experts could even identify vehicle faults within a very short time and sometimes without physically dismantling the vehicle to determine the fault. Those at the center are considered to be enjoying full participation as members of the CoP (Lave, & Wenger, 1991). As explained earlier, those graduates lacking practical skills may not necessarily be at the periphery because they possess certain skills in motor vehicle repair, which they acquired from the TVET institution before engaging in workplace learning.

Similarly, graduates learn techniques for balancing tasks, which they are required to perform at the workplace. They learn how to balance these tasks through mentorship, observation and acquisition of multiple skills in garages, which eventually enables them to balance responsibilities and enjoy full participation in their community of motor vehicle mechanics. These learning approaches are commonly used in CoPs. However, this study reveals that graduates learn competencies as they work and also work as they learn which is a cyclic process that CoPs do not theorize.

## CONCLUSION

Although previously trained to repair motor vehicles only, TVET graduates can perform additional multiple tasks using competencies acquired at the workplace. These tasks in addition to motor vehicle repairing include training others, managing spare part shops and garages as well as participating in learning. The graduates face challenges in balancing work, training and learning which include injuries, unethical behaviors of managers and language issues and devise strategies such as delegation, effective communication, use of multiple skills and protective gear as well as being flexible to balance work, learning and training others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

TVET institutions need to train their learners to be multi-tasking to increase their chances of employment and assume multiple tasks as they graduate and go to the world of work. This is because graduates perform many tasks, some of which are not learned in the TVET institution. A graduate who can handle many tasks stands a better chance of getting employed and earning more from his skills.

Employers need to avail time and other resources for their workers to learn new skills if they are to perform better at work and handle multiple tasks. Such multiple tasks often require multiple skills which can only be obtained if graduates are supported by employers and given learning opportunities through sponsorship and work schedules that enable them to acquire new skills.

Managers need to provide protective gear and practice ethical behaviors to facilitate a balance of work, training and learning.

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