



Entrepreneurial mentorship programme for TVET students

Promising Practice

Implemented by: Embu College of Professional Studies

Where: Kenya

Status: Launched in June 2022

Summary: The entrepreneurial mentorship programme equips youth with entrepreneurial skills and empowers them to start their own businesses and become self-employed.

Overview

Embu College of Professional Studies is a private TVET institution with modern facilities and equipment that caters for around 1,500 students. The institution offers diversified academic programmes to prepare its students for the dynamic labour market.

The college is dedicated to continuous improvement of research and teaching activities, as well as to establish an active role in the development of businesses and industries in Kenya through attachment programmes and partnerships with NITA (National Industrial Training Authority) and KUCCPS (Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service). The college is committed to continually strengthening links with national and international organizations for enhancement of quality learning, innovation and knowledge.

Description

Developing an entrepreneurial mentorship programme

The development of the entrepreneurial mentorship programme by Embu College of Professional Studies entailed liaising with different stakeholders and specialists in the field of entrepreneurship. The targeted stakeholders, which included both organizations and individuals, were sent information letters that contained the prospective date and the topics in entrepreneurship that they could possibly cover.

Involving CISCO Networking Academy

The college received positive responses from most of the stakeholders and was able to organize the entrepreneurial mentorship programme over one day. The stakeholders that contributed to the mentorship programme included CISCO Networking Academy, which highlighted existing opportunities in ICT to the students.

Covering different topics

The students were also informed about personal branding and its role in creating successful businesses. One of the mentors focused on the basics of starting and running a business and equipped students with knowledge on writing successful business plans, discipline in entrepreneurship, power of networking and how to remain resilient during difficult economic times. Since the college offers different courses, the mentors included specialists who had sessions with specific groups of students based on their areas of specialization.

Objectives

The college caters for students from various parts of Kenya, most of whom have challenging backgrounds, to the extent that they face difficulties to settle school fees. There are also limited job opportunities in Kenya, and hence an uncertain future for these students. The college is confident that entrepreneurship education is key to a brighter future. The entrepreneurial mentorship programme is an opportunity to equip students with the necessary skills and attitudes to start their own businesses and improve their access to opportunities in the labour market.

Addressing the lack of entrepreneurial education and access to employment for Kenyan youths

In recent years, the Kenyan government, together with several financial institutions, introduced easily accessible funding opportunities for innovative entrepreneurs. Embu College of Professional Studies offers a wide range of technical courses, and if the students have the right guidance and mentorship on how they can capitalize on their technical skills, they can access these funding opportunities to set up their own businesses and become self-employed.

Outcomes and impact

Eight hundred students have completed the training so far. The college plans to organize such trainings every semester so as to cover more entrepreneurial issues and reach a wider number of disadvantaged youths. The college expects that following the entrepreneurial mentorship programme, a large number of youths will start up their own business ventures and become independent through self-employment. The college also plans to have a follow-up programme for those who set up businesses to mentor them whenever necessary.

The expected impacts of this initiative are:

- Skilled youth that are trained in entrepreneurship and that have the necessary skills to start their own businesses and become self-employed;
- Reduced unemployment; and
- Improved standard of living for disadvantaged youth in Kenya.

Challenges

Developing an entrepreneurial mindset

An existing reality in entrepreneurship is the fear of the future, and the major challenge in this mentorship programme was to support students to overcome this fear and to create an entrepreneurial mindset. To address this challenge, the choice of mentors included young people who had started their own businesses with limited capital and who are now running successful ventures. These young mentors were able to inspire the students and to equip them with networking skills which are very important for successful entrepreneurs.

Affording mentoring costs

Another challenge is that some entrepreneurial mentors demand a high salary for training. The college intends to enhance collaboration with institutions that can offer such training as part of their corporate social responsibility to make these sessions more affordable. The college also wants to organize these more frequently.

Choosing what to teach

A final challenge was choosing what to teach, since the college offers a wide variety of courses that expose youth to different vocational fields. This was

addressed by having mentors in different areas of specialization, hence enabling youths from various vocational fields to enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

Insights

The mentorship programme was a success to the extent that several youths have started up their own ventures which include catering services, selling clothes, and selling shoes. The youths are utilizing social networking platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to market their products among a wider audience. Other TVET institutions are encouraged to introduce similar mentorship programmes as these can serve as eye-opening initiatives where students learn about the various opportunities available to start their own businesses.

Next steps

The college intends to continue following up on successful entrepreneurs who would have benefited from the mentorship programme. The plan is to have these successful entrepreneurs contributing to future mentorship programmes by encouraging more students to explore entrepreneurship opportunities.

Learn more

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To learn more about Embu College of Professional Studies, visit: <https://embucollege.ac.ke>

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