**SKILLING, RESKILLING, AND UPSKILLING A WORKFORCE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM KENYAN ENTERPRISES**

Muchiri, D. G.

**SKILLING, RESKILLING, AND UPSKILLING A WORKFORCE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM KENYAN ENTERPRISES**

**Muchiri, D. G.**

MBA, CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP YEI) - Nairobi, Kenya

**ABSTRACT**

*Across the globe, businesses are experiencing constant and accelerating changes in their work environments. In the labour market, the growing consensus is that the most competitive entities in future are those that will invest in reskilling and upskilling their workforces. This paper discusses whether Kenyan enterprises and organizations have embraced a learning ecosystem for their employees by offering them opportunities to upskill, reskill, and acquire new skills. An inductive reasoning approach was employed to make broad generalizations about the studied phenomenon. A mixed methodology was adopted where a survey tool comprising both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. A purposive sampling method proved useful in targeting expert respondents who are resourceful and knowledgeable about the subject-matter, and whose responses would yield information-rich data – all while addressing the challenge of the willingness, availability, and ability of potential respondents to participate in the survey. Moreover, with the focus being on the "what" rather than the "how" or "why", a descriptive study design was used to observe and describe the skilling/upskilling/reskilling situation in Kenya. The findings showed that in the last five years, 67.8% of Kenyan organizations had planned some form of skills training programs, although the size of the enterprise was an influencing factor with 100% of multinationals reporting to have done so while only 25.9% of microenterprises had made similar efforts. Across the board, 70.4% of the organizations reported to be experiencing skills gaps in their workforces or expect them in the next few years. What is more, 100% of human resource specialists and trainers, as well as 96.9%, 91.7%, 89.5%, and 83.3% of owners/CEOs/directors, supervisors, managers, and clerks/administrators, respectively – said that the current workforce in their organizations needed some form of new skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to remain relevant for their roles or future positions. Generally, 94.8% of the expert respondents believed that skilling/reskilling/upskilling have critical roles to play in the future of work, especially due to the need to adapt to future work demands, continuously improving organizational performance, the changing work dynamics, adapting to new trends (e.g. technology), and remaining competitive.*

**Keywords:** *Skilling, Upskilling, Reskilling, Learning Ecosystem*

## INTRODUCTION

This study postulates that for organizations to keep up with modern challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities, they ought to be comfortable with changes as they arise and equip their employees to adapt to them, with a key strategy being continuous skills development. Existing research has suggested that skilling, upskilling and reskilling could be the crucial differentiator between entities that thrive and those that flop in the future (Randstad, 2020). With the future of work becoming increasingly uncertain, there is no better time than now for people to have the right skills through relevant and timely skilling, upskilling and reskilling efforts – so that they can be more resilient, agile, and competent to cope with not only future challenges but also occasional disruptions such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly affected learning and training, thereby leading to a possible negative impact on human capital accumulation in the long run (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). In other words, as demand for new and/or advanced capabilities gain momentum, developing the needed skill sets is paramount if an organization or even an economy is to remain competitive amongst its peers.

Whether or not organizations are putting in place relevant and timely skilling/upskilling/reskilling efforts is the major issue that this study seeks to understand. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), widespread evidence shows that mega trends such as technological advancement (automation), globalization, demographic changes, as well as changing values and preferences will not only affect the quality and quantity of jobs but also "how and by whom they will be carried out", which is why one of the recommended policies to consider is preparing people for the jobs of the future by equipping them with skills needed to navigate the "ever-changing, technology-rich work environment, and [giving them] the opportunity to continuously maintain their skills, upskill and/or reskill

throughout their working lives" (OECD, 2017, p. 20). However, skills gap and skills demand-supply mismatch continue to trouble developing and emerging economies, an indicator of poorly coordinated skills development policies, which may precipitate and induce skills obsolescence and irrelevancy in the labour market, a situation that can render these economies and their working populations unable to compete in the future of work (Allen & de Grip, 2007; Bergin et al., 2019; Musa & Al-Rubaie, 2021). Being a developing/emerging economy itself, Kenya warrants scholarly attention to study its preparedness in regards to skilling/upskilling/reskilling its working population for future roles in domestic and international labour markets.

## Study Objectives

To achieve its primary aim and purpose, the study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To quantify the proportion of Kenyan organizations have made deliberate skilling/upskilling/reskilling efforts.
- To study the proportion of Kenyan organizations that are experiencing skills gaps and skills irrelevance that can be addressed by workforce skilling, re-skilling, and upskilling.
- To understand the role that skilling/upskilling/reskilling will play in the future of work in Kenyan organizations.
- To study the practices and solutions being used by various enterprises/organizations to prepare their workforces for the future of work.

## Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the state of skilling, upskilling, and reskilling among the studied Kenyan enterprises, particularly to understand whether they are making deliberate efforts to prepare their workforces for the future of work by identifying and sealing existing and foreseeable skills gaps. The notable problem was that the labour market was experiencing progressive changes the world over, which were and had rendered some roles and skills irrelevant,

misplaced, or obsolete. Consequently, modern organizations are expected to continuously invest resources to enhance the capacity and competency levels of their employees in adapting and adjusting to the new order of work. In Kenya, it has not been clearly and extensively established whether organizations are creating the much-needed learning ecosystem for their workers in response to the changing labour market dynamics.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Learning Organization/Ecosystem

Presently, skilling, reskilling, and upskilling constitute a new currency for organizations to attain competitive advantage. A contemporary organization need to continuously invest money and time to improve its workforce so that workers can easily adapt and adjust to the new order of work, especially considering the changing labor market dynamics and uncertain futures (Suri, 2021). However, the concept of a "learning organization" is not new. In 1990s, Peter Senge, through his book The Fifth Discipline, discussed various learning disabilities that can negatively impact an organization, one of which being lack of a healthy learning ecosystem for employees (Senge, 1990). In the new world of work, it may not be outwardly clear what skills will become obsolete or in-demand, but what is seemingly clear is that at some point, employees will need to spend time skilling (continuously acquiring new skills), re-skilling (learning new skills for new positions), or upskilling (learning current tasks more deeply). Most jobs will have new technologies and work methods that will require learning as the new or modified roles fit and refit into the changing work environment.

### Skilling/Reskilling/Upskilling Case Studies

On the part of individuals, embracing the skilling/reskilling/upskilling idea requires a sense of agency, and the right motivation and preparedness. However, individuals' commitment can only work well when corporations step up their efforts on the same endeavour. Various local and international companies have shown their commitment to skills

development. For instance, in 2021, Walmart – an American multinational retailer – launched "Live Better U" (LBU), a $1 billion five-year program that will pay 100% college tuition for its approximately 1.5 million associates to earn college degrees and earn new trade skills (Walmart, 2021). In 2015, McDonald's, a multinational fast food chain, launched "Archways to Opportunity" initiative that supports it employees to learn English language skills, earn high school diplomas for free, receive tuition assistance when pursuing college degrees, and enjoy access to career advising services (McDonald's, 2021). Another example is the $100 million "Google Career Certificates Fund" that supports non-profits such as Social Finance, Merit America, and Year Up in upskilling about 20,000 American workers, and it is part of the company's larger "Grow with Google" initiative that has been helping people to access training, resources, and tools that can equip them with the skills they need to not only find jobs but also sustain the ones they have (Pichai, 2022). In Kenya, Safaricom, the leading telecommunication company in the region, uses its Digital Academy to enable "employees to reskill and learn the digital skills [the company] have prioritised as part of [its] transformation to being the digital services provider of choice" (Safaricom, n.d.). KCB bank is another Kenyan company offering its employees reskill and upskill opportunities that can preserve their capabilities to handle their roles (KCB Bank, 2016). Notably, all these programs and initiatives are driven by the realization that human re-skilling is a critical driver to organization growth.
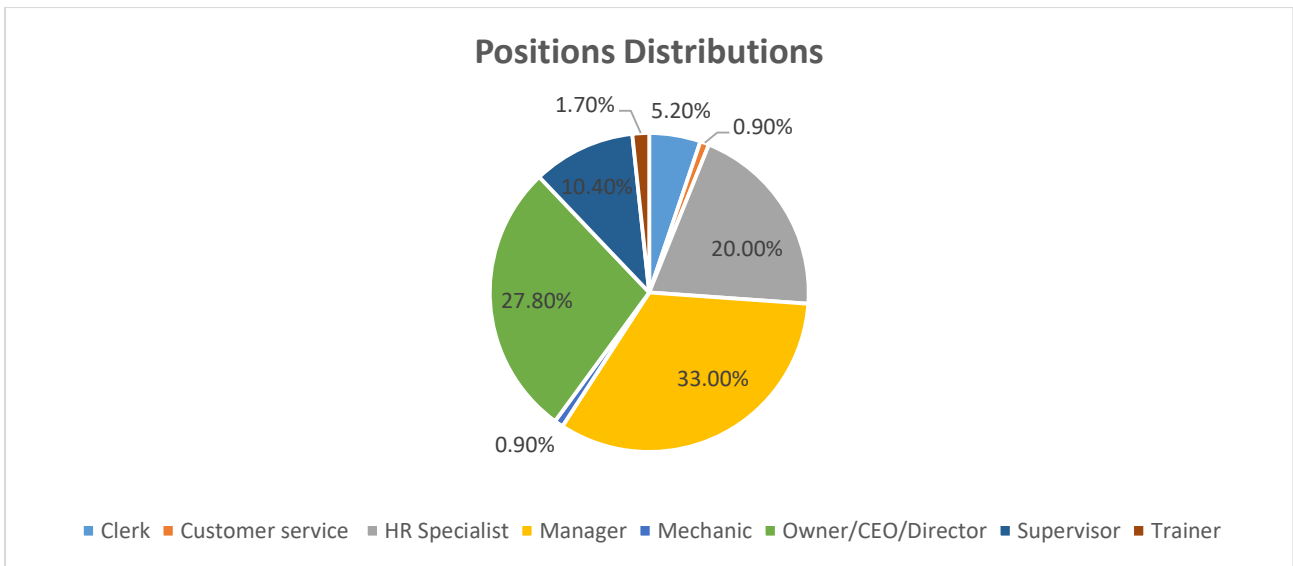
### Existing Studies

In recent years, the topics of skilling, reskilling, and upskilling, as well as the concept of a learning organization have gained traction in research and academia fields. In their research on *The Importance of Reskilling and Upskilling the Workforce*, Chakma and Chaijinda (2020) has found that investing on these employee development activities has lower cost implications than recruiting and training new workers, it fine-tune the workforce to meet the organization's labour

demands, enhances overall employees' capabilities, increases organization's income, and improves employee retention. In another study that focused on upskilling and reskilling in the logistics and supply chain sectors, and particularly during the fourth industrial revolution (IR 4.0), it was found that almost 70% of the respondents felt that the training provided by their organizations open more professional opportunities for them in their fields of work (Wahab, Rajendran, & Yeap, 2021). In addition, a Randstad Risesmart global survey incorporating feedback from more than 1,000 human resource professionals found that about 70% of these experts required employees to upskill or reskill to match changing work environment, 61% said that they have implemented an organizational strategy to train and develop their workforce, and 80% of the multinationals represented in the study agreed that the ability to adapt and meet new work challenges is a "must-have" competence in the modern corporate world (Randstad, 2020). Similarly, a 2020 Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends Report found that 74% of studied organizations said that reskilling their workforce would be critical to their success in the next 12 to 18 months, even though only 10% reported being ready for the undertaking; about 53% said that at least half of their workforce will need to change their capabilities in the next three years (Deloitte, 2020). What is more, it has been concluded that automated processes will render 85 million jobs obsolete in the next five years, even though these automations will create 97 million new jobs, but organizations will need to invest in workforce reskilling and upskilling to enhance workers' capacities to take up the new jobs and opportunities (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2020). In other words, these studies suggest that skilling, reskilling, and upskilling is not only a matter of necessity but also urgency.

## METHODOLOGY

In an inductive reasoning approach, a descriptive research design was adopted in this study since the researcher's sole interest was to observe, measure, and describe the skilling/upskilling/reskilling phenomenon in Kenya without any intention to control or change any variable. According to Nassaji (2015) such a research design "is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened" (p. 129). The primary data collection tool was a survey that was distributed through a Google Form. A purposive sampling method was used to target those holding positions of influence in regards to recruitment and employees development, such as managers, supervisors, human resource officers, owners, directors, chief executives, and organization trainers. As noted by Palinkas et al. (2015), though it does not enjoy the benefits of probabilistic or random sampling, purposive sampling is appropriate in situations where the researcher intends to yield data that is "information rich" by identifying and selecting potential respondents who are knowledgeable and experienced about the subject matter, which in in this case is skilling, reskilling, and upskilling a workforce. In addition, the willingness, availability, and ability to participate in the survey was another reason why purposive sampling was suitable. Moreover, a mixed approach methodology was adopted for this survey; the questionnaire consisted both closed and open-ended questions, which collectively yielded qualitative and quantitative data.

The target respondents were experts in matters of general business and human resource management. As shown below, they respondents for this study hold different positions of influence.

**Positions Distributions**



Legend: Clerk · Customer service · HR Specialist · Manager · Mechanic · Owner/CEO/Director · Supervisor · Trainer

Values shown: 1.70%, 5.20%, 0.90%, 10.40%, 20.00%, 27.80%, 33.00%, 0.90%

**Figure 1. Respondents [Positions]**

Specifically, the survey reached 122 respondents, and 115 of them gave complete responses. Out of the total, 91.2% were subject expert respondents, which constituted HR Specialists (20%), Owners/CEO/Directors (27.8%), Managers (33%), or Supervisors (10.4%) – all of which were experts and directly involved on matters of skilling, reskilling, and upskilling in their respective organizations (See Figure 1).

In regards to gender, both male and female genders were represented even though more males than females participated as shown below.

**Gender Distribution**



Legend: Female · Male

Values shown: 35%, 65%
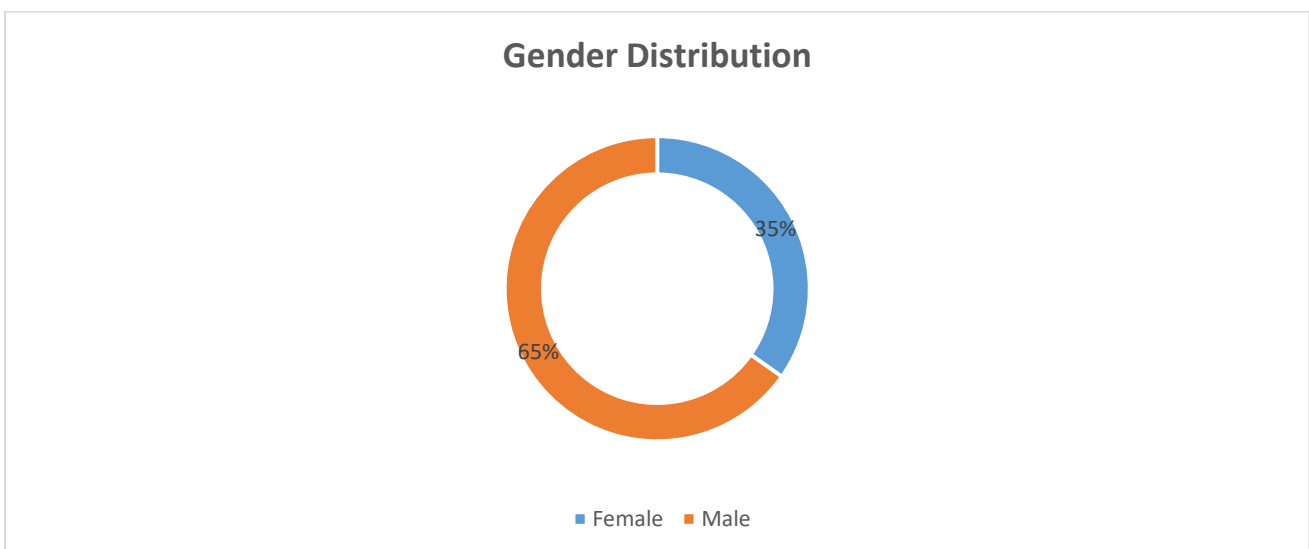
**Figure 2. Respondents [Gender]**

Specifically, Figure 2 shows that out of 115 respondents, 65% (n=75) were male while 35% (n=40) were female.

Another demographic element captured by the survey was the type and size of enterprises affiliated to the respondents.

## Size/Type of Enterprise
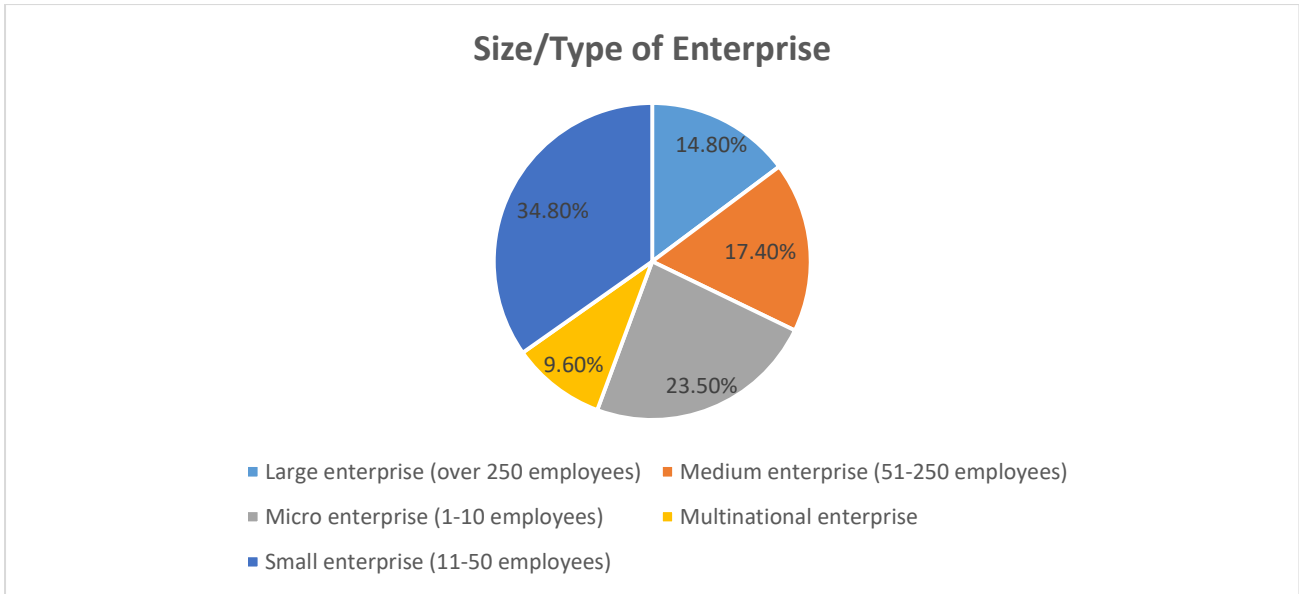


**Figure 3. Respondents [Size/Type of Enterprise].**

As shown in Figure 3 above, the single majority of the respondents (34.8%) came from small enterprises with between 11 and 50 employees, with 23.5% coming from micro enterprises that had up to 10 employees. However, almost half of them (41.87%) came from medium (17.4%), large (14.8%), and multinational (9.6%) enterprises.

What is more, being a study that sought to understand the Kenyan context, almost 50% of the 47 counties in Kenya (n=23) were represented. In 7.1% of the cases, the organizations had operations in all over Kenya. The leading counties on the survey were: Nairobi (20.6%), Lamu (16.7%), Nakuru (10.3%), Mombasa (7.9%), Turkana (7.9%), and Kilifi (6.3%). In addition, these respondents came from about 20 sectors, with the Hospitality and Tourism industry being the most popular at 30.43%, followed by Service industry (6.92%) and Manufacturing & Production sector (6.92%), then Private Security (6.09%), as well as Banking (5.22%) and Education (5.22%). These and the above respondents' distributions are indicative of a significantly representative survey whose findings can be generalized to the case of Kenyan context.

## FINDINGS

### Situation Analysis

A key inquiry aspect was to question the respondents on whether their respective organizations had implemented any form of skilling programs in recent years.
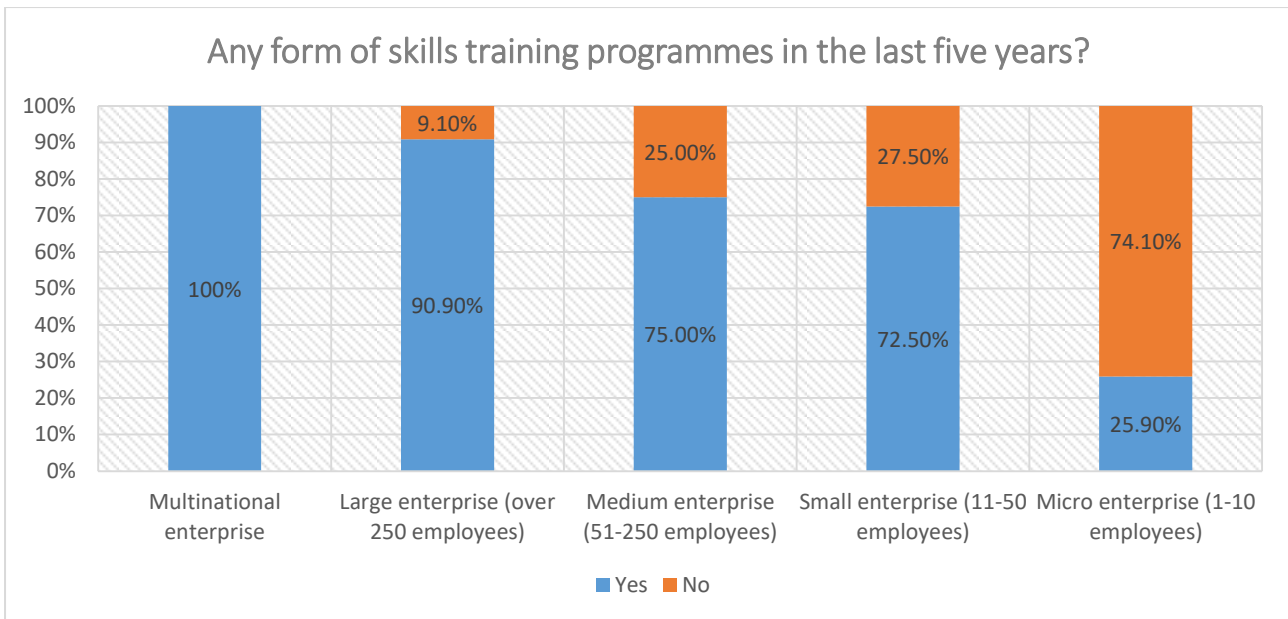
**Figure 4. Any Skills Training Recently?**

Overall, 67.8% of the respondents said that their enterprises/organizations planned/organized some forms of skills training programmes in the last five years, with the remaining 32.2% saying that this did not happen. However, a notable trend was identified when the element of organization size/type was introduced as a cross-validation in the analysis. As shown in figure 4, those who said "Yes" on whether their organizations had made deliberate efforts to offer workforce skills training increased with increasing size of organization, with 100% of those in multinational enterprises saying yes and only 25.9% saying the same in microenterprises.

The vice versa was true with the "No" response: none of the respondents working in multinationals felt that their organization are doing nothing on this front, but a staggering 74.1% in microenterprises says that their organizations has not planned or organized any skills training in the last five years (see Figure 4). However, when asked whether they believed that the inability of an organization to retain employees has cost implications that should be avoided, on average, and across the various organization type/size, 89.6% said Yes and 10.4% said No.

**Table 1. Skills gap vs Skills Gap Analysis**

| Question | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Currently experiencing skills gap? | 70.4% | 29.6% |
| Any skills gap analysis recently? | 49.6% | 50.4% |

As shown in Table 1 above, when asked whether their organization was experiencing skills gaps in the workforce or expect them within a few years, 70.4% said "Yes" while 29.6% said "No". However,

more than half (50.4%) had not done any form of skills gap analysis in recent times to identify what human resources are missing, obsolete, or wrongly deployed in their workforce.

**Page: 196**

The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. **ISSN** 2312-9492 (Online) 2414-8970 (Print). www.strategicjournals.com

**Table 2. In-Demand Soft Skills**

| Skill | Frequency | Percent | Cum. Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Digital literacy/capabilities | 65 | 24.6% | 24.6% |
| Critical thinking | 54 | 20.5% | 45.1% |
| Resilience (e.g. COVID-19) | 50 | 18.9% | 64.0% |
| Communication/collaboration | 49 | 18.6% | 82.6% |
| Persuasion/negotiation | 44 | 16.7% | 99.2% |
| Problem Solving | 1 | 0.4% | 99.6% |
| Work Ethics | 1 | 0.4% | 100.0% |
| **TOTAL** | **264** | **100.0%** | |

As evident in Table 2 above, to find more specific answers, respondents were asked to pinpoint the various soft skills that were evident gaps (missing) in the current workforce. The most commonly mentioned were digital literacy, critical thinking, resilience, communication/collaboration, and persuasion/negotiation.

Figure 5 below captures responses on the question of whether the workforces of the studied organizations need skilling/reskilling/upskilling.
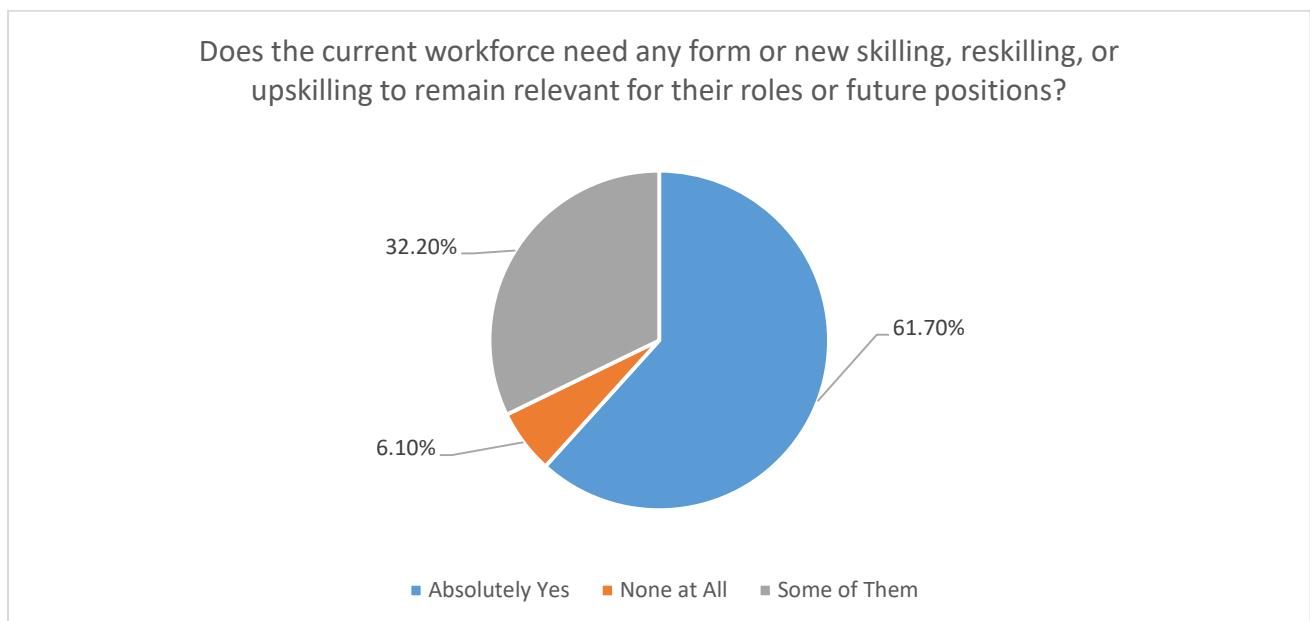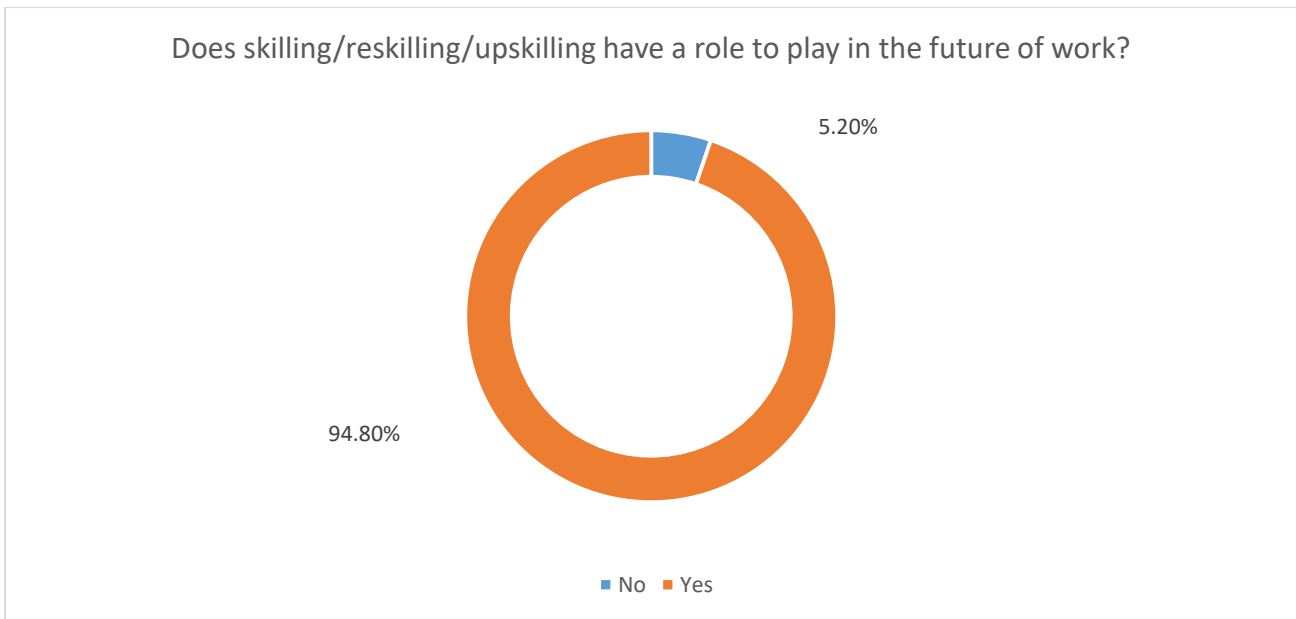


**Figure 5. Need for Skilling/Reskilling/Upskilling**

Notably, 100% of HR Specialists and Trainers – both of which were expert/knowledgeable respondents – said that the current workforce in their organizations needs some form of new skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to remain relevant for their roles or future positions, with 96.9%, 91.7%, 89.5%, and 83.3% of Owners/CEOs/Directors, Supervisors, Managers, and Clerks/Administrators saying the same. On average, only 6.1 % of the respondents said that their current workforce didn't need any form of skilling/reskilling/upskilling, with the remaining 93.9% agreeing that at least some of the employees need some skilling (see Figure 5).

A key objective of this study was to understand the role that skilling/reskilling/upskilling will play in the future of work, and Figure 6 captures some of the opinions.

Does skilling/reskilling/upskilling have a role to play in the future of work?

5.20%

94.80%

■ No ■ Yes

**Figure 6. Skilling/Reskilling/Upskilling in the Future of Work**

Notably, 94.8% believed that have critical roles to play in the future of work (see Figure 6). In a follow up question on why people thought that way, issues such as the need to adapt to future work demands, improve organizational performance, changing work dynamics, new trends (e.g. technology), increased importance of digital skills, and remaining competitive were highlighted as the reasons underscoring the role of skilling/reskilling/upskilling in the future of work.

**Current State**

When it comes to the reality on the ground, it was important to understand whether organizations have any programs or plans in place to skill, reskill, and upskill their employees as evidence of their efforts in this endeavour.

**Table 3. Organizations Offering Skilling/Reskilling/Upskilling**

| Does your organization have any form of skilling/reskilling/upskilling programs? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| **No** | **34** | **29.6%** |
| **Yes** | **81** | **70.4%** |
| *Both* | 7 | *8.6%* |
| *Offline* | 44 | *54.3%* |
| *Online* | 30 | *37.1%* |

As shown in Table 3, the survey found that 70.4% of the organizations studied had some form of skilling/reskilling/upskilling programs meant to train workers on new soft or hard skills that can make them more effective, stay relevant, and competitive in their current or future roles. Out of these, 54.3% were using offline training mechanisms, while 37.1% and 8.6% were using online or both online and offline, respectively.

Many tools have been used to support the learning ecosystems of organizations embracing the skilling/reskilling/upskilling phenomenon, and Table 4 below tabulates responses in this regard.

**Table 4. Distance-Learning Tools**

| Distance-Learning Tools | Frequency | Percent | Cum. Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Printed materials | 55 | 28.5% | 28% |
| Online learning programmes and resources | 41 | 21.2% | 50% |
| Video conferencing tools | 32 | 16.6% | 66% |
| Multimedia, including podcasts and YouTube videos | 17 | 8.8 % | 75% |
| Virtual reality simulators | 11 | 5.7% | 81% |
| TV | 3 | 1.6% | 82% |
| Offline and online | 1 | 0.5% | 83% |
| No distance learning tools are being used | 33 | 17.1% | 100% |
| **Grand Total** | **193** | **100.0%** | |

As shown above, when it comes to the common tools of delivering skilling/reskilling/upskilling programs, only 17.1% said their did not have any form of distance learning tools, with Printed Materials, Online Learning Programmes and Resources, and Video Conferencing Tools having 28.5%, 21.2%, and 16.6% popularity.

On the same topic of mode of delivery, organizations can either offer this programs independently or in collaboration with external parties.
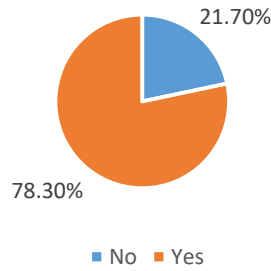


**Figure 7. Third Party Trainers**

The study found that majority (70.4%) are doing the skilling/reskilling/upskilling initiatives independently: only 29.6% of them reported to be engaging third parties to conduct or facilitate the trainings (see Figure 7). Among the mentioned external organizations include County Governments, CAP YEI, TVETA, KNEC, AHK-Germany, Federation of Kenyan Employers (FKE), KEBS, Insurance Providers, International Labour Organisation (ILO), KOICA, KIPC, Government Ministries (e.g. MOH), Utalii College, KUSCCO, KYEOP, and Consultancy Firms/Individuals.

However, in acknowledging the importance of skilling/reskilling/upskilling to their career growth, some individuals may opt to seek additional training on their own, as visualized below.

**Figure 8. Training Outside Organization**

Specifically, Figure 8 shows that on top of the various training and career growth opportunities offered by organizations, it was revealed that about 78.3% of the respondents pursued training on their own (outside organization) to enhance their capability in their current roles or in pursuit of a promotion.

**Table 5. Current State**

| Statement | Percent (n/115) |
|---|---|
| After the coronavirus outbreak, our organization stepped up their upskilling/reskilling efforts. | 25.2% |
| During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, some skills such as digital literacy/capabilities have become more important. | 64.3% |
| The changing work environment has rendered some skills irrelevant, absolute, or redundant. | 32.2% |
| The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for retraining the workforce. | 46.1% |
| The skills required for the same positions have been changing over time. | 64.3% |

In Table 5, the study sought to collect insights about specific issues pertaining the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has somewhat created a new order of work in most sectors. According to findings, at least 64.3% of the respondents said that (a) during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, some skills such as digital literacy/capabilities have become more important, and that (b) the skills required for the same positions have been changing over time. In addition, 46.1% of them felt that (c) the COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated the need for retraining the workforce, with 32.2% saying that (d) the changing work environment has rendered some skills irrelevant, absolute, or redundant. However, only 25.2% of organizations represented in the study (e) stepped up their upskilling/reskilling efforts after the coronavirus outbreak.

**Table 6. Motivation to Seek Training**

| Statement | Percent (n/115) |
|---|---|
| Skills that I find interesting but are unrelated to my job/organization | 27.0% |
| Skills that would help me get promoted | 33.0% |
| Skills that directly relate to my current role | 85.2% |
| I am not interested with any additional training | 7.8% |

When asked what they preferred to spend their time learning if they would seek additional training, a staggering 85.2% said that they would pick skills that directly relate to their current roles, with 33% and 27% saying they would seek those skills that would get them promoted and those skills that they find interesting though they are unrelated to what they or their organization do, respectively (see Table 6).

In addition to the above, the study revealed that some of the factors the respondents cited as reasons to upskill or reskill include improving employee retention, avoiding/reducing hiring costs, adapting to new changes, as part of organizational career development culture, training employees on new technologies, due to lack of needed talent/skills in the labour market, to comply with new regulations and labour policies, as a means of reward/benefit/employer branding, and enhancing overall productivity.

**Table 7. Extent of being Satisfied with Skilling/Upskilling/Reskilling**

| Mean | 3.982608696 | |
|---|---|---|
| Median/Mode | 4 | |
| Standard Deviation | 0.927008097 | |
| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Very Dissatisfied [1] | 2 | 1.7% |
| Dissatisfied [2] | 4 | 3.5% |
| Neutral [3] | 26 | 22.6% |
| Satisfied [4] | 45 | 39.1% |
| Very Satisfied [5] | 38 | 33.0% |
| Total | 115 | 100.0% |

Overall, with a mean of 3.983, a median and mode of 4, all of which correspond to "Satisfied [4]", and a standard deviation of 0.927, it can be said that the majority of the responds are fairly satisfied with the skilling/upskilling/reskilling efforts in their organizations (see Table 7).

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regardless of the sector, size, type, and region, it is increasingly difficult for enterprises to deny the importance of embracing changes, particularly in having adaptable and agile workers. The consensus in most industries prone to labour market changes is that the most competitive entities will be those that will invest in reskilling and upskilling their workforces. Notably, international organizations such as Walmart, McDonald's, and Google, as well as Kenyan companies such as Safaricom and KCB Bank have massively invested in equipping people with not only the currently in-demand skills but also those that will be required in the foreseeable future. This descriptive study adopted inductive reasoning to generalize the case of Kenya in regards to skilling, upskilling, and reskilling employees for purposes of sustained competitiveness, skills relevance, adapting to new technological trend, matching the future work demands, and improving organizational performance. The paper met its primary objective of discussing the situation of Kenyan corporate space in regards to creating a learning ecosystem for their employees. The study was successful in painting a clear picture of the phenomenon, including the gaps and challenges that ought to be addressed to prepare businesses for the future of work.

As a positive, a 70.4% majority of Kenyan entities had implemented some form of skilling/reskilling/upskilling programs meant to train workers on new soft or hard skills that can make them more effective, stay relevant, and competitive in their current or future roles. However, it should be noted that this is happening more with large enterprises than small ones. What is more, even

with the current efforts to enhance workforce competencies and capacities, 70.4% of the organization are experiencing skills gaps in their workforces or expect them in the coming years, and more than half (50.4%) have not done any form of skills gap analysis in recent times to identify what human resources are missing, obsolete, or wrongly deployed in their workforce. As a result, these findings may suggest that some of the efforts are blinded and may be addressing nonpriority issues, especially in the case of those who have not conducted any needs or skills gap assessment. In fact, despite the efforts of more than 70% of the organizations, an average of 92.2% of the expert responds feels that their current workforces need some form of new skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to remain relevant for their roles or future positions – with 94.8% of them agreeing that these career/employee development initiatives have critical roles to play in the future of work.

Moreover, even with the realization that employees need skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to be future proof, 72.1% of the respondents reported being fairly satisfied with the skilling/upskilling/reskilling efforts in their respective organizations, which can suggest a level of laxity and comfort with status quo despite existing literature showing that such initiatives ought to be not only a matter of necessity but also urgency. It is worth noting that majority of employees are ready to embrace programs meant to enhance their expertise, capabilities, and competitiveness – with a staggering 85.2% saying they are hungry for skills that directly relate to their current roles and another 33% saying that they would go for skills that would get them promoted if they were given a chance to seek additional training.

However, new developments such as COVID-19 pandemic has convinced about 64.3% of the respondents that the skills required for the same positions have been changing over time and that some skills such as digital literacy/capabilities have become more important. Consequently, some organizations have stepped up their upskilling/reskilling efforts and accelerated the plans to retrain their workforces. Overall, Kenyan businesses are clearly aware of the capability of skilling, reskilling, and upskilling initiatives in attaining competitive advantage and proofing their workforces for future demands; however, guidance is needed in regards to identifying the specific areas that need focus and in increasing urgency do implement the initiatives.

**REFERENCES**

Ali Alrubai, F. K. & Musa, A. A. (2021). Skills gap in the enterprises and labor markets: A vision from an international perspective. *Algerian Scientific Journal Platform*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349642578

Allen, J. & de Grip, A. (2007). Skill obsolescence, lifelong learning and labor market participation. Maastricht, MD: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/4789964

Bergin, A., Delaney, J., Handel, M., McGuinness, S., Kupets, O., Pouliakas, K. & Redmond, P. (2019). *Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries*. Geneva: ILO. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_726816.pdf

Chakma, S. & Chaijinda, N. (2020). The importance of reskilling and upskilling the workforce. *Interdisciplinary Sripatum Chonburi Journal*, *6*(2), 23-31.

Delloite. (2020). *Global human capital trends report: The social enterprise at work: Paradox as a path forward.* Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cn/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-cn-hc-trend-2020-en-200519.pdf

International Labour Organization. (2021). *Skilling, upskilling and reskilling of employees, apprentices & interns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from a global survey of enterprises*. Geneva: ILO

KCB Bank. (2016). *Working at KCB*. Retrieved from https://bi.kcbgroup.com/fr/a-propos-de-kcb/2016-05-10-14-15-57/gouvernance/106-a-propos-de-kcb/careers/115-working-at-kcb

McDonalds. (2021). *Archway to education: 5 ways McDonald's is making education more accessible to all*. Retrieved from https://corporate.mcdonalds.com/corpmcd/en-us/our-stories/article/OurPeople.education-accessible.html

Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research, 19*(2), 129-132. doi:10.1177/1362168815572747

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). Future of work and skills. *2nd Meeting of the G20 Employment Working Group*. Hamburg: OECD. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/wcms_556984.pdf

Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *42*(5), 533-544. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Pichai, S. (2022). Our new $100 million Google career certificates fund. *Google*. Retrieved from https://blog.google/outreach-initiatives/grow-with-google/career-certificates-fund/

Randstad. (2020). *Skilling today global survey*. Retrieved from https://info.risesmart.com/skilling-today-global-survey-report

Safaricom. (n.d.). *Employees*. Retrieved from https://www.safaricom.co.ke/sustainabilityreport_2020/stakeholder-engagement/employees/

Senge, P. M. (1990). *Fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation*. London: Doubleday Publisher.

Suri, N., 2021. Chapter 16: Skilling is a New Currency: Are You a Learning Organization. In A. Khandelwal (Ed.), *Transformational Leadership in Banking: Challenges of Governance, Leadership and HR in a Digital and Disruptive World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.

Wahab, S. N., Rajendran, S. D. & Yeap, S. P. (2021). Upskilling and reskilling requirement in logistics and supply chain industry for the fourth industrial revolution. *Scientific Journal of Logistics, 17*(3), 399-410

Walmart. (2021). *Live better u fact sheet*. Retrieved from https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://corporate.walmart.com/media-library/document/live-better-u-fact-sheet-july-2021/_proxyDocument?id=0000017a-e56b-d458-ab7f-f7ebc2ee0000

World Economic Forum. (2020). *Recession and automation changes our future of work, but there are jobs coming, report says.* Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/10/recession-and-automation-changes-our-future-of-work-but-there-are-jobs-coming-report-says-52c5162fce/