



# Teacher Education-Community Involvement Curriculum: Analysis of Practices and Perspectives Towards Enhancing Graduates' Employability

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## Abstract

Higher education-community involvement research agendas explore educational alignment with the labour market needs to address the graduates' employability crisis. This mixed-methods study, underpinned by the triple helix model, explored teacher education and community involvement through the integration of local community content and students' experiential learning of the world of work. The study selected 821 students, 104 academic staff from six higher learning institutions, and 314 community participants from two regions in Tanzania. Survey questionnaires and key informant interviews were used. The results showed a poor integration of key self-employability skills, particularly in financial management, the informal market economy, and project-based business startup. There is also a poor teacher education-community involvement, such that the selected programmes, the pure science (7.4%), and arts (9.5%) had lower ratings compared to the education and community development (26.7%), and business studies with schooling (36.2%) on enhancing students' interaction with the labour industries through course activities. Additionally, the use of labour market interactive methods, such as inviting guest speakers (4.8%) and sharing self-employment experiences (7.7%), received the lowest ratings among the academic staff. Furthermore, only 62 (19.7%) of the community respondents participated in the teacher education curriculum development and review process, while the majority, 252 (80.3%), did not. The study concluded that a weak interrelationship among teacher education institutions, government systems of labour market administration, and public communities is a cause of the prevailing graduates' employability crisis. Transforming the teacher education community requires linkage policies,

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institutional strategies, and further research on graduates' self-employment data.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, teacher education-community involvement, graduates' employability, self-employability skills, job creation

## Introduction

The poor employability of higher education graduates is a global threat. According to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 2020 report on youth employment, the employability of graduate youth is lower than that of those with elementary or no education. It is claimed that youth unemployment rates are higher among university graduates in Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda than those with lower levels of education (Baah-Boateng, 2016). The lower rates of graduates' employability are associated with their inadequate capacity to create new jobs. At the same time, they struggle to adapt to existing, ready-made jobs that are scarce and highly competitive. It is claimed that this condition is a result of a skills shortage and a mismatch with labour market needs (Afolabi & Medu, 2023; Sufi et al., 2025). Generally, there is a prolonged time lapse for the school-to-work transition among teacher education graduates. Consequently, graduates' youth attainment of the envisioned decent jobs and better livelihoods as per the Sustainable Development Goals [SGDs 2030] seven (7) (United Nations, 2015) becomes unrealistic.

Although several employability researchers emphasise university-community linkage as a good strategy for promoting students' experiential learning (Dipitso, 2020; Brabazon et al., 2019) of labour market practices and needs, there is limited evidence about its applicability to self-employment contexts. A weak linkage between the higher education curriculum and the community labour market industries is identified as one of the factors hindering students' effective learning of the world of work outside of books and theories (Kamuhabwa, 2019; Dipitso, 2020). Unfortunately, higher education institutions are blamed for maintaining an academic status quo that separates learners from societal knowledge and realities (Meghan, Barnes, & Marlatt, 2022). An emphasis on the status quo hinders the HLIs' interactions with external communities, such as parents, leaders, and local business owners.

Furthermore, inadequate teacher education results in students' limited learning connectivity with the community and real-life practices of labour market systems, leading to their failure to create new jobs after completing their studies. These graduates consequently become long-term vulnerable job seekers, given their low economic capacity to create new jobs globally (Danson et al., 2021; World Trade Organisation, 2024). For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the youth unemployment rate is estimated at 5.9%,

with over 25.8 million unemployed individuals in 2019 (Mukisa et al., 2020). According to David and Mathew (2015), the world needs approximately 734 million new jobs to absorb the growing labour force and meet production demands between 2010 and 2030. About 91 per cent of these jobs are required in low and lower-middle-income countries. Therefore, this article aims to generate knowledge that bridges the gaps in the linkage between teacher education curriculum designs and community lived contexts, to enhance graduates' capacity to create new jobs. A key focus is on curriculum relevance in content and training methods that incorporate enterprise skills development, preparing students for a broader range of job market opportunities within and outside the scope of the teaching profession.

Nevertheless, building job creation mindsets among teacher education students aligns with Tanzania's long-standing philosophy of education for self-reliance, which aims to produce graduates capable of applying the skills they have learned to produce services and products that contribute to society and national development (Nyerere, 1968). Correspondingly, the Tanzania Development Vision 2050 (URT, 2025) emphasises the role of literate citizens in promoting sustainable national development goals by 2050. Obviously, the attainment of this vision and philosophical presumptions requires a well-enriched collaboration between the education and training institutions and the local communities to nurture students' practical learning of job opportunities, structural policies, and job conditions. In fact, the education systems and their products are the property of the community and for the community (Nyerere, 1968); the educational institutions have no separate ownership rights.

Henceforth, beyond poor curriculum-community involvement is the dominance of bookish learning at the expense of practical exposure of students (Afolabi & Medu, 2023; Kamuhabwa, 2019; Tandika & Ndjuyeye, 2021) to the real-life work experiences outside books, cemented to the THM perspectives (Dipitso, 2020; Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024). Under such circumstances, most teacher education students complete their studies without being aware of the complexities of self-employment. They are therefore unable to utilise available employment opportunities in their communities (Tandika & Ndjuyeye, 2021). Moreover, it can be anticipated that a poor university-community involvement curriculum reduces accountability between the HLLs and government authorities in planning, implementing, and regulating the educational curriculum development and reviews relevant to enhancing graduates' employability prospects.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While available literature recommends the importance of university-community involvement in enhancing students' practical learning of the

real-life labour market jobs and promoting graduates' employability (Hailu, 2024; Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024), there is a lack of a well-informed practice on teacher education-community involvement curriculum for enhancing graduates' self-employability in Tanzania and elsewhere. Most available studies focus on the role of higher education curriculum alignment in meeting the needs of employers in wage employment organisations (Bowers, 2017; Cyran, 2023; Dipitso, 2020; Hatibu & Hafidh, 2021; Tandika & Ndiujye, 2021). There is no well-established body of literature on the collaborative role of teacher education curriculum integration in combining labour market policies, local context experiences, and business opportunities to promote graduates' employability. Adequate details about the parents and public communities' involvement in the universities' curricula processes and programmes are lacking. It is claimed that educational goals and outcomes remain the responsibility of higher education training institutions. At the same time, stakeholders, employers and parents blame these institutions for graduates' misfit into labour market jobs, including the existing self-employment opportunities in their communities (Afolabi & Medu, 2023; Hatibu & Hafidh, 2021; Kamuhabwa, 2019). If these wage gaps are not clearly addressed, society's expectations about the value of productive teacher education graduates in both wage and self-employment sectors, as well as the value of a higher education degree, will increasingly deteriorate. This study, therefore, aims to explore the status and practices through which the teacher education institutions collaborate with their surrounding communities in promoting effective teaching and learning that has a practical impact on students' self-employment outcomes and job creation competencies.

## Research Objectives

- i. To assess the state of teacher education students' interactions with the self-employment labour market businesses during their studies in Tanzania.
- ii. To examine the nature of teacher education academic staff interactions with the surrounding communities in promoting their students' self-employment skills.
- iii. To explore the community involvement in teacher education curriculum development and review processes to promote graduates' self-employability.

This study is significant as its results will inform teacher education institutions about community involvement through curriculum development, review, and teaching and learning processes, thereby enhancing their graduates' prospects for self-employment. The study stimulates a critical application of the THM perspectives in the roles of universities, government authorities,

and the community in labour market policies, ensuring effective schooling and further enhancing graduates' self-employability prospects. The study findings will further contribute to promoting policy reforms on the university-community involvement portfolio in ways that create and maintain an accountable relationship among academic institutions and responsive social systems, thereby enhancing graduates' employability and addressing ongoing unemployment trends.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study used the Triple Helix Model (THM) of innovation. The model theorises the linkages among higher learning institutions, labour market industries, and local community government systems in the knowledge society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024). Concurring with Hailu (2024), from the THM perspective, technology in the process of university-industry linkage encompasses a system of knowledge, skills, experiences, and organisation intended to foster a common understanding, consistency, and applicability of technology among manufacturers and users. Thus, using this THM element, the study objectives were designed in a mixed methods approach to triangulate data from survey tools and key informant interview guides. Moreover, data interpretations and discussions were tightly underpinned to demonstrate how the teacher education curriculum, technology development, reviews, and implementation processes are linked to the local community's experiences of self-employment, labour market, policies, and practices. For instance, the THM theorises concerns about contextualisation of the curriculum technology development, evolution and reconstruction (Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024), which in this study, issues such as integration of employment support policies, the informal economy, and involvement of non-academic community participants into the curriculum development and review processes were explored and discussed. The study under the THM interprets these linkage chains as means by which teacher education students can gain practical and real-life experience in self-employment, job market skills, and experiences, with the potential to support their future transition from school to work. Therefore, with the THM perspectives, the paper asserts that the authentic outcomes of the teacher education curriculum technologies, and self-employment preparations of prospective graduates depend on the triple functions of: curriculum technology content and process offered by respective HLIs, the conditions of the labour market industries, and the community socio-structural systems of labour market policies and support services.



## **The State, Structure, and Provision of Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania**

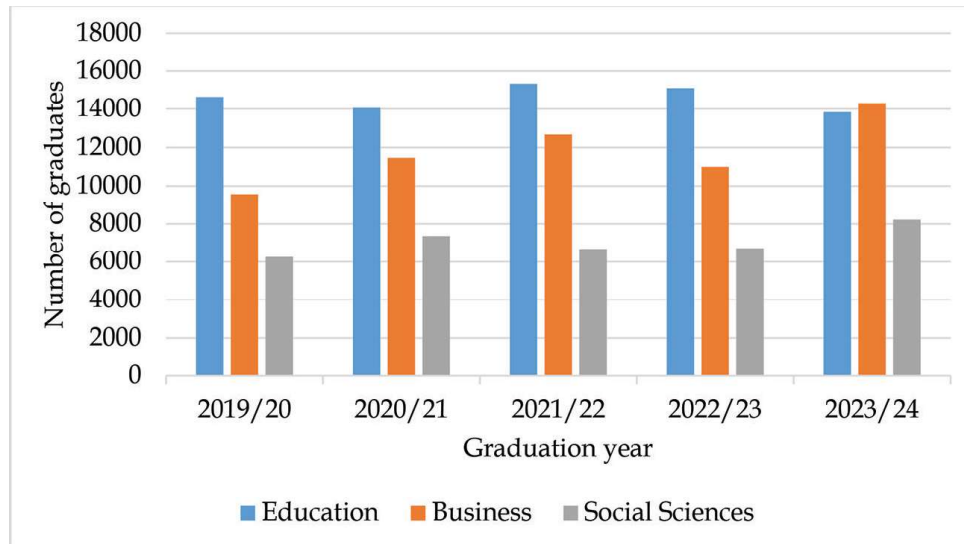
Teacher education in Tanzania is provided by the HLIs, including the teacher training colleges (TTCs), university institutions, university colleges, and campuses. While the TTCs offer certificates to diploma-level programmes, universities and university colleges offer degree-level programmes. This paper focuses on degree-level teacher education programmes offered by universities, university colleges and campuses in the country. By the 2024 academic year, there were 33 full-fledged universities, 15 university colleges and five university campuses and centres in Tanzania (TCU, 2024a). The provision of degree programmes under university institutions is regulated by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), established in 2005 (URT, 2005). In fact, the core aim of teacher education is to develop professional teachers who can serve as teachers in primary education, secondary education and teachers' education colleges as directed by the Education and Training Policy (ETP) 2014 revised version 2023 (URT, 2023) and the TCU framework for teacher education development and delivery in Tanzania (TCU, 2024b). However, as from the 2024 curriculum development framework, TCU introduced a slight improvement in the structure of the teacher education curriculum by dividing it into two streams: Bachelor of General Education with Education (arts and/or science teacher education), and Bachelor of Technical Higher Education (Vocational Skills Education) stream (TCU, 2024a). Unlike the previous curriculum frameworks, the vocational education stream was introduced as one of the efforts to integrate multidisciplinary skills attributes into teacher qualities, aiming to enhance graduates' employability.

Historically, since the 2000s to date, teacher education provision has been driven by the expansion of enrolment rates geared by various initiatives such as the Education Sector Development Plan I and II (ESDP) (URT, 2000; 2010), and the teacher education master plan (TEMP) (URT, 2001). Moreover, the country invested in funding higher education through the Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB) (URT, 2004), which prioritised teacher education programmes for a long time. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of teacher education students' enrolment and graduates in the country. For instance, according to the recent TCU VitalStats data (2020-2024), the number of teacher education graduates was consistently higher, followed by the business studies and social sciences fields, except in 2024, when the business studies field had the highest number of graduates (TCU, 2024b). This trend implies significant importance attributed to the field by the government and the society from which applicants come. However, their equal emphasis on school-to-work transition after completing their studies has not been given substantial presentation in the available literature in Tanzania. Figure 1 below presents

a comparative trend of the number of graduates from teacher education with other leading fields of study in Tanzania.

**Figure 1**

*A Comparative Trend of Teacher Education Graduates Number with Other Leading Fields of Study in Tanzania 2020-2024*



Source: TCU VitalStats on university education in Tanzania from 2020 to 2024

## Empirical Studies

The literature review selection focused on studies related to teacher education, graduates' employability, higher education, and community involvement practices within the higher education sector. In this study, we define teacher education-community involvement as collaborative linkages between teacher education institutions and the community, which contribute to the development, implementation, and review of the curriculum. Henceforth, it is conceptualised, along with the THM perspectives, that academic community involvement calls for an open higher education system that engages society to contribute inputs into the educational curricula processes and has ownership of the outputs generated. The end goal of this university-community engagement is contextualising students' learning and graduates' self-employment.

Several employability studies recommend university-community involvement as a tool for promoting experiential learning of real-world practices. For instance, Grau et al. (2017) emphasise linkage through service-based learning and participatory research, which, according to them, help extract inputs from educational stakeholders such as policymakers, academics, and authorities. As explained in Bowers (2017) and Hatt, Nolan and Watts

(2024), extending students' learning to real-world enterprise experiences is vital in promoting their intrinsic values, interests and preparedness to cope with such businesses in the future. Despite the awareness, there are views that both universities and communities have low trust in the impact of each other regarding interactions. According to Grau et al. (2017), often, local communities and the academic community have a negative perception of each other. While universities strive to maintain their status quo as high-level institutions, the communities on the other side perceive academic institutions as distinct entities that do not fit into local community cultures, traditions, and lives (Meghan et al., 2022). These contrasting perceptions have a negative impact on the graduates' employability prospects.

Some studies on multidisciplinary curriculum designs integrate contents and pedagogical methods from different disciplines into the learning process (Roy, 2022; Tramonti, Tramonti, and Dochshanov, 2019; Upadhyay, 2024). One approach is an interdisciplinary design, which refers to the integration of two different subjects to create a hybrid content or topic within a subject or course, enriching the student's learning experiences (Roy, 2022). It builds on integrating contents, methods and experiences from different courses to address complex problems within the course studied. According to Pietrandrea, Masters and McHugh (2022), this integration can be vertical, horizontal or spiral. Horizontal integration occurs between different subjects simultaneously. In contrast, vertical integration aims to improve the connection between introductory courses and higher-level knowledge or courses within a similar discipline over time. Finally, spiral integration involves integrating across disciplines and time, such that learners revisit the material at increasingly complex levels as they progress through the course. The other approach is transdisciplinary curricula, which are more flexible in transitioning between the self-employment labour market and professional cadres, essentially to curb the unemployment crises that are globally alarming (Sodha et al., 2024). In this case, the teacher education curriculum can draw on content from related disciplines, such as business and entrepreneurship, as well as non-professional experiences that have authentic reflections in the community.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Study approach, Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. The study population involved teacher education academic staff, final-year undergraduate students, and community participants. 104 academic staff, and 821 final year undergraduate teacher education students who were selected from six (6) higher learning institutions. The selection of HLIs was predetermined by identifying suitable teacher education programmes that could offer a



comparative analysis of their capacity to enhance community involvement in the curriculum. With this basic criterion; four kinds of teacher education programmes and students sample size from each were identified and selected namely; the arts teacher education [ATE] (317), the science teacher education [STE] (203), teacher education with adult education and community development [ECD] (243), and the business studies with education [BSE] (58). Henceforth, the teacher education HLIs were selected based on their experience in offering the selected types of teacher education programmes. Additionally, the criterion of institutional ownership, whether public or private, was added to ensure the availability of mixed experiences. With these criteria, six (6) teacher education HLIs from two regions of Tanzania mainland, Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, qualified and were selected. These regions became suitable study areas because most graduates also remain after completing their studies to seek employment; hence, communities in the selected regions have rich experiences with graduates' self-employment lives.

Having identified the teacher education HLIs, the selection of students from the selected programmes was conducted randomly. Students were provided with questionnaires, and the sample size for each program was determined using the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) formula. Academic staff selection was guided by specified criteria, including involvement in teaching courses offered within the selected programmes, one year of teaching experience, and being under a permanent contract, as well as 314 community participants. After this identification, academic staff involvement in the questionnaires and interviews was done through convenience sampling. Moreover, the selection process of community participants was predetermined by the identification of community-based organisations and local government authorities involved in the provision and/or supervision of youths' employment support services. This key criterion identified the villages, streets, wards, local government council department of community development, trade, industry and investment as relevant units. From these organisations and government authorities, the study purposively sampled Ward Executive officers, Ward Councillors, Community Development officers, experienced officials from the Department of Trade, Industry and Investment, Street Executive officers, Street Local Government Chairpersons, Directors, and experienced staff from community-based organisations. Therefore, the sampling process was fair, unbiased, and included sample representatives from various community groups, comprising youths' employment support services providers, supervisors, parents, guardians, employers, and local community residents.

### **Data Collection Methods, Validity and Reliability of Tools**

Data were collected through questionnaires for academic staff, continuing students, and community participants. Moreover, key informant interviews

were conducted with academic staff and community participants. The study also employed curriculum document analysis to examine the integration of skills, experiences, and contextual knowledge, linking the teacher education curriculum to self-employment businesses within the surrounding communities. The researcher developed survey tools, submitted them to three experts in teacher education curriculum development for validation, and piloted their reliability before the actual data collection. The validation comments suggested improving the content by removing items related to the agriculture field because in Tanzania, agriculture is not yet considered as a profit-related self-employment according to the Integrated Labour Force Survey [ILFS] (URT, 2022). After refining the questionnaires, the researcher piloted the tools and assessed their reliability by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. Some poor Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient values, ranging from  $< 0.6$ , were removed. In contrast, others were improved, and those with a score of 0.6 to  $< 0.7$  were categorised as moderate, while those with a score of 0.9 were considered excellent (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2016). These individuals were included in the final questionnaires, showing some improvement. The qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interview guides for the academic staff and community participants.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The authors coded the survey data, entered it into the SPSS version 21 software and analysed it using descriptive statistics. The coding process was reviewed by the expert data statistician both before and after, who also assisted the authors in conducting the descriptive analysis of the results. The qualitative data analysis was conducted in collaboration with the authors and research assistants experienced in teacher education, following the six-step thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as cited in Dawadi (2020). The steps were: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing the report. The initial codes were generated from the authors' and research assistants' interview transcripts. Throughout the six steps, the identified themes were presented in verbatim quotes in the results section and further discussed in Section 5.

## Ethical Issues

The researchers cleared administrative and ethical logistics by obtaining an ethical clearance letter from the University of Dodoma and research permits from the President's Office - Regional Administrative and Local Government (PO-RALG). Prior to interviewing the key informants, the researchers read and provided the participants with an information sheet to obtain their informed consent. However, the oral consent was preferred by most key

informants for several reasons, including that the nature of the study did not require disclosure of personal information, biodata, or photos; the busy work hours in the visited offices; and that it is commonly used in most surveys in their areas. In addition, confidentiality of personal and institutional details was also maintained by using anonymous representations during data collection, presentations and discussions. Finally, this work is original and plagiarism-free, and the cited sources were also acknowledged in the reference list.

## RESULTS

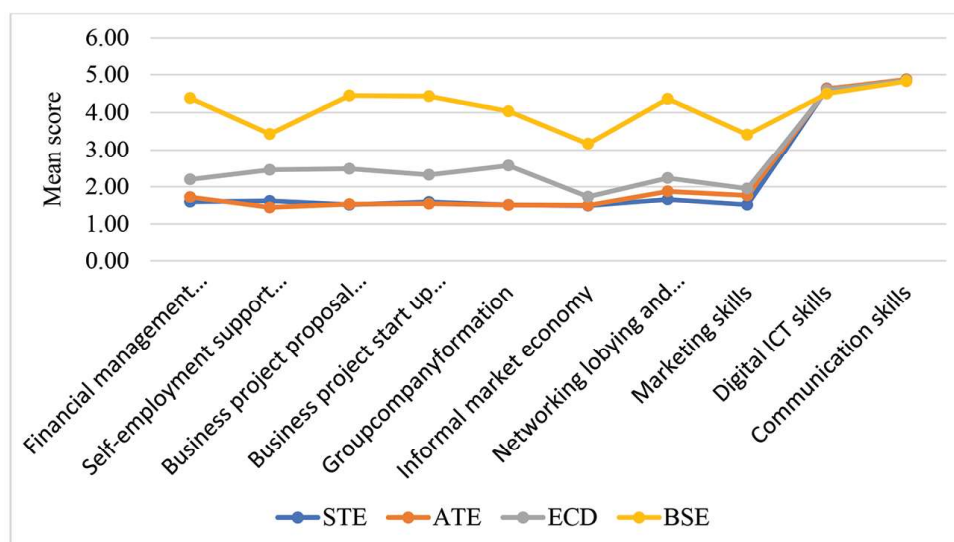
### (i) The State of Teacher Education Students' Interactions with Community Self-Employment Labour Market Businesses During their Studies

Curriculum Integration of Self-Employability Skills across the Selected Teacher Education Programmes

Using the 5-Likert scale tool, students were asked to rate the extent to which their programme curriculum offered the listed self-employability skills. The Likert scales ranged from lowest to highest; 1 = not studied at all, 2 = studied as a part of a sub-topic, 3 = studied as a sub-topic, 4 = studied as a topic, and 5 = studied as a course. Comparative results across programmes are presented in Figure 2 below;

**Figure 2**

*A Comparative Students' Perceptions about the Curriculum Integration of Self-employment Skills Across the Selected Teacher Education Programmes*



Source: Data from students' survey questionnaire

Data in Figure 2 above show that across the selected teacher education programmes, the BSE curriculum was highly rated as having many rich counts related to the listed self-employability skills compared to the rest of the programmes. This is followed by ECD, which had a mean score above 2.00 in most skills, indicating that these skills were studied as part of the sub-topics or topics. In contrast to pure arts and science teacher education curricula, the mean scores ranged below 2.00, meaning that the listed skills were either not studied at all or studied as part of sub-topics. However, across all programmes, digital skills and communication skills were rated higher, indicating that these skills were learned through courses or modules as part of various courses.

### ***Students' Interaction with the Community Self-Employment Labour Markets Environment During Their Studies***

Using a survey questionnaire tool, the study investigated whether the teacher education curriculum engages students in practical learning about community services through course activities during their studies. This tool aimed to assess the linkage between teaching and learning strategies, extracurricular activities, and institutional strategies that students perceived as suitable for fostering their experiential learning of self-employment businesses within their surrounding communities. The results across programmes are shown in Table 1 and Figure 3 below;

**Table 1:** Students' Interaction with the Self-Employment Labour Market During Studies

Students' mode of interaction with self-employment labour markets during their studies	Programmes of study			
	STE	ATE	ECD	BSE
Do not interact regularly	33.0	29.7	12.3	10.3
Through a tour study	8.9	4.1	9.5	5.2
Through the course assignment works	7.4	9.5	26.7	36.2
Through personal affairs interaction	34.5	40.4	20.6	12.1
Through field practice works	12.8	8.5	11.5	8.6
Through research and project works	3.4	7.9	19.3	27.6
<b>Total (N)</b>	203	317	243	58

Source: Descriptive data output from students' survey questionnaire

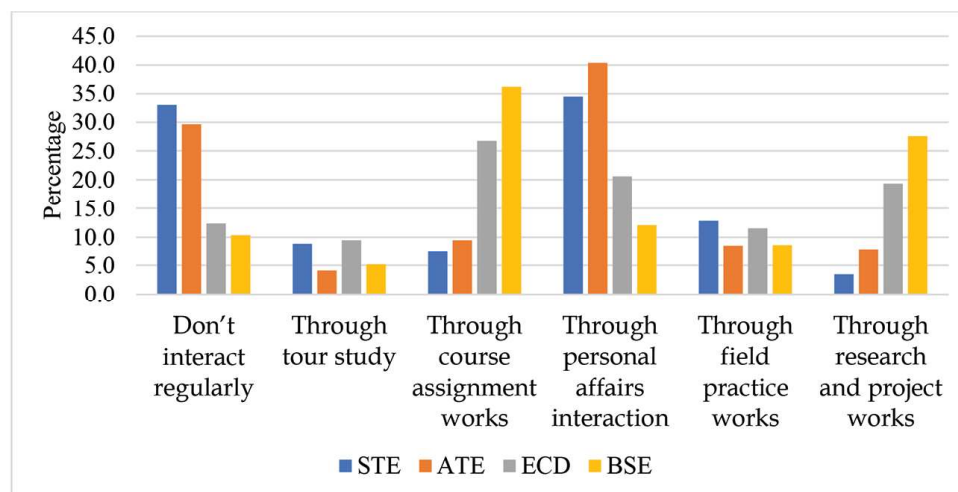
Data in Table 1 above show that, in the STE and ATE curricula, a large number of students, 34.5% and 40.4%, respectively, view their interactions with the self-employment labour market business as personal affairs. This was followed by those who thought they did not interact regularly, at 33.0%

and 29.7%, respectively. On the contrary, within the ECD and BSE, the numbers concentrate on those who interacted through course assignment activities, at 26.7% and 36.2%, respectively. This is followed by students who view their personal affairs as the regular mode of interaction in the ECD programme (20.6%) and those who view research and project work as their next mode of interaction with self-employment businesses in the BSE programme (27.6%). The results imply that the nature of courses offered, such as those related to community development and business studies fields, has a greater likelihood of fostering students' interactions with the community and community involvement compared to those with pure arts or science.

These results are further presented in Figure 3 below, indicating the differences across programmes of study.

**Figure 3**

*A Comparative Analysis of Students' Interaction with the Self-Employment Businesses across the Selected Teacher Education Programmes*

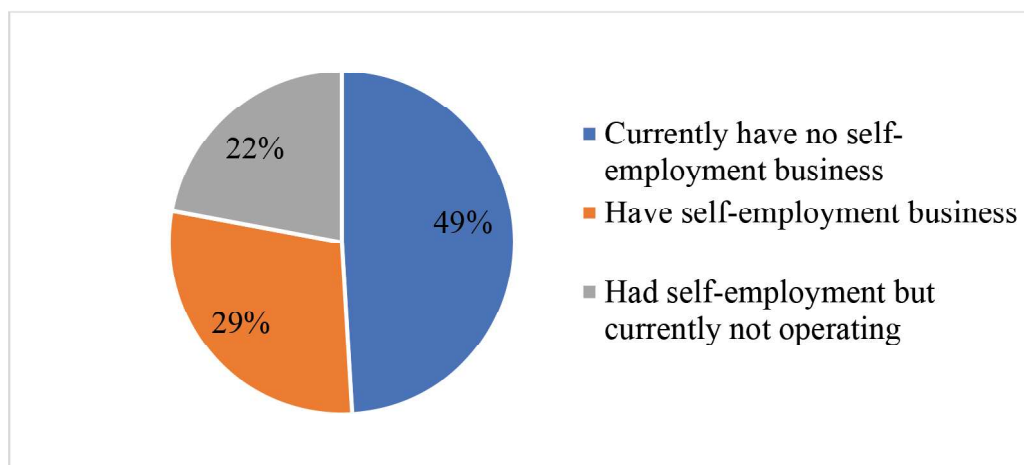


Source: Students' descriptive data output

ii) Higher Education Academic Staff Involvement in Self-Employment Businesses within The Surrounding Communities

Using a structured questionnaire, the academic staff were asked to state their status of engagement in self-employment businesses. The results are presented in Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4***Academic Staff Participation in Self-Employment Businesses*

Source: Academic staff questionnaire data

The data in Figure 4 above show that approximately 49% of participating academic staff did not engage in self-employment businesses at the time of the study, and about 29% were involved in self-employment businesses. In comparison, 22% had previously engaged in self-employment but were not operating them at the time of the study. The results show that the number of HLI's academic staff who participate in self-employment businesses is lower than that of those who do not.

Through the interview guide, the participating academic staff were asked to explain the extent to which they engaged in self-employment businesses within their communities and how they integrated such experiences in promoting students' learning of self-employment skills. The results showed that academic staff do not seriously consider self-employment jobs as part of their responsibilities. During the interview, among others, one academic staff had the following to say;

*I run my retail shop business other than my employment as an academic staff. I don't normally talk about it as an example because it is just a small home shop, and that I don't prepare students for such kind of a job after their studies. They have to focus on becoming competent teachers. However, I sometimes talk about self-employment to promote their positive attitudes.*  
**(Source:** Interview with an academic staff in Dodoma, June, 2023)

### *Strategies used by the Academic Staff to Engage Students in Learning the Self-Employment Business Experiences*

Using a structured questionnaire, the study explored the strategies used by participating academic staff in the selected HLIs to engage students in learning about self-employment businesses outside the HLIs' boundaries and books. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Strategies to Promote Students' Interactions with the Self-Employment Labour Markets

Strategies for engaging students in the self-employment labour market industries during studies	Frequency	Percent
No response	3	2.9
Mini research activities	13	12.5
Guidance and encouragement during lectures	18	17.3
Course project work assignments	22	21.2
Guest speaker sessions	5	4.8
Sharing my self-employment experiences	8	7.7
Field practice attachment	9	8.7
Public speeches during institutional gatherings	6	5.8
Extra-curricular activities	11	10.6
Students' associations, clubs and groups	9	8.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Analysed field data from students' questionnaire

Data in Table 2 show that the most used strategies by the academic staff and the selected HLIs to link students with the self-employment labour markets industries include; 22(21.2 per cent) course project assignment activities, 18 (17.3 per cent) were using guidance and encouraging students for self-employment during lecture sessions, 13 (12.5 per cent) use mini research activities, and 11 (10.6 per cent) extra curricula activities. The least used strategies were guest speaker sessions (5.8%) and students' participation in public speeches during institutional gatherings (4.8%). These results differ slightly from those of students, who gave the "course project assignment" a lower rating, particularly in arts and science programmes.

Moreover, these results were triangulated with the academic staff interviews on the same question. From the academic staff interview sessions, one central theme that emerged was the argument that educational goals and outcomes were not predetermined for self-employment jobs, which hinders initiatives to develop respective strategies for this purpose. However, some interviewed academic staff reported notable efforts they take to ensure that their students prepare for a diverse labour market world of work, including

self-employment businesses, during and after completion of their studies. For instance, during the interview, one academic staff had the following to say;

*Although our programme curriculum does not explicitly contain courses on self-employment, I promote my students' preparations for self-employment. Some of my courses have several contents on self-employment although I also take efforts throughout my interaction with students to encourage them to focus on job creation than keeping on seeking to be employed somewhere after studies. For example, in one of my modules named 'employment drives' and 'business project planning' they learn a lot, they are motivated and interested to become independent workers. (Source: Interview with the academic staff in Dar es Salaam, August, 2023)*

### **(iii) Community Engagement in Teacher Education Curriculum Development and Review Processes**

Data about community involvement in the teacher education curriculum process were collected through three different tools. Firstly, using the survey questionnaires, community respondents were asked whether they had participated in any curriculum development or review activities conducted by higher learning institutions in their area. Table 3 presents the results.

**Table 3:** Community Participation in Curriculum Development and Review Processes

Participation in curriculum development or review	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	62	19.7
No	252	80.3
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Survey questionnaire data from community participants

Data in Table 3 show that, out of the sampled community respondents, only 62 (19.7%) participated in the higher education curriculum development and review processes, while the majority, 252 (80.3%), did not. The results indicate a poor flow of knowledge from the community to the teacher's educational curricula.

The authors also conducted interviews with community participants to explore their collaboration status with higher education institutions in ensuring effective learning and promoting graduates' employability after graduation. Among the key themes was a lack of precise mechanisms for university-community involvement, poor budgeting to enhance the HLIs' capacity to extend their processes to labour market industries, and a

readiness or low awareness among most people in the local communities to engage with higher education affairs. During the interviews, among others, one community participant had the following to say;

*I think there is no open process though which I can explain may collaboration or linkage with the universities or training colleges. We are engaged mostly through paying school fees, attending graduations or sometimes trying to resolve disciplinary measures taken against your child. In my view universities or colleges are far from community linkage as you can see, we do not even engage in contributing for the constructions, renovations or even providing food and meals for our students, they are directly at the hands of the government or other investors (Source: Interview data with one Village Chairperson in Dodoma, June, 2023)*

With a slightly different perspective, another community participant expressed disappointment and a sense that his child is isolated from parental involvement after reaching the higher education level, unlike at the lower levels. During the interview session, the participant had the following to say;

*I used to visit my child when she was in advanced secondary school, I was called by teachers to check her academic progress, and sometimes attending Parents' Day with the school, but for universities the situation is different, there are no such things maybe it is because they provide high level education which most of the parents do not have. (Source: Interview with a ward councillor in Dar es Salaam, July, 2023).*

## DISCUSSIONS

Results from Objective One bring evidence about the poor integration of self-employment skills into the teacher education curriculum. This implies a poor linkage between curriculum technology and self-employment labour industries, as expected through the THM elements (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Hailu, 2024). Earlier studies on employability, such as those by Afolabi and Medu (2023) and Hatibu and Hafidh (2021), have criticised higher education institutions for being overly academic, failing to connect their functions with diverse socio-economic experiences, and instead focusing on predetermined theories within their studied disciplines. With this disconnection, the practical learning of skills such as financial management, business project planning, startup experiences, marketing, and networking for self-employment, as emphasised in other literature (Ahmid et al., 2023; Cyran, 2023; Tandika & Ndijuye, 2021), is difficult to attain. Although keeping the curriculum focus on academic disciplines is a strength, students' lack of transferable skills is more critical during the

school-to-work transition as it was cemented by Nandonde and Malaki (2020) students' need to be exposed to diverse skills related to the vocational self-employment businesses, in order to strengthen their competitiveness which is lacking in the traditional higher education curriculum in the job market arena.

Unlike pure sciences and arts programmes, those that incorporate additional content from business studies, education, and community development disciplines strengthen the teacher education curriculum's multidisciplinary nature (Roy, 2022; Upadhyay, 2024) and enhance graduates' self-employability prospects (Jackson & Li, 2024). As supported by Tramonti et al. (2019), this kind of integration has the potential to foster transferable learning experiences among students, appealing to their internal self-efficacy (Fatwa & Nur, 2021) and readiness to create jobs across disciplines. This linkage should be understood as a co-functioning curriculum approach under the THM perspectives (Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024), ensuring learning interactions with self-employment labour market businesses that enhance diverse experiences, interests, abilities, and values among learners towards related business ventures. Similarly, Hatt et al. (2024) and Sodha et al. (2024) support the significance of integrating enterprise and entrepreneurship contents to promote students' intrinsic motivation and perceptions for start-ups and self-employment decisions. Henceforth, programmes with content such as project planning and management, business proposal writing, and situational research offer community-interactive teaching and learning methods, where students can practise business activity planning, undertake practical project work, and conduct business situational analysis, exposing them to real-world experiences.

It was also noted that the teacher education academic staff had low participation in self-employment businesses, which was among the important factors for promoting the curriculum-labour market linkage. Arguments can be drawn from the viewpoint of scholars such as Fatwa and Nur (2021), who support the role of faculty members in building the vocational self-concept of students. Likewise, Ahmid et al (2023) emphasise the role of instructors in nurturing the students' innovative characteristics and work readiness. Promoting these skills requires experienced educators and facilitators who can explicitly link curriculum content and learning outcomes to the lived experiences of the vocational skills industries. Unfortunately, there were divided perceptions, such that some academic staff disregarded their role in nurturing students' learning towards self-employment job preparations, arguing that it was beyond the scope of their curriculum goals. This kind of mono-professional rigidity (Amany et al., 2023; Tramonti, 2019; Upadhyay, 2024) hinders flexibility in contextualising learning outcomes for a wide range of job market realities. Such thinking is contrary to the THM theory



concepts as pinpointed by Shyiramunda and Bersselaar (2024), requiring the educational curriculum to incorporate real-life content, experiences, and practices from labour industries and the public. So far, while the instructor's positive perceptions are instrumental in promoting students' school-to-work self-employment transition, resistant perceptions obviously hinder students' self-employment preparations, rather than propagating dependent attitudes towards ready-made jobs.

Furthermore, with objective three, the study reveals little interaction among community participants and teacher education HLLs during the curriculum development, review, and implementation processes. While the THM emphasises curriculum technology innovation (Hailu, 2024; Shyiramunda & Bersselaar, 2024), through effective university-industry linkage learning, there is an inferior entrepreneurial network of knowledge transfer to and from the local community contexts. Poor use of self-employment, experienced guest speakers, and inadequate interaction between students and communities outside the university borders hinder their practical learning of key skills, such as capital development, marketing, business management, and social capital skills. These skills are important in building a self-employable graduate (Ahmid et al., 2023; Danson et al., 2021). The untransformed mindsets of most academic staff towards graduates' self-employment, and communities' perceptions regarding the HLLs as part of their social institutions in which they have roles to play, seem to hinder this progress. In the midst of these paradoxes, learning in teacher education HLLs remains theoretical, resulting in students' inadequate preparation for job creation competencies.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

This study concludes that the current practice of the teacher education institutions does not sufficiently take into account the community involvement portfolio. The results and discussions of Objective One present a disconnection between the teacher education curriculum's goals, objectives, and learning outcomes and the self-employment labour market industries. Moreover, with objective two, the results indicated a lack of substantial community participation in the teacher education curriculum processes, implying weak collaboration. Hence, there is a limited flow of knowledge and experiences between the teacher education institutions and the community's lived contexts in the labour industries. There is a divorced functional relationship between education systems and the labour market, contrary to the THM perspectives. The overall trend affects graduates' transition to employment markets within their communities after completion of studies. Based on the THM perspectives, the weak interrelationship among teacher education institutions, government systems of labour market administration, and public communities has further implications for

propagating the prevailing graduates' employability crisis globally.

The study therefore recommends the establishment of proactive and responsive policy frameworks for academic-community linkage, enhancing practical employability learning among students. The study also recommends the development, review, and implementation of a teacher education curriculum that is industry-engaging and community-interactive, ensuring a mutual flow of knowledge and technology that contributes to employability across the THM elements. Where disconnected functioning among these THM elements exists, the teacher's educational curricula will remain theoretical and ineffective for the majority of students, whose number continues to increase in society. This will pose a threat to the socio-economic stability of the national and international community and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, further research on graduates' employability data and trends in the informal labour markets is recommended.

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