

ROLE OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING (TVET) IN EMPOWERING WOMEN IN  
RWANDA: A CASE OF RUBAVU DISTRICT

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**Abstract**

*TVET is a hands-on product-based form of training that seeks to expose people to as close as real world of work and its inherent processes. It plays a crucial role in empowering people and makes them well skilled in a specific area of work. This study aimed at assessing the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda. The research was conducted in five TVET schools in Rubavu. The study followed the descriptive research design which under quantitative approach. The target population of the study was 334 subjects from which a sample of 77 participants was chosen. The study employed a structured questionnaire in data collection. The data was analyzed by means of percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviation analysis. The study revealed that TVET contributes greatly to the women's empowerment in Rwanda and strengthens their abilities. Findings highlighted the role of hands-on skills as these have greatly contributed to the women's empowerment through accessing to occupations traditionally dominated by men, developing women's confidence and self-esteem, enhancing women's access to employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship skills make women capable to set business goals and work to achieve them and improve socio economic status and inspire self-reliance. Communication skills empowers women in effectively communicating their thoughts, lights, and choice, communicating, and effectively practicing their knowledge and skills for accessing employment opportunities. The study recommended that Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) with its institutions such as Rwanda Polytechnic (RP) and Rwanda TVET Board (RTB) and TVET schools should continue to encourage women to acquire technical and vocational education and training to be able to compete in the job market.*

**Keywords:** *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Education, Training, Empowering, Women Empowerment, Rwanda*

According to Saxton (2000) all over the world, countries feel in need of having a knowledge-based society for increasing productivity, high earnings, economic growth, and development. It is the reason why each country strives to have an education which responds to citizens' knowledge and skills needs. Abagi et, al. (2002) education is one of the most important means of transforming and empowering people of different categories like men, women, youth or adults with knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to enable them to become productive members of the society and participate fully in the development process.

Moreover, FME (2000) noted that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is regarded as the most effective education system to

empower the citizenry for enhancing employment opportunities, limiting the incidence of social vices due to joblessness, improving the quality of life, stimulating sustainable national development, and reducing poverty. FME (2000) added that TVET is therefore, the most reliable vehicle for empowerment, self-sustenance, and economic prosperity of individuals: men and women and the nation over others.

MINEDUC (2015), TVET is comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services, and livelihoods. It is any education, training and learning activity leading to the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skills, know-how and attitude relevant for employment or self-employment. WDA (2008) the aim of TVET is to enable or empower learners to meet needs of employment for qualified labour and/or own needs related to production of work. WDA (2008) added that Rwandan TVET is inclusive, and its special focus is both for women and vulnerable people to empower them for employment creation. Empowering women leads to more working force for better development of the country. Therefore, TVET schools have been created across the country of Rwanda.

According to Workforce Development Authority (WDA, 2008) Rwanda recognizes the role of TVET in empowering women and youth and contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). TVET prepares people for specific jobs or types of work, often including practical and/or procedural activities. WDA (2008) the aim of TVET is to enable or empower learners to meet needs of employment for qualified labour and/or own needs related to production of work.

WDA (2008) added that Rwandan TVET is inclusive, and its special focus is both for women and vulnerable people to empower them for employment creation. Empowering women leads to more working force for better development of the country.

However, the TVET schools, being inclusive, are not playing their predetermined roles effectively because women who graduate in TVET schools do not get jobs compared to men. According to both The National Tracer Survey (NTS) for TVET graduates and Employer Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2018 by the MINEDUC and MINEDUC 2018 education statistics, the females who graduated in 2017 from TVET schools were 16,929 which is 37.7% but the survey indicated that 21% out of 37.7 % did not get employment yet. This means that, although women graduate from TVET schools, are not empowered enough for getting employed or self-employed. If this problem of TVET unempowered women persists, women unemployment also will remain high, and this will have a negative impact on socio economic development of the country of Rwanda. If this problem of TVET unempowered women persists, women unemployment also will remain high, and this will have a negative impact on socio economic development of the country.

Due to the above situation, we found it crucial to conduct a study that can help in solving the problem. Hence, this aimed at assessing the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda with a case of Rubavu District. It was set to answer the following research questions: What is the role of hands-on skills, as acquired from TVET schools, in empowering women in Rubavu District?; What is the role of entrepreneurship skills, as acquired from TVET schools, in empowering women in Rubavu District?; What is the role of communication skills, as acquired from TVET schools, in empowering women in Rubavu District? ; We believe that this study would provide insights on the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda. The findings of the study would serve as a good tool in assessing the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda.

### **Literature review**

An overview of TVET: According to Dike, et al. (2009) in Africa, the apprenticeship system was an avenue for acquiring vocational skills before the colonial era. The youth were trained in traditional vocations such as pottery, weaving, mat making, wood carving, and traditional medicine to name but a few by their parents, family friends, and relatives who were traditional masters of the crafts. Everything changed when the colonial masters set up formal vocational schools for those interested in learning particular trades. While technical and vocational education has continued to thrive in many advanced and emerging societies, most of Africans, including the leaders and parents, have an untoward attitude toward technical and vocational education and related careers. In Africa, there was a general faulty perception that technical and vocational education is meant for individuals who are either not intelligent enough to gain admission into regular academic institutions or are incapable of withstanding the rigors of formal academic programs.

According to MINEDUC (2015), as in other African countries, Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Rwanda had a long history. It was provided by different institutions with different naming. Before 1979: *Ecolefamiliale*: Offering vocational training for female graduates of primary school for 2 years and CERAR (Centre d'Enseignement Rural et Artisanal): Offering vocational training for male graduates of primary school for 2 years. Between 1979-2009 : CERAI : Centre d'Enseignement Rural Artisanal Intégré ; ETO (École Officielle Technique) : offering technical education and awarding A3 and A2 certificates. CFJ : Centre de Formation des Jeunes were offering short course training of 6 months to 1year in different trades until the establishment of Workforce Development Authority (WDA) in 2008.

Between 2009-2017: the Government of Rwanda initiated Workforce Development Authority (WDA) as an institutional framework to provide a strategic response to the skills development challenges facing the country across all sectors of the economy. Established by the law no 03/March/2009 and restructured by the law no N°42/2016 of 18/10/2016. In 2013 new

Competency-Based curricula were developed and piloted in Southern Province, Rwanda TVET qualification framework elaborated. VTC and TSS: Vocational Training Centers (VTC) and Technical Secondary School (TSS).

After the establishment of WDA in 2008, the supervision of CFJ shifted from the Ministry of youth, sport, and culture to the ministry of education. Then, the name changed to VTC, and all secondary schools offering vocational courses become technical secondary schools (TSS). Now all VTCs and TSSs have become TVET schools, and they work under Rwanda TVET Board (RTB). IPRCs: Integrated Polytechnic Regional Colleges are working under Rwanda Polytechnic (RP).

**An overview of women's empowerment:** According to Drydyk (2013) the term empowerment of women was validated at the Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. From there, the term has evolved over the years and is adapted in different circumstances. In the 1990s, the term women's empowerment was used in the development field by the critics of the Women in Development (WID) and the Women and Development (WAD) approaches. These models were criticized for being too economic, and it was argued that the concept of women's empowerment should be all-encompassing and bring to light issues of inequalities, race, and ethnicity (Batiwala, 2007). Since then, the concept has been applied to different fields, such as health care, education, and rural development.

Mujahid et al. (2015) Women's empowerment is multidimensional and has four distinct areas: personal; economic; social and political. Mujahid et al. (2015) added that for a woman to be considered empowered, these four dimensions should all be positively affected, come into effect. Thus, empowerment should not be conceptualized according to only one given outcome but should be multi-dimensional.

### **Economic dimension of empowerment**

Mujahid et al. (2015) economic empowerment is more concerned with women's participation in the labor market. This entails the need to create opportunities for women and the removal of barriers hampering their meaningful participation in the labor markets. Chopra and Muller (2016) argue that, under this dimension, it is important to consider the contribution of women through non-market fields, such as care work, which is unpaid, and how it eventually influences their full participation in the labor force. According to Carr et al. (1997) women's economic empowerment is having access to and control over the means to make a living on a sustainable and long-term basis and receiving the material benefits of this access and control. Through TVET, women are given the opportunity to participate effectively in economic activities and generate an independent income, and then we can say that education is fostering women's empowerment. This would contribute to women's empowerment, as it gives them the opportunity to contribute economically and to make economic decisions. According to Carr et al. added that to understand if a woman is

moving towards empowerment, therefore, one would need to explore if a development initiative (in this case TVET) has made a positive impact in her life, especially in the different domains of life.

**Social dimension of empowerment**

Another dimension of women's empowerment is the social dimension. Mujahid et al. (2015) This relates to the changing power relations at family, community, and society levels, generally, through being aware of women's rights and needs. Social empowerment embraces a realization and an expansion of the areas of family and social relationships. This will also help women in changing the way they see themselves. According to Duflo (2012) legal rights, especially property rights, continue to favor men compared to women. It is important to understand whether TVET can be used to improve women's unequal status in society.

**Political dimension of empowerment**

Hennink et al. (2012) refers political empowerment as the ability of individuals, communities, and organizations to have legal rights, hold governments accountable to protecting those rights, and have the freedom to advocate for political and legal change. Thus, for a woman to be empowered, politically, they need to be able to advocate for policy change and demand better service provision.

Chopra and Muller (2016) through TVET education, therefore, women should be able to come to awareness that they have rights to vote, contest, make decisions, and not to leave the power of decision-making to others. This would also include women's participation in the governance structures at TVET institutions through voting or contesting in students 'representative councils.

**Personal dimension of empowerment**

Mujahid et al. (2015) personal empowerment denotes the development of a sense of self, whilst personal competencies are those that relate to an individual's thoughts, habits, and dispositions. Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016) Personal empowerment also involves issues to do with self-awareness, personal development, and spirituality. All of these will ultimately contribute to individual well-being. This means that attaining skills and abilities through education is important; but, unless this is accompanied by the capacity of critical thought, education will not be useful in an individual's personal life.

**Women's empowerment through TVET education:** Anjali (2018) Women empowerment is one of the biggest tools for effective development of any country. It means freedom of women from the vicious circle of social, political, economic and gender-based discrimination. Making women aware of their rights and developing confidence in them is a central issue. Anjali (2018) added that it is essential for women to be skilled to be able to better serve their families at home as well as professionally.

Murphy-Graham (2012) it is often assumed that the more the years of education, the more empowered a woman becomes. He added that empowering

education should lead to actions that challenge inequitable social structures and improve individual and collective prosperity. Murphy-Graham (2016) and Lloyd (2016) came up with four necessities for TVET education to empower women:

The first requisite is that the environment where learning takes place must be physically, materially, and socio-culturally conducive to learning. According to Murphy-Graham (2012) this means that for women to experience empowering TVET education there should be adequate ablution facilities, enough learning space, and learning resources; moreover, the environment also needs to be devoid of sexual harassment or bullying.

The second condition that Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016) note is that TVET education for girls should foster recognition and dignity. Coming from patriarchal conditions, women may believe that they are inferior to men. This means that for education to contribute to empowerment, it needs to foster a sense of self-esteem and self-worth in the women. Thus, Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016) comment that having a clear understanding of one's own dignity and equal worth with others will provide a stronger impetus for girls to imagine alternative futures and provide motivation for them to make different choices.

Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016) the third condition for empowering TVET education is that it should help women to exercise their agency. In other words, an empowering education will expand the actions girls are able to take and push the boundaries of the cultural constraints that limit them from achieving their full potential. One key component of empowerment is action. If women learn to act (agency), this is a step towards women's empowerment through education. Thus, withdrawal' Murphy-Graham and Lloyd, (2016) conclude that TVET education itself cannot change the social structures that constrain opportunities available to women and men, but it can foster habits and dispositions that result in social action rather than apathy and social withdrawal.

**Hands-on skills acquisition and women empowerment:** The research conducted by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ, 2003) on theory of change for how vocational training programs may improve women's labor market outcomes, the findings emphasized that vocational programs provide skills that directly increase women's practical skills; facilitate access to job and equip women with life skills to improve aspects of life such as interpersonal relationships. GTZ (2003) secondly, hands on skills result in improving women's employability by increasing their occupational knowledge and vocational skills; their knowledge of the labor and their life skills, such as attitudes towards work, motivation, self-esteem, career aspirations, and strategies to balance job and domestic responsibilities.

GTZ (2003) also mentioned that, in turn, these improvements in women's skills and employability may result in increasing women's employment status, income, improve women's working conditions and opportunities for advancement, and reduce the degree of occupational segregation by improving access to occupations traditionally dominated by men.

Mahalinga (2014) has explained that to empower a man is to empower an individual while empowering a woman is empowering a whole family. From the study he conducted in India, Mahalinga found that hands on skills play a very important role in the women empowerment. Hands on skills make women practically skilled and these helps women to develop her and her family. Mahalinga (2014) noted that hands on skills help in modifying woman's behavior in every aspect, such as mentality, outlook, attitude etc. skills empower women not only tend to promote hands on skills of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Technical education (hands on skills) serves as a powerful instrument for women to achieve power and status in the society. It is a source of practical skills, ability, capacity, empowerment, and productivity both at the individual and social level.

**Entrepreneurship acquisition and women empowerment:** Constantine (2017) has conducted a study on why women need to study and learn entrepreneurship and she came up with the findings expressing that entrepreneurship nurtures personal growth and development. Studying entrepreneurship benefits women from different social and economic backgrounds because it teaches them to cultivate unique skills and having critical thinking. Entrepreneurship education skills also make women budding entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge to come up with business ideas and develop their own ventures and this includes helping them to learn about core business areas such as finance, sales, marketing, management, and accounting, not to mention, broader ranging skills such as adaptability, effective communication, and confidence. Also, findings revealed that entrepreneurship skills are relevant in any field that women want to invest in or work in. In fact, learning entrepreneurship skills gives a wide range of business-relevant skills acquired and makes women ideal candidates in most fields.

According to Osisioma (2009) entrepreneurship education is teaching women how to start and run their own businesses and become self-employed. It is not a project or a mission rather; it is first and fore most a mindset, a lifestyle, a process of creative destruction with an eye on profit, a value adding chain and wealth. It is the same line that Bergman (2018) wanted to know how women can start a small business using skills acquired in entrepreneurship and he came up with a guide explaining a step by step the process of opening and running a small business for women using entrepreneurship skills:

**Define the business and set goals:** During entrepreneurship course, women are skilled that the first step in opening and running a business is to define your business and set goals to be achieved. Women must think about the type of a business they want to run and set the goals for the business.

**Research business viability:** After assessing the idea of what kind of to own, women are skilled by entrepreneurship to evaluate one's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and make market research to determine the

competition in the area and possible target consumers to market the services or products.

**Create a Solid Business Strategy:** Entrepreneurship also provides women with skills in solid business strategy which serves as guide to determine the direction of the business. This strategy contains target goals to achieve at a monthly, quarterly, and annually and milestones that will help to reach them. Additionally, costs and profit are included in business strategy.

**Apply for funding:** Entrepreneurship teaches women where to get capital and how to work with financial institutions. Women are skilled in elaborating the business plan and financial forecast along with the market research which help lower risk when asking for a loan from banks.

**Market your business:** Once everything is ready, start the business. Entrepreneurship equips women with marketing skills. Marketing your service or products is very important in business.

**Communication skills acquisition and women empowerment:** Zanaton et al. (2011) conducted research on communication skills among university students, and he pointed out that communication skills help university women to develop their verbal, written and social communication skills and become good communicators ready to effectively communicate their capacity, thoughts, and position and clearly explain their work or job or business. Additionally, He explained three communication skills that women develop during the communication skills course:

**Verbal communication skills:** Women nurture and develop verbal communication skills through activities such as speaking, public presentations, open discussions, debate, and conversations. Further, women can also practice verbal communication skills in work interviews. Communication skills make women effective speakers and listeners.

**Written communication skills:** Communication skills help women develop this communication skill through completing written assignments, reports, letter writing, essay writing. Good written communication skills are measured through the clarity of the writing, the flow of the arguments, using simple and easy to understand sentences, and written using academic writing style and good reading. Communication skills make women good writers and readers.

**Social communication skills:** Communication skills empower women also in negotiating, language, culture, and politeness. Women learn how to negotiate, to discuss in various languages and cultural settings politely with appropriate terms. This type of communication must be carried out humbly and politely.

Findings from the study done by Subha (2001) communication skills empowers women through confidence building, capacity and awareness building, ability to market them, ability to communicate their thoughts, lights, and their choices. Subha (2001) women are known to be good at convincing, frequently having a much richer vocabulary than men. Also, they are known for their capacity to listen and admired for the empathy they show towards others. The findings also



explained that communication skills help women overcome confidence gap as one of the most worrying gender discrepancies. Communication skills empower women with increasing their level of confidence from a growth mindset perspective to full confidence and communicating competence and become good communicators in families, friends, colleagues, managers; acknowledging their ability to take on leadership roles, learning to communicate more confidently in business environments; and by leading their own confidence mindset change.

**Materials and methods**

**Research design:** Alan Bryman (2012) defines a study design simply as the framework or plan for study used as a guide in collection and analyzing data. This research adopted a descriptive research design employing quantitative method to assess the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda.

**Participants:** As for the target population, the current study was concerned with a set of 334 of women staff and alumnae (320 alumnae and 14 women staff) from five sampled TVET schools (Rubavu Technical College (RTC), Ecole Technique Nazareen International (ETENI), Ecole D’Arts de Nyundo, College Baptiste Gacuba II, Ecole Technique Applique Gisenyi (ETAG) located in Rubavu District from 2017 to 2019. The choice of these TVET schools was made bearing in mind that this is a good number to represent all 20 TVET schools in Rubavu District. The study used a sample of 77 participants composed of 5 women staff and 72 alumnae. The sample was chosen by means of the sampling by Yamane (1967) formula of selecting sample that is:  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where  $n$  represents the sample size,  $N$  represents the target population,  $e$  represents marginal error.

Simple random sampling and purposeful sampling were used as sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used for collecting quantitative data while purposeful sampling was used for collecting qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). Simple random sampling technique was used to collect the data from alumnae because, as respondents in this research, they were assumed to have the same characteristics shared by target population from which they were chosen. This sampling technique provided equal chance for every member (alumnae) in the target population to be included in the study through lottery system. Purposeful sampling was used to collect data from women staff because it is a procedure where the researcher's own judgment was used to identify whom and whose views to select into his framework in as much as the data received are relevant to the research objectives.

Purposive sampling was also used to obtain only reliable respondents (women staff) capable of providing specific information for the study (Blaxter, 1996). The researcher considered the alumnae and women staff as the right

respondents that should have provided necessary and useful information about the role TVET in empowering women.

**Research instruments:** This study used structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The study also used documentary review to collect secondary data (from journal articles, books, theses, etc.). The questionnaire contained close-ended questions only in the form of likert scales (1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Neutral*, 4=*Agree*, 5=*Strongly Agree*). The participants had to tick the appropriate box regarding their understanding.

**Data Collection Procedures:** Before collecting the data, the research instrument and the content validity was reviewed by specialists in TVET education and women empowerment. To check the validity and reliability of items prior to the final administration of the questionnaires to all respondents, the researcher conducted a pretest on a group of 28 respondents (2 women staff and 26 alumnae) who later were included in the study sample. Before collecting data, the researcher sought the authorization to collect research data from the Principal of University of Kigali. Before data collection, the researcher sought the informed consent from the respondents using an appropriate form. The data was taken out from the questionnaires and entered SPSS 16.0 version.

**Results**

This research was set to answer following research objectives and the following are findings.

**Objective 1: To assess the role of hands-on skills in empowering women:**

TVET schools are known to equip students with practical skills that could enable them to use their hands in different activities. The researcher sought to know how hands-on skills acquired at school empowered women. Respondents were asked to assess the acquired hands-on skills in relation with empowering them. The respondents’ views on how hands-on skills empowered them are presented below:

**Table 4.1: Mean, SD, minimum and maximum on how hands-on skills empowered women**

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Hands on skills have improved my access to occupations traditionally dominated by men	77	4.17	.70	3.0	5.0
Hands on skills have developed my practical skills and competences	77	4.3	.60	3.00	5.00
Hands on skills have developed my confidence and self-esteem	77	4.3	.70	3.00	5.00
Hands on skills have enhanced access to employment opportunities	77	4.23	.70	3.00	5.00
Hands on skills have enhanced my capacity for self-employment	77	3.9	.93	2.00	5.00
Hands on skills have increased my work competition spirit and employability skills	77	4.05	.87	2.00	5.00
Hands on skills have been a tool for productivity enhancement and socio-economic development. They have made me self-dependent.	77	4.8	.97	2.00	5.00
Overall		4.32	0.78		

**Note:** Strongly Disagree= [1-2]=Very Low Mean; Disagree= [2-3]=Low mean; Neutral= [3-4]=moderated mean; Agree= [4-5]=High mean; Strongly Agree = [5- ]= Very High mean.

**Source:** Primary data, January 2021

The findings in the table above represented how hands on skills empowered women on competing and performing on job market. The mean rating of

respondents' views from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> questions were 4.17, 4.3, 4.3, 4.23, 3.9, 4.05 and 4.8 corresponded to standard deviation of 0.70, 0.60, 0.70, 0.70, 0.93, 0.87 and 0.97. These findings indicated that respondents in this research had high agreement on the role of hands-on skills in empowering women as the overall mean rating was 4.32 and standards deviation was 0.78 meaning that the choice was concentrated on agree and strongly agree rates.

**Objective 2: To examine the role of entrepreneurship skills in empowering women:** One of the methods of empowering people for competing to the labour market is instilling in them the entrepreneurship skills. Entrepreneurship is the basic skill for enhancing job creations and competing in business and financial activities. Respondents were asked to examine the role of entrepreneurship skills in empowering them.

**Table 4.2: Mean, SD, minimum and maximum on entrepreneurship skills empowered women**

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Entrepreneurship skills have made me able to find business idea and assess it into business opportunity	77	4.02	.96	2.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship skills provided me with the capacity and ability to set business goals and objectives and work towards achieving them	77	4.15	.92	2.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship skills have enhanced my business competition and marketing skills	77	4.13	.88	2.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship skills have oriented me where to get capital and how to work with financial institutions	77	4.11	.81	2.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship has enhanced my capacity for self-employment	77	4.00	.88	2.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship skills have enhanced my managerial ability/skills to generate profit and become financial independent	77	4.10	1.04	1.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship skills have helped me to escape the confinements, increase my socio-economic status and inspire self-reliance.	77	3.93	1.06	1.00	5.00
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.93</b>		

**Note:** Strongly Disagree= [1-2]=Very Low Mean; Disagree= [2-3]=Low mean; Neutral= [3-4]=moderated mean; Agree= [4-5]=High mean Strongly Agree = [5- ]= Very High mean.

**Source:** Primary data, January 2021

Constructed to the above findings in the table above the respondents agreed that entrepreneurship skills empowered them. This has been observed through the mean rating from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> questions that were 4.02, 4.15, 4.13, 4.11, 4.00, 4.10 and 3.93 corresponding to standards deviation of 0.96, 0.92, 0.88, 0.81, 0.88, 1.04 and 1.06 which showed that majority of respondents agreed that entrepreneurship has empowered them in terms of developing business ideas, acquiring capacity and ability to set business goals and objectives and work towards achieving them as well as enhancing them to develop business competition and marketing skills. The high rate of agreement was also observed through the overall mean of agreement (4.06) and standard deviation (0.93).

**Objective 3: To analyse the role of communication skills in empowering women:** Communication skills play a great importance in making business successful. The researcher sought to know how communication skills acquired at school empowered women. Therefore, respondents were asked to analyze the acquired communication skills in relation with empowering them. The

respondents’ views on how communication skills empowered them were presented and analyzed below:

**Table 4.3: Mean, SD, minimum and maximum on communication skills empowered women**

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Communication skills have strengthened my ability to exchange ideas, opinions, and information with specific purposes	77	4.14	8.06	2.00	5.00
Communication skills have strengthened my ability to effectively communicate my thoughts, capacity, lights, and choice	77	4.00	1.08	1.00	5.00
Communication skills course has strengthened my communication skills such as verbal, non-verbal, written, giving feedback, presenting ideas verbally and in written form	76	4.13	.90	2.00	5.00
Communication skills have made me capable to communicate and effectively practice my knowledge and skills for accessing employment opportunities	77	4.20	.73	3.00	5.00
Communication skills have built my confidence from a growth mindset perspective to full confidence and expressing my competences	77	4.16	.85	2.00	5.00
Communication skills have developed my network capacity and interacting with others, job market and competition spirit	77	4.25	.86	2.00	5.00
Communication skills have made me self-reliant and improved socio-economic development	77	4.00	.94	1.00	5.00
Overall		4.12	0.88		

**Note:** Strongly Disagree= [1-2]=Very Low Mean; Disagree= [2-3]=Low mean; Neutral= [3-4]=moderated mean; Agree= [4-5]=High mean Strongly Agree = [5- ]= Very High mean.

**Source:** Primary data, January 2021

The findings in the table 4.10 above presented mean rating and standards deviation explaining how communication skills empowered women to perform their jobs. This has been indicated by the means of all seven questions that were 4.14, 4.00, 4.13, 4.20, 4.16, 4.25, and 4.00 corresponding to the standards deviation of 0.80, 1.08, 0.90, 0.73, 0.85, 0.86 and 0.96, all presenting that majority of respondents agreed that communication skills have importance in their job careers. The overall mean rating of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.88indicated the higher level of agreement as the overall mean rating is greater than the mid-point that could be

**Discussion**

Based on the findings of this research from the first objective, as it was to assess the role of hands on skills in empowering women, the study concluded that hands on skills are strongly assessed as they have greatly contributed to the women’s empowerment through improving women’s access to occupations traditionally dominated by men; developing women’s confidence and self-esteem; enhancing women’s access to employment opportunities; enhancing women’s capacity for self-employment; increasing women’s work competition spirit and employability skills and serving as a tool for women’s productivity enhancement, socio economic development and self-dependence.

The second objective aimed at analyzing the role of entrepreneurship skills in empowering women, based on the findings from the study, it is concluded that

entrepreneurship skills plays an important role in making women capable to find a business idea and assess it into business opportunity; setting business goals and work to achieve them; enhancing women's business competition and marketing skills; orienting women where to get capital for business and work with financial institutions; enhancing capacity for women self-employment; enhancing women's managerial skills and ability to generate profit and become financial independent and entrepreneurship skills help women escape the confinement; increase socio economic status and inspire self-reliance.

The third objective was to analyze the role of communication skills in empowering women. Based on the findings from the study, it is concluded that communication skills play a significant role in empowering women through strengthening women's abilities to exchange ideas, opinions and information with specific purposes; communicating effectively their thoughts, lights and choice; strengthening women's verbal, non-verbal, written, giving feedback, presenting ideas verbally and in written form, doing presentations and negotiating to achieve a goal and getting support/ agreement; capacitating women to communicate and practice effectively their knowledge and skills for accessing employment opportunities; building women's confidence from a growth mindset perspective to full confidence and expressing their competences; developing women's network capacity and interacting with others and making women self-reliant and improving their socio economic development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The need of TVET for women's empowerment and therefore women's employment or self-employment is paramount. As revealed by the findings of the study, the role of hands-on skills, entrepreneurship skills and communication skills, acquired at TVET schools, in empowering women in Rwanda is significant. TVET plays a great role in empowering women as showed by most of respondents who agreed that hands on skills, entrepreneurship skills and communication skills acquired at TVET schools empower women in different ways with knowledge, skills, and competences.

This study has a great implication in policy formulation and improves education practices in Rwanda. Its implication in policy formulation is that it first serves as a documentation on the role of TVET in empowering women in Rwanda and therefore, it inspires policy makers on the role played by TVET in empowering not only men but also women and they would strengthen the TVET policy formulation by making it women empowerment based.

The study also contributes on the improvement of education practices, especially TVET practices in Rwanda. As a document, it shows that TVET empowers women, and this is the role of all education stakeholders to make education beneficial to its beneficiaries where women are considered. TVET schools must set and implement practical ways and strategies to continue offering relevant TVET to women so that women get empowered or acquire

relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes which allow them to be employed or self-employed. It finally shows to women that TVET skills them enough and make them self-reliant. It really shows the importance of education, especially TVET in women empowerment.

As per the results of the study, the recommendations are as follows: Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), Rwanda Polytechnic (RP) and Rwanda TVET Board (RTB) should continue to encourage women to acquire technical and vocational education and training to be able to not only compete in the usual ordinal jobs but also in the technical areas thus making them more active in the job market; TVET schools and stakeholders should set strategies to make women more strong, more empowered, and more productive in TVET schools and institutions; Public and private sectors should recognize that employment opportunities should be equally given without gender consideration but considering individual's empowerment degree/level or capacity as respondents recommended.

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