

The Streaming of Students to TVET in Ethiopia: The Case of Two TVET Institutions in Addis Ababa

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Abstract

The study was conducted with the objective of exploring the possible impact the procedure of streaming procedure that is used to stream grade 10 completes for a place in TVET on their motivation and performance. It employed qualitative case study method. Two TVET institutions, one governmental and another private were selected for this study. The participants of this study were officials at the education bureau of Addis Ababa, students and teachers at the two institutions and parents whose children are learning in those institutions. The study revealed that the criteria being employed to stream students to TVET expressed clear disfavor towards TVET by streaming students who were unable to succeed in EGSECE. This, unfortunately, aggravated the misconception that TVET is meant for the low achievers. On the other hand, students and parents as well were found to lack ample information about TVET prior to their students joining it and therefore form an incorrect and even sometimes a negative conception about it. As a result, the students submerged in deep dissatisfaction when they were streamed to this program. The repercussion of the streaming process was also found to be reflected in students' lack of motivation and hence poor performance in their studies. Furthermore, the teaching learning process is not only suffering from ill motivation resulting in poor performance but also from students' poor background knowledge associated with the streaming of students who practically failed the EGSECE, which certifies the completion of general education. Conclusions and implications for practice were derived based on the findings described above.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Since the late 1970s, due to economic recession and crisis the growth of modern sector employment in sub-Saharan Africa slowed sharply. Spending cuts in the public sector and massive lay-offs resulted in a rapid rise in unemployment among the youth, especially those who had completed secondary schooling. This heralded the change in the structure of employment with the rapidly growing informal sector absorbing much of the labor force. The former TVET system, shaped on the model of the former colonial powers, proved incapable of providing the skilled man-power demanded by the African production system (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002).

In addition to this, it was criticized for being too costly, training not suited to actual socio-economic conditions, poor quality, disregard of the informal sector's need and the labor market and the high unemployment rate among graduates (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002). The development of private education is increasingly seen as a means of diminishing the deficiencies of public education in terms of access, internal efficiency, curricula and quality of teaching. The growing number of private institutions in African countries reflects not only families loss of confidence in the public school system, but also the inabilities of governments to meet the growing demands for education (Atchoarena and Esquieu, 2002).

The Ethiopian situation is not much different either. The former TVET system of Ethiopia was heavily criticized for similar reasons as pointed out above (FDRE, 2002, MOE, 2003a). Hence the current education and training policy (ETP), adopted in 1994, promulgated the provision of diversified technical and vocational education with a view of averting the shortage of middle level human power that has had a negative impact on the development of the country (TGE, 1994).

The major objectives of the TVET of Ethiopia, as stated in MOE (2003a) include, in addition to producing competent middle level man power, producing skilled labor that

can adapt to the requirements of the labor market and one that possesses the necessary capabilities to become self employed.

However, currently the objectives of TVET have become more diverse. They are no longer simply economic but also social including the fight against poverty and the integration of young people in to the world of work (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002).

1.2. The Problem

Enabling students to choose a vocation after the completion of the highest level of general education possible improves educational equity and student motivation (Middleton et al., 1996). The Ethiopian middle level TVET admits students who have completed general secondary education. According to a standard set by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2003b), the minimum requirement to be admitted to middle level TVET is a grade point of 1.4 for male and 1.2 for female students in the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certification Examination (EGSECE).

Based on the directive of MOE, the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau has set its own requirement, principally based on grade points achieved in the grade 10 national examination, for the 2005/06 academic year. Hence, the minimum expected grade point to be enrolled in TVET program at the governmental TVET institution is 1.43 and 1.29 for male and female students respectively. On the other hand, those who wish to join the academic stream should earn a minimum grade point of 2.57 and 2.43 for male and female students respectively. One can easily observe a clear disfavor expressed towards the TVET program and such an unreasonable and biased placement “discourages even the most motivated and enthusiastic candidates from joining the program” (Teklehaimanot, 2002; 8). Enrolling uninterested students to TVET thus results in lower motivation, less learning and lower probabilities that students enter the occupations for which they have been trained (Middleton et al., 1996).

In most sub-Saharan African countries the cause for the limited number of students who join TVET is attributed partly to the society’s negative outlook towards the program, which is regarded as leading to low status occupations (an issue related with esteem). In

addition, students who enroll in this kind of education are considered to be those who have failed in general education (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002:46).

The emerging focus on learners' motivation and incentives seems to lack relevance in educational arena where the main issues remain the ones of access and provision (Athcoarena and Dullec, 2002).

A glimpse into the directive employed by the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, which used Ministry of Education's directive as a basis, betrays the propagation of the aforementioned misconception on TVET. These results in a contradiction between the economically and socially strategic roles TVET plays and the generally negative image it maintains before the public (Middleton, et al, 1996: Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002).

Since post-secondary TVET schools exist mid way between secondary schools and universities, it often makes their status unclear. Therefore, newly established TVET institutions often encounter problems in "securing a market niche with employers" (Middleton et al., 1996:193). It is believed that favorable employment outcomes increase students' need to study TVET courses and improve motivation (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002).

Modern concepts of TVET are against dead end streams for they assert that vocational education be provided "within a framework of open-ended and flexible structure in the context of life long education" (UNESCO, 1989 as cited in Teklehaimanot, 2002; 9). Even if some sub Saharan countries have 'path ways' to give vocational students access to higher education, still in most countries students who opt (end up) in vocational schools arrive at a dead end as far as higher education is concerned (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002).

The TVET of Ethiopia is aimed at curbing the serious shortage of middle level manpower that plays a significant role in the development of the country. Graduates of this program, according to TVET strategic plan of Ethiopia (MOE, 2003a), are expected to be competent in such a way that they are equipped with capabilities that would enable them

not only to be employed but also become self employed. To achieve this, students should participate in the program with interest.

In addition, support and understanding from members of students' families and the society at large is believed to be decisive for the success of the graduates and the training program as well.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The study that was undertaken rested on the major objective of exploring the streaming of students to TVET and its impact on students performance and motivation and on their parents' understanding and perception on the decision that ultimately resulted in their children enrolled in the training program well. More specifically the study endeavored to:

- Understand the considerations taken while streaming students to TVET
- Unveil the impetuses that made students decide to join TVET
- Understand as to how their being streamed to TVET is affecting their motivation and performance
- Analyze TVET teachers reflection on their students motivation and performance and
- Analyze parents' reflection over the decision that led to their children joining TVET.

Thus, the research that was undertaken intended to answer the following guiding questions.

- How are students streamed to TVET?
- What reasons do students provide for deciding to join TVET?
- Do students find their studies motivating and interesting? Why?
- How do TVET teachers evaluate their students' motivation and performance?
- How do parents of TVET students reflect on their children's being streamed to TVET?

1.4. Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, streaming unwilling and disinterested students to TVET will result in the failure of the program to achieve its goals.

Furthermore, the prevalence of the negative impression of the public on such kind of training will be aggravated. Hence, the outcomes of this study will hopefully help in understanding the place students' interest is given in streaming them to TVET and the possible impact the streaming process is resulting on their motivation and performance. In addition, it will also assist in serving as a source of information in improving some aspects of the training program. It will hopefully act as a spring board for further research in this area as well.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the investigation of the streaming of students to TVET and its possible impacts on students motivation and performance. Furthermore, it also intends to take into consideration the perception of the parents of TVET students on the training program with specific focus on the streaming of their children to TVET to understand the matter from another angle. The study is also delimited to two TVET institutions, one governmental and another private, selected for the sake of in depth analysis. Students participating in this study were regular students enrolled in the above-mentioned institutions.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

Due to insurmountable shortage of reference materials in the areas of technical and vocational education and training, a number of sources mentioned in the review of literature are secondary sources.

Definition of Important Terms

- **Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)** :- refers to all forms and levels of educational process involving, in addition to general knowledge, the study of technologies business and related fields and the acquisition of practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupation in the various sectors of

economic and social life. (adapted from UNESCO, 1989:2 as cited in Masresha Geleta 2004).

- **Streaming:** - is the selection and placement of students who have completed secondary education to technical and vocational education and training and academics based on certain criteria set.
- **Motivation:** - Nolker and Schoenfeldt (1988) have divided motivation, which cause people to act in particular situation, into two as “intrinsic” and “extrinsic.” Spontaneous striving for activity (which does not include biological drives like hunger, pain... since vocational education can hardly be concerned with it) and knowledge is defined as “intrinsic” motivation while on the other hand motives directed towards the achievement of a goal (like learning a skill to earn money)- are defined as “extrinsic” motivation. Both types of motivations should be given due emphasis since both motives are entwined in such a way that the “intrinsic” or primary motives, like the needs, interests, and inclinations are to a larger extent dependent up on upbringing and social origin.
- **College Preparatory:** - Second cycle of secondary education which prepares students for tertiary education (TGE, 1994).

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Philosophy of Vocational Education

Before proceeding into the discussion of vocational education, I believe understanding the philosophical stands that serve as a basis for the introduction of vocational education is important. In this regard Gilli (1976:33-37) has forwarded two broad statements encompassing various principles in vocational education:

1. Vocational Education Accepts the Task of Providing Pre-Work Youngsters with Relevant Information about the World of Work and the Place of the Individual in it.

Although the manner in which educators work towards this goal varies, this principle has won broad acceptance among the vocational education community.

The show and tell approach and the use of guidance and counseling professionals who have specialized in occupational information has proved successful in acquainting youngsters with occupation (Gilli, 1976).

Another approach to acquainting students with the world of work is the cooperative education model. Even if considerable diversity exists in the formats of cooperative education efforts there are six frequently used one including practicum and internships. The common aim of all cooperative education formats, though, is exposing students to jobs and also enabling them to understand their abilities in light of the world of work and their place in it (Ibid).

2. Vocational Education Accepts the Task of Preparing People for Work in the Entire Non-Professional Segment of the Work Force.

Vocational schools are endowed with the task of preparing nonprofessional work force, though this has not been completely achieved. Hence, even if it appears that the major responses of vocational school will continue to be the preparation of pre work age youngsters for non-professional occupations, they can play a significant role in retraining, upgrading and up dating of adult workers skills (Gilli, 1976).

2.2. Skills Development in Sub- Saharan Africa

Today, many sub- Sahara African countries have found it crucial to developing the skills of their workforce. The major reasons for doing so, according to Johanson and Adams (2004), are the following:

1. Globalization and competition require higher skills and productivity among workers, both in the modern companies and in the micro and small enterprises that support them. As a result of liberalized trade regimes and lowered trade tariffs ,companies have been downsizing and out sourcing, thus, demanding higher qualification levels among employees . Moreover, entrepreneurial skills are of growing importance .

2. The adoption of ICT (information communication technology) in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa requires a strong skills base.
A labor force with a solid basic skills foundation is essential for countries to exploit the opportunities opened by technological change (Betcherman , 2001 as cited in Johanson and Adams , 2004).
3. The structural adjustment policies in many sub-Sahara African countries have resulted in many workers being displaced from their jobs. These workers, whose numbers can be significant, often need upgrading of their skills.
4. Poverty reduction requires investing in the productivity and skills of economically and socially vulnerable groups .Africa's future depends less on its natural resources (which are being depleted and are subject to long run price declines) but on its labor skills. Skills are an important means to increase income and sustainable livelihoods for the poor.
5. Finally, skill development becomes both more important and more difficult as a result of HIV/AIDS. AIDS depletes scarce human capital and magnifies the need to replace skills lost across a wide range of occupations. (World Bank, 2000 : 42 cited in Johanson and Adams,2004).

2.3. Who should join TVET?

The issue of who should participate in TVET is among the central debates. The question whether vocational and technical education streams and schools are for those who fail to be selected for academic schools has had a long story (King, 1995).

In many Western societies trade schools of different types used to provide short courses for those who were not expected to proceed through the academic lines. In addition, in many colonial dependencies low-level manual and industrial education and trainings were thought by ruling power to be particularly appropriate to subject people (King, 1971 a cited in King, 1995). These early associations of vocational education to be particularly relevant to colonized people and certain socio-economic classes ensured that for a time there prevailed a negative reaction to this kind of provision.

Thus, after independence most manual or industrial education was dropped from the syllabus of basic education in most Anglophone African countries (King, 1995). In the United States, similarly, vocational education was incorporated in an effort to control blacks (Gilli, 1976). The low prestige of vocational education is thus due to historical factors discussed above and other more of a contemporary nature, which shall be discussed consequently.

Since vocational education prepares people for non- professional jobs i.e. ‘low status’ jobs, many persons of all races and background reject it without understanding its nature and possibilities for serving people. Most upper and middle class parents want their children prepare for a profession, hoping that it will provide them with a chance to move into the life style of an elite group. Education is seen as being one of the chief vehicles for “getting ahead” (Bean and Duncan, 1976 in Gilli, 1976) and this is reflected in the disproportionate numbers who seek entry into professional programs.

Therefore, one of the major reasons for the low prestige accorded to vocational education is the low values placed on the kinds of jobs for which it trains individuals (Gilli, 1976). However, one may be compelled to ask “is it always the case that technical and vocational courses are doomed to lack attractiveness despite the strategic role graduates are expected to play for development?”

2.4. The Issue of Attractiveness of TVET

It has been claimed that vocational subjects fail to attract students and parents because white collar work carries more status and vocational subjects are not perceived to lead to good economic prospects (Foster, 1965 ; Urevbn , 1988 cited in Lauglo,2005). Vocational subjects are often perceived by people outside these fields as mainly suitable for the academically less able, compared to purely academic secondary education (Lauglo , 2005) .

Researches conducted in various sub-Sahara African countries conclude otherwise. Kaluba(1986) and Wright (1988) cited in Lauglo (2005) noted that industrial art subjects were well popular with students in academic streams in Zambia and Siera Lionne .

A recent study in Kenya by Nishimura and Orodho (1999) cited in Lauglo (2005) showed students prefer to study vocational subjects for they think they could achieve higher grades in those subjects and boost their chances of joining tertiary education (the same study concluded that because of lack of facilities students do not have to struggle to pass vocational courses).

A Botswana study arrived at a quite similar conclusion to the one conducted in Kenya. But in addition to this, attractiveness of vocational courses to parents and students depends on the subject options combined with the vocational course. If vocational course are combined with less demanding variants, of science, they will thus, be perceived by students and parents as suitable. Also in developed countries, there is no ‘iron law’ that relegates academically less performing students to vocational subjects. In Norway for example during the 1980s, although typically high scoring students entered the academic stream, the minimum grade point average needed for entry to this field was lower than that of the vocational stream (Lauglo, 2005).

In general, earlier researches converge in supporting that there is no ‘iron law’ that vocational subject as being less attractive. Nor there is an iron law that says that vocational subjects lack attraction to academically well qualified secondary students.

If these subject make participants eligible for further education, and if they are well taught and well equipped, and if they are perceived to give advantage for opportunities in the future, such attraction will be boosted. And vocational courses will attract learners who will be well motivated and competent at their learning tasks and interested in using their skills in the labor market afterwards, if given the opportunity (Lauglo, 2005 :23 – 24).

2.5. Considerations to be Made During Selection

Success in any pursuit calls for possession of a number of traits. Age, ability, interest, character and economic necessity are all factors which affect success.

Even if sometimes the possession of an excess in one quality may compensate for lack of another trait, in general so much of each requirement is essential. Hence, interest about is not enough to determine occupational success (Strong, 1954).

Strong (1954) has outlined some four considerations to be taken into account before one enters an occupation. These are necessary knowledge, ability, personality and physique. Before entering an occupation, it is imperative for one to have sufficient knowledge about all the fascinating as well as the 'boring' part of that occupation so that one can weigh up the pros and cons and decide. Various researchers have shown that students aspire to enter vocations which call for greater abilities than they possess.

Hence, to determine the necessary ability of students, intelligence and aptitude tests can be employed. Scholastic performance and achievement tests are real aids especially if definite courses are pre requisites to the career. There is no clear guideline as to what type of personality or physique are requirements for vocations. With regards to personality, common sense approach is useful for example analyzing questions like '*can she become a nurse and endure complaints of patients, long working hours?*'. Some people, although believed to be unfit for certain vocations due to handicaps, are observed to excel in it. However, where there is no will to achieve, students should be discouraged from attempting tasks for which they are not physically built (Strong, 1954 :33-35).

2.6. Admission to Middle level TVET

The strategy for TVET of Ethiopia (MOE, 2003a) has stipulated as to whom and with what personal traits are entitled the admission to the middle level TVET. Hence, among the two paths through which students progress to TVET is one that requires the completion of general education (grade 10) and an interest towards studying the program. The other one is the progression from lower level TVET.

Since the focus of this paper is on those students who join middle level TVET, the 10+1, 10+2, and 10+3 programs, after the completion of general education, subsequent discussions will be in consideration with this standing.

Thus, to those students who complete general school (grade 10) and are expected to join either the vocational or the academic stream the Ministry of Education has set criteria.

These criteria are principally based on grade points achieved in the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certification Examination (EGSECE) of grade 10. Therefore, a minimum grade point of 1.4 for male and 1.2 for female is expected for entry into the 10+1 TVET program. For the 10+2 program a grade point of 1.8 for male and 1.6 for female is the minimum requirement. Those who are eligible to entry into the 10+3 program are those who have earned a minimum grade point of 2.00 for both sexes (MOE, 2003 b). The streaming of general school completers is, thus, regulated in such a manner.

Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Methodology

The methodology put into use for this research is qualitative methodology. This methodology has certain features that differentiate it from those of quantitative ones, as summarized by Lamnek (1988); Miles and Huberman, 1994; Smith, 1992 in Sarantakos, 1998:51-52).

- It is *interpretative*: - Social interaction is a process of interpretation and social reality is constructed through interpretation of the actors.
In addition, social relations are the result of a process of interaction based on interpretation, and theory building is a process of interpretation.
- It is *naturalistic*: - It perceives reality as a natural setting. It employs naturalistic methods such as field work, field study and generally methods that are familiar to people living in these settings. These methods are considered to be mostly descriptive in nature, describing the people and events in natural setting.

- It is *communicative*: - It is understood and operates in the context of the process of communication, of which it is part.
- It is *reflective*: - It should reflect critically the aspects of reality that are considered to be a theoretical and practical problem of social research.
- It is *qualitative*: - It uses no traditional quantitative procedures methods known to be suitable for the research project.

Hence it coincided with the intention of the study which was to conduct the study in a natural setting and derive an understanding illuminating the participants' world, the students of TVET in this case, as how the streaming process is affecting their motivation and performance in their studies and communicate its finding stressing on interpretations and meanings.

3.2. Design

The study employed a qualitative case study design. This method is suited to answer the “how” and “why” questions and produce a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 1984 in Merriam 1988: Merriam, 1988).

Collective case study, which studies a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into a phenomenon, population or general condition was the specific design selected. It is not the study of collective but instrumental study extended to several cases. The individual cases in the collective may be similar or dissimilar; redundancy and variety each having voice. They would be chosen for the reason that understanding them will lead to a better understanding, perhaps better theorizing about a still larger collection of cases. Hence, two TVET institutions were included in this study.

The cases were analyzed together by taking extreme caution to not at all overlook their uniqueness. The rationale behind analyzing the cases together is to avoid redundancy of data that would seriously affect the readability of the report.

3.3. Selection of Research Settings

Two institutions, one governmental and another private, were chosen. The basic rationale for the inclusion of one governmental and private TVET institution each was based on the information I was able to secure from an unpublished document at Addis Ababa Education Bureau.

It demonstrated the number of students who were streamed to TVET along with seats available in governmental TVET institutions and proposed grade point averages to stream into the three levels of TVET; 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3. It also depicted that of those eligible to TVET less than half were absorbed by governmental TVET institutions and the rest were expected to enroll in private TVET institutions. Therefore, I was convinced that the inclusion of one private in addition to governmental TVET institution would further enhance the understanding expected from the study.

After I reached the decision on the inclusion of a governmental and private institution each, I embarked upon formulating a criterion by which the cases can be selected. Three criteria were employed for the selection of the TVET institutions. First and foremost the institutions should be those that were fully recognized by the education bureau of Addis Ababa so as to enhance the credibility of the study. The second criterion is the availability of the three levels of the TVET programs namely, the 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3. The middle level TVET program is organized in three levels mentioned above. Hence, I believed that to convey a context-rich-interpretation and understanding, it was wise to incorporate students and teachers who have the experiences of attachment in those three levels. The third criterion was convenience within which financial resource and time constraint were taken into consideration.

3.4. Selection of Research Participants

The research questions at hand demand there be four different groups of participants to be included in this study; officials at the Addis Ababa Education Bureau, students, teachers and parents. Though some qualitative researchers reject the notion of representativeness as employed by quantitative researchers, others find it useful and indispensable element

of the research and make an effort to assure that principles of representativeness are adhered to (Sarantakos, 1998: 26). The selection procedure I employed belongs to the second bloc in that I took every precaution to include purposefully contrasting cases so as to avoid deriving an understanding without taking into consideration 'the other side of the story'. I also made sure the three levels of TVET, 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3, are accounted for by including teachers and students screened based on defined criteria as discussed consequently.

3.4.1. The Officials

The first group of participants were officials at the Addis Ababa Education Bureau who have first hand information with regards to the preparation and administration of the criterion utilized to stream students to either TVET or Preparatory.

Among these officials two of them, both male, were selected purposefully because their involvement in the preparation and administration of the selection criteria was found to be more rigorous than others and were thought to provide a deeper insight into the situation. A senior official at the education bureau had given me a lot of hand in such regard.

3.4.2. The Students

The students who were selected purposely to this study belong to the two institutions mentioned earlier. A total of ten students, four from the private and six from the governmental institution were selected to this study. Among the four students at the private TVET institution three of them were females where as one male. On the other hand, in the governmental TVET institution four female and two male students were selected.

The criteria that was employed to select, from the outset, was that at least there be a student each who is studying at the three levels, 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3 . Afterwards, out in the field contact with potential participants was achieved by the unreserved support of individuals at the scene. The students were selected with the help of head of the student body at the private, and department heads and teachers at the governmental TVET institution.

3.4.3. The Teachers

The selection of teachers to the focus group discussion was a purposeful one similar to the students. It was based on the criterion that the focus group as a group boosts the inclusion of teachers who are experienced in teaching in the three levels of TVET. In the governmental TVET institution all FGD participants were male where as in the private one among the five one was female.

The data generated from the focus group discussion (FGD) with teachers was further enhanced by the inclusion of interviews of teachers with vast teaching experience and merit. These were the key informants, especially at the governmental TVET institution, who were not able to attend in the focus group for various reasons but willing to participate in the research.

3.4.4. The Parents

Persuading parents of students at TVET was the most daunting and at times seemingly impossible task in conducting this study. Some of them shied away for fear of the breaching of privacy which I believe was well addressed and taken very seriously in the ethical directions employed in this research. However, my endeavor paid dividend in terms of convincing two parents to participate in this research with one having a son and another daughter in the TVET program studying in the selected institutions.

3.5. Data Generation Strategies

Two data generation strategies were employed to the information needed from participants of the study. These are interview and focus group discussion.

3.5.1. Interview

Interview is a data generation method that is used to find out what is on someone else's mind; to access the perspective of the person being interviewed (Patton, 1990 in Best and Kahn, 1993). This method was employed to generate data from TVET students and parents who have children learning in this program. In addition two teachers at the governmental TVET institution who were believed to be crucial to contributing valuable data that would facilitate understanding were also interviewed for they were not able to attend the focus group discussion.

An interview guide approach was implemented to cover topics and issues in advance, increase the comprehensiveness of the data and to make the interview fairly conversational. All the interviews with students took place in their respective school compounds; where as the interviews with parents took place in their homes with a view of generating data in a natural environment.

The interviews took place in Amharic, the local language, in order to allow interviewees express their feelings as comfortably as possible. They were then translated to English, but in order to maintain their contextual descriptions some Amharic phrases were put in some excerpts.

3.5.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion allows access to valuable information about group processes, attitudes and opinions of group members (Sarantakos, 1998). Hence, the focus group discussion was undertaken to derive a relatively comprehensive picture as to how teachers perceive their students' motivation and performance is affected by the streaming procedure in place. It was consciously guided by a focus group discussion guide prepared before hand for reasons similar to the ones mentioned in the preceding section. The focus group discussions, one at each institution, were conducted in the respective school compounds in which a group of five teachers each took part. Once again the Amharic language was the medium during the discussion for the reason described above.

3.5.3. Documents

Documents such as the Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy and the Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualification System both of which are publications of the Ministry of Education (MOE) were used as sources of information with especial emphasis on issues related with the streaming of students to TVET.

3.6. Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis strategy employed for this study is *interpretational analysis*. This strategy, according Gall et al. (1996: 562), is “the process of examining case study data

closely in order to find constructs, themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied”. All the data generated using interviews and focus group was transcribed from its original form i.e. tape recording. Hereafter, I went through the data repeatedly to construct a meaning out of it and was categorized under two major themes; the streaming and the aftermath.

To assure the validity of the analysis serious attention was given to triangulation. Denzin (1984), cited in Stake (1995: 112-115), pointed out four triangulation protocols; source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

Source triangulation, which is looking to see if the phenomenon remains the same at other times, in other spaces or as persons interact differently, was employed for this study. Thus, the response of each participant is triangulated with each other with the aim of ‘looking for additional interpretation and more than the conformation of a single meaning’ (Flick, 1992 in Stake, 1995: 115).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Most ethical concerns in qualitative research revolve around issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of the data (Punch, 1994). Immense attention was given to the ethical issues especially to the ones discussed consequently as summarized from Best and Kahn (1993).

- *Informed Consent*: - Research involving human participants should be performed with the informed consent of the participants. The involvement of the participants in this study was based on a voluntary basis and has every right to withdraw from it any time they wish to.
- *Privacy*: - This according to Ruebhausen and Brim (1966) in Best and Kahn (1993) is the freedom of the individual to pick and choose for him/herself the time and circumstances under which, and most importantly the extent to which his/her attitudes, beliefs, behavior and opinions are to be shared with or withheld from others. This was achieved by providing participants the privilege of editing and even withdrawing any comments they made from the transcription.

- *Anonymity*: - This requires the identity of individuals be separated from the information they provide. This has been achieved by designating a pseudonym to all participants of the research in the analysis. In addition, for this same reason the names of institutions included in this study has been kept anonymous.
- *Confidentiality*: - This refers to the fact that even if the researcher is able to identify a particular participant's information, not revealing it to a third party.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data presentation and analysis is organized under two major themes; the streaming and the aftermath. Under each major theme there are sub themes.

Each major theme begins with a general description of the major issues to be addressed in depth by the sub themes under the respective major themes. It is worth reminding that all the names mentioned in this analysis are fictitious pertaining to the ethical considerations employed.

4.1. The Streaming

This major theme embraces issues about the preparation of the selection criteria, its execution and issues related with the perception of the research participants about the streaming itself.

It is divided into three sub themes which would hopefully enable readers to portray the situation pertaining to the streaming of students to TVET from different angles, as discussed by the research participants blended with my understanding.

The completion of grade 10 heralds the stage at which students are forced to put a serious thought on a decision to be enrolled in either Preparatory (academics) or TVET. But then preference may not be enough by itself. Grade 10 completes are streamed to either Preparatory or TVET in a competitive manner primarily based on grade points achieved in the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certification Examination (EGSECE) administered at the end of grade 10.

The criterion set by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2003b) is used as a basis and employed by the education bureau of Addis Ababa City Administration in a manner that takes into consideration the city's existing circumstances.

4.1.1. Seats Available; the decisive factor

The City Government of Addis Ababa Education Bureau prepares a criterion to regulate the streaming of students to Preparatory and TVET.

This criterion varies slightly by the year, according to Assefa and Mesay officials at the Education bureau who participated in this research. With regards to how it is prepared, Assefa, one of the officials who had a hand in its preparation said, *"...based on seats available in tertiary education institutions the Ministry of Education allots a quota for each regional government ..."*

Here after, in accordance with the number of seats allocated for Addis Ababa, the Education Bureau compares it with those who have taken the EGSECE and a *'cutting-score'*, in the words of Assefa, is decided upon. The *'cutting-score'* is the score at which the number of students scoring it and beyond it fill out the seats availed by MOE to Addis Ababa at tertiary level. Those students whose score is not high enough to meet the *'cutting-score'*, a minimum score to gain entry to Preparatory, are streamed to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The number of seats available in governmental TVET institutions, once again, deters it from absorbing all students streamed to TVET .Hence the Addis Ababa Education Bureau employs a criterion to select among TVET entrants to absorb into its institutions there by demanding a higher grade point as compared to the standard set by MOE (MOE, 2003b). In this regard, Assefa asserted,

"...for example the minimum grade needed to join Government run TVET institution for this academic year was 1.57 for girls, higher than that of Ministry of Education's standard of 1.2.."

Since seats available at governmental TVET institutions are not able to accommodate all grade 10 completers, a number of students will be left out. Concerning those students who fail to be enrolled in governmental TVET Assefa said,

“...those who fail to be placed by the education bureau to governmental TVET institutions and fulfill the requirement of MOE can join non-governmental and private TVET institutions or the extension program....”

The introduction of the selection criteria is as a result of the limited number of seats available in the tertiary level governmental institutions.

Tertiary level education is among the highly subsidized sectors of education and the government is restricting the flow of students in an attempt to counteract over-expansion (World Bank, 2004).

I do not believe there is a better choice for the government to make under such circumstances, especially should the number of students who seek entry into such institutions by way of Preparatory becomes far beyond its capacity. It seems quite logical to select among those students who have taken the EGSECE with relatively higher achievements for a place at the tertiary level where as those who were unable to make it should be granted the alternative way to pursue and hopefully succeed in TVET.

However, one can infer a fallacy on the administration of the criteria set to admit students to middle level TVET. The TVET strategy (MOE, 2003a: 12) stipulates that among the criteria set for the entry requirement in the middle level TVET one is the completion of grade 10.

But the directive as being issued by MOE (2003b) and implemented by the Addis Ababa Education Bureau streams students to TVET who have scored grades as low as 1.2. These two documents exhibit incompatibility as a student who has scored a grade of 1.2 or even for that matter a single decimal point less than 2.0 can not be considered a grade 10 complete for s/he hasn't succeeded in passing the EGSECE which certifies the completion of general education.

Hence, one can safely argue that the middle level TVET program is admitting a number of students who fail to fulfill the requirement of completing grade 10. And this might result in serious repercussions, that would adversely affect the success of the program in achieving its aims.

4.1.2 . The Low Achievers to TVET?

The issue as to who should join TVET has been among central debates in the educational arena (King, 1998). The assertions of the officials at the education bureau about the preparation and administration of the selection criteria seem to point to the conclusion that TVET is meant for ‘low’ achievers or in other words for those who are not able to score high enough to join the Preparatory program. But Assefa argues that the directive as issued and implemented with slight modification by Addis Ababa education bureau is being wrongly understood in such a way that

“...since most students with higher grades join preparatory schools it led to a wrong understanding that those with higher grades should join preparatory...they can join TVET if they want to...”

Mesay, another official at the bureau confirmed Assefa’s claim. He further explained that the ‘cutting-scores’ set at the beginning of every academic year are minimum requirement for entry to Preparatory and thus those who fulfill this requirement can choose between TVET and Preparatory. He commented, *“...the number of students who opt for TVET over the Preparatory stream even if they are eligible for entry to Preparatory is on the rise by the year...”*

Assefa added to Mesay’s claim with justifications these students provide for their decision as follows.

“...there are some who join TVET despite having grades as high as 4.0...among the reasons these students provide for choosing TVET over Preparatory is that they want to acquire some skills especially in the technology fields before they join the university...”

It goes without saying that not everybody has equal academic caliber. Some may outshine whilst some might find success in the academic fields of studies hard to come by.

The streaming process being put into use which employs grade point as its criteria, as I understood, reflects the need to differentiate among students who best suit and are expected to succeed in the academic endeavor which lies ahead. It is not advisable for students with low academic caliber to pursue academic stream, according to, Assefa; for he believes

“...even if there might be the interest, should not one possess the ability, pursuing academic stream is meaningless....and I believe if one joins academics in such manner s/he will not be successful...”

Literatures converge with Assefa's assertion in that students should be urged to join streams that are in line with their abilities, since ability is among the major factors determining success in any pursuit (Strong, 1954; Gilli, 1976:47).

And it is a considerable success to the program that students of high academic caliber are attracted towards it, as indicated by Assefa and Mesay, because I believe that it will encourage innovation and enhance the productivity of graduates.

However, what would be a pitfall is assuming the converse of Assefa's assertion to be true, that is, assuming that those who do not have the ability to pursue academics will succeed in TVET and by implication assuming TVET requires less knowledge and ability. Sadly though, such misconception has infiltrated into the Addis Ababa Education Bureau as expressed in Assefa's words,

“...since it (TVET) is a practical training anybody fulfilling a minimum standard can understand it and is also a training where one would learn it by observing and engaging in practical undertakings... as far as the requirement of material resources and competent teachers are fulfilled, I don't believe there would be any way we fail to produce competent graduates....”

This is among the misconceptions as mentioned by Teklehaimanot (2002: 10-11) which have been amply challenged at the International Congress on TVET in Seoul in 1999. It was recommended that all countries should place TVET and academics on an equal footing to enable students a passage to tertiary institutions.

In addition, it would call for considering TVET as a subsequent level in the educational echelon that requires successful completion of the preceding one and not as a ‘safety net’ for the unsuccessful ones . There is a lump of truth in Assefa’s words in that the ample input of human (in terms of trainers) and material resources does matter in providing quality training ,though his simplistic outlook neglecting the human input in terms of motivated and competent students negates his assertion.

Teachers also seem to be victims of the misconception that TVET is meant for the ‘low achievers’. Some of the remarks that I came across in the interview sessions with teachers whenever they mention of their good students illuminate my assertion. They talk about them with pity and regret at how these good students ‘ended up’ in TVET. Marew, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution, said

“...there is this kid...I feel really sad that he couldn’t make it to the university, he is very outstanding...there are a few such excellent students here...they become nervous in the (EGSECE) exam couldn’t achieve the desired result they come here...and when you see their achievements you will be surprised at how they couldn’t make it to the university....”

Here is also a similar assertion of a teacher in an FGD at the private TVET institution.

“...there are few whom I believe shouldn’t be here...since they are very outstanding they should have reached higher position (ትኩቅ ደረጃ መድረስ ነበረባቸዉ) they shouldn’t have been stranded at TVET level...”

The responses of the teachers tell us two things; first it is quite rare finding ‘good’ students in TVET and second those ‘precious’ good students are pitied for ending in there. One can also read the ‘surprise’ in finding such good students in TVET and as a result some like Marew speculated that over excitement in the EGSECE must have paid its toll for such students to be there. In addition, TVET was considered as a hindrance to those outstanding students who aim to progress further.

When one looks at the criteria set to admit students to TVET it seems that its meant for those who were unable to pursue academic education and hence perhaps the ‘abundance’ of EGSECE ‘failures’ in TVET prompted teachers to feel sorry for those good students in ‘no man’s land’.

One could conclude that the criterion being used to stream students to either TVET or Preparatory had undoubtedly resulted in the tracking of a number of students who were unable to succeed in the EGSECE to TVET and their accumulation of points has ultimately resulted in a sort of aformation of an ‘identity’ as to who belongs there. The assertion of one of the teachers at the governmental TVET institution, Abebe, would support my claim. He said, “...*I have taught in both elementary and high schools before... and when I observe these students it seems to me like the low achieving students have come here...*” This perhaps would lessen the blame on teachers for being a prey to the misconception that TVET is meant just for low achievers. Therefore, such a condition, I believe, would put a stumbling block on the high achievers in EGSECE who wish to join TVET to break into.

4.1.3. The Information Gap

Literatures assert that since TVET prepares people for non professional jobs people of all races and background snub the idea of enrolling TVET without understanding its nature and possibilities for serving people (Bean and Duncan in Gilli, 1976). Therefore, promoting an understanding among the stakeholders of TVET especially students and parents is a key task to gain their recognition and acceptance. However, there seems to be generally a lack of clear understanding and information with regards to what TVET is, that is, what courses are available and the job prospect it entices.

And this, Assefa believes, is the major cause for the students,’ those streamed to TVET, discontent. He claimed,

“...they (the students) don’t feel happy at all...since they don’t know about it (TVET)...but it is after they get enrolled in the training program that they become happier...”

He further noted that lack of orientation is the major reason underlying students’ unhappiness at being streamed to TVET and among the reasons he claimed “...*they are taught by teachers of academic origin who have little or no knowledge about TVET so basically they come (to TVET) blindfolded...*”.

It seems quite speculative to assert that students who do not know about the program they are being streamed to will be happy after they join it for as much as there might be happy faces there could also be quite sad ones, to say the least. In addition, one can deduce from his assertion that teachers at high schools are as ‘unaware’ as their students about TVET; and hence, are not able to help their students get oriented to it.

Mesay agrees with Assefa’s assertion concerning students’ discontent about being streamed to TVET and believes that the major reason lies, in addition to lack of knowledge, the harmful practice that lingers in the contemporary society.

He explained,

“...in general I could say there is a lack of understanding towards TVET. But when one looks closer the society in general and the families of students in particular, they haven’t emancipated themselves from the harmful practice of despising and disrespecting men of skill...and so this is reflected in students lacking desire to join TVET...”

History books betray the fact that there was wide spread practice of disrespecting and despising men of skill to the extent of executing them on the pretext of possession of evil spirits in Ethiopia (Wanna, 1998). But TVET is not all about the training of manual skills; there are also fields of training devoted to the production of middle level ‘white collar’ work force like secretarial science, purchasing, accounting and so on (MOE, 2003b). However, some students equated it with ‘blue collar’ training as Halima, a student at the private TVET institution, stated,

“...just because it is called vocational education (የግብርና ትምህርት) I used to think that it was all about woodwork, metal work ...you know stuff like that... (but) there is pen and paper... it is quite similar to the way we used to learn back in high school...”

Halima understood that TVET was about the training of the hand only for it bears the name vocational education.

Had she been able to obtain relatively comprehensive information about TVET besides its name, the 'puzzle' about TVET would have been complete. What's more, she was even surprised the training involved the rigorous use of pen and pencil, which in her case is accounting.

Amazingly a student at the governmental TVET institution, Meseret, claimed she had a recollection of TVET very similar to Halima's. She said, "*...I used to think TVET was about manual training...I would never have joined had it been like this...*" The lack of information about TVET is also prevalent among parents as well. Ato Kindie, one of the parents of a student in TVET, got to know about TVET after his son was streamed to TVET. His understanding was limited to the provision of trainings of manual nature,

"...just like the way it used to be provided during the dergue...I didn't realize, for example that information technology the course my son is studying was provided as a TVET ..." he said. In a similar fashion, another parent W/ro Alem maintained incomplete conception about TVET to the very moment the interview took place and also felt that her daughter doesn't belong there, "*...all I know is that those who are not able to succeed in matric (EGSECE) join it...but my daughter was a good student...it's just her fate...*" One realizes that the knowledge gap is more pervasive and perhaps require serious intervention.

I myself have been quite attentive about issues raised about TVET, especially ever since I took up this thesis project. And therefore, most of the time or I dare say almost all the time whenever the issue of TVET is aired on radio and TV shows it is equated with those skills that employ the rigorous use of the hand like metal and woodworks and the like. Then one would not be surprised should the association of TVET with manual skills only be rampant in the society.

What's even worse is that some students conceive a negative image about TVET based on things they hear being told about the program. Rahel's prior perception, (a student at the governmental TVET institution) can be included in this claim. She asserted,

“...back in elementary and high school I used to think that TVET is useless, you know something you learn rather than sitting at home idle, something that gets you no where...because I heard some people saying’... ባባ ባባ ሙያ አሳጣጥ... ‘(Should I fail to make it there is always TVET...)

Students like Berhanu of the private TVET institution learnt about TVET when the door to Preparatory is closed on them. He said,

“...I had no idea what so ever about TVET ...after I received my EGSECE result and found out that I would not be able to continue Preparatory, I inquired some people and they told me I could join (TVET) college...”

One can understand the fact that most of these students were not exactly sure of what is lying ahead which I dare say their very own concern. The ‘camouflage’ on TVET has made some to speculate about it based on incomplete and at times totally incorrect information leading to faulty conclusion. Those who were ‘blessed’ with meager information and derive a relatively informed understanding were able to adjust their aspirations accordingly before hand. Tessema, a student at the governmental TVET institution, tells his experience in such regard as follows. *“...all I knew was that auto mechanics training was provided in TVET which was what I wanted...”*

In a similar vein Helina , a student at the governmental TVET institution said

“...I came to know about the courses provided (in TVET)...even if I had scored a grade making me eligible to entry to Preparatory I wouldn’t have joined any way...I wanted to study ‘Hotel Services’ (a training course in TVET) and get a job...”

The experience of these two students is quite different. They seem to have ample information which would enable them to decide their future. Therefore, the probability that their transition from general education to TVET coming as a shock will be minimum.

Teachers have also been conscious of students’ unawareness towards the program they have been streamed to as mentioned in an FGD at The governmental TVET institution.

They further asserted that all the burden of orienting students with the course they've been streamed to, the skill they would be able to gain and the job prospect that awaits them has fallen on them. A teacher said in such regard "...I can say the public relation work is performed by us ..."

4.2. The Aftermath

As discussed earlier students are streamed to either TVET or Preparatory schools primarily based on the grade points they score in the EGSECE administered at the end of grade 10. Those who are eligible to entry to TVET are not expected to attain a higher grade point requirement as compared to the Preparatory stream.

Since most these students interviewed have a poor and incomplete information and knowledge about TVET, they might find the decision of being streamed to TVET far from good news. Furthermore, the misconception that TVET is designated for 'failures' implied by the streaming procedure might also play its part on the reaction one would expect from students, teachers and parents. This major theme, thus, is devoted to the research participants' impression and experiences of the resultant of the issues mentioned in the previous section and sub divided further for an in depth analysis.

4.2.1. Disgruntled at Being Streamed to TVET

One would expect that students who aspired to enroll in Preparatory to be unhappy as their aspiration falters. But the accounts of students who have been through this tell the unhappiness was beyond just disappointment. Elleni, a student at the private TVET institution, is among those students that finding themselves in TVET came as a total shock, in fact more than just a shock. She told her story,

"...I used to learn in two schools, in the mornings my regular class session and in the evening a special class (ማጠናከሪያ) designed to help prepare for EGSECE... I was a good student and expected much....and when the result failed to enable me to go to Preparatory I was devastated...I cried for almost a week and my face picked allergy as a result and had to be taken to hospital for it...I even decided not to learn ever again...and I hated education..."

As one looks at this account of a student streamed to TVET, questions such as the following may come up. ‘Why would she feel this sad to the extent of giving up on education? Is it just because she was unable to join Preparatory or perhaps there is more to it than it seems?’ She explained this as follows.

“...I wanted to join Preparatory and go to university...my parents did their best to console me and that I could go to university and study for my degree.....”

She associated her not joining Preparatory to not being able to study for a degree and this seems to have aggravated her sadness in addition to not making it to Preparatory.

Is it a fact that those joining TVET will not be able to go on to study in a university? Mesay and Assefa, officials at the Education Bureau, both claim that nothing prohibits these students from doing so. In addition, the TVET strategy of Ethiopia (MOE, 2003a) clearly stipulates that the road to tertiary level education should not be closed and a procedure to facilitate this transition would be in place. Perhaps should there be some way that this girl had known about this, she could have been spared the sickness and pain she endured.

Tigist, a student at the governmental TVET institution, has had a similar experience. When she had learned that she had scored a result that would not enable her to pursue an academic education in Preparatory, she was submerged in feeling of disbelief and desperation .She said she had never thought of joining TVET and that she and her friends even used to belittle it. One can imagine how she would take the news of being streamed to TVET. She told her story,

“...I don’t know how this could have happened to me...I was among the top five students in my class... it’s God’s will...I almost gave up on education...and even thought of going into exile anywhere abroad...but my parents, my friends and my teachers all consoled me...its only been about two months since my sadness receded...I just sometimes used to cry...”

I was touched by the grief these students went through when they were streamed to TVET.

These two students said they were among those good students who work hard and expect that their 'due' place is the Preparatory and for some reason when this failed to materialize they were devastated. One would expect students to be quite unhappy about being enrolled in TVET considering the knowledge gap discussed earlier but never to such magnitude. And hence one would suspect that there might be more to it than it looks and indeed there is. What has aggravated their disappointment, besides the belief that their dream of going to university wilt before them, is the feeling of being left behind from friends and the embarrassment it resulted, as expressed by Tigist, a student at the governmental TVET institution, as,

"...only two of us didn't make it out of all my friends...there is this geography teacher of mine from whom I hide ...I am just too embarrassed to see his face but he always sends messages through my friends that he wants to talk to me..."

What's even more, students might even be looked down upon by their peers for joining TVET or conversely for not making it to Preparatory. Teachers in an FGD at the private TVET institution noted such a sad situation as,

"...there is a problem among students...here there are both TVET and degree students...you could see that there are some degree students ridiculing the TVET students... it's an awful sight..."

Martha, now a student at the private TVET institution, went through a similar situation. "... I was so very sad (በጣም ተከፍቼ ነበር ከሚገባው በላይ)..” What added fuel to her disappointment was that she was considered a failure by her families, in her own words,

"...when I joined TVET my families considered me as if I have failed completely...it was so infuriating... (እንደወደቅኩ ያክል ነው የተቆጠረው ምንም ውጤት እንደሌለኝ...)"

I was surprised to find out, from her, that she had scored a grade point of 2.0 in the EGSECE. How is it possible that she was taken for a failure while in fact she had passed? I think this has to do with her families' understanding of how passing is defined.

It seems like ‘passing’ according to her families, was joining Preparatory and eventually university; and therefore her joining TVET meant not fulfilling the requirement for passing and success. On the one hand she is distressed that she was not able to join Preparatory and on top of this she was considered a failure for not ‘making it’ by her families; it was indeed a double blow.

Such association of ‘failing’ with joining TVET has forced some students to do everything they could to restore the ‘pride’ they were denied, one of which is to retake the EGSECE. Tigist, a student at the governmental TVET institution, has not yet given up on the prospect of succeeding in EGSECE and joining Preparatory.

She told her story,

“...I’m learning both here (at the governmental TVET institution) and a revision class in the evening to prepare for the upcoming EGSECE...but a friend of mine who was streamed to TVET refused to join any TVET institution...she spends the day at the library studying and in the evening goes to the revision class with me...”

This could be an example as to how much students are desperately trying to go back to the ‘mainstream’ educational system. Parents also collaborate with their children in such regard to the extent of sending their siblings away from home. An incidence of this sort was reported by a teacher at the FGD in the governmental TVET institution. He said,

“...there is this parent I know in my neighborhood, his daughter scored a result that would not enable her to join Preparatory and was streamed to TVET...but her father refused to let her join TVET and instead sent her to his home town, some where in the rural area, to enroll in high school and retake the EGSECE...”

Parents of TVET students shared their children’s ‘predicament’. Ato Kindie his son’s state,

“...oh he was very sad of course...I did what I could to convince him that in life these things happen and one has to take opportunities as they present themselves...and perhaps it’s a blessing in disguise (ሁሉም ነገር ለሰጠኝ)...”

Another parent whose daughter was streamed to TVET, W/ro Alem claimed she consoled her daughter that there was nothing she could do but face the truth, “...*what can one do... she wasn't successful in matric (EGSECE)... ማትሪክ አልመጣላትም... she has to make use the vocational education(TVET) and get employed...*”

Teachers are also aware of the distress these students face and this is reflected in the school compound. This, according to Marew, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution, has made it difficult to teach students who are in such state; ‘demoralized’, in his words. He said,

“...especially in the beginning (of the academic year) it is very difficult for us...they come with no pen, no exercise book...they are demoralized, you see... since their intention of joining university has not materialized...”

Among the reasons for students’ anguish at being streamed to TVET is the lack of awareness as to what opportunities it avails. Elleni of the private TVET institution is among those students who found their being placed in TVET a correct decision even though it took going through painful experience to arrive at such conclusion. She said, “...*when I look back now ... it's amazing; I could almost talk about it as a joke you know ...I'm so happy right now...*” Perhaps, Ato Kindie was right after all; TVET was a blessing in disguise for her, though I sincerely doubt that it should or was meant to be ‘in disguise’.

Besides the sadness she incurred Martha of the private TVET institution is still skeptical about the decision that resulted in her being streamed to TVET. She felt she had been hindered from pursuing her dream of becoming ‘someone’ in a rather uncertain manner. She said,

“...when I sometimes think about it I feel like I could have become someone...you know study fields like engineering...perhaps had it been up to grade 12...and some other times I kind of feel that I'm not good enough and may be it's my fault...and instead of wasting two years it's good that I met my fate earlier (..አደጋን ቀድሜ ማወቁ ጠቅሞኛል ብዬ አስባለሁ...)

This student has ended up in state of confusion over the decision of joining TVET; for it was in contrast to what she had dreamt of. She feels TVET is deterring her from becoming ‘someone’ she wanted to be. Making a decision about one’s future is not an easy task for it requires ‘cold-blooded’ calculation in addition to subjectivity (Strong, 1954). Among the ingredients of the cold-blooded calculation is the objective analysis of one’s ability with aspirations which might require professional assistance. Martha is not particularly sure as to how she was streamed to TVET and feels fate had a lot to do with it. The issue of prestige played a considerable part in students’ disapproval at being streamed to TVET.

Vocational education was accorded low prestige for reasons of historical and contemporary origin. For example, historically in most African countries that were under colonial rule, vocational education was perceived to be particularly relevant to those people under colony and therefore some countries wiped out vocational curricula out of their education systems after attaining independence. An issue of more contemporary nature resulting in reduced prestige is the fact that since vocational education prepares people for non-professional jobs, parents do not want their children to join it with the hope that they would join the profession and move into the life style of an elite group (King, 1995; Gilli, 1976). A similar situation can be observed in this case as well. A society with a history of relegating men of skills to low status mixed with an incorrect belief that one’s dream of making it into the professions is over for joining TVET, has resulted in a brew that inflicted considerable anguish on students and their parents who experienced the taste of a sip.

4.2.2. Relief and Satisfaction

Not all students claimed to have submerged in grief for being streamed to TVET. Quite contrary to accounts of students discussed above some students expressed a feeling of relief at being able to gain an alternative opportunity to pursue their education. Some like Berhanu, a private TVET institution student, was quite relieved that he was able to have joined TVET. He recalled,

“...I wasn’t a good student back in high school...and I took the EGSECE haphazardly... (በደመነፍስ ነበር ማትረክ የተፈተንኩት) ...I’m happy that I joined TVET because with the knowledge level I have I belong here...”

His account is quite different to the ones discussed earlier. His claim of not being a ‘good’ student was ‘awarded’ with an opportunity to enroll in TVET and that his ‘knowledge’ is more suitable to TVET rather than Preparatory. Abdu of the governmental TVET institution has a similar reflection on the matter but for quite different reason.

He said, *“...at least I’m happy that I was able to be enrolled in governmental (TVET) college...but my sister wasn’t able to and is studying in a private college...”* His rationale is based on the financial advantages he secured.

The course of analysis of this major theme has started with the description of the grim picture of students’ grief at being streamed to TVET and went on a slightly less the sense of relief some voiced. Though I was overwhelmed with data illustrating students’ distress as a result of their joining TVET, I maintained an optimistic position to assume that there would be some students who had aspired for TVET and thus fulfilled their intentions by getting enrolled. My optimism paid off after a painstaking endeavor at the governmental TVET institution for Tessema, a student at the governmental TVET institution, had wanted to join TVET. He said *“...I wanted to join TVET because I knew there was auto (mechanics) training...even if I hadn’t joined auto (mechanics) I would have joined another TVET course gladly ...”* He felt his wish had come true when he was streamed to TVET and he expressed his eagerness when he was about to start class as *“...I remember that I just couldn’t wait to receive my (school) Id....”* One notices the complete contrast to earlier excerpts described above; life sweet and sour, as it goes.

4.2.3. Streaming Affecting Motivation

Motivation plays a significant role on learning and the acquisition of skills (Howe, 1998).

Motivated people act in predictable ways; they have strong preference for their intended action and show persistence, focus and resilience in its favor (Smith and Spurling, 2001). Motivated students will thus be able to grasp and understand their lessons more effectively.

Some students of TVET have found their studies motivating and interesting. Tessema, a student at the governmental TVET institution has had an experience of working in a garage on a part time basis back in high school and this, he believes, instilled in him the inclination towards studying auto mechanics, one among the many TVET courses. However, some of his classmates are not as interested as he is but in fact are bored to sleep in a manner that reminded him of himself at high school. He said,

“...for example when we were learning about gear transmission which is among the most important parts of a car some of my classmates were dead asleep in class...just the way I used to sleep during plasma TV classes back in high school...”

These students Tessema mentioned are clearly manifesting their ill motivation in a fashion too obvious to not be spotted. And this situation will for certain affect students who may be as motivated as Tessema for the classroom environment may suffer.

It is to be noted that some students expressed their deep dissatisfaction at being streamed to TVET earlier in this section and therefore one would imagine these students may find it difficult to drive away their feelings out of their pursuit in education. This was indeed the case for Elleni, a student at the private TVET institution. Especially the first few months of schooling after being streamed to TVET were particularly difficult for her. She explained

“...I used to go to classes, sit and hear what the teacher was saying with no real attention...oh and the library, I never used to go there... I just felt it had no use at all...”

Her discontent at being streamed to TVET had deterred her from paying due attention to her lesson.

It seems like her disapproval of the use studying and utilizing the resources available in the library might have emanated from her perception that her prior hard work at the library had not enabled her to join Preparatory.

Some students like Martha of the private TVET institution and Meseret of the governmental TVET institution are still shackled by the lingering regret of not joining Preparatory. Martha said “...*I’m not that eager towards my study...it’s because I wanted to join Preparatory...*” Meseret, in a similar fashion claimed her performance in her lesson is suffering for she believed she was not entitled the opportunity to join university, in her words,

“...I am not doing that good, you know ...I would have worked really hard had I joined Preparatory for an opportunity to join the university...”

In a similar vein in the FGD among teachers at the private TVET institution it was mentioned that their students lack ‘maturity’ in taking their education seriously and assuming responsibility for their learning. One of the participants of the FGD said,

“...when you look at the majority they don’t seem to understand the importance of learning...they seem to be engaged in fulfilling their parents’ urge of having to learn...”

Another participant of the FGD is of the belief that the carelessness the students exhibit has sometimes made it difficult for her to handle them in classes. Abebe, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution, similarly felt his students are not serious enough in their studies. He claimed, “...*they are not serious enough....especially in classroom they would resort to fun based on every pretext that they come across with....*”

Teachers in the FGD at the private TVET institution noted that among the reasons for some students’ carelessness to their lesson is that some students come with a negative impression towards TVET. And this negative impression is instilled in them possibly by members of their family, the teachers claimed. Such students tend to become careless and ill motivated, “...*they tend to think ‘why should I care about TVET’...*” (ደሞ ስ TVET

ብሰጢ ያስባስ) <...this really makes it difficult for us to teach them...”Marew, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution also pointed out that he didn’t find real effort among his students to improve in their endeavours “...there is no self effort exhibited by these students...if there is no self effort there won’t be improvement...”His assertion is a good illustration of the lack of motivation affecting students performance in their lessons and indeed without exhibiting determined and purposeful effort success in any pursuit is unlikely to come by.

4.2.4. Countering Feeling of Incapacity

Quite differently from Tessema’s assertion that the desire to learn TVET acting as a motivating factor, the motivation of some students is rooted in proving themselves that they can be successful in their studies to those who doubted it. It is to be noted that else where in this paper, it was discussed that some students who were streamed to TVET were disappointed for being considered a failure.

This seems the case for Halima, a private TVET institution student, who is desperately trying to forget the feeling of incapacity she was subjected to experience and said,

“...I was really sad that I couldn’t make it (to Preparatory)...but I want to prove myself I can do it you know...I’m now working really hard (in such regard)...”

Berhanu, a student of the private TVET institution, on the other hand, believes he is motivated into working hard and scoring good grades in his studies for he is determined to ‘catch up’ with his friends in Preparatory, in his words

“...I’m now working hard and using my time effectively...because I see my friends who are at higher position (Preparatory) (..ከኔ በላይ የደረሱ ንደኛቼን አያሰሁ..) and I want to catch up with them and forget my agony...”

When one looks closer at the latter, students like Berhanu seem to be desperately trying to rinse themselves from the feeling of incapacity they incurred as a result of being streamed to TVET. In addition, one could sense a feeling of inferiority and being left behind as expressed in Berhanu’s words while he described his position with respect to his friends in Preparatory.

I believe the incidence of motivation by itself can be taken as a positive sign to the success of students' endeavors in particular and to the program in general although it might be questionable that the motivating factor for students like Halima and Berhanu is quite far from what the program could offer. These students who claim to be motivated towards their studies are those that are determined to counter the deep emotional damage they sustained as a result of 'ending up' in TVET. This I believe is not good news at all and is in fact very unfortunate; an incidence that should not have been allowed to have taken place to begin with.

4.2.5. The Prospect of Tertiary Education; rekindling motivation

Some students like Tigist of the governmental TVET institution associate their motivation towards their lesson with the prospect of progressing from 10+1, in her case, to 10+3 and all the way to the university, in her words,

“...now I'm working hard to progress up to 10+3 and as my teacher told me after I get my diploma I have the opportunity of being placed in one of the (governmental) universities...”

Indeed, the prospect of enrolling in tertiary education adds much to the attractiveness and desirability of vocational courses (Lauglo, 2005) while modern concepts of TVET also advocate that TVET be provided “within a framework of open-ended and flexible structure in the context of life-long education” (UNESCO, 1989 in Teklehaimanot, 2002: 9). In line with this, the strategic plan of TVET (MOE, 2003a) has stipulated that such will be the path the training would follow by linking it with tertiary level training.

One captivating thing, in such regard, mentioned in the FGD at the governmental TVET institution was that there is a difference in students' motivation among the levels starting from 10+1 to 10+3. It was mentioned that the 10+3 students are relatively serious in their lesson and even some exceptional students confront the teacher until things are clear to them. Students' lack of motivation is more severe in the 10+1 level, the teachers reported. One teacher said “...I'd rather not teach 10+1 students... it's extremely difficult...” A teacher also claimed that students, especially the 10+1 ones, express a kind

of hopelessness and doubt towards their studies like “...*what’s the use of my learning?...what would I do after I complete my study?...*”

The responses of the students mentioned above point to one direction, the university. The desire of going to the university is acting either as an inspiration into achieving more or a stumbling block hindering success for those who believe that their aspiration of joining the university would no longer materialize because they joined TVET. In any case, one understands the influence the prospect of progression to tertiary level poses on students’ motivation.

4.2.6. Poor Background Knowledge; the Additional Hurdle

Teachers at both the governmental TVET institution and private TVET institution had forwarded an impression about their students’ performance in their studies. And some factors sprang out to be major ones as a result.

In addition to ill motivation discussed earlier, teachers at both institutions asserted that their students lack the necessary background knowledge needed to understand the lesson they were providing. Among the background knowledge inadequacy stressed was poor English language command of students.

Most of the trainings provided in the middle level TVET require at least a fair understanding of English language since the medium of communication and reading materials are in English (TGE, 1994). But in the FGD at the private TVET institution teachers emphasized students’ poor language ability is deterring them from grasping the lesson, and is also slowing the pace of the lesson considerably.

In a similar fashion Marew, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution confirmed the prevalence such problem among his students in such manner.

“...they (the students) have serious language constraint...they don’t understand you when you talk to them in English let alone asking them to write in English...”

Similarly, teachers in an FGD at the private TVET institution claimed their students are suffering from poor language proficiency. Abebe, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution, shares Marew's assertion in that he has found it quite difficult to teach students with low language proficiency because he is forced to 'over-simplify' things beyond his expectation. He said,

"...their language proficiency is poor and thus they find it difficult to read and understand by themselves...I am forced to do everything for them...simplify everything to the level of spoon-feeding.."

Tessema, a student at the governmental TVET institution is among those who found English language ability a hurdle in achieving good in their lessons. He said,

"...I didn't pay much attention to my lesson back in high school and so my English (language ability) isn't so good...I find it difficult to read and understand things written in English..."

And his inadequacy in the command of English language is costing him marks and above all the knowledge he is aspiring to harness. He continued, *"...if it is a practical exam I have no problem but if it is a theoretical one I face difficulty..."*

Language barrier, unfortunately, was not the only problem mentioned by teachers at the governmental TVET institution. Some training fields like construction and technology require the rigorous application of mathematics and physics. In this regard Abebe, who teaches surveying and drafting courses at the governmental TVET institution, said he has found the mathematical background of his students too poor to concentrate on teaching the major course; for he asserted,

"...for example, surveying is the application of the mathematical concept geometry but since they have poor mathematical background I'm forced to go back to teaching high school geometry...math is given here as a common course but their biggest headache is unfortunately math itself...as a surveying student they should be good in math..."

Marew, in a similar vein, believes although the course he is providing requires a physics background his students are not fulfilling his expectation at that level. He said, “...*I observe failure in grasping important concepts...they don’t have it with them what they should have had from high school...*” And this, he believes, is hindering his students from understanding the theoretical knowledge that is underlying their practical engagements. He has also observed a complete contrast between students’ performance in theory and practice. He said,

“...they hate theory...if you give them theoretical examination they won’t do it...they are not interested in reading it...but if you ask them to construct a circuit they quickly do it...”

In the FGD at the governmental TVET institution it was mentioned that students’ performance in common courses like mathematics and English is very low. The students dislike these subjects and most do not like attending these classes at all.

As teachers at the FGD claimed, some students express their disfavor towards these subjects in such a manner like “...*what’s the use of learning math and English... we don’t go to the university...*” What aggravated student’s carelessness in common courses, according to teachers at the FGD, is the promotion policy in place for students of TVET. A teacher participant of the FGD said in such regard,

“...I think it has to do with the promotion policy that is when progressing from one level to another for example from year 1 to year 2 in a 10+2 program even if they(the students) score low in common courses it doesn’t bear much credit...and so they are liable to passing...”

This sort of promotion policy diminishing the credit common courses bear in students’ marks seriously affects their desire to study them and may even insight a perception that such courses are not meant for them to work hard on after all. Tessema said he had come across an incident where a classmate of his found math ‘unbearable’ and complained to his teacher “...*I thought I was here to learn auto (mechanics) if I had to work this hard in math why shouldn’t have I joined Preparatory? ...and the teacher answered ’let alone (TVET) college math won’t let go of you even if you join the convent...*”

Such an under achievement in courses which are presumed to be basic to understanding the courses provided in TVET not only affects students learning but also teachers motivation to help their students learn. In such regard Abebe, a teacher at the governmental TVET institution, is of the belief that his students are not challenging him enough to read more and discover and disseminate new knowledge to his students should it come up, in his own words,

“...they (the students) are not good enough to challenge me to work harder, force me to dig for more ...unless of course I want to for my personal interest...let alone teach them new things, they find it difficult to take up the lesson as they are supposed to...”

Marew fears that students who graduate with a limited theoretical knowledge on the course they are trained in will become no different than ‘lay men’. He made his point as follows.

“...I’m afraid if this problem is not solved, we will be producing graduates who can run the motor but are not able to explain what’s running it, which at this level they should have...”

Both Abebe and Marew in addition to participants of the FGD at the governmental TVET institution are of the belief that students’ problems in mastering theoretical knowledge has its roots in the lower level educational echelon. In this regard Marew said, “...when you look at their academic status they are not up to their level even if it is presumed that they have completed grade10...” Marew might have plausible ground to doubt his students’ ability meeting the level at which they are, for perhaps the prevalence of students who had not passed the EGSECE, as discussed earlier, played a role in his assertion.

This I dare say challenges to the earlier incorrect assumption that TVET is meant for the low achievers for the teachers are of the belief that those students streamed to them are not carrying the right ‘baggage’ in terms of ample background knowledge needed from high school.

Despite most assertions mentioned thus far point towards TVET students not performing well in their studies for the many reasons mentioned above, it was, to say the least, comforting to come across positive news in such regard. In an FGD at the private TVET institution teachers, especially those who teach degree students in addition to TVET claimed that they enjoy teaching TVET students because they appreciate the students' energy. Moreover, they asserted that their performance is not bad at all compared to most people's expectation as one participant said,

“...on the eyes of others these are pupils who are believed to be no good and failures...and sometimes you might encounter students difficult to handle but nonetheless they perform well , indeed well above my expectation...”

They believed that the major reason for TVET students' good performance in their lesson is the fact that their students enjoy a lot of contact hour with their students. I believe, however, there might be more to it than this because all TVET students, at private as well as governmental institutions, are governed by the same curriculum.

Perhaps one reason could be that since they enjoy the 'luxury' of joining the department of their wish, they might at least be 'consoled' as a result, unlike governmental institutions where not everybody is placed in a department of one's wish. In addition, they also pay considerable amount of money for their education and therefore this might encourage students to at least obtain some return from their investment.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

The Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been introduced with the major aim of curbing the serious middle level human power shortage the country faces. A lot is expected from the graduates of this program; they are not only expected to become employed but also become self employed as well (MOE, 2003). Achieving this is believed to be a considerable stride towards the eradication of poverty and economic prosperity.

The streaming procedure being employed is basically dictated by grade point average at the EGSECE and students' decision to enroll in either stream, especially to preparatory, would stand if they score above the 'cutting score'. Those who have scored below this score are streamed towards TVET.

This procedure is demonstrating disfavor towards TVET by putting in place a lower grade requirement for enrollment. In fact, the grade requirement goes down as low as well below the passing grade of 2.0 at the EGSECE, contrary to the entry requirement of middle level TVET program i.e. the completion of grade 10. The repercussions of the administration of this procedure were unveiled to be quite serious. It has resulted in the streaming of a number of students who have practically failed at the EGSECE, thus becoming a tangible reason for the program to be preordained for 'the failures'. Therefore, the streaming procedure is not only inherently suffering from the misconception that TVET is meant just for those who have 'failed' in the EGSECE but is also invigorating it among the students, parents and ultimately the society at large. It would be difficult for the program to be able to attract students with high academic caliber should the streaming procedure in place is as much a barrier by itself.

Among the philosophies for the introduction of vocational education is the task of acquainting pre work youngsters with the world of work and the individual in it (Gilli, 1976). However, the findings of this study seem to be quite contradictory to the very philosophy underlying the essence of vocational education.

The program seems to be obscure to most students and parents who participated in this research. As a result, it turned out to be among the basic reasons for parents' disapproval and students' considerable distress and anguish at being streamed to TVET. Such an appalling spectacle is one that should never have been allowed to happen for the study revealed that students who were able to access even relatively limited information were able to avoid it.

The issue of attractiveness of the program can be understood in relation to earlier issues mentioned previously. In addition, it also entails both prestige and economic prospects.

Academically well qualified students will be attracted towards vocational courses should the training allow opportunity for further education, quality education is provided and it is perceived to give opportunities in the future (Lauglo, 2005). The students and parents who participated in this study were short on the opportunity to obtain reliable and comprehensive information to make up their mind upon. Hence, they ended up making assumptions about the program based on biased and unreliable information they were able to get their hands on, like the training hindering progression to tertiary education and it being solely devoted to training of manual skills.

It would not come as a surprise if students are not attracted to TVET under such circumstance. Indeed, especially those who believed they could succeed in the academic endeavor lying ahead were the ones who found their being streamed to TVET quite sad news, to say the least. This implies that, the streaming procedure and lack of information about the program teamed up to deny the training program the prestige that it deserved.

The cumulative of the aforementioned issues resulted in ill motivation and poor performance on those students who were enrolled in TVET.

Motivation is among the most important factors affecting the learning of students (Howe, 1998). Students' lack of motivation was found to be hindering them from performing well in their lessons and this would seriously put success of the program in fulfilling the crucial endeavors it is endowed with under question mark. Their not being competent in their learning task would deter them from effectively acquiring the skills they are being trained in. Moreover, it might even prompt some to completely reject the idea of using the skills they were trained to in the skill market.

Thus, the skill market would suffer along with the graduates who went through such an experience. Ending up with graduates of such intention who had been into this extremely expensive training program (Teklehaimanot, 2002), especially one publicly provided, is a huge loss to the country not only in terms of economical value but also individual talents of students.

Students' poor background knowledge was indicated to be an additional influence on their performance in their studies, especially English language constraint.

This problem was found to be casting considerable influence on the teaching learning process; placing extra responsibility on teachers to help out in 'over-simplifying' lessons resulting in consuming more than the allotted time and students finding it difficult to comprehend reading materials. Though English language is provided as a common course, since the credit the sum of common courses bear in students results is minimum students do not pay much attention.

These seem to be among the underlying reasons for students to developing carelessness and even a dislike towards theoretical training that is provided in English language. Producing students who are short of competence in theoretical training underlying the practical engagements, which accounts for about thirty percent of training time (MOE, 2003a), would be translated as a failure in achieving the aim of TVET in producing competent middle level man power. Lack of ample background knowledge in other subjects like math and physics were also mentioned by teachers to have affected students' learning in some specific courses which demand their knowledge. Thus, this might imply that the streaming to TVET may not be effective enough in streaming students suited to the training program.

Perhaps the argument earlier that, it is playing a part in placing a number of students who had not been able to complete general education to TVET may be fit enough in justifying this claim. However, what may come out as desirable achievement the program is expected to have achieved is the fact that teachers at the private TVET institution claim of their students scoring high enough to meet their expectations in their studies.

This, I believe, shows that one could not completely doom all the students streamed to TVET to be unfit to the training.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) serves beyond strategic economic interests. The fight against poverty and the smooth transition of the youth to the world of work are also key social issues believed to be addressed through the appropriation of this program (Atchoarena and Dullec, 2002). As most sub Sahara

African countries, Ethiopia is engaged in curbing the shortage of middle level human power that is believed to play a considerable role for the development of the country.

Thus, this study is able to point out possible dimensions of intervention that would hopefully put into check the shortcomings that had been unveiled during the course of the study;

- The streaming procedure employed to translate the TVET policy into practice is not exactly in the same wavelength with it. It seems to have been playing its part by seriously putting in jeopardy the prestige the program deserves. It resulted in influencing entrants from harnessing the benefits the training provides to the best one is able to by affecting their motivation towards their training. Defining a better way in translating the policy into action through the streaming procedure is a decisive action not to be left for tomorrow.
- The information gap concerning the nature of the training program was found to be among the root causes of the problems as understood from the responses of the research participants. This calls for a sincere and coordinated effort that needs to be undertaken to orient prospective entrants in particular and the society in general.

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