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The TVET Apprenticeship Program: Mentor-apprentices perspective

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Abstract

The major objective of this research is to assess the degree of appropriateness and relevance of the apprenticeship program has in relation to mentor-mentee relationship. Apprentices' questionnaire was used as a major data collecting instrument. Focus group discussion was another tool which served as a device to compare, contrast, and integrate the data acquired. Findings suggest that a moderate knowledge exist of what apprenticeship is and what an effective mentoring should involve on the part of mentors. Despite this moderate awareness, findings even depict that there is a major setback regarding execution of an effective and professional mentoring responsibilities. Also, the apprenticeship program is found to prove some pattern of consistency with the apprentices' field of study and what they perform in the cooperative delivery program: with law students, that appeared to have higher level of relevance and in the Department of Accounting was found to be lower than those in the Department of Law. An alarmingly unprofessional and inept mentor evaluation trend is clearly observed in this study, while the chances to allow apprentices to be involved in problem solving schemes were found to be moderately sufficient.

Key words: Apprenticeship, cooperative delivery program, apprentice, mentee, mentor, mentoring, supervisor, TVET

Background of the Study

The success of the TVET Program depends on a number of variables which operate side by side. The presence of effective trainers (both at school and on job training programs) is quite mandatory to the effectiveness of the Program. Stakeholders in the apprenticeship system who are familiar with the fundamental philosophy of the establishment of the program would also be vitally important in order the TVET Program to reach the height of success.

Not only can the TVET institutions and stakeholders unable to render facilities to the students, they but also fail to provide the students with the fundamental inputs among

which could determine the success of the Program in general. In fact, the apprenticeship program which is considered to be among the most important components of the TVET Program does have a lot to acquire from those stakeholders. Specifically, apprenticeship at TVET, which is also known as the cooperative delivery program does highly depend on the effectiveness of the enterprises involved, which are the prime stakeholders of the system. Their effectiveness in executing appropriate and effective apprenticeship program could have a number of manifestations.

The enterprise's facility, the mentoring quality as well as the network the TVET institutions maintain during the cooperative delivery have surely a lot to serve as yardsticks to measure whether the apprenticeship program has gone through the appropriate and desired channel or not.

As stakeholders are irreplaceable components of the cooperative delivery system, the apprenticeship program can hardly bear its aspired fruit without the conscious and appropriate actions taken by the hosts-mentors. Thus, checking the status of mentors' knowledge regarding effective mentoring as for the basic objectives of the TVET curriculum would surely remain an important agenda.

Significance of the Study

In order to achieve the essential goals of the TVET program, it is important to check whether stake holders involved in the overall delivery process are effectively working in it or not. Obviously, the more efficient the stake holders in the process of the TVET training result, the closer the trainees would go towards meeting the objectives of the course. On the contrary, substandard delivery methods will surely inflict loss to the individual trainee, the stake holders as well as the nation at large. The significance of this study thus regards the extent to which the cooperative delivery program is effective enough in helping the trainees to achieve the ultimate goals of the TVET curriculum, with special emphasis on the mentor-apprentice relationship. Furthermore, this study may lead interested researchers to look into issues such as the extent to which the various

cooperative delivery program units: TVET instructors, the cooperative delivery offices (apprenticeship units) and the TVET institution's administrative body.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of this study is to investigate the mentor-apprentice relationship during the cooperative training delivery course (apprenticeship) towards meeting the major goals of the TVET Program.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do mentors at apprenticeship program supervise their apprentices?
2. Is the mentors' evaluation of the apprentices' achievement fair and unbiased?
3. To what extent, does mentors' assistance go in line with the fundamental expectations of the TVET Program?
4. To what extent, are mentors and apprentices aware of what they are expected to perform in line with the apprenticeship program?

Literature Review

This study also considered both the conceptual/theoretical and empirical literature. The review of relevant literature is organized in such a way that it includes brief reviews on the implementation of TVET Program in Africa, on some challenges related to the Program, major problems faced in running effective apprenticeship Program, and on role of stakeholders in the provision of cooperative delivery training. This part of the paper also deals with types and approaches of apprenticeship in relations to mentors' traditional, cognitive and school-based apprenticeship. It further describes about apprenticeship model of teaching (support-oriented teaching) and reflective practitioner mentoring approach.

The Implementation of TVET in Africa: Brief review

It is evident that there exists a strong belief among educators and policy makers in many African countries with regard to the significant role TVET can play in nation building.

This increasing interest in the program could be reflected in many ways. The application of the program across different nations and the effects it is claimed to possess in relation to the struggle towards poverty reduction in Africa, are some to be mentioned. The concern Africa has in this program is also clearly reflected from the policy makers' position:

In its Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education (2006 – 2015), the Africa Union (AU) recognizes the importance of TVET as a means of empowering individuals to take control of their lives and recommends therefore the integration of vocational training into the general education system (COMEDAF, 2007, p.5).

The share Ethiopia is assuming in the expansion of the TVET Program in Africa is quite immense. According to ECBC (2006), Ethiopia had achieved an increase of 1,200 % enrolment rate over the last five years, which made it the second biggest African country in terms of the number of training institutions.

TVET Program: Some challenges

Although Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) is provided by various countries in quite distinctive modes, it shares a common agenda - '...to create a competent, motivated, adaptable and innovative workforce' (ECBC, 2008, p. 12). However, bringing efficient young professionals with the qualities characterized above is not something to be achieved for granted. There are, in fact, multiple variables, which can work either for or against the success of the apprenticeship program's ultimate objectives. One of these variables is the quality of relationship between mentors and apprentices during the cooperative course delivery process.

Major Problems in Running Effective Apprenticeship Program

According to Beyazen (2008), despite the fact that apprenticeship is widely practiced almost in all vocational fields, there is very little documentation on how it works, how many are trained and what are the benefits in terms of self-employment and improving the livelihood of trainees. This shows that the problem of running an efficient and effective apprenticeship program starts from lack of guidelines based on universally acceptable standards and is deficient of researched plan of actions for its day to day implementation. Evidently, the apprenticeship program, which is considered as one of the most important instructional component in the courses offered in the TVET Program, has more problems than this one. Financing the apprenticeship program has also proved to be among the major obstacles the TVET is bound to face, especially in developing nations. For instance in countries such as Ethiopia, where a limited access to fund exists, this component of instructional process is suffering of inadequacies, lack of appropriateness and unprofessional handling from mentor apprentices' perspective. "*The Ethiopian TVET financing Framework*", quoted in ECBC (2006), recommended a deepened employers' involvement in the delivery of TVET, through cooperative and in-company training as significantly increasing cost-effectiveness in the TVET system. This, among other reasons has most presumably led the undertaking of the cooperative delivery program to be essentially shouldered by stake holders-enterprises.

Role of Stakeholders in Providing Cooperative Delivery Training

In reality, it is beyond dispute that enterprises will have a lot to offer with regard to exposing their apprentices to a well organized work environment from which the trainees could get a meaningful practical exposure. Nevertheless, it would be quite unfortunate to see the exclusive handing over of apprenticeship firing back on the successful accomplishment of the TVET instruction. For instance, it may lead apprenticeship stakeholders to deal with their apprentice demands arbitrarily and put the entire apprenticeship course at a stake. Thus, sometimes, the effectiveness of the apprenticeship program is merely left at the mercy of the stake holders' efficiency.

Types and Approaches of Apprenticeship in relation to Mentors' Role

Before assessing the various types of apprenticeship and mentor roles, let us first define the meaning of mentoring to the specific purpose of this study. According to Gulam and Zulfar (1998), mentoring is a “constrictive intervention at key transitional points...where the more experienced shall care for...the less experienced in a non-judgmental manner”. Although there is no one and best theory or approach of apprenticeship to which all cooperative learning programs should be addressed, various theories suggest how the program should be managed.

Traditional Apprenticeship

In this type of apprenticeship, Collins et al. (1991, p. 1) state that: ‘the expert shows the apprentice how to do a task, watches as the apprentice practices portions of the task, and then turns over more and more responsibility until the apprentice is proficient enough to accomplish the task independently.

According to the aforementioned author, this approach is characterized by four major steps: modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching. Modeling is the step where the apprentices observe the master demonstrating a certain task, while during the scaffolding stage the mentee gets support from his master in carrying out a task. In the third stage, fading, the mentor slowly removes the support system from the apprentice and gives him tasks to be handled more independently which leads him to the final stage, coaching. At this final stage the mentor coaches the apprentice through verities of activities such as providing hints and scaffolding, evaluating the activities of apprentices and diagnosing the kinds of problems he may be facing where he is expected to offer encouragement, feedback, structure the management by focusing on particular weaknesses and etc..

Cognitive Apprenticeship

This type of apprenticeship, according to Denner and Burner (2008), considers the mentor as a direction giver and instructor to the apprentice. The mentor, according to this theory, is generally assumed and expected to be more knowledgeable and experienced than the apprentice and effectively articulate how the learning occurs. Moreover, he should devise strategies of learning by extracting data from every day experience. The proponents of this theory argue that this type of mentoring has been on effect long before education was diffused in universities, and even before educational institutions were established.

Although this type of apprenticeship allows the apprentice to focus on action that has theoretically been dealt with at school through the help of a more experience and professional mentor, it is also criticized for not being very much efficient in other aspects of learning. For instance, as Russel (2002) argues, it usually lacks the relevance with the theory discussed at school as concentrating more on the tasks related to the organization's interest; not the actual educational demand.

This type of apprenticeship approach, according to Hartl (2009), is being widely practiced in Africa in both formal and informal cooperative delivery sectors.

School-Based Apprenticeship

As the name itself indicates, this type of apprenticeship is provided inside a well equipped institution. According to Vocational Training Education Directorate in school (2010), the primary objective of the School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program is to provide high quality, flexible and accessible training to registered apprentices and trainees in recognized vocations, while they are still enrolled in the institution itself. It is also aimed at satisfying the requirements of the relevant Vocational Training and teachers will be doing the job of a mentor during the apprenticeship phase.

Apprenticeship Model of Teaching (Support-Oriented Teaching)

Ylvisaker (2006) argues that an effective apprenticeship takes place when workplace mentors have given responsibilities to their apprentices by following certain essential steps. He underscores that tasks which are given to these novice professionals should be carefully crafted in such a way that they can go about them independently step by step. This model of mentoring has the following sequence of components:

1. A meaningful task is identified.
2. The teacher makes sure the student knows exactly what the learning target looks like (e.g., via modeling, visual supports, etc.).
3. The teacher invites the learner to participate as a collaborator as much as possible (without demanding performance – that is, “we work as a team to ensure that the learning task is completed successfully”).
4. The student acts independently only when fully ready to do so (Ylvisaker, 2006, p.1).

As we can see in this model, the student will be given autonomous responsibilities to work on a specific task when he is in a position to take that particular responsibility in confidence and as his competence boosts to the desired level after going through some important sequences of learning.

The Reflective Practitioner Mentoring Approach

Mentors, according to this approach, need to consider how they can engage their mentees in useful critical thinking approach. According to Lipman (2003, p. 52), there are series of steps which can help mentees deal with problematic situations and come up with solutions. They are: (1) Expression of feeling that there is a problem; (2) Identification of cause of feeling (formulation of problem); (3) Choice of desired end-state or goal (formulation of purpose); (4) Identification of means (devising of hypothesis); (5)

Anticipation of consequences; (6) Selection among alternatives; (7) Devising plan of operations; and (8) Evaluation of effects.

This type of mentoring, according to Lipman (2003), considers trainees as an apprentice and will avoid the 'sink or swim' style of mentoring, where the trainee is simply left to flounder, rather it helps towards independence through steady defined mentoring procedures.

In what follows, let us present the data, the analysis and discussion of the major findings of the study.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The major research instrument employed for this study was apprentice questionnaire, which was divided into four major parts. In the first section of the questionnaire, items which are related to the mentors' knowledge about mentoring as well as the overall TVET Program were analyzed and discussed.

On the second part, questionnaires which are designed to investigate how the mentor realize his duty will be investigated and the relevance of tasks with apprentices' field of study will also be observed.

The third part focuses on attitude. It emphasized on data regarding the apprentices' attitude towards their mentors' evaluation.

The fourth section comprises items which represent socialization between mentors and mentees in line with creating smooth and effective working atmosphere. In addition, focus group discussion was held and used to compare, contrast, as well as complement the information obtained through the major research instrument.

Research Design and Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey with a researcher designed questionnaire to collect relevant data regarding the types of mentor-apprentice relationship during the cooperative delivery phase of the TVET Program. To complement the data generated through the questionnaire, a focus group discussion was held.

Target Population and Sample

The population for the study comprised students who have at least gone twice under the process of apprenticeship program from four departments: Information technology, Law, Marketing Management and Accounting. The sample subjects filled out the questionnaires, while twelve other students with at least the same level of apprenticeship experience participated in focus group discussion for the purpose of triangulation.

Mentors Awareness of their Major Roles and Responsibilities

The following mentee questionnaires were designed to identify to what extent apprentices and mentors are aware of what their major roles and responsibilities should be during the cooperative learning program. Accordingly, apprentices were invited to evaluate their mentor's knowledge regarding mentoring.

Table 1- Respondents' Attitude towards Mentor's Knowledge about Mentoring

Do you think that your mentor has got enough knowledge about mentoring?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	35.0
I am not sure	16	26.6
No	23	38.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey outputs, 2011.

As clearly illustrated in the above data, the majority (more than 61% of respondents) were at least skeptic about their mentors' knowledge with regard to the competence they have in effective mentoring, while 16% of them were not sure whether their mentors are capable of executing effective mentoring responsibility or not. These may imply that there are a number of mentees who might not actually figure out what they should get from their mentors.

Focus group discussion revealed partially consistent data. A focus group participant, for instance, described the mentors' knowledge about their apprenticeship in such a dissatisfied tone of expression, as he stated: "They sometimes don't even know what program we are pursuing our study in-degree or diploma and ask you in between."

However, some participants seem to acknowledge some improvements with this regard. As another FGD participant stated:

Let's now look into the relationship that exists between the data acquired from the two instruments. Although there is no a consistent information as to whether mentors have a sufficient knowledge about mentoring and apprenticeship in general, a strong positive

relationship between the lack of mentors' competence and willingness in carrying out effectively their duty arises.

In order to get more specific information on some other further related questions, they were asked and their responses were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Mentor's Awareness regarding Information on Apprenticeship

Does your mentor have sufficient information about what you should perform during your apprenticeship period?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	30	50.0
I am not sure	6	10.0
No	24	40.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

Still, there is a huge uncertainty whether mentors have sufficient information about what their apprentices should precisely perform during their cooperative learning period or not. Nevertheless, this more specific question clearly show their lack of knowledge as to what mentoring competence is all about, as the number of responses under 'I don't know' category saw a sharp decline in here. This may imply that some mentees could be more conscious of the quality of mentoring in line with the relationship with the topics they have studied theoretically.

This hypothesis is consolidated by information generated from one of the FGD participants in the Department of Accounting, the discussant stated:

Students usually expect to get what they have studied in the classroom item by item. But the mentors have their own way of mentoring. For instance, what we have learnt at school is PEACHTREE ACCOUNTING and what we get there is

ACPAC. They show you this new software, you learn something new, and they will be able to enjoy your assistance, too.

The above-stated excerpt of qualitative data taken from the FGD participant may lead us to further investigate, to what extent, what apprentices perform in the cooperative delivery program is related to their field of study in the light of their point of view.

How mentors carry out their mentoring duty and the relevance of tasks with mentees’ field of study

Table 3 – Performance related to Field of Study

Is what you are performing related to your field of study?	Frequency	Percent
Never	14	23.3
Rarely	25	41.6
Partially	13	21.6
Moderately	4	6.6
Very much	4	6.6
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey findings, 2011.

Around 65 % of respondents were of the idea that what they had been performing in the apprenticeship program either never matches or rarely matches with their fields of study. The minority indicated that there was a *moderate* or *very much* relationship to their respective fields of study.

Let us now observe what participants in the focus group discussion said about the topic. An apprentice from the Department of Law has to say this:

You are not usually assigned in an area where there is no relationship between your work and your field of study. Even if you are assigned to work in the archive and documentation section, which is the least relevant section to our study, you will learn about legal procedures to handle files and database, although you may not get as much related experience as you wish there.

The pieces of information we obtained from another FGD participant in Department of Accounting had got a dissimilar tone, when s/he stated: “We obviously come across with tasks which are quite irrelevant to our fields of study. For instance, we are sometimes asked to tear papers in to pieces, but, to best of my knowledge, there is no topic like that in any of the Accounting courses.”

Another FGD participant from the Department of Accounting was less certain about the issue, as he expressed: “Many organizations put their heavy chores until apprentices show up. They simply take the opportunity for the coming of the apprentices as a means of reducing their organizations’ heavy burdens.”

The discrepancy between the responses given by those participants from the two Departments could emanate from the nature and type of works each offices have in relation to their fields of study. This pattern consistently persists throughout all the FGD participants’ reflections, as they sated: “the law mentees bring favorable experience, while the majority accounting apprentices quoting a usual incompatibility between what they do and what they should do.

At this point, it is important to investigate the meaningfulness of the tasks apprentices are usually assigned to perform from their own point of view, as depicted in following Table 4.

Table 4 – Meaningfulness of the Tasks assigned to be performed

Does your mentor give you a meaningful task to be performed?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	10	16.6
Rarely	14	23.3
Sometimes	7	11.6
Usually	21	35.0
Always	8	13.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

Although the majority of the respondents disagreed with the idea that there had been a sound relationship between what they perform and what they should perform in relation to their fields of study, there were 48% of respondents who reported that the tasks they are usually assigned to perform had been sensible ones. However, those 39% of them labeled their tasks as almost meaningfulness had not appeared to give anyone a sense of ease. Here, we can confidently witness that a huge number of the mentees seem to have practically identified the tasks they perform as *nonsense*.

Some more questions which targeted at investigating the type and quality of mentoring were asked to the sample mentees: whether mentors precisely explain steps and procedures for tasks, introduce their mentees with the changes emerging along the way of the cooperative delivery program and allow apprentices go about tasks by themselves when they are matured enough to do so.

Table 5 – Whether or not Information given to the Mentees by Mentors

Does your mentor provide you with information guideline as to how you should perform?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	15	25.0
Rarely	15	25.0
Sometimes	4	6.6
Usually	16	26.6
Always	10	16.6
Total	60	100.0

Source: The researcher’s own survey findings, 2011.

The data in the above table revealed that half of the mentees (50%) had not been provided with the information they expected from their mentors. As this question appears to be general, more specific questions regarding some important job guidelines apprentices should receive from their mentors were asked. Results are illustrated as under.

Table 6 – Whether or not the Steps to be performed by Mentees explained

Does your mentor explain steps to perform tasks and encourage you to perform by yourself next?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	13	21.6
Rarely	14	23.3
Sometimes	1	1.6
Usually	17	28.3
Always	15	25
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey, 2011.

As we can see in the table above, about forty-five percent of the respondents (44.9%) reported that they had “rarely” or “not at all” got any type of explanation regarding the steps to be followed in performing their duty before they embarked on actual actions. This finding indicates that the majority of mentors use to leave their mentees in the so called the 'sink or swim' approach. Nevertheless, a FGD participant from the Department of Information Technology reports quite the contrary based on issues which arise from her personal experience, as she said.

... One of our mentors was ordered by his boss to offer an outdoor IT service to a client. Right away, he directed the task to us although we were hesitant to take the responsibility. He insisted that we could perform the task effectively and encouraged us to give it a try, equipping us with some important guidelines and of course a lot of moral support. Finally, we agreed to go and effectively accomplish our duty. We felt confident and became quite happy about this adventurous experience.

The above-stated FGD participant attributed the successful achievement of her apprenticeship to the friendly and supportive interpersonal relationship she had managed to develop with the mentor and his personal positive attitude.

Let’s now consider the level of support mentees get from their mentors regarding updated necessary information about changes along the way.

Table 7 – Whether or not the Mentors’ Update the Mentees

Does your mentor Update you with changes and information in relation to your work?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	16	26.6
Rarely	11	18.3
Sometimes	3	5.0
Usually	19	31.6
Always	11	18.3
Total	70	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

To the question, “*what is a good mentor for you?*” A FGD participant from the Department of Law gave a short and precise answer: “*One who consistently updates me with new information along the way of my on job training.*” But more than 44% of questionnaire respondents to the relative question have declared to “*never*” or “*rarely*” get updated information regarding changes throughout their apprenticeship.

Another question was asked to check whether factors other than the mentor himself could work against the success of the apprenticeship program in general about the organization’s capability to offer adequate facility to their apprenticeship demands. Here the results:

Table 8 – Apprenticeship Organizations’ Capacity to accommodate the Mentees

Do you think that the organization you are assigned at is capable of accommodating your apprenticeship demands?	Frequency	Percent
Never	16	26.6
Rarely	5	8.3
Partially	5	8.3
Moderately	21	35.0
Very much	13	21.6
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey findings, 2011.

More than forty-four percent of the respondents labeled their apprenticeship organization’s capacity to offer effective cooperative delivery program as sufficient. However, the level of dissatisfaction in relation to the organization’s capability to render effective apprenticeship program appeared to be less than one percent about the quality of supervision. This may imply that the mentors’ attitude towards and awareness impact effective mentoring more than the organizations’ quality facilities.

Let’s now consider what a FGD participant, from the Department of Accounting, has to state about it:

...in the apprenticeship letter we have from the University College for instance, we will be required to practice Fund, Tax, as well as Peachtree Accounting. In reality, however, if you want to practice Fund, you will have to go to some NGOs and you have to go to the Revenue office when you want to study Tax. It is obviously hard to get an organization which can satisfy all these requirements at the same time.

It may be useful to look at the or absence of some attributes which may represent a kind of socialization between mentors and mentees as creation of smooth and effective working atmosphere and reinforce sound team work spirit.

Apprenticeship assessment of their Mentors’ Evaluation

This section deals mainly with the reliability and fairness of mentors’ evaluation from the mentees point of view, invited to rate the fairness and the validity of their mentors’ evaluation, based on their personal apprenticeship experiences and what they have observe from their friends.

Table 9 – Mentors’ Evaluation Fairness and Reliability

Do you think is your mentor evaluation fair and reliable?	Frequency	Percent
Never	10	6.6
Rarely	31	51.6
Partially	3	5.0
Moderately	7	11.6
Very much	9	15.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: The author’s own survey results, 2011.

The above table portrays such an alarming picture as the significant majorities (more than 68%) of the respondents were found to categorize their mentors’ evaluation as “*unfair*” and “*unreliable*”. Only less than 27 % of the respondents considered the mentors’

evaluation as fair and dependable, while those who rated the evaluation as “*very much*” confident were found to be only 15%, which may be an extreme cause for concern.

The information we obtained during the FGD sessions had even made the picture worse, since none of the participants was found to be unsatisfied about the fairness and honesty of their mentors’ evaluation. For example, the participants stated:

Almost all mentors say that students do not normally deserve to score 100% and give you 99%. Others may say -It is not trendy to give below 100 in our organization’ and just give you that pick score irrespective of your performance. They feel that they would damage your grades if they give the grade you really deserve. They give us big marks and, honestly, we are happy with it.

An equivalent inept mentor behavior is reported by one of the FGD participants from the Department of Accounting, regarding the way some mentors get on with their evaluation responsibility. As he argued: “There are occasions where in mentors offer the mentees to fill up their own evaluation form in which they assign as much mark as they want. Then the mentors simply stamp on the form and send it back to school.”

Another FGD participant from the Department of Information Technology attributes the cause for the inappropriateness of mentors’ evaluation to lack of knowledge regarding the appropriate standards of evaluation, as he expressed:

Mentors do not have sufficient knowledge about mentor evaluation. The significant cause of this lack of awareness is because the network between the mentors and the apprenticeship office in the university college is too loose.” She adds, “... that is why I simply tell my mentor to write my results the way I tell him, which he doesn’t normally object.

The mentors' evaluation is subjected to an unprofessional and careless mentor handling, according to one of the FGD participants from the Department of Accounting, when she stated:

Some students from another college were quite careless with their apprenticeship training. They usually check in late and leave office early. The worst is they don't perform well in the limited amount of time they are on duty. The mentor was serious and gave them 70%. They went to the extent of weeping and begged their mentor to revise the mark which she totally rejected. However, as this mentor was on leave, they took another evaluation form from their school and had another 'mentor' fill it up with a better mark.

As feedbacks are highly interrelated with evaluation in one way or another, let us try to investigate the apprentice's rating of mentor's feedback for their performances.

Table 10 – Apprentice's Rating of Mentor's Evaluation for Apprenticeship Performance

Does your mentor provide you with feedbacks to your performance in order that you could achieve your goal?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	26	43.3
I am not sure	8	13.3
No	26	43.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

At least the figure of the students we had for the "yes" and "no" categories regarding the question whether or not they had got feedback to their apprenticeship performance was found to be the same.

Mentor Apprentice Social attributes and Mentors role in allowing the mentee involvement in problem solving environment

Let us now move to other aspect of effective mentoring, that is, the mentors’ inputs regarding the creation of real problem solving attitude in the apprentices. Accordingly, the following mentee questionnaires mainly focused on the apprentice’s chance to identify problems, work on a strategy to tackle them and embark on action for solving.

Table 11- Degree of Mentors’ Support in terms of Problem Solving and Decision Making Skills provided to the Mentees

To what extent does your mentor support you to develop and use your problem solving and decision giving skill?	Frequency	Percent
Never	11	18.3
Rarely	18	30.0
Partially	7	11.6
Moderately	10	16.6
Very much	14	23.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey outputs, 2011.

For the question whether or not mentees got an opportunity to develop their problem solving and decision making skills, another discouraging data was found to be a reality on the ground. More than 48 % of the respondents reported that they had “rarely” or “never” got their mentor’s support with this regard – skills required for problem solving and decision making. Bearing this information in mind, we further investigated the kinds of mentors’ support:

Table 12- Mentors' Readiness to help the Mentees to tackle Problems at Work

Is your mentor ready enough to help you tackle problems you encountered at work?	Frequency	Percent
Never	5	8.3
Rarely	3	5.0
Partially	6	10.0
Moderately	24	40.0
Very much	22	36.6
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

Unlike the picture we had for the minimal support apprentices had been enjoying during their apprenticeship; let us now have an incredibly high level of support (i.e., more than 76 %) in favor of the mentors' readiness to support their respective apprentices with their problems popping up along their ways.

Table 13 – Discussion of the Mentors with the Mentees about Realistic Work Experience

Does your mentor discuss with you realistic work experience?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	15	25.0
Rarely	12	20.0
Sometimes	4	6.6
Usually	18	30.0
Always	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

The above data depicted an encouraging mentor’s behavior as the majority of the valid responses (more than 48%) from the sample respondents indicated that the mentees had discussed about realistic work experiences with their respective mentors.

In addition, a focus group participant’s remarks from the Department of Law go in line with that, as he stated:

...when we tell our mentors that we have studied how to do something different from the way they are trying to show us, they go to the extent of sharing their personal experience. They also ensure whether we are clear with their discussions or not and give us more explanation if we are not.

Let’s now examine the level of encouragement mentees have enjoyed from their respective mentors upon performing better during the apprenticeship period:

Table 14 – Use of Encouraging Words and Expressions by Mentees’ Mentors

Does your mentor use encouraging words and expressions when you perform well?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	15	25.0
Rarely	13	21.6
Sometimes	1	1.6
Usually	20	33.3
Always	11	18.3
Total	70	100.0

Source: Own survey findings, 2011.

The above table illustrated that about 51 % of the mentors had been keen on encouraging their mentees upon observing worth encouraging behaviors. So, there is some consistency regard in maintaining sound social mentor –mentee relationship in such a way that the apprenticeship program could be more fruitful and appropriate.

Table 15 – Support given by the Mentors to the Mentees to operate in Teamwork

Does your mentor help you to operate in team work?	Frequency	Percent
Never	8	13.3
Rarely	2	3.3
Partially	4	6.6
Moderately	33	55.0
Very much	13	21.6
Total	60	100.0

Source: The researcher’s own survey, 2011.

Mentors’ encouragement to establish sound teamwork spirit is interestingly high as the data in the above table depicts. In fact, the majority (i.e., more than 78 %) of the mentors were found to be supportive to their mentees as they had been encouraging their mentees to participate in teamwork activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This research, which sought to assess the effectiveness of mentor-mentee relationship in line with the major objectives of the TVET Program, has the following major findings. The majority mentors' awareness about mentoring and the TVET Program as a whole is found to be relatively satisfactory. Nonetheless, data revealed a less effectiveness of the way mentors carry out their duty. The other major finding in this study portrays such an appealing picture in which the overwhelming majority respondents label their mentor evaluation as something useless and unfair. On the contrary, the majority of the mentors are found to give the due encouragement to positive work behaviors activities.

As the apprenticeship program and allow their mentees engage in a real problem solving is considered as one of the major components of the TVET system, these findings could have their own implications. Since the awareness of the mentors about the major objectives of the TVET Program and the important procedures of mentoring is judiciously sufficient, it would likely be to expect that they carryout their mentoring duty effectively and professionally. However, that is not usually performed practically happen, according to the finding of this study. That may indicate some other reasons other than the awareness of the mentors' knowledge to contribute to the effectiveness of mentoring in the cooperative delivery system. The stakeholders' personal preference as to what mentees should perform rising from their personal advantage's point of view has been found to be one of the major threats in this regard.

It is not only the overwhelming majority of the research participants who described the mentor's evaluation as something nonsense but also the low level of concern many stakeholders had had regarding the operating of apprenticeship. These findings may indicate that it is in line with the fundamental objectives of the TVET Program.

Recommendations

Based on empirical findings of the study, this study would be wise to recommend that strong and consistent link between the stakeholders and TVET institutions regarding solid standards and procedures on which the apprenticeship program should be founded. Factors which deter the effectiveness of the apprenticeship's success should have to be sorted out item by item, discussed openly and attempt should be made to curb these obstacles on a regular bases.

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