

**Youth Employment: The Impact of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Enhancing Youth Employability in the Labor**

Wanna Leka<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

This study attempted to show the impact of college TVET training in enhancing the employability of youth in the labor market. A total of 251 TVET college graduates working in various organizations in five different regions were traced and filled out questionnaires related to their pre-employment training and its relevance to their current jobs. The data obtained through questionnaire and other document analysis indicated that their training had enhanced their chances of employability despite some challenges. They seem to have positive outlook towards college TVET program. It was recommended that the expansion of TVET programs must be done taking into account various factors that might constrain the effectiveness of the program.

Key word: Impact, Technical and vocational education and training, youth employment

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1: Wanna Leka, (PhD) IER/AAU. Mobile: 09 11 78 73 18.

**1. Background**

Ethiopia is a heterogeneous society with a population close to 100 million out of which 50.1% are males and 49.9% are females. 55% of the population is below the age of 20. Close to 85% of the population and 90% of the poor live in rural areas and most of them earn their living from rain-fed agriculture, which constitutes 52% of the country's GDP. Only 33% of the population is literate. It is considered as one of the poorest countries in the world with a per capita of USD 300. Close to 46% of the population live on income less than one USD per day (Ethiopia – Central Statistical Agency, 2005). In order to eradicate poverty and bring social and economic transformation in this country, education and training are taken as the key factors.

Cognizant of this fact, the government promulgated a number of social and economic policies since it took power in 1991. One of these policies is the Education and Training Policy of 1994 (hereafter referred to as ETP). Since the commencement of ETP, student population increased at primary, secondary, tertiary as well as in TVET programs

The government had a number of reasons for making such an expansion. (a) As indicated earlier 55% of the population is below the age of 20 and facilitating the transition of youth from school to work is seen as one of the major tasks of the government. (b) The government strongly believes that TVET can improve the employability and productivity of the youth in the labor market and this will help the fight against poverty (c) TVET is expected to play a key role in this strategy through building the needed skilled, motivated and competent workforce. The government's Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to end Poverty (PASDEP, 2005/06-2009/10) envisages TVET to provide the necessary relevant and demand-driven education and training that corresponds to the needs of economic and social sectors for employment and self-employment (National TVET

Strategy, 2006, p.6). In the Ethiopian context, education and training should bring social and economic transformation by developing the needed human capital. Thus, the roles of TVET programs in enhancing the employability youth in the labor market must be studied to ascertain their viability.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The future development of a country depends on its youth who possess knowledge, skills and positive attitudes. These three virtues are transmitted through education and training. In line with this, TVET programs are meant to train individuals in the skills that are needed in the labor market. Furthermore, TVET programs are expensive in their nature and their viability must be ascertained by studying their impact on the individuals as well as on the society. Such a study has rarely been done so far. This study attempted to investigate some of the issues related to the role of TVET in enhancing the employability of youth in the labor market.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of TVET in enhancing the employability of youth in the labor market. The study also attempted to ascertain the relevance of pre-employment training to the demand of the labor market.

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of the study were:

- To investigate the role of TVET in developing skills needed in the labor market
- To solicit the views of TVET graduates concerning their training programs and to ascertain the impact of the skills training in enhancing their employability in the labor market.
- To identify the major factors that TVET graduates consider as constraints for their employability in the labor market.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The study attempted to address the following major questions.

- Do TVET programs help to develop the needed skills in the labor market?
- Did the training enhance the employability of youth in the labor market?
- What other factors constrain the employability of youth in the labor market?

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

The overall result of this study would help the government (to re-examine its TVET training policy, if necessary) as well as the society at large to justify the cost of expanding TVET programs in the country. Finally, the findings are expected to be of a great value to stakeholders, namely: policy makers/implementers, TVET training colleges/institutes, employers, teachers, students, donor community, parents, educators, researchers as well as general readers.

## **1.7. Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

### **1.7.1. Delimitations of the Study**

In 2014/15 there were 919 government and non-government TVET institutions in the country enrolling 352,144 students all over the country. This study did not include the whole TVET graduates in the country. Furthermore the study did not include non-government TVET graduates. Few selected government TVET college graduates were included in this study.

### **1.7.2. Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited in terms of coverage and data. The study focused mainly on graduates from government TVET colleges who were employed during the time of this study. Furthermore, due to resource limitations, employers of the TVET graduates were not included in this study. Thus, the results discussed in here could not be generalized fully to all TVET programs. However, the outcome of this study has valuable implications.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **1.1. Research Design:**

The study adopted a descriptive research (also called survey research). According to Gay and Airasian (2000):

A descriptive study determines and describes the way things are. It may also compare how sub-groups such as males and females or experienced and inexperienced teachers view issues and topics. Typical descriptive studies are concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, preferences, demographics, practices and procedures. Descriptive data are usually collected by questionnaire, interview, telephone, or observation (P. 275)

### **1.2. Sample Population and Sampling Techniques of the Study**

The main focus of this study was TVET graduates who completed their training between 1993/94/-2016/17 in five regions of the country, namely: Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Tigray and the city of Addis Ababa. However, effort was made to trace TVET graduates in the study areas using snowball sampling technique.

Purposive sampling method was used to select the five regions. The rationale was that (a) these regions had 92% of the government TVET colleges/institutes in of when this study was undertaken (b) taking this numerical fact as well as the labor market potential of these regions into account, it was believed that there might be a relatively better employment/self-employment opportunities and consequently locating/tracing TVET graduates would be easier.

The most challenging part of this study was locating scattered TVET graduates who were wage employed and willing to participate in the study. Thus, applying the most rigorous sampling technique was quite difficult. However, the following approach was used to overcome this problem.

(a) The data collectors working in the selected five regions approached the deans of the TVET colleges/institutes for help in locating at least few TVET graduates living in the area. Once such contact was made, snowball sampling technique was used to get other graduates. According to Gay and Airasian (2000) snowball sampling is within the domain of purposive sampling. The aforementioned authors defined snowball sampling as selecting a few people who can identify other people who can identify still other people who might be good participants for a study; this approach is most useful when a study is carried on in a setting in which possible participants are scattered or not found in clusters (p.139). Furthermore, Ary, et.al. (2002) also pointed out that snowball or chain sampling occurs when the initially selected subjects suggest the names of others who would be appropriate for the sample. The latter might suggest others and so on. Such sampling occurs when potential respondents are not centrally located but scattered in different sites (p.429). By using the sampling technique discussed above 251 TVET College graduates were included in the study from five different regions (Table 1). Moreover, the TVET graduates who participated in this study were the ones who completed their training in one of the following TVET programs (i.e., commerce/business, industrial technology, construction technology, textile & garment, and hotel services) shown in Table 2. These areas of specialization (even though the graduates indicated their areas of specialization at the time of data collection) were considered for the study with the assumption that these programs usually enroll a large number of students.

### **1.3.. Data Collection Instruments**

The data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through the data collecting instruments (mainly questionnaire and some interview). Secondary data were collected from the ministry of education as well as government publications related to the study. The instruments used to collect primary data were interview guide and questionnaires (open and close ended).

The questionnaires developed for the TVET graduates were adopted from standard instruments designed by different sources for conducting graduate surveys pertaining to TVET programs. Further more pertinent ideas were also taken from literature review.

### **1.4.Validation of the Instruments**

The following procedures were used in order establish the validity and reliability of the instruments.

- (a) At the initial stage the questionnaire developed for graduates in English language was distributed to some TVET graduates in Addis Ababa, Amhara and SNNPR regions to test the clarity, the difficulty level, as well as other unforeseen errors.
- (b) The suggestions obtained from the graduates were incorporated and the final version was developed. The questionnaire developed for TVET graduates has three parts. Part A deals with respondent's background. Part B deals with respondent's education and training. Part C deals with the employment status of the respondents.

- (c) The data collectors had training sessions to familiarize themselves with the questionnaires as well as the procedures to follow in order to get the necessary information from different sites. This was how the data collection instruments were developed and tested in order to ascertain their validity and reliability

### 1.5.Data Management

Data obtained from each region were coded and stored into different data files. A professional statistician organized and analyzed the data using SPSS computer programs. Some of the data obtained through the open-ended questionnaire and interview could not be coded and quantified. In such instances care was taken to incorporate the relevant data by using different means.

## 2. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section attempt has been made to analyze the data using descriptive statistics.

### 2.1.TVET Graduates

A total of 251 TVET college graduates from five different places participated in the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Graduates included in the Study

Regions	Frequency	Percent
Addis Ababa city	49	19.5
Amhara	42	16.7
Oromia	56	22.3
SNNPR	48	19.1
Tigray	49	19.5
Total	251	100.0

Source: Field data (2017)

We can see from Table 1 that 22.3% were from Oromia, 19.5% were from Addis Ababa and also from Tigray. Graduates from SNNPR accounted for 19.1% and 16.7% were from Amhara region. Out of these graduates 65.7% were males and the rest 34.3% were females. Most graduates (48.6%) were within the age range of 25-30. Furthermore, 13.5% were between the ages of 31-36 years. Less than 4% were over the age of 36. In terms of marital status, 69.3% were single, 29.5% were married and the other 1.2% were divorcee as well as widowed. One can say that for these young people working in the labor market and to make a living is an important achievement and TVET is expected to serve them well to earn a living.

## 2.2. Specialization

**Table 2. Areas Graduates' Area of Specialization**

	Frequency	Percent
Business	29	11.6
Industrial technology	75	30.0
Construction technology	17	6.8
Construction management	8	3.2
Textile and garment	21	8.4
Hotel services	19	7.6
ICT	38	15.2
Manufacturing	21	8.4
Other	22	8.8
Total	250	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	251	

Source: Field data (2017)

Table 2 shows that 30% the graduates are from Industrial technology (Auto, Electrical, Electronics, construction, textile, etc.). Those who graduated from ICT accounted for 15.2%. Business area accounted for 11.6%. All other areas of specialization accounted for less than 10%. Table 3 below shows the training levels that the graduates completed.

**Table 3. Program Levels That the Graduates Completed**

	Frequency	Percent
Level 1	6	2.4
Level 2	20	8.0
Level 3	66	26.3
Level 4	122	48.6
Level 5	25	10.0
Other	12	4.8
Total	251	100.0

Source: Field data (2017)

The respondents were asked the training levels that they completed and graduated. We can see that the majority of them (48.6%) graduated from Level 4 and they are considered as supervisors. The next group graduated from Level 3 (26.3%). They are also considered as supervisors. Those graduated from level 5 (10%) are taken as managers. The others Level 1 (2.4%) and 2 (8%) are considered as lower level skilled personnel. Less than 5% of the graduates did not indicate the training levels that they graduated from.

## 2.3. Employment Status of the TVET College Graduates

For all young men and women getting employed after graduation is considered as a success story. In view of this, the graduates were asked how long it took them to get employed. Table 4 shows the time it took the graduates to get employed.

**Table 4. The Time It Took the Graduates to Get Employed**

Response		Frequency	Percent
	I got my first job immediately after graduation	41	16.7
	2-3 months	74	30.2
	4-6 months	44	18.0
	7-9 months	20	8.2
	1 year	32	13.1
	More than a year	34	13.9
	Total	245	100.0
Missing	System	6	
Total		251	

Source: Field data (2017)

It is not easy for young graduates to get employment in the labor market where many factors come into play. According to Asalfew (2011):

Youth unemployment is the outcome of different socio-economic and demographic factors at macro and micro level. The micro levels are directly associated to individuals demographic and socio-economic attributes while the macro level factors are related to the national issues.

It should be noted clearly that education and training alone cannot create jobs. For those with saleable skills, there must be demand in the labor market. In Table 4 we can see that for 30.2% of the graduates, it took them 2-3 months to be employed. Those who got employment immediately after graduation accounted for 16.7%. Eighteen percent of the graduates got employed after waiting for 4-6 months. The others were employed even much later.

#### **2.4.What is the Impact of TVET in Enhancing Youth Employment?**

It is a well-known fact that people with better education and training have a better chance of getting employment as compared with those who have little or no education at all. Table 5 has been constructed to show the impact of TVET in enhancing youth employment. We can see that 87.6 % of the graduates indicated that their training helped them to get employment in the labor market. Only 12.4% of the graduates responded in a negative way.

**Table 5.TVET helped me to get my current job**

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	219	87.6
	No	31	12.4
	Total	250	100.0
Missing	System	1	
Total		251	

Source: Field data (2017)

The same graduates were asked the relevance of their training to the current jobs they have. Table 6 has been constructed show the responses of the graduates. It can be said that a high percentage (94.3%) of the employed indicated that their college TVET programs were relevant to their current jobs.

**Table 6. Relevance of TVET Program to the Current Jobs of the Graduates**

Responses		Frequency	Percent
	It has a very high relevance	89	36.6
	It has high relevance	83	34.2
	It has some relevance	57	23.5
	It has low relevance	12	4.9
	It has a very low relevance	2	.8
	Total	243	100.0
Missing	System	8	
Total		251	

Source: Field data (2017)

The graduates were also asked whether they would advise someone to join TVET program to take training in order to enhance his/her chance to get employment in the labor market. Table 7 shows that the majority of the graduates (86.5%) responded in a positive way.

**Table 7. Graduates Would Advise Others to Join TVET Programs**

Responses		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	212	86.5
	No	33	13.5
	Total	245	100.0
Missing	System	6	
Total		251	

Source: Field data (2017)

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 4.1. Conclusion

The issue of youth employment is a word wide issue. The youth are the dynamic segment of the society with huge potential. Their potential could be put into use if they could get the necessary education and training that corresponds to their interests. Youth unemployment is a serious issue throughout the world. Unemployed youth could be very destructive. In Ethiopia the young population comprises the largest percentage. This untapped human resource could be the driving force for social, economic and political advancement. In view of this, the research carried out on TVET and its impact to enhance youth employment shows positive signs.

### 4.2. Recommendations

There is a popular statement which says: “If you think education is expensive try ignorance”. TVET by its nature is an expensive endeavor. Based on the results of the research findings the following recommendations are made;

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- Make TVET programs popular so that more youth could take various skills training for future gainful employment.
- Since the Ethiopian population is heterogeneous and most of them live in rural areas develop TVET programs that address the needs of these people.
- Effort must be made to design TVET programs based on labor market needs.
- It was indicated that TVET colleges lack timely information concerning the skills needed in the labor market. This is seen as a constraint to design relevant training programs. This has to improve and corrective measure must be taken.
- The impact of TVET programs in improving the productivity of our industries has not been ascertained at a national level. Such studies should be carried out in the near future.

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