

The Practice of Quality Assurance in the TVET System of the State of Amhara as Perceived by Major Stakeholders

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of quality assurance in the TVET system of the State of Amhara. In this respect, leading questions focusing on the supply of resources, the quality of the training delivery process and the efforts exerted towards quality assurance were taken care of based on the input-process-output framework of quality assurance. The study employed the embedded design. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from students and teachers (809 in sum) who were drawn through stratified and simple random sampling techniques from six TVET colleges. Eleven teachers and twelve students selected through purposive sampling method were also involved in an independently conducted FGD to garner qualitative data. Besides, four deans, two OCACA participants and two industry managers were involved in a one-to-one interview drawn through the same sampling method. Documentary examination has also been conducted. Both descriptive (mean) and inferential (t-test) statistics were implemented to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the TVET quality in the study area has been persistently stricken with meager supply of necessary resources. Consequently, the quality of the training process has been so weak to equip students with the required competences. That means the efforts of quality assurance were not fruitful enough to meet the needs of both the trainees and the labor market. To rescue the quality assurance efforts, it requires taking an immediate action by the government that enables to effectively finance TVET institutions in any way possible, including the realization of the intentions of cooperative training.

Key words: competence, cooperative training, quality, quality assurance, TVET.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it seems that the focus of emphasis in the provision of education and training is shifting more towards quality. Tikly (2013) and the World Bank (2011), for instance, claim that access for the opportunity of education and training alone could not reduce the problems of unemployment, income inequalities and poverty effectively. Vegas and Petrow (2008) complement that poor quality in education and training is the possible attribute for relevance and utility problems. Hanushek and Wößmann (2007) and the World Bank (2011), more acutely, assert that quality of education and training contributes much more significantly to development than its quantity (expanding access) does. The latter two sources have reported that the correlation of quality of education and training with economic growth is stronger than that of the correlation between the years spent in schooling and economic growth. Joshi and Verspoor (2013, p. 51) in the same vein emphasize that “at higher levels of the education system ...

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ensuring the quality of education and training and the mastery of advanced knowledge and skills, may be more important than rapidly increasing the number of graduates.” Joshi and Verspoor as well as d King and Palmer (2010) in general inform that contemporary economists and educators widely advocate that it is the real competence that people acquire than the number of years of their schooling that is playing pivotal roles in the alleviation of poverty and achievement of sustainable development in our contemporary competitive socio-economic context. Consequently, quality and quality assurance in education and training have won more emphasis than ever before across the world today.

Quality is characterized by multifaceted dimensions that make it difficult to define precisely. According to Blom and Meyers (2003) and Van den Berghe (1996; 1998) its definition often depends on the perception of people defining it. For African Union (AU) (2007) and Visser (as cited in Blom & Meyers, 2003), for instance, quality refers to the different aspects of a product or a service: the input, the process, the output, or to the three dimensions at the same time. AU considers these are also the major yardsticks for TVET quality

Just as it is in all aspects of production and service delivery, there is no standard definition for quality in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Although the characteristics of quality in the service sector such as TVET are difficult to define, many scholars of the field (e. g., Bulmahn, 2004; Seyfried, Kohlmeyer & Futh-Riedesser as cited in Blom & Meyers, 2003; Sallis, 2002; Wolf, 2011) explain that it is possible to detect and characterize quality indicators in the service sector. Competence and morale value of teachers, adequate supply and application of material resources and required technology, strong partnership among stakeholders, strong concern and aspiration among students, standardized and relevant occupational standards (OSs) and curriculum, appropriate monitoring and evaluation scheme, and strong and purposeful leadership are the major ones among others. Van den Berghe (1996) relates TVET quality with two essential concepts: first, quality of design, organizational competence to draw up plans, and determine services that can be recognized for its quality by the end-users; and second, quality of conformance, organizational capability to address the required design, plan and specification in line with the agreements made earlier. AU (2007, p. 23) in this respect declares that “inadequate instructor training, obsolete training equipment, and lack of instructional materials” are some of the factors among many that debilitated the quality and effectiveness of TVET in Africa. AU also suggests that if competence is sought in TVET, appropriate workshop, adequate equipment and training materials as well as the time for practical exercise for trainees need meet the standards besides the competence of teachers.

Nowadays, various scholars (e.g., Blom & Meyers, 2003; Van den Berghe, 1998; Van der Berg, 2011) assert that quality improvement is one of the major focus areas of TVET employability because low quality TVET is one of the key poverty traps in many countries, particularly the developing ones. King and Palmer (2010) also supplement that quality assurance in TVET is an essential step towards maintaining TVET quality. Blom and Meyers (2003), Van den Berghe (1996; 1998) and Zuniga (2004) insist that TVET quality usually implies a comparison with the standards already set to assess the quality of the service delivered by a TVET institution. They argue that TVET quality requires the development of systematic and consistent definition,

continuous improvement, documentation and verification of the market needs of parents, learners, employers and government agencies and honoring working methods to meet these needs.

Scholars such as Blom and Meyers (2003) and Zuniga (2004) state that clients of TVET institutions want the training they take to match with the competencies demanded in a work place. To meet such requirements, according to them, TVET institutions should cope with the ever-increasing demands of clients as well as the rapidly changing technological and work environment situations. They infer that the concept of quality applied in TVET comes down to the success that graduates achieve in the labor market. For them, TVET quality is often analyzed from the institution's management point of view because whether a TVET institution complies with the principles implicit in the norm determines the quality of its service. Nonetheless, according to Zuniga, TVET quality encompasses four interacting subsystems: quality of policies and strategies; quality of institutional administration; quality of the programs at an institution level; and quality learning experiences at individual level. The first two can be characterized as systemic qualities (system level quality) while the remaining three as operational quality – quality at proper training delivery level.

Delivering quality TVET is strongly linked with the establishment of a strong quality management and leadership system. These included management commitment, teamwork, good understanding of principles and procedures by all, maintaining quality at any step by everybody, dependence on facts and objective data, and systematic problem-solving competence (Masson, Baati & Seyfried, 2010; Van den Berghe, 1996; Wolf, 2011). According to Allen (2006), that is because service quality is increasingly requiring “responsiveness, reliability, accuracy, knowledge, courtesy, consistency and urgency” (p. 1) particularly from the TVET institutions. That might be why AU (2007), Billett (2013), and Van den Berghe (1996; 1998) emphasize quality management as one of the main concerns in contemporary TVET exercise, which is characterized by highly competitive environment that forces customers to expect the training they gained need correspond to the abilities and competences required in the market.

Van den Berghe (1996) also contends that Total Quality Management (TQM) is the most widely used quality improvement approach in modern TVET quality assurance movement. Unlike quality control that is based on the detection and elimination of final products or their components that lack to meet the required standards and most probably followed by wastage, according to Van den Berghe (1996; 1998), TQM better addresses the quest of quality assurance because it gives emphasis to five major concepts: a clear customer focus, continuous improvement, quality assurance of internal processes, emphasis on process, and prevention instead of inspection. Blom and Meyers (2003), Bulmahn (2004), Sadgrove (1997) as well as Sallis (2002) conceptualize TQM as a way of understanding, planning, organizing and leading each activity to eliminate unnecessary wastage of effort and energy on routine activities. Not only Van den Berghe (1996) but Pekar (1995) too argue that since there is no one best way for effectiveness in TQM due to the peculiarities of organizations leadership commitment, attention to customers, knowledge and skill, shared vision and ownership, team-work, and

competent monitoring and evaluation mechanism are often considered as the building blocks of a good TQM. In general TQM is an agenda not only done by senior managers and passed down the line but also equally cared by the subordinates. That is because the word total in TQM implies that everything and everybody in the organization is involved to maintain continuous quality improvement. It is, therefore, an important instrument for a successful management of TVET institutions (Atakilt & Van Kemenade, 2013; Pekar, 1995; Sadgrove, 1997).

Besides input supply, the incorporation of competency-based education and training (CBET) into the system is taken as a function of quality improvement in TVET (Billett, 2013; King & Palmer, 2010). According to Brockman, Clarke, Mehaut, and Winch (2008) CBET is also taken as a variety of TQM in TVET quality assurance. According to these authorities, TQM is a mechanism whereupon the quality of the training provided is measured by the competence achieved than by the quantity and quality of inputs supplied and the type and magnitude of courses taken, and the theoretical knowledge acquired in a given period by the trainee. The methodology focuses on the performance of trainees (the outcome) in accordance with qualification standards set by the work place. They add, CBET is highly essential because besides stimulating the development and integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, it bridges the economic demands with individual learning needs of students. Other notable sources of literature (e.g., Billett, 2013; King & Palmer, 2010), on top of that, point out that CBET does not neglect the input and the process aspects of training delivery because the TVET system puts the principles of TQM – attention for input, process, and output – in place.

Unlike the traditional (supply driven) approach, Brockman, Clarke, Mehaut, and Winch (2008) as well as Mounier (as cited in Wheelahan and Moodie, 2011) advocate that CBET enables every student to understand what is expected of him/her and what the ranges of competences are. According to these authors, for one to implement CBET successfully, s/he should clearly define the standards that are used to deliver training and measure the performance of the students vis-a-vis workplace requirements. In addition, they substantiate that CBET takes individual issues into consideration in which a student is given the chance to master a skill at his/her own pace within a reasonable time. In the context of Ethiopia CBET is a component of outcome-based TVET delivery approach, key paradigm change brought about by the new TVET strategy to respond to the questions of quality and relevance (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2008). The approach has replaced the obsolete curriculum based scheme to address the problems of both quality and employability in the TVET system of the country more easily.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Both the education and training policy (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1994) and the TVET strategy (MoE, 2008) of Ethiopia attempt to deliver good quality TVET across the country. Yet, MoE (2008; 2010) discloses that the TVET system of the country has long been prone to low quality and the consequent unemployment. Similarly, Atakilt and Van Kemenade (2013), MoE (2010a) and the Technical, Vocational and Enterprises Development Bureau (TVEDB) (2007a, 2007b E. C.; 2008 E. C.; 2009 E. C.; 2010 E. C.) of the State of Amhara unveil that the quality of TVET is very low in the country in general and in the study area in particular. Above all, not only the beneficiaries of the system but all the stakeholders often

involved in TVET delivery too highly complain about the widespread quality problem in the TVET system in the current study area.

The roots of the problem may be diverse. This study has made its focus on the input, process, and output components to examine the quality assurance practices in study area because literature reviewed above inform that these three interrelated factors are the major factors of quality that need be examined thoroughly to understand the quality assurance practices in the system. These included the delivery of material inputs, the supply of competent teachers, and the quality of the training delivery process. That is because understanding the status of these factors significantly helps to understand the quality of TVET delivered and deduce about the practices of quality assurance made. The purpose of the study is, therefore, to investigate the practices of quality assurance in the TVET system of the State of Amhara by examining those factors thoroughly. To that end, the following three basic questions guided the study:

1. What do students and teachers feel about the supply of material inputs and teachers?
2. What does the perception of study participants inform about the quality of the TVET delivery process?
3. To what extent do TVET institutions endeavor to foster the quality of the training?

METHODOLOGY

Design

The intention of this study was to examine the practices of quality assurance in the TVET system of Amhara State. It employed the cross-sectional descriptive survey design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data and methods. The mixed method was applied both to collect and analyze data because it creates better understanding over the problem under investigation than either the quantitative or the qualitative approach alone (Creswell, 2014). In this respect, the embedded design was preferred, according to Creswell, because this method is mentioned by many scholars as the most cost effective and efficient model in educational research and in addressing mutuality or filling of data gaps to each other. The supportive data in the study was the qualitative data because it is the most widely preferred approach than otherwise. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously from each study site. Then quantitative and qualitative data were integrated (triangulated) through data consolidation (interpretation) method (Blaikie, 2003; Cozby, 2001; Kothari, 2004). This is because it easily helps to perceive the influence of the independent variable in a more authentic picture. In line with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), for sure, the quantitative data of the survey approach assisted in elucidating an overall picture of the study whereas the more fine-grained information achieved through interviews and documentary examination helped to augment the quantitative data.

Population and Sampling

This survey study employed the mixed methods approach and triangulated data both in terms of data source and typology of instruments. That is because different scholars, such as

Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) and Patton (2002) recommend that the mixed design is essential for studies that seek to triangulate data. They further suggest that such methods inform much more than otherwise due to their mix of information-rich and representative samples. Accordingly, among about 91 public TVET colleges organized into ten clusters, six colleges were involved in the study through a two-stage sampling procedure. According to Creswell (2014), Dattalo (2008), and Schofield (2006), this was because extracting participants through a mere probability sampling technique from a hierarchically structured population environment may nest some segments of the population unnecessarily and affect the relevance of the conclusion thereafter. To this effect, primarily, Bahir Dar, Debre-Markos and Woldia polytechnic colleges were drawn through a simple random sampling technique. Then three satellite colleges (Finote-Damot, Amanuel and Kobo TVET colleges from each cluster center consecutively) were selected from each cluster center through the same sampling method.

The drawing of participants has implemented the simple random sampling technique. For an exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon across occupations an attempt was made to address as different occupations as possible. Therefore, the cluster and stratified sampling techniques were implemented for securing occupational diversity. In addition, the selection of students was limited to the senior year batches from levels V, IV, and III sequentially basically to secure better information due to their long stay and experience in the colleges. To minimize the sampling error that may stem from the disproportionality of population size (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012), 70 teachers and 70 students from each college were drawn to fill out the questionnaires among a total of 4,163 teachers and 96,095 students (TVEDB, 2010 E. C.). The method of sample size determination suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 103) that states “a conventional sampling strategy will be to use a 95 per cent confidence level and a 3 percent confidence interval” was employed to select these participants. The sample size, which in sum involved a total of 420 teachers and 420 students, is intentionally maximized to avoid the risks of losing questionnaires due to problems springing from different sources (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

In sum, 412 and 397 participants filled out and returned the questionnaires. Besides, eleven teachers and twelve more assertive and conversant students were selected purposively with the assistance of deans and the teachers and interviewed independently. The collection of qualitative data was limited to Bahir Dar Polytechnic College and two companies in its catchment area. That was because conducting an in-depth interview with people in micro and small enterprises in all the six study colleges was not found worthy enough, apparently, because there is absence of such companies in the rest study areas focused. Two private companies that provided employment opportunities to graduates and at times involve in providing cooperative training were drawn through purposive sampling method. Then, the managers of the two companies were interviewed thoroughly about the competence of graduates to get information about the quality of the training provided by TVET institutions from which the quality assurance practices in the study area are possibly deduced.

Instruments

To collect primary data self-prepared instruments (questionnaires, one-to-one interviews, and focus group interviews [FGD]) were administered. This sort of multiple data collection method was applied because pertinent sources of literature (e.g., Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012) inform that it helps to refine personal perceptions further and tap the advantages of data triangulation. Both the questionnaires and interview guides were employed after translation into Amharic for the sake of enhancing communication and validity. Five level attitude scales (extending from very low to very high) were designed for all the sub-scales. Three packages of items incorporating 11 items on the supply of training material, 14 items on the supply and competence of teacher, and 12 items on quality assurance practices were administered. Teachers were involved in all the three packages whereas students filled out only the first two packages on which they are expected to have adequate information.

To ascertain reliability and validity factors the questionnaires were piloted at Injibara Polytechnic College, which has a similar setting with those included in the study. Although the questionnaires demonstrated good internal consistency and homogeneity among the sub-scales in each package, some items were excluded based on the feedback from the participants and on the inter-item correlations indicated by the pilot data analysis. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) of the sub-scales in each package after improvement were 0.855, 0.911, and 0.897 respectively. Similarly, alpha values were 0.813, 0.938, and 0.897 consecutively after the questionnaires were fully implemented. All these values were considered suitable for the purpose of the current study, according to Creswell (2014) and Larson-Hall (2010), because $\alpha = 0.70$ is often taken as the lowest acceptable value for a questionnaire with less than 20 items.

Data Analysis

In this study, the input-process-output framework was employed to schematize the analysis and interpretation of data. In this respect, the descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (between group and within group *t*-test) statistics were manipulated by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-23) computer software. Five percent ($\alpha = 0.05$) level of significance was applied to determine whether groups of scores are significantly different because it is often a conventional standard degree of significance for educational and behavioral studies (Creswell, 2014; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). *Cohn's d* was also operationalized to measure effect size index (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). To help refine (triangulate or complement) the quantitative data results qualitative data gathered through interview guides and documentary examination were analyzed thematically by embedding them in the quantitative data. In this respect, as can be seen in the data analysis section, the qualitative data were found so helpful to substantiate and tie up the loose ends of the quantitative data.

RESULTS

Input Supply

Supply of training materials

Material supply in this study encompassed facilities, machinery, equipment, hand tools, and consumables. Both teachers and students have replied an inadequate supply of these resources. As can be seen from Table 1, however, the *t*-test for independent samples reveals a very small mean scores difference between the two groups ($t = 2.350$, $df = 723$, $p = .017$, $d = 0.18$). That is, teachers and students sense that there is very poor material supply in the colleges.

Table 1

t-test result for Differences in Perception of Supply of Training Materials Between Teachers and Students

	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Teachers	412	20.14	5.44	2.35	723	.017	0.18
Students	397	19.22	5.05				

The entire annual reports of the bureau (2007 through 2010 E. C) in general and the respective colleges studied in particular verified the critical challenges the colleges faced with were scarcity of training materials. Even the two cluster centers, which are considered as better furnished and senior ones in the regional state, seriously complain in their annual reports that shortage of workshops, obsolescence of machinery, shortage of consumable materials and the like are the key problems that they are often challenged by. In view of all the deans interviewed, the satellite colleges totally do not possess machineries required by the OSs for training delivery. Neither are there adequate supports for satellite colleges from their cluster centers because the latter colleges themselves are not self-reliant let alone to support others. To make things worse, satellite colleges are located in rural areas where there is no access for companies or enterprises to benefit from cooperative training (CT). According to one of the deans among the satellite colleges (Dean₄), the CT exercised in a limited extent by itself is not effective because of the reluctance of companies to allow practical training for various reasons. The real intention of sending trainees for CT, according to this interviewee, is not for practical exercise but to show trainees the machines they theoretically learnt physically.

Student interviewees also resentfully complained that the training delivery is highly affected by the shortage of resource supply. A student from information technology occupation (Student₆), for instance, criticized his college because it has admitted about 150 students while the workshop is equipped only with not more than five functional computers. In connection to this, another student from automotive technology (Student₁) described that it is unthinkable to get adequately facilitated workshops in most occupations of her college. She believed that workshops are available physically but not practically. She also argued that in most cases practical training is hardly possible because workshops are not equipped with necessary machinery and consumable material supplies. Another student involved in the FGD from the

same occupation (Student₂) condemned the scarcity of material supply and its implications more gravely:

...Imagine a TVET college enrolling students ... without preparing adequate material supply. Which comes first, student enrolment or delivery of material inputs? I am a graduating class trainee in auto engine servicing ...I have never seen what an engine looks like so far... we all [his classmates] have never exercised how to drive a car at all.

Teacher supply

With respect to the supply of teachers required, the analysis of data as can be seen in Table 2 revealed that neither teachers nor students are satisfied with the supply and competence teachers. The t-test result shows a substantial difference between the two groups ($t = 13.132$, $df = 720$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.12$). The mean score of teachers was found higher than that of the mean score of the students' implying that teachers' dissatisfaction about the supply of competent teachers is much less than that of the students. To measure the competence of teachers, similarly, the current study has examined the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers. Data analysis results regarding teacher competence showed that the composite mean score of teachers is high whereas that of the students is low. As can be understood from the table the mean score difference between the two groups is strong ($t = 25.815$, $df = 720$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.16$). This informs that while most teachers perceive that they are competent enough, most students refute the competences of their teachers.

Table 2 *t*-test result for Differences in Perception of Supply of Teachers and Teachers' Competence Between Teachers and Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Supply of teachers	Teachers	412	3.02	1.01	13.132	718	.000	1.14
	Students	397	1.98	0.82				
Competence of teachers	Teachers	412	34.12	9.80	25.815	704	.000	2.17
	Students	397	18.18	4.90				

For capturing better clarity on teacher competence both teachers and students were involved in FGD. During the interview session, students were so open and confident enough to disclose the prevalence of teachers with very weak competences. Student₇, for instance, noted that despite his regular class attendance, he does not feel that he can succeed in the occupational competence assessment due to lack of proper training that emanated from lack of material resources as well as poor teacher competence. Student₃, from surveying occupation, also senses that most of the teachers in his college lack necessary qualification, inexperience, and language skills to transfer what they know to their students. The following excerpt from the words of the same student may describe the situation of teacher competence more acutely:

Fortunately, I am from a surveying occupation where necessary machines and devices are available. [At the same time] I am unfortunate because our teacher cannot

operate the available machines such as stereoscope, GPS, and total station. except our teacher takes us to the workshop and introduces us their names ...and functions we ...never utilized those machines in the training process. Those machines and devices are utilized only during competence assessment.

Just like their students, teachers were also interesting for their honesty. Most of them not confessed their own weaknesses besides openly disclosing the deficiencies of their colleagues. In contrast to the responses given to the questionnaire items, teacher interviewees have contested the results of quantitative data presented by Table 2. They reflected similar views with the students regarding the prevailing problems of teachers' competences. One teacher (Teacher₄) emphasizing on the knowledge of teachers, for instance, mentioned that almost 90% of the teachers lack to understand English texts properly. Another one (Teacher₂) added that most teachers instruct not what they are expected to do but only few units of competences which they can understand. Another teacher (Teacher₆) who focused on the practical competence of teachers sorrowfully explained that the availability of practically competent teachers is deteriorating from time to time and their college is starting to yearn for TVET in the past. Teacher₅ also confessed that since most of them prefer office works to physical works, most TVET teachers are usually seen in workshops with white-collar dresses instead of overalls. He also condemned teachers, including himself, as follows: "for fear of being ridiculed ...most of us do not exert efforts to improve our skills by involving in ...actual work places such as production units." Moreover, Teacher₄ confessed on the existing challenge that teachers are faced from skill gaps and defects in their subject matter knowledge as a result of which most of them often deliver training focusing only on specific units of competences that are easier to them for demonstration. According to this participant most teachers jump units or topics that are difficult for practical demonstration. Teacher₃ expounds the problems of teacher competence as follows:

Regarding practical [skills] we do not deserve to the level we are assigned to train. ... Each of us often look for assessment tools and their projects ...for training delivery ... because we cannot escape the pressure from the students on the one hand... and enable as many students as possible to pass the assessment. That is because the pass rate of students is one of the key criteria for our career promotion. ... As to me these are characteristics that most of us...including myself share. Had that not been the case ... our weaknesses could have been exposed and our job security endangered.

Teacher interviewed also revealed the persistence of negative attitudes among teachers for their profession. Teacher₅, for instance, mentioned that these days being a TVET teacher is something highly tiresome and boring, coupled with dissatisfactions on remunerations. According to this teacher, nowadays, the majority of the teachers in the TVET system are either less competitive, less experienced, or burnouts who want to leave TVET if opportunities are opened. Teacher₇ added also that being a TVET teacher is so tedious today that demands the delivery of training including on profession on which they are not specialized. English language, mathematics and entrepreneurship are examples he mentioned in this respect. According to him, these in aggregate demanded intensive preparation and worthless fatigues

with a resultant effect of irresponsibility among teachers. Still more, according to Teacher₃ and Teacher₅, TVET teachers are also responsible to looking for and negotiating CT, providing support for local enterprises and graduates, carrying out labor market demand and tracer studies, etc. It is teachers who are inextricably tied up with all these responsibilities and problems that we are expecting effectiveness from, which is absurd and precarious. According to these participants, such challenges have resulted in continuous turnover of teachers that exposed the sector to lose the most experienced and competent trainers. This in turn implies how the quality of TVET delivered is deteriorating.

Moreover, teachers interviewed unanimously felt that no one would stay a TVET teacher nowadays had a teaching experience been directly valid to transfer to other jobs. For them, those teachers who currently live in the colleges are mostly novice teachers and less competitive ones who by themselves are lurking to leave and join better-paid and more convenient work environments. Teachers involved in the interview session, in general, contend that currently the quality of TVET delivered is so poor because most teachers are highly affected not only by problems of ineptitude but also by lack of motivation and determination for their tasks.

All the deans interviewed shared the arguments of teachers strongly, if not more gravely. Dean₁, for instance, stated that from the outset most of the teachers available possess C level qualification (the lowest qualification level in the system). This dean also feels that most of these teachers have poor subject matter knowledge and skill. Due to shortages of teachers, according to this interviewee, many of them offer training in levels III and IV that should have been delivered by B or A level teachers. Dean₄, from a different college, complemented with regret that most of the teachers available in his college also have only C level qualifications. These teachers, according to him, complete a module that requires 260 hours within few weeks. For him, this is due of lack of competence (i.e., lack of subject matter knowledge, skills, and methodology) among teachers.

According to the perception of the deans, in general, the key problem in the TVET system today is poor competence of teachers. Dean₂ exhaustively describes different factors that have been major hindrances for the effectiveness of most teachers:

The supply of teachers is ... [one of] the formidable challenges in TVET colleges.... Besides, there is a high turnover among ...better-experienced teachers. Most of the available teachers do not fulfill requirements ... [and] those who fulfill [qualification levels] lack necessary competences Although they are expected to teach English, mathematics, and entrepreneurship as a rule of thumb ... most of them lack competences not only on those professions but in training methodology as well. ... Their defect of English proficiency in particularly is an arduous imperil for the system....

Even though there has been an employment of many new teachers, they do not have the acquaintance of teaching methodology. The TVEDB report examined informs only little measures taken to equip teachers with necessary methodological competences. The 2007b E.

C. annual report, for instance, points out that 144 teachers have left and 536 new ones hired within six months none of whom were equipped with necessary methodological competences. From then on, no report mentions about filling the methodological skill gaps of teachers. In this respect, Dean₃ comments that most TVET teachers did not take courses focusing on training methodology because most of them are trained for production activities in an industry but not for providing training. According to this participant the only measure taken when hiring such graduates as college teachers was providing them a sort of orientation on training methodology for an hour or two after employment.

Consistently, all the annual plans and performance reports of TVEDB throughout the last five years condemn teachers for different methodological defects. These included lack of preparing session plans, trainee progress follow up charts, and training modules or materials as well as maintaining the training delivery with 80% practical and 20% theoretical proportion by involving trainees in CT. These reports align with the FGD teachers confessed all these defects outright. Teachers₈, for instance, disclosed that in their context the practical-theoretical proportion of training delivery is reversed (i.e., 80% theory and 20% practice). Yet, surprisingly and paradoxically, the two TVEDB authorities interviewed (TVEDB₁ and TVEDB₂) claimed that the quality of the training delivered in the entire regional state is still good.

Process of Training Delivery

As regards training delivery process teacher focused variables were paid due attention. Factors such as regular preparation, motivation, practice of trainee record-book, focus for practical exercise, attention for theoretical concepts, competence-based training delivery, feedback delivery, communication skills, and work ethics of teachers were considered based on the standards described in one of the manuals set to realize the goals of the TVET strategy. Except for trainee record-book utilization and communication skills, the mean scores of students for the rest of those factors were low. These two factors are also the only items on which teachers and the students have no strong mean score differences ($t = 4.013$, $df = 720$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.31$ and $t = 4.989$, $df = 698$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.41$ consecutively). It implies that both groups have optimistic perceptions regarding teachers' effectiveness in practicing trainee record-book utilization and demonstrating favorable communication skills. As regards the remaining items, the mean scores of teachers and students were completely divergent. That is, the mean score of teachers for all the items were high whereas those of the students were low. This implicitly informs that for the students the quality of the training delivery process was poor while it was good in the eyes of teachers.

Besides examining the process of training delivery, the efforts made toward quality assurance were emphasized by this study. Results of quantitative data analysis in this respect inform that teachers involved in the study are not satisfied with the quality assurance measures taken by their respective colleges because the mean scores obtained are low. Within group t -test result comparing teachers of cluster centers (colleges more likely with senior and better experienced teachers) with teachers of their satellites (colleges more likely with junior and less experienced teachers) demonstrated by Table 3 portrays a modest difference between the two ($t = -3.901$,

$df = 352, p = .003, d = -0.34$). It implies that teachers perceive quality assurance practices in both college types are not adequate to equip students with the required competences.

Table 3

t-test result for Differences in Perception of TVET quality assurance practice Between Teachers of Cluster Centers and Teachers of Satellite Colleges

<i>Groups</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Teachers of cluster centres	412	23.2	7.95				
Teachers of satellite colleges	397	25.9	7.77	3.90	352	.003	-0.34

In Table 2 it is seen that the mean score difference between teachers and students was strong ($d = 2.18$). This was because the mean scores of teachers for all the items, except for two factors, were high whereas those of the students were low. This implies the existence of contradictory perceptions between teachers and students regarding the competence and effectiveness of teachers or the process of training delivery. Since teacher competence, which is likely ascertained by student satisfaction, is one aspect of quality assurance, it in turn informs that the practice of quality assurance in the TVET system of the study area did not meet the needs of customers. It all implicitly tells us that students perceive the quality of the training delivery process is poor.

Output

The output in this study refers to student competence. Although it might be possible to measure and judge quality output directly, most commonly through the assessment of student competence, it is also possible to deduce output quality based on the perception of necessary stakeholders. The latter approach is useful in contexts where available data regarding output have lack of reliability. In the context of this study, for instance, the occupational competence assessment results are not reliable data sources. That is because according to data sources presented earlier students are assessed after they are trained to the test based only on assessment tools and projects instead of being equipped with the necessary competence in the occupation they are enrolled to. With respect to the judgment of student competence, accordingly, the perceptions of teachers and the students were examined. Data analysis in this respect informed that the mean score of teachers was found slightly lower than that of the students. That is, while most students felt that they have adequate occupational competence, teachers reported quite the reverse. Table 4, however, indicated that there is a moderate mean score difference ($t = -8.908, df = 691, p < .001, d = -0.71$) between the two groups.

Table 4

t-test result for Differences in Perception of student Competence Between Teachers of Cluster Centers and Teachers of Satellite Colleges

<i>Groups</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Teachers	412	2.47	0.96	8.908	691	.000	-0.71
Students	397	3.50	0.97				

Interview data gathered from teachers, deans, Occupational Competence and Certification Agency (OCACA) participants, similarly, confirmed that the real competence of most candidates assessed is much below the assessment results they score. According to these sources, the defects of the assessment procedure have resulted in an assessment score that does not explain the competence of most candidates. Among other things, that is because the assessment system lets an instrument prepared for assessment in a specific time to be utilized repeatedly throughout a year in a situation where occupational assessment is carried out every month. This possibly exposes a situation whereby assessment tools get into the hands of candidates. It in turn helps candidates to exercise on the tools ahead of sitting for an assessment. Consequently, according to the interviews conducted particularly with OCACA participants, the competence assessment results of graduates do not demonstrate their real competence on the ground in most cases.

Participants from the industry favored the above argument. Both the industry managers (Manager₁ and Manager₂) involved in the study affirmed that often the graduates lack to fulfill the minimum requirements of their respective companies. Manager₁, for example, states that his company does not place newly employed TVET graduates without retraining them. He adds that his company has never assigned a TVET graduate on a specific job permanently without ascertaining their competence through retraining. A quotation from Manager₂ shares the same experience:

Newly recruited TVET graduates always ...fail to fulfill the competence requirements of our company. ...most of them have serious problems [skill gaps]. Therefore ...we do not deploy new employees of TVET graduates without additional training. Often, we deliver them up to 90 days training together with others who are recruited among those who do not have TVET background. ...otherwise they will damage machines and ...expose the company for unnecessary costs and wastage.

DISCUSSION

One of the issues the study has addressed is pertaining to the inputs (material supply and teacher supply) in the TVET system. Material supply is one of the key requirements in bringing quality in TVET. All the college deans, teachers, and the students interviewed, resentfully and with one voice complained that the training delivery is highly challenged by shortage of resource supply no matter the college is a cluster center or a satellite. Students, particularly, have

furiously complained TVET colleges for wasting their time by enrolling students without necessary preparation and ill-equipped workshops. To make it worse, most satellite colleges are located in rural areas and hence not only lack accesses for companies or enterprises to compensate the gaps through CT but also are the available enterprises unwilling for CT. The situation just confirms the persistence of Foster's half-century old observation (as cited in King & Martin, 2002) that strongly condemned policy makers and elites of developing countries, typically of Africa, for hypocrisy. That is, he used to criticize leaders of those countries had been erecting TVET institutions that cannot even afford hand tools for the poor but send their sons and daughters to luxurious academic schools.

Although the strategy (MoE, 2008) repeatedly stipulates that the problem of material supply in TVET colleges will be addressed by using diversified funding sources, data sources in the current study reveal that TVET colleges are still entangled with serious challenges of financial and material resources to meet quality requirements. Despite the fact that TVET colleges are officially (Council of the State of Amhara, 2012a, 2012b) authorized to generate and utilize their own incomes, moreover, both deans and the teachers commented that it is very difficult for all satellite colleges and many cluster centers to generate income and compensate their budgetary deficits. Above all, the findings of the current study disclose a big mismatch between the principles set in the strategy and the practices on the ground because in contrast to strategy directions (Melaku, 2015; MoE, 2010c), the supply of training materials with the required quantity and quality is not paid with adequate attention. Accordingly, the finding of the current study with respect to material supply is a typical reflection of the concerns of Johanson and Adams (2004), who argued that public TVET systems in SSA often have financial constraints that highly hampered the possibility of equipping students with necessary competences and pave the way for employability.

In general, TVEDB and the colleges under its auspices, both bestowed with shared goals of enhancing the quality of TVET, disputed on the need for material supplies in TVET colleges. TVEDB participants were not that much concerned for material supply in TVET colleges because they argue that CT compensates it whereas deans and the teachers who understood the formidability of CT, in contrast, insisted the need for fulfilling necessary material supplies for colleges. Besides supplying adequate material resources, this big rift need be synchronized if the quality and employability of TVET is sought to be ascertained.

The supply of teachers with the required levels of qualification and competences is indisputably essential to maintain the quality of TVET. The analysis of data regarding the supply of competent teachers revealed contradictory perceptions and quite mixed results among participants. Despite manipulation of mean score differences revealed that there is a big disagreement between teachers and students regarding teacher competence, the perception of students is likely a binding information. That is not only because one of the definitions of quality is customer satisfaction (Blom & Meyers, 2003; Zuniga, 2004) but also because deans and the teachers involved in the FGD have strongly backed the perceptions of students on the point. The perception of students is binding because from the perspectives of quality, too, service quality is either conformity to established organizational requirements and

specifications or at least meeting customer expectations (Blom & Meyers, 2003; Van den Berghe, 1996; 1998). Data from documentary review consistently corroborate that all TVET colleges in the region are delivering training mostly by using teachers that fail to fulfill the requirements of the standards set.

During the FGD students also amazingly disclosed that there are teachers who cannot operate the existing machines besides their deficiencies to deliver the theoretical concepts of the courses effectively. This is a fundamental problem not only in equipping students with the required skills but also in maintaining internal efficiency because the available resources that could have optimized the output of the training were not utilized effectively. The underutilization of the available facilities and machinery due to lack of teacher competence and budgetary shortages for the supply of adequate consumable materials made TVET more expensive in the context of the study area. In general, it is plausible to assume that TVET teachers have neither fulfilled the required qualification levels nor satisfied their customers. In the study area, accordingly, TVET is neither efficient nor effective because according to the criteria set by MoE (2010c) TVET is considered as effective when the teachers available in a specific occupation fulfill the required levels of qualification and competence as well as material supplies are relevant and adequate for delivering training.

Although the manual focusing on trainers' qualification framework (MoE, 2010a) specifies that a trainer should have a qualification at least one level higher than the one s/he offers, moreover, deans and the teachers know that this was impossible to practice in the colleges due to lack of teachers who meet the qualification levels specified. According to them, mostly C level teachers deliver training in levels III and IV, which according to the standards of MoE (2010a) shall have been delivered by B level teachers. Both participant groups know that most C level teachers are not able to understand English texts to provide training properly and hence training is limited to few units of competences in most cases. To make things worse, entrepreneurship, English and mathematics have been de-professionalized in the TVET system of the study area. Consequently, technical teachers who by themselves are condemned for their weakness in mathematics and English proficiency provide communication and mathematics courses. This, in turn, implies the problem in equipping students with necessary generic skills (business management, communication, measurement, etc.) in aggregate generates far-reaching deficiencies on the entrepreneurial competence and business life of graduates.

In general, although problems related to teacher supply and competence were emphasized as the key bottlenecks of the system by the TVET strategy (MoE, 2008), the findings of the current study revealed the persistence of those problem to these days. The findings, moreover, disclose the problems related to the supply and competence of teachers is not resolved so far, if not worsened at all. That is because the problem related to teachers today is not only lack of practical competence like old times but also deficiency in theoretical knowledge unlike old times. Despite the fact that the GTP II (of TVEDB) has targeted to equip all its teachers with the required competences as of 2012 E. C., the practice on the ground reveals that teacher competence is still not only poor but deteriorating instead. To complicate the problem further most TVET teachers today lack the competence in training methodology. Although the

qualification framework for teachers (MoE, 2010a) emphasizes any TVET teacher to possess a certificate of methodological competence before employment, besides occupational competence, so far, many teachers in the TVET system are not certified for their methodological competence.

To qualify as a TVET teacher, according to MoE (2010a; 2010b), one has to be certified at least with a C-Level trainer qualification that requires two different certificates. The first one is Level-III certificate or National Certificate III (NCIII) that is acquired through the occupational competence assessment. The other one is C-Level certification in training methodology that is known as Trainers' Methodology C (TMC) and is achieved through competence assessment in methodology. Accordingly, legibility for recruitment as a potential C-Level teacher requires possession of NCIII as well as TMC, competence in subject matter knowledge (or what to teach) and on how to teach consecutively. The same procedure holds for both A-Level and B-Level teachers (i.e., a minimum of NCV + TMA for the former and NCIV + TMB for the latter). Besides, MoE (2010b) underpins that "a teacher is at least one level higher than the level that s/he is actually teaching" (p. 7). Despite the official formulation of all these criteria, deans and the teachers involved in the FGD have disclosed that most teachers in their colleges provide training on levels that are equivalent to their qualification levels and none of the teachers in the study area has practically been certified accordingly. C-Level teachers, particularly, are short of TMC as well as exposure for methodological courses except a sort of orientation or induction exercises they participated for an hour or two after employment. Given that there may be many teachers gifted with natural talents of methodology, therefore, it is easy to imagine the problems that the TVET system is challenged due to lack of teacher competence and its implications on the quality of the training to ultimately ascertain quality and effective employability.

Moreover, although MoE (2010a, c) has set out a strategy of industry immersion programs for teachers to continuously enhance and thereby update their competence and the quality of the training they deliver, both deans and the teachers have confirmed that it has never been practiced. According to them, the major excuses behind included scarcity of enterprises, reluctance of the available enterprises to provide the opportunity, and absence of interest and courage from the teachers themselves. That is, on the one hand, enterprises do not want to waste their time and resources by hosting teachers to exercise in their workshops without any return to gain. On the other hand, most teachers often shy away actual work place exercises due to lack of adequate practical competence and the consequent frustration of being a laughing stock by the exposure of their inabilities. Data gathered from both deans and teachers, therefore, reveal that industry immersion is an unutilized opportunity that may have contributed much in improving the competence of teachers and the quality of training.

The findings of the current study reflected the statements of Cavanagh, Shaw, and Wang (2013) as well as Ferej (2000) who demonstrated that detachment from real work places for a long time is one of the critical problems often observed among TVET teachers. TVET under such a context becomes less relevant and less employable because school-based training often implements basic curriculum that is so general in scope and function, besides being removed

from the day-to-day workplace practices and activities. Consequently, TVET delivered under such conditions has become incompatible with the requirements of the work place and graduates find it difficult to fulfill the required work place competencies at the end of the day. Otherwise, teachers with qualification levels below the requirements in association with the scarcity of machinery and training materials can in no way deliver training according to the requirements.

In its TVET strategy, MoE (2008) has announced that to ascertain quality in the system it has introduced a new paradigm of training delivery process known as the outcome-based approach. It has also stated that the goal of introducing this approach is to equip students with the necessary competences easily. This is an approach that different notable sources (e. g., Billett, 2013; Brockman, Clarke, Mehaut & Winch, 2008; King & Palmer, 2010) called CBET and is a process whereby training delivery focuses on improving the competence of a student through learning by doing and continuous assessment and feedback delivery. Even though TVEDB (2002 E.C.) proclaims that it has been effectively implementing the outcome-based approach, students disprove the claims. Students felt that teachers by themselves lack the competences to teach and hence is the training process hardly outcome-based. Besides, students have replied that most teachers lack motivation, preparation, and rigor to provide feedbacks on their performances. That means, just like the statements by different scholars (for instance, Bulmahn, 2004; Blom & Meyers, 2003; Sallis, 2002; Wolf, 2011) CBET is not tapped effectively to make TVET outcome-based because the competence and morale values of teachers are ignored. Deans and the teachers, moreover, confirmed that most teachers lack all the necessary competences to implement the outcome-based training methodology, given that the scarcity of material supply is another obstacle that exacerbates the problem. Consequently, the reliability of the reports by TVEDB regarding the quality of the training process is subject to question.

Although the TVET strategy and the teachers' qualification framework (MoE, 2010a) outline that maintaining necessary qualification and motivation, in conjunction with keeping enthusiastic to their profession, among teachers is the key to keep the quality of TVET, the findings of the current study reveal that the practices contradict the principles and requirements. Similarly, even though old practices are condemned by the strategy for their exclusive emphasis on theoretical knowledge and denial of adequate attention for the importance of practical skills and the world of work, the current finding has revealed that nowadays it is not only the practical exercise but the theoretical aspect too that has been denied attention. Therefore, even if criticizing outdated and poor practices and setting inspiring strategies and plans is a step towards improvement and development, it does not suffice by itself. The indispensable measure to justify the utility of the inspiring strategy directions is rather realizing the objectives formulated and demonstrating their viability.

In general, besides low competence participants have disclosed that most teachers are discouraged and uncommitted for their tasks because they shoulder different duties that are beyond their capacity to accomplish. Most of them are complaining of burn out and seen usually blaming that they are TVET teachers. The problem faced to TVET these days is,

therefore, not only lack of competence among teachers but also deterioration of the existing competence among the available teachers through time.

Another issue addressed in the present study is the process of training delivery. The Ethiopian education and training system cohort analysis demonstrates that at least 80% of secondary school graduates, excluding those who drop out education at both primary and secondary levels are expected to join TVET every year. That is because the maximum accommodation capacity of the higher education system does not exceed 80% of the graduates every year. Concern for quality and quality assurance of TVET means concern for more than 80% of the young work force who leaves and drops out school every year. TVET quality is, therefore, the cornerstone of the whole socio-economic development of the country because Joshi and Verspoor (2013) and Melaku (2015), for example, explain that as far as TVET quality is not paid with adequate attention its goals of cultivating competent middle-level skilled workforce that meets policy and strategy goals might end fruitless. Worldwide advocacies (e. g., King & Palmer, 2010; Kingombe, 2012), too, convey that cautiousness and paying adequate attention to quality assurance in TVET ascertains the quest for employability and its contribution for developing middle-income economy. Those sources complement that the above analogy has importance in a modern market environment because the situation is highly exposed for globalization and the consequent inescapable competition.

The findings of the current study, nonetheless, reveal that the training process in the area under study is in line with neither the abovementioned worldwide practices nor the intentions of the strategy in general and the operational and strategic plan (GTP) of TVEDB in particular. Although MoE (2008) criticizes low TVET quality in previous times has been highly debilitating the competitiveness of graduates and the image of TVET in Ethiopia, the findings of the current study reveal the continuity of quality problems as well as the poor public image. One of the major reasons behind, according to data sources, is that TVEDB denied adequate attention for quality and quality assurance in the system. Teachers who filled out questionnaires regarding the practices of quality management in the TVET system have revealed that they are hardly satisfied with the practices of quality assurance in their respective colleges.

In contrast to different research results (e. g., Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Joshi & Verspoor, 2013; World Bank, 2011), which unveil that the role of education and training quality on effectiveness and development is much stronger than that of quantity, the commitment of TVEDB for maintaining the quality of TVET is subjected to question. For example, the GTP, the different operational plans and the performance reports lack to give necessary attention for quality as much as they do for quantity. Moreover, the confusing targets of TVEDB (2002 E. C.) on the number of TVET colleges to be established during the GTP years reveal the possibility of establishing substandard colleges. On the one hand, it states that the number of TVET colleges that fulfill the required standards will be 107 by the end of 2007 E. C. On the other hand, the same document attempts that the number of TVET colleges will be 130 by the same time. In the latter category, quality is not mentioned at all. Arguably, this implies that the 23 additional colleges incorporated in the latter category of colleges are not necessarily to fulfill the required standard. Otherwise, there is no reason of mentioning different figures in such an

official document unless the GTP of TVET is set only for the sake of planning or it is introduced spontaneously. Even though any sort of training is better than no training at all, it is possible to enhance the expansion of access along with quality through proper planning and efficient resource allocation. Neither in the TVET strategy nor in the different manuals and directives introduced to change the strategy into practice is there a single option given for erecting colleges that compromise quality, however.

Be that all as it may, despite the claim by TVEDB participants that the quality of TVET in the state is encouraging, documentary review results unveil that TVEDB has been recklessly disregarding the quality of TVET. Hanushek and Wößmann (2007) as well as the World Bank (2011), on the other hand, advocate that quality of education and training has a stronger impact on economic growth than do the years spent in schooling. The practice of TVEDB, however, diverges not only from such study findings but from the strategy goals of creating competent, motivated and innovative workforce through delivering quality and relevant training as stated by the strategy, the GTP, and the operational plans formulated every year as well. It is a pity to see a government organization vested with the responsibility of maintaining defined quality standards but is ignorant for the quality of TVET that it stands for. The finding of this study, accordingly, shares the concerns of many scholars (e. g., Maclean & Wilson, 2009; Munbodh, 1999; Winch, 2013; Wolf, 2011) because just like the findings there it has clearly pointed out that TVET colleges in the study area are disguised with low quality and quantity of human and material resource supply. That is, TVET colleges of the study area are hardly utilized for playing instrumental roles for enhancing the capability of the enrollees and their socio-economic development. Accordingly, just in agreement with Vegas and Petrow (2008) who warn that poor TVET quality is the possible attribute for relevance and employability problems, the credibility and utility of TVET towards alleviating the challenges of employability and poverty in the study area is so dubious.

The study has also examined the issue of graduates' competence. According to the TVET strategy (MoE, 2008), the competence achieved by the student is the sole indicator of output quality in the TVET system of Ethiopia. The strategy in this regard justifies that the outcome-based approach whereby occupational competence assessment results rather than training completion certificates verify the competence of graduates is introduced into the system. The principle sounds legitimate because nowadays the outcome-based approach or simply CBET is echoed across the world (Billett, 2013; Brockman, Clarke, Mehaut & Winch, 2008; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011). As regards the competence of students, nevertheless, findings revealed quite mixed result among teachers and the students. Teachers, most of who claimed for possessing the required competences for themselves, responded that student competence is low whereas students who are dissatisfied on the overall competence of their teachers, in contrast, claimed that they possess the necessary occupational competence. This is one of the contradictions among the two participant groups in general, which demonstrates a serious blame game in the TVET system.

Since it is very difficult to produce competent graduates under a situation where TVET colleges are highly challenged by resource scarcities and reluctance of the industry to involve in CT

(AU, 2007; Bulmahn, 2004; Sallis, 2002; Wolf, 2011), the claims of students for possessing necessary competences more likely lacks reliability. It seems that students are contradicting themselves (attitude-reality paradox) because they claim for possessing adequate occupational competence on the one hand and decry about the problems of material resources and competent and determined teacher supply, on the other, which they confirmed for highly affecting the quality of the training they have been delivered. Consequently, it is possible to argue that if the TVET system in the study area has widespread deficiencies to equip trainees with the required competencies and quality, students, inevitably lack to fulfill the required competence.

Incidentally, even if the overall objective of the TVET strategy was producing competent and motivated workforce that can serve as the backbone for the endeavors of poverty alleviation in the country (MoE, 2008), it at all remained a futile exercise. While formulating such an inspiring objective, the strategy has belittled previous TVET systems for overlooking access, relevance and quality. The finding of the current study, in contrast, disclosed a strong mismatch between the rhetoric and the practice of TVEDB. Both competence and employability situations observed on the ground are evidences to claim so. In contrast to the ideas of Allen (2006), Pekar (1995), Van den Berghe (1996; 1998) and Zuniga (2004) who advised the indispensable role of leadership on TVET quality assurance, it is arguable that the TVET system in the study area is not in a position to realize the goals of quality and competence stipulated in the strategy as a consequence of which the employability of graduates is suffering a lot.

CONCLUSION

Given that TVET is an expensive investment as it relies on costly infrastructure and low student-teacher ratio, it is not that easy to assure its quality. In connection to this a closer examination of data by this study revealed that access for TVET has been characterized by a haphazard erection of ill-facilitated institutions. That is because attempts made to optimize the utility of TVET have been mere expansion of institutions without adequate supply of resources. Overlooking the matter of resource supply is meant neglecting attention for CBET, a quality assurance practice that could have equipped trainees with the required competences. Despite the due emphasis by the TVET strategy for TQM, besides, the practice of quality assurance has fundamentally focused on inspection (assessment and certification) and not on TQM or prevention (monitoring the quality of training delivery process). Above all, the practice of quality assurance has been overshadowed by the aborted and obstructive CT in most cases, if not at all. The fatigue and burnout among teachers that hampered their commitment and fruitfulness as well as the deficiencies in their occupational competence and generic skills have also been neglected. The efforts made by the government to ascertain TVET quality in the study area rather explain a contradiction between its rhetoric and the practice on the ground. Quality assurance efforts, specifically with respect to measures taken to improve the quality of training delivery through improving the competence of teachers as a whole is overwhelmed by a wide spread blame games among the major TVET stakeholders that in turn informs that all efforts of quality assurance have proved futile.

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