

THE QUALITY OF EVENING EDUCATION PROGRAM AT JIMMA TEACHERS' TRAINING COLLEGE (JTTC), IN OROMIA, ETHIOPIA

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Abstract

The central objective of the study was to investigate the quality of evening continuing education program at JTTC. Data for this study were collected from students and instructors of four existing evening program in the college; registrar officer was also a major data source. In addition, information from direct class observations and students' academic records were used as data sources. For triangulation purpose, interview guide, questionnaire, focus group discussion guide, observation checklist and document analysis form were, accordingly, used as instruments for data collection. And, the collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods; though qualitative method was dominantly used. The results of the study showed that the dropout rates in all the departments were in large proportion, especially in the department of Civics. The major reason for the dropout was found to be academic dismissals. Furthermore, student respondents described instructors' lack of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills, negative attitudes towards evening students, unpunctuality and lack of sufficient educational resources as major problems that had worked against their successful learning. They also added inconvenient teaching-learning atmosphere, timing of the evening program, personal and occupational problems as major obstacles to their academic performances. On the other hand, teacher respondents attributed the challenges to lack of guidance and counseling services, students' poor educational background, some students' lack of interest in learning, lack of reference materials in Afan oromo and ICT services. It was stressed that the quality of teaching-learning in particular and evening education program at the college, in general, was under threat. Ideas were further discussed and implications about quality in evening continuing education program at the college were underlined.

Keywords: Quality, Evening, Education, Teachers' Training College, Jimma

Introduction

Education is recognized, by most Educators, as the essential foundation for culture, social and economic development. It is expected to make a contribution to addressing sustainable human development, peace and security, and the quality of life at individual, family, societal and global levels. The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994 states: “Education enables individuals and society to make all-rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes.” And this can be facilitated by expanding and nurturing all educational programs, including evening continuing education.

Higher education institutions are expected to contribute to the formation of the next generation of skilled personnel equipping them with the requisite knowledge and generic wisdom necessary to sustain and develop the national economy. In order to get such benefits, governments have made greater commitments to expand access to higher education (Ashcroft, 2004.) More importantly, together with the expansion of higher education institutions, the issue of quality must be addressed carefully. A failure to address quality of education at the tertiary level could be a hindrance to the overall development attempts. Being educated in higher education institution alone does not guarantee meeting personal and social expectations. In situations where graduates fail to compete in the world of work, unemployment will rise. When institutions are unable to produce competent graduates, joblessness will rise and creates burden to parents and the country. This requires carefully managed educational process to control personal, societal and institutional crisis. Some other scholars could perceive education as an endless process of developing human capital and it undergoes in a given socio-economic context (Tigh, 1983; Kundu, 1986).

More specifically, evening continuing education program is a voluntary, less costly and compressed part-time educational activity. In contrast to the regular school system, evening education is advantageous to those that are involved in some kind of business and/or those employed but have no opportunity to join the regular system. Hence, it is possible to increase educational opportunities to the less privileged as well as the working people through the evening classes (Cross, 1988; Good, 1973; Smith, Aker and Kidd, 1970)

In many societies, evening continuing education is considered as an alternative means of providing educational opportunities for those that have been previously disadvantaged. Such educational opportunities, once taken, are then believed to provide better access for human resource development in that they help undereducated citizens to improve their academic standards so that they would function satisfactorily in work, family, and the community at large.

Undeniably, the intrinsic value of evening continuing education and a desire to be among those who make use of the facilities provided by the service has resulted in an increasing number of students seeking to return to education.

The evening continuing education program offered by government and community schools as well as universities made thousands of youth and adults beneficiaries. Armed with a marketable skill, plus the necessary academic subjects, they may have a chance in the competitive labor market. Usually, they are determined to do something about the opportunity they missed. No citizen, regardless of age, could be denied the opportunity to resume or continue his education (Smith et al, 1970; Knox, 1993, and Terry, 1994). All the above scholars agree that education is an important variable that determines the overall development of a society and a right for every citizen.

In Ethiopia, evening education program in higher institutions can play a significant role by providing education and training to those who are unable to learn in the regular program and maximize educational opportunities for those who are on the job. Supporting this, Mulugeta (1977) has underlined that the primary purposes of the college and university extension has been to supplement the development of high and middle level manpower and to upgrade specific skills.

In Jimma Teachers' Training College and other colleges and universities in Ethiopia, evening/extension programs are open to all eligible individuals. However, the difficulty of successful accomplishment of the program has been observed in different situations. In this case, it is a crisis for the individual students and may be for the country at large. Thus, it was the intention of this study to investigate the quality of evening continuing education program at Jimma Teachers' Training College (JTTC).

Objectives

Based on the statement of the problem, the specific objectives of the study were:

- To describe the condition of dropouts and possible reasons for the problem
- To identify major challenges, if any, students and Instructors face, in the process of teaching-learning;
- To pin-point the intensity of impacts of the problems, if any, on the academic performances of the students
- To look into whether these students were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills needed in the world of work

Significance of the Study

This study has attempted to investigate the quality of evening continuing education program at Jimma TTC. And, the findings of the study may serve the following major practical purposes.

- It may serve as an additional information source and document base in the process of managing the quality of evening education in higher education institutions, at colleges.
- It could contribute to the improvement of evening education at the higher education institutions in general and Jimma Teachers' Training College in particular.
- It may contribute to the efforts made to strengthen the quality of education in Teachers' Training Colleges in general and Jimma TTC in particular.
- It could stimulate prospective researchers to conduct further research on this or related area and to address those areas that remain untouched or inadequately treated.

Operational Definitions

Basic terms and phrases that were used in the study were presented as follows:

Academic Performance: - refers to students' correct language skills, mastery of grammatical forms, class attendance, class participation, expression of oneself, a score of a student as measured by GPA.

Adult Education:- The term adult education denotes the entire body of organized educational process whatever the context, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities whereby persons, regarded as adults, by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude and behavior in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation to balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (UNESCO, 1976:2)

Adult Educator: - is a person with a specialized training, education and/ or significant professional experience in the field of adult education, involved in the planning and directing of educational activities for adults (Good, 1973:17).

Evening /Extension Education: - is an organized program of education offered to students and other citizens out of the school. It includes formal classes, in various communities in the evening or on Saturday (Good, 1973:230).

Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE): - is examination score or grade point average a student obtained while

completing high school education program. However, it is no more nowadays; instead EGSECE (Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination) and EHEECE (Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination) are being used.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, the researcher will include as many relevant documents as possible related to the research problem so as to create linkage between the present study and the available knowledge in the area.

Indicators of Quality in Education

The indices of quality education are benchmarks with which we can systematically assess the quality of education and every society has certain explicit and implicit measures or status indicators of educational quality (Taddesse, 2006). These could include orderly school environment, academic emphasis in the form of clearly defined learning outcomes and standards, curriculum, particularly the “implemented curriculum” (textbooks, other learning materials), time for learning, effective use of school time, qualified teachers and healthy environment. The developed countries show similar results with a varying level of quality input.

Although various researchers tried to identify some indicators of quality in education, it was Kealy (1995, as cited in HERQA and ADRC (2005) that gave a broad explanation on the concept. As Kealy (1995) explained it, the correlates of quality education are divided into three categories: educational inputs, educational process and educational output.

Educational Inputs: include financial measures, physical measures, and the manpower measures that are provided for students at each educational level. The financial measures are the amount of money spent per student. Physical measures include the age, condition and comprehensive of such facilities as classrooms, laboratories and libraries and the provision and use of intentional materials and equipments. Manpower (human) resources include the number of personnel of different types, often expressed as ratio in relation to student numbers at each level. They also include background information about the personnel such as educational qualification, experience and perhaps knowledge competences and attitude.

Educational Process: refers to the interaction between students and the personnel, the curriculum, the course requirement and offering, method of teaching employed, system of student’s evaluation and the organization of the educational environment as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The interaction will be influenced by various mediating factors such as level of parental and community support and encouragement.

Educational Outputs: refers to the consequence of the educational process as reflected in measures such as the level of knowledge, skills and value acquired by students and the latter careers of graduating students in terms of, for example, educational accomplishment assessed by the proportion of students participating in post-secondary education.

Objectives and Scopes of Evening Adult Education

In Ethiopia, according to Ketema (2007) and MOE (1977), evening programs have the following objectives:

- ✚ to help those who, for various reasons, cannot attend the day-time learning have an educational opportunity;
- ✚ to extend the educational opportunity for more people by utilizing the already available resources;
- ✚ to develop or update the skills of these citizens who are on the job so that production can be promoted;
- ✚ to offer continuing education for dropouts; and
- ✚ to provide literacy programs;

The Needs and characteristics of Adult Evening Learners

Adults need reassurance until they get their feet on the academic ground. They have a high fear of failure and thus need to be welcomed into the learning setting. Adult evening learners need access to alternative ways of doing and learning. Adults respond well to a flexible teaching and learning style. They demand education with intrinsic merit-education that serves their recognized needs. When an activity helps them solve their problems and make the behavior changes they want and need to make, they will learn with interest. Only when adults are forced by political, social or economic pressure to acquire a certificate will they pursue classroom activities with reduced interest (Knowles, 1984)

The provision of evening education for adult learners can be effective and up to the learners need and requirement, if we know as much as we can about the background and characteristics of the learners. In this regard, Prosser (1967:17) notes that:

No satisfactory provision of adult education facilities can be made without a full knowledge of the background and character of the students who are to benefit. It is the first task of any adult education organizer to make sure that he knows as much as he can about the students he has to satisfy. This knowledge will determine the type of adult education which is provided and its subject matter; also the most important will be the method of teaching. Length and type of courses, intensity of teaching, timing of private study, subject approach and teaching methods can only be determined from knowledge of the students concerned.

Skillful adult educators have known for a long time that they can not teach adults as children have traditionally been taught. For adults are almost always voluntary learners, they simply disappear from learning experiences that don't satisfy them. To keep adults motivated and create conducive learning environment, we need to get in touch with adults learning and teaching characteristics so as to examine some of the limiting factors hindering the participation of adult learners in the evening extension classes.

Higher Education Opportunities through Evening Program

As adult population is the one immediately involved in production process, effective use of available resources to educate this section of the society is important. Here, one way of bridging the gap between the working people and the environmental changes in the rapidly changing world is evening education (Axford, 1980, Smith et al, 1970).

Considering this fact, many countries in the world have organized educational institutions that provide evening education to those who are on the job and others that are unable to continue education in the regular program. Explaining the need for evening continuing education, Nathan C, (in Ketema, 2007) states that:

The graduate engineer who has been out of school for ten years has become obsolete unless he has continued to study and keep abreast of the times. With the advent of the atomic age, the world has become smaller and its problems more complex. This creates the necessity for every citizen to learn as much as possible about world affairs and keep himself up to date with the changing world. Evening school programs are necessary for expanding such type of learning environment for young people and adults who are on the job. As a result, continuing education is becoming a pattern of life and the adult who wants to be advanced on his job has to participate in in-service education or take advantage of local facilities of the educational institution nearest to him.

Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in Jimma Teachers' Training College, Jimma, South West of Ethiopia

Sample and sampling technique

There were four departments (namely Geography, Civic and Ethical Education, Afan Oromo and Biology) that had evening/extension program. By the time the study was conducted, the program was the four years (8 semesters) program; though previously, students had graduated on the seventh semester (three and half years).

The researcher took all the four departments having evening program. All third year students in the three departments and second year students of Afan Oromo (because the department had no third year students) were considered for the document analysis and observation. Only information-rich and experienced students were selected for interviews and focus group discussions. These students were chosen on voluntarily basis and purposely. They could also share the researcher their experiences of the prior years, which was relevant in making the study more meaningful. Unfortunately, there were no fourth year students-they had graduated at the first semester of 2010. However, this study was conducted a year after (2011).

The entrance criteria for these students were according to the standard set by Oromia Education bureau. 2.28 for regular Males and 2.14 for regular females; 2.41 for private males and 2.20 for private females. In addition, the Teachers Training Institute (TTI) graduates needed to have a minimum GPA of 2.00 to join the program.

Moreover, Instructors teaching the students in each department and registrar officer were used as sources of data.

Instruments of Data Collection

Tools used in this study to gather relevant data on the issue under investigation were document analysis form for students' academic records, interview guide, questionnaire, Focus group discussions guide, and observation checklist. The content and construct validities of the instruments were checked by experts in the area and used effectively and accordingly

Before the beginning of the interview process, ethical issues were discussed. For example, permission was obtained to record the interview and promise was made about the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees' responses. For this purpose, interview protocol was prepared in a manner that includes ethical issues for this study. The data from interview was primarily collected by tape recorder and brief notes were taken during the interview session focusing on important points.

Procedures of Data Collection

After explaining the main purpose of the study and getting full-informed consents from all the participants, the researcher started data collection. And, the collected data were classified and organized according to their types and nature.

Methods of Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were used in this study. To analyze the collected data, such descriptive statistics as percentages were used. Largely, qualitative methods such as in-depth word description, narration, thematic analysis and direct quotations were used.

Results

Dropout Rates of Students in All the Four Departments and Reasons of the Drop-out

Table 1: Summary of the Dropout rate of Biology Students

Dep't	Students registered at 1 st year 1 st Semester		Students who reached 3 rd year		Students Dropped-out in the Middle	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Biology	17	36	14	28	3	8
	Total=53		Total=42		Total= 11 (20.75%)	

As can be observed from Table 1, the number of students dropped-out of the department of Biology was eleven or about twenty one percent.

Table 2: Summary of the dropout rate of Afan Oromo Students

Dep't	Students registered at 1 st year 1 st Semester		Students who reached 2 nd year		Students Dropped-out in the Middle	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Afan Oromo	14	35	8	26	6	9
	Total=49		Total=34		Total= 15 (30.61%)	

Table 2 clearly showed us that fifteen or about thirty one percent of students from the department of Afan Oromo were dropouts.

Table 3: Summary of the dropout rate of Civics Students

Dep't	Students registered at 1 st year 1 st Semester		Students who reached 3 rd year		Students Dropped-out in the Middle	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Civics	15	44	7	32	8	12
	Total=59		Total=39		Total = 20 (33.90%)	

As can be seen from Table 3 above, twenty or about thirty four percent of students were dropped-out from the department of Civics.

Table 4: Summary of the dropout rate of Geography Students

Dep't	Students registered at 1 st year 1 st Semester		Students who reached 2 nd year		Students Dropped-out in the Middle	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Geography	12	51	7	38	5	13
	Total=63		Total=45		Total= 18 (28.57%)	

Table 4 above indicated that eighteen or about twenty nine percent of the students of the department of Geography were dropouts.

As precisely presented above, the dropout rates in all the departments were really in large proportions, especially in the department of Civics.

Accordingly, most respondents pin-pointed the possible reasons for the dropouts as academic problem (predominantly), getting the chances of joining other regular programs such as agriculture, health extension, nursing. Inconvenient teaching-learning atmosphere, consideration of evening program as a secondary activity, timing of the evening program, personal and occupational problems were also some of the reasons they mentioned.

Challenges to students' academic performances

When asked about what had challenged their academic performances, the student respondents described the challenges and problems as follows:

1. “Some teachers have serious limitations in the subject areas they teach and methods of teaching they use. As the result, we are not benefiting, rather we hate being taught by them.”

2. “Few instructors have negative attitudes towards evening students. They do not even consider us as students who have goals and learn towards realizing the goals.” Supplementing this idea, a student who was an experienced TTI teacher expressed his thought as follows:

“-----Ok, I am an adult learner having long time and meaningful life experiences which could be shared for others.----- I also want my ideas be respected and valued. However, some teachers treat us like children----it should not be like this (Akkana ta'uu hin qabu)!!---We have also something to say!”

3. “Most teachers are not punctual. We always go to classes according to our schedules; but they don't come on time. And, if they come, they do so after 15-30 minutes late.” Concerning this issue, a student during FGD said, *“----What irritates me most is that when they know that they would not come, they don't let us know-----very bad (nama gaddisiisa)!!”* Another student added saying,

“-----I know a teacher who came to the class only twice, and compensated his limitation by giving us only “A” and “B” grades-----Hmmm---it is a miracle (raajii dha!!)

4. “We think that we are not understood that most of us chase after works and come to classes without energy (being tired), sometimes, to the extent that we could not attend to what our teachers teach.”

5. “Personal and social matters also work against our academic performances.”

6. There were serious limitations regarding educational resource like reference books in Afan Oromo. Most books shelved in library were in English language, and students hardly understood the language-a significant barrier. In fact, there were modules prepared in Afan oromo but limited in

number and terribly full of errors. Moreover, the library spaces were not enough for all the students who needed the services and the facilities within the library were very poor.

The students also stressed that there were no Information Communication Technology (IT) services in the college that could have facilitated their quality learning.

Challenges and Problems Explained by Teacher Respondents

Similarly, teacher respondents explained the challenges their students faced and problems they encountered with, specifically on the students' academic performances. And, their responses went as follows:

1. “The students are not interested (intrinsically motivated) to learn. Their goal is simply to collect their diplomas at the end of the day and chase work then after. And, obviously, this intention will take them nowhere!”

2. Some students had very poor educational background. Undeniably, this had pervasive impact on their current academic performance and psychological makeup. Supporting this idea, an instructor from Afan Oromo department shared his real teaching experiences with the students (during his interview with the researcher):

”-----*Surprisingly, some students, especially those who joined the department after the completion of 10th grade are really really terrible (rakkisoo dha!). Few cannot even write their names properly; they can also not differentiate similar words that have different meanings, while writing. For instance, baala (leaf of a tree) vs balaa (an accident); duute (died) vs dute (barking). So, such students are burdens for us, their families and the country as a whole.*”

3. “----Actually, some students may have financial, personal, occupational problems. Their big faults are that they fail to work to change the challenges into opportunities. For example, they don't attempt reading and referring to related materials, they rather ask for handouts that tests and exams will focus on; few of them are packages of absenteeism-rarely attend classes.”

4. “More importantly, rather than working hard and achieving good grades, very few students suffocate the offices of their teachers, begging grades by way of crying, seducing and using all proven strategies that could help them snatch the grades from the teachers. But, their rationalizations are all trash and implausible.” In relation to this idea, a Geography teacher, during FGD, forwarded his concrete experience like this:

”-----*After a girl stayed in the office ,I shared with others, for about one and half hours crying, seducing and sometimes trying to fool me, I warn my students on this issue from the very beginning of a class if at all I am forced*

to teach evening students; otherwise I don't want to teach evening students then after!!!”

5. “Absence of guidance and counseling service for the students was also a real problem. There were no such services even for regular students, leave alone for the evening students.”

Analysis of direct observation data and students' academic records

During series of observations of classes, the researcher realized that student absenteeism was high, some students were passive or not attentive, lack self-confidence to express what they want to; few were even telling teachers that the time was up. Moreover, few instructors came late after most students had already left; others had not come at all, putting students in the senses of discomfort and frustration.

Regarding the academic records of students, the researcher had gone through the students' assignments, tests, mid and final exams and grades. Accordingly, some of what had been observed was below the general expectations. For instance, regarding language usage, organizational skills, exemplification or contextualization, case presentations, the students were poor, so to honestly reflect on. Concerning their grade records, only few students scored “A” and “B” grades; most of them collected “C” grades.

Generally, all the respondents had evidenced that most of the challenges and problems described and explained above could work against the quality of students' learning in particular and the quality of education in general. Furthermore, the results of the researcher's direct class observations and academic records analysis went in consistent with the aforementioned ideas and concerns.

Discussion

This section discussed the results of the study. In doing so, the findings of the present study and the available related and relevant literature were interwoven.

The conditions of dropouts in all the departments were high, especially in the department of Civics. And, most students were dropped out for academic reasons. This study and most local studies have indicated dropout as mostly due to academic dismissals (Berhanu, 2009; Asmerom and et, al, 1989). Poor academic performance is one of the most often cited correlate of dropout.

Student respondents described instructors' lack of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills, negative attitudes towards evening students, unpunctuality and lack of sufficient educational resources as major problems that have worked against their successful learning. They stressed that they were treated childishly. In relation with this issue, Prosser (1967)

said that skillful adult educators cannot teach adults as children have traditionally been taught. For adults are almost always voluntary learners, they simply disappear from learning experiences that don't satisfy them. These adults should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and allowed to voice their opinions freely in class.

Supporting Prosser's idea, Knowles (1984) emphasized that adults have a need to be treated with respect, to make their own decision, to be seen as unique human beings. They tend to avoid, resist, and resent (hate) situations in which they feel they are treated like children-being told what to do and what not to do, being talked down to, embarrassed, punished, judged. Adults tend to resist learning under conditions that are incongruent with their self-concept as autonomous individuals. Instructors must tell adult learners explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them on the job.

Daniel (2005) shared his serious concern that the higher education expansion in Ethiopia appears primarily quantitative and there is a serious question concerning quality. There are serious challenges in meeting minimum standards for quality education. Providing adequate number of qualified staff, sufficient library, classroom facilities, etc are some of the challenges that need to be successfully addressed if quality is to be maintained. These serious issues of educational qualities were also what the present researcher has come up with.

Conclusion

It was the strong intention of the researcher that these findings may help the evening continuing education of Jimma Teachers' Training College community to take corrective actions to rectify the existing situations and provide quality education. It was hoped that the results of the study scratched the problems and generate valuable information for all concerned.

Arranging evening programs for citizens to learn is an appropriate means of expanding education opportunities. Moreover, the practice of offering higher education on part-time basis is necessary since it gives a second chance to the working population who are qualified to undertake college level work. The work in the extension division is helping the college to put the limited facilities at its disposal to the maximum possible use and upgrading and retraining a great many people so as to make them more useful members of the society.

However, when seen against the minimum standards of quality measures, Jimma Teachers' Training College's evening program and the students held by the program were under big question mark, regarding quality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were given.

- The major reason for students drop out was academic reason. Thus, entrance exam need to be added to the existing criteria of students' admission to the program.
- Among others, Books and other reference materials prepared in Afan Oromo were rare in the library of the college and seriously affecting the successful learning of students. So, the college and Oromia education Bureau need to immediately solve the problem, if quality education is to be provided.
- To make evening education program effective, basic understanding of the needs and characteristics of adult learners are of paramount importance, especially for the educators.
- Provision of guidance and counseling services, by professional counselor, is needed for evening students. So, administrative bodies of Jimma TTC should think of this issue critically, for the benefits of their students
- The study was limited to Jimma TTC. Extending the study to other colleges and universities may help to draw a more general picture of the problem.

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