

*Improving Technical and Vocational oriented education within  
Somaliland*

High Quality Research Support Program

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**Waris Dualeh**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research study considers ways to improve the lack of technical and vocational education (TVE) programs available to young adults and professionals within Somaliland. It highlights the gaps and failings that exist within this program and addresses the disconnection that exists between the technical and vocational training institutes and employers.

The role of education is known by now to be essential to one's livelihood and quality of life. It enhances efficiency and effectiveness of individuals and societal needs. Education allows individuals a greater access for achievement and opportunities in the labour market. A better educated labour force is required in order to supply relevant local labour market jobs. In spite of this, not much action or support has been given to the implementation and proper coordination of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) or its effective growth in the education sector in Somaliland. Skills are an important engine for the economic growth and development of any country. Countries with skilled workers and knowledge of the labour sector respond promptly to challenges and opportunities made by globalization. In Somaliland however, the choice of skills training is not being guided by the needs of the local market but instead by a need to address all needs in projects whose scopes are too small or too wide.

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) is an important step towards empowering individuals to take control of their lives and provides ways to integrate skilled workers into the labour market. In Somaliland there are a vast number of individuals who are outside of the formal school system due to financial limitation and lack of alternative education. By creating a non-formal education system that young individuals could start earlier, this in turn would allow them to gain professional skills and consequently employment. In Somaliland the state of TVET is very weak and not much progression has been made. The implementation of education programs in Somaliland falls through the Ministry of Education and Higher Studies (MOEHE) with many partners with sub programs from Save the Children and HAVOYOCO falling under the TVE program. But still TVE does not have a standardized system in terms of TVE assessment, curriculum, examination and certification. In such, TVE in Somaliland has not received the appropriate success it deserves.

## **BACKGROUND**

The growth of the education sector in Somaliland is something that should be noted. The lower quality of education that exists has fuelled the demand in higher quality of education. It is noted that, "the higher education sector grew rapidly in the last decade. In Somaliland, 23 institutions were functioning in January 2013, a significant increase from the two institutions that existed in 2004" (*HIPS, 2013*). Consequently, the number of students and graduates has also increased over the years. The majority of the universities are owned; funded, managed, and maintained by a diverse range of institutes i.e. the private sector, the local community, NGOs, and religious organizations. One of the major current issues in Somaliland is the lack of a regulatory framework to manage the standard of increasing number of universities. This has directly

impacted on the quality of higher education across Somaliland. As a result, many of the graduating students do not have the basic skills and education needed to enter the labour market.

This year the Ministry of Education & Higher Education (MOEHE) released their strategy report for 2012-2016, where they recognise the problem of trying to introduce TVET to Somaliland without the right strategies in place. MOEHE mainly stated the challenges and limitations to creating technical and vocational programs in the education sector. A few of the key challenges stated by the Somaliland Education Sector Strategy Plan 2012-2016 are: “limited access to quality skilled trainers, limited governance structure, quick-fix solutions without long-term agendas, inadequate training facilities” (MOEHE, 55).

In Somaliland there is lack of access to experienced trainers who could train potential skilled workers in the fields that are of utmost importance in the countries labour market i.e. electricians, plumbers, carpenters etc. Furthermore, there is a gap between the training system and the employment system; this leaves potential skilled workers at high risk of not finding employment after they complete their TVET. The success of vocational training institutes and employment systems working together is an important key to the proper functioning of TVET in Somaliland.

## **CHALLENGES AND LIMITATION**

This study faced difficulties in gaining information from key contacts in the Ministry of Education and the lack of literature and previous research in this area within Somaliland. One of the main challenges to this research was accessibility and lack of coordination within the ministry. It was a difficult getting an any type of information whether it was; getting an appointment with the right person, gaining access to any type of information within the building i.e. who is who and where to find out, being juggled around from person to person, and last minute cancellation without any previous notice. This issue really slowed down the data collection process and is a big challenge for anyone who is conducting research within the ministry.

The greatest limitation for this research is the lack of previous research and literature. Not much primary sources exist in studies of TVET within Somaliland and it was not possible to find any previous overview of the struggles that hinder the progression of TVET in Somaliland.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a qualitative method to collect the required findings and make appropriate recommendations to help provide reasons for lack of skills development. Data was gathered using secondary sources, key informant interviews with three students of whom two were university students and one high school student; two business; Aden Harako garage and Tayo Production Factory; The University of Abarsoo administration, and finally the technical advisor for policy and planning for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with direct

observation. Excerpts from the interviews will provide a comprehensive report outlining the findings through data analysis, and practical recommendations will be made.

## **THE FINDINGS**

### **1) LIST OF PROBLEMS WITH TVET IN SOMALILAND**

Technical and Vocational Education in Somaliland is facing many tribulations. Some of these problem highlighted by the key interviewees are;

- i) Limited number of TVE training institutes
- ii) Lack of properly functioning facilities and material for training students
- iii) Inadequate/shortage of trained TVE teachers
- iv) Mismatch between acquired skills and market needs
- v) Poor quality training
- vi) Improving the quality of education and training at all levels
- vii) Low priority for TVET programs
- viii) Poor correlation between industries and ministries
- ix) Difficulty in career progression i.e. no linkage between trades that have a high employment opportunities
- x) Lack of infrastructure i.e. modern equipment and raw materials
- xi) Inflexible curriculum and skills
- xii) Lack of social recognition
- xiii) Equity i.e. females and those with disabilities

### **2) DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Students**

All of the key interviewees knew what was meant by TVE and that it exists and is functioning in Hargeisa. When asked to explain the base of TVE they responded with; “cooking, tailoring, electrical and machinery (Redwan Abdi, 22), another student stated that TVE was beneficial in gaining “employment straight away” but the disadvantage was “not having the proper equipment for training” (Hassan Kiyo, 20). The three students knew the benefits and opportunities presented within TVE education but had chosen to not pursue it because they felt there is a public perception of TVE and it mainly falls on being negative to the point that it is affecting students choice in what they study. One student stated that most “students do not see the benefit of skilled work over academia” (Hamda Abdiwahib, 21). Another student affirmed that by saying “the issue lies with the fact TVET certificates do not hold the same weight or recognition as a academy degree does within our society” (Redwan Abdi, 22). This contributes to the major reason as to why students opt for university degrees rather than persuading TVE training. They also see that the employment opportunity is greater and all voiced that there would be major improvement and advantages with TVET being backed by government and civil society.

Most of the students had an understanding of what TVE entails but had no knowledge of what is offered at the school or its exact location. They understood that TVE brought better employment opportunities which was their main concern but still chose not to pursue it. A fact explained by Redwan Abdi as “TVE not weighing the same quality of standard as an academic degree within our society”. What appears to be missing is students having access to career/course guidance that can help them better understand the type of prospect available to them within Somaliland for better chance of employment. They need better knowledge of what type of job markets are available to them.

There is clearly further research needed in this area especially in market analysis and the percentage of youths who would benefit from TVE before and after high school.

*Chart 1: Total of three students*

Code	Questions	Responses
1	Gender	Male Male Female
2	Age	22 20 21
3	What is your highest level of education	First year university Grade 11 Second year university
4	What is/was your field of study?	Geology N/A Law
5	I'd like to know what you think about the education system in Somaliland. Tell me what do you think works well? What needs to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity for employment in field studied in</li> <li>- English being taught during secondary school with no previous teaching causing gaps**</li> </ul>
6	Have you heard of the term 'technical and vocational	- All three have heard of

	education'? if yes, then ' could you tell me what you think it means?' or if no, ' what do you think is meant by the term technical and vocational education?	<p>TVET**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work that is based on tailoring, cooking. Electrical and machinery</li> <li>- One TVET school in Hargeysa and training by other instituties i.e. INGO</li> <li>- Early employment</li> <li>- Study for 3 -6 months max</li> </ul>
7	What are the benefits and disadvantage of skilled training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not having proper equipment for training</li> <li>- Gaining employment straight away with skilled work**</li> </ul>
8	What are your thoughts on TVE education being taught in schools in Somaliland?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students not seeing the benefits of skilled work over academia</li> <li>- TVET being a part of the education system. Better career paths earlier in life**</li> <li>- Better training capacity</li> </ul>
9	How important is it to you that there are skill workers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An opportunity that is really needed in Somaliland**</li> </ul>
10	How important is the availability of skilled workers in our society? Can you explain your reason for your answer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Without skills worker no chance for prosperity and progression for our society</li> <li>- Better employment options and showing our societal creativity</li> <li>- Further development and expansion</li> </ul>
11	Would you employee someone with TVE training background?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All three agreed in employing skill trained individual**</li> <li>- An trained individual promotes experience and knowledge</li> </ul>

**Business**

Both respondents stated the importance of skilled work being available to society and youths who “waste their talent by chewing and do not have proper training facilities open to them” (Aden Haddi, 35). Skilled work is a major benefit seen by both employers; Aden Haddi claimed that “TVE is better than academia in terms of gaining employment right away to help pay your school fees and daily expenses if you do not have the money to go to school” while the other employer stated that TVE would give Somaliland a great advantage because than “we can produce materials needed within the community” (Mukhtar Abdi, 32). There were concerns highlighted by the employers who were not happy with students who claim to have a TVE certificate from either Hargeisa technical school or were NGO trained. They felt that the students had to be re-trained because there was a gap between what they studied and what they could do. Both employers agreed on hiring someone with TVE background but Aden Haddi stated “Yes, I would hire someone with TVE training background but the certificate and the level of experience should match”, while Mukhtar Abdi also claimed “I would hire youths with TVE experience but I question whether the institutes where they were trained have properly trained teachers who are capable of teaching”.

The major areas of concern for both employers were gaps that exist between those who can teach and those who want to learn. Finding qualified teachers who are able to teach skilled work is a key dilemma. These students it seems are not being taught to the full capacity they need to gain employment in Somaliland. They are not being properly trained by either the technical school or NGOs (HAVAYOCO and Save the Children), who do not understand the full scope of the labour market. It seems that more weight is put on theory than practical work and they do not have access to materials and equipment to gain practical experience.

There needs to be more in-depth research into the reasons for a lack of qualified teachers within Somaliland. Where does the gap exist? Does the problem lay with the teachers or lack of access to proper equipment in the faculties? Is the curriculum taught the issue here?

*Chart 2: Total of Two business owners*

Code	Questions	Responses
1	Gender	Male Male
2	Age	35 32
3	What is your highest level of education	Grade 10 Grade 8

4	What is your job title?	Car mechanic owner  Workshop factory owner
5	I'd like to know what you think about the education system in Somaliland. Tell me what do you think works well? What needs to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Left school early to persuade hands-on type of work instead of academia**</li> </ul>
6	Have you heard of the term 'technical and vocational education'? if yes, then ' could you tell me what you think it means?' or if no, ' what do you think is meant by the term technical and vocational education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes both have heard of TVE before.</li> <li>- Went under an apprentice to persuade to learn their skills, TVE didn't exist in their time. Teacher themselves to young students who want to learn from them.</li> </ul>
7	What are the benefits and disadvantage of skilled training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TVE is better than academia in terms of gaining employment right away without completely finishing training or school</li> <li>- Beneficial to our people and society because than we can produce materials needed within the community.</li> <li>- Disadvantage being unable to produce materials on time because of lack of equipment. Everything is done by manual need modern supply.</li> </ul>
8	What are your thoughts on TVE education being taught in schools in Somaliland?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student not being properly trained</li> <li>- Any TVE student with a trained certificate tells me they do not know passed theory</li> <li>- Students currently trained by HAVAYOCO and</li> </ul>

		Save the Children
9	How important is it to you that there are skill workers?  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Something our society and people really need, that and properly trained teacher</li> <li>- Helps to gain some type of employment that is what's most important right now</li> </ul>
10	How important is the availability of skilled workers in our society? Can you explain your reason for your answer?  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skill work is much needed for the youth within our society.**</li> <li>- They are wasting their talent by chewing and do not have proper training faculties open. They need career guidance.</li> <li>- Current gap between those who want to learn and those who can teach that skill</li> </ul>
11	Would you employee someone with TVE training background?  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, I would hire someone with TVE training but does the certificate and the level of experience match.</li> <li>- Yes, I would hire youths with TVE experience but do the institutes they were trained at have properly trained teachers who are capable of teaching.</li> <li>- Well functioning schools are the major key issue here in Somaliland</li> </ul>

**\*\* Mention more than once**

**Ministry of Education Technical Advisor for Policy and Planning and Abarsoo University  
Head Admin**

As of last year the MOEHE opened its first operating technical school in Hargeisa with plans to open another in Burco. Mustafa Jama from the MOEHE stated that “currently TVE is the most important priority of the government and MOE”. The current education system of Somaliland needs “the involvement of major stakeholders i.e. government, those in the private sector, public and civil society” (Ahmed Abdi, 27). What is missing and needs improvement is the MOEHE capacity to regulate, and “start up cost and revenue regeneration” (Ahmed Abdi, 27). What seems to be hindering the success of TVE is the lack of coordination between the Ministries. The lack of research conducted in this area is not helping with the progression of the programs; there is a need for “research in market demands within Somaliland” (Mustafa Jama, 31).

It seems the major issue lies with the lack of coordination between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour. In order for the programs to achieve full height of success there needs to be research conduct by the ministry of labour investigating what gaps exist in the labour requirements, how many students would benefit from TVE faculties and what percent of youth might attend TVE training. This would in turn help the MOE to create a curriculum that fits the need of the students. One cannot function without the other. Another problem highlighted by Mustafa Jama is the ministry’s struggle to hire qualified teachers to teach skilled work. Teachers do not have any prior experience or qualification in order to teach. This is also further widening the gap.

*Chart 3: Total of 2 institutes*

Code	Questions	Responses
1	I'd like to know what you think about the education system in Somaliland. Tell me what do you think works well? What needs to change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education system is more of a private sector than public</li> <li>- Need the involvement of major stakeholders i.e. government, those in private instituted and civil society.</li> <li>- MOEHE capacity to regulate is not there</li> <li>- NGOs funding project without truly understanding the full scope.</li> <li>- Education system in Somaliland is a work in progress. Main issue is accessibility and</li> </ul>

		quality of teachers.
2	Have you heard of the term ‘technical and vocational education’? if yes, then ‘ could you tell me what you think it means?’ or if no, ‘ what do you think is meant by the term technical and vocational education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, I have, its skills that are taught by hand that does not require much academia background.</li> <li>- Those with TVE background potential for employment and financial earning is much greater.</li> <li>- Existing TVE institutes puts less pressure on universities</li> <li>- Skills that fall under TVE are cooking, tailoring, hospitality and spa courses</li> </ul>
3	What is the government’s policy on TVE programme in Somaliland? E.g what has it done, what does it plan to doo? (if anything)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last year a technical school was opened in Hargeisa and another one is opening in Burco. Currently TVE is the priority of the government and MOE</li> </ul>
4	What challenges do universities institutions face in attaining quality TVE programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost for start up and revenue regeneration</li> <li>- Not knowing the percent of students who want to attend TVE before or after high school</li> <li>- Need research in Markets that are in demand in Somaliland</li> </ul>
5	What challenges does the GoSL face in attaining properly functioning quality TVE programme in Somaliland?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruiting well trained and qualified teachers. Lack of qualified individuals working for the education sector is an area of concern</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The need for market analysis and how many youths need TVE institutes to be train at</li> <li>- No correlation between ministries exist; a gap between MOL and MOEHE, willingness to identify the problem that exist</li> </ul>
6	What are the strategies we can use to address the challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No coordination between ministries exist and willingness to identify gaps</li> <li>- Networking and collaborating between schools to create a stronger curriculum</li> </ul>
7	Looking ahead, what difference will TVE programmes make to our society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TVE would make a big difference in terms of filling gaps that need to be filled within the education sector.</li> <li>- Lessen the need for foreign skilled worker hired from abroad</li> <li>- Holt the migration of youths by presenting better opportunities.</li> </ul>

**\*\* Mention more than once**

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many steps that need to be taken in order for TVET to start functioning properly within Somaliland. It would seem the time is right for all stakeholders i.e. MOEHE, professionals from the industries, educationist, policy makers, and civil society groups, to come together and look at the progression of TVET as something seriously needed within our society. There needs to be a much more robust national policy on technical and vocational education within Somaliland with a commitment to implementation. Solving the problems of TVET may well be a better way to solve our unemployment problems in the country since people who attend TVET schools are

more ready to take up employment opportunities than those who attend academic schooling. As stated by Ahmed Abdi from Abarsoo university “TVET opportunities would make a big difference in Somaliland; it will fill a gap that needs to be filled. We would not need to bring in foreign skilled workers from outside which requires us to spend more money to bring them in. Already the job wages are so low by importing skilled workers from outside this is creating problems rather than helping”.

In summary, not enough research exists in order to know how to meet the markets demand and fill the existing gap between the demand and supply of skilled work.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. The Government of Somaliland should redefine its role in reforming and strengthening TVET programs by making the necessary investment in the area and promoting interactions between industry and academia.
2. TVET could be improved by government promotion as an alternate for those dropping out of school. TVET certificates should be promoted as holding weight within society.
3. Emphasis should be placed on promoting and creating interactions between TVET graduates and skilled employers i.e. job fairs, meet and greets, career building
4. Career guidance and mentoring for youths in high school and especially targeting girls so they can venture into trades regarded as masculine
5. To improve and reform the functional capacities of TVET so it could become quality conscious and competitive in both national and international level.
6. Capacity strengthening the MOE and MOL structure to execute market analysis
7. Coordination between ministries to build functional capacities and fill labour market gaps
8. Creating further research in TVE and labour market jobs
9. Take cues from other countries within Africa and study how their TVET is running
10. Finally to investigate whether there is potential for public-private sector partnerships.

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