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Perceptions of Public Educators about the Education and Training Provided by Private Colleges in Tigray

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Abstract:

It is observable that Higher Education in Ethiopia faces many problems both in terms of quantity and quality of provision. Collaborative and concerted efforts by different partners in education that include private enterprises organized as for-profit businesses are still necessary. However, many public educators in Tigray seem to view the private colleges with distrust, likely for the mere reason that one of the colleges' aims is making profit. This paper, therefore, investigates the participation of Private Higher Education Institutions in the management and resources support to current adult education in Tigray and how private colleges are usually viewed by the public education sector. Hence, the objective of this paper is to explore whether there exists major differences in perceiving positively or negatively the educational opportunities being provided by private colleges in Tigray. The researcher employs descriptive research method mainly focusing on both quantitative and qualitative primary data. Data on the perception of people concerning the private colleges was gathered by the following data collection techniques: observation, interviews/questionnaires and document analysis. Informants were randomly selected from public and private institutions. Available secondary data sources from current documents were collected and integrated with the data obtained from primary sources. Percentages were computed to analyze the data.

The findings of the study suggest that the participation and contributions of private colleges' to higher adult education are significant, which indicates that more household contribution to education can be gained which is essential for learning and further development. However, the study evidenced that the public educators mistrust private colleges for low quality of educational service provision, while the causes of the problems of quality of education and training cannot be problems of the private sector alone. There appears to exist lack of commitment to participate from the education administrators' side to facilitate essential conditions for true participation in education. They need to share their authority and responsibility to various actors in education, outside of the system, if rapid development is to be achieved.

1. Introduction

Equalization of educational opportunities and reducing regional disparities has become the top priority of the Ethiopian education system. The government designed the Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 1994 from which developed the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) to improve quality and access to education in rural and under served areas, and to achieve universal primary education by 2015. It is mobilizing resources from multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors; local communities, parents, the private sector and indigenous and/or international NGOs to fill anticipated financial gap (MOE 1999).

Participation in the diagnosis of needs, in the development and implementation of school policy, the design of education content, or the delivery or evaluation of such content is usually seriously constrained. This indicates that the concerned people of poor countries like Ethiopia need to organize and mobilize the local community for contribution of resources to compliment the efforts of their governments in their respective countries in order to achieve a better life by providing quality education.

As stated in the BESO project preliminary plan (BESO, 1999:20), on the one hand Ethiopia is trying to expand access rapidly and to improve the quality of education on the other hand. The questions of quality often compete for resources with the need for rapid expansion, particularly in poor countries like Ethiopia. It is observable that Higher Education in Ethiopia faces many problems both in terms of quantity and quality of provision. Although encouraging results have been gained with the collaborative efforts made by government, private enterprises, non-government organizations (NGOs) and local communities, their concerted efforts are still necessary. The Ethiopian population is growing rapidly. On the contrary, its socio-economic and political features are persistently linked to drought and war. Financial, material, and human resource constraints are

common in the Ethiopian Education System. To meet the demand for greater coverage and access for Higher Education combined with the need for improving its quality and efficiency requires the involvement of the private sector, the local communities and the NGOs intervention and support through projects and participation.

Many public educators (i.e. employees working for government educational institutions), however, seem to dislike talking about profits. But, it is a common knowledge that the motive for many providers of post secondary learning opportunities is profit. New colleges and universities are flourishing, organized as for-profit businesses, and are providing educational opportunities for regular and continuing adult education learners. Concerning adult education, people from all over Ethiopia can be enrolled in credit courses and earn certificate, diploma and degrees, without having to leave their homes.

This paper, therefore, investigates the participation of Private Higher Education Institutions in the management and resource support to current adult education in Tigray, and how private colleges often have been viewed by the public (i.e. government) education sector.

2. Study Methodology

The method that the researcher adopted is the descriptive statistics. The data collection techniques include: observation, interviews/ questionnaires, and document analysis. The data source for the study mainly focuses on primary data of both quantitative and qualitative types. In addition, the perceptions of the target population about the educational opportunities of higher learning are well assessed and analyzed.

2.1. Observation: Personal observation was used in a qualitative data collection method. Sufficient time was spent with the different groups in the study areas to gain first hand experience and ample field notes were documented during the observation time.

Different questions were forwarded in an informally open way in order to hear what the different target groups think about the training services provided by private colleges in their locality. Observation also included the assessment of training and educational materials available in computer centers, libraries and laboratories, and how they are used and by whom. Thus, the personal observation was used as source of validation.

2.2. Interviews/questionnaires: The Questionnaires mainly focused on the perceptions of the interviewees about the contributions of Private Higher Institutions concerning resource support and management of education in the sub-sector and how they view the private colleges (i.e. colleges owned by private investors) found in their areas.

2.3. Secondary data: Literatures on issues that are facing private colleges concerning recognition, quality, and competition of programs and funding and acceptance by adult educators was read. Current information available on various sources from documents found in the respective offices was collected and integrated into the data obtained from primary sources.

2.4. Sampling Technique and Sample Size: - Sample selection or purposive sampling technique was used. This was done for the convenience of access to private colleges where most of the main campuses of almost all regional private colleges are located in Mekelle. Accordingly, Mekelle-the regional capital and three woredas' towns namely Adigrat, Shire-Endasselassie, Setit-Humera were included in the study. Two private and 2 public colleges and the Regional Education Bureau (that included the Tigray TVET Commission and the three Woreda Education Offices) were selected for this sample. The colleges included in the study are, from public Mekelle Mid-Level Health Professionals Training Institute and Mekelle College of Teachers Education; from private Poly Institute of Technology and New Millennium College. These colleges and offices were selected by using availability and random sampling techniques. The informants were selected in a manner that ensures best possible representative mix of people in terms of government and private organization they are working for, occupation and the like that enabled the researcher to draw acceptable conclusions on perceptions of people towards private colleges .

The sample population consisted of a total of 55 respondents. These included 20 employees and 20 trainee of both public and private colleges and 15 education officials and experts working at various levels from woreda to regional level in the study area. The employee informants were selected using availability sampling technique in order to include individuals who were closely connected to the education and training services of the region's colleges. The student respondents were selected using the systematic random sampling technique whose list was obtained from the respective colleges of study.

2.5. Instruments for data collection

For data collection questionnaires/ interview, and documents analysis were used. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared, one for education officials/experts and the colleges' staff. The second set of questionnaire was for students in the concerned private and public colleges (i.e. colleges run by government).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 General Characteristics of the Respondents

Questionnaires were distributed to 10 trainees and 10 employees of private colleges; 10 trainees and 10 employees of public colleges; 15 education experts and officials from Woreda to Regional level. In this study, a response rate of 89 was achieved.

As shown in Table1, out of the 49 subjects in the sample, 20 percent are women. The dominance of males is more conspicuous among the workers than among the students. There is only one woman out of the 29 surveyed at these levels.

With respect to age, 98 percent of the respondents are between 17 and 49 years of age. The remaining 2 percent are above 50. This indicates that the highest percentage of age distribution, i.e. 90 percent of the trainees in public colleges is in the lower age position. This is a little larger compared to that of the private college trainees (70 percent). This justifies that some private college students are enrolled at a later age as compared to public university colleges.

Table 1. General Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics of The Respondents		Pr.C.E		Pu.C.E		E.O.E (REB/WEO)		Pr.C.T		Pu.C.T		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sex	Male	10	100	5	83	13	100	9	90	7	70	44	80
	Female	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	10	3	30	5	20
	Total	10	100	6	100	13	100	10	100	10	100	49	100
Age	17-27	7	70	2	33	1	8	7	70	9	90	26	53
	28-38	2	20	2	33	5	38	3	30	1	10	13	27
	39-49	1	10	2	33	6	46	-	-	-	-	9	18
	50-60	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	-	-	-	1	2
	Above 60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	10	100	6	100	13	100	10	100	10	100	49	100	
Literacy Level	PhD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	MA/MSc	1	10	1	17	1	8	-	-	-	-	3	6
	BA/BED/BSC	9	90	5	83	10	77	-	-	-	-	24	49
	Diploma	-	-	-	-	2	15	-	-	-	-	2	4
	Certificate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Certificate Year I	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	1	2
	Certificate Year II	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	40	-	-	4	8
	Diploma Year I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Diploma Year II	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	2	20	3	6
	Diploma Year III	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	8	80	9	18
	Degree Year I	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20	-	-	2	4
	Degree Year II	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Degree Year III	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	1	2
Total	10	100	6	100	13	100	10	100	10	100	49	100	

Regarding the level of education of the respondents, the share of subjects with MA/BA/BED/BSC degree qualification is 49 percent; and 6 percent of the sample are MA holders. All respondents in both samples of private and public colleges (100 percent) are BA/BED/BSC degree holders and above. This implies that there exists technical expertise

and supervisory skills at colleges, which are centers where the actual educational and training activities are practiced.

3.1.2 The views of education officials/experts and the private/public colleges' employees towards the education and training provided by private colleges

As Table 2 shows, 76 percent of the respondents reported their agreement that private colleges address the needs of adult students. A greater proportion of education officials (23 percent) and public college employees (17 percent) seem to disagree with the above idea than the private college employees (10 percent). In addition, some proportion of education officials (8 percent) and public college employees (17 percent) do not differ from the private college employees.

Table 2. Responses on Addressing the Needs of Adult Students

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O.E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Private colleges accommodate the growing Number of adult students.								
A. Strongly Agree	2	15	-	-	5	50	7	24
B. Agree	7	54	4	66	4	40	15	52
C. Disagree	3	23	1	17	1	10	5	17
D. Strongly Disagree	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. No idea	1	8	1	17	-	-	2	7
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

Table 3. Responses on the Availability of Varied Flexible Training Programs

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O.E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
To what extent do you think private colleges have varied flexible training programs?								
A. High	1	8	1	16	-	-	2	7
B. Significantly	1	8	-	-	5	50	5	17
C. Moderately	5	38	3	50	4	40	12	41
D. Little	4	30	-	-	-	-	4	14
E. Nothing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
F. No idea	2	15	2	34	1	10	5	17
Total	13		6	100	10	100	29	100

Concerning the availability of varied flexible training programs, diversified answers are observed in the percentages as table 3 reveals. Over half (65 percent) respondents on aggregate have reacted “high”, “significantly” and “moderately” added together.

Table 4. Responses regarding the Availability of Varied Skill Training Programs

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O.E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
To what extent do you think private colleges have varied skill training programs?					6			
A. High					3	60	6	21
B. Significantly	5	38	2	33	-	30	10	34
C. Moderately	5	38	3	50	-	-	8	28
D. Little	-	-	1	17	1	-	1	3
E. Nothing	3	24	-	-	-	10	4	14
F. No idea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

Similarly, in answering the question of whether private colleges have varied skills training programs or not, the following results were obtained. On the education officials and experts side, responses were 38 percent each for ‘significantly’ and ‘moderately’ and 24 percent for ‘nothing’. The responses of public and private college employees to the same item were represented by ‘moderately’ and ‘high, which accounted for 50 and 60 percent, respectively.

In Table 5, respondents were asked to what extent they understand that private colleges’ participation is necessary and beneficial for adult learners to enhance their education and to learn the skills necessary to enter into a particular career. The majority of education officials and experts as well as public college employees have similar feelings that they

Table 5. Degree of Necessity and Benefit of Private Colleges Participation in Education for Adult Learners.

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
To what extent do you think private colleges’ Participation is necessary and beneficial for adult learners?								
A. Very High	2	15	-	-	3	30	5	17
B. High	4	31	1	17	6	60	11	38
C. Medium	4	31	2	33	1	10	7	24
D. Low	3	23	3	50	-	-	6	21
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

reported medium or low (54 percent) and (83 percent) respectively. The responses of private college employees to the same item was represented by ‘very high’ or ‘high’ which

accounts 90 percent. This indicates that private college employees have positive and public colleges a negative attitude towards this issue.

The item in Table 6 asks if private colleges are under constant attack or not by the public education sector in Tigray. Out of the 29 officials/experts, public and private institutions' workers 46 percent, 67 percent and 50 percent respectively reacted 'yes'. This indicates that private colleges are not being encouraged. And this shows that due attention should be given to the private colleges by all concerned; they will lose interest and confidence, otherwise.

Table 6. Reaction to the Current Possible Reasons as to Why Private Colleges Are under Constant Attack by the Public Education Sector

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O.E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Are private colleges currently under constant attack by the public education sector in Tigray?								
A. Yes	6	46	4	67	5	50	15	52
B. No	4	31	2	33	5	50	11	38
C. no response	3	23	-	-	-	-	3	10
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

To further clarify things, inquiries were made on what the respondents perceive about the level of seriousness of reasons for private colleges being attacked by the public sector (see Table 7). According to the responses reasons for attacking private colleges can be labelled as failure in admission requirements. Second standard and/or quality problems and third unhealthy competition.

Table 7. Responses on the Level of Seriousness of the Current Possible Reasons as to Why Private Colleges Are under Constant Attack by the Public Education Sector

Possible Reasons	Respondents	Very Serious		Serious		Less Serious	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Reports of students receiving low quality education and training	E.O.E	2	40	2	40	1	20
	Pu.C.E	2	67	1	33	-	-
	Pr.C.E	1	20	3	60	1	20
Admission of students who are not academically prepared simply to get profit	E.O.E	4	50	3	40	1	10
	Pu.C.E	4	100	-	-	-	-
	Pr.C.E	-	-	5	100	-	-
Unhealthy competition over similar programs between private and public colleges	E.O.E	5	63	2	25	1	12
	Pu.C.E	2	50	1	25	1	25
	Pr.C.E	1	20	3	60	1	20
Competition between public and private colleges to take the largest share of the community's money resources	E.O.E	4	50	2	25	2	25
	Pu.C.E	2	50	1	25	1	25
	Pr.C.E	1	20	4	80	-	-
The private colleges do not meet/fulfill the standards of the accrediting commission.	E.O.E	7	88	1	12	-	-
	Pu.C.E	2	50	2	50	-	-
	Pr.C.E	1	20	4	80	-	-

A question was asked as to whether the Regional Bureau of Education organizes meetings to discuss issues on resource contributions of different private colleges to minimize duplication of effort (Table 8). Accordingly, the majority of respondents (82 percent) complained that such meetings are rarely and/or never conducted. In this case, the Bureau does not seem to give due emphasis in making use of conferences and symposia so as to facilitate information exchange among different partners.

Table 8. Frequency of Meetings Organized by REB to Discuss about Resource Contribution of Private Colleges

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
How often does the Regional Education Bureau organize meetings to discuss issues on resource contribution of different private colleges?								
A. Always								
B. Sometimes								
C. Rarely	1	8	2	33	1	10	4	14
D. Never	7	54	2	33	1	10	10	34
E. I don't know	5	38	1	17	8	80	14	48
	-	-	1	17	-	-	1	3
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

In related matters, an inquiry was made concerning the relationship mechanism that exists to exchange information with different private colleges (see Table 9). This table reveals that 31 percent of the respondents either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ and 69 percent either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ all together. When seen separately, 69 percent and 50 percent of education officials/experts and public college employees ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ on the existence of relationship mechanism, respectively. Eighty percent of the private college employees ‘disagree’ on the same issue. This shows that the type and frequency of reports written and the way meetings are organized are not well developed as the respondents explained during the informal discussion in field observations.

Table 9. Existence of Relationship Mechanisms

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Does the Regional Education Bureau has formal relationship mechanism to exchange information with different private colleges?								
A. Strongly Agree					1	10	1	3
B. Agree	4	31	3	50	1	10	8	28
C. Disagree	8	61	2	33	8	80	18	62
D. Strongly Disagree	1	8	1	17	-	-	2	7
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

The item in Table 10 inquires whether private colleges add varied inputs to cover part of the cost of higher education sub-sector. Out of the education officials/experts, the public and private college employees 62 percent, 66 percent and 70 percent reacted ‘yes’, respectively. In addition, a higher proportion of the respondents 38 percent, 34 percent and 30 percent said “no”, respectively. This indicates that all categories of respondents are dissatisfied with the inputs added so far.

Table 10. Availability of Contributions of Varied Inputs to the Cost of Higher Education

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Do private colleges add varied inputs to cover part of the cost of higher education sub-sector in your locality?								
A. Yes	8	62	4	66	7	70	19	65
B. No	5	38	2	34	3	30	10	35
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

Concerning the extent of contributions, the education officials/experts, and the public college employees seem to have a similar understanding (see Table 11) that 46 percent and 100 percent said, respectively, that the private colleges' contribution is moderate and/or little in terms of cost. But employees of the private college around 80 percent said their contribution is high and/or significant. There appears a difference between employees of the public and the private colleges on this issue.

Table 11. Extent of Contribution of Private Colleges

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
To what extent do you think the private colleges contribute in terms of cost to the higher education sub-sector?								
A. High	1	8	-	-	3	30	4	15
B. Significantly	1	8	-	-	5	50	6	22
C. Moderately	5	38	2	50	1	10	8	29
D. Little	1	8	2	50	1	10	4	15
E. Nothing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
F. No idea	5	38	-	-	-	-	5	19
Total	13	100	4	100	10	100	27	100

But private colleges' contribution has a considerable share in terms of student enrolment and job opportunities. Among the four sample colleges (Appendix E) 50.9 percent student enrolment and 49.1 percent of employed personnel goes to the private colleges' share. The public educators seem to deny the reality that commitment and support to collaboration, participation and partnership among various actors should prevail. Education administrators should have the capacity to reflect administrative and political will to support the private sector which appears to be insufficient.

Table 12. Reaction to the Suspicious View of Many Public Educators on Private Colleges

Question Item	Respondents							
	E.O.E		Pu.C.E		Pr.C.E		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Do you think many public educators usually view the private colleges with suspicion in your area?								
A. Yes	10	77	5	83	6	60	21	72
B. No	3	23	1	14	4	40	8	28
Total	13	100	6	100	10	100	29	100

To further clarify things, an inquiry was made to ascertain whether many public educators view private colleges with suspicion (Table 12). The table shows that the majority (72 percent) of respondents reacted ‘yes’ that they usually view the private colleges with suspicion. Besides, many of the education officials/experts and public college employees give the following reasons for this, in an open-ended question that private colleges’ grading is inflated, there are admission requirement and standard problems, focus is on profit and attracting customers rather than on the quality of education.

3.1.3 The views of private/public colleges’ trainees towards the education and training provided by their respective institution

In Table 13, respondents were asked how helpful education and skills they have gained in their respective colleges to enter into a particular career are. A majority of the respondents have similar understanding and answered ‘very high’ and ‘high’ (80 percent). This positive attitude towards their respective colleges shows that there is no much difference between the public and private colleges’ in educational services they are providing.

Table 13. Responses concerning the education and necessary skills gained

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu.C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
How helpful do you think are the education and skills you obtained to enter a particular career?						
A. Very High	5	50	4	40	9	45
B. High	3	30	4	40	7	35
C. Medium	1	10	2	20	3	15
D. Low	1	10	-	-	1	5
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

The item in Table 14, inquires whether timely and adequate information about accreditation status is given. Out of the private and public college trainees, 80 percent and 90 percent reacted ‘yes’, respectively. This indicates that there is almost a balanced transparency on this issue in both types of colleges.

Table 14. Responses on the provision of adequate information about accreditation

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu.C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Does your college give timely and adequate information about its accreditation status?						
A. Yes	8	80	9	90	17	85
B. No	2	20	1	10	3	15
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

A question was raised to both private and public colleges’ trainees to ascertain attitudes towards admission requirements in the colleges they learn. Table 15 shows that higher proportion i.e., 40 percent of the private, 20 percent of the public college respondents

accepted that there is a failure in admission requirements. But the problem seems to double in private colleges concerning this issue. This could be because older and part-time students are enrolled in private colleges and such students appear to be more interested in career preparation and advancement than public college students.

Table 15. Responses on Admissions Procedure

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu.C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Does your college enrol students who do not fulfil admission requirements?						
A. Yes	4	40	2	20	6	30
B. No	6	60	8	80	14	70
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

Table 16 Deals with the aspects of standards of accreditation. In both types of colleges the private (90 percent) and public (80 percent), reported that the standards of the accrediting commission are met.

Table 16. Responses on Standards of Accreditation

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu.C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Do you think your college meets the standards of the Accrediting Commission?						
A. Yes	9	90	8	80	17	85
B. No	1	10	2	20	3	15
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

Table 17 shows that there is similar understanding between the private and public colleges trainee respondents. In other words, 80 percent and 90 percent of the private and public

colleges, respectively, reacted ‘yes’, that the respondents of teachers in the respective colleges are qualified to the level they are teaching and use appropriate methods.

Table 17. Responses regarding the Qualifications of Instructors and Methods of Teaching

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu. C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Do you think the instructors’ qualification and method of teaching are suitable to the level they are teaching?						
A. Yes	8	80	9	90	17	85
B. No	2	20	1	10	3	15
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

This indicates that there is little difference between the two types of colleges with knowledge and skills transfer to trainees.

Table 18. Responses regarding the Use of Working Time

Question Item	Respondents					
	Pr.C.T		Pu. C.T		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
How do you evaluate most of your instructors in using Classroom sessions appropriately?						
A. Very Good	5	50	2	20	7	35
B. Good	4	40	6	60	10	50
C. Bad	1	10	2	20	3	15
D. Very Bad	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	10	100	10	100	20	100

As Table 18 reveals, 50 percent of the private and 20 percent of the public college trainees reported that use of classroom time is 'very good'. In addition, 40 percent and 60 percent of the same respondents, respectively, reported 'good'. In general, 90 percent and 80 percent of the private and public colleges, respectively, qualified the use of classroom time in their respective colleges as either very good or good.

3.2 Discussion

As it is evident from the results, private colleges are enrolling a higher proportion of older students between 28 and 38 years of age (30 percent) compared to the public colleges of around 10 percent. These older students could be more part-time students with families and job responsibilities, academically under prepared students and students who are primarily interested in occupational preparation and growth. Private colleges must be prepared for such changes of adult learner profiles, as these trends have been documented by several studies, (Shearon, Templin, and Daniel, 1976; Shearon and others, 1980; Warren, 1995; in Merriam and Cunningham, 1989:327).

With regard to the qualification of teachers, 100% of the respondents in both private and public colleges indicated that teachers are BA/BED/BSC holders and above. According to their responses the required qualification of instructors is fulfilled in both types of institutions. The results of the document analysis seem to substantiate this finding that all trainers in the lists of the respective institutions, except in the health institutes evidence this. Thus, technical expertise and supervisory skills are not as such a problem at the private colleges under study.

However, from their answers to questions referring to the necessity and benefit of private colleges' participation in education for adult learners, we observe that the respondents from

governmental institutions differ in their view. In the result section, we have seen that a majority of the workers in the public sector seem to point out that the benefit of the participation of private colleges is either low or medium opposed to the response of the private colleges represented by very high or high accounting 90 percent. This suggests a positive change of attitude is required from the public sectors towards the private sector involvement.

We have also seen the difference between the public and private college respondents concerning the extent of contribution of private colleges to the cost of higher education sub- sector. The respondents from private institutions reported high and/or significant (80 percent). Opposed to this, respondents from government sectors (46 percent and 100 percent), said the private colleges contribution is moderate and/or little, respectively.

As to the suspicious view of many public educators on private colleges, it is made clear in the result section, the majority (72 percent) of all respondents from both sides accepted that many public educators usually view private colleges with suspicion. But they differ in the reasons for this suspicion. In an open-ended question, the public educators argue that private colleges' grading is unfair and inflated; there are admission and standard problems. And a majority of them, they say, focus on profit and attracting customers without bothering about the quality of education.

On the other hand, private colleges' staff and administrators said the reasons of public educators to distrust private colleges is that they do not go beyond the competition to share the scarce resources of the community. The private colleges argue that they meet the standards of the accrediting commission as do the government colleges, if not more. They further go on to say that they provide timely information to students regarding length and cost of courses, and entrance requirements. They also argue that they recruit qualified

instructors and use appropriate teaching materials and equipment which they say can be witnessed by their clientele trainees. When the four colleges under study were observed, the two private colleges had by far better educational facilities and equipment than the two public colleges. What has puzzled the researcher in this study is how could the issues of quality and standard bring such a negative perception of the private investment on education by the category of public educators target groups?

According to Shaeffer S. (1994:13) many case studies give evidence that greater participation of private enterprises can help the quality as well as the demand for education. In addition, Shaeffer goes on to say (ibid: 32) that although the politics of a nation wishes to encourage participation, the administrative side of government may do the opposite. The bureaucracies and bureaucrats in education ministries may possess characteristics, which work against more participatory approaches to development, among which are characteristics identified as particular weakness of the intermediate (regional, district, sub-district) level of government.

This indicates that devolution of power may not be easily accepted by the administration of education officials. It requires the sensitization and training of government staff focusing on the ability to work with the private sector as development partner, how to give some autonomy to it, and the willingness to trust and support private investment activities.

By inference from the above statements, responses of the subjects and other previous discussions, the researcher has concluded that: public educators have a negative perception on the education and training provided by private colleges in Tigray because of lack of commitment to participate.

The public institutions' education administrators do not seem to surrender control to the private colleges. Thus, the crux of the problem lies in the difference in understanding the role of the private sector in education and development. Of course, the issues of quality may have an influence on this, but it cannot be a determining factor by itself since we have seen that there could be educational quality problems in both the private and public colleges.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1 Conclusion

The preceding results and discussions of the study point to the following specific conclusions:

4.1.1 The private investors' response and involvement towards higher adult education activities are commendable. The private colleges' contribution has a considerable share in covering the costs of higher learning in Tigray. The contribution to the cost of the sub-sector as obtained from the two private colleges show (Appendix E) that their share of student enrolment and job opportunity is 53.6 percent and 49.1 percent, respectively. This can be supported by the PHRD office (1996:86) reports showing at the time that non-governmental organizations can add more resources to education. This contribution is so young that it needs to be strengthened further. Nevertheless, we can conclude that the private colleges are achieving their objectives in stimulating adult learners and this is promising in solving the high demand of adult higher education. Adults must up -grade themselves if society is to function properly.

4.1.2 As private colleges' employees confirmed 80 percent 'disagree' and/or 'highly disagree' that the REB has a formal relationship mechanism to exchange information with different private colleges. In addition, the REB 'rarely' and/or 'never' organizes meetings to discuss issues on resource contribution of different

private colleges. Accordingly, of the total respondents 82 percent complained that formal and clear mechanism of information exchange among the major stakeholders of higher education is not fully developed. Therefore, more effort is required from the REB to bring about closer working relationships among different partners of the higher education sub-sector in order to minimize duplication of efforts in resource contribution.

- 4.1.3 Employees working in the public (governmental) education sector institutions show negative attitudes toward education and training provided by private colleges. Whereas the private colleges' employees are found to have positive attitudes, almost all the trainees in both the public and private colleges have no difference in their educational needs satisfaction. In both the private and public institutions, most the teachers are qualified; except in the health institute where 50 percent of the trainers' are diploma holders as noted in the field observation. This situation, of course, can be tolerated for there is a scarcity of required professionals. The conditions that satisfy the trainees' educational needs in both cases are more or less the same. However, in spite of these conditions, a significant number of the public educators reported that most private colleges are mainly concerned with profit.

Of course, the causes for the negative perceptions of the public educators may be many and varied. In most cases, they can be attributed to lack of willingness to trust and support private colleges.

4.2. Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions drawn, the following points which are assumed practical are recommended so that the identified problems can be solved or minimized.

- 4.2.1. The finding that the private colleges are contributing significantly to adult higher learning opportunities is an important implication for the region in facilitating and strengthening private sector support to the higher education sub-sector. To support quality higher education, it is necessary to mobilize additional resources from the many providers of adult learning opportunities motivated by profit. Such contributions are critical in making rapid progress towards the millennium goals of poverty reduction strategy which should be supported. To realize greater private sector participation organized as for-profit businesses, strategies that meet the capacity and needs of the potential beneficiaries should be developed by the regional education Bureaux. This can be applied by reinforcing private and public sector partnerships through the means of regular open communication and cooperative planning.
- 4.2.2. In designing training programs for adult learners of higher education, the need for better coordination of the multiplicity of resources of higher learning courses calls for wholehearted efforts. To minimize duplication in resource contributions, there is an urgent need for education officials and experts at different levels in the region. They are required to facilitate transparency and information flow among the relevant local government authorities, the concerned private investors running the private colleges and the intended beneficiaries: adults, business and industry, and the community at large. Education administrators should establish and strengthen a TVET counsel and occasionally organize conferences and symposia. This can help to communicate and disseminate information on investment priorities, standards of the accrediting commission, admission requirements, and other related issues like potential problems that might arise in relation to participation when implementing the education and training programs.
- 4.2.3. The study evidenced that private colleges have often been viewed with suspicion by the public education sector of the region as if they are putting profit above education. But documents on the other side show (Appendix E) that numbers of

- student enrolled in the private colleges should be the ultimate gauge by which all schools in higher education are measured. Therefore, to improve this phenomenon.
- 4.2.3.1. The regional TVET commission/education bureau have to be based, as they should be, upon continual onsite visits to the private colleges or establish a standardized quality control mechanism.
- 4.2.3.2. The suggestion of Seaman and McDivitt in Merriam and Cunningham (1990:420) can be applied here that the private colleges shall also consider their for-profit motive as the very strength of their existence and growth. Due attention must be given by the private colleges to continue to capitalize upon flexibility and ability to respond quickly to adults' educational and market oriented training needs. However, the scope of the involvement of the private colleges will depend upon how the aforementioned issues are addressed by legislators, by accrediting commissions and by the potential adult students themselves.

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