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LIMITATIONS OF OUTCOME BASED ACCOUNTING CURRICULUM IN ETHIOPIA

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Abstract

The demand for accounting profession is increasing from time to time because of the increase in complexity of the business environment. Education institutions are responsible to produce qualified and ethical accountant required by the accounting profession. Specifically, Technical and Vocational Education and training (TVET) colleges play great role in training lower and middle level accountant in Ethiopia. However, Academicians, practitioners and employers are raising concern on the quality and relevance of education and training given by TVET colleges. The major objective of this study is to examine the limitations of TVET in accounting curriculum in relation to relevance and contents of the competences included. The finding of the study showed that the existing curriculum has a lot of limitations in terms of relevance, coherence and content. As a result, the existing curriculum should be revisited in order to make it better.

Keywords: Accounting education, Competence based, Curriculum limitations, TVET

JEL Classification: M4

1. Introduction

Education is the most important tool to deal with the changing social and physical environments. It is a process designed to shape the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for individuals to manage the environment in which they live. Different organizations and individuals have indicated this fact. For instance, UNESCO (2002) stated that education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for

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sustained economic growth. Especially, sustainable economic development, environmental protection, social and political development of a nation directly or indirectly depends on education. Derbessa (2000) also suggested that education should be a basis for developing the capacity to cope up with leading, evaluating and changing society in this information age. Further, he added that higher education institutions have greater contributions for the development of a country through supplying skilled and semiskilled man power.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a part of the education system in Ethiopia that helps people to attain their full educational or professional potentials. TVET is one of the main components of Educational Sector Development Program (ESDP) policy for increasing the trained labour force related to the development of the country as a whole (MOE, 2015). In the same way, TVET also plays an equally important role in social, economic, and political development of a nation together with its academic counterpart. TVET plays a crucial role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled human resource, enhancing industrial productivity and improving quality of life. Strengthening the importance of TVET, Sharma (2008) indicated education is considered as a key to development whereas TVET is a master key because it has the ability to open all doors of the lifelong learning, reduce unemployment and improve the quality of living. These roles can be realized when competency based TVET program is applied properly.

One of the programs in TVET training system is the field of accounting. Accounting education can be described as training students about identifying, recording, summarizing, reporting, analysing, and auditing financial information that will steer the decisions in business. It consists of various subfields including; financial accounting, managerial accounting, government accounting, auditing and taxation, all of which aid in financial Reporting, economic planning, project appraisal, capital formation, property control and so on. The main function of accounting is to manage and provide information, primarily financial in nature, about economic entities that is intended to be useful in economic decisions. This information allows users to make reasoned choices among alternative uses of scarce resources in the conduct of business and economic activities. The need for accounting therefore arose in response to the desire to make judicious use of scarce resources, accumulate wealth and produce high quality goods and services in a competitive market environment.

To perform these roles, accountants are required both in number and in quality and this should be the function of the existing accounting education and training system.

An attempt to understand the future developmental requirements of accountants necessitates the study of the current status of accounting education. In connection to this, Carnegie and Napier (1996) argued that knowledge of the past and the present accounting education can facilitate an understanding of the future of accounting profession. They also noted that accounting education is worthy of studying because it puts accounting today into perspective and may well allow us to draw on the data bank of the past to provide solutions to the problems of the present and pave the right way for the future. Hence, the study of the current accounting education should start with evaluation of the strength and weakness of the existing curriculum.

The authors have undertaken a research on the topic “Outcome Based TVET in Accounting and the Professional Practices” in the academic year 2017/18. The objective is to identify the bottlenecks surrounding TVET in accounting in the country and provide appropriate suggestions for solving them. This article is part of the above-mentioned study specifically aimed to identify the limitation of currently working accounting curriculum at TVET level. Specifically, the evidence for the study is taken from the existing curriculum and sample respondents from TVET colleges in west Oromia. To achieve the purpose, the remaining part of this paper is structured as follows: Section two explains the research problem and objective of this manuscript, section three reviews related literatures, Section four presents the research design and methodology adopted in the study, Section five presents the analysis and discussion and finally section six concludes the paper.

2. Problem Statement

Accounting education and training has been under attack for many years resulting from rapid technological advances and growing market globalization (Lin et al., 2005). The function of today’s accountant has changed from mere book-keeping of business operations to the provider and interpreter of diversified information to various internal and external users of financial information (Albrecht and Sack, 2000). Such developments require expanding the

knowledge and skills of accountants to meet the changing demands stemming from the new business environment.

Jeacle (2008) have pointed out the changing nature of accounting work over time and he calls for changes in the accounting curricula to reflect the needs and market demand in a changing business environment. In the past, accounting conventions mainly emphasized on quantitative recording, financial calculation and historical accounting for stewardship of resources (Parker, 2001). However, in the current turbulent world, technical accounting competences are not sufficient for educating professional accountants and needs to be complemented by other competencies such as; creative thinking, lifelong learning, and communication skills. Today, accountants are more involved than before in financial and business advisory services due to the increasing demand for financial and nonfinancial information in business decision. The changes in the role of the accounting functions are driven by the characteristics of the modern global business environment. Colleges and Universities should accordingly incorporate the market expectations to their accounting curriculum in order to ensure that accounting graduates are equipped with knowledge and skills required by the market. However, there are increasing criticisms that accounting education has lagged behind developments in the changing business environment (Madawaki, 2015).

In Ethiopia, employers complain that College accounting education and training has lagged behind and failed to prepare graduates adequately to deal with the challenges of discharging their professional responsibilities and they have to spend substantial time and resources to train newly recruited accountants. Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC, 2007), stated that accounting education in Ethiopia has been under-developed because of less developed educational system, lack of sufficient educational facilities, outdated text books for training of accountants and the accounting curricula is mostly restricted to accounting technicalities and basic procedural aspect of auditing. Thus, a gap exists between the acquired and required knowledge and skills for accountants due to the rapid changes in the market environment and the slow changes in the curriculum.

Previous studies have indicated the need for the accounting education change to reflect among other things the implication of changing demands of businesses. International Federation of

Accountants (IFAC) (2007) recommended that accounting curricula should include subjects designed to provide students with understanding of global issues affecting society and business environment. Evans (2012) argued that accountants and accounting students requires improved knowledge and skills in using Information Technology system. In a related study, Grayson (2004) opined that jobs outcomes should be connected to some extent to what graduates might learn in colleges and therefore argues that accounting curricula should reflect changes to meet job demands. Other accounting education studies have examined how accounting teachers can be motivated and what should be taught in classrooms (Madawaki, 2015).

Given the current focus on strengthening the accounting profession following the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS), the importance of developing and enhancing accounting education in Ethiopia has been repeatedly discussed. As a result, the accounting curricula for bachelor's degree in accounting and finance were harmonized among universities before five years. Hence, Ethiopian universities have made efforts to establish common minimum requirements for courses in accounting and finance. There is also a recent effort to revise this harmonized curriculum and incorporate IFRS in the syllabus. Further, there is an effort to build the capacity of accounting teachers at university by giving them short term training.

Contrary to undergraduate accounting curriculum, the major problem observed in curriculum development for TVET accounting training was the continuous and unpredicted change made in it without making detail investigation of its limitations. At the beginning, all curriculums and training materials were prepared centrally and used by all institutions with similar inputs and processes. That was changed shortly by occupational standards which were prepared for 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3 program. Lately, the development of the occupational standards has been re-categorized into five levels i.e. Level I, Level II, Level III, Level IV and Level V packages. This has created a feeling of discomfort on trainers/teachers and is seen as wastage of time and other resources. Some TVET teachers complain that the change was not based on detail study of the limitations of the former curriculum. Instead; it is based on the grant and support coming from aboard. Therefore, detail examination of the existing curriculum is required to suggest revision.

Further, it is an important part of the educational process that trainers in accounting recognise the local developments in the country. There are new Laws and legislations issued by the house of people's representatives and council of ministries in the recent years, such as the new Laws on IFRS and Taxation law. There is no formal means within the TVET colleges that communicate academic staffs about the new development. Therefore, each teacher uses his/her way to be aware of the new developments in the legal, economic and business environment nationally and globally. This has tremendous effect on the relevance and quality of accounting education offered at TVET colleges.

Some studies have examined the issue of what should be the knowledge and skills components of today's accounting education programs that can satisfy the demands for training future accountants at university level (Mihret & Bobe, 2014; Kidane, 2012; ROSC, 2007). In addition, the challenges of the existing TVET system were studied in general terms to some extent (Dadi, 2014; Solomon, 2011). But accounting education and training at TVET level in particular was relatively ignored. Hence, there is increasing recognition by all stakeholders such as teachers, students, employers, governments and society the need and utility of conducting research within TVET colleges in order to position such institutions for the challenges of the 21st century. The main objective of this study is to examine the limitations of the existing TVET in Accounting Curriculum. Specifically, the study is aimed to investigate the existing TVET in accounting curriculum in terms of relevance to local needs, to examine the existing TVET in accounting curriculum in terms of its content as compared to international standard and to identify competences that were not usually covered in the curriculum and the reasons behind.

This type of research is made for a single purpose: to identify weaknesses in order to plan for improvements. Thus, findings of this study will have some basic contributions in providing valuable information on the actual implementation and effectiveness of competency based TVET curriculum.

Currently, the government is studying the whole education system in the country in order to make improvement in the future. This specific study is planned to provide policy input for revisiting TVET in accounting education and training program.

3. Literature Review

Accounting education can be defined as educating students in determining, collecting, recording, summarizing, reporting, analysing, and auditing financial data that will steer the decisions in business. The accounting profession like many others has been affected by rapid economic and technological developments of national and global environment. Pressures for change come from many sources, including globalization, advances in technology, business complexity, societal changes, and the expansion of stakeholder groups, including regulators and supervisory bodies as well as the broader community. To meet the needs created by these changes and developments, an efficient accounting education is imperative.

The primary goal of any education aimed at preparing students to become accounting professionals must equip them reasonably well through college education and smooth their entry to the world of work. The goals set for accounting education directly determine the training orientation and professional curriculum settings through which the accounting professional will be produced. The objectives of accounting program should be consistent with the entity of which it is a part. The implication of this observation is that an accounting program and, by extension, accounting education must be responsive to the parent institutions and constituencies that are interested in accounting education and which it serves. In addition to be consistent with the goals of stakeholders and interested entities, accounting goals and objectives should be specific enough to permit measurement of achievement and inform decisions regarding the operation of the particular accounting education program.

The function of accounting is to provide quantitative information, primarily financial in nature, about economic entities that is intended to be useful in making economic decisions in making reasoned choices among alternative courses of action. The profession offers accounting, bookkeeping, tax preparation, auditing, and financial information to help people make better decisions. Accounting is not merely the language of the enterprise, informing supervisors, but a significant mover of a country's economic development. It is a service activity whose purpose is to divulge information, especially financial to help individuals, investors, businesses, and policy makers make better decisions.

The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) is a global organisation committed to protecting the public interest by formulating high-quality international standards, promoting strong ethical principles, upholding quality practice, and supporting the development of all sectors of the accounting profession around the world. It comprises 167 professional bodies of accountants in more than 127 countries and has more than 2.5 million individual members (IFAC, 2012).

The International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) in its revised standards document emphasizes that: the aim of International Education Standard is to ensure that candidates for membership of an IFAC member body have enough advanced professional accountancy knowledge to enable them function as competent professional accountants in an increasingly complex and changing environment. The standards outline that the primary knowledge part of professional accounting education programs should fall under three major headings: (a) Accounting, finance and related knowledge; (b) Organizational and business knowledge; and (c) Information technology knowledge and competences. The aims of these standards are to prescribe the range of professional knowledge, professional skills, professional values, ethics and attitudes required, develop an attitude of lifelong learning, focus on learning outcomes, and promote consistency and convergence in accounting education (IFAC, 2012).

IAESB issued nine International Education Standards (IES). The IESs are used as benchmarks for the preparation and continual development of professional accountants worldwide. One of the main objectives of IESs is to assist accounting educators internationally in ensuring that accounting students develop and demonstrate the competences needed to meet the expectations of the communities they serve. In general, IESs establish the essential elements that education and development programmes are expected to contain and that have the potential for international recognition, acceptance and application (IFAC, 2012). Of particular interest for this research are the IESs that set the content of accounting education programmes which are IES2 knowledge, IES3 skills and IES4 values, ethics and attitudes.

The knowledge these accounting students need to acquire are prescribed in IES2, "*Content of Professional Accounting Education Programmes*", which consists of knowledge in the area of accounting and finance; organisation and business; and information technology

(IES, 2008). This body of knowledge should be gained through intensive courses which should take at least two years of full-time study or the equivalent. However, IES2 only sets out broad subject headings on the premise that accountants will need to continually update their knowledge, as the body of knowledge and local conditions change and as the world's business environment changes. In IES2, IFAC emphasises that the accounting curriculum is itself changing and will continue to change in response to rapidly changing market demands. New topics are entering the curriculum and the relative emphasis among topics is changing (IFAC, 2012).

Skills that accounting students should acquire are prescribed in IES3, "*Professional Skills and General Education*". The skills are classified into five main groups: intellectual skills; technical and functional skills; personal skills; interpersonal and communication skills; and organisational and management skills. 'Skills' competency can also consist of four soft skill-areas that have been identified in a number of research studies and comprise the following: communication skills; creative thinking and problem-solving; teamwork and leadership; management of change (IFAC, 2012). However, IFAC acknowledges that this classification of skills is not exhaustive as skills have been classified and described in various ways. IES3 also explains how general education can contribute to the development of these skills (IFAC, 2012).

Values, ethics, and attitudes are considered crucial for accountants to exercise professional judgment and act in an ethical manner that is in the best interests of society and the profession. IES4 "*Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes*" emphasises that accounting education programmes should lead to a commitment to:

- the public interest and sensitivity to social responsibilities;
- the IFAC Code of Ethics, or its local equivalent;
- continual improvement and lifelong learning;
- reliability, responsibility, timeliness, courtesy and respect;
- laws and regulations.

'Values' competency represents attributes, behaviours and abilities that provide foundations for moral and ethical performance of professional work and responsibilities on which 'Technical competence' and 'Skills' are based. Prior research and other works on this area suggest that 'Values' include the following competence areas: professionalism, conceptual foundations of ethics, and ethical decision making. To serve the public interest and society, professional

accountants ought to perform their work with integrity, due care, public trust, and other ethical norms of the profession and the society (IFAC, 2012). If future professional accountants are to perceive professional values, ethics and attitudes as important to their work, it is essential that they do not perceive the treatment of professional values, ethics and attitudes as only peripheral to their main education programs. Therefore, professional values, ethics and attitudes need to be treated in their own right within the curriculum (IFAC, 2012).

The accounting education and training is identified in the literature as one of the earliest to adopt Competency based Education and Training (CBET) approach. Many professionals even suggested that accounting is one of the "technical" disciplines that is appropriate for a CBET approach. Competencies pertaining to accounting are broadly defined as a set of attributes, behaviours, abilities, and technology embodied in sufficient technical competence, skills, and values and their integration that will enable professional accountants to serve the society and public interest by performing their professional duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently and creating/sustaining their differential advantage. The IAESB has now stressed and adopted competency approach to accounting education which specifies an outcomes-based approach in integrating technical competence, professional skills, and professional values, ethics, and attitudes (IFAC, 2012).

IFAC (2012) defines technical competence as the ability to apply professional knowledge to perform a role to a defined standard. IESB gives 11 competence areas as well as learning outcomes and minimum proficiency level associated with each area. This competency category comprises functional and other knowledge and abilities included traditionally in accounting subject-areas. The competence areas pertaining to Technical-competences are classified into two sub-types as follows: (a) Technical competence 'Accounting', and (b) Technical competence 'Broad Societal and Business Perspectives'. The following competence areas are for Technical competence 'Accounting': financial reporting and analysis, management accounting and control, income tax accounting, accounting information systems and IT, audit and assurance, enterprise risk management and governance, accounting for non-profit organizations, and strategic accounting and auditing.

Technical competence 'Broad Societal and Business Perspectives' has the following competency areas: liberal arts,

business and organizational environments and systems, business laws and regulations, strategic management and organizational behaviour, corporate finance and financial management, international business and globalization, and quantitative business analysis and modelling (IFAC, 2012).

Accounting education can be looked at from two perspectives, it can be used to describe education for accountants, in other words, those instructions designed to be necessary for potential accountants to acquire in order to gain their professional qualifications. It can also be used to describe the expansion and extension of knowledge and the development of judgement of those who have already become accountant. Thus, to maintain professionalism, accountants must be abreast with the release of both local and international standards and emerging theoretical postulations. With the continuous development of standards, new accounting procedures, and changes in the business and economic spheres coupled with the risk of being found negligent and therefore incompetent in the discharge of his duties, a professional accountant who neglects the need for accounting education does so at the risk of his profession.

The curriculum development phase involves 'what, why, who, with, where, and when' facets. Literature on curriculum change indicates that successful curriculum implementation depends entirely on teachers who are regarded and who regard themselves as active agents in shaping policy as their understanding and interpretation of policy are translated into classroom practices. However, teachers' belief systems, experiences and ideologies affect how receptive to curriculum change they are likely to be. According to Ballet & Kelchtermans (2008), teachers do not simply implement curriculum change; they interpret and modify it according to their different frames of experience. Consequently, they respond to curriculum change in different ways. Fullan (2001) argues that experienced teachers tend not to change their current practices easily because these are rooted in their beliefs and in the practical knowledge they have accumulated during their years of teaching. So, while changes in the curriculum theoretically require teachers to make significant shifts with respect to its content and their instructional methods alike, in practice many teachers either resist implementing curriculum change or adapt the curriculum to suit their own practices. This means that they choose to assimilate teaching strategies into their current practices with minimal substantive change (Spillane, Reiser & Gomez, 2006).

When a totally new education program is being developed, the job, task and competence information can be used in a free way to define the key educational objectives, course titles, learning outcomes and to specify course content and assessment strategies. In many education development projects however, a curriculum needs to be revised, which is far more complex than developing a new one.

Changing a given curriculum has implications for the contributions of departments, teams and teachers, and often goes against the regarding interests of the groups and individuals involved. Therefore, curriculum revision goes hand in hand with resistance against change and advocating current practices or at least defending the contribution of the given content-matter domains.

Ethiopia is committed to participate in the competitive global market economy. This requires technical and professional citizens trained in specific occupations. Hence, TVET is often at the centre of Ethiopia's education strategy, which is aimed at the development of marketable entrepreneurial skills. Ethiopia is putting in place, in part via TVET, a comprehensive human resource development program. TVET provides training on market-oriented programs based on the demands of industries for various target groups, such as: graduates of grade 10, school leavers, people who are in employment, school drop outs and marginalized groups in the labour market.

The fifth Educational Sector Development Program (ESDP V) states that the goal for TVET is to produce a lower and middle-level, competent, motivated, adaptable and innovative workforce, which can contribute to poverty reduction and social and economic development through facilitating demand driven, quality TVET and transfer of demanded technology. The document further states the policy objective is to increase the quantity and quality of effective and accredited TVET and to increase the relevance of TVET in terms of courses and technologies developed and transferred to industry. TVET in Ethiopia seeks to create competent and self-reliant citizens that contribute to the economic and social development of the country, thus improving the livelihoods of all Ethiopians and sustainably reducing poverty (MOE,2015).

The mere expansion of TVET does not solve the problems of unemployment and low productivity of the economy. TVET has to respond to the needs of the labour market and create a competent, motivated and adaptable workforce capable of driving economic growth and development. The 2008 Ethiopian National TVET Strategy

replaces an older version, the Ethiopian Education and training policy, which was first adopted in 2002. It reflects an important paradigm shift in recent years which places quality and relevance of TVET as its priority. The strategy was developed with the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. It defines the major principles of TVET development in the coming years. TVET development relies on an outcome-based system, which depends upon the cooperation, dedication and trust of its stakeholders (Edukans Foundation, 2012).

Occupational standards are particular descriptions of what an individual is expected to be able to do in his or her work role. They are defined in terms of ideal benchmarks against which competence is assessed and certifications granted. It is also defined as the competences of a worker according to requirements in the labour market. Competences include the entire range of skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to perform a specific job. Occupational standards will be developed for all occupational fields at all relevant qualification levels attainable within the TVET system. Theoretically, relevant competences should be incorporated in the TVET accounting curriculum. This study has planned to examine whether the competences in accounting are relevant and adequate for the middle level accounting profession.

4. Research Design and Methodology

This study used descriptive research design. The rationale for the choice of the descriptive design is to collect factual information that would explain existing situations; make comparisons and evaluations; identify special problems or justify existing conditions or practices; and to determine what other people are doing about similar problems and to make suggestions for future courses of action. Descriptive research uses people and other written sources of information to describe, clarify, and interpret aspects of education as they presently exist.

The choice of data collection method is mostly based on the purpose of the study and the research question. To achieve the research objective, the study used different methods of data collection including survey questionnaire, Interview with key informants and Document review. Such mixed method helps to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data sources and provides a better, more substantive picture about the topic under study.

Semi structured interview were made with key informants. This includes trainers, college deans and an expert from Oromia TVET agency who are expected to implement the findings as well as those who are responsible for guiding the implementation effort. The respondents were selected from six TVET colleges in west Oromia including Jimma, Agaro, Mettu, Nekemte, Riftvalley and DandiBoru TVET colleges. Accordingly, data for this study were collected from 21 Accounting trainers and 4 TVET college Deans. The following Table 1 shows the characteristics of trainers that participated in the study.

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents

a) Name of College	Frequency	%	b) Educational level	Frequency	%
Jimma TVET College	3	14	Master Degree	4	19
Rift Valley TVET College	6	29	BA Degree	12	57
DandiBoru TVET College	4	19	TVET Diploma	5	24
Agaro TVET College	2	10	c) Specialization		
Mettu TVET College	2	10	Accounting & Finance	13	62
Nekemte TVET	4	19	Management	5	24
Total	21	100	Other Fields	3	14

Source: Survey data, 2018

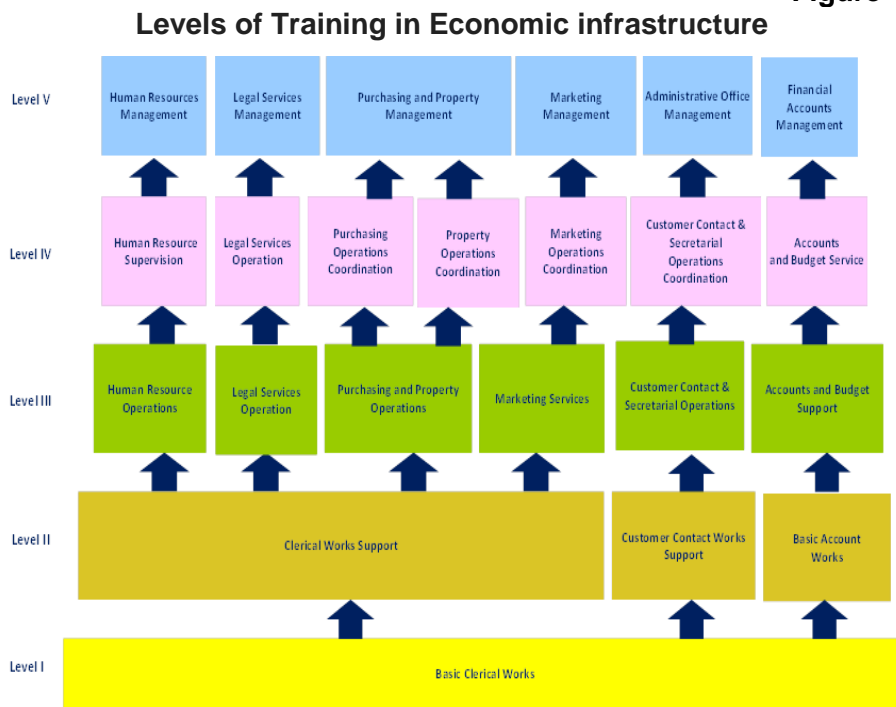
In addition to the semi structured interview, the existing TVET curriculum at each Level, statistical data from Oromia TVET agency, Policy documents and other pertinent secondary sources were intensively used in the study.

5. Result and Discussion

Since the introduction of competency-based training in Ethiopia in 2008, TVET education sector has implemented two Ethiopian Occupational Standards (EOS). The new EOS, which has been effective since 2012, commenced in six broad sectors including: economic infrastructure, health, agriculture, industry development, culture, sport and tourism, labour and social affairs sectors. Among the available TVET sectors, Economic Infrastructure is the main focus of this study. Economic infrastructure sector incorporates Business and

Finance sub-sector. Basic Clerical Work (Level I) is one of occupational standards found under Business and Finance sub-sector that every trainee has to go through before they start to study their area of specialization. All economic infrastructure sectors should pass through this level. Basic accounts Work (level II), Account and Budget support (Level III), Account and Budget service (level IV) and financial accounts management (Level V) occupational standard are the area in which trainees will specialize in accounting area. Under level III, Level IV and Level V; trainees are expected to have specialties' in accounting and expected to work without supervision in the work place. The following figure 1 shows the different levels in TVET training system under economic infrastructure in general and accounting in particular at the moment (Edukans Foundation, 2012).

Figure 1



Source: Edukans Foundation, 2012

The focus of a programme should extend beyond technical skills and emphasize the personal capacities of students to interact well

with one another, assume responsibilities, reason logically, think creatively, embrace ethical standards and conduct and communicate effectively. Hence accounting curriculum for each occupational standard must be structured to achieve this objective. The curriculum for the accounting profession must produce candidates who have acquired broad array of skills which include interpersonal, communication, intellectual and other skills for public accounting. Future accountants must also possess knowledge in organizational administration, business, accounting, auditing apart from general knowledge.

International accounting standard further set out that accounting students need to acquire a set of knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitudes and have the ability to integrate them together. The knowledge these accounting students need to acquire consists of Professional Accounting Education Programmes, which includes of knowledge in the area of accounting and finance; organisation and business; and information technology. In addition, trainee should be acquainted with hard and soft skills required in their professional duty. Value and Ethics plays critical role especially in accounting. In line with this, the TVET curriculums for each occupational standard were analysed in order to see to what extent the competences included at each level consists of the three basic components which comprises Knowledge, skill, ethics and value.

Table 2
Summary of Competences in the Existing Curriculum

Levels	Accounting & Finance	General Business	Organizational & personal skill	IT Skill	Value and Ethics	Total
Level I	0 (0%)	4 (27%)	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	15
Level II	8 (57%)	1(7%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	14
Level III	15 (60%)	3 (12%)	6 (24%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	25
Level IV	12 (52%)	2 (9%)	5(22%)	2 (9%)	2 (9%)	23
Level V	10 (59%)	5 (29%)	1(6%)	0 (0%)	1(6%)	17
Total	45 (48%)	15 (16%)	22 (23%)	8 (9%)	5 (5%)	94

Source: Own summery from the currently working curriculums

Table 2 above clearly vivid that there is no any accounting and finance related competences at level I. The curriculum gives high emphasis to organizational and personal skills, general business and information technology skills. There are two competences that are related to value and ethics. Accounting and Finance was given no

attention at this level may be because trainees who complete level I are expected to serve as clerk in private and government offices which does not require profound knowledge and skills in accounting.

At level II, 57% of the competences are related to accounting and finance. Organization and personal skill got the next attention at level II and General business and IT skill are following respectively. At this level, there are no competences that are related to ethics and value at all. Trainees that complete this level are expected to work as record keeper (accounts work).

Accounting and finance comprise of 60% of the competences at level III. 24% are related to organizational and personal skills. The remaining 12% and 8% are related to general business and IT skills. There are no competences that are related to ethics and value at this level. Trainees that complete this level are expected to support senior accountants in the area of record keeping, budgeting and accounts.

At level IV, 52% of the competences are related to accounting and finance. 22% of the competences are related to organizational and personal skill. General business, IT skill and Value and ethics each accounts about 9%. Trainees that complete this level are expected to work independently in the area of budget and account services.

Level V curriculum contains 59% competences that are related to accounting and finance. 29% of the competences are related to general business. And the remaining two competences are related to organizational and personal skills, ethics and value. Trainees who complete this stage are expected to work as financial accountants and managers.

Accounting professionals can perform their jobs in many different fields including auditing, taxation, managerial accounting, financial planning, consulting and bookkeeping (Armstrong, 2002). In each of these areas, financial statements must be applicable and presented adequately to facilitate rational decision-making in economic systems. Economic systems are therefore founded on the accurate reports of the financial value of traded entities, and these essential reports are prepared by accountants. Accounting as a career is a technique as well as an art (Armstrong, 2002).

Accounting professionals usually face a number of different situations requiring significant ethical judgments. They themselves recognize that there are a lot of available opportunities in their work to engage in immoral behaviours to acquire some personal benefits. Any unethical behaviour in accounting will somehow lead to a failure in

economic systems. As a result, various bodies attempt to sketch the map of accounting ethics to guide accounting professionals in an ethical method when they face ethical judgment problems. The accounting ethics literature indicates that the scope of studies on accounting ethics extends from auditor independence to the morality of capital markets (Mele, 2005).

Table 2 above further shows, trainees in Accounting who will complete level V are expected to take 48% accounting related competences, 16% general business-related competences, 23% organizational and personal related competences, 9% IT skill related competences and 5% ethics and value related competences. This indicates the low attention given to ethics and value in the TVET in accounting curriculum. According to IES4, Values, ethics, and attitudes are considered crucial for accountants to exercise professional judgment and act in an ethical manner that is in the best interests of society and the profession. IES4 further emphasis that Professional Values, Ethics and Attitudes emphasises that accounting education programmes should lead. On the other hand, graduates of TVET in accounting are working as cashier, store keeper, accountant, auditing etc. These occupations in turn require ethical values and behaviour by their nature. If the accountant is not ethical, the resources of the organization will be at risk since it might be misappropriated.

In a curriculum design, it is suggested that knowledge and skills should be designed in spiral way. At lower level, basic knowledge and skills should be introduced in order to serve as a base for knowledge and skills at higher level. When we see the detail competences at each level in the TVET program, the following limitations can be observed. First, the link between competences in accounting and finance, general business and IT skills among the five levels is very low. Second, in some of the competences, higher kevel knowledge and skill were presented without having basic concepts at lower level. For instance, accounting students should be introduced with the basics of analysing business transaction and the rule of debit and credit at level I before they are thought about preparation of financial report and other related competences at higher levels. Finally, the arrangement of the competences at each level seem very random in which there is no logical flow among the different competences from simple to complex.

In addition, as one can see from the composition of the existing curriculum, the number of competences in each level is not the same. In level III and IV, there are too many competences. Where as in level

I, II and Level V, the number of competences is relatively small. This will have an impact on the successful completion of the competences at each level. Another limitation in the TVET accounting program is that none of the colleges started training students at level V. Although the curriculum is already prepared, they did not start implementing this curriculum since none of them have got the status of polytechnic college.

The above analysis is made based on the written curriculum at each level. Further, the trainers and deans who are implementing this curriculum were requested to give their opinion on the deficiencies of the existing curriculum. With this respect, trainers were requested to give opinion on the limitation of the current accounting curriculum and their response is summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Limitations of the Current TVET in Accounting Program

Which of the followings do you believe are major challenges of TVET in accounting program?	%	What deficiencies have you seen in the current TVET in accounting curriculum?	%
Shortage of training budget	62%	Professional experts did not participate	67%
Lack of labour market information	43%	It is directly copied from another country	57%
Absence of need assessment	24%	other stakeholders did not participate	43%
Theoretical method of instruction	19%	It is not relevant to our country	33%
Law quality students	14%	Time shortage to cover all competences	33%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Source: Survey data, 2018

Table 3 above vivid that shortage of training budget, lack of labour market information and absence of training need assessment are the top three challenges in accounting program respectively. Trainers complain that in the currently working curriculum, professional experts did not participate sufficiently, it is directly copied from another country, other stakeholders didn't participate, topics are irrelevant to our countries context and it is too bulky to cover in the given time period.

Specifically, with respect to relevance, when we see the competences at each level, most of them are directly copied from

Australia. For instance, there are concepts and terminologies that are not popularly used in Ethiopia which were directly copied from Australian curriculum. Australia and Ethiopia are different in terms of legal, economic and cultural setting which will need different knowledge and skill in the training area. Taking experiences of developed countries might be good but it should be customized to our country's context. With this respect, Bennett et al. (2004) studied the five developing countries consisting; Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Vietnam and Tanzania and advised the necessity of recognising the country context to adequately train finance personnel. Further, Enthoven (1991) stated that Accounting education structures and activities should take into account socioeconomic objectives. It is not very beneficial to copy educational systems from abroad without assessing them in the light of a country's requirement. Accounting education and educators should answer such basic questions as: what are the country's accounting information needs? What are the available skills and data? What sort of and how many accountants do we have to educate for the short, medium, and long term?

The TVET deans interviewed mentioned the following problems in relation to the curriculum. The curriculum was not prepared by relevant professional, aged trainers have difficulty of adapting to this new curriculum, Although C level trainers can be assigned as a teacher, they are usually unable to prepare teaching material for their trainees, In addition, they mentioned that repetition of the competences, not strictly following the curriculum in private colleges and less attention given to economic infrastructure occupations were challenges. Especially private owned colleges are victims of these problems.

Further, trainers were requested to indicate competencies that were not covered because of different reasons in Level III and Level IV. Table 4 below summarize the response of the trainers.

Table 4
Competencies not covered in Level III and Level IV

Level III (Accounts and Budget Support)		Level IV (Accounts and Budget Service)	
Maintain Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) Services	48%	Perform Cost Accounting	24%
Produce Spreadsheets	38%	Provide Management Accounting Information	24%
Maintain Quality System and Continuous Improvement Processes (Kaizen)	33%	Perform Accounting for Governmental and Not-for-Profit Entities	24%
Handle Foreign Currency Transactions	29%	Perform accounting for decentralized operations	24%
Deliver and Monitor a Service to Customers	24%	Operate a computerized Accounting System	24%
Monitor Implementation of Work plan /Activities	24%	Maintain Fixed Assets & Inventory Records	14%
Apply Quality Control	24%	Perform Auditing & Reporting	14%
Lead Work place Communication	24%	Perform Accounting for Partnership & Corporate forms of business	10%
Process Financial Transactions and Extract Interim Reports	19%	Prepare Tax Returns	10%
Administer Subsidiary Accounts and Ledgers	19%	Maintain Expenses and Recording Payments	10%
Design and Produce Business Documents	19%	Record Income and Receipts	5%
Process Payment Documentation	19%	Maintain Cash and Receivables	5%
Process Applications for Credit	19%	Record Income and Receipts	5%

Source: Survey data, 2018

As can be clearly seen from the above Table 4, Maintain Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) Services, Produce Spreadsheets, Maintain Quality System and Continuous Improvement Processes (Kaizen) are the top most competencies at level III that were not covered most of the time. Cost accounting, management accounting, computerized accounting, fund accounting are the most common competencies that were not covered most of the time. The reasons for not covering these competence as mentioned by the trainers include; irrelevance of some competences to Ethiopian cases, large number of competences in each level, redundancy of some competencies, irrelevance of some competences, lack of reading material on some competences, lack of experts on some competences such as

computerized accounting and ATM Machine, focusing on COC related competences, shortage of time and budget and time spent on meeting. Although some trainers are not covering the existing competencies, when asked additional competencies that should be incorporated, they suggested the following additional competencies. The top three competences suggested by trainers include IFRS, mathematics and English, and Agricultural accounting.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

International accounting education standard set out accounting students need to acquire a set of knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitudes and should have the ability to integrate them together. Specially, Value and Ethics plays critical role in accounting since it is related to management of money. Analysis of the existing TVET curriculum found that there very few competences that are related to professional ethics and value. This indicates the low attention given to ethics and value in the curriculum itself. If future professional accountants are to perceive professional values, ethics and attitudes as important to their work, it is essential that they do not perceive the treatment of professional values, ethics and attitudes as only peripheral to their main education programs. Therefore, professional values, ethics and attitudes need to be treated in their own right within the training framework. Ethics and value competences should be included in the curriculum by integrating with core accounting competences such as financial reporting, taxation and auditing. This will enable students to appreciate the use of ethics and value in the actual work environment.

With respect to coherence, the current working TVET in accounting curriculums at each level have the following limitations. First, the link between competences in accounting and finance, general business and IT skills among the five levels is very weak. Second, in some of the competences, higher level knowledge and skill were presented without introducing basic concepts at the lower level. Finally, the arrangement of the competences at each level seem very random in which there is no logical flow among the different competences from simple to complex. It is better to arrange all the competences in logical order. Customizing all of the competences to Ethiopian context is also required.

Assessment of the existing TVET curriculum indicated there are areas that will have to be updated in the curriculum in order to prepare graduates for enhanced requirements in the actual accounting and auditing practice. For instance, the curriculum does not include international components in accounting (IFRS) and auditing (ISA). Specifically, the TVET accounting curriculum was mainly adopted from Australia and lacks local relevance in most of the competences. Ethiopian economy is mainly based on agriculture. Especially, west Oromia region is known with production of coffee and there are significant numbers of investors engaged in coffee production. However, the curriculum at all levels lacks some relevant competences such as agricultural accounting. Therefore, it plays vital role to incorporate agricultural accounting competences in the curriculum. Further, language and quantitative method competences should be incorporated in any of the five levels to increase the generic skills of the trainee.

The majority of the trainers responded that significance number of competences from level III and Level IV are not covered adequately. Maintain Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) Services, Produce Spreadsheets, Maintain Quality System and Continuous Improvement Processes (Kaizen) are the top most competencies at level III that were not covered most of the time. Cost accounting, management accounting, computerized accounting, fund accounting are the most common competencies that were not covered most of the time at Level V. This will negatively affect the quality of training at TVET Colleges and has negative effect in professional task in the work environment. Budget shortage is a cause for not providing training all year round and at full capacity in TVET centers. Some of the competences require facilities and the colleges have no sufficient budget. It is also affecting the quality of training provided in the regular program. In addition to government and NGO support, training centers themselves have to generate their own fund and try to supplement the formal budget allocated by the government.

The study revealed the shortcomings of competency based TVET in accounting curriculum and lack of training material. Well-developed accounting training materials are lacking in the TVET centers. This is due to trainers' inability to prepare their own training materials. As a result, it becomes advisable if TVET agencies and TVET institutions jointly engage stakeholders with profound knowledge of occupational standards, different educators, curriculum experts and

industry experts in the preparation of competency based TVET curriculum materials. In this regard, Jimma University accounting and finance department should take the leading role and other stakeholders should provide support in arranging training on how to prepare training material especially on the technical aspects.

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Occupational Standards of TVET in Accounting Curriculum (Level I – V)

Basic Clerical Works (Level I)	Basic Account Works (Level II)	Accounts and Budget Support (Level III)	Accounts and Budget Service (Level IV)	Financial Accounts Management (Level V)
Participate in OHS Process	Work Effectively in the Financial Services Sector	Process Financial Transactions and Extract Interim Reports	Make Decisions in a Legal Context	Provide Financial and Business Performance Information
Use Business Equipment and Resources	Work Effectively with Others	Administer Subsidiary Accounts and Ledgers	Prepare Financial Statements for Non-Reporting Entities	Prepare Legally Compliant Tax Returns for Individuals
Work Effectively in Business Environment	Use Business Technology	Perform Financial Calculations	Set up and operate a Computerized Accounting System	Manage Budgets and Financial Plans
Operate a personal computer	Process Customer Accounts	Design and Produce Business Documents	Apply Principles of Professional Practice to Work in the financial services industry	Prepare Financial Reports for Corporate Entities
Develop Keyboard Skill	Process Customer Transactions	Administer Financial Accounts	Prepare Financial Reports	Implement and Maintain Internal Control Procedures
Create and use spreadsheet	Develop understanding of Ethiopian financial system	Prepare, Match and Process Receipts	Process Business Tax Requirements	Provide Management Accounting Information
Plan skill Development	Develop understanding of Taxation	Process Payment Documentation	Evaluate and Authorize Payment Requests	Establish and Maintain Accounting Information Systems
Participate in Environmental sustainable process	Develop and use personal budget	Process Applications for Credit	Establish and Maintain Payroll System	Comply with Financial Services Legislation and Industry Codes of Practice
Organize and complete daily work activity	Develop and use saving plan	Monitor and Control Accounts Receivable	Develop and Use Complex Spreadsheets	Prepare Financial Reports to Meet Statutory Requirements
Receive and respond to daily communication	Develop understanding of debt and consumer credit	Balance Cash Holdings	Produce Job Costing Information	Prepare Financial Forecasts and Projections
Work with others	Participate in Work Place Communication	Process Payroll	Prepare Operational Budgets	Apply Legal Principles in Corporations and Trusts Law
Demonstrate work values	Work in Team Environment	Prepare Financial Reports	Maintain Inventory Records	Establish Effective Workplace Relationships
Apply quality standards	Develop business practice	Produce Spreadsheets	Establish and Maintain a Cash Accounting System	Apply Legal Principles in Commercial and Property Law

Develop understanding of Entrepreneurship	Apply Continuous Improvement Processes (Kaizen)	Calculate Taxes, Fees and Charges	Establish and Maintain an Accrual Accounting System	Manage Project Quality
Apply 5S Procedures		Handle Foreign Currency Transactions	Manage Overdue Customer Accounts	Facilitate and Capitalize on Change and Innovation
		Maintain Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) Services	Administer Levies, Fines and other Taxes	Establish and Conduct Business Relationships
		Maintain Business Records	Plan and Organize Work	Develop and Refine Systems for Continuous Improvement in Operations
		Process Customer Complaints	Migrate to New Technology	
		Deliver and Monitor a Service to Customers		
		Monitor Implementation of Work plan /Activities		
		Apply Quality Control		
		Lead Work place Communication		
		Lead Small Teams		
		Improve Business Practice		
		Maintain Quality System and Continuous Improvement Processes (Kaizen)		