

The Management Aspect of Vocational Skill Training Outcomes: The Medium of Instruction and Learning in Tanzania Vocational Education and Training Institutions

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ABSTRACT - *Hindrances or barriers to learning faced by learners with poor English background in Tanzania Vocational Training Centres (VETs) can lead to increased feelings of desperation, frustration, helplessness and inadequacy. In some cases these outcomes lead to course withdrawal and lowered chances of breaking through the boundaries and achieving job attainment and satisfaction. This research aims to investigate whether the needs of these learners who did not master the medium of instruction were being met by the Information Technology (IT) training they received and whether their difficulties and major hindrances were primarily institutionally (related to the IT training process) or non-institutionally grounded. A questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative information and to identify learners who do not master the medium of training (VTCs). The results indicate that both institutional (e.g. poor quality instructions) and non-institutional factors are implicated as hindrances to learning. Code switching was preferred by many learners from a group of those who attended primary education in Non English medium schools (NEMS) Some suggested ways within the training institution of breaking through the barriers are discussed.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocational Education (VE) throughout the world have a major aim: producing graduates who would have opportunities to secure well paid and or creating employment for themselves by using acquired skills. This underpins the importance of providing quality Vocational Training (VT) to learners and hence, the importance of mastering the medium of instruction. In instruction, a medium have a broad meaning and the major one being referring to the language medium. Thus, in order for the instruction and learning of vocational courses to run successfully they have to involve the interaction which requires the high level of language proficiency (Osaki, 2005).

Over the years, there has been a lot of debate on the issue of what should be the medium of instruction to Tanzania

educational institution especially in primary, secondary and intermediate professional educational institutions (Kaduma, 2005). The situation has left many of our people confused particularly when within the government there does not appear to be a consensus about the issue (MoEVT, 2004).

II. BACKGROUND AND THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The medium of instruction in Tanzania Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) is English (MoEVT, 2014). But the official language for Tanzanians is Kiswahili which is the official medium of instruction for public primary schools although English is taught as a subject and English is predominantly the medium of instruction in private primary schools. In predominantly English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), foreigners who are poor in English may face some barriers to learning and this also occurs to learners in Tanzania educational institutions who do not master English language which is used as a medium of instruction/learning.

These barriers can act to set handles that can affect access, participation and completion of VE courses and a competence in the job market. Vocational Education and Training (VET) policy stipulates both primary school leavers and secondary school leavers to be major input in VTCs A survey conducted by Mal;ecela (1990) revealed that 81.3% of public primary school graduates did not master English language and this finding was in line with the findings that about 60.3% of secondary school learners had difficulties in reading and writing English words and that was much observed in science subjects (Kankila, 2010).

The observation by Mutarubukwa (2006) on the extent different types of instructional techniques used in VTCs revealed that about 90% of instructors in various trades used English and Kiswahili frequently to impart knowledge and skills to learners. In this regard, both instructors and learners were happy with switch-coding mode because they understand each other. Different scenario was noted in some VTCs whereby learners complained about the ineffectiveness of English born instructors who used only English language during instruction.

The same scenario is observed in English speaking countries (UK and USA inclusive) whereby VE graduates from non speaking English background have difficulties in employing their skills in markets. In some instances, these people are highly qualified and experienced in a chosen trade or profession but do not have local experience and their qualifications may not be recognized. According to Schwan (2014), these people tend to seek tertiary education to learn English (as a subject), new vocational skills or to improve old skills in order their skill prior learning to be valued.

VET being a tool for wage and/or self employment and on course of comprehending Honorable President John Pombe Magufuri philosophy '*Tujenge Tanzania ya viwanda* i.e to Tanzania to be industrial country), in the year 2016 many primary and secondary school learners were enrolled in VE courses. According to URT (2014) the government of Tanzania has been very keen on ensuring effective provision of VE. For example, between years 2005-2011, the number of VTCs increased from 195 to 260. The enrolment increased from 39,759 (male, 46312 and female 38698) to 85,040 (male 46,342 and female 38,698). Today, while there an increase of VTCs by 9.7%, the percentage of learners' increase

Despite that above massive increase, learners are usually keen to learn and have experienced difficulties in comprehending and understanding course materials and training due to difficulties in mastering the medium of instruction. This can lead to vocational learners who feeling desperate, frustration, helplessness and inadequacy of learning materials. The outcome of these behaviours is course withdrawal, lowered self-esteem, a waste of short public resources, as well as lack of job attainment and vocational satisfaction.

VET has become increasingly popular for Tanzanians as there are courses that cater for most of their educational needs. In Tanzania, VE has a great attraction generally for the following reasons Availability of a range of vocational programme, long and short duration of courses, affordable fees, and first step in post-school education, wide geographical spread of VTCs; and accessibility and flexible entry requirements for many courses. For example, in Tanzania courses range from mechanical, civil and electrical trades to agriculture and tourism trades (to mention a few) and these courses are offered in both short and long terms aiming at meeting the needs of a range of the needy (learner, the society and job market). According to the Ministry of Education and Vocational training (MoEVT) by 2025, each district in Tanzania should have public VTC in addition to public VTCs.

III. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE Issues for Vocational Education and Training Learners: Barriers and Hindrances

Relevant literature has indicated some major barriers and hindrances for learners in VET in VTCs. These hindrances have been explained to provide boundaries to skill '*learning*'

and course '*achievement*' as well as skill '*competencies*' which need to be broken through before progress can be observed. How these boundaries might be best broken through is an important issue for VTCs in which educational equity and achievement of full potential, both social and educational/occupational, for all types of learners are valued.

There are barriers in the areas of language, participation in vocational courses, learning difficulties and recognition of prior learning, access and equity, as well as education and training issues.

Medium of Instruction (Language) Barriers

It is contended that a learner remember vividly first experience of concepts and this is pronounced mostly in science (Osaki, 2005) and subjects which require abstract thinking (Mutarubukwa, 2006). They recall also vividly the language and words used during that experience. If they receive instruction in that language, they are able to explain clearly concepts that in a language learned at later stage due to language barriers.

Language barriers can add to the cultural shock for learners who begin to use English as medium of instruction at second or third stage of learning. They often assume that a complicated language like English cannot be learned quickly and easily. This is because listening and speaking skills are developed by means of language laboratories. The problem is confounded if the background language is very dissimilar to English and learners themselves lack literacy and spoken or written fluency in their first language.

Wagner (1985) has pointed out the importance of learning English, mainly because proficiency in English language is regarded as an acceptable criterion for determining access to educational and employment opportunities for adults. In Tanzania learners who master Kiswahili language have experienced confusion with regard to the English barrier. They recognize the acquisition of the English language as being a major stumbling block and the key to understanding and being happy in an English-speaking environment.

Wagner (ibid) identified what many non English speakers have called the '*English merry-go-around*' when, after completing several English courses, they find themselves having not progressed to a course of study or job of their choice. These vocational learners believe that they have failed and will never be able to participate fully in society. Koinge (2011) found that a higher percentage of first year learners in VTCs are enrolled in VET courses were affected by language-related difficulties compared to learners in second year. This observation was given by the high percentage of first year learners reported experiencing difficulties in understanding instructions, instructors, writing assignments, reading and understanding textbooks (George, 2011).

Watson (2013) explains the extent language plays as the key element to learning vocational subjects and the need for a better understanding by all instructors of the significance of language in the vocational education and training process.

Kocheko (2012) identified language proficiency achieved in private VTCs as not being adequate for entry trade test grade one, as some courses require a high level of English skills.

The Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA, 2006) also reported that a major barrier to participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) was a low level of language proficiency or literacy. The report found that some primary and secondary school graduates (being input in VTCs) believed that their poor English language proficiency was forcing them to enroll in inferior courses whilst others indicated that language difficulties, in combination with unemployment, were major barriers to VET.

VET Participation Barriers

Concerning participation in VET courses, Sim and Dhungel (1993) found that among learners with English difficulties, concentration in the lower levels of Vocational Training (VT) is more pronounced than among learners without English language difficulties. There was a greater degree of concentration among learners with difficulties in English in the multi-field education, economics and in the business administration areas of vocational training than for learners who master English language.

Bujoge (2004) found that the two major reasons given by learners for participating in VET were to improve skills and to get a job. In this regard, many learners mastering English language were found to attend courses as a bridge to further study. This is evident in Tanzania whereby about 24% of people in the above explained category after completion of trade test grade one examination join technical colleges for technician/engineering courses. Furthermore, 19% (out of 24%) had good background of English since they studied at English Medium Schools (EMSs) at primary level.

Despite this, learners' from Non English Medium Schools (NEMS) who pursue vocational courses in VTCS are of big category with wide differences in the labour market and in VET participation as well as attainment. For example, in the period of 2010- 2013, 49% of learners in this category undertook study or training courses and are now self or wage employed country-wide (VETA, 2012).

Learners' Learning Difficulties

The major reasons faced by learners were the medium of instruction is 2nd or 3rd language is the difficulties of terminology and colloquial terms used by instructors; the limited vocabulary of learners; poor English skills; lack of confidence communication; in-adequate instruction/learning facilities and equipment, un-familiar assessment procedures and difficulties in understanding questions and operation procedures.

This is congruent with what Jongile (2013) found in Kenya VTCs that female studying vocational courses were affected by lack of time to study at home, writing of assignments, reading and understanding class textbooks and the class instructors. The difficulties experienced by this

group of female could be partly attributed to low English proficiency or low literacy skills. Jongile (2013) further noted that a high proportion of learners lacked proficiency in writing and speaking English which was the biggest barrier to participation in the workforce. Some students also had difficulty in understanding instructors.

Community Cultural and Other Boundaries

Cultural differences can mean differences in perception and meaning that can contribute to making learning a difficult and confusing process. This is especially so if the material presented or its manner of presentation is '*culturally*' inappropriate or does not compensate for cultural differences. As well as this, the material to be learned must be seen to be meaningful, appropriate and relevant to the needs and goals of the NEMS learners. A study done by Njoroge (2009) reevaluated emphasis on English language learning has tended to overshadow the other factors which serve to reduce learners with poor English background access to education, training and retraining.

VETA Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Skills

Some researchers have identified another education and training boundary as the lack of recognition of qualifications gained outside VET system. Perceptions relating to qualifications acquired outside VET system include VETA officials' and employers' as distrust of some informal training, lack of English language provision to allow the use of qualifications, cumbersome and discriminatory trade testing procedures and a lack of bridging courses and other support structures to allow for effective and efficient accreditation and utilization of overseas qualifications. Therefore, some people do not declare their informal qualifications in order to gain a job and are perceived by VETA, employer and themselves as '*unskilled*'.

Sim and Dhungel (1993) identified two issues relating to RPL of females' skills: recognition of formal training and recognition of informal training such as skills gained through employment. The study found that 60% of female with previous VT had not been granted exemptions or credits for their existing skills; According to Sim and Dhungel (1993), only 19% of female with a history of previous VT gained some recognition for their previous. Furthermore, they state that there is a lack of policies and procedures in place in most VET systems to address the issue of recognizing informal qualifications and/or work experience for the granting of advanced standing or credit transfer.

In that VET system, access to entry level training is restricted by the general difficulties experienced by the community in obtaining employment, which may be a prerequisite for getting a training place in structured vocational education. The strong nexus between the ability of this group to secure employment and their ability to access VET is often still a point of major concern.

The Issue of the Medium of Instruction in Tanzania Educational Institutions

All decisions regarding the provision of education in Tanzania is made by the parliament present, the education and training policy of 2014 is a product of education policy (1995), policy of VET (1999), policy of Higher Education and the policy of IT for primary education(2007). In this regard, the policy statements on education are Education and Training (2014), Education policy (1995) and Higher Education policy (1998). These are also policy statements especially regarding the language in education stipulated in the cultural policy of 1997 and the Kiswahili translation (*Sera ya Utamaduni*, 1999). As the 2014 education policy stipulates, English is the language of instruction in post primary education, while at primary school level both Kiswahili and English may be used. In practice, at primary school level only public primary schools use Kiswahili as medium of instruction and English is learned as lesson while in private primary schools, English language is strictly used as medium of instruction.

Since most learners who join post primary schools are product of public primary schools, it follows that the first challenge they encounter is the use of English language as a language of instruction and thus, fail to cope at post education (VET inclusive).

VET Empirical Issues

VE is becoming more integrated and more responsive to the needs of the community, the workplace, individual and global roles. A convergence is taking place between 'self reliance' education philosophy and VT practices. In relation to Tanzania 'cultural' understanding, this emphasis represents the acceptance that all learning takes different understandings and Tanzania economy perspectives. In this regard, cultural understanding is becoming seen as a critical competency for all types of learning in the country.

Furthermore, technological progress, among other forces, has meant that both public and private VTCs have tended to concentrate their efforts onto VT to the detriment of 'Higher' education generally. Concerns, for instance, have been expressed in Tanzania by youth in cities and villages and VETA about the importance of vocational training in poverty alleviation and reduction. It has been argued that, while this continues, VTCs will not be in a position to make a timely, coordinated and comprehensive response to the training needs this massive group of Tanzanians, most of them lacking English proficiency.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study generally investigated the extent the medium of instruction/learning influenced learning of learners from different institutional background in VTCs.

Two groups of learners in VTCs were identified i.e. those who pursued primary education in Non English Medium Schools (NEMS) and those who pursued primary education in

English Medium Schools (EMS) before joining VTCs and the later group was a control group. Specifically, the study examined the extent learners' needs if were achieved by knowledge and skills received. The study also determined if difficulties and major boundaries faced by learners with regard to English as a medium of instruction in VTCs were primarily institutionally (related to the training process) or non-institutionally grounded.

Despite the above objectives, perceived barriers and hindrances to learning set a boundary through which those two categories of learners in VTCs must break before they are likely to complete their course at a level which fulfils their ability and, if possible, enter the labour market through attainment of a job that is satisfying and which suits their interests, talents and qualifications. Many people in the world have come to realize that, for employment as well as self employment, they need to have IT skills. This provides a reason why the researcher decided to conduct a study on this specific vocational course. With the rapid advancement in modern technology it has become imperative that people have some knowledge of IT including computing. Other subject areas could have been studied but this area of study has, in the past, proved to be very popular to all categories of learners understudy.

As well, for time, cost and other reasons it was the area of focus. It was reasoned that many of the barriers and hindrances that these categories of learners in VET potentially face upon entry to VET would emerge in research in this popular area. In this study, a survey research design was employed and qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The ultimate focus of this study is to develop an awareness of managing the medium of instruction/learning among learners by approaching the variety of experiences of these learners; by identifying the problems encountered while studying IT course and to identify techniques that could be used to meet learners' need during learning. These techniques could be used as a basis for future instruction/learner's learning planning, changes and VET curriculum innovations.

The Population and Sample

The population was all learners studying Information and Technology (IT) course at Dar es Salaam Regional Training Service and Centre (DRVTSC). A sample was drawn from a population. To ensure that the sample used was representative (NEMS and EMS), both purposive and random sampling techniques were employed to obtain 50% sample based on the courses that contained the most IT training hours.

This resulted in a sample size of 152 respondents, of which 52% were female and 48% were male. The categorization of respondents from a sample was as follows: Category 1(fromNEM)=122 and category 2(from EMS) = 30.

The Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was developed to gather the data. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the

sample, covering a range of educational and training areas and issues. Most questions could be answered with only a tick. They were worded as simply as possible to facilitate comprehension and understanding.

More weighting was assigned to respondents' attitudes, self-perceptions and suggestions towards improving learning. Questions elicited respondent's personal particulars to provide some background information about the respondents for data analysis and to identify the target groups. Other questions elicited relevant information about the respondent's needs with regard to the medium of instruction and goals with regard to skill acquirement and achievement, identifying difficulties experienced and determining techniques to meet their skill needs. Thus, their perceived learning hindrances, barriers and boundaries were canvassed.

Study Procedure

The questionnaire was trialed and some slight changes made before administration. Generally the questionnaire was able to be completed in class time, which ensured a very good response rate. A covering letter was included giving reasons for the survey and assuring confidentiality. The data were gathered within a period of a few weeks.

Study Results

Of the 152(100%) respondents who responded, 89 (58.5%) full-time students and 63 (41.5%) learned the course under part-time mode. In light of this, 142(93.4%) respondents explained that the course was a preferred choice for their future carrier since knowledge, skill and experiences they were gaining were requirements for wage or self-employment or both. Further analysis of data revealed that 104(68.4%) studied IT course in order to acquire credentials for job seeking as one respondent (0.6%) from this group narrated '*..... there may job opportunities which require IT qualifications I am sure after completion of this course I will automatically be able to gain wage employment*'. With regard to this group, findings indicated that all of them were neither employed nor self employed.

The remaining group of respondents 48(31.6%) apart from all being employed/self employed, 28.5% attended IT course in order to gain new job relevant skills and the remaining group 3.1% because of personal interests. Relevant to whether the DRVTSC was satisfying students learning IT, 141(92.7%) rated DRVTSC as satisfactory in providing them new IT knowledge and skills as well as providing them job qualifications., 139(90.55) indicated that job may result, if they were successful in learning IT course. Furth more, it was very impressive from the study that 149(98%) respondents perceived that the course in which they had enrolled was expected to be beneficial to them in fulfilling their vocational needs.

The collection of information from both groups of respondents (NMES and MES) allowed respondent

differences to be compared. Table I outlines the percentage of group of respondents who studied primary education in English medium schools and those who studied in non-English medium schools before joinining VTCs. The results show that, separate to the major problems for both groups of delivery speed and of needing more IT practice time, other differences emerged between these groups.

Respondents who joined VTCs from non-English medium primary schools (NEMS) indicated more issues indicated in a comparative table below.

Table1: Responses from Respondents with Regard to the use Medium of Instruction and Learning in the IT laboratory

Perceived Issues	NEMS Group (N=122)	EMS Group (N=30)
Not comprehending the lesson content and materials	102(83.6%)	1(3.3%)
Unclear instructions	98(64.5%)	2(6.6%)
Understanding instructors	39(32.2%)	28(93.3%)
Too few practical exercises	120(98.4%)	2(6.7%)
Communication problems	119(97.5%)	
Lack of perceived feedback	98(80.3%)	9(30%)

Analysis of data revealed that some students from both groups had a problem of the Medium of instruction when learning IT courses. The percentage is high for group of those who did not study in English medium primary schools. In this regard the issue of comprehending is congruent to understanding the course contents as well as the number and type of practical provided to them during learning. It is imperative that failure to comprehend the content and the associated issues is empirically influenced by poor mastery of the medium of instruction as one respondent highlighted '*..... It is difficult to master English at later age and use it effectively in learning difficult subject such as IT. It is third language after my mother tongue*'.

The major discovery from the above data is that: (i) not all learners from English medium primary schools master English and use it effectively in learning other courses at secondary/tertiary levels. This is in line with the findings that 30% of total respondents (N=30) from a group of English Medium schools lacked perceived feedback which underpins all learning components in vocational training (Table 1). (ii) Mastery of the medium of instruction/learning does not always positively influence learning of vocational subjects which are always associated with doing practical.

In this case, while 98.7% of total respondents from English medium schools (N=30) comprehended contents and material, 1.3% from the same group were not able to do so.(ii) Not all students from Non English medium schools do not master English and fail to use it effectively in learning vocational courses. In this case, 39(32%) respondents

(N=122) from a group of non-English medium schools were able to understand instructions and 3(2.5%) had no communication problems.

The validity of this discovery is evidenced by what is currently observed in our Tanzania whereby Japanese despite of not mastering English and Kiswahili languages are effective in providing different skills to Tanzanians. The argument could be a 'base' for education policy makers to decide on the preferred medium of instruction in Tanzania educational institutions at all levels: and hence amend the current Education and Training policy (2014) on language of instruction/learning component.

Table 2: Perceived Issues with Regard to Environmental Perspective Skill Instruction/Learning at DRVTSC: Comparative Data

Perceived Problems	NEMS Group (%) (N=122)	EMS Group (%) (N=30)
There is no enough time for using IT facilities	60(49.2%)	3(10%)
Course content covered too fast	120(98.3%)	2(6.7%)
Instructional techniques not good	119(77.5%)	1(3.3%)
Availability of time to work and study at home or library	117(95.5%)	
Poor preparation of practical lessons	67(64.9%)	
Understanding what instructors say	50(41%)	30(100%)
Course content covered very fast	106(88.5%)	1(5%)
No one to see about my IT problems	20(16.3%)	
Instructional/learning resources not enough	60(49.2%)	11(36.7%)

Based on data in Table 2, qualitative comments indicated other areas of difficulties experienced by NEMS such as all instructions should be written rather than spoken. In instruction/learning situation availability of written instructions enable students to learn by repetitions (Jacob, 2013) and hence, the retention of learned materials as well as an instrument of understanding what instructors says in the laboratory.

These are in line with instructional techniques whereby instructors (80%) frequently used lecture method of instruction which resulted into very fast covering of course contents. Swich-coding was technique explained by respondents (74%) from a group of NEMS facilitate learning among them. Respondent argued that '... Sometimes the class

is happy when the instructor after instructing in English elaborates concepts in Kiswahili'. In this case, the instructor use of both English and Kiswahili during skill training helped them to understand many concepts during skill learning. This is practiced by few instructors who need more understanding of students. But instructors (70%) were reported not to have empathy towards their learning ability that is used stereotypes which is discouraged when teaching diverse group of students especially those with different education background (Koyogo, 2014).

Lack of enough time for using IT facilities was a problem to both groups although at different rates. No access to IT facilities outside DRVTSC. The situation negatively influenced the rate of learning IT in a language of instruction. The issue is in line with few hours at the vocational training and service centre and many hours at home which influence the rate of learning and understanding of the language of instruction. Some comparative, EMS group comments revealed:

- (i). Not enough time available on learning and using IT facilities and equipment
- (ii). Difficulty finding time to practice and study at home or in the library;
- (iii). There is satisfaction because it is the course there were interested to study.
- (iv). The course was challenging and interesting.

It is clear from the results represented in Table 2 that the highest frequency responses supported improvements in the clarity of verbal instructions given. Qualitative comments in support suggested instructions to be written on the board or on paper or students to be given handouts, rather than be given orally whereby by many students fail to capture main them of the lessons due instructors' difficulties in pronouncing many vocational terms. Next is the suggestion on availability of many practical which is in line with the suggested extra time requirements for occupational work. A 'buddy' system was suggested by 80% of learners as a useful aid to learning: that is where two students work together discuss learned issues to improve their competencies.

Other suggestions which received some support were for English language to be taught as a subject in line with vocational courses as well as the provision of competent instructors to help learners during learning of both theory and practical. Further results indicated that the students from a group of NEMS learners were motivated to learn English and vocational skills and that the majority (85%) found the IT course challenging, interesting and enjoyable. NEMS (76.5%) did not find the IT course difficult, but provided recommendations for improvement (Table 3)

Table 3: Perceived Importance of factors to Improve IT Learning: Response from NEMS group (N=122)

Factors	N(%)
Clear instructions	7(5.7%)

Increase number of practical exercises	15(12.3%)
The use of 'Buddy' system during instruction	10(8.2%)
Provision of English language training language	60(49.2%)
Availability of more than one competent instructors in a class/laboratory	10(8.2%)
Availability of more time for IT training	20(16.4%)
TOTAL	122(100%)

Some 97% of respondents indicated that a good knowledge of English was important. The majority of respondents used the word '*competent*' as a key word or the word '*instructions*'. They clearly perceived the importance of having good English skills as a basis for learning '*with understanding*' and being better able to follow instructions and '*occupational*' operations during practical. For instance, comments such as without mastering English it is difficult to a course and it is hard to follow theoretical and practical instructions and mastering English language helps to communicate with instructor and to '*grasp*' concepts were provided by 105(86%) of total respondents. It was revealed by 58(47.5%) of NEMS students that they would prefer a course designed for students with different fluency levels of English.

As for the assessment component of the course, 43% of NEMS respondents requested the use of simple language whilst 32 others opted for clearer written instructions and formatting: The test requirement to be verbally explained with more pre-exam practice given (20%).

Anecdotal evidence from the respondents indicated that lack of English language skills was the main issue for students' inability to comprehend lesson/practical assessment requirements. Qualitative comments indicated that some of the NEMS students were retrained because they acquired skills from informal Vocational Education (VET) system and that their qualifications were not accepted.

V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings revealed that the greatest hindrance to full NEMS learners' participation and learning was non mastery of English language skills. The difficulties experienced by NEMS learners because of the English language difficulties have been explained by authors in different disciplines of study. Scott (2000) argues that English language and literacy skills are being seen as setting critical boundaries for effective education and training for some learners. Findings also indicated that NEMS learners had difficulties with a range of issues such as: No enough time located for practice on the IT facilities and equipment, content covered too fast, failure to comprehend classroom and practical lesson contents and difficulty in finding time to work and study at home or in a

library.

Some difficulties experienced by the NEMS learners were related to the students themselves and these included: Not understanding what instructors say, difficulties in understanding communicating with instructors and reading as well as understanding the course materials. These findings agree with Singh Falcon (2011) findings. Analysis of the findings indicates that NEMS learners were experiencing difficulties to a greater extent than EMS learners in the areas of 'content covered too-fast' and 'finding time to study at home or library'. For both NEMS and EMS students, the first converging difficulty could possibly relate to instructors not catering effectively for the learning capacity of the learners. The second difficulty is non-course related and, therefore, difficult to assess; perhaps family responsibilities is a contributing factor.

Some NEMS learners argued the IT course to be very difficult and hence, the importance of 'buddy' system and clearer instructions as well as availability of enough time to do many practical. The two groups converged on the importance of using English when studying IT because it helps with understanding and following of instructions. This indicates that there is awareness by these learners that knowledge of English facilitates learning. The recommendation for future provision of IT courses was that IT courses should be available at different English fluency levels.

Difficulties were experienced with assessment tasks. Some recommendations for improving assessment tasks are as follows: Assessment tasks to be written in simpler language; assessor to explain purposes; provide clearer written instructions for practical; more pre-examination practice; clear setting out.

Both institutional and non-institutional factors were thus implicated as hindrances to vocational course learning. Institutions and staff need to continue to address the concerns identified by NEMS learners so that these concerns do not create boundaries between dissatisfaction or withdrawal and course success and job attainment.

Conclusively, it has always felt by Africans educationalists that the African child's major learning problem is linguistic. Instruction is given in a language that is not normally used his immediate environment, a language that neither learner nor instructor understands and uses well enough (Obanya, 1980).

The medium of instruction (language) plays a crucial role in instruction and learning because in VTCs instructor and the learner communicate through language in all skill learning settings. While language serves as means of effective instruction and learning, it can also be a barrier in learning. If there is a '*mismatch*' between the language of instruction and the language of instruction known by the learner, instruction and learning can be adversely affected. Similarly, if the instructor is not competent in the language of instruction, the instruction and learning process can be hampered.

Therefore, the medium of instruction/learning is supposed

to help 'bringing' education close to the learner and therefore in motivating learners to invest energy and time in the intrinsic excitement and self regenerating 'dynamo' of learning.

What is experienced in Tanzania VTCs is a situation where the use of English language during instruction/learning takes place in the 'expense' of development of Kiswahili (National language). This is what Brock-Utne (2001) highlights to be 'subtractive' English where English is being used in schools at the expense of mother tongues (i.e. the use of Kiswahili in Tanzania). This is because foreign language (English) in Tanzania academic instruction/learning is stigmatizing our national language (Kiswahili). What is actually required in VTCs is 'additive' English, which is desired state so as to develop language competence among learners.

Some recommended ways, within DRVTSC of breaking through the barriers or hindrances to learning are: (i) Educate instructors on strategies such as medium of instruction counseling strategies and instructional strategies for teaching NEMS learners (ii) Rewrite course and subject material (in very simple English language) to facilitate ease of reading and comprehension, (iii) Survey withdrawn learners from vocational courses to identify problems and any institutional reasons for withdrawal, (iv) Experiment with the 'buddy system' of learning; (v) Acknowledge, learners' prior learning and provide ongoing English language assistance; (vi) Assessment of NEMS learners' level of English proficiency prior to enrolment. This can provide awareness to students and instructors to predict later hindrances they may encounter if proficiency is low; (vii) Consider NEMS learners' needs and goals and devise strategies which aim at reducing the effects of potential barriers to their present and continuing education and training. (viii) study the validity of switch-coding.

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