



ONLINE LIBRARY

(www.onekhmer.org/onlinelibrary)

Title: Factors affecting students' participation in technical and vocational education and training: Case of Cambodia

Name of Author	Samon Ratana
Name of University	University of Canberra
Country of Study	Australia
Major	Education
Degree	Master
Course Title	Contemporary Education
Type of Document	Essay
Year	2015

Factors affecting students' participation in technical and vocational education and training: Case of Cambodia

Abstract

Technical and vocational training and education is now being supported by the royal government of Cambodia and other partners in the country. More students start enrolling in the programs. There are a lot of factors which they take into their consideration before working on a specific course at a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) center and they are the location of the centers, the employability after graduation, the available subjects, and the quality of education provided. Moreover, there is one interesting factor which makes most of the students stay in the TVET program is their parents' decision to send them there. As a country rooted by Buddhism, all children are adhering to the Buddhism ideology and pay a deep respect to the elders and especially their parents. The final analysis has shown that parents' decision really has strong effects on their children's course options.

1. Introduction

Education is the key factor to push the economic growth in each country whether the developed or developing ones around the world. As part of education, technical and vocational education plays as an important role in producing more skilled labor to actively work in the economy. Power (1999) defined technical and vocational education (TVE) is the component of education most directly concerned with the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required by all citizens and workers in most manufacturing and service industries (p.30). The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system in Cambodia now consists of 39 polytechnics and institutes and 25 provincial training centers offering a wide range of programs, diplomas, bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees (Development Research Forum, 2013). However, only 1% of employed Cambodians have formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and less than 6% of Cambodians ages 20-24 have attended TVET schools (World Bank 2012a). Thus, we can see that there are many reasons behind this issue in Cambodia. All in all, this article review will provide some good viewpoints related to students' decision to get involved in TVET in Cambodia.

Key words: Technical and vocational education and training, Cambodia, students' participation, parents' decision, skilled labor, disadvantaged group.

2. Literature review

Choosing a school for pursuing a specific skill is a hard decision for students to make after they graduate from high school in Cambodia. Most of the students just go straight away for education at university level whereas small amount of students will go for technical and vocational education. Therefore, school choice is a hot issue in Cambodia nowadays.

Reasons for students to select a course

Students need to make a lot of decisions in their academic life from one stage to another as they are growing older and older. One of the most important stages is when they are done with their studies from high school. This time they need to select a course from the university or vocational training which they are interested in. Some students select a course because they are talented at it and some choose a course because they see the future employment in that field. In the United States of America (USA), a study conducted by Baird (1964, cited by Bradshaw et al 2001) showed that the students' key choice elements in selecting a course are good environment, high academic standards and course availability. In contrast, Brennan (2001) found that the crucial choice criteria are good faculty and high standards. He also found out that the cost and the quality of the institution are also major contributions. Moreover, Maguire and Lay (1981, cited in Bradshaw et al 1981) identified financial aid, peer influence, special program, and size of the institutions, location, athletic facilities and social activities as the most important factors in choosing an educational institution.

Mazzarol (1998); Krone et al (1981); and Morgan, Baron, and Bainbridge (2001) suggested the major influential variables on students' decision are:

- 1) Location of the institution
- 2) Reputation
- 3) Courses that are available with the benefits that they offer
- 4) Career opportunities with employment
- 5) Course specifics (content, structure, method, and assessment)
- 6) School ambience and environment (distant from home, rural/urban place, atmosphere of the campus, facilities of the city)
- 7) Reputation of the institutions

Moogan, Baron, and Bainbridge (2001) found out that there are two significant factors contribute to students' decision in attending local vocational institutions respectively location (distance from home) and the courses offered whereas those who want to go away from home for their study will first look at the courses and then location followed by social variables.

Moreover, McDonough (1997) argued that college choice is influenced by colleges, high schools, parents, friends, and the media. There are basically three strands of literature that address school choice: 1) social psychological studies, i.e., parental influence; 2) status attainment, i.e., social status; and 3) economic studies such as cost benefits and rational choice (Aypay, 2003).

Eichhorst, W. et al (2015) claims that some countries prefer to use the dual systems which general and vocational education could be seen together in at secondary level (p.316). Thus, students need to attend the vocational education as it is part of their schedule at school. Moreover, Eichhorst, W. et al (2015) added that technical and vocational education and training is usually regarded as the solution to better the opportunities of youth who lack the resources, skills, or motivation to continue with higher education (p.315).

For example, UNESCO advocates TVET, claiming that technical and vocational education that is driven by market demand is more effective in enhancing employment and income for the disadvantaged (Adams, 2011).

This is essentially an issue of access to TVET and, once girls and women enter TVET institutions, how they are received and accommodated (McClean & Lai, 2011, p. 6).

It is imperative to recognize that countries are at different stages of social and economic development. This has a direct bearing upon TVET needs and training systems; therefore, each nation must plan relevant TVET institutions and programs to meet its current and projected future needs (McClellan & Lai, 2011, p. 6).

Students' Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Thailand

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region is a place where there is a high potential for economic activities. All countries are trying to strengthen its educational system at higher level and the TVET system too. However, there are some countries which vocational and technical education and training is being promoted for the qualified skilled to compete in the job market especially for 2015 integration. Thailand, a neighboring country of Cambodia to the west, is building a good system in TVET. In 2007, the aim is to get 20% increase in the enrollment in TVET (MOE, 2006) and various types of training programs are offered and run by the Thai Vocational Education Commission (Pimpa, N., 2007). For instance, there are eight levels of studies found in the training programs ranging from semi-skilled level to degree level (MOE, 2006). Thai students acquire vocational education for enriching their industry-specific knowledge and skills. Finally, based on the study of Pimpa Nattavud (2007) entitled "Reference groups and choices of vocational education: Case of Thailand",

"the major factors contribute to students' decision in attending vocational schools are personal attitude towards vocational education, curriculum of the courses offered by institutions, potential for future employment after graduation, attractiveness of the campus, and tuition fees and scholarships".

Students' Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Australia

From the Australian context, students have attended the technical and vocational training and education centres for many reasons. Lamb (2011) stated that students who are from the disadvantaged families, with disabilities, and those who are living in the remote or rural areas are more likely to get involved in TEVT. Moreover, he added that disadvantaged students stay in the TVET due to it is part of their program at senior high school. Gaining the qualifications back to school, poor students are trying to enroll in TVET programs (Lamb, 2011). For instance, TVET has prepared the young labor force for the world of work and furthering their studies. Lamb (2011) additionally found that the old-aged people enroll into TVET programs because they are so competitive, but they are skill-based which create the good environments for them to learn. Finally, TVET programs build students more confidence in their achievements (Lamb, 2011). They are a part of the program because of seeing something more needed to be learnt in the purpose of accomplishing more work.

Students' Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Cambodia

Studies in the field of technical and vocational education and training have been done by royal government of Cambodia and other research institutions across the country. In its report, Development Research Forum has found out that royal government of Cambodia has prioritized TVET and put more effort to push the enrolment in this sector. As the result, the

number of students who participated in TEVT have increased from 2005 to 2009 with the number of 27, 894 to 168,630 respectively (ILO&NIS, 2010). Cambodia faces a lot of obstacles in making TVET accessible to its target students. The first reason is that it does not have enough financial support and relating materials in the workshop for students. Most students will have the classes for their TVET, but they learn a lot of theories and the real practice is not seen. Secondly, there is the fluctuation in effort and resources for the TVET centres. For example, one TVET centre could be run by 10 different ministries and the funding and resources are very limited. Thirdly, from the report, the lack of capital and information is another challenge which builds the wall for the private sector to get involved in this sector (Knight & MacLeon, 2004). Private organizations are not able to expand their coverage in terms of courses because they cannot get access to information related to TVET in Cambodia. Last but not least, most of the public and private TVET institutions are built in the urban areas whereas those who are willing to enrol into TVET programs are living in the rural parts of the country. Finally, Development Research Forum pointed out the problem in connection with supportive policies from the government of Cambodia. For instance, in the two provinces where the special economic zone located, the government established a university instead of having a TVET centre. Furthermore, Un (2012) revealed an analysis showing that in 2001 among 11 public higher education institutions that were part of the Priority Action Program showed that only 27 percent of them provided vocational and technical courses and only 9 received only 9 percent of the funding. Finally, the government has a plan to build one secondary school, rather than a TVET centre in every district. For these reasons, students are not able to come to the right decision in enrolling in a TVET program because they cannot get access to information about the course. When there are not many TVET institutions in the provinces, the location will be one of the major factors students take into their consideration in going for a TVET program. Last but not least, the government seems to make students not get involved in TVET programs as it is trying to provide general education rather than technical and vocational education and training to the rural students by building more universities not TVET centres.

3. Methodology

This review article is written using a variety of documents from different sources. The main sources are the documents about TVET in Cambodia from the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Asian Development Bank office, and the journals articles from the database of the University of Canberra. Within the literature review stage, a systematic analysis will be conducted to figure out the problem and come up with the right solutions to the problem identified.

4. Results

From the literature review, students from different countries decided to enrol for a technical and vocational training course because of a few factors and they are the location of the training centres, the possible future employment after finishing the course, the quality provided by the institutions, potentiality in competing in the job market regionally and globally, and job advancement in their organizations.

For Thailand, the major key for students in getting in to a technical and vocational education and training centre is to better the quality of their skills in competing in the job market in the home country and regionally.

For Australia, people come to be a part of the technical and vocational education and training because they are the disadvantaged people. They enrol into TVET programs to get skills fitting for the job market and qualifications to continue their higher education in the country. Thus, there are two main reasons for the students to take courses at a technical and vocational education and training centre and they are the disadvantagedness and furthering their higher education.

For Cambodian context, the students are now turning to get involved in the technical and vocational training and education as the demand of the skilled labour in the market especially for the tourism, garment, and agriculture. The productivity is really a concern for all employers to take into their consideration before hiring a new employee. There is a significant increase in the enrolment from 2005 to 2009. This figure illustrates the active involvement of the students in TVET in Cambodia.

5. Discussion

Literature from in various country contexts does not include parents' decision in children enrolment in a technical and vocational education and training institution. The factors are centre around the TVET institution itself, the course, and the financial stability of a student. One interesting factor is the location. Location has played as a crucial role in students' decision to go for a course in a TVET centre as supported by much literature. Noticeably, this element is also significant in affecting Cambodian students' decision. If there is the TVET centres built in their communities, they will go for it. However, the royal government turns the focus on universities rather than the TVET centres as seen in the literature review section. One more influential factor on students' decision is the parents' decision. Cambodia, a country, which 95% of the total population is Buddhists (<http://www.movetocambodia.com/about-cambodia/get-to-know-khmer-culture/religion/>), has something to deal with parents' influence when it comes to a decision of an issue in a family. For instance, some marriages happen in the country now are managed by the parents. From this perspective, enrolling into a course at a specific technical and vocational education and training has something to deal with the parents' decision too. Parents will guide their children to enrol in an institution and even recommend a course for their children to take too. Most children will walk on a path which is prepared by their parents even though they are not really happy to take that course. One more important factor which appears in Cambodian context in selecting a course is the gender issue. Women are seen weak in Cambodian context. Most of decision-making is usually finalised by the fathers in the family. So, if the mothers have a chance to influence the fathers' thinking in the family, this will make a change. Thus, the gender education is really an advantage to help all fathers understand the contribution of all women and daughters in an issue. This will increase more options for the children too due to the fact that most of Cambodian children are closed to the mothers than the fathers. So, their mothers understand them better than father, and when they are included in the decision-making process, it means that the children are giving more freedom in selecting the courses they want to take as their life careers.

In contrast, for the current situation in Cambodia, parents' influence seems to be lowered in every matters happening at home related to the children. Most parents nowadays are educated and they understand the talent of their children. They seek for comments from their children and come to the decision altogether. They want their children to reach their potential and be with the skills they want to have or dream of.

6. Recommendations

Finally, most Cambodian students are just like other students in Thailand and Australia; they go for the TVET courses because of a few factors such as employability, furthering their academic purposes, location of the TVET centres, and the job advancement.

However, due to the fact that Cambodia is rooted by Buddhism, parents are always get involved in the decision-making for most of the issues in the family including in selecting the course and the TVET centres for their children. Seeing the strong influence of parents' decision in choosing a course for their children to study at a technical and vocational education and training centre and with the understanding of Khmer tradition and culture, I have come up with some recommendations which facilitate the parents' and children's decision;

- Children have to be reasonable with their parents when they propose a course for themselves as skills for making a living.
- Parents need to find out their children interests and talent and discuss with them before sending them to a technical and vocational education and training centre.
- More advertisement on the TVET courses needed because this will provide the parents more information in recommending the right courses for their children.
- Parents have to be more educated or further their study because doing so they will learn more about the process of the right decision on a specific issue.
- Seeking the advice from the experts in the fields will make the parents and children be at ease in making the decision together.
- Raise the gender awareness in the community and through the curricula at school. Doing so the mother and children will have more contribution to the decision-making in the family.

References

- Development Research Forum. (2013). *Diversification of the Cambodian Economy: The Roles of Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Development Research Forum.
- ILO & NIS (2010). *Labour and Social Trends in Cambodia 2010*. Phnom Penh: National Institute of Statistics.
- Lamb, S. (2011). TVET and the poor: challenges and possibilities. *International Journal of*

Training Research, 9(1), 60-71.

McDonough, P.M. (1997). Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity. State University of New York (SUNY) Press: Albany, NY.

Pimpa, N. (2007). Reference groups and choices of vocational education: Case of Thailand. International research education conference.

Power, C. N. (1999). Technical and vocational education for the twenty-first century. *Prospects*, 29(1), 29-36.

Un, L. (2012). “A comparative study of education and development in Cambodia and Uganda from their civil wars to the present”, Ph.D. thesis (University of Amsterdam)

World Bank (2012). *Cambodia's economic monitor update (July 2012)*. Phnom Penh: World Bank.