Push, pull and fallout dropout factors in continuing education program: The Case of Dire Dawa University

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Abstract

This study investigated the reasons why students drop out based on push, pull and fallout theoretical framework. The study used quantitative survey method on a total of 223 students selected by stratified random sampling technique and verbatim data were collected using open ended questions. The survey quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and based on statistical assumptions, proportion t-tests were used to make inferences. Qualitative focus group discussion was also held on 15 key informants. The findings of the study revealed that the push factors more prominently accounted for students' dropout rather than pull and fallout dropout factors.

Keywords: Students' Drop out, Push factor, Pull factor, Fallout factor, CEP

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Introduction

Continuing Education Program (CEP) is essential to get updated with the latest developments, skills, and new technologies needed for ones' field of study beyond graduating from a program. Some professions also need continuing education to comply with laws, remain licensed or certified, or maintain membership in an association or licensing body. Over all, CEP is considered a way for professionals to keep abreast of their fields so that they don't lag behind. (Murangi, 1997, UNESCO, 2014) Many careers need continuing education. Therefore, countries adopt and issue different policies and strategies to accommodate potentials learner and keep the education sector accessible.

Ethiopia is trying to achieve with all possible efforts the Second Growth Transformation Plan, aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and improving the welfare

of its peoples (MoFED, 2006, 2010). Providing Quality Education to all students is one of the major goals in educational documents and a stepping stone to achieve the Growth and Transformation Plan (MoFED, 2006, P.109; MoE, 2010). CEP is seen as the stepping stone for creating different educational opportunities and lifelong skills for a society (MoE, 2008; UNESCO, 2014). Through the skills and knowledge gained, CEP enables people to participate in the social, economic and political activities of their communities to their potential.

Statement of the Problem

The term 'university dropout' is commonly used to describe situations where a student leaves the university study in which (s)he has enrolled before having obtained a formal degree (Larson et al, 2013). Educational drop out is a global problem in higher institutions (Tinto & John, 1973; Tinto, 1975; Paura & Arhipova, 2014). Questions of why CEP students drop out of the educational system and how to prevent these are vital and relevant with educational system (Elana, et.al, 2018). Multitude of institutional, cultural, economic, environmental and personal factors might have contributed to this state of affairs. Existing studies have identified a number of significant factors related to drop out from the perspective of push, pull and fallout

factors (Doll et al, 2013; Elana et.al, 2018; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017) such as a student's socio-economic background (Shannon and Bylsma, 2005), academic competencies (Tinto, 1975; Shannon and Bylsma, 2005), motivations for studying (Tinto, 1975, Thunborg et al., (2011), and academic climate (Godor, 2017) and so forth. Doll et al. (2013), found out that pull factors were the major contributing factors for students' dropout. As per Elana (2018), long- and short-term reasons could contribute for students dropout based on individual and institutional characteristics and behaviors. But, drop out problems in higher institutions of developed countries may not be similar with the context of that of developing countries like Ethiopia which have to be supported by empirical research. Maintaining a reasonable number of students in CEP of DDU is challenging. In the last five years, for instance, the dropout rate of CEP in DDU has been increasing to a considerable extent compared to the dropout rate in preceding years. The CEP alone at 2015/16 has increased its enrollment to 1812 in 2015/16 (DDU Registrar, 2016). The students total dropout rate from year to year is increasing in alarming rate as shown in Table 1. During this period, the registrar data has shown that 2000 students have dropped out from their study. Assessing the factors could pinpoint possible directions to all stakeholders to

2

make some remedial actions or find out about problems of CEP. However, the primary agents for the dropouts among

push, pull and fallout factors for this huge number of dropout is unknown.

Table 1: Number of Students Drop-out from year 2009/10-2013/14.

Academic Year	Sem I	Sem III	Dropouts
2009/10	1130	885	245
2010	3435	2839	596
2011	1086	842	244
2012	1195	815	380
2013/14	1231	696	535
Total			**2000**

Source: Dire Dawa University Registrar, 2015/16

Research Question

What is the major reason among pull, push and fall out factors for students' dropout in CEP?

Conceptual Framework

Dropouts and delays of graduation have been studied a lot and there are several frameworks to categorize the factors. First, a framework developed by (Jordan et al., 1994; Watt & Roessingh, 1994) defines three factors for drop-outs; push, pull, or fall out of an institution factors. In push-out factors, an institution is active and the factors include poor academic performance and disciplinary problems. Pull-out factors refer to out-of-institution factors like work or family reasons, or illness. The fall out factor mean that a student does not show significant academic progress and in a way a student just disappears. During several decades the pull factors are depicted as the highest factor for dropout (Doll et. al, 2013). Second, Rumberger & Lim (2008)

defined two groups of factors to explain reasons for drop-outs; individual characteristics of students and institutional characters of their families, schools and communities.

A framework was developed by two groups of authors to explain reasons why students drop out such that they can be pushed, pulled, or fall out of educational institutions (Jordan et al., 1994; Watt & Roessingh, 1994). These accounts can be integrated to explain the overall dropout experience. Jordan et al. (1994) explained pressures on students of push and pull dropout factors. A student is pushed out when undesirable situations within the school environment direct to consequences, eventually resulting in dropout. These include tests, attendance and discipline policies, and even consequences of poor behavior (Elana, et.al, 2108).

On the other hand, students can be pulled out when factors inside the student divert

3

them from completing school. These occur when factors, such as financial worries, out-of-school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage or childbirth, pull students away from school. They can even include illnesses, as these cause students to put a greater value on something outside of school, and therefore they do not complete school (Doll et. al, 2013). Watt and Roessingh (1994) added a third factor called falling out of school, which occurs when a student does not show significant academic progress in schoolwork and becomes less concerned or even cynical with school completion. It is not necessarily an active decision, but rather a "side-effect of insufficient personal and educational support" (p. 293). Also, more than push or pull factors, falling out factors highlight a process in school dropout whereby the student gradually increases in behaviors or desires of academic disengagement, yet without being forced out by the school or attracted by things they need (Finn, 1989; Finn & Pannozzo, 1995). As a consequence, the students eventually drop out of the system.

The key difference between push, pull, and fall out factors has to do with agency (Doll et. al, 2013). With push factors, the school is the agent whereby a student is removed from school as a result of a consequence. With pull factors, the student is the agent, such that attractions or distractions entice them out of school. Finally, with falling out factors, neither the student nor school is the agent. Instead, circumstances exist that neither the school nor the student can the primary agent, and as a result, the connection students have with school gradually diminishes.

Research Design and Method

The study conducted using quantitative survey design. The population of interest in this study was 1812 students attending CEP in 10 departments. The size of students in departments differ by large from each other; so that, first stratified sampling was used and then participants were selected using proportional allocation to make the sample representative of the population. Then, for selecting students simple random sampling technique was used through the lottery method. In the focus group discussion, 15 key informants have participated. The key informants were the CEP dean, coordinators, department heads, college registrar coordinators, senior registrar data clerk, instructors and CEP students' representatives of their respective colleges.

Sample Size Determination and Allocation

The sample size accounting for about 13% of the total population size (N=1812) was
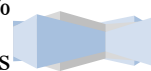
223, distributed to different departments using "Proportional Allocation". That is, it gives a self-weighting sample by which numerous estimates can be made with greater speed and higher degree of precision (Darogha & Chaudry, 1986, p.

55). Accordingly, the following table of sample size allocation is prepared. These sample sizes had further been allocated to the different batches within the departments as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample size for each department for the survey

Department	N_i	n_i	Available batches
Civil Engineering	250	31	Year I, II, III, IV, V
Electrical Engineering	40	5	Year II, IV, V
COTM	36	4	Year III, IV, V
Computer Science	87	11	Year I, II, III, IV
Economics	82	10	Year I, II, III
Law	42	5	Year IV, V
Management	347	43	Year I, II, III
Marketing	55	7	Year I, II
PADM	16	2	Year III
Accounting	857	105	Year I, II, III
Total	**1812**	**223**	

Source: DDU Registrar, 2015/16

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

To investigate students' drop out reasons on CEP based on theoretical framework of pushed, pulled and fall out factor, data were collected through structured survey questionnaire for current students. It was prepared in a 5-level likert scale format as: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. The participants' responses are merged into "*disagree*" and "*agree*" for the purpose of analysis and being tested. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage and standard deviation to summarize the data. Again, based on statistical assumptions, a parametric method (proportion t-test) was used to test the statistical significance of the study variables. The conclusion is based on the P-value and the equivalent 95% Confidence Interval (CI) as indicated in the last two columns of tables 4-6.

Results and Discussion
Background Data

The background data of the total 223 respondents is tabulated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of background data

Factor	Classification	Percent
Gender	Male	70
	Female	30
Age	15-19	5
	20-24	44
	> 25	51
Marital status	Single	68
	Married	32
Family Size	1-2	22
	3-4	37
	5-6	24
	> 6	17
Have dependents at home	Yes	45
Primary Caregiver	Yes	28
Previous Education Level	Preparatory	36
	Diploma	28
	First Degree	33
	Others	3
Employment conditions	Government	39
	Private	14
	Self	6
	NGO	5
	None	36
Monthly Income(ETB)	Less than 1500	11
	1501-3000	31
	3001-4500	27
	4501-6000	18
	More than 6000	13
Residence	Dire Dawa	95
	Family and friends in CEP	59
	Information session	29
Source of information to join CEP	Others	12

Source: Own Survey, 2018

Pushing factors results

Among the pushed factors, majority of the instructors build on students' previous knowledge and that they are willing to listen to students, but their teaching method is not active. The rest factors are almost fifty-fifty that instructors are knowledgeable, staff is not caring to students, and students are not provided with feedback on assessments, enough course materials are not provided and that courses are not supported by practical trainings

Table 4: Pushed Factors

Pushed Factors	Agree	Disagree	Total	% agree	95% CI	P-value
Instructors don't build on previous knowledge	68	103	171	40	32-48	0.009
Instructors' are not knowledgeable	73	83	156	47	45-61	0.471
Staff is not caring at DDU	84	72	156	54	46-62	0.379
Instructors are not willing to listen	55	119	174	32	25-39	0.000
The teaching method is not active	112	63	175	64	56-71	0.000
Instructors do not provide feedback	93	88	181	51	44-59	0.768
Course materials are not sufficiently available	81	91	172	47	45-61	0.493
Practical trainings are lacking	89	78	167	53	45-61	0.439

Source: Own Survey, 2018

Among the pushed factors, majority of the instructors build on students' previous knowledge which was (P<0.05; CI=32-48) and that they are willing to listen to students (P<0.05; CI=25-39) found significant in not contributing dropout problem. Instructors teaching method is not active (P<0.05; CI=56-71) found significantly associated with student dropout in CEP. The rest factors are almost fifty-fifty that instructors are not knowledgeable (P>0.05; CI=45-61), staff is not caring to students (P>0.05; CI=46-62), students are not provided with feedback on assessments (P>0.05; CI=44-59), enough course materials are not provided (P>0.05; CI=45-61) and that courses are not supported by practical trainings (P>0.05; CI=45-61). Therefore, this test of proportion at 95% confidence interval shows most of the pushing factors found insignificant in contributing to

student dropout of the program need to look in to and rigorously scrutinizing each factor is inevitable as the data suggest partially significant.

Sixty two students filled the open ended verbatim questions and students response is analyzed within pushed, pulled and fall out factors framework. Based on the verbatim comment on registrar, the respondents (23%) wrote that the registrar do not serve the students properly. The written comments on registrar include the following: registrar is disorganized and not held responsible for their wrong doings; in some cases student aware they have been dismissed during their fresh man year but keep learning till the third year and informed they will not graduate. It kills our feeling; still we are registering without grade report but no one takes the responsibility if we face a problem; classes

are not started on time at the beginning of the semester because of this, many teachers do not cover the courses properly. These also affect exams and exam schedules as it often changed. Therefore, the registration program has to be improved; because, the date does not recognize the government payment system. Despite all these challenges there is no course exemption in DDU, but it is considered in other institutions.

Students (52%) on the verbatim data wrote the following comments on the need to incorporate practical courses and lab sessions: they suggest, mostly students pay for lab and tutorials but we didn't get the required lesson; in almost all courses which requires practical lessons we have never use laboratories and field trip as well. However, there is a symbolic workshop and lab room, having no instrument/equipment, no lab technician. On top of this, tutorials are given by a projector and are not taken seriously. Sometimes it is boring because the instructor is simply reading the slides, and when the light is off, they postponed the lesson since they cannot teach without projector. Moreover, some teachers do not have the ability to communicate their knowledge to students. Their explanations are not related to practice, focused more on theory. Here, PADM students, for instance, has noted that some practical attachment

should be given in order to make the theoretical aspects of the lesson with live experience.

On the verbatim data of the survey, the respondents (48%) gave written comments on examinations and assessments. The following were summary of the comments:

Most instructors rush to finish the courses and give Assignment, Quiz, Test and Final exam in one week at the end of the semester. Some courses have many chapters. So, "I would suggest that chapters examined under continuous assessment to be excluded from final exam." Though limited time is allocated in some cases, exams are not related to the subject we learnt. Besides, exams are tough to answer and also difficult to understand. Teachers in DDU are good in preparing exams rather than teaching the courses. The teachers do not have the habit of giving feedbacks. "No Grade" will be given if one misses one quiz. Some teachers are not good on assessments reasoning saying "we have no time". No 'retest' even if a student gets 1 out of 10. Furthermore, lack of transparency and accountability is commonly observed in assessment because some teachers give additional grade by business and acquaintances. So, cross checking exam results are important as check and balance tool. On top of this, some instructors are not professional in securing exam and use the

exam delivered for regular program without any modifications. In some cases even final exam was handed over to students via the instructor himself or via the department secretary.

Respondents (48%) on the verbatim comment wrote the following on lack of good infrastructure to run the CEP in DDU: assuring quality education without laying proper infrastructure is unthinkable. However, respondents forwarded frankly to manifest the ongoing institutional problem pertinent to infrastructure. They indicated that:

All lab rooms do not have sufficient windows; they are not properly opened and no ventilation is installed; the environment and classrooms are not comfortable to learn; CEP has a class after 12:00 (night) but most of the time power is off so we return home; most of the switches and sockets in the classes do not work properly. So it is better to have alternative power source like standby generator. For Example, we have taken exam by flashlight of our mobile.

Related to lack of quality teaching and learning, respondents (48%) on the verbatim comments wrote the following (all respondents provided negative comments except two students): sometimes classes are called on weekdays and some of us may not hear it as some teachers change

classrooms as they wish. Most students have useful knowledge and right insights about the lesson, but we are in silence mode, in case we may not get acceptance by teachers. Especially girls are affected by an unwanted behavior of some teachers. Teachers have major problems: they do not consider our work obligations; they are careless, do not complete topics, most of them suffer from teaching problems and they do not know the course well. In accordance to this, most teachers explain in Amharic which is a huge problem than the medium of instruction. This may be due to skilled, qualified and responsible teachers are not assigned especially for engineering students. Experienced teachers are not assigned very much for major courses. Hence, some teachers are failed to deliver the course in a significant depth. Apart from this, sometimes teachers mix teaching and learning process with personal problems.

On the focus group discussion, almost, every informant raised the point that CEP in Dire Dawa is one potential area to serve the community, however; it is caught with many challenges and obstacles. Some of the major points they raised are the following: students dropped out because of the way they are taught, assessment mechanism, handling students are no conducive; beside, teachers preparedness is very weak; the institution is not running the program seriously and considers it just as an extra

burden. In my view, the first who is going to be asked for the failure of the program is the top management; there are no clear duties and responsibilities of directors, deans, coordinators and department heads; the top management is far from overseeing the CEP activities, continuous assessment is not practiced well; there is weak institutional coordination among top, middle and lower management; there is no clear schedule for CEP students, most teachers do not obey classroom schedule; for instance, one teacher came only for 2 days per semester. Absurdly the same instructors 'give' F in DDU CEP but give A in other private colleges for the same course which indicate the grading of instructors is paradox.

Table 5: Pulled Factors

Items	Agree	Disagree	Total	% Agree	95% CI	P-value
Courses are not specific to my field of study	50	122	172	29	22-36	0.000
Family responsibility is a problem to me	94	79	173	54	47-62	0.287
Family and friends do not motivate to attend CEP	44	128	172	26	19-33	0.000
Courses aren't useful to our career	36	131	167	22	16-29	0.000
Course materials are not based on my learning Style	59	99	158	37	30-45	0.002
The university is far from where I live	74	102	176	42	35-50	0.042

Source: Own Survey, 2018

During the Focus Group Discussion, the key informants responded the following important points regarding pulling out factors: students are attracted to private colleges than to CEP because they are not welcomed here; also due to our grading system being a fixed scale (even though they get better knowledge here, grade is ultimately better to them), one staff witnessed this point: his wife moved to a private college, because of fear of hardships, in spite of the fact that she won a free scholarship here in DDU; also senior staffs of DDU are more interested to teach at private collages than their own institute.

Fallout Factors Results

Regarding the fall out factors, only two of the factors are found to affect almost half of the students. These are, students sit for exam with minimum stress, and they pay reasonable tuition fee. For all of the other factors, majority of the students do have positive attitudes and hence cannot be

major reasons for them to drop out of CEP: they get personal satisfaction from their study; they are interested, enjoy, and are motivated towards their studies.

Regarding the fall out factors, only two of the factors are found to affect almost half of the students. These are, students sit for exam with minimum stress, and they pay reasonable tuition fee with a p-value of 0.646 and 0.705, respectively. For all of the other factors, majority of the students do have positive attitudes with a p-value of 0.000 and hence cannot be major reasons for them to drop out of CEP: they get personal satisfaction on their study, have confidence on finishing their study, they are

interested, enjoy, and are motivated towards their studies.

The test of proportion shows among fallout factors affecting student dropout at 95% confidence interval being anxious during exam found significant (p-value of 0.000). On top of this factor such as schedule suitability (p-value 0.022), tuition fees (p-value of 0.705) and feeling stressed during exam (p-value of 0.646) found moderately contributing factors for dropout. However, the remaining variable mentioned in table 6 suggest are entirely not a contributing factor as per the test of proportion for each variable.

Table 6: Fallout Factors

Fallout Factors	Agree	Disagree	Total	% Agree	95% CI	P-value
I didn't get personal satisfaction on my study	34	160	194	18	12-24	0.000
I think I will not finish my study	24	174	198	12	8-17	0.000
I am not anxious in my field	102	57	159	64	56-72	0.000
I do not enjoy my study	47	143	190	25	19-32	0.000
I am not interested in my study	52	142	194	27	21-34	0.000
I do not have motive in my study	64	128	192	33	26-41	0.000
Students sit for exam with minimum stress	82	89	171	48	40-56	0.646
Students do not pay reasonable tuition fee	84	90	174	48	44-59	0.705
Students do not find the schedules is suitable	71	102	173	41	34-49	0.022

Source: Own Survey, 2018

In the verbatim comment, respondents indicated that taking attendance is one of the assessment tools for grading and so that one of the main causes for student failure. Missing class may happen because of various reasons like their job situation; family related problem and so on in which the instructor as much as possible should be flexibility so that progressively dropping out will not occur. Again, they noted that teachers should consider about giving the knowledge not the attendance. On the contrary, some students have also indicated that the concerned body must take serous measure on students who do not attend class regularly or who are absent from class often. In addition, the respondents also wrote their comments on tuition fee that it is not balanced and it is very high.

Discussion

Push, pull and fall out perspectives call attention to that students drop out reason with the primary agent being the students themselves, the institution. This study sheds light on CEP students drop out by doing a survey and collecting verbatim data in relation to what contribute students drop out from CEP. Notably, findings from the present investigation on the survey suggest that the students drop out due to push factors rather than pull and fall out factor. Contrary to this, prior study has shown that the pull factors are

depicted as the highest factor for dropout (Doll et. al, 2013. This may be due to the context of CEP differ from one institution to another.

Based on the verbatim data , the finding of the study showed the most common prevalent were push out factors like lack of good registrar service, poor quality of teaching and learning in CEP, improper professional ethics by instructors, bad assessment practices, problems of tuition fee , not enough infrastructure and the like. Similar factors were listed out on the synthesis of research literature done by Doll et al (2013). The pulled out factors obtained were taking social responsibility and missing classes due to work and study programs. A similar finding was obtained by Jokipelto and Bäck (2014) students dropped out due to the difficult of combining studies with family and work. Some fall out factors observed were students lose hope that we will not hired after graduation and F_x grading system will lead students to eventually to depart CEP. The other fall out factor obtained students afraid to express anything to the instructors which may result in students drop out.

On the Focus Group Discussion, almost many contributing factors for CEP drop out problems had been raised by participants as reviewed by scholars on dropped problems

(Doll et al, 2013; De Witte et.al, 2013). The key participants raised concerns from DDU top management problems to administrative bodies' problems, to instructors that need to be addressed in CEP in DDU. The finding of Focus Group Discussion suggest more likely that the primary agent for high dropout problem in DDU is the institution itself. Institutional behavior can include what academic and student support programs are offered to students and when, institutional policies, and campus procedures. These policies, procedures, and academic programs can both operate in such a way that they accommodate the needs of adult students and offer the flexibility needed by the adult student population, or institutional practices can operate in a more "one-size-fits-all" model that does not consider the unique characteristics of adult students. The finding of this study suggest from top management to instructor were not accountable for CEP. For instance, as depicted in the focus group discussion there is high power relationship between instructors and students in DDU CEP. According to Godor (2017, p. 266) "if the regulation in academic communities is perceived by students as too constraining or illegitimate", students would be forced to drop out from CEP.

Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate the reasons that students dropped out from CEP taking the theoretical framework of push, pull and fall out factors based on students' survey data, verbatim data, and FGD on key informants. The push factors are more responsible for students' dropout triangulating the study data. Among others, the push out factors includes such as not employing active instructional method, not giving assessment feedback, not caring students and not getting enough course resources and lack of practical training was the reasons for students' dropout. The verbatim comments also suggested that the push factors contribute to students drop out in that registrar is not serving properly, courses are not practically supported, assessments are not fair and transparent, facility are not fulfilled, the quality of teaching-learning is not as expected, there is no follow up of the program by the concerned bodies, and that the class schedules are not in accordance with the weather condition of the city. From the focus group discussion, it has been learned that the teaching-learning process and assessment system are not carried out properly, and payment to staff is not attractive and not effected on time. Moreover, the status of students is not

determined timely so that they learn without knowing whether or not they have passed. However, based on the survey result most of the pull factors are not major reasons for students drop out from CEP, because students rated that courses are specific to their fields of study, useful to their career, their families and friends and they agreed that they were motivated to attend CEP. Similarly, most of the fallout factors do not account for most of the students to drop out of CEP. Majority of the students get satisfaction from, enjoy, are interested in, motivated towards, and will finish their studies. Contrary to this, students responded that the teaching center is too far for most of the students to attend CEP. These results can be used to identify barriers to complete their study in Continuing Education Program, which in turn could help intervention efforts be more effective. In conclusion, The institution should take the prime responsibility to retain its students to complete their study and graduate from CEP because the primary agent based on this study finding is the academic climate as a whole as a push factor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following points are recommended for the overall improvement of CEP and to retain its students. DDU should seek solutions to the pushing factors of students drop out of CEP; particularly follow up and supervision of the teaching-learning, assessment process. Grading system policy has to be revised in light of private college practices. Students should get engaged in practical classes like lab sessions, field trips and apprenticeship. Inverted classroom or flipped classroom where students get enough resources to read and prepare before class and come to discussion to class may be appropriate for CEP students rather than using lecture method often. Registrar services should be delivered properly and timely. Payments to academic and supportive staff should be improved and get the payment on time. Status of students had better be determined timely. Both the registrar and finance system of DDU has to be automated for increasing each stakeholder satisfactions. Facilities for classrooms and laboratories should be studied and fulfilled.

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14

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