

The Equity-Quality Dilemma of Higher Education Expansion: A Goal-oriented Planning Approach for Maintaining High Quality Standards in Ethiopia

Demissie L. Karorsa
Walter S. Polka

ABSTRACT

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, has embarked on an aggressive mission to expand higher education opportunities for its populace during the past two decades. However, associated with this aggressive approach to increasing higher education opportunities is the dilemma that educational planners face of improving the quality of the higher education system while the expansion is occurring. The major higher education strategic planning issues related with resolving this dilemma are analyzed in this article and recommendations for a more efficient and effective approach to improving higher education in Ethiopia as well as in other countries is presented.

INTRODUCTION

It is well understood that in the emerging global economy advanced human capital has become a crucial factor in economic development and a nation's competitive advantage. Consequently, many countries are shifting from an elitist style to a more mass systems style of higher education (Trow, as cited in Dill, 2007). In addition, such a global demand for skilled human capital is also advocating for improvement in the quality standard of higher education programs in many countries. Educational leaders in various developing and developed nations are, thus, seeking a more flexible and more applicable approach to ensure international recognition of the credentials granted by their country's higher education institutions (HEIs).

Thus, it is imperative to assess the quality of higher education not only from the perspective of meeting national education standards, but also in terms of its comparative global standings. The authors of this article have the conviction that there has to be some general standard criteria against which the quality of higher education is compared globally as well as nationally. Subsequently, for the purpose of this paper, the objectives of higher education set by the *National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in the United Kingdom (UK)* were used as global quality framework reference. In addition, the objectives established by the *Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP)* for higher educational institutions, and the higher education objectives stipulated in the *Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009* were selected as internal measures of expected quality.

Therefore, the authors used both widely accepted external measures of quality and policy-driven internal measures of quality to critically analyze the current status of higher education in Ethiopia. The authors believe that most of the objectives identified in both of the above cited quality reference documents contain useful rubrics that are applicable measures to consider no matter the context since they are inherent quality goals for higher educational institutions in both developed and developing countries. They definitely represent comprehensive overarching goals relevant to any developing country aspiring to improve the results within their respective higher education sector. Thus, the researchers posit the following questions to facilitate a contemporary analysis of the Ethiopian higher education experience:

- 1). What is the current status of the Ethiopian higher education system in light of these basic accepted global higher education standards and national expectations for higher educational institutions (HEIs)?
- 2). What limitations to advancing higher educational quantity and quality are currently being evidenced in Ethiopia?
- 3). How may the existing gaps between higher educational quantity and quality be minimized so that the results expected of higher educational institutions throughout the world, and specifically in Ethiopia, may be efficiently and effectively realized?

It should also be noted that the current thesis is based on the authors' practical engagement in higher educational institutions both globally as well as within the Ethiopian education system. However, it must be emphasized that issues related to quality of higher

education are so complex that by no means is there one and only one solution to the multiple dilemmas associated with higher education expansion in the contemporary context, especially in developing countries. But, most of the questions posed in this article should be considered as areas of discussion to resolve the dilemmas, and are not intended to either praise or criticize specific stakeholders in any country.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is a key to a country's social and economic development, and Ethiopia is no exception to this well accepted premise. Although higher education sometimes is believed to be a non-pro-poor intervention (World Bank, 2015, p.76), it is a pillar for sustainable economic advancement and to attain international status as a "developed" nation. But, despite rapid economic development and impressive poverty reduction initiatives, Ethiopia still ranks among the least developed countries in the world, the alleviation of which requires qualified professionals trained in various disciplines (World Bank, 2003). As articulated in the *Ethiopian Growth and Transformation (GTP)* document,

Ethiopia aspires to build an economy which has a modern and productive agricultural sector with enhanced technology and an industrial sector that plays a leading role in the economy; to sustain economic development and secure social justice; and, increase per capita income of citizens so that it reaches at the level of those in middle-income countries (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE], 2010, p.7).

Therefore, in order to achieve an ambitious national goal of becoming a mid-income country by 2020-2023, unquestionably, qualified professionals hold a significant share in terms of accomplishing this goal. To this end, maintaining the quality of higher education is a priority. As the *GTP* document further articulates:

The key priority for higher education during the forthcoming five years will be ensuring quality and relevance. To this end, the management and administration system of universities will be improved and strengthened, and efforts will be made to enable the Higher Education Strategic Center and the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency to achieve their missions (FDRE MOFED 2010, p.50).

Higher educational institutions are established not for their own sake, but are meant to solve societal problems. They need to address the social, economic, and cultural objectives of their national or regional context. In other words, higher educational institutions are purpose-driven institutions. As stated in the *Ethiopian Government Ministry of Education (MOE) Education and Training Policy* document, "Higher education at diploma, first degree, and graduate levels, will be research-oriented, enabling students to become problem-solving professional leaders in their fields of study and in overall societal needs"(FDRE, 1994, p. 15). Investment in higher education, thus, is a worthwhile investment because its main purpose is to "create the prepared minds" (Andres, 2012). Andres (2012) further posits,

The investment by government in higher education, including research labs and preparatory facilities, *may* result in the creation of new products and services, but *will definitely* result in the production of highly prepared workers needed by industry for their pursuit of commercializing innovation (p.1).

So, the key question to be considered at this point is: are the Ethiopian HEIs producing the prepared minds in the quality and quantity necessary to meet both the current societal needs and promote economic growth and development?

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

Although quality is a complex abstraction because it means different things to different people, quality measures are always linked to organizational goals, objectives, and assessments. The key logic in this thought is that quality is all about meeting objectives or standards and there needs to be concrete evidence to assess the degree of success against the objectives or standards. If objectives are not met, quality is not maintained. In referring to business organization management, Hoyle and Thompson (2013) diagrammatically explain the relation between

objective or standard and quality as in figure 1 below. For Hoyle and Thompson (2013) quality is a progressive function of time. It is an expression of the gap between the standard expected and the standard provided. When the two coincide, there is no gap; thus, good or satisfactory quality was obtained; whereas when there is a gap there is dissatisfaction and, thus, the need for improvement.

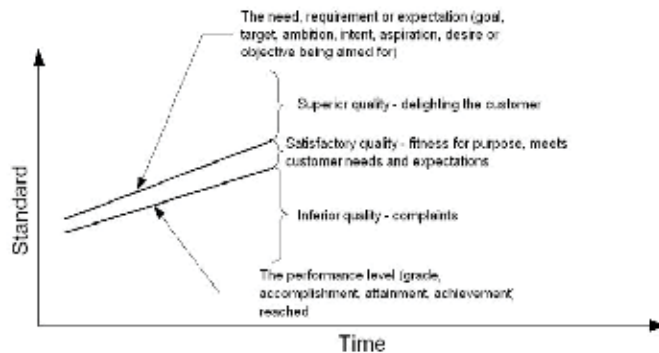


Figure 1. Relationship between time and standard

According to the modernist organization perspective as posited by Hatch and Cunliffe (2013), organizations such as higher educational institutions are, "...objectively real entities operating in a real world; when well-designed and managed they are systems of decision and action driven by norms of rationality, efficiency, and effectiveness directed toward stated objectives" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013, p.15). In discussing quality issues emphasis is given to effectiveness and efficiency of the HEIs in terms of objective attainment and goal accomplishment. Another key question, to be considered, is: Are the Ethiopian HEIs leaders cognizant of and specifically working to meet the objectives set for higher educational institutions?

THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION OBJECTIVES (2009) AS BASIC REFERENCE

According to the *Proclamation Number 650/2009 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* that was announced in the *Federal Negarit Gazeta*, the objectives of higher education in Ethiopia include the following:

- 1). Prepare knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive.
- 2). Promote and enhance research focusing on knowledge and technology transfer consistent with the country's priority needs.
- 3). Ensure that education and research promote freedom of expression based on reason and rational discourse and are free from biases and prejudices.
- 4). Design and provide community and consultancy services that shall cater to the developmental needs of the country.
- 5). Ensure institutional autonomy with accountability.
- 6). Ensure the participation of key stakeholders in the governance of institutions.
- 7). Promote and uphold justice, fairness, and rule of law in institutional life.
- 8). Promote democratic culture and uphold multicultural community life.
- 9). Ensure fairness in the distribution of public institutions and expand access on the basis of need and equity (FDRENegarit Gazeta, 2009, p. 4969).

THE UK HIGHER EDUCATION OBJECTIVES (2002) AS QUALITY CONCEPTUAL REFERENCE

At the beginning of the new millennium, the *United Kingdom (UK) National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education* identified that the purposes of higher education are to:

- 1). Inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well

- equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society, and achieve personal fulfillment;
- 2). Increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society
 - 3). Serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional, and national levels;
 - 4). Play a major part in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society (UNESCO, 2002, p. 11).

Therefore, both the above Ethiopian and UK objective frameworks were used as rubrics to pose some critical questions related to the current Ethiopian higher education equity-quality issues. Both frameworks (objectives) have many common elements and the difference between the two is merely in wordings and in their reflection of their respective countries' contexts as one (UK) is based on a "developed nation" context and the other (Ethiopian) is based on a "developing country" context. It should be emphasized that answers to whether the HEIs are within the frameworks or not may require comprehensive critical field-based investigations, which is best left for the institutions to conduct their own genuine internal self-assessments. The authors advise the use of the objective frameworks by HEIs as rubrics for judging on the quality of their respective higher education programs. (Please consider using the rubrics in the attached appendices when conducting institutional self-assessment).

BASIC STATISTICS RELATED TO THE CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION GROWTH AND EXPANSION IN ETHIOPIA

Higher education is a recent phenomenon in the history of Ethiopian modern education system. Although the founding of Addis Ababa University, previously known Emperor Haile Sellassie I University, in 1950 marks the beginning of higher education in the country (Teshome, 2005), there has been heightened growth in the number of universities during the past two and half decades. Particularly the *University Capacity Building Program (UCBP)* launched and funded by the Ethiopian Government, and the growing demand for higher education service from the public seem to have been the energy behind rapid growth of universities after 1990. According to the *Ministry of Education Annual Statistical Abstract*, currently there are a total of 34 public higher learning institutions, 31 owned by the Ministry of Education, with approximately double that number of accredited higher private institutions operating in Ethiopia (FDRE MOE, 2013).

In addition to these, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) has announced plans to construct eleven new universities during the second growth and transformation plan period, which will begin by the end of 2015 and is expected to last until 2020. Construction of the universities is expected to be completed within two years and priority will be given to science fields. Upon completion the government expects the enrollment capacity to increase to 600,000 in regular program alone and to have the net consequence of raising number of higher learning institutions owned by the Ministry of Education to 44 (FDRE MOE, 2015a).

HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLMENT CHALLENGES AND BUDGET GROWTH

Increasing the enrollment in primary and secondary schools has a direct implication for the growth and development of higher education in Ethiopia. The impetus aimed at meeting the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* and *Education for All (EFA) Goals* has played a critical role in the recent history of Ethiopian education. In order to meet the target set by both the Millennium Development and EFA goals, the government and their respective development partners in the education sector played a key role in expanding primary schools throughout the country particularly during the last two decades. See Tables 1, 2 and 3 for more details.

Table 1.

Education growth status in Ethiopia (Primary and Secondary)

Item	Academic Year					
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	AAGR*
Enrollment #s						
Preprimary	341315	382741	1622473	2012473	2498360	48.9%
Primary (1-4)	10512539	11254696	11426055	11913430	12539260	3.6%
Primary (5-8)	5279565	5463415	5564729	5474865	5599940	1.2%
Secondary(9-10)	1452850	1461918	1442226	1541238	1609315	2.1%
Secondary (11-12)	243680	288216	323785	358493	389040	13.6%
Gross Enrollment %						
Preprimary	NA**	NA**	21.6%	26.1%	33.7%	15.9%
Primary	93.4%	96.4%	95.4%	95.1%	101.3%	1.6%
Secondary	22.6%	23.7%	23.9%	24.4%	25.0%	2.0%
Net Enrollment %						
Primary(1-8)	82.1%	85.3%	85.4%	85.7%	92.6%	2.4%
Secondary(9-10)	16.4%	16.3%	17.3%	19.4%	20.2%	4.3%
Secondary (11-12)	2.4%	4.2%	4.8%	5.3%	5.5%	18.0%

Source: FDRE MOE, 2015. Note: *AAGR = Annual Average Growth Rate. ** No Data Available

This increase in primary and secondary school enrollments has had a direct implication for the growth in number of schools and number of teachers. As the need for a greater number of teachers for primary and secondary schools increases so does the corresponding need for a greater number of teacher training colleges and universities.

Table 2.

Number of teachers and schools (preprimary, primary and secondary)

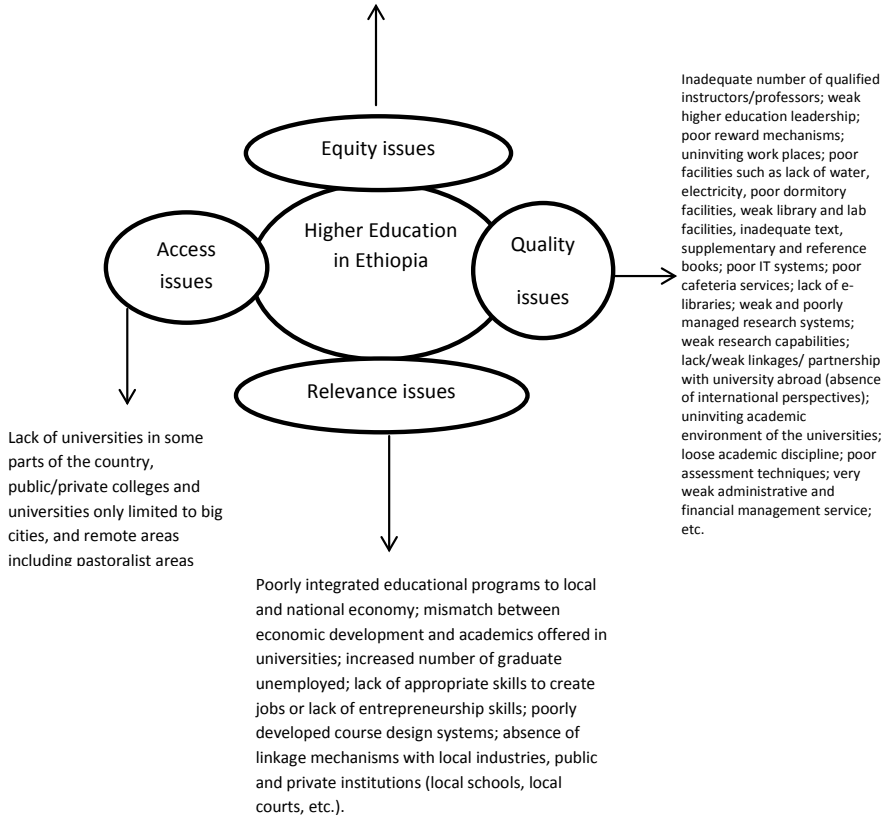
Teachers	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	AAGR
Preprimary	9647	13963	12480	12639	15137	9.4%
Primary (1-4)	168798	175297	187786	190109	213989	4.9%
Primary (5-8)	114293	NA**	NA**	NA**	NA**	NA**
Secondary(9-12)	46060	52525	59349	65139	70987	9.0%
Schools						
Pre primary	3318	3418	3580	3688	4560	6.6%
Primary(1-8)	26951	28349	29482	30495	32048	3.5%
Secondary (9-12)	1335	1517	1710	1912	2333	11.8%

Source: FDRE MOE, 2015. Note: *AAGR = Annual Average Growth Rate. ** No Data Available.

As a result both gross enrollment and net enrollment have shown drastic changes during the last decade for pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools. In much the same manner, enrolment in higher education shows an increasing function of time with not only a focus on quantity of opportunities but also a focus on improving the equity for higher education opportunities. *The Education Statistics Annual Abstract* (FDRE MOE, 2013) identifies that between 2008/09 and 2012/13, undergraduate enrolment for regular, evening, summer, and distance programs have increased in both government and non-government higher education institutions from 310,702 (29% female) to 553,484 (30% female). This represents acute progress for the country in terms of quantity and equity of opportunity when compared to similar 2003/2004 data which identified that the total higher education population in Ethiopia was 98,404 of which only 20,418 (21%) were female.

Figure 2. Overview of Ethiopian Higher Education System Challenge

Remote areas have limited access to colleges and universities; low number of female enrollment in higher education, only few women professors, absence of women in university leadership, lack of disability friendly environment; lack of materials and equipment for disabled university students; lack of experienced and qualified teachers especially in the recently established remote universities; inadequate higher education financing; etc.



Source: Demissie, 2011

Table 3.

Higher Education Growth Status in Ethiopia

Item	Academic Year					
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	AAGR
Undergraduate						
Enrollment	420387	444553	494110	553848	593571	7.1%
%female	27%	26.8%	28.2%	30.0%	30.3%	2.3%
Graduated	66999	75348	78144	79786	96980	7.7%
% female	23.4%	27.3%	25.3%	28.7%	25.6%	1.8%
Postgraduate						
Enrollment	14272	20150	25660	31304	33882	18.9%
%female	11.9%	13.8%	20.2%	20.6%	19.5%	17.2%
Graduated	4873	6250	6162	6424	8021	10.5%
% female	13.9%	14.4%	14%	14.9%	15%	1.5%
Teachers	15707	17402	20668	23905	24252	9.1%
%female	11.4%	9.2%	9.6%	10.6%	11.7%	0.5%
Higher education enrollment total	190,043				593,049*	
Ratio of Science and Technology students	61:39				69:31*	
Higher educational institutions (mostly public and few private)	70	74	91	99	124*	12.1%*
Education budget share of higher education	31.7%				21.2%*	

Source: FDRE MOE, 2015. *Estimates based on Government Projections

In addition, when the postgraduate studies enrolment is disaggregated from the total enrolment, between 2008/09 and 2012/13, master's degree enrolment in government and non-government higher education institutions increased from 9,800 (11.4% female) to 28,139 (20.4% female). Doctoral degree enrolment also increased from 325 (8% female) to 3,165 (11.2% female) in various disciplines. Academic staff increased from 11,028 (9.8% female) to 23,905 (10.5% female) in similar years. Nevertheless, the system is suffering from lack of sufficient academic staff as only 11.3% PhD holders and about 50% MA/MSC holders are available in all government and non-government HEIs and the remaining are either BA/BSC holders or diploma holders (FDRE MOE, 2015, p. 77).

NATIONAL BUDGET ALLOCATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The government has been allocating 5.5% to 6% of the GDP to education since 2006 (UNESCO, 2015). The share of public education expenditure (primary, secondary and higher education) from the total government expenditure increased from 11.28% in 1999/00 to 25.2% in 2012/13. Similarly, the share of higher education budget from the total education expenditure rose from 10.21% to 22.6% over the same years. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2014) report,

Education is one of the sectors that have performed well. The country has achieved results beyond the target set for 2012/13. This is mainly a result of deliberate fiscal focus as the budget allocated to education increased from 17.5 % in 2009/10 to 25.2 % in 2012/13 (p.4).

In contemporary Ethiopia, education takes the second highest share of the national budget (17%) next to the top share (35.5 %) allocated annually to road construction (UNDP, 2014).

ARE THE CURRENT EQUITY INITIATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION EXPANSION IN ETHIOPIA JUSTIFIABLE?

Equity is all about being fair and impartial, based on any form of differences (Rossell, 1993). Accordingly, in this article equity implies being fair in accessing the higher education opportunities for needy populations. It also implies fair distribution of higher educational institutions all across the country based on critical needs assessment. The affirmative action taken by the government and all stakeholders to extend the reach of higher education to the needy in various geographic and cultural settings of the country is a positive move towards ensuring equity in higher education. This action, the authors believe, is a commendable action especially for countries such as Ethiopia who require qualified manpower for accelerating as well as sustaining their economic growth. In addition, higher educational institutions are entry points for further development in remote communities, thus, the expansion of such institutions is justified as part and parcel of poverty reduction initiatives (Borode, 2011). It should also be understood that higher education is a major investment needing careful strategic planning and focused tactical implementation (Assefa, 2015). As a matter of principle, before putting investment into action there has to be a comprehensive critical assessment of needs as well as the likely success of the intended program (MGT of America, 2006).

It appears that the Ethiopian government has followed a demand-driven approach in the recent higher education expansion. However, there is limited empirical evidence to support this perspective. But informal feedback from various community and academic leaders identifies that of the areas selected for establishing the 40 universities (some are in the process of being constructed) in the last nearly two decades, all are in areas where there is a dire need for higher education. The feedback further indicates that, even some areas could have had universities prior to twenty years ago if demand-driven approach was followed, but decisions are, in most cases, political and not entirely based on a needs assessment approach.

Nonetheless, by any standard of measurement, the expansion of HEIs is a positive move forward for the country that had only limited space for higher education students almost until the beginning of the second millennium. The central point of this thesis, however, is that ensuring equity shall not be an excuse for a reduction in higher education quality in Ethiopia, as practice has shown that both quality and equity could be addressed concomitantly.

LOOPHOLES IN MAINTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY

As the case is true with other developing countries, quality of higher education in Ethiopia has been an issue as the country forges ahead aggressively to advance greater higher educational opportunities for its citizens. Various study documents and assessments including the *Ethiopian Education Sector Programs* have identified concerns on higher education quality, and the need to give due emphasis to improve the problems (Assefa, 2015; Mulu, 2012; Teshome, 2005). In order to closely monitor issues of higher education quality in Ethiopia, the *Higher Education Quality and Relevance Assurance Agency (HERQA)* was established by government fiat in 2003. The procedures HERQA officials employ to achieve their mission of assuring quality higher education include: 1) institutional quality audits in all higher education institutions, 2) gathering and dissemination information about the standards and programs of study of foreign higher education institutions, and 3) examining accreditation issues (Mulu, 2012, p. 113).

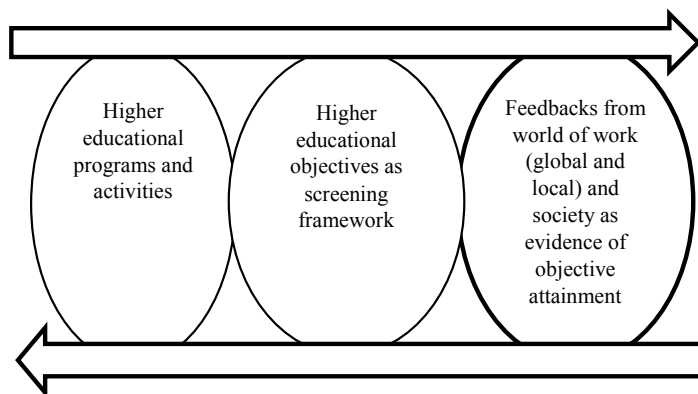
However, HERQA which is responsible for guiding and regulating quality of higher education in Ethiopia, operates with constraints of human resource capacity and of lack of full autonomy (Mulu, 2012, p. 115). Moreover, although HERQA identified areas of focus for

institutions' self-assessment, how much of those identified areas are implemented based on the suggestions articulated in the audit reports, frequently depends on resources the institution had at its disposal (Wondwosen, 2012). It was also identified that HERQA uses surprise visits which is more faultfinding based on a deficit thinking approach and not encouraging of mutual thrust (Wondwosen, 2012). HERQA's supervision and control also focuses on private higher educational institutions, and cannot equally influence the assurance of quality in public higher educational institutions. It, thus, follows the great majority of public universities in Ethiopia are operating without meaningful quality control from the HERQA which was organized specifically for that purpose (Wondwosen, 2012).

ENVISIONING FUTURE ACTIONS BY WAY OF QUESTIONS

One of the widely understood objectives of HEIs is, "...to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society, and achieve personal fulfillment" (UNESCO, 2002, p.11). In relation to this objective, the following questions may be posed: What is the current status of Ethiopian higher educational institutions' contributions to the Ethiopian society? Are the graduates well equipped to effectively manage the mission expected of them after graduation? How much is the personal fulfillment of the graduates? What are the obstacles for lack of effective contribution (if any) by graduates for country's development? What mechanisms are in place to overcome the obstacles?

Figure 2. Higher Education Objectives as a Framework Guide for Determining Higher Education Quality



Another stated objective of higher education institutions worldwide is, *to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society*. How much are the various courses, programs, and contents of Ethiopian universities relevant to the country's economy? Are programs designed appropriately and carefully scrutinized in correspondence with the growing economy? How much relevance exists between academia and job placement? What are evidences of content relevance? How much of the graduates are successful in the society? What is the definition of success? How does both the leadership and policies of higher education encourage the interface between higher education and economic development in the country? What leadership strategies and policy approaches are applied to strengthen the interface between the two? What are the prevailing higher education policies and how do leadership related problems affect the higher education relevance to economic growth?

In addition, another global higher education objective is, *to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional, and national levels*. Higher education lays a base for high-level scientific research both in the social and natural/physical realms. It is the arena for new inventions and innovations. Thus, what is the current status of research in higher educational institutions, in terms of quality and also quantity? What are the hurdles? Are the researchers endowed with conducive research environments? Are professors

encouraged and committed to develop and conduct research projects? Are the researchers making any difference in the economic and social undertakings of the country? Where is the evidence? Is the economic growth and transformation shifting its gear from imported knowledge to transformative locally based knowledge? Is technology transfer and knowledge transfer been focused on to lay a sustainable base for the country's economy? Of course, it should be mentioned that there are recent initiatives being made by the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Technology in attempting to create a knowledge-based economic development by linking research with industry, but the impact of those initiatives has not as yet been publicly reported.

Another major purpose of HEIs is, *to play a major part in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society*. How much is this critical objective reflected in the Ethiopian higher educational system? Are the institutions marked by respect for all cultures and values irrespective of any differences and are the institutions' leaders and teachers shaping the growing young generation accordingly? Education is a means of stepping into civilization and making positive progressive changes to improve the life conditions for all. As long as an inclusive agenda that respects all citizens, their culture and values on equal footing, is put aside and only a few ideas get precedence then sustainable social and economic progress is unlikely. Thus, HEIs should be centers of courageous modernists who respect the culture and values of all citizens and are committed to promote mutual co-existence based on equality and respect for all. This issue is the core issue for Ethiopia's future. All HEIs are meant to shape future generations within this framework. So, the major question, is this truly happening in Ethiopian higher education institutions or is it merely limited to mission statements on paper only, and lacking practicality, as quite often observed in many educational and non-educational institutions as a way to "save face"?

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Quality and access and/or equity are inseparable. When higher education equity is well planned, the issue of quality higher education continues to be in focus. When ensuring higher education equity is on the government's agenda then ensuring equity of quality higher education should also be on the agenda. From practicality point of view, ensuring quality is not an overnight action. It is a process that takes vision, time, energy, and funding. Nevertheless, beginning this process shouldn't be left for tomorrow. It is good to learn from the country's experience in meeting the universal primary education and the EFA goals during the first decade of the millennium which has taught us that much emphasis were given for gross enrollment, and yet issues related to quality primary education was for a while left aside. Of course, later on all stakeholders actively engaged to address the problem thereby cooperatively reverting the worse situation that could have occurred. It is, thus, illogical and unadvisable to repeat a similar tradition for higher education. In short, it is good to *practically* focus on both quality and quantity of higher education program delivery in Ethiopia on same footing. However, it must be stated that the agenda about higher education quality is merely on the "back-burner" in many institutions or at times only evidenced in mission statements, but missing in *actual classrooms*.

Moreover, it is so essential to begin to make genuine institutional self-evaluation of HEIs a strategic emphasis right from the inception of the higher education institution. It is the belief of the writers that higher education quality comes from all of the stakeholders including: educational leaders and strategic planners, faculty, students, community and government leaders and education policy makers at all levels. It, above all, demands dedicated and visionary leadership. As equally important as the leadership is also the commitment from a team of professionals. The difference that comes by applying external input is secondary, albeit still important. Thus, it follows that higher educational leaders with visionary perspectives who work cooperatively with a committed team of professionals can move forward together in assessing their progress by gazing themselves through the scrutiny mirror of the objectives for higher education frameworks identified herein. The frameworks are umbrella, thereby giving wide latitude for the higher education officials and planners to think and act flexibly so as to achieve the intended goals of their respective institutions.

The role of the government through HERQA and other similar quality assurance agencies should be more on capacitating and facilitating the initiatives and the creativity by the institutional leaders. As long as the institutions are operating within the established and well-recognized frameworks, there is the possibility of achieving the goals of both quality and equity. There also could be a reward mechanism, by which those who made new inventions and innovations are incentivized. Equally important also is the issue of facilitating institutional autonomy. Institutional autonomy is a key contemporary global issue in higher educational development. It marks confidence of the government towards the higher education institutions. It also requires quality leadership, and, thus, the need for higher education leadership overhaul. Put another way, unless

internal mechanisms for improving quality of education is strengthened by empowering higher education leadership and freeing higher educational institutions from bureaucratic restrictions, the issue of education quality in higher education continues to be an issue especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. “Institutional autonomy is an internationally recognized condition of top quality higher education” (UNESCO, as cited in Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), 2013, p.5).

Finally, the authors of this article have developed two rubrics: Polka-Karorsa Higher Education Institution Standards Rubric *A---Domestic* and *B---International* to assist higher education stakeholders and policy-makers in assessing the degree of congruence between the current status of Ethiopian higher education institutions with both the formal Ethiopian Higher Education Institution Goals and Assessment Standards, *Proclamation Number 650/2009 of the Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia*, 2009, (Rubric A) and the globally accepted higher education institution standards based on the *United Kingdom (UK) National Committee of Inquiry Into Higher Education* as published by UNESCO, 2002 (Rubric B). Both of these rubrics with their corresponding standards, institutional impact data factors, and scoring system are appended to this article (See Appendix A and B). This rubric assessment process, based on the authors’ experiences as well as accepted global references and practices, is designed to facilitate institutional self-assessment as well as data based strategic planning for the future of higher education institutions in Ethiopia and elsewhere around the world where applicable.

REFERENCES

- Andres, F. (2012). *The purpose of higher education: To create prepared minds*. The Evolution: A Destiny Solutions Illumination, Paradigm Research International. Retrieved from <http://evollution.com/opinions/the-purpose-of-higher-education-to-create-prepared-minds/>
- Assefa, B. (2015). The practice of strategic planning and strategy implementation in public universities of Ethiopia. *Educational Planning*, 22(1), 17-34.
- Borode, M. (2011). Higher education and poverty reduction among youth in the sub-Saharan Africa. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(1), 149-155.
- Dill, D. (2007). *Quality assurance in higher education: Practices and issues* [Background paper]. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved online from URL: <http://www.unc.edu/ppaq/docs/Encyclopedia.pdf>
- Demissie, L. (2011). *Overview of Ethiopian higher education system challenge: My reflections from ESDP joint review mission field assessment*. Addis Ababa, (unpublished).
- Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia (FDRE). (1994). *Education and training policy (ETP)*. Addis Ababa: St. George Printing Press.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). (2009). *Higher education proclamation No. 650/2009*. Addis Ababa: Negarit Gazeta
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). (2010). *Ethiopia growth and transformation plan (GTP)* (shortened version). Addis Ababa: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). (2013). *EMIS, planning and resource mobilization directorate*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (FDRE). (2015). *Education statistics annual abstract*. EMIS and ICT Directorate. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED).(2014).*National indicative plan of Ethiopia*, signed 19 June 2014 between MOFED and EU. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). (2013). *Institutional autonomy and the protection of higher educational from attack*. [Research study]. New York: Higher Education Working Group of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. Retrieved from http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/institutional_autonomy_and_protection.pdf
- Hatch, M. & Cunliffe, L. (2013). *Organizational theory: Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspective*. (3rd edition). Hampshire, U.K: Oxford University Press.
- Hoyle, D., & Tompson, J. (2013). *Transition support: A flexible approach to business improvement*. Retrieved from <http://www.transition-support.com/Quality.htm>

- MGT of America (2006). *Higher education needs assessment study of the south 1-35 Corridor* [Report]. Prepared for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from http://www.mnscu.edu/media/newsreleases/2006/pdf/south_1-35_regional_higher_ed_needs.pdf
- Mulu, N. (2012). *Quality and quality assurance in Ethiopian higher education: Critical issues and practical implications* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). CHEPS/UT, the Netherlands.
- Rossell, C. (1993). Using multiple criteria to evaluate public policies: The case of school desegregation. *American Politics Quarterly*, 21(2), 155-184.
- Teshome, Y. (2005, May). *Making higher education support more effective*. Paper presented at the International Expert Meeting, The Hague, The Netherlands.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2014, February). *Ethiopia country economic brief*. Analysis Issue No. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/ethiopia/docs/Country%20Economic%20Brief%201%20final%20for%20web.pdf>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2015). *Quality key to Ethiopia's education sector plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/quality-key-ethiopias-latest-education-sector-plan-3243>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2002). *Policy-making, strategic planning, and management of higher Education*. Papers on Higher Education. Bucharest: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- Wondwosen, T. (2012). *Evaluating the Evaluator: HERQA in the eyes of PHEIs in Ethiopia*. New Delhi, Academia.
- World Bank. (2003). *Higher education development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the vision*. Washington: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2015). *Ethiopia Poverty Assessment: Poverty Global Practice*. Washington: World Bank.

Appendix A

Polka-Karorsa Higher Education Institution Standards Rubric A---Domestic

Base Year _____ To _____ Data Year

Ethiopian Higher Education Institution Goals and Assessment Standards	Data Factors Evidence Examples	Negative Change -1	No Major Change 0	Positive Change +1	Assessment Score
1) Prepare knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive.	<p><i>Number and % of college and university graduates disaggregated by majors.</i></p> <p><i>Post-higher education placement data disaggregated by occupation and global market status of employer and employee retention.</i></p>				
2) Promote and enhance research focusing on knowledge and technology transfer consistent with the country's priority needs.	<p><i>Number and financial amount of research grants and awards to individuals and institutions disaggregated by academic discipline</i></p>				
3) Ensure that education and research promote freedom of expression based on reason and rational discourse and are free from biases and prejudices.	<p><i>Range, diversity, and sponsorship of research grants and awards by academic discipline and specific topic.</i></p>				
4) Design and provide community and consultancy services that shall cater to the developmental needs of the country.	<p><i>Number, content type, topic, and location of various community and consultancy services provided by higher education personnel</i></p>				
5) Ensure institutional autonomy with accountability.	<p><i>Review institutional policies related to academic freedom and research accountability and cite number and types of controversy and outcomes.</i></p>				
6) Ensure the participation of key stakeholders in the governance of institutions.	<p><i>Number and diversity of stakeholders on higher education committees and decision-making governance positions.</i></p>				

7) Promote and uphold justice, fairness, and rule of law in institutional life.	<i>Number, type, and outcome of higher education administrative, faculty, and student grievances and appeals; solutions suggested, and implementation modalities.</i>				
8) Promote democratic culture and uphold multicultural community life.	<i>Identify number, diversity, and type of democratic processes employed related to student and faculty life organizations.</i>				
9) Ensure fairness in the distribution of public institutions and expand access on the basis of need and equity.	<i>Geographic analysis of institutional locations and student residence data and "catchment" area analysis and disaggregate data based on gender, social-economic status, and cultural heritage.</i>				
TOTAL ASSESSMENT SCORE	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXX				

Polka-Karorsa Higher Education Institution

Standards Rubric B--- International

International Higher Education Institution Goals and Assessment Standards (UNESCO, 2002).	Data Factors Ethiopian Evidence Examples	Negative Change -1	No Major Change 0	Positive Change +1	Assessment Score
<p>1) Inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society, and achieve personal fulfillment.</p>	<p><i>Number and % of college and university graduates disaggregated by majors, gender, family socio-economic status, home geographic area, and cultural background.</i></p> <p><i>Post-higher education placement data disaggregated by occupation and employee retention.</i></p> <p><i>Cite number and type of community volunteer activities and disaggregate participation data by higher education levels and institutions.</i></p> <p><i>Research survey results related to personal satisfaction and life happiness.</i></p>				
<p>2) Increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society.</p>	<p><i>Number and financial amount of research grants and awards to individuals and institutions disaggregated by academic discipline.</i></p> <p><i>Number and type of individual and community artistic and scientific presentations and performances by higher education institution graduates.</i></p> <p><i>Higher education background data of government, education, and business leaders.</i></p>				

<p>3) Serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional, and national levels.</p>	<p><i>Number and type of higher education economic outreach programs and activities at local, regional, and national levels including specific sector skill development, job trainings, small and major business incubations, as well as individual and professional entrepreneurship development. Analyze economic impact and sustainability of these higher education initiatives.</i></p>				
<p>4) Play a major part in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society.</p>	<p><i>Collect and analyze local, regional, and national voting data and patterns based on educational level. Identify higher educational backgrounds of government, education, agricultural, business, and civic leaders and review their respective policies and practices related to democratic processes and cultural diversity approaches. Analyze crime rates and causes of conflicts based on locale and identify if higher education presence, personnel, and programs serve as deterrents.</i></p>				