
Educational Research and the Ethiopian Journal of Education (EJE) in the Past Decade (2000-2009): Contributions, Downsides, and the Way Forward

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Abstract: Over the last two decades, Ethiopia has substantially expanded its education system at all levels. This necessitates a commensurate expansion and strengthening of educational research not only to inform policy decisions, but also to bolster the creation and dissemination of knowledge that can positively influence educational practice. Zooming specifically into the events in the last decade, this article attempts to reflect on EJE's contributions to educational research and the challenges it encountered along the road based on 90 research papers published in the Journal between 2000 and 2009. To that effect, multiple data generating procedures were used including content analysis of textual materials, web search using Google Scholar, and analyses of secondary sources. The findings confirm that EJE is still the leading educational journal in the country and instrumental in addressing the national educational priorities, notwithstanding its relatively low visibility and span of circulation both at home and abroad. The paper finally recommends the ways in which EJE can emerge as a viable scholarly outlet and become more focused, accessible, and consequential to supporting the desire to ensure equal educational access of acceptable quality.

Keywords: educational research; journal quality; journal visibility; Ethiopia.

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Introduction

Over the last two decades, Ethiopia has substantially expanded its education system at all levels. This apparently calls for a commensurate expansion and strengthening of educational research not only to inform policy decisions, but also to encourage the production and dissemination of relevant scientific knowledge and innovation that galvanize educational practice. And one of the crucial outlets of disseminating new knowledge, innovative paradigms, and best practices is through publishing scholarly journals. In this regard, existing studies do not paint a rosy picture. Instead, despite the discourse on the impact of educational research on the quality of education in schools and universities, the size of empirical evidence at the disposal of those who need it is not only small (e.g., Derebssa, 2004; Amare, 1998a; 2000), but also the limited research output has no sufficient locally available scholarly outlets (e.g., Habtamu, 2003). One may wonder why educational research has been so limited and ponder, if indeed, the lack of adequate scientific channels is the cause. However, this article is devoted not to search for this causality. Instead, it is an attempt to highlight the state of educational research over the last several decades; and from there, to make a modest soul searching about the role of the Ethiopian Journal of Education (EJE) as the oldest scientific periodical in the country.

The fact that EJE is the sole peer reviewed journal serving as a forum for sharing empirical findings, theoretical knowledge, and practices deserves empirical attention in its own right. On the other hand, the nascent feeling among some researchers and academics also triggers concern that the EJE might gradually lose its grip as a key academic journal. In response, this article set out to address some of the existing concerns based on multiple data sources including content analysis of EJE publications in the last decade (2000-2009), web-generated data, secondary sources as well as this own observations as manuscript contributor and a reviewer of articles submitted to EJE.

Even though this paper essentially focuses on research articles published in the Ethiopian Journal of Education, by addressing the outstanding issues, it aspires to provoke scholarly debate on the status, challenges, and the way forward for educational research in Ethiopia to respond to the real educational problems and priorities that affect the country's development ambitions. The article further intends to offer useful information to the EJE itself to help it ponder about its past, present, and the future. In turn, the questions that guide the article are in order.

Research Questions

This paper endeavors to answer the following questions

- To what extent does EJE make an impact on the Ethiopian educational research in terms of its scope and coverage?
- How visible is EJE as measured through some known attributes (i.e. circulation, longevity, appearance in citation indices; citation of EJE past issues in EJE, and style and content) of journal quality indicators?
- How inclusive is EJE in terms of the diversity of authors' institutional affiliations and background characteristics?

In subsequent sections, the paper reviews the literature followed by the discussion of the methodology and the findings and discussion. Finally, the article concludes by identifying the issues that require closer attention and the way forward.

The State of Educational Research and the Ethiopian Journal of Education

Notwithstanding the less developed culture of research and technical/methodological inadequacies of individual researchers or academics (Derebssa, 2004), it is frequently stated that research and development have been given marginal attention in Ethiopian academic institutions (e.g., Habtamu 2000; 2003; Endashaw, 1996; Tefaye, 2007; Tefaye and Elizabeth, 2008; Ayalew et al, 2009). Recent studies in the context of HEIs (e.g., Ayalew et al, 2009, 2008; Tefaye, 2007, 2011) also suggest that with a surge in student enrollment, research and publication has been steadily declining. The underlying reasons for it, among others, include little time for research activities owing to many teaching assignments, shortage of funds, and limited opportunity to publish research results (e.g., Ayalew *et al*, 2009; Habtamu, 2000; 2003; Tefaye, 2011).

However, this section attempts to address three major issues specifically related to educational research in general and the EJE in particular. First, it reviews studies in view of setting the context of educational research in Ethiopia. This will be followed by a closer scrutiny of the state of educational research vis-à-vis the role of the Ethiopian Journal of Education (EJE). The review section concludes with the discussion of quality indicators of scientific journals drawing on international experience.

Educational Research and History of the Ethiopian Journal of Educational Research

It may be difficult to give the exact date as to when educational research formally started in Ethiopia. However, some evidence (e.g., Amare, 1998a; Yusuf, 1986) shows that it made a modest beginning with the opening of the Faculty of Education in 1962 [at Hailesillasse I University (HSIU)]. The opening of the Faculty of Education gave rise to Educational Documentation Center which was later upgraded to the Institution of Educational Research (IER). Formal research and publication nevertheless started with the

launching of the *Ethiopian Journal of Education* whose first issue (Volume 1) came in 1967 (Amare, 2000). However, its over four decades journey had never been smooth and EJE was interrupted between 1977 and 1987. Amare (2000) characterized this period as the “Dark age” of EJE which he partially explained as an outcome (negative) of the formative stages of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution (p. 25). In the late 1980s, however, things started to change in its favor and regular publication of two issues per volume has ever since been possible. The EJE is hosted and published by the Institute of Educational Research (IER) at Addis Ababa University and, to date, its publication costs have been covered by SIDA/SAREC through its bilateral partner, the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission. The Ethiopia Science and Technology Commission has recently been upgraded and re-named as the Ministry of Science and Technology (Amare, 1998a, p.6).

At this juncture, it is important to note the mutual interdependence of the history of educational research and the EJE. The strength of one affects that of the other. Amare’s (1998a, 2000) analyses of over three decades of educational research confirms this interdependence. For instance, Amare (2000, p. 30) found out that between 1967 and 1999 (in 33 years), EJE managed to publish only 123 research articles in more than nine areas. On the other hand, of the total 1249 registered educational research documents between 1974 and 1998, he found only 106 journal articles and 19 books. This suggests that only a small fraction of the studies were published. Seeking answers to the low output of educational research, Derebssa (2004, p. 94-101) identified five major impediments, namely, (a) *research culture*-lack of motivation on the part of individual academics and policy makers, failure in using research results to inform policy decisions, (b) *fund for research activities*- lack of sufficient funding to conduct research, (c) *personal capacity to conduct research* - inadequate methodological and technical skills to produce publishable work. (d) *teaching load*- too little time to do research due to teaching assignments, and (e) *infrastructure and facilities* – absence of conducive environment to do research which includes, adequate office facilities and infrastructure (i.e. PC, printers, stationery, telephone and fax services, internet connectivity etc...) to do research. Without contradicting Derebssa’s (2004) assertions, however, Habtamu

(2003) argues that researchers and academics are unable to publish their scholarly work due to lack of sufficient scientific outlets. Similarly, Amare's (2000) analysis of educational research which revealed considerable proportion of unpublished materials generally indicates the absence of scholarly channels.

The present author concurs with Habtamu (2003) when he argues that the apparent lack of reliable outlet has serious ramifications on the quality and quantity of research output. In other words, the lack of sufficient outlets would lead to shortage of experienced reviewers; since reviewers themselves must have some degree of expertise through publishing their scientific work in available journals. It follows that the lesser the chance for publication due to lack of scholarly outlets, the slimmer would become the available pool of reviewers. Creating a critical mass of educational researchers depends to a large extent on the availability of adequate scholarly outlets.

Previous Research on EJE

Apparently, paucity of data limits our understanding about the status of research and publications in the field of education including the quality and quantity of the studies published in the EJE. This means that there are very few studies that touched upon on the issue (e.g., Amare 1998a; Seyoum 1998; Taye 1993). The study that exclusively focused on EJE was the one carried out by Amare (2000). Using a qualitative content analysis procedure, Amare attempted to provide an assessment of EJE's 33 i.e., 1967 to 1999 years of publication. In his in-depth analysis (based on 123 research articles), Amare generated useful data on EJE in terms of the content areas covered, level of education system often focused on, and the educational issues raised. The research methods used, the research designs and data gathering instruments employed, the authors' characteristics the type of authorship and the proportions of reference citations were also among the perspectives. Amare considered in the assessment of the articles that appeared in the Ethiopian Journal of Education between the years 1977-1997.

Amare (2000) concludes that the articles published in the EJE did not meet the criteria of “basic research” since the majority of the articles were found to be “applied research” works. In terms of research design, he indicated that the researchers (whose publication he assessed as explained earlier) shy away from experimental procedures and other similar tasking methodologies. This, he concluded, could perhaps be due to shortage of funds for educational research.

On the other hand, Derebssa (2004) and Amare (2000) seem to agree on the need to build the capacity of aspiring researchers to redress some of the quality problems that may spillover as EJE submissions. In this vein, Amare (2000) went to the extent of recommending research methodology training for potential manuscript contributors to maintain EJE’s scientific rigor. On the other hand, it is also true that dissemination of research results has not been easy due to limited scholarly outlets (Habtamu, 2003). EJE has been a longstanding journal of education but little has been said about its quality as measured by relevant indicators. In the following section, an attempt will be made to briefly review the existing literature on known quality indicators of scholarly journals.

Quality Indicators of Scholarly Journals

With the advent of the Internet as the fastest means of disseminating academic knowledge created elsewhere, the interest to measure the quality and rigor of scholarly publications attracted considerable research attention (e.g., Hodge and Lacasse, 2011; Serenko and Bontis, 2009; Ferratt *et al.*, 2007). The growing body of research suggests that the measures used to describe quality are far from being established as new studies continue to bring fresh yardsticks. For instance, Ferratt *et al.* (2007) suggest that the institutional affiliation of authors who publish in a particular journal is an indicator of quality. The study contends that journal of good a quality attracts more authors [Which they call Author Affiliation Index (AAI)] from world class universities than others. Still others argue that “Impact Factor” is the best indicator of a scholarly publication while Hodge and Lacasse (2011) recently claimed that the H-Index is a better predictor of quality due to its high discriminant validity. It also exhibits closer agreement with expert opinions. Serenko and Bontis (2009a; 2009b), based on the journal perceptions of the experts surveyed the following outlet attributes as quality indicators: (a) reputation of editor and review board, (b) inclusions in citation indices, (c) opinions of leading researchers (d) appearances in ranking lists, (e) citation impact factor, (f) opinions of colleagues, (g) journal longevity, (h) acceptance rates and (i) circulation (i.e., number of subscribers) (Rogers *et al.*, 2007; Serenko and Bontis 2009).

The present paper, however, refrains from wholesale adoption of the identified journal quality indicators due to the practical limitations of using them in Ethiopian context. As a result, the next journal quality indicators are excluded appearances in ranking lists, citation impact factor, and reputation of editors and the board members.

Methodology

This section describes the data sources, the sampling method employed, techniques of data generation and analyses, as well as operationalization of the variables of interest.

Population, Sampling and Data Sources

The target population for this study was all full length original articles, communications, research reports, and book reviews published between the years 2000 and 2009 in the EJE. Hence, ten EJE volumes (Vol. Nos: 20-29) that had 20 issues (81 original articles, and 9 communications, reviews or research reports) were published between the years 2000-2009. Each article or other forms of publication (i.e. communications, research report, or book review) was considered as a unit of analysis.

Two types of sampling procedure were employed to generate primary data. First, complete sampling method was used to examine the content coverage of EJE in which case, all the 90 papers published in the decade were taken as units of analyses. Assessment of the frequency of citation of the articles/papers was made on five volumes (50%) of the Journals published in the years 2000-2009. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the five EJE volumes considered in the assessment.

Data Sources and Analysis

Three major sources of data were used in this study. The primary data were generated based on a) content analysis and Google Scholar, while secondary data were gathered from Institute of Educational Research, EJE publications office. The nature of the data generated and the respective methods of analysis used are described below.

Content Analysis

Content analyses were carried out on 10 EJE volumes published between 2000 and 2009 by taking the articles/papers as units of analysis. A similar procedure was employed by Amare (2000) from which the present paper partly got inspiration. The existing literature in social science research (e.g., Berelson, 1952; Holisti, 1968; Amare, 1998b; Flick, 2006; Prasad, 2008) also confirms the validity of content analysis. Specifically, content analysis was used to identify the EJE's coverage by focusing on the titles, research questions, literature review, and methodology sections of the 90 research articles and papers. Following that, the content categories were developed based on recurrent themes used in the selected parts of the textual materials. Codes were then developed to count the frequencies of themes as teaching methods, active learning, student achievement, etc. This helped in categorizing the papers under various content areas (e.g., Language education, gender and education, educational planning, etc.) for identification and tabulation of the major content/subject areas of the publications. A similar procedure was used to determine the profiles and personal attributes of authors, type of authorship, institutional affiliations, and frequency of EJE citations in the published articles or papers. The coders were two. The first coder was the investigator himself while the second coder was a trained assistant. The two coders developed their own respective categories regarding the subject areas covered by EJE. Following that inter-coder reliability was computed using the formula suggested by Holisti (1968) i.e. $R = 2(C_{1,2}) / C_1 + C_2$, where R represents inter-coder reliability, $C_{1,2}$ representing the coding agreed by the two coders (C_1 and C_2), divided by the sum of the two codings. Accordingly, the computed inter-coder reliability was found to be high ($R = 0.89$) with 12 agreement (Each coder identified 12 categories that overlapped with that of the counterpart) out of the total of 27 codings obtained by summing up the 14 categories identified by Coder 1 and 13 categories identified by Coder 2 respectively.

Web-generated Data

To assess the relative “Impact” of EJE, a web search engine namely, *Google Scholar* was used considering its wide use to compute journal impact factor. For the purpose of this study, however, *Google Scholar* was used to determine the frequency with which EJE has been cited in international scholarly publications (i.e. regional or international journals). Indexing information about EJE was also obtained from online resources.

Secondary Data

Secondary data on subscribers were obtained from EJE Publication Office, the Institute of Educational Research, Addis Ababa University, to supplement data generated using *Google Scholar*.

The data gathered through the above stated procedures were summarized and interpreted qualitatively using narrative-descriptive procedure and content analysis. Data involving frequency counts and percentages were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In addition, Kruskal-Wallis Test was computed to determine the mean rankings of the areas of the research published in EJE.

Operationalization of Variables

This study deliberately avoided using attributes like ‘Impact Factor’ “Reputability of International Board and Editor” and “Acceptance Rates” since data on these parameters were unavailable. In particular, impact factor as is used to assess the quality or reputation of Western journals is inappropriate since most local scholarly publications cannot stand on equal footing with their counterparts in developed countries largely because of factors other than the quality of articles they publish. Therefore, the paper adopted the concepts:

- *Coverage* - the relevance and manageability (i.e. the multiplicity of sub-fields) of themes of educational research.
- *Visibility* – is used as a measure of quality which is based on known attributes identified in the literature (Rogers et al, 2007; Serenko and Bontis, 2009a). The attributes are circulation, appearance in citation indices, journal longevity, and the frequency of citation of previous issues of EJE in the articles or other papers published between 2000 - 2009. These are used as a proxy measure of the domestic impact of EJE in educational research, policy, and practice. *Indexing* in known databases on the web is also used to supplement data on journal visibility.
- *Inclusiveness* – institutional affiliation, academic qualification, gender, nationality, career profile and type of authorship.

Findings

The results of this study are organized as follows: (a) *Coverage* topics and areas of educational research covered by EJE; (b) *Contributors* – the diversity and composition of scholars and practitioners including their institutional affiliations and (c) *Visibility* as measured through degree of circulation, indexing, and size and diversity of EJE contributors.

In view of the above conceptualization, the findings are discussed as follows:

Coverage: Areas of Research

EJE accepts manuscripts for publications in almost all areas of education ranging from language teaching to special needs education and distance education. In the years between 2000 and 2009, a total of 90 papers (81 articles and 9 reviews/communications or research reports) were published in the ten volumes with an average number of 9 papers per volume (see Annex-1 for detailed review).

A closer look at the distribution of the articles/papers reveals that the majority fall under the category of educational psychology and testing (21.1%) and language education (17.6). This is followed by teacher education/development (12.2%) and curriculum/pedagogy (12.2%). The share that goes to science education is (9.1%) while educational planning and policy claim (7.8%) of the articles/papers. Also, moderate shares go to gender and education (6.7%) and higher education (6.7%) while educational research (2.2%), educational technology (2.2%), and distance education (1.1%) received lower share than all the other fields of the research published in the Journal. The mean ranks determined by Kruskal-Wallis Test confirms the order despite the absence of statistically significant difference across the 12 sub-fields (Chi-square = 11, $df = 11$; $p = .443$). The available data is inadequate to accurately explain what underpins this difference. However, the likely reasons for the imbalance may be attributable to the relatively greater number of experienced and qualified staff in fields like educational psychology, language education, curriculum/pedagogy, and teacher education.

Table 1: Distribution of EJE publications by area of research

Area of Research	N	%	Mean Rank*
Curriculum and Pedagogy	11	12.2	3.50
Distance Education	1	1.1	10.50
Ed. Planning and Policy	7	7.8	6.00
Ed. Research	2	2.2	10.50
Educational Psychology/Testing	19	21.1	1.00
Educational Technology	2	2.2	10.50
Gender and Education	6	6.7	7.50
Higher Education	6	6.7	7.50
Language Education	16	17.8	2.00
Science Education	8	8.8	5.00
Special Education	1	1.1	10.50
Teacher Education/Development	11	12.2	3.50
Total	90	100	

Source: Computed based on content analysis data;

* Kruskal-Wallis Test: Chi-square = 11.00, $df = 11$, $p = .443$

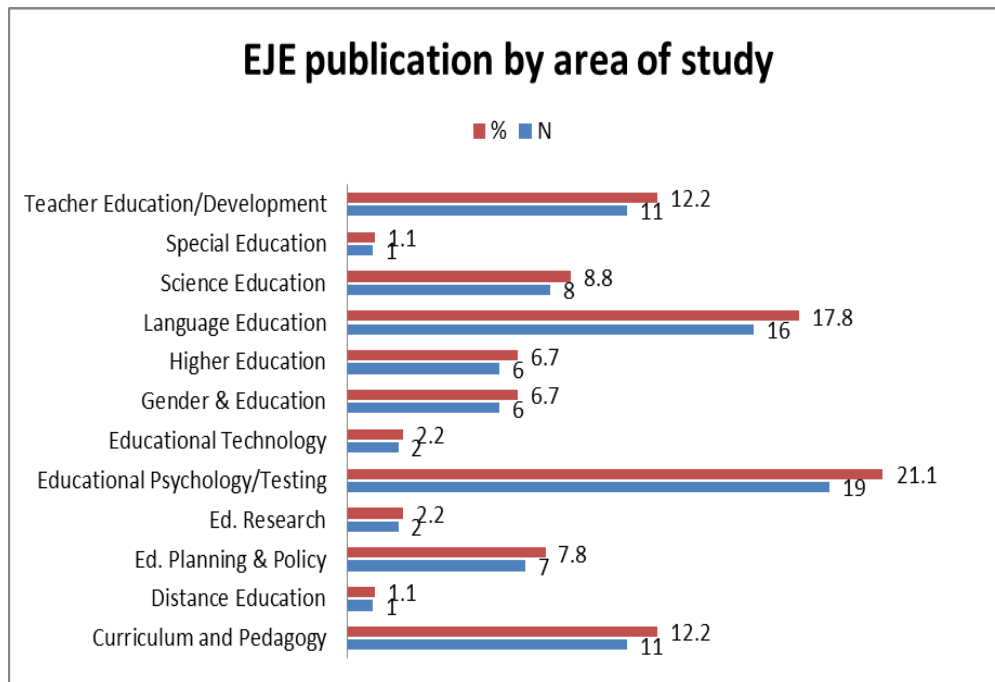


Figure 1: Distribution of EJE articles by area of research (Years: 2000-2009)

Though the size of research output is too small for a country with huge and complex educational problems, the irreplaceable role of EJE as a key local educational journal is beyond dispute.

On the other hand, despite the limited size of publications, the diversity of the topics the journal published raises concerns in terms of providing sufficient and comprehensive data in all the areas. As indicated in Figure 1, EJE appears to be so over-stretched that it can only scratch the surface of all educational research areas. This has been one of its failures in terms of responding to national priorities. The unfolding situation in Ethiopia today requires a more focused and meaningful response from educational research. EJE, therefore, does not seem to be viable if it wants to continue in its old way.

Visibility

For the purpose of this article, the term *visibility* has been conceptualized as EJE's *circulation* at local, regional, and international levels (Rogers et al, 2007; Serenko and Bontis 2009). It includes its span of *circulation* (i.e. number of subscribers) which refers to the availability of the journals in universities and other major libraries, *indexing* in online-databases of academic and scholarly publications, and the composition and diversity of *contributors*. In the following paragraphs, we will assess EJE vis-à-vis these indicators of visibility.

Circulation

Inspection of the data in Table 2 shows how much EJE circulates both domestically and internationally. Here, we examine EJE circulation not from the perspective of contributions, but in terms of circulations using the size and diversity of subscribers.

According to the data obtained, domestically, EJE has been subscribed by 21 libraries and two individuals. Internationally, however, there are only two subscribers. As can be seen from Table 2, the AAU Library System is the largest subscriber with a share of 66.7% of all local subscriptions. Excluding Addis Ababa University, the only HEIs that subscribe EJE are Bahir Dar University, St. Mary's University College, and Abbi-Addi and Hosanna Teacher Education Institutions. Two federal institutions, namely, the MoE Library and the National Archive, also subscribed the journal. Bole Secondary School is the only school to subscribe the EJE. Libraries in the remaining 21 public universities and several other teacher education colleges in the different regions of the country do not subscribe the journal.

Thus, university students, faculty members, and researchers in these academic centers are less likely to have access to the journal leave alone getting the inspiration to send their contributions. In other words, the actual audience of EJE is a very small portion of its potential audience in the

country. Much worse, the international audience, as shown in Table 2 below, is restricted to two libraries: one in Nairobi, Kenya, and the other in the Netherlands. Taken together, the circulation of EJE at both national and international levels is severely limited. This partly might be due to logistic and administrative workload that naturally has additional financial implications. The problem of circulation can perhaps be tackled if EJE goes online as most journals do.

Table 2: Libraries and Institutions Subscribing EJE

Subscription Rate	Local	Remark
National Library	1	National Archive and Library of Ethiopia
Federal Ministry of Education	1	MoE Library
AAU Libraries	14	Institutions (IER, IDR, IES, ILS, IGS), Main Library, Science Faculty, SGS, FBE, Education, Social Science, Building College, Medical and Technology Libraries
Universities other than AAU	2	Bahirdar University; St. Mary's University College
Teacher Training Colleges	2	Abbi-Addi TTC and Hosanna TTC
Secondary School	1	Bole Secondary School
Individual Subscribers	2	
International Libraries	2	The Library of Congress Office, NNairobi, Kenya. Swets Information Services B.V., The Netherlands

Source: EJE Publication Office, IER, AAU

Inclusion in Citation Indices and Journal Longevity

Journal indexing provides information on the visibility and impact of the journal. Similarly, a journal's prolonged existence is viewed as indicator of quality (e.g., Serenko and Bontis, 2009). This paper, however, deliberately avoids a comparison of EJE with all regionally or internationally published Education journals. Instead, it attempts to make a modest assessment relative to similar periodicals published in Ethiopia. As shown in Table 3, compared to others, EJE is the oldest running education journal. The fact that it is the oldest journal indicates the recognition and importance attached to it since most journals that are not believed to be "useful" die at a very young age. Despite the interruptions in the past, EJE is the longest running journal compared to the majority of other academic and professional journals published in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the shortcomings particularly in terms of indexing. It is unbecoming of EJE to be invisible while younger journals such as the "Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science" (Jimma University) and the "Ethiopian Journal of Social Science and Humanities" (AAU, College of Social Science) are indexed in online databases like African Journals Online (AJOL). The fact that EJE stands in the same footing as its successors, for example, the Ethiopian Journal of Educational Development (2006) and the Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education 2004 is hard to swallow. In a positive note, however, the data obtained from the IER publication office reveals that the EJE is 'on process' to be indexed in ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) and AJOL (African Journals Online).

Table 3: Scholarly Journals published in HEIs

<i>Periodical</i>	<i>Host Institution</i>	<i>Citations^a</i>	<i>Indexed in</i>
Ethiopian Journal of Development Research, ISSN:0738-0813 (1974) ^b	Addis Ababa University	21	AJOL
Ethiopian Journal of Education; ISSN: 0425-4414 (1967)	Addis Ababa University	117	NPC, Journal Seek, ERIC*, AJOL*, DNA
Ethiopian Journal of Educational Development; ISSN: 2076-7579 (2006)	Addis Ababa University	-	
Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education, ISSN: 2076-751X (2004)	Addis Ababa University	58	NPC
Journal of Education and Sciences, ISSN: 1998-8907 (2005)	Jimma University	17	AJOL
Journal of Social Science and Humanities, ISSN: 1810-4487 (2003)	Addis Ababa University	1	AJOL

Source: Data gathered from respective publications and Online Resources

Note: AJOL: African Journal Online; ERIC= Educational Resources Information Center; NPC: National Pedagogical Center; DNA = Data not available

*On process, ^a Computed based on data obtained from Google Scholar that searches for all available journals online, ^b indicates the journal launching date

Normally, frequency of citation is used to determine journal impact factor. However, as stated elsewhere, this paper refrains from doing so partly because of the controversy surrounding the validity of the notion of “Impact Factor” and partly due to the peculiar reality of African journals at international level. Nevertheless, the data gathered through Google Scholar portrays the extent to which EJE has impacted research in its four decades of existence in terms of knowledge production and dissemination globally. Compared to journals like the Ethiopian Journal of Development Research (EJDR) ($n = 21$) which is about five years younger than EJE ($n = 117$), the frequency is larger. But compared to the EJHE ($n = 58$) which was launched only in 2004 there is a need for an explanation. The invisibility of the Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education (EJHE) and its contemporaries like the Ethiopian Journal of Social Science and Humanities (EJSSH) and Journal of Education for Development (JED) may not be surprising though one should question why the former showed extraordinary performance. Two possible reasons may stand out. One possible explanation is that, unlike EJE, EJHE is a specialized journal focusing on higher education. The other possible reason may be EJHE is one of the very few sources of scholarly information on higher education in sub-Saharan Africa along with the South African Journal of Higher Education and Journal of Higher Education in Africa published by CODSERIA.

Frequency of Citation: EJE in EJE

In order to collect data that determines the frequency of attention of EJE articles/paper, the “references” sections of the articles in EJE volumes were counted and tabulated. To that effect, five volumes of EJE (published in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2007) were randomly selected for frequency count. The summary is presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Citation frequency of EJE in EJE articles/ papers

Publication Year	Total No. of References	Frequency of EJE in EJE Articles			International	No. Articles
		EJE (%)	Other Publications	Theses		
2001	237	9(3.8) ^a	9 (3.8)	23(9.7)	196 (82.7)	11[2] ^b
2002	263	13 (4.9)	33 (12.5)	4 (1.5)	213(81.0)	8 ^c [1]
2003	306	7(2.3)	36(11.8)	7(2.3)	256(83.7)	9[1]
2006	164	3(1.8)	2(1.22)	32(19.5)	127(77.4)	8
2007	221	13 (5.9)	28 (12.7)	22 (9.95)	158 (71.5)	8[1]
Total	1191	45 (3.8)	108 (9.1)	88 (7.4)	950(79.8)	44

Source: Computed based on EJE, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2007 (Issues 1 and 2)

^a Numbers in parenthesis are percentages; ^bRefers to short communications, reviews, and research reports;

^c Original research articles.

The data in Table 4 shows the citation frequency of research results of the past EJE publications in the randomly selected volumes (i.e. all articles thereof) to determine how often EJE is cited in the articles it featured (i.e. in EJE itself). Unfortunately, the proportion of EJE vis-à-vis non-local (international), other local journals, and M.A/PhD theses were just 3.8%. A closer scrutiny further indicates the lack of any discernable pattern in terms of growth in citation which makes it difficult to hope for increased visibility as a function of time. Rather, it is characterized by a trend in which the EJE had the highest frequency of citation of 5.9% (13 times in the References) in 2007 (Volume 27) and the lowest (1.8%) in 2006 (Volume 26). On the other hand, despite their focus on local issues, the majority of the articles/papers seem to depend heavily on studies published in Western contexts. The key observation made in this regard is that scholars with previous publication record seem to make significant attempt to include more EJE publications

than those who had no previous record. On the other hand, articles published on English language teaching methods found to prefer using publications originating from non-Ethiopian (or African) contexts.

In another aspect, 79.8% of the articles published in EJE were found to review studies published in Western journals. Here, a number of explanations can be forwarded for this to happen. One critical problem which stands out is the fact that despite EJE's relevance to inform research in Ethiopian context, most authors fail to use it as a key source of accumulated knowledge. Thus, the EJE contributors themselves are partly to blame for the growing invisibility of the journal. For some authors, Western sources are more authentic than their own. In fact, it should also be acknowledged that EJE is less accessible even if researchers want to inform their work with indigenous research findings. Therefore, the consequence is that the research findings run the risk of poor fine-tuning and contextualization to local situations. This has much to do with the issue of *relevance* (emphasis added). Thus, the manuscript review criteria should include contextualizing as well as building on research works previously published in EJE. This is one of the ways how local knowledge can be produced and expanded.

Inclusiveness: Authors' Institutional Affiliation and Background Characteristics

To determine the extent of EJE's inclusion aspect, this section attempts to find out the extent to which EJE has been inclusive. The section is devoted to analyze the diversity of the contributors' institutional affiliations, gender, professional profile (academic rank/educational qualification), and nationality. As shown in Table 5, the largest share was contributed by local HEIs and organizations while authors affiliated to foreign universities contributed only 4.4% (four articles/papers).

Table 5: Institutional Affiliation of EJE contributors

Institutions	Journal Volume (2000-2009)										Total (%)	
	0	1 ^a	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
Abbi-Addi TTC	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)
Adama University	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	3(3.3)
Addis Ababa Commercial College	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)
Addis Ababa University	3	7	6	6	3	4	4	2	3	4	42 (46.7)	
Assela TTC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1(1.1)
Bahir Dar University	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	6	1	23 (25.6)	
Eth.Civil Service College	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	3(3.3)
DebremarkosTTC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1(1.1)
Debab/Hawassa University	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3(3.3)
Dilla University	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)
Foreign Institutions	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4(4.4)
Gonder University	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)
ICDR	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)
Mekelle University	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2(2.2)
NGOs	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2(2.2)
Unity University College	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1(1.1)

Source: Computed based on content analysis data

^aNumbers (the last figure) represent the year of publication of the EJE from 2000-2009.

Out of the 90 articles or other papers published in EJE, the largest share came from Addis Ababa (46.7%; n= 42) and Bahirdar (25.6%; n = 23) Universities Adama and Hawassa Universities along with Civil Service College, contributed about 10% (each contributing 3.3%; n = 3). Mekelle University (2.2%; n=2) and NGOs (2.2%; n = 2) contributed about 4.4% Abbi-Addi, Assela, and Debremrkos Teachers' Colleges, Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR), Unity University College, and Dilla and Gonder Universities together contributed about 7.7%..

As depicted in Figure 2, the lion's share of the contributors come principally from Addis Ababa and Bahirdar Universities while other major universities have insignificant contribution. This, in turn shows that, EJE, despite bearing the name "Ethiopian", failed to attract education professionals, scholars, practitioners and researchers from wider audience in the country. This provides a partial evidence about its limited degree of outreach.

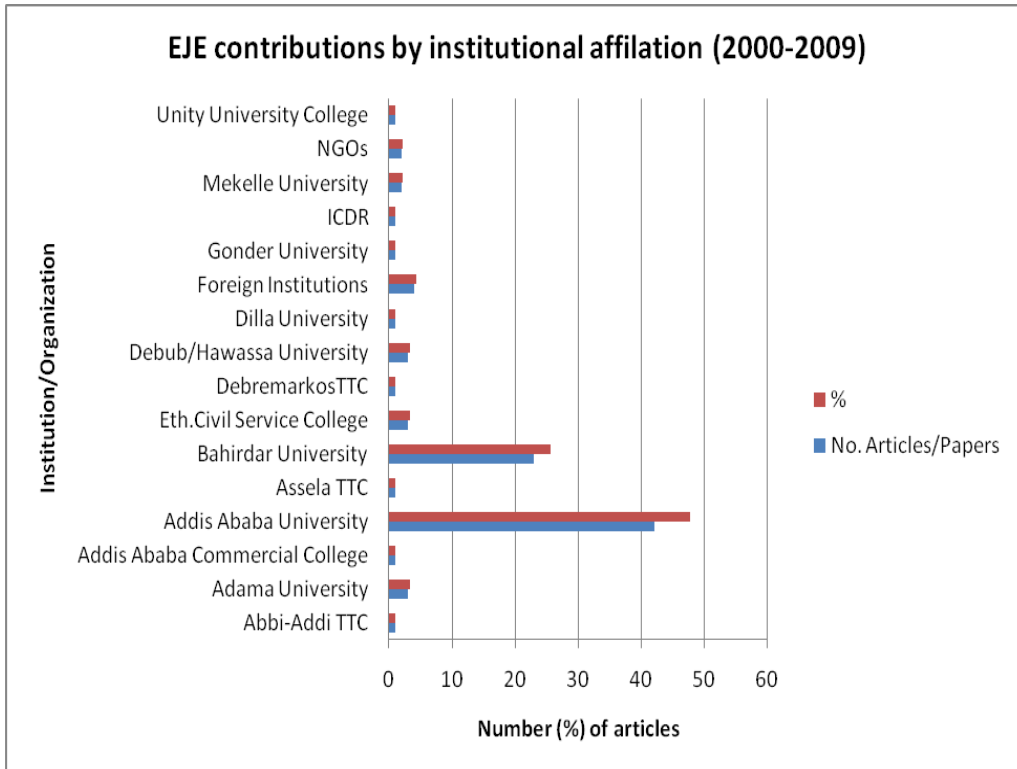


Figure 2: EJE Contributions to EJE by Institution (2000 - 2009)

Authors

In this section, we will closely examine the profile of contributors in terms of their gender, academic rank, and profession (academics/researcher vs. non-academic/researcher). Table 6 below summarizes the results.

Table 6: Personal attributes of contributors (N = 90)

<i>Authors Attributes*</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	83	92.2
Female	7	7.8
Academic Rank/position		
Professor	1	1.1
Assoc. Professor	17	18.9
Assist Professor	40	44.4
Lecturer	31	34.4
Assist Lecturer	1	1.1
Professional career		
Academics/Researchers	89	98.9
Non-Academic**	1	1.1
Nationality		
Expatriates	3	3.3
Nationals	88	86.7
Authorship		
Solo	78	76..7
Multiple/joint	12	13.3

*Only the lead authors are considered in the computations for all contributions by joint authors

**Authors who are not affiliated to academic or research institutions

The distribution of authors by background characteristics portrays that the overwhelming majority were male (92.2 %). Academics or researchers constitute (98.9%) of the contributors. In terms of type of authorship, 76.7% of the papers were contributed by sole authors with a marginal share going to foreign scholars (3.3%). A closer inspection of the data by academic rank confirms our expectation that the significant share (over 63%) of the contributions were made by people with the academic rank of assistant professor and above.

In a nut shell, the above pattern is consistent with the general trend. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the dominance of sole authorship over joint and collaborative work provides some indication of the lack of sufficient collaborative or joint research engagements. This, in turn suggests the limited opportunities that are available to mentoring young researchers. Further, the minimal role of international authors in EJE publications suggests the low visibility of the journal or its marginal attraction as a scholarly outlet outside Ethiopia.

Causes for Concern: EJE's Content and Form

As indicated earlier, the issue of quality is not peculiar to EJE alone. A number of other local journals like the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development (EJHD) (e.g., Yemane, 2009) are challenged by visibility and quality concerns. Observations of content and form of the EJE publications in the past decade reveal consistent shortfalls in the process of quality assurance. In terms of content, some EJE publications overlooked serious methodological considerations. Among these, (1) a good number of articles that used self-response measures (e.g., Likert-type Scales) did not have internal consistency reliability evidence or any form of reliability information, (2) constructs (factors) have been identified neither based on sound theoretical/substantive evidence nor using some form of construct validation (e.g., Application of Factor Analysis to the measuring instruments). Most importantly, in some articles conclusions were drawn based merely on calculation of means and percentages. Such kind of apparent

methodological flows may occur at least for two reasons, both of which rest on the anonymous referees. The two likely explanations may be lack of methodological competence and negligence or lack of concentration. In response to lack of methodological competence, Derebssa (2004) and Amare (2000) suggested training. Lack of concentration, in Amare's (2000) opinion, is caused by lack of motivation. It should be noted that quality assurance is at stake if we fail to take crucial moves to quickly redress such pitfalls that characterize EJE publication.

Furthermore, the issue of 'style and formatting' can equally affect the readability and quality of the journal. The absence of limits to the length of abstract and the main body of the articles, failure in identifying 'Keywords', irregularity of table formats and presentation of statistical data are some of the frequent shortcomings of the journal. The articles published between 2000 and 2009; for instance, vary considerably in the length of their abstracts. The length of the abstracts varies from as low as 250 to as high as 1000 words (see EJE Vol.No: 20-29; 2000-2009). Any abstract that is longer than 200 words does not safely meet international requirements for indexing and cataloging. A seemingly simple editorial oversight such as this, can seriously compromise the quality of EJE as a leading local journal.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the coverage, visibility and inclusiveness of the EJE based on 90 papers of which 90% were original research articles. In spite of the serious material, human and financial limitations and the bumpy road it traveled in the past four decades, the efforts made to ensure its survival deserves recognition in its own right. Unfortunately, however, the present paper found that little has changed for better over the last 10 or 50 years. This means that many of the deficiencies pointed out by Amare (2000) still seem to characterize EJE publications considered in the present study.

In terms of EJE's coverage, except 'higher education' 'language education', and 'gender and education' which emerged as prominent areas of research, the dominance of educational psychology and testing is still observable. With respect to visibility, EJE is facing problems that require immediate attention. These, among others, include (a) *Limited circulation*-libraries of Ethiopian HEIs located outside of the capital do not have copies of the EJE. Further, despite EJE's long years of existence, the authors who have published their work in the journal tend to show the journal little appreciation. For example, of the total 1191 reference citations made in the five EJE volumes, only 3.8% are traceable to EJE. The diversity of the contributors in terms of institutional affiliations was also very limited, with only two HEIs dominating over 70% of the EJE publications in the past decade. Authors from regional universities, female researchers, and foreign scholars are underrepresented. (b) *Indexing* – EJE has not been indexed in regional and international educational and social science indices. In fact, it had a high likelihood (as shown by data obtained using Google Scholar) of increased citations internationally as a sole and long standing Ethiopian journal. Recent efforts of IER to ensure EJE's inclusion in international online databases, like the AJOL (African Journals Online) and ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), is encouraging and its realization increases the journal's visibility.

A significant improvement has been made in recent years in eliminating the huge backlog, but the journal still suffers from a number of pitfalls including.

For example, (a) A very long waiting time to get articles reviewed frustrates many potential contributors. (b) Finding competent/motivated referees who have the competence, professionalism, and the willingness to work is another obstacle. (c) The existence of a narrow pool of contributors severely limits the size of manuscripts submitted for publication in the journal.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the low visibility can be partly ascribed to the absence of long-term plan that is accompanied by the necessary financial resources and infrastructure. This seems to affect its focus in terms of addressing issues of national, regional and international significance. The EJE should not expect manuscripts from contributors *per se*. Guided by its long-term vision; EJE should be the one to set the agenda for research and publications on issues of national, regional, or international significance and academic and practical implications.

In spite of the above stated challenges, however, the future is not totally bleak for EJE to reposition itself as a major player in Ethiopian educational research. Among others, the expansion of graduate and PhD programs in education and allied fields widens the pool of manuscript contributors, reviewers, and potential editors. The flipside is that expanding advanced degree courses in HEIs also benefits from EJE by getting their research findings published.

Prior to giving any closure to this section, it is important to once again stress the issues raised earlier by fellow educators (e.g., Derebssa, 2004; Habtamu, 2003) regarding the absence of clear vision in educational research on the one hand, and the mistrust among stakeholders in the other. I concur with the idea that the continued mistrust among researchers, institutions, and policy makers hinders cooperation and coordination of efforts, as well as integration of research agendas. Evidently an environment of reciprocal misconstruction would not in any way help educational research to address the challenges of increasing access, ensuring equity, and improving quality. Thus, there is a compelling reason to bridge the gap by building trust among the key players.

The way forward

In spite of the apparent limitations both in methodology used and the scope of the study, the following suggestions are made as a point of departure for further scholarly engagement to come up with elaborate recommendations regarding the future of meaningful educational research in general and the fate of EJE in particular. These include that the EJE:

- Needs to limit its scope and invite in-depth and high quality contributions in selected areas rather than accepting manuscripts submitted from all areas of education. For instance, manuscripts on teacher education professional development and higher education may be directed to EJHE and JED both of which are published by IER. To do this, it is necessary to establish the reputability of both journals as soon as possible.
- Should increase the size of articles published per issue given the fact that the volume of scientific knowledge that the EJE publishes is marginal for a country as big as Ethiopia. This can be done in many ways. One way to do this is through increasing the number of articles/papers published per issue or by increasing the number of issues per volume. This calls for significant increase in the number of manuscript submissions, fast tracking the review process, and putting in place an efficient editorial and quality assurance systems.
- Should be goal directed and needs to set a research agenda in view of the domestic priorities without losing sight of regional and global developments. This move has to consider inter-institutional cooperation and trust building for joint research and publication ventures.
- Update the editorial board members and include other educational researchers beyond the host institution, Addis Ababa University. In addition, EJE should introduce guest editors from other HEIs or research centers. This is believed to bolster a sense of ownership and belongingness and improve the existing sense of exclusion and unfavorable attitude.

- Introduce “*Special Issues*” in areas where research attention is urgently needed in view of national priorities. In particular, the current policy priority for the fields of science and mathematics education can be a good beginning for EJE special issues. As the case may be, guest editors may be invited to handle the quality monitoring and publication processes.

Regarding Editorial Process, Publication and Dissemination

- Revisiting the existing journal format and style, abstract, and manuscript length in the context of the recent internationally accepted practice.
- Going online as soon as possible and this may ensure fast publication and dissemination, and increase its visibility worldwide. To that effect, IER may be required to coordinate the mobilization of skills and financial resources.
- Acquiring a highly qualified, full time and devoted editor and an editorial assistant for EJE is glaringly important. A separate language editorial support and secretarial services are also key requirements.
- Creating efficient dissemination mechanism through establishing inter-institutional cooperation and networking. Thus, the IER, as a publisher and host of the EJE, needs to reinvigorate itself to acquire the capacity of reaching out all public and private HEIs, teacher education institutions (TEIs), research centers, federal, regional, and local education offices as well as public libraries.

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Annex

Annex 1: Broader Specialization Areas of EJE Publications (Years: 2000 - 2009)

Year	Broader Areas of Articles Published in EJE												Total
	Science Edu.	Language Edu.	Instructional Technology	Gender & Edu	Teacher Edu./development	Ed. Psych & Testing	Distance Edu.	Curriculum/Pedagogy	Educ. Research	Special Educ.	Educ. Planning & Policy	Higher Ed	
2000	1	1	-	-	2	3	-	2	1	-	-	-	10/1
2001	2	3	-	1	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	11/2
2002	-	3	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	9/1
2003	1	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	9/1
2004	1	2	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	8
2005	1	-	-	1	1	2	-	1	1	-	1	-	8
2006	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	4	-	-	1	-	8
2007	2	2	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	8/1
2008	-	2	1	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
2009	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	3	9/3
Total	8	16	2	6	11	19	1	11	2	1	7	6	90/9

Source: EJE (2000-2009)