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## Quality Assurance Practices in Ethiopian Higher Education: The Case of Addis Ababa University<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** At the beginning of the millennium, despite voiced concerns by other stakeholders and in the absence of favorable policy environment and virtual ignorance of the sector throughout the 1990s, higher education establishments in Ethiopia experienced hegemonic attack by government. This position was subsequently used by government and the ministry to introduce a series of reforms in higher education and teacher education termed as Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO) and Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) respectively. Using available policy and research documents, this article explores quality notion in higher education, important international and domestic pressure attributed for the need to establish quality and relevance assuring mechanisms. Finally, attempt was made to see existing mechanisms within Addis Ababa University and challenge to establish system of quality assurance mechanism to the expanding sector.

### Introduction

Matters related to quality and relevance together with issues of access, equity and efficiency were among major problems in Ethiopian education that challenged and preoccupied policy makers (Amare and Temechegn, 2002). As attested by those major reform attempts (MOE, 1972, 1986), these concerns did stand out recurrent problems of the state of education. The 1994 education and training policy also acknowledged concern over quality and relevance at all levels of education as legitimate area of reform (TGE, 1994a, b). For instance, in addition to low participation and gender parity, Education Sector Strategy document underlined the deteriorating

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quality in higher education as, "... These institutions of higher learning are generally overcrowded, under funded and unsatisfactorily equipped resulting in the deterioration of the quality of their teaching and their research capacity" (TGE, 1994b, p. 7).

Ethiopian education overall was not only characterized as being entrenched with quality concern, it also lacks a system of assuring quality and relevance. The state of higher education is not an exception in this regards (Aschoft, 2003; World Bank, 2003). Apart from the absence of such a system, some of the indicators currently used in the ministry's annual abstract (for example, teacher's qualification as indicator of quality for secondary education) were inappropriate for the purpose (Akalewold, 2004). The mere qualification; for example, could not stand up alone to justify quality instruction since the majority of teachers with BA/ BSc. degree were found dissatisfied with their profession (Akalewold, 2004).

Although Ethiopian higher education attained international recognition early in its establishment (World Bank, 2003), it experienced continuous decline in standards over the last three decades (TGE, 1994b). At present, it was argued that it is difficult to determine quality of HEIs in Ethiopia due to lack of standardized testing (World Bank, 2003) and lack of a system of quality assurance (Aschoft, 2003). Based on her discussions with HEI communities and observations of facilities, Aschoft, underlined the need to establish a system of monitoring quality and relevance of educational provision in light of further expansion of the sector as, "Ethiopian higher education does not yet have the quality assurance systems that would stand up to international scrutiny nor that could assure its stakeholders that the education provided is relevant and appropriate" (Aschoft, p. 22).

The state of education in general and higher education in particular was under attack by government in the beginning of the millennium (Mol, 2002; Teshome, 2001; 2004; MoE, 2002a). In the absence of favorable policy atmosphere for higher education (Tekeste, 1993; World Bank, 1994) and virtual ignorance of policymakers for almost a decade (as declared openly

in 2001 meeting of policymakers with HEIs academia), the Ethiopian government criticized the performance and orientation of the sector (Mol, 2002). This position was soon met with urgent actions in reforming the sector by establishing a new vice-minister office for higher education.

This was followed by the Ministry subscription of reforms in the name of HESO (Higher Education System Overhaul) and TESO (Teacher Education System Overhaul), with the ultimate promulgation of Higher Education Act by the Parliament in 2003 that significantly changed higher education system. With this general background, the paper using available documents to clarify the conceptual framework used and finally to the recent international, national and institutional developments in establishing a system of quality assurance.

### **Framework for Understanding Quality and Relevance in HEIs**

This study attempts to analyze institutional response to national and international discourse on quality. For this purpose, it employs the framework used in Ayalew (2002) for it recognize institutional quality and relevance practices within the supra forces both within the national and international context. Such link was also noted by the Bank for it acknowledged that quality at institutional level, being affected by developments at the national level (World Bank, 2003). Similar evidence for institutional performance as being determined by what happens at national level was clearly observed in the HESO study. The ministry argued that institutional problems in areas of management and leadership being related to problem at national level; for the ministry was unable to lead the sector (MoE, 2001).

Quality and relevance were taken central to genuine higher education reform. According to UNESCO source book for higher education, relevance (in various venue- Dakar, Tokyo and Beirut Conference and also related to UNESCO Policy Paper) was considered in terms of 'the role of higher education as a system and of each of its institution towards society. It

includes the role higher education plays in democratization of access, links to the world of work and education system in general. It demands for higher education community involvement on pressing human problems. On the other hand, quality in higher education was also understood (similarly in the above venues) as being linked to relevance. Quality, thus, has no meaning without relevance and to large extent it was taken as 'a multidimensional concept that depends to a large extent on the contextual setting of a given system, institutional mission or conditions and standards within a given discipline.

Although quality has become the focus of attention in contemporary educational discourses, its meaning is not always clear nor its usage consistent (Ayalew, 2002). EEA/ EEPRI (2004) also defined quality as a construct not defined in itself but measured from the various input and output indicators of an institution. Indeed, the notion of quality in higher education has no agreed technical meaning and its usage involve a heavy contextual overlay of some political and educational positions (Lindsay, 1992 in Watty nd). A review of literature in relation to change as a result of quality initiatives revealed that two broad ways of thinking about quality; one relating to context and the other related to stakeholders.

The first gives quality a context-specific meaning- as reference was given to quality of assessment, student's intake, academic programs, teaching and learning, the students experience etc. Several studies used more or less related criteria and standards in an institution (EEA/EEPRI, 2004; Aschroft, 2003; World Bank, 2003; Teshome, 2001; Ayalew, 2002; MOE, 1986). Here, quality of education was mainly considered relative to the country levels of development (MoE, 1986). In the Ethiopian context; for instance, attempt was made to 'operationalize' the concept taking into account the socio-economic and political context as, "Primarily the supply of human and material resources, their characteristics, the resource delivery system, the resource management system, the instructional system and the standards of human performance attained' (MoE, p. 8).

A second way of thinking about quality relates to stakeholder-specific meaning, where quality is considered with regard to a variety of stakeholders having an interest in higher education and each having the potential to think about quality in different ways (Vroeijenstijn, 1992; Middlehurst, 1992; Harvey and Green, 1993). For instance, Harvey and Green (1993) emphasized the importance of understanding different conceptions of quality from various stakeholders to assist in understanding their preferences in relation to the quality issue. By deconstruction of the concept, the authors identified five categories or ways of thinking about quality as follows (Watty nd; Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003):

- *Exception-* Distinctive, embodied in excellence, passing a minimum set of standards.
- *Perfection-* Zero defects, getting right the first time (focus on process as opposed to input and outputs).
- *Fitness for purpose-* Relates quality to a purpose, defined by the provider.
- *Value for money-* A focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring output against inputs. A populist notion of quality (government).
- *Transformation-* A qualitative change; education is about doing something to the student as opposed to something for the consumer: include concepts to enhancing and empowering: democratization of the process, not just outcomes.

## **Recent International and National Developments- towards Establishing System of Assuring Quality and Relevance**

### **International Influence**

Though quality assurance and accreditation in Ethiopia is by law the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE, 1995, 2002; World Bank, 2003), there are important global, national and institutional developments to the interest shown recently by the ministry and government to establish QRAA for higher education. Since its formulation

in 1994, the policy for national education was criticized quite early by one of the leader of Ethiopian Teachers' Associations (ETA), among others, for serving the interest of the World Bank (Assefa, 1997). The influence of the later was made through its structural adjustment programs and major education sector studies conducted early in the 1990s (USAID, 1992, 1993).

Until quite recently, HE in Ethiopia did not receive enough attention within education policy documents (Tekeste, 1993). The beginning of the millennium marked a break in this history for it brought renewed interest in aspects of higher education by the Ethiopian government and the ministry. To the largely traditional higher education system (World Bank, 2003), the new reform rhetoric of HE (see specifically HESO and TESO documents) reflected wholesale importation of policies from elsewhere (Kedir, 2006; Damtew, 2004) reflecting continuation of policy importation of pre-1991 Ethiopia. Largely motivated by the critics made by other stakeholders, the government brought 'best imported international knowledge' in relation to the serious anomalies of the sector with the ultimate purpose of overhauling (Kedir, 2006; Solomon, 2004).

Recently higher education reform was also criticized, like education policy document produced a decade ago, for it emphasized the agenda of the World Bank (Damtew, 2004). The World Bank publication-Higher Education development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision- was argued by Teferra as the 'Bank's prescription for Ethiopian Higher education' (Teferra, 2004). Though such link was denied by Saint (HE specialist of the WB and one of the resource person in writing the above document) in response to Teferra's accusation (Saint, 2004), Teferra underscored the huge consequence such report may play in countries like Ethiopia for both research and policy environment leaves a lot to be desired. The word of Birgit Brock-Utne seems more illuminative and may apply to our case, as she succinctly argued for the role of the World Bank in the formulation of African higher education policy: [I]t is not possible to discuss higher education policies in Africa without discussing the important role of the

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donors and international agencies, the first and foremost being the World Bank' (2003, p. 3).

In addition to the WB report, the expertise and contribution of **William Saint, David Bridges and Kate Aschroft** (the latter two as professors of higher education in UK and the latter was heading higher education strategic institute office within the ministry) were well acknowledged in HESO document that indicates, given the fact that those Ethiopians involved in writing HESO were not known in the field of higher education (Teferra 2004), these professional were key actors in the process. Similarly, **Gebreegziabhere (2006)** argued that recent reform in teacher education (TESO) was closely aligned with teacher education system in UK. Such behavior of the government may be partly attributed due to acceptance of globalization as one of the pillars of foreign relation and national security policy document (MoI, 2002b).

For **Brock-Utne (2003)**, the World Bank influence through 'setting conditionality and promoting the neo-liberal agendas'. As a result, unlike past reform rhetoric, these instances brought into the literature the infusions of neo-liberal thinking where education was subjected to the 'laws of market' (Amare 2004), 'quasi-market' and 'consumerism' concepts (Aschroft, 2003; Setargew, 2004; Kedir, 2006). To fulfill these agendas, higher education, according to the Proclamation (**FDRE, 2003**), was then granted with financial, managerial and academic freedom. Along with such autonomy, the new proposal also brought the 'accountability' principles with the need for an agency accountable to the ministry and make supervision over the relevance and quality of higher education offered (**FDRE, 2003**). This fact was quite explicitly stated in words of Aschroft, when she said:

The reforms introduce elements of a quasi-market in higher education: students sharing the costs of higher education institutions; the expansion of private higher education; the move away from state funding of public higher education institutions through the encouragement of income generation activity. They also enabled a move from extreme centralization towards

institutional autonomy. Such autonomy and the creation of quasi-market depends upon 'customers' (and other stakeholders such as the Government) being assured of the quality of the 'product' offered (whether education, consultancy or applied research). Without that assurance, the reform would not meet the country's development agenda (2003, p. 1).

### **National Influences**

State education in the 1990s was faced with a 'crises of legitimacy' in relation to its stakeholders (Tekeste, 2006; Solomon, 2006; Akalewold, 2005). Together with primary and secondary levels, higher education was also a focus of debate and contestation among competing political groups (example the debate organized by Addis Ababa University on November 27, 2005). Taking teacher education as a case in point, Kedir (2006) argued that the state was characterized by 'terrain of contradiction, challenges and chaos'. In the context of these discontent to the nation education in general and higher education in particular, the government is active in reforming the sector. This behavior could be interpreted as a strategy of "compensatory legitimation"- an attempt by the state to retrieve some of its legitimacy (Weiler, 1981; Rees, 1994; Panayiotis, 1998).

Further domestic interest in these regards was also highlighted in Amare (2004) when discussing the postmodern stance. This position was repeatedly heard by influential personalities in Ethiopian polity since the meeting of the policy makers with the university academia in 2001- to move away from the ivory-tower concept of university to the one that was held accountable to its community. HEI services in Ethiopia, more specifically, Addis Ababa University (AAU), were considered by politicians as being divorced from the need and concern of society. The beginning of the millennium marked the rise of such influential stakeholders as represented in Amare "... society is now demanding to dictate its own knowledge to the university' signals the need to attend to matters of relevance in higher education" (2004, p. 1; quoted Barnett, 1997).



Parallel to the above national developments, there is also other domestic interest that was reflected both in the Bank's report and in the recent education debate among politicians. There is ample evidence that the expansion of educational access made was done at the expense of quality (World Bank, 2005; USAID/ ETHIOPA, 2005). To run the risk of low quality in the context of huge expansion, Higher Education proclamation called for a number of measures- the need to establish national and institutional QRAA (FDRE, 2003) and Pedagogic Resource Centre as key inputs to ensure matters of quality and relevance (World Bank, 2003).

Recent national debate also identified education as key concern (Inter African Group, 2004; African Initiative, 2005) and quality of education was turned out to be number one sources of critics. This important development may signals in the future that for any party to win the political battle over the education landscape, the education enterprise should be reformed with an in-built monitoring system. The move towards HE proclamation and charter with the underlined principles of autonomy and accountability, financial decentralization etc, the government can play the role of 'big consumer' and based on the new notion of 'value-for-money' his role as guardian of education quality would be justified.

### **Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO)**

The new proposal for education was criticized quite early by Tekeste (1993, 1996) for its silence on matters of higher education. For him, this omission was partly explained historically for "higher education has not been treated as part of the education sector" (Tekeste, 1996, p. 84). Highlighting the role of government in producing a coherent policy framework for higher education, the World Bank argued that 'more differentiated higher education systems require a well defined legal framework and consistent policies (World Bank, 1994).

Paradoxically, in the absence of such policy framework and neglect for almost a decade by government, higher education in place was met with

serious critics in the beginning of the millennium (MoE, 2002a; Mol, 2002; MoE, 2001; Teshome, 2004). The sector was criticized for the meager attention it received within government policymaking, its curriculum being divorced from the country's development directions, its limited access and poorly trained manpower output in relation to national priorities (MoE, 2002a; Mol, 2002; MoE, 2001; TGE, 1994a). The sector was not only characterized as being relatively young but also entrenched with a myriad of problems including quality and relevance (Teshome, 2004). According to Teshome, Higher Education in Ethiopia is not well developed, and faces problems associated with the quality and relevance of programs of studies and research, equity, resource constraints, and inefficient resource utilization.

Hence, the need for overhauling the system was quite obvious and was reflected in several studies (Mol, 2002; Teshome, 2001, 2004; Ashcroft 2003, 2004; MOE 2001). Although Education Sector Strategy document recognized quite early the need for reform as 'to promote a higher education of good quality, relevance and focusing on research and development'(TGE, 1994b: 13), the Ethiopian Government begun comprehensive attempt in the beginning of the millennium by recognizing the global role the sector can play in national development, the positive correlations accorded between increased access with economic growth and more importantly due to the poor capacity of the nation for the various government development initiatives (Teshome, 2004; Mol, 2002).

In order to reform the sector, higher education task force was established and undergoes a comprehensive study on different aspects of HEI including leadership and management, programs and curricula, teachers, inputs, access, post graduate programs, instructional resources, organization and management, use of modern technology and ability to produce good citizenships (MoE, 2001). Teferra criticized the process for involving individuals who are on the "periphery of the higher education knowledge terrain" and ignoring 'comparable heavyweight counterpart' from the Ethiopian side (2004). Some of the problems of the sector identified by HESO task force include:

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- Higher education management and its organization lack clear aim (objective), mission and strategic vision.
  - Its various programs, curriculum, the conditions of teachers and students, sections of the various inputs their use and retentions, finance and management job descriptions, usage of information technology, mode of delivery, the type of research done, contribution of the private sector in higher education etc. was not synchronized in terms of their relevance to the mission of the institution, in producing qualified manpower and lack of transparency and a system that was inefficient (MoE- HESOTF 2003, p. 3)

Taking into account the new education and training policy and current state of HEI, the task force produced 14 policy documents in response to the major problems identified. Most of the task force recommendations (cost sharing, per student budgeting, privatization of HE, QRAA, Higher Education Strategic Institute etc) were considered new developments to the nation. Major policy document suggested by HESO task force are:

- HE cost-sharing system implementation;
- HE finance system, budgetary arrangement and per head cost inventory list;
- HE management and administration system;
- Study to attract and encourage privates to invest in HE sector;
- Proposal to establish Ethiopian HEI association;
- HE instructors;
- HE students;
- HEI research, future plan and implementation;
- Proposal to establish HE standard, and quality assurance agency;
- Proposal to establish HE strategy institute;
- Recommendations to access information, communication and technology in HEI;
- Recommendations to satisfy required inputs, efficient use and handling;

- Recommendation to give four subject that should be given in HEI; and
- Proposal to implement community wide practical education that should be given in HEI (TFHESO, 2001)

Ultimately, higher education proclamation was established (FDRE, 2003, p. 2235) due to the need to lay down a system that enables higher education:

- To produce skilled and quality workforce in relation to the national need;
- To establish appropriate legal framework for the service (teaching, research and consultancy) of higher education in line with national problems through appropriate resources utilization;
- To provide academic freedom and managerial autonomy of HEI ; and
- To provide direction for private higher education to contribute for education and research.

### **Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO)**

Improving the nations' teaching force and taking it as a strategy for addressing quality education was remained to be a long-standing debate in Ethiopian politics and education policymaking. Teachers' shortage and quality challenged the expanding sector since the 1940s (MOE, 1971; 1986; TGE, 1994b). Similarly, the recent proposal (TGE, 1994a, b) recognized the problem as 'more of quality rather than quantity' (TGE, 1994b, p. 3) and gave concerted attention to teachers as one of the reform strategy. Some of the account recognized by the policy that has implications to teacher education reform includes:

The process of preparation of teachers starting from recruitment right through the actual training to the quality and competency acquired at the end is unsatisfactory. To start with, appropriate candidates for the teaching profession were not selected as they were arbitrarily assigned for training. The training facilities in most of the centers are inadequate and the

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objectives and contents of their curriculum lack coherence and coordination with the curriculum of schools that they are supposed to serve (TGE, 1994b, p. 4).

Accordingly, the policy outlined important resolutions in areas of teacher trainees, mechanism of recruitment, program components, teacher certification, continuous professional development, professional career structures, institutional autonomy, women participation etc (TGE, 1994a, p. 20-22). The need to 'focus on teacher training and overall professional development of teachers and other personnel' was recognized as areas of special attention and action priority (TGE, 1994a, p. 33). Although, reforming teacher education was recognized by the policy as priority area, the groundwork for overhauling begun after 7 years of policy implementation with the publication of the Federal Task Force report on Teacher Education in late 2001 (Livingstone, Woods and Leu, 2002; Solomon, 2004), when implementation become highly politicized (Akalewold, 2004).

Again in the beginning of the millennium, both the government (MOI, 2002) and the ministry (Teshome, 2001, 2004; MoE, 2002, MoE, 2001) expressed their concern to the quality of the nation's teaching force at all levels of education. At the same time there was a widely voiced claim by the opposition, teacher association and the free press that the problem observed so far as inherent within the policy and policy making, though government reports (MoI, 2002a, b; MoE, 2002) tend to argue the case due to conditions of implementation. Accordingly, the failure observed so far and the justification used by government for reforming teacher education system (TESO) was largely argued due to:

- Implementation problem and not as such policy problems;
- Lack of required competence in the teaching force, shortage of teachers, poor quality of teacher education programs, poor ethical conduct and professional commitment of the majority of teachers;

- Lack of common understanding and consensus between policy makers and implementers on the strategies of the reform; and
- Lack of interrelatedness between what is given in schools with what is considered important to the day-to-day life of the student and other important policies of the government (Akalewold, 2005, p. 25)

### **Major Quality and Relevance Concern Identified**

On a similar terrain, the groundwork for TESO was started with the publication of '*The Quality and Effectiveness of Teacher Education in Ethiopia: A Report of the Study Findings with Recommendations for Actions*' (Livingstone, Woods and Leu, 2002). The study identified major problems of the sector with possible recommendations. Sooner, after the report, the ministry established five sub-committees to ensure successful policy implementation-Pre-service, in- service, teacher educators, selection and the education system (MoE, 2001; MoE, 2002; Livingstone, woods and Leu, 2002; MoE, 2003a, b). Table 1 identified major issues and problem identified by the study.

**Table 1: Major Issues and Problems Identified by the Study**

No.	Issue	Major problem identified
1	<b>Teacher Education programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of appropriate configuration for effectiveness and efficiency</li> <li>▪ Lack of comprehensive and continuous program of pre- and In-service teacher development</li> <li>▪ Curricula lacks relevance to national policies; and other needs-subject matter competence, appropriate active teaching methodology, and practicum</li> <li>▪ The method of teaching and assessment is primarily traditional</li> <li>▪ Lack appropriate programs that inducts pre-service teachers into the culture, values and ethics of the profession</li> <li>▪ Lack internal quality assurance mechanisms</li> <li>▪ Lack of appropriate system for assigning teachers duties in research, teaching and other relevant services</li> </ul>
2	<b>Teacher Education Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack any program that assists the institutions as 'centre of excellence'</li> <li>▪ Problems related to leadership, efficient administration and management</li> <li>▪ Lack of realistic minimum standards for facilities, priorities and a strategy to achieve these standards;</li> <li>▪ Lack of a list of essential student an other services expected by the institutions and a phased strategy to achieve it;</li> <li>▪ Lack of projections for expansion of services;</li> </ul>
3	<b>Teacher Educators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of professional preparation in teacher education by all teacher educators;</li> <li>▪ Lack of a systematic on-going in-service professional development program for teacher educators;</li> <li>▪ Insufficient number of female teacher educators;</li> <li>▪ Lack of formal linkage between teacher educators and school teachers;</li> <li>▪ High teaching load;</li> <li>▪ Problems of professional identity, professional ethics and moral of teachers</li> </ul>
4	<b>Pre-service Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Admission criteria dwells entirely on CGPA and does not consider other important criteria;</li> <li>▪ Does not work out a strategy to attract more female students result in huge gender parity.</li> </ul>

### **Measures taken to Address Quality and Relevance Issues**

The reform was characterized as being both extensive and radical (MoE, 2003b) presenting a 'paradigm shift' with a different conception of the nature of knowledge, a commitment to active learning, focus on practicum, linking schools HEI and local communities, professional courses and research; academic area- the combination of content and method; assessment; organization of courses; certification; gender; life skills; and civics (MoE, 2003a; Solomon, 2004). In arguing for the attention given to matters of quality by the various documents of the TESO proposal, MoE (2003, p. 3-4), has summarized the following:

The emphasis throughout the program is on quality and new schemes are incorporated that will lend greater orderliness, regularity and method to the monitoring of quality. These include: internal and external quality arrangements and checks; accreditation of provider institutions; licensing and re-licensing of teachers and teacher educators; a mandatory qualification for teacher educators licensing and a scheme for academic credit accumulation for teachers.

Quality improvements have been built into the content and the process of pre-service programs and the short-term ('upgrading') programs. The revised selection criteria and procedure will assist the recruitment into teaching of more committed and interested students. The professionalizing of the teacher educators, mainly through a dedicated Higher Diploma in Teacher Education will be a major and leading- edge development. The reform of the system will add quality in terms of the analysis of functions and reorganization to facilitate communication and lines of responsibility and authority at the various levels of government.



### **Institutional Level Quality and Relevance Assurance Practices and Current Development**

Although no formal and autonomous organ responsible for assuring quality and relevance at AAU so far, there are some procedure & practices that functions as quality standards (AAU, 1987). This can be seen either at the stage of input, process and product (Aschroft, 2003) or at instruction, program and institution level (AAU, 1987). For example, Addis Ababa University Senate Legislation (AAU, 1987) sets the context for the rules and standards of university teaching, research & services. The following policy statement describe the standards of teaching, research and services of the university (AAU, 1987, p. 40)

It is a function of the Addis Ababa University, like any university, to serve society by advancing the frontiers of knowledge and to encourage learning through instruction that does not seek to indoctrinate, but to develop, among students, an understanding of the spirit and methods of free, rational, dispassionate and intellectually disciplined discussion as a means of seeking truth. Furthermore, it is a function of the University faculty to be creative, not imitative; to develop, through imaginative planning and consistent open-minded re-evaluation, instructional programs and research activity which contribute to Ethiopia's special needs for trained manpower and knowledge. It is thus a function of the University to develop itself as a community of scholars devoted to the continuing improvement of the University as a free institution in the service of the nation and society in general ... (Article 2.1.1.1.2)

Despite the absence of such a system, Aschroft (2003) was right in saying that there are some best practices observed sporadically and without a holistic framework. HEI in Ethiopia despite having some good practices cannot have the potential to defend their claim and convince policy makers for they lacked institutional standard. Noting the importance of institutional levels quality assuring system, the World Bank (2003, p. 65) stated that:

The key to higher education quality is the individual institutions- the effectiveness, relevance, and standards of faculty teaching, research and service; their ability to produce effective outcomes; the nature of their facilities; and other factors.

Though the existence of such best practices can be taken as important instances, the challenge in this regard was noted by the author as to how to use this as a stepping stone for developing a coherent plan of ascertaining quality of services. Aschroft (2003, p. 22) in this line argued that:

In each of these cases, institutions or subject departments in Ethiopia have established good practice that would stand up to international scrutiny. The challenge is to develop this practice into a system wide set of expectations that are monitored and evaluated. Unless this happens, it may be the case that quality exists (and in this context, quality includes relevance), but it cannot be *assured* (Emphasis is original).

### **Institutional Management and Administration**

Although the University Legislation state key policy statement for the various offices, standing committees, members, duties and responsibilities, terms of references etc; institutional level management and administration was criticized from a number of points (Teshome, 2001; Teshome, 2004; Aschoft, 2003; MoE, 2003a, b; MoE, 2001). According to Teshome (2001, p. 4-5):

Institutional management was in general lacks both the required capacity and talent to design efficient system of resource utilization, cost effective procedures, human resource management and production, expansion of innovative teaching & learning methodologies, identify and make use of required resource etc. In general the management lacks clear vision that accounts to the poor capacity and development of the sector (translation is mine).

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Another serious critic came from the task force established from the various HEI (TFHEI, 2002; MoE, 2001; Mol, 2002; AAU, 2002). Given the new mission and visions, the present state of HEI was characterized as lacking democracy and good governance being manifested in area like-lacks clear work procedure and process of evaluation, decisions being made not based on participatory manner, absence of culture of dialogue, lack of common vision, and underdeveloped democratic culture and practices (TFHEI, 2002).

After the discussions made between the Government and the academy in 2001 and the key reform issues in HESO proposal, AAU senior management and the faculty made consultative meetings to reach at consensus on major issues of Higher education expansion proposal and the need to establish a new 'partnership' with government. More importantly, the issuance of a document by AAU- *Setting Efficient System: building capacity for a better future (the Plan of Action for 2002/ 2003 Academic year)* (AAU, 2002), the establishment of University reform office with a vice-president position and strategic planning meetings that was conducted University wide in June 2006 could be taken as important developments.

The document outlined major areas of the reform (AAU, 2002). Democratization, good governance and strengthen research capacity within AAU were taken as major reform agendas. To enhancing good governance through setting systems that assert democratic values (Goal 1) aimed at: 'improving transparency, accountability, devolution of power and division of labor, communication, shared vision, and respecting group and individual rights' (AAU, 2002, p. 5). Contrarily to these developments, Setargew (2004) questioned this pressure that challenged and distorted the mission and purpose of Addis Ababa University. For he argued that:

... Addis Ababa University is increasingly falling prey to extremely utilitarian or consumerist demands, which would in turn lead it astray from one of the central educational missions that a university should address, i.e. the cultivation and the disciplining of the mind (p. 35).

### **Academic Program and Curriculum**

Higher education should have academic programs with clear purpose and mission. In this regards, it is very difficult to say that this is adequately present in Ethiopian HEI (Teshome, 2001). Similarly, HEI curriculum generally criticized for not well related adequately to the realities of the world of work and lacked the potential to produce individuals who can create jobs (MoE, 2001; TFHE, 2002). There are also attempts at building capacity and collaborative work at designing, revising and improving academic programs and curricula both at AAU and the college of education. In this line, the work of Amare et al (2000), which was done based on the request of the then AAU president, could be taken one exemplary attempt towards a 'framework intended to serve as a reference for designing curriculum in the University' (77).

Generally there are few instances of collaborative program revision both at the college and department level. The workshop on the future plan of the faculty of education held in Nazareth July 22-23, 1995 (Faculty of Education, 1995) and University/ faculty wide revisions during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary between 1997-2000 (AAU, 2002; Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 2000) are some of the attempt made to adjust the programs with feed back from stakeholders and with the demands of the time. Although, revising programs and curricula were mostly done within the academic department mostly within a curriculum committee, there are only few instances for involving stakeholder (AAU, 2002).

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In general, there is no formal time framework and specific mechanism for program revision, although in the Legislation there are lines of authority that start from the individual teacher (Article 2.6.3) through the Academic standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC)(Article 1.6.2.2.11). ASCRC is the highest body next to the Faculty/ College Academic Commission for approval & possibly for minor revision on proposed programs. According to AAU (1987), the role of ASCRC is to:

Advice the Senate on the establishment of courses of instruction and curricula for the various units of the university and on any major changes in approved curricula submitted by the Academic Commission of the units concerned (Article 1.6.2.2.11).

Any Academic Staff Member shall have the freedom and duty to develop any field related to his discipline and offers it a fully fledged course in accordance with the University's rules and procedures on course offerings in various disciplines in pursuit of knowledge in the university (Article 2.6.3).

#### **Higher Education Teachers Academic Staff (Recruitment, Retention etc)**

Teachers' are generally admitted to the academy when they satisfy academic qualifications set for the position (e.g., senate legislation in AAU, 1987), though there is a possibility for such criteria to be set at the departmental and college level (ACM/ 10/03-04/96). Teachers' retention and promotion was determined by evaluation (by student, colleagues and department head) made at the end of each semester, on a number of publications and other institutional and community services rendered by the candidate. Students evaluation is not only sporadic but appropriate feedback are not available on time. There is also no system of using the information for the revision of the program or the course (Daniel, 2004).

In this line, Aschroft (2003) argued that most HEI in Ethiopia set out minimum standards for the qualification of academic staffs. HEI were also criticized for having poor system of recruitment, training, academic promotion of staffs, and no procedure for retaining highly skilled and capable teachers, to attract new talented individuals and to use personnel through joint appointment (Teshome, 2001; [TFHESO, 2001](#)).

Teachers at HEIs are generally under paid (USD 150 for Lecturer, 400 for Professor) (World Bank, 2003) and there is no system of compensation commensurate with teachers opportunity cost ([TFHESO, 2001](#)). HEI expansion was accompanied by a decline in the proportion of staffs with PhD (World Bank, 2003). Lack of adequate staff with appropriate qualification, pedagogical training and experience were challenge to quality concerns to the expansion proposal ([Daniel, 2004](#)). Hence, to maintain the standard in the midst of expansion, academic staff development and nurturing the culture of research were suggested as priority concerns (World Bank, 2003).

### **Teaching**

According to the World Bank report, lecture method turned out to be the dominant method of instruction, along with large class size and excessive dependence on objective type examination (2003). Similar account was also made by Daniel as he said 'most instructors in HEIs... have no training on teaching', hence, 'lecture methods persist as a common mode of instruction' and 'students primarily depend on lecture notes; independent learning is not encouraged' (2004, p. 72, 75). There is also lack of adequate and continuous training for helping teachers improve their knowledge in areas of teaching methods, teaching material preparation, assessment and evaluations (Teshome, 2001; [TFHESO, 2001](#)). With regards to the quality of teachers' vis-à-vis the requirement to address the mission of the HE, Teshome (2001) again argued that:

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For successful mission accomplishment, what is required was teachers who are adequately prepared and with the required ability and loyalty for the job. But it is not possible to say that higher education institution at present have these kinds of teachers in adequate number. Their teaching method is largely traditional and promotes rote learning. The majority of teachers do not show effort more than transferring their notes to the blackboard. Hence, the existed style of teaching were at odd with the expectation to develop creativity and flexibility in teaching (translation is mine).

With regards to issues related to measurement and evaluation, Daniel (2004, p. 77-78) based on reflections of HE teachers argued that:

Test and measurement in HEIs don't adequately serve the purpose they are intended for. Assignment in the form of projects, and term papers are limited in quite many programs. The types of examinations given seem to encourage students to memorize facts. The evaluation practice is generally summative. There is little or no habit of planning a test particularly with the aim of providing teaching.

To address these shortcomings, both TESO and HESO proposals are more concerned with a dedicated higher diploma program, democratizing the teaching & learning process, through the use of student-centered method of teaching, continuous assessment, focus on practicum etc. More importantly to reverse this situation and attain the pedagogic reform and quality education, the ministry established NPRC, a form of in-service professional development, as:

To improve teachers teaching skills, methods and materials, government has established a National Pedagogical Resources Centre (World Bank 2003, p. 56)

## Research

Although teachers are required to spend 25% of their academic career in research (World Bank, 2003), in general, research contribution of HE teachers was found to be very low (Teshome, 2001). Among those done, the focus of the majority was divorced from the national priorities and existing pressing problems of the community. Similarly, the contribution of these researches to program & curriculum revisions, competency in teaching and development of center of excellence was minimal (ibid).

Daniel (2004; quoting Adane 2001) made it clear that lack of expertise and experience, heavy teaching load, lack of funds and journals etc, as obstacles to research. Other problems includes absence of system for giving proper acknowledgement to these few works available, absence of favorable condition, including earmarked budget (MoE 2001; TFHESO 2001). In this regards, it seems commendable to emphasize the recommendation of the World Bank (2003, p. 56) in that for the nation to benefit from expansion and research, due attention should be given to this within HE policy, institutional strategic planning and budget allocation process, to make staff accountable to fulfill research responsibilities etc.

## Facilities

Daniel (2004) and Teshome (2001) acknowledged shortage of resource as one of the common and serious problem of Ethiopian HEIs. Both older and new programs alike suffer from shortage of basic facilities like textbooks and references, laboratory equipment, computers, other instructional materials and even physical spaces. Even those available are not mostly in good terms and not related with the number of student. HEIs, in this regards, also lack efficient resource utilization procedures (MOE, 2001). Hence, unless addressed adequately and timely, the objective of quality HE teaching and expansion will be at risk.



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## Finance

In general HEI in Ethiopia were under funded. Most problems of the sector were related to shortage of adequate finance and with budget dependency syndromes. Alternative funding source, with a scheme for financial recovery system was urgent policy options for compensating those direct costs spend for academic, accommodation and other services of the HEI. There is also problem of budget utilization that works under the principles of 'use-it-or-lose-it' (Teshome, 2001, p. 7). The majority of the budget available (60-70%) spends for student services and personnel with quite few amounts left for the huge academic task.

## Students

HEI students experience a lot of challenges including shortage of facilities (libraries, classrooms, workshops, laboratory, accommodation etc). They are not also cognizant of the demands of students with special needs. Many of these entrants are not also adequately prepared at the secondary levels. Similarly, HEI are not well prepared to give services such as advice, tutorial and other support services (Daniel, 2004; Teshome, 2001).

## Use of ICT

Although the introduction of AAU-Net was taken important input towards quality teaching and learning, there is no evidence how far the academy makes use of it. There is generally problem of availing basic information that could be used for planning and monitoring of the system. Collaboration, information and both human and material exchange do not generally exist among institutions for alleviating their resource shortage. Quite recently, there are good beginning in AAU; for instance, in publishing the names of academic staffs and their qualification (AAU, 2004), informing academic regulations to students (College of Education, 2003b), publishing students' disciplinary regulation (AAU, 1999), overall information about the institution (College of Education, 2003a) and information about graduate program (AAU, 2002).

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