

## Review On Importance Of Higher Education In Ethiopia: Implication For National Prosperity

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**Abstract:** The education reform of Ethiopia has been an impressive dimension since 1950. The expansion of education programmes in Ethiopia in the form of new universities, new courses, accelerating enrolments, institutional autonomy, curriculum revisions, new funding arrangements etc. are influencing national prosperity and boosting the development of an economy. In Ethiopia, the last two decades had been massive expansion of higher education but at the same time enrolment ratio, quality and relevance of the education system are the major challenges. Expanding higher education in any country needs vision and a strategy. Since its inception, the higher education in Ethiopia has been assuming that the modern education system followed by the western style is the only way to the development of higher education in Ethiopia. Still, the new education system is having few gaps i.e., lack of national interest, no clear directions for curriculum development and do not consider local situation or context. This study focuses on present higher education reform efforts in implication for national prosperity in Ethiopia, to analyse potential weaknesses in the higher education reform, to recommend appropriate changes for maintaining quality of education at a higher level.

**Keywords:** Higher education, national prosperity, the quality of education, curriculum development

### Introduction:

The establishment and reforms of higher education in Ethiopia have been involved by many foreign experts and donor organizations. Most of the scholars have expressed lack of national direction in Ethiopian higher education is the main reason for the more involvement of foreign advisors, administrators and expatriates. Since 1991, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia had introduced several policies for the modernization of the education system in Ethiopia. Implementation of the modern education system in Ethiopia is also influencing Euro-American context conflicts with Ethiopia's cultural-linguistic and historical heritage and it is not improving the lives of people.

Present in Ethiopia development and implementation of quality of education is one of the debate areas. The quality of education has been influencing national prosperity as find out solutions through empirical research. Research on higher education in Ethiopia in general but it is not adequate (**Amare, 2007; Teshome, 1990; Damtew and Altbach, 2003; Teshome, 2007; Amare, 2007; Teye, 2008**). The environmental changes have also taken place for improving quality of education in Ethiopia as rapid institutional and enrolment expansion amid financial stringency, frequent change in policy direction for improving quality of education.

### Review of Literature

Many of the studies indicate that the education system in Ethiopia from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to till date. These are including **Alcardo Alex Barakabitze, Anangisye William-Andey Lazaro, Neterindwa Ainea, Michael Hamza Mkwizu, Hellen Mazikum Alex Xavery Matofali, Aziza Iddi, and Camillius Sanga, (2019)** highlights Information Communication Technology (ICT) models for analysing education transformational approach towards integrating ICTs in Africa's education system. Another study also represents in the same line system-based emphasis is required for improving the quality of education in Ethiopia **Sisay Awgichew Wondemeteeh, (2016)**.

The government expenditure on pre-primary education is influencing the better results in their performance in the future expressed by **Danlela Del Boca, Chlara Mondardini, Sarah Grace See, (2018)**. **Albert-Enéas Gakusi, (2008)** African education system has been facing serious challenges related to low and inequitable access to the education, learning outcomes and the capacity of the education system is poor. It concludes a greater effort is required for providing quality education. Larger effects in the lower levels of education and technological changes will be influencing the expansion of education (**Hannum and Buchmann, 2003**). **Sen, (1999)** expressed that those countries are focusing on access to education and health is the benefit in long run, and eradication of poverty. Basic education leads to learning to do, to know and to live together (**UNSCO 2000; Torres 2004**)

### The impact of higher education on national prosperity

There is a positive impact of higher education on national prosperity. The country has transformed from an agrarian to a strong industrial economy due to advanced higher education. The higher education occupied as

centre stage in developmental strategies has been implementing for overall economic development and attaining national vision and objectives. **Woldegiyorgis (2015)** described national prosperity by certain features including (a) Strong state control system; (b) Focus on technology transfer (c) Diversification of institutions; (d) Emphasis on science and technology as priority areas (e) Expansion in a large scale (f) Non-economic function/goals.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

1. To review the significant developments in Ethiopian higher education
2. To study issues, quality, and relevant in higher education
3. To analyse critically policies of higher education
4. To investigate the effects of modernization towards recolonization on the economic, cultural and societal well-being of Ethiopians

### **Higher Education as a Tool in Development of National Prosperity**

Understanding the position of higher education, or education in general, in the development approach of a given country requires examining the level of importance attached to it and how well it is aligned with other aspects of major development plans. In Ethiopia, based on a review of policies and documents higher education has been playing important role in the overall development of an economy. Further the education has strengthened the individual in the form of problem-solving and hence better life in society. Higher education as a tool, not only resolving the individual issues and its practices will be helpful for all-round development by diffusing science and technology into the society. It also creates the condition for individual mutual understanding, equality, and cooperation in that way promoting respect for human rights and democratic values.

Higher education is the road map for the development of the country and it is inculcating targets with the actuals and estimating outcomes, defining a systematic scheme for achieving national goals of the country. Higher education is the instrument in the process and setting mechanism in the form of policies and strategies for achieving national prosperity. The main emphasis of higher education in the development of the country, to identify priority areas is a considerable improvement for attaining the goals of the country. Through the higher education balanced access in science and technology and its involvement as innovative products in the field of agriculture, manufacturing and servicing sector forcing for the development of the economy.

### **Challenges of higher education in Ethiopian development:**

In Ethiopia, though the policy framework appears to have created a reasonable space for higher education to make important contributions to development, there are several challenges the higher education system has to overcome to practically realize its role.

#### **1. Limited research capacity:**

Ethiopian higher education institutions, even the senior ones, have serious limitations of research capacity. This, in addition to the lack of research facilities in many of the universities, can be seen in the negligible share of research budget that stands not more than 1% (MOE, forthcoming). Similarly, the share of academic staff with third level (Ph.D.) degree, one of the requirements for research productivity, stands at 7.6% as of 2011/12 (MOE, 2012). Besides, graduate programs are limited to few universities and the quality and applicability of graduate research are another dubious issue. The limited number of specialized institutions and centres' focused on research and knowledge generation in priority areas is another limitation, though sizable strides have been made in recent years. The establishment of two Science and Technology Universities, as well as the launching of specialized centres' and institutions in the senior universities, can be seen in a positive light to improved research productivity.

#### **2. Lack of proper coordination with other sectors:**

Though sufficient evidence can be seen to assert that higher education is placed as having a decisive role in development, the very important issue of coordination with other sectors, particularly in implementation, remains under question. For a synchronized national development to take place a coordinated planning and execution are necessary that identifies the roles of each sector. In Ethiopia, the structure for such coordination has not been well established. Though the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) is at the centre of such coordination, its role appears to be compromised by the equal status it has with other ministries and the federal arrangement and the consequent distribution of power.

#### **3. Quality of education:**

The production of a certain number of graduates in particular fields is not enough for higher education to play its role in development. The quality of the graduates to fit the requirements of the economic circumstances:

- In attaining the desired products as well as for the continuous improvement of mechanisms.
- is equally essential. The poor quality of Ethiopian higher education has been documented in recent studies.
- devalues the contribution of the subsector in terms of bringing about resource efficiency, and the overall structural change of the economy at large.

4. **Lack of partnerships:**

Nationally and internationally the formation and commencement of partnerships that improve the capacity of universities remain at a low level. Ethiopian universities are absent or under-represented in regional and international initiatives, such as the Inter-University Council of East Africa, East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Forum, African Higher Education Harmonization and Tuning Project, Association of African Universities, African Centres of Excellence Project, etc. This deprives universities of tapping opportunities that could have been garnered from regional and international resources and undermines the possibility of improving capacity by working with other institutions.

5. **The napoleonic tradition of focusing on training:**

Research and community engagement are insignificant in Ethiopian universities, compared to teaching. The long-standing Napoleonic tradition of primary focus on training for the bureaucracy and the limited private sector can be considered another inhibiting factor in Ethiopian universities.

6. **The tension between views:**

Ethiopian universities have long been a breeding ground of political movements in the country. History teaches leaders to keep the universities at an arm's length. The tension between political powers and the academic community, which is also often mirrored between academic and management staff not only deters productive dialogues between the two, by polarizing views but also inhibits the free exercise of intellectual pursuit and academic freedom. In recent years, however, some improvements are discernible.

**Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30)**

The following reforms have been proposed in thematic areas including quality, relevance, equity, unity with diversity, efficiency, and financing of higher education implication for national prosperity.

Sl. No.	Description
01	Establishment of new and satellite campus on the existing university have been proposed
02	For expanding higher education including opening online, continuing and distance education to expand inclusive literacy
03	For improving the quality of education strengthening the teacher training and capacity building activities
04	Focusing on female students' enrolment and reducing the gender gap
05	To improve the research infrastructure (laboratory, publishing, transport etc.)
06	Promote local journals to meet the international standards and publishing their research finding
07	To increase the budget for research, technology and community services
08	Enhance procurement for purchase research and laboratory inputs
09	Allow academic staff for spending more time on research and community services.
10	To promote universities towards industry linkages so that students can get real work experience

**Conclusion**

It may be concluded that higher education is one of the instrument as constructing knowledge societies at the national level. It is emphasizing in equity in gender and social mobility as a rationale for investing in higher education. Higher education institutions are providing benefits to the graduates in priority areas on health, equality and democracy. Their contribution will help for strengthen institutions and training for the development of a nation, Ethiopia. The activities of research and community engagement are influencing local and national development. These institutions are the example that has shifted from market-driven to development-oriented for national prosperity.

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