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The 70:30 Student Placement Ratio and Its Implication Towards Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs)

By

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Abstract

During the previous (Derg) regime, the Ethiopian Higher Education was monopolized by the government. So those students who failed to score the minimum result in Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) had no chance to attend tertiary Education. With the adoption of a market-oriented economy policy, the EPRDF regime opened a space for the flourishing of Private Higher Education Institutes (PHEIs) in the country. This created opportunity for many citizens who failed to score the minimum entrance result in ESLCE to join higher education institutions. Even though the contributions of the PHEIs to the country as whole are significant, the change of policy for student placement (the so called 70:30 ratio) becomes an issue in recent years. In fact, the educational policy is the major factor that affects (positively or negatively, the strategic plan of the PHEIs. Therefore, it is essential for the policy makers to recognize what motivates and discourages the PHEIs in order to improve their quality, productivity and ensure their success. Thus, the following main questions were inquired to assess the answer and to recommend possible solution: Why there is the 70:30 placement? Which is the implication of the 70:30 placement policy for higher learning education, particularly for Private Higher Education Institutions? How would it be possible to implement the 70:30 placement policy by Private Higher Education Institutions? And how do the Private Higher Education Institutions evaluate the 70:30 placement policy? The general objective of this research is to analyze the main trends of educational policy of Ethiopia and its implications on Private Higher Education Institutions. The specific objectives of the research are: to analyze the Ethiopian Educational Policy documents and their implications on educational process, to analyze the 70:30 placement policy with respect to PHEIs, to check whether the implementation of the new placement policy is affordable or not in terms of investment cost, and to investigate whether the PHEIs can cope up with the in acting placement policy. This research used the quantitative research method and the collection of primary data was undertaken using sampling technique, through questionnaire filled in by a number of students, instructors, and higher education managers. The results of the research indicate that the new in acting 70:30 placement policy of the MoE doesn't satisfy the interest of student, the implementation for PHEIs seems difficult and not affordable, while the contribution of the PHEIs to increase the qualified labor force is significant. Even though such macro policies need strong

research, it is possible to conclude that the implementation of the new policy bears many of its difficulty on PHEIs. Therefore, in my opinion the policy needs: Re-thinking, re-consideration, and participation of all stakeholders for its proper implementation.

Keywords: Higher Education, placement policy, Private Higher Education Institutions.

Introduction

During the previous (Derg) regime, the Ethiopian Higher Education System was monopolized by the government. So those students who failed to score the minimum result in ESLCE had no chance to attend tertiary education. With the adoption of a market-oriented economy policy, the EPRDF regime opened a space for the flourishing of PHEIs in the country. This condition created opportunity for many citizens who failed to score the minimum entrance result in ESLCE to join higher education institutions. In recent years, even though the contributions of the PHEIs to the country as whole are significant, the change of policy for student placement (the 70:30 ratio) becomes an issue.

Hard science and Soft science

The reason to discuss this concept is to remind how much the requirement of the resources and infrastructures needed for teaching hard and soft sciences are different. The hard sciences are characterized as relying on experimental, empirical, and quantifiable data; on the scientific method; and focusing on accuracy and objectivity, such as for chemistry, physics, biology, etc. There is even an argument about chances of scientific research for soft science, but as compared to the hard science, the soft science is less quantifiable and considered more subjective, as social science (history and political science).

Contribution of the PHEIs to increase the GER of the Country

During the ESDP I period (1997 EFY – 2001 EFY), the Ethiopian Ministry of Education stated that the overall “enrolments as well as the intake capacity of the higher education

institutions significantly increased” (MoE, 2005). There are different reasons for the enhancement of the student enrollment in the higher education, as twenty-two universities in the country (9 existing and 13 new ones) and more than 50 private higher education institutions have been accredited within the planning period. As a result, the overall enrolments of the students in higher education institutions have increased from 149,694 to 319,217 in that period.

Statement of the Problem

Educational policy is the major factor that positively or negatively affects the strategic plan of the PHEIs. Therefore, it is essential for the policy makers to recognize what motivates and discourages the Private Higher Education Institutions in order to improve the quality, productivity and ensure the success of the PHEIs. The following main questions were raised to assess the answer and to recommend possible solution:

- Why the 70:30 hard science to soft science placement ratio?
- What is the implication of the 70:30 pronouncement of hard science to soft science ratio for higher learning education, particularly for Private Higher Education Institutions?
- How would it be possible to implement the 70:30 placement ratio by the Private Higher Education Institutions?
- How do the Private Higher Education Institutions evaluate the 70:30 placement ratio?

Scope of the Study

The study focused on Private Higher Education Institutions, particularly those which are found in Addis Ababa, as the 70:30 student placement ratio is significantly affecting their survival in terms of financial sustainability and infrastructure availability.

Significance of the Research

The outcome of this research will be beneficial for policy makers, as well as for both Public and Private Higher Education Institutions. For policy makers, whether to revise or to maintain the policy and it enables the Private Higher Education Institutions to decide whether to continue in the business or change the business area.

Limitations of the Study

The following are the limitations of the study:

- Shortage of time;
- Distributing the questionnaire - unwillingness of individuals to fill in the questionnaire;
- Collecting the questionnaire – unable to collect the filled in questionnaire on the promised date; and
- The study focused only on the PHEIs which are found in Addis Ababa.

Research Methods

This study used both descriptive survey research and documentary analysis as its research methods to generate primary and secondary data respectively. The problem doesn't arise if secondary data are to be used. However, if primary data are to be collected, a decision has to be made whether census method or sampling technique, is to be used for data collection. In the census method, we resort to 100% inspection of the population and enumerate each and every unit of population. In the sampling technique, we inspect or study only a selected representative and adequate fraction (finite subset) of the population. After the researcher has analyzed the data collected from the sample, the results will be interpreted and then we draw conclusions about the characteristics of the population. Therefore, in this research, the sampling technique was used. The study used questionnaires as research instrument and interviews as technique for collecting primary

data from the sample. In addition the study employed documentary analysis method to collect pertinent secondary

Sources of Secondary Data

The chief sources of secondary data were published documents and unpublished materials. There are a number of national (governmental, semi-governmental and private) organizations and also international agencies which have collected statistical data relating to different sectors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis and interpretation of the study will be presented as follow on the basis of some of the major questions asked to the respondents.

1. Evaluation of the 70:30 placement policy of higher education pronouncement is described using table below along with its interpretation.

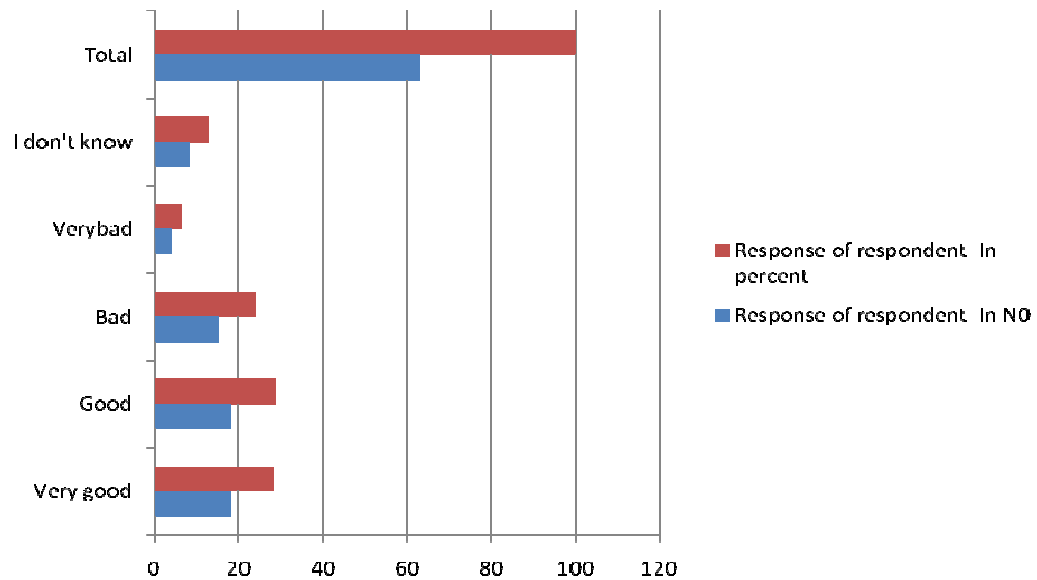


Figure 1-- Evaluation of 70:30 student Placement Policy.
Source: Own survey results, 2011.

Concerning the 70:30 placement of the higher education policy, 28.6% of the respondents argued that they had supported the efficiency of the policy. At the same time, the aggregated value of both the ‘Very good’ and ‘Good’ response categories were found to represent 57.2%, which is above the average.

2. The implication of the policy towards students’ interest, achieving the Growth and Transformation Plan [GTP] of the country and the labor market.

a) In terms of students’ interest

Table1- Implication of the policy on students’ interest

Parameters	Student Interest
	%
Very Encouraging	12.7
Encouraging	33.3
Discouraging	33.3
Very Discouraging	14.3
I don’t know	3.2

Source: Own study results, 2011.

As it is illustrated in Table 1, the policy doesn’t meet the interest of the students. This is due to the fact that the students are not able to select a field of specialization which they intend to study.

b) In terms of achieving the GTP and Investment cost

Table 2 - Implication of policy on GTP and Investment cost

Parameters	Achieving GTP	Invest. Cost
	%	%
Very High/ Very High	25.4	52.4
High/High	41.3	28.6
Low/Low	20.6	4.8
Very Low/ Very Low	3.2	11.1
I don't know	3.2	0.0

Source: Own survey data output, 2011.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that the policy had met the requirement of the government to achieve the GTP. However, the PHEIs are not complying with the policy due to the fact that the financial and resource requirements are high. Respondents' responses were 81% (Very High + High).

c) In terms of labor demand (market)

Table3 - Implication of the policy on Labor demand.

Parameters	Labor demand
	%
Highly demanded	20.6
Moderately demanded	15.9
Fairly demanded	22.2
Low demand	31.7
I don't know	3.2

Source: Compiled by the author, 2011.

Table 3 presents the respondents' response regarding their attitude towards the implication of the policy on labour demand. About one-third of the respondents agreed that the implication of the policy on the market demand was found to be low.

3. Will the policy affect the PHEIs? (Yes/No) and if so, how? (positively/negatively).

Table 4 - Effects of the Policy on PHEIs and its Types

Parameters	Policy affects PHEIs? (Yes/No) (%)	Positively/ negatively (%)
Yes/Positively	76.2	17.5
No/ Negatively	7.9	60.3
No effects at all	0.0	1.6
I don't know	11.1	14.3

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

As the respondents' responses show in Table 4, the new placement policy affects the PHEIs. The significant majority of the respondents (76.2%) were found to hold that attitude towards the new placement policy of the country. Those respondents who viewed that it had had negative effect weighed 60.3 % of the respondents' responses.

4. Contribution of the PHEIs to increase the supply of the qualified labor force in Ethiopian economy.

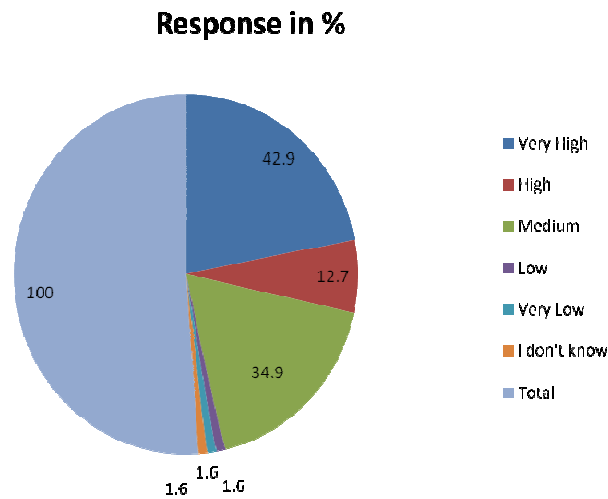


Figure 2 -- Contribution of PHEIs in the supply of qualified labor force in the economy.

Source: Own study results, 2011.

As it can be depicted in the above pie chart, the contribution of the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) is significant. A significant proportion of the respondents were found to agree with this idea which was found to weigh 55.6% (i.e. 42.9 % Very high and 12.7 % high).

5. Do you think that the policy maker needs to revise the policy with respect to the PHEIs?

Table 5 - Revising or Maintaining the Policy

Parameters	(%)
Yes	69.8
No	12.7
I don't know	12.7

Source: Own survey results, 2011.

Most of the respondents' responses indicated that the policy maker had been required to revise the placement policy with respect to the PHEIs, which accounted for 69.8 %.

Summary of Major Findings of the Study

Having analyzed the data collected and then interpreted them, it is now possible to summarize the major findings in the following manner:

- The results of the study indicate that the new in acting 70:30 placement policy of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ethiopia doesn't satisfy the interest of students.
- Matters or questions related to the investment cost as well as the implementation of the 70:30 placement policy for the PHEIs seem difficult and not affordable. That is, 81% of the respondents assured the difficult acceptability of the policy by the PHEIs.

- The pronouncement of the 70:30 placement policy seems one of the factors which is used to achieve the Growth Transformation Plan of the country.
- The contribution of the PHEIs to increase the qualified labor force is significant and, hence, proper attention is required from policy makers.

Conclusions

Even though such a macro policy requires strong research undertaking, it is possible to conclude that the implementation of the new in acting placement policy bears its difficulty on PHEIs. Therefore, the study concludes the following regarding the policy under investigation:

- The policy needs re-thinking.
- It requires re-consideration.
- There should be the participation of all stakeholders for its proper implementation. By stakeholders, in this study, we mean the students, instructors and the Private Higher Education Institutions' managers.

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