

**Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International  
Conference on Private Higher Education in  
Africa**

*Major Theme: Poverty Reduction and the  
Contribution of Private Higher Education in  
Africa*

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## **Keynote address**

**By**

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Dear Participants and Organizers of the Conference

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start my intervention by saying that it is my pleasure to be here today to attend this very important gathering on the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> international Annual Conference of Private Higher Education under the theme of *“Poverty Reduction and the Contributions of Private Higher Education (PHE) in Africa”*. On behalf of my colleague, Firmin Matoko, Representative of UNESCO to Ethiopia, ECA and African Union I would like to thank the organizers for the invitation extended to us to attend this conference.

The core mission of higher education should be to educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens and to provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life. Higher Education Institutions should educate students to become well-informed and deeply motivated

citizens, who can think critically, analyze problems of society, try to find solutions to solve them and accept social responsibilities. Higher Education Institutions must anticipate the developing needs of society and individuals, and they must be open to the needs of adults for continuing education and the updating of their knowledge and skills in order to be in tune with the rapid development of the global economy. Special attention should be paid to higher education role of service to society, especially in activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease, and also contribute to activities aiming at the development of the culture of peace, through an inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman

As it is stated in Education Sector Development Plan IV, the goals of higher education in Ethiopia is to develop highly qualified, motivated and innovative human resources and produce and transfer advanced and relevant knowledge for socio-economic development and poverty reduction with a view to turning Ethiopia into a middle-income country by the year 2025.

Some key outcomes for higher education are:

- A balanced distribution of higher education opportunities throughout the country through the widening of access to higher education, in particular to science and technology
- Increased student learning, personal growth and improved employability through high quality higher education and relevant professional mix

In order to achieve the vision of transforming Ethiopia into a middle-income country by 2025 it is necessary to transform the economy through application of science and technology as wealth creating instruments. This government commitment will give a confidence to work on poverty reduction and job creating activities. As it is mentioned in the theme of the conference, there is a fertile ground to work on poverty reduction for Private Higher Education. It is now clear that, to fulfill its mission, higher education must change radically by becoming organically flexible and at the same time more diverse in its institutions, its structures, its curricula, and the nature and forms of its program and delivery systems, and by utilizing the information and communication technologies which can help to achieve its purpose.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman

UNESCO Liaison Office in Ethiopia worked closely with Ministry of Education in the preparation of ESDP IV. The challenges identified were:

- Despite major expansion, access to higher education remains relatively limited (Gross Enrolment Rate of 5.3% in 2008/2009), and admission targets have not been met.
- Post-graduate admissions remain far below the target figures. This puts serious constraints on the system in terms of local staff availability because of the rapid system expansion.
- In terms of gender balance, the share of female academics remains far below the target, and would require serious efforts to encourage women participation both at the under-graduate and postgraduate levels.

- Undergraduate enrolments evolve more rapidly than qualified teachers putting serious constraints on working conditions and the quality of education.
- Shortages of qualified staff both in public and private sectors particularly pronounced in science and technology areas where enrolments are expected to increase rapidly.
- The private institutions relevance and quality is not in line with the expectation of the government
- There is no strong Technology Transfer system which is based on the need of the industry.
- Higher Education Management and Leadership system is not at the required level.

UNESCO with its Cap EFA Program is working collaboratively with Ministry of Education among different directorates, Regional Education Bureaus and Higher Learning Institutions focusing on capacity building programs for effective implementation of sector plan. The Private Higher Education should focus also to resolve the challenges of the sub sectors that are explained in the sector plan.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman

Private higher education has an important contribution to the education sector in terms of enrollment and it is one of most dynamic and fastest growing segments of post-secondary education at the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The gross enrolment rate of higher education in least developed countries and sub Saharan Africa is very low. However, the growth of the private sector is

seen as one of the viable alternatives. At present, the private sector is a fast expanding segment of higher education in Africa. In terms of number of institutions, they surpass public institutions in many countries including here in Ethiopia. However, in terms of enrolment they still continue to be a small segment of higher education.

Some research outputs revealed some of the weaknesses in the private institutions that should be improved in the future. Most of the staff in private Higher education are working in part time, the students in Private Higher Education are those who couldn't get an opportunity to join public universities, the private universities of recent origin offer courses that require less investment in terms of infrastructure and equipment and research is rarely emphasized.

Therefore, it is expected that private education institutions will start considering how to measure outcomes for students, and use these as the basis to spur quality improvements in the programmes. While institutions can justifiably seek to increase enrolment, they should ensure that students they admit are able to benefit from their programmes, and provide appropriate support to help students complete their studies. The private education institutions should recognize the impact that they have on students' lives, and to deliver on the promises made.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman

As the only United Nations agency with a mandate in higher education, UNESCO facilitates the development of evidence-based policies in response to new trends and developments in this field emphasizing its role in

achieving the Millennium Development Goals and particularly poverty eradication. The Organization fosters innovation to meet education and workforce needs and examines ways of increasing higher education opportunities for young people from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It deals with cross-border higher education and quality assurance, with a special focus on mobility and recognition of qualifications, and provides tools to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision of higher education. UNESCO promotes policy dialogue and contributes to enhancing quality education, strengthening research capacities in higher education institutions, and knowledge sharing across borders.

As part of its priority to Africa program, UNESCO established in 1999 a category 1 Institute called International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA). IICBA is based here in Addis Ababa and works in building the capacities of teacher educators and teachers in the 54 Member States of Africa. As part of its contribution to higher education in Africa IICBA designed and implemented postgraduate programs in many African countries in such areas as 1) MA in the Teaching of Math and Science in collaboration with the Addis Ababa University, 2) MA in ICT in Education in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, 3) MA in Critical Practitioner Inquiry in collaboration with the University of Umea (Sweden), and 4) Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education and MA in Distance Education in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (India). It has also developed ICT- enhanced Teacher Standards for Africa as a framework for teacher educator's development. It is also working on formulating national and regional qualification frameworks, quality assurance frameworks and a strategy for teachers' mobility throughout Africa.

In Ethiopian context, UNESCO is one of the UN agencies that signed the UNDAF Action Plan (2012-2015). This framework is fully aligned to the five-year national development plan for Ethiopia Known as GTP. The GTP is the first in a series of three five years plans to push the country's transformation to middle income country by 2020-2023. The UNDAF outcome for the education sector is “**By the end of 2015, equitable access created and quality education provided to boys and girls at pre primary, primary and post primary levels with a focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and localities**”.

In this connection, UNESCO has been supporting these efforts to improve the capacity of teachers, professionals and their institutions to enable them implement the national plan of country. To cite some, UNESCO and Ministry of Education are working together to improve the capacity of teachers. For example;

- To capture up to date information about the education sector including higher learning institutes (EMIS is strengthened)
- TMIS Software developed and started to install in education offices and this also include the pre-service trainings
- Capacity building programs arranged focusing on Sector Plan and Management
- The new project “***Support to strengthening teacher education for bridging the education quality gap in Ethiopia***” is started in two Teacher Education Colleges (Bahirdar and Hawassa) with the support of Chinese government implemented collaboratively with UNESCO-LO, IICBA and MOE. The main intervention area of IICBA's support is strengthening capacities in the two selected



teacher education institutes (TEIs) in Bhair Dar and Hawassa in the areas of Teacher Education, ICT in Education, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Teachers.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman

Therefore, the theme and the sub-themes that will be addressed in the presentation of the research output will be helpful in order to improve the quality of higher education. Improving the quality of higher institution that contribute for poverty reductions should be a major concern of policy makers and the higher learning institutions to improve the workforce problems and the community development of the country.

Finally, I feel that this conference will be the most useful and fruitful from which we shall all draw significant lessons that could be an input for the government as well as for private higher institutions. We appreciate St. Mary's University and other development partners for convening this important forum. I wish you a fruitful conference.

Thank You