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Enhancing Graduate Employability for Enhancing the Role of Higher Education in Poverty Reduction: A Gap Analysis Study with Particular Reference to Private Providers Operating in Ethiopia

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Abstract:

On the basis of relevant theories and the practice elsewhere, this paper argues that, unlike the old days, all higher education institutions operating in poor economies must and should raise their contribution to poverty reduction by enhancing the employability of their graduates from time to time. What private providers doing in Ethiopia and the associated macro environment was assessed with mixed approaches, using qualitative and quantitative data collection. Methods included: an extensive review of literature, examination of official documents and key informant interview at five private higher educational institutions selected for case study. Documentary sources show that since the second half of the 1990s, Ethiopia has been made to have national policies and strategies promoting and supporting the education for employment (E4E) agenda. Unfortunately, however, such provisions are not augmented by national graduate employability (GE) focused policy framework, vision, strategies, programs, guidelines and working group dealing with the matter. This made the existing macro intervention in the country far from complete. Regarding the situation at micro level, it was found that all the institutions covered in the study are well aware of the fact that graduate unemployment or underemployment problem has been manifesting in unprecedented way in present Ethiopia. Paradoxically, however, none of them managed to have a full-fledged system function dedicated to the enhancement of graduate employability. Unlike pre-program need assessment, the practice of conducting tracer studies and/or industry satisfaction surveys for identifying the employment situation of graduates and taking the necessary corrective measures with industry feedback and participation was found a rarity. In so far as interventions seeking to enhance graduate employability through curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities are concerned, much has not been done in all cases. In nutshell, the agenda of graduate employability has not been given serious attention at all levels: policy, strategy, curriculum & instruction, research and development. Changing such a scenario will definitely enable the case study institutions produce employable graduates capable of emancipating themselves and others from the yoke of poverty.

Introduction

Relatively, the term ‘employability’ is a new addition to the vocabulary of higher education. Knight (2001) describes it as a chameleon concept for simple reason that it can be defined differently for different purposes. Some relate it to immediate employment (e.g. % graduates into fulltime employment within 6 months). Others focus on immediate employability; ‘work readiness’, ability to ‘hit the ground running’. Longer term views emphasize lifelong sustainability of the individual’s employability (Relton, M., 2009). Widely, reference is made to a set of skills, understandings and personal attributes that could make the individual graduate employable both in short- and long-term (Ibid). And, exceptionally, the description given by Malaysia’s Ministry of Higher Education (2012) on the basis of the learner-centered approach is very comprehensive in nature; hence, very useful in terms of having a broader view of the concept and how it differs from employment.

Employability is about the potential of obtaining and building a fulfilling career through continuous development of skills that can be applied from one employer to another; possessing the set of attributes and skills that match those required by industry; taking the responsibility for self-development through learning and training, either through the employer or self initiatives; adopting the concept of life-long learning; being employed according to their level of qualification, functional competencies and being awarded accordingly in terms of wages & benefits; whereas employment is a contract between two parties - one being the employer and the other being the employee.

Accounting the broader features of the concept mentioned above, this paper throws light on relevant best global practices and what has been done or not done at the case study organizations and their macro environment in so far as the need for enhancing graduate employability for the purpose of poverty reduction is concerned. Basing itself on the Human Capital Theory that displayed the role of investment in education in order to boost economic and social achievements (Olaniyan, and Okemakinde 2008); and, standing against the liberal view that opposes the Education For Employment (E4E) agenda and the associated notion that all academic courses should include employability enhancing content, the paper argues that higher education institutions operating in poor economies must and should raise their contribution to poverty reduction by enhancing the employability of their graduates continuously.

In terms of purpose, identifying gaps to be filled for enhancing graduate employability and the role of higher education (HE) in poverty reduction in Ethiopia is the whole idea (general

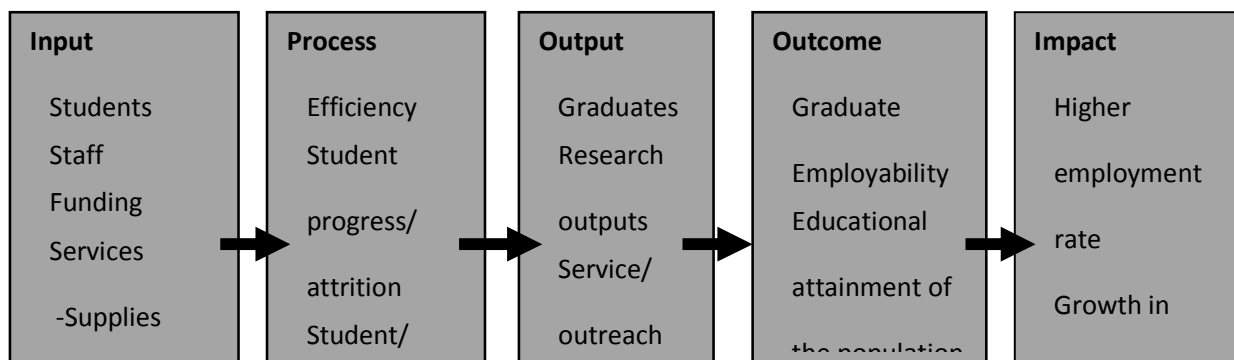
objective) of the study; and assessing: i) the type and scope of existing interventions at macro and micro level, ii) institutional awareness about the problem and recorded achievements (if any), and iii) limitations or unmet needs with existing scenario are its specific objectives.

The Concept and the Practice in Global Context

For centuries, employability had never been raised as an issue in the agenda of higher education across the globe. This, however, no longer the case in the era of globalization, competitive market economy and massification of higher education; where graduate unemployment and underemployment is pervasive.

Research has shown that education at any level could make significant contribution to poverty reduction, if institutions manage to produce employable graduates for the consumption of societies (Figure 1). This is very critical in countries where a significant proportion of the population lives in poverty. Unless they intend to enhance the employability of their graduates through ongoing interventions, higher education institutions operating in poor economies, will definitely lose their key role in poverty reduction, and become irrelevant.

Figure 1: Higher Education and Poverty Reduction: The Link



Adopted from Nel and Barnard (2009)

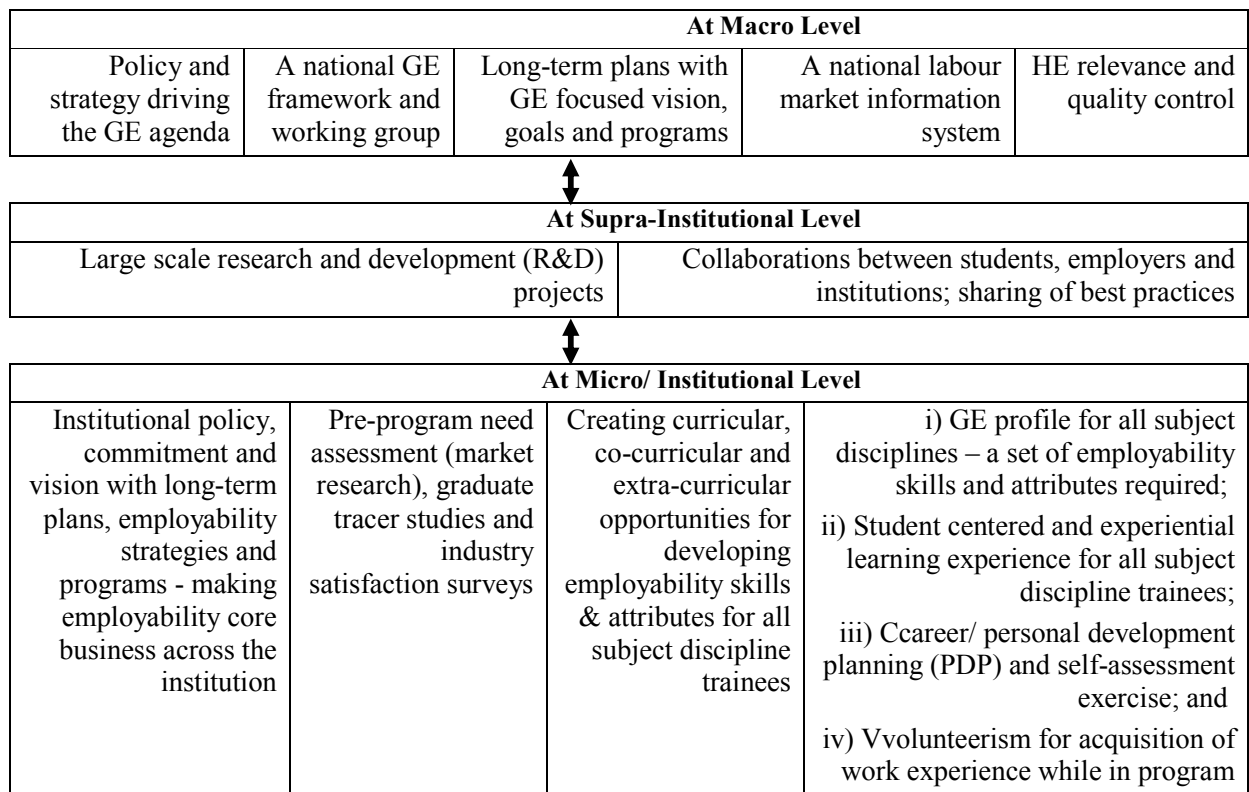
Employability has become so important not only in the context of poor economies but also for a number of other general reasons to be seen in global context. In this regard, growth of knowledge economies; greater international competition resulting from globalization; call for improved forecasting of skill needs and education-based solutions; move away from the traditional job-for-

life; increasing unemployment levels; notions of social justice, with employment seen as a solution to poverty and social exclusion; and, trend toward greater civic participation, can be mentioned as examples (Relton 2009). In fact, as stated in the work of Cranmer (2006), all societies in the developed part of the world have been introducing policies that seek to enhance employability through educational initiatives with a view to boosting national wealth. In line with this, notions of graduates 'work-readiness' are embraced by many societies as a means of ensuring economic competitiveness in a global context. Concerning the nature and pervasiveness of the problem, it was noted that 'concern from employers that undergraduate programmes are failing to provide graduates with the necessary skills for their careers is a worldwide issue.'

It was since the dawn of the 1960s that the world started observing efforts directed towards enhancing graduate employability. Europe is a pioneer as far as research on higher education institutions –vs- the world of work is concerned (Teichler 2009). With the establishment of i) the Institute for Economics of Education in 1970 in Dijon, France when worldwide debates focused on the contribution of educational expenditures to economic growth, ii) the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies in Enschede, the Netherlands in the mid-1970s when governmental steering and institutional management of higher education became more strategic, and iii) the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work at the Comprehensive University of Kassel, Germany in 1978 as a response to growing concerns about graduate employment and work in the wake of educational expansion and of graduate employment problems visible since the "oil shock" of 1973; the continent started seeking solution to the problem through policy research and graduate tracer study, which has become a popular tool for the analysis of the relationship between higher education and work, and taking the necessary actions towards ensuring graduate relevance and employability for the benefit of all parties having stakes in the higher education sub-sector (Schomburg 2003). Accompanied by industry satisfaction surveys, the practice of conducting tracer studies was extended beyond the boundary of Europe in the 1980s. This period witnessed not only the expansion of problem-solving research in the area but also policy debates and emergence of government initiatives and programs. In the UK, for example, two government-funded programs; namely, Higher Education for Capability (1988) and Enterprise in Higher Education (1989) were initiated to support the development of employability skills (Cranmer 2006). In the 1990s, especially following the conclusion of the 'Cold War' the period

witnessing fundamental changes in the political economy of the bipolar world; consequently raising unemployment to higher level everywhere, a number of nations behaved in unprecedented way in their commitment to more closely aligning higher education with the world of work. Accordingly, the graduate employability agenda was made to take centre stage at higher level; and, the liberal debate standing against it was silenced (Ibid). Since then, depending on the magnitude of the problem, and institutional and national interests expressed at local, regional, continental and global level, various interventions seeking enhancement in graduate employability have been designed and implemented with varying approaches and scope. Case studies conducted in different parts of the world show the importance of adopting a holistic approach to the problem (Ibid.; Relton 2009). In fact, what has been documented as best global practice so far in the area indicate that better results can be achieved if various efforts to be expressed in terms of policy, strategy, quality & relevance control, research & development, curriculum & instruction, etc are made at different levels, macro, supra-institutional and micro/ institutional – involving various stakeholders from all sectors (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A Comprehensive Intervention Modality for Enhancing GE



For better results, the intervention at micro/ institutional level is expected to ensure the engagement of industry (employers) and students in number of areas (Figure 3). The participation and involvement of such stakeholders is sought not only at micro/ institutional level but also at macro level as member of the national working group (Relton 2009).

Figure 3: Industry and Student Engagement at Micro/ Institutional Level

Industry engagement	Student engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular design ▪ Work placement and site visits ▪ Role in course instruction, student assessment and mentoring ▪ Guest speaking ▪ Career/ job fairs & recruitment ▪ Opportunities for institutional staff to update knowledge & skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular design ▪ Membership of institutional boards and committees ▪ Student/ tracer surveys ▪ Responsibility for own skills development/ supported with personal development plan and other reflective learning tools

The kind of employability skills and attributes to be developed through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities may or may not be one and the same everywhere. Depending on the labour market target (local and/or global) and industry needs to be fulfilled accordingly, a set of skills and attributes to be prescribed and included in graduate employability profile (GEP) could show variation as we go from one country/ institution to another. But, equally, it is also possible to find matching prescriptions here and there. This is true in case of ‘generic’ or cross-cutting skills, knowledge and attributes usually recommended for all students regardless of their subject discipline, like for example, communication, multilingualism, IT, understanding the business, enterprise and entrepreneurship, working together (team working), analytical thinking and problem solving, self-management, learning how to learn, and foundation skills such as a positive approach (can-do attitude), willingness to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism, and take responsibility for outcomes.

Normally, for the purpose of enhancing graduate employability, effective program, skill and knowledge prescriptions need to be made on the basis of research which is why need assessment,

tracer studies and industry satisfaction surveys are made part and parcel of the intervention modality we saw above. Research is needed not only to identify skills, knowledge and attributes to be developed but also to determine institutional performance (the success of intervention being implemented) in terms of the outcome of graduate employability in employment terms so that corrective measures can be taken to further enhancing employability now and in the future. Recently published reports show that developed nations adopting the best practices we saw above are recording remarkable achievements. In case of Scotland, for example, the following has been observed (Table 1).

Table 1: Employability of Graduates from Scotland Universities: 2009/2010 – 2011/2012

University	Graduate employability		
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Robert Gordon University	95.7%	97.1%	97.7%
Glasgow Caledonian University	91.0%	87.8%	96.2%
Queen Margaret University	92.0%	93.5%	93.8%
Edinburgh University	93.2%	93.6%	92.3%
University of Abertay	87.1%	89.2%	92.1%
University of the West of Scotland	86.9%	90.9%	84.7%
Total Scotland	92.2%	93.0%	92.8%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, UK (2013)

If adopted carefully, it is believed that the intervention modality proved successful in the developed part of the world could also bring in excellent results in the other part of the globe characterized by chronic poverty. Accordingly, the case in Ethiopia has been studied.

The Problem and Study Rationale in the Context of Ethiopia

Tertiary education is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. It was introduced at the beginning of the 1950s with the establishment of Addis Ababa University (then known as University College of Addis Ababa) and three junior colleges. Up until the beginning of the 1990s, the country had two public universities only, while there were literally no private providers. At the beginning of the 2010s, the population of public universities was raised to thirty-two; and a number of private providers came into the scene (Ministry of Education Ethiopia, 2011b; 2011c). With the aforementioned phenomenal events, higher education enrolment in the country (at public and

private providers) has exceeded the mark of 400,000 (Ministry of Education Ethiopia 2011a). And, the share of private providers has been over 17% since they entered the market (Ibid).

According to the World Bank (2011), Ethiopia's tertiary level Gross Enrolment Ratio of 5.0% places the country among the lowest ranking countries of the world or the region (Figure 4). This means that the professional and technical capacity needed at tertiary level is extremely limited in Ethiopia. Given this state of fact, the current massification of higher education in the country is justifiable, but without graduate employability, it can take the nation nowhere.

Figure 4: Higher Education in Ethiopia

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1991	1999	2000-12
Public HEIs (universities)	1	1	2	3	2	4	32
Private HEIs (universities/ university colleges)	0	1	0	0	0	0	68
Enrolment (in thousands)	<=4.5			18.4	43.8	52.3	467.843
Public							78% - 82%
Private							18% - 22%
Gross Enrolment Ratio (Ethiopia)				0.5%	0.8%	1.7%	5.0%
Low income countries							9.2%
Sub-Sahara Africa							7.9%

Source: Ministry of Education, Ethiopia (2011a; 2011b; 2011c); World Bank (2011)

Unfortunately, results that the country is observing now-a-days is not promising. Since the 1980s, unemployment has been manifesting mainly among secondary school graduates and dropouts from primary and secondary levels of schooling. This is no longer the only case in present day Ethiopia; in that, with massification of higher education, the country started witnessing the existence of a new youth group facing unemployment after completing college/ university education in the country. The trend is that, graduate unemployment is growing at alarming rate. It was 0% up until the 1980s; below 3% throughout the 1990s; more than 20% at

the end of the 2000s; and now estimated $\geq 40\%$ (Berhanu , Abraham , and Deijl, Hannah 2005; Central Statistical Agency Ethiopia 2011). And, with the increase in graduate output; undoubtedly, it will continue to increase further unless otherwise effective intervention is sought for combating it in the short, medium and long-term.

If not reversed, the effect would be devastating: HE providers will lose their value, significance and influence, and become irrelevant; money and other resources spent or to be spent on HE can't be justified; and most importantly, unemployment and poverty remain chronic problems possibly leading to social and political unrest in the country. So, for all stakeholders (government, HE providers, etc), the task of ensuring graduate employability is not something optional but mandatory. The reality on the ground may or may not go with expectations. Whatever the case might be, researching and documenting macro and micro initiatives that Ethiopia has been observing in relation to best global practices has paramount importance not only in terms of identifying gaps and pinpointing the way forward for the betterment of institutional performance in addressing the problem referred herein but also in sharing experiences and lessons with others and stimulating further research in the area.

Methodological Considerations

A case study design supported by national policy, strategy, program, etc document survey was adopted for assessing micro and macro initiatives, achievements and gaps with mixed approaches, using qualitative and quantitative data collection. Methods included: an extensive review of literature, examination of official documents and key informant interview at five private universities or university colleges selected for case study. In selecting the five institutions, popularity was used as selection criteria with the assumption that good or best practices to be shared with others could be found more at popular institutions than the unpopular ones. At the time of initiating the study, Ethiopia had 68 accredited private universities or university colleges. With case study design, the study has no intention of generalizing its findings at micro (institutional) level to such population of private providers operating in the

country. But macro assessment findings to be obtained through document survey are expected to provide a general picture about provisions and limitations (gaps) for the whole nation.

The existence and contents of relevant study reports and working documents produced at national and institutional level were checked to determine the type and scope of existing interventions, their achievements and limitations. This was augmented by conducting key informant interview (with semi-structured tool) soliciting feedback from academic officials (institutional representatives) so as to determine institutional awareness and perception about the problem and verify initial desk/ document research results on the basis of which adjustments were made for ensuring the completeness and quality of study findings.

On the basis of assessment parameters derived from best global practices, qualitative data gathered for the study from various sources were analyzed using the content analysis technique. In case of quantitative data, descriptive statistical functions and presentation tools were utilized. As per the request of the five private providers included in the study, naming names in reporting findings or other aspects of the study was found unnecessary. But, instead of names unique codes assigned by the researcher were used to refer institutions in relation to certain study matters whenever necessary.

Presentation of Data, Analysis Results and Discussions

Apart from their popularity, the five institutions covered in the study also reflect homogeneous characteristics in many respects. In terms of history, most of them were established in the second half of the 1990s. In terms of program, all of them render a variety of training and educational services at TVTE (technical and vocational training and education) and undergraduate level; and, with the exception of the youngest institution that came into existence in the first half of the 2000s, the rest found to have courses leading to postgraduate (second) degrees in one or more subject areas (Table 2).

Table 2: Characteristics of Institutions Studied

Provider Code	TVTE programs (n)	Undergraduate degree programs (n)	Postgraduate programs (n)
PHEI ¹	10	22	1
PHEI ²	7	7	5
PHEI ³	5	10	2
PHEI ⁴	7	8	1
PHEI ⁵	4	5	0

The base academic and administrative facility of the institutions is located in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. Again, with the exception of the youngest private provider, all the institutions conduct their training and educational services both through the conventional and distance modes of instruction. Accordingly, they have had branch campuses and/or distance education coordinating offices almost everywhere in the country, that is, in the nine regional states and two special city administrations of Ethiopia.

With regard to the document survey designed for the assessment of the macro situation, the study has covered all policy, legislation, strategy and program documents released for the education sector of Ethiopia in general and its sub-sector, higher education in particular. Additionally, related macro policy and strategy documents prepared for other sectors like industry, agriculture, etc. were also consulted. The list was prepared and accessed by visiting and consulting not only the official websites of the Federal Government of Ethiopia ministries, associated agencies, their documentation/ resource centers and relevant information and communication staffs but also other sources on the net or otherwise.\

The macro situation

Since the second half of the 1990s, the macro environment in the country can be characterized by existence of relevant policies, strategies and programs promoting and supporting the E4E agenda. For instance, the Education and Training Policy and Strategy (1994); the Education

Sector Development Program (1997-2017); the Industrial Development Strategy (2003); the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (2006); and, the 70:30 Higher Education Enrollment Policy (2009) emphasize on the place given to education in reducing poverty and steering economic and social development. In congruent with this, in her recent work, Ashcroft (2010) noted the following:

The Ethiopian Government sees higher education as an important plank in its strategy for social and economic development. Particular ideas related to the purposes of higher education are valued and prioritized. Some of the purposes are seen as relatively less important (for example furthering the arts and culture) than others (especially employability, democracy and entrepreneurialism).

Even the Higher Education Proclamation (2003) demands all providers to equip their students with employability skills mentioned above.

Higher education or training offered at any institution shall be that which focus on experience and student participation; that is practice-oriented; that take the objective situation of the country into consideration; encourage independent thinking, reflect modern views; and that is problem – solving (Article 13, p.2238).

Following the aforementioned proclamation, a quality watchdog for the HE sub-sector of Ethiopia, which is known as HERQA (higher education relevance and quality assurance agency) came into the scene to function in three main areas: ensuring institutional standards, quality and relevance; offering pre-accreditation and accreditation; and, providing information to the public about standards, programs and status of HEIs (higher education institutions).

By design, HERQA is made to address the graduate employability agenda in one way or another. In pre-accreditation process, for example, the agency's accreditation or quality audit protocol demands every HEI to justify the relevance of its programs and to have robust procedures for curriculum design, approval and review by conducting pre-program need assessment, involving external professionals and employers in curriculum design, evaluation and review process; and, maintaining appropriate balance between subject knowledge and transferable (employability) skills. Failure to fulfill such requirements will lead to denial of accreditation by the Agency. If allowed, in the post-accreditation period, the institution is expected to document student

progression and graduate outcome and to seek improvement in student retention and achievement by maintaining data/ information on the graduation rate, the employment of graduates in appropriate graduate level posts; and, taking the necessary actions to maximize such employment; creating and maintaining links between the institution and potential employers that facilitate graduate employment; maintaining contacts with graduates (alumni), and with employers as well to collect feedback on graduates and taking the necessary actions for improvement. This in turn demands the institution to carefully plan and conduct tracer studies/ industry satisfaction surveys regularly. Cognizant of this, in 2007, a data gathering tool (survey questionnaire) for conducting graduate tracer studies has been developed for use by all providers. When it comes to practice, however, what has been done at national level is not encouraging. In fact, Bewketu's recent work (2013) - basing itself on data obtained from HERQA showed that 'no higher education institution has so far undertaken fully fledged employers' satisfaction and graduate tracer studies. There is no such trend at all. The first and last available survey undertaken by the HERQA on employers' satisfaction was in 2010.'

Since the second half of the 2000s, HERQA has been auditing private and public HEIs and publishing its reports for use by stakeholders. One important thing missing in such exercise is that the rating of institutional performance using multi-faceted criteria including graduate outcome (GE rate), rewarding the best performers and communicating results to the public has not been put into practice yet. Possibly, the aforementioned gap in the area of research would have been narrowed, if this missing component had been considered in the audit exercise.

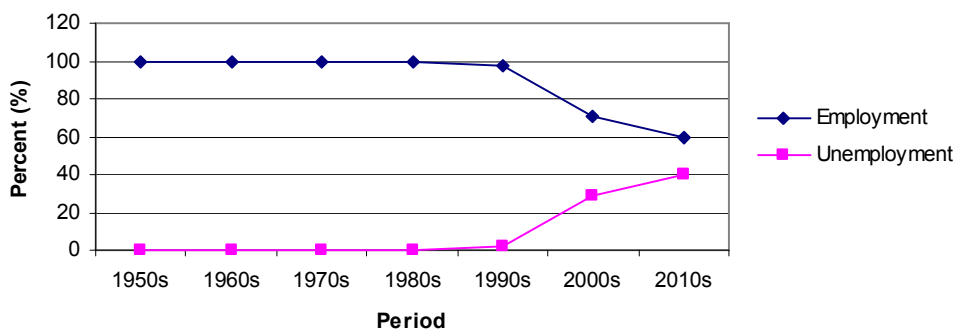
A government official recently interviewed by local newspaper said that the Government of Ethiopia is making efforts towards addressing the graduate unemployment problem being observed in the country. In this regard, the introduction of a common course on entrepreneurship and enterprise development at all public universities and the provision of technical support and seed money (loans) made available from the newly established government agency working on micro and small scale enterprise development were mentioned as examples. More recently, the Ministry of Science and Technology has come up with a new initiative that seeks to strengthen the university-industry linkage in the country. The Ministry's proposal has been reviewed by

stakeholders at national level; and, a final working document is expected to materialize soon. But, in general, when compared to the practice elsewhere, what has been tried and put in place so far in Ethiopia is still far from complete.

The micro situation

It was found that all institutional representatives interviewed are well aware of the fact that graduates unemployment/ underemployment problem has been manifesting in unprecedented way in present Ethiopia (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Trend of Graduate Un/employment in Ethiopia



Without differing, the representatives see graduate unemployment or underemployment both as institutional and national problem; and they believe that effective solution to the problem can be found through public-private partnership; which is being discussed as one of the loose areas in the higher education sub-sector of Ethiopia.

When asked what has been the institutional response to the problem being observed, their feedback as well as document examination results showed the existence of gaps in number of areas. As shown on Table 3, the type and scope of interventions existing at the case study organizations is very limited. Pre-program need assessment study, industry participation in curriculum design or review, the invitation of employers for guest-speaking, and IT skill development training for all subject discipline trainees are the only good practices commonly

observed at the five institutions studied. Relatively, one institution is found to have more intervention components than others. In all cases, however, graduate employability has not been considered as policy and strategic issue. Accordingly, no institutional working document or framework developed for addressing the problem.

Table 3: Graduate Employability Enhancing Initiatives at the Case study Organizations

Assessment (audit) checklist	Cases (<i>n</i> =5)	
	Yes	No
Micro policy, strategy and graduate employability (GE) framework		
Taking part in supra-institutional efforts?	0	5
Have had micro policy driving the GE agenda?	0	5
GE considered as core business, strategically?	0	5
GE framework developed at institutional level?	0	5
Curriculum and instruction including co- and extra-curricular activities		
GE profile developed for all subject disciplines?	0	5
Work placement/ experiential learning opportunities created for all subject discipline trainees?	0	5
Student volunteerism exercised?	1	4
Personal development planning and review exercised?	0	5
Entrepreneurship development education and training for all students?	0	5
IT skill development training for all subject discipline trainees?	5	0
Industry participation in curricular design and review?	5	0
Industry participation in extra-curricular design and review?	0	5
Industry made to have role in course instruction and student assessment in all subject areas?	0	5
Employers invited for guest speaking?	5	0
Career / job fairs organized with involvement of employers?	1	4
Research and development		
Pre-program need assessment study conducted?	5	0
Graduate tracer studies/ industry satisfaction surveys conducted?	1	4

Moreover, research endeavors made, and curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities created for enhancing GE found to be very insignificant. Respondents identified various factors that they think are attributable to the gaps being observed at their respective institutions; the most common ones being underestimation of the problem (as unknown/unfamiliar and new phenomena to Ethiopia), resource constraints, and lack of cooperation and absence of a national framework stimulating and enforcing initiatives at institutional level.

Exceptionally, one institution has managed to conduct a tracer study in 2007. The study had participated 665 graduates and 85 employers; and, it enabled the institution to measure its graduate outcome in varied ways (Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4: Employment Status of Graduates Reported

Status	Frequency of cases (n)	Percent (%)
Engaged in wage employment	339	51
Self-employed	27	4
Apprenticeship	7	1
Further education	40	6
Unemployed – at the time	53	8
Unemployed – since exit	199	30

Source: Hailemeleket and Mesfin (2008)

Accounting the timeframe (6 months) that the literature suggests for calculating a GE outcome, makes the GE performance of the institution to be 45%. If we raise the evaluation timeframe to 12 months, then the GE performance for the institution becomes 58%.

Table 5: Time taken to get the first job

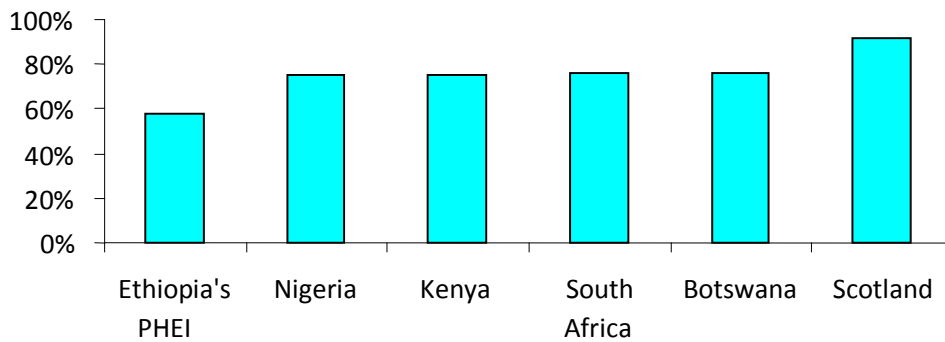
Time taken	Frequency of cases (n)	Percent (%)
<=3 months	203	31
4 to 6 months	90	14
7 to 9 months	48	7
10 to 12 months	43	6
>12 months	63	9
No response	19	3
Unemployed since exit	199	30

Source: Hailemeleket and Mesfin (2008)

Compared to the performance of other similar institutions in or outside Africa, what is recorded for the case study institution (58%) was not very poor as such but needs a significant

improvement (Figure 6). Due to lack of data, trend analysis as well as comparison with other Ethiopian institutions couldn't be made.

Figure 6: Institutional GE performance by country



Do graduate outputs and industry needs matching?

The 2010 industry satisfaction survey revealed the existence of a wide gap between employer expectations and performance of graduates - especially in quality of work, productivity, specific job related knowledge and skills. Forty percent of employers responded that higher education institutions did not respond appropriately to their needs, in terms of the competencies of new graduates. In fact, 'the only thing that employers considered positive about new graduates was that they could be hired cheap' (Bewket 2013).

A recent management visit report (Misganaw 2013) on feedback collected from two giant employers (Ethiopian Airlines & Commercial Bank of Ethiopia) and a well-established employee recruiting agency, Ethiojobs showed that graduates of recent years (over the last 3-5 years) are observed to lack appropriate attitude for their jobs; they lack practical skills, professionalism, office etiquette, discipline, integrity, the readiness to learn new things and taking responsibility for a certain task. Moreover, it was commented that graduates' communication and language skills are very poor; they cannot sell themselves; most applicants fail to express themselves and cannot communicate their ideas; and, lack of confidence in one's potential is observed in many job applicants. All these show the existence of unmet needs to be fulfilled for enhancing the employability of graduates.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Ethiopia has had relevant macro policies and strategies driving the E4E agenda in the country. However, the existence of a high level policy support alone can't bring in the desired results unless otherwise it is supported by other important intervention components to be considered at different levels: macro/ national, supra-institutional, micro (institutional). At macro level, beside the existing high level policy support, broadening provisions with GE focused framework, vision – long-term plan with necessary intervention program (projects) supported by working group and institutional performance rating and rewarding scheme using GE outcome as one of the criteria could make a difference. At supra-institutional level nothing has been done in so far as GE focused joint initiatives (collaborative research, experience and resource sharing) are concerned. This needs to change for getting things done with less cost and time so that addressing the problem by undergoing cyclical research and action planning processes is possible. At micro level, the GE agenda has not been given serious attention in many respects: policy, strategy, curriculum and instruction and research and development.

The skill, knowledge and attribute deficits reported for recent HE graduates indicate the fact that there is unmet industry need to be met. In sum, with existing interventions, it is hardly possible to enhance graduate employability and the role of the case study institutions in poverty reduction. Thus, the need for change and improvement can't be questioned. The approach to be followed should be a holistic one - considering all aspects of the problem including but not limited to the following: skills, understandings and attributes that students possess upon joining HEIs, staff competence, the ever changing industry needs, labor/ job market information including HR requirements of the country in short-, medium-, and long-term in the context of the regional, continental and global market. As one cannot make generalizations about the micro situation elsewhere (at Ethiopian private or public HEIs) on the basis of specific findings at the case study organizations covered, the need for further research also cannot be questioned.

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