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**Effectiveness of Private Higher Education Institutions as Seen from the
Perspective of Graduates and their Employers: The Case of St. Mary's
University College (SMUC) in Ethiopia.**

By

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Abstract

By considering concepts and approaches to performance evaluation, and the practice elsewhere, this research demonstrates, the importance of measuring the effectiveness of a higher education institution from the view point of its graduates and their employers in Ethiopian context. An illuminative evaluation case study research approach is adopted, using qualitative & quantitative data collection. Methods included: an extensive review of literature and examination of a set of raw data and official document resulted from the responses of SMUC's graduates (n=665) and their employers (n=85) who participated in the recent tracer study conducted by the University College's staffs (Hailemeleket & Mesfin, 2008).

What the case study institution (SMUC) has been doing since its establishment in 1986 found to be highly effective in terms of creating, with 64% average employment rate, a relevant workforce for the consumption of various organizations/ institutions operating in the country: public/ government (39%), private (49%) and NGOs/ community-based (10%) and others (2%); preparing graduates for the world of work (81%), further education (41%), successful life after graduation (85%); and, contributing to the realization of their personal objectives (79%).

Various factors are found to have a bearing on effectiveness of SMUC. Among others : (1) policies, rules and regulations formulated at macro and micro level, (2) absence of close working relationships with industries (manufacturing, service, etc.), (3) gaps in curriculum and instruction, and (4) lack of information on labor market at national and regional level.

To be more effective, the case study organization is required to revisit its curriculum, instructional methods and graduate profile both in the short- and long-term. In doing so, the need for producing graduates with entrepreneurial mentality, skills and knowledge should be given due attention. Additionally, establishing close working relationships with industries so as to produce graduates meeting the expectations of potential employers, and influencing the policy environment to the effect of running

the right and relevant training programs should also be considered as priority agenda items.

Introduction

The Problem and its Approach

Secular higher education is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia (Figure 1). It came into the country's scene 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 2 public universities only, while there were literally no private higher education institutions. By the end of August 2008, the number of public universities has reached 22 (Sentayehu, 2008); and hundreds of private providers came into the scene. Comparatively, the development of private providers in Ethiopia "is by far the highest in Africa and in some cases comparable to countries of transitional economies" (Wondwosen, 2007). Presently, higher education enrolment in the country (at public and private providers) has exceeded the mark of 200,000 (Dagnachew, 2007). And, the share of private providers in higher education and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) program has reached 22%¹ and 60%, respectively (MoE, 2007; SMUC, 2009).

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1991	1999	2000-08
Public universities/ University colleges	1	1	2	3	2	4	22
Junior colleges (Public)	3						17
Private Universities/ University colleges	0	1	0	0	0	0	11
Junior colleges (Private)	0						289

¹ Now it is 18% due to massification of higher education observed in the public sector.

Enrolment (in thousands)	<=4.5	18.4	43.8	52.3	270.3
Public					TVET: 40%
Private					Undergraduate Degree Programs: 78%; 82% TVET: 60%
GER (Ethiopia)					Undergraduate Degree Programs: 22%; 18% 0.5 0.8 1.7% 2.7% % %
Low income countries					6.9%
Sub-Sahara Africa					5.6%

Figure 1: Higher education in Ethiopia

Ethiopia’s tertiary level Gross Enrolment Ratio of 2.7% in 2007 places the country among the lowest ranking countries of the world or the region as does its 209 tertiary students per 100,000 inhabitants. This means that the professional & 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 quality (effectiveness), it can take the country nowhere.

This paper throws light on relevant global practices and the experience of the case study organization, SMUC in so far as the need for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of higher education is concerned.

Higher Education Effectiveness Evaluation: Why and How?

For centuries, higher education institutions across the globe were functioning without giving much attention to measuring the effectiveness of what they do and produce for the consumption of the society (Figure 2). This, however, couldn’t continue as commonly accepted practice in the era of globalization, competitive market economy and massification of higher education. Unless they intend to ensure the relevance and quality of their products and services through cyclical research and action planning

processes by targeting stakeholders in the sub-sector as source of data/feedback, higher education institutions, be it in Ethiopia, America or Europe, will lose their value, significance and influence, and wither away.

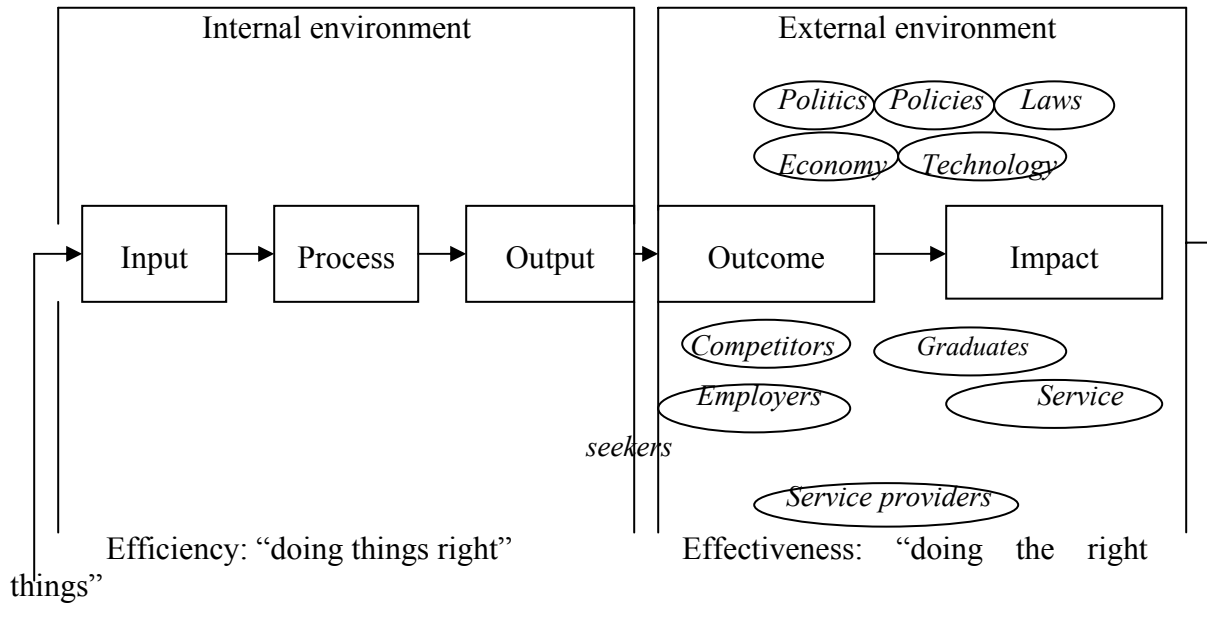


Figure 1: Organizational configuration for measuring institutional effectiveness.

Depending on their makeup and the environmental scenario in which institutions are operating, the effectiveness of higher education institutions could be affected by various factors (Figure 3). As cases may vary from one context or institution to another, it is a must to investigate and identify ones own matters/issues from time to time, and establish cause-effect relationship for effective or ineffective institutional performance so that it is possible to take the necessary action for improvement.

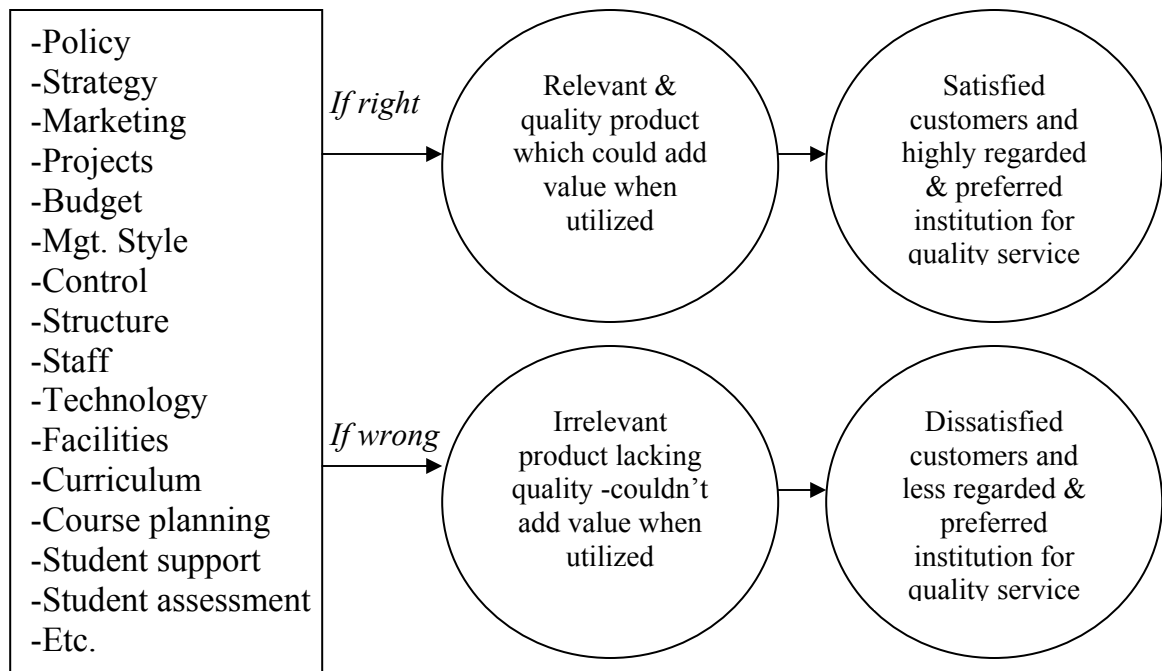


Figure 3: Factors that can affect institutional effectiveness

As far as the how to of higher education effectiveness evaluation is concerned, graduate tracer study which sometimes referred to as graduate survey or alumni research or follow-up study can be mentioned as a popular modality.

The meaning and essence of tracer study

The ILO Thesaurus (2005) defines tracer study as an impact assessment tool where the ‘impact on target groups is traced back to specific elements of a project or program so that effective project components may be identified’. Graduate surveys or studies are popular for analysis of the relationship between higher education and work. They provide quantitative-structural data on employment and career, the character of work and related competencies, and information on the professional orientation and

experiences of higher education graduates (Millington, unpublished). Above all, graduate surveys constitute one form of empirical study which provide valuable information for evaluating the results of the education and training of a specific institution of higher education. This information may be used for further development of the institution in the context of quality assurance (Schomburg, 2003).

Advanced approach to tracer studies enable institutions of higher education get feedbacks on their educational programs and serve as a basis for planning, generate information on the professional success (career, status, income) of the graduates as well as the relevance of the knowledge and skills (relationship between knowledge & skills and work requirements, area of employment, professional position) are needed. Graduates might also be asked to assess the study conditions and provisions they experienced retrospectively (Ibid).

Historical overview

Research on higher education in general and on its main program deliverables (graduates) in particular is a recent phenomenon across the globe (Teichler, 2009). Up until the 1970s tracer studies were unthinkable as universities were dominantly seen and functioning as institutions having the ‘mission’ of producing and disseminating ‘pure knowledge’ and educating insignificant portion of the society with such knowledge.

Based on what has been documented and made available for use so far in the area, one can state that tracer studies came into the picture in the context of new developments (changes) that the world has been observing in and around the higher education system environment since the down of the 1960s (Ibid.). The introduction of popular theories such as the *Human Capital Development Theory*, and the *Neo-classical Development Theory* that influenced the philosophy and practice of higher education, and key socio-

economic and related issues or matters like ‘mass higher education’ (massification) and unemployment; the need for strategic thinking, cost-effectiveness, and quality assurance as well as higher education-industry linkage; and, the ever changing needs, requirements and expectations of industries in this era of globalization and ‘knowledge society’ can be cited as examples, in this regard (Olaniyan, D.A., and Okemakinde, T., 2008).

As indicated in the work of Teichler (2009), Europe is a pioneer as far as researches on higher education institutions themselves and the world of work are concerned. In his own words, the author pointed out three phenomenal events Europe had observed in the 70s as follows.

The Institute for Economics of Education was founded in 1970 in Dijon (France) when worldwide debates focused on the contribution of educational expenditures to economic growth. And the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies was established in Enschede (the Netherlands) in the mid-1970s when governmental steering and institutional management of higher education became more strategic. Similarly, the establishment of the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work at the Comprehensive University of Kassel (Germany) in 1978 was a response to growing concerns – in Germany, but – as already stated – not only there, about graduate employment and work in the wake of educational expansion and of graduate employment problems visible since the “oil shock” of 1973.

Since the occurrence of the aforementioned phenomenal events in Europe, tracer studies, according to Millington (unpublished), are conducted by educational institutes for decades. Scomburg and his colleagues at the Centre for Higher Education and Work, University of Kassel, Germany, have done considerable research on conducting tracer surveys, constructing effective tracer study questionnaires and their statistical analysis. They have conducted survey projects in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Apart from developing tools and conducting surveys, the Center for Higher Education and Work at University of Kassel had also organized and conducted a series of training for African and other scholars selected from various universities in the world. Amongst other things, this has greatly contributed to the adoption of tracer studies at African universities in the second half of the 1980s. Documentary sources available in the area indicate that, as of 1987, the idea of tracer study has been put into practice in various African countries like Malawi, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. In Ethiopia, although higher education has been in existence for the last six decades, with the exception of the privately operated St.Mary's University College, all universities in the country have not embarked on tracer study yet. Also, it is thought that a good number of other African countries are in the same situation.

There are various constraints that affect tracer studies in Africa. Asked about their plans to affirm the employment statistics in relation to the tracer study they conducted in South Africa, Maharasoa and Hay (2001) said, the deans of higher education institutions studied expressed the need to conduct tracer studies but the financial stringency under which many South African universities operate relegates tracer studies to a low place on the universities' priority lists. However, the need to have feedback on the graduate outcomes of their graduates making employability issues a priority is further warranted by the priorities of learners and parents for employability as ascertained by researches in the area.

The Rationale

Regardless of type, age, size and programs, all higher education institutions across the globe are required to evaluate the quality of their programmes and services from time to time. This, according to SEARCA (2007) is not something optional but mandatory.

Institutions involved in developing human resource (HR) through long- and short-term programs have the duty to keep track of the performance of their graduates to determine accountability and whether or not their HR development programs have impacted on the individual, the institution or the country.

Documentary sources indicate that the case study organization, St. Mary's University College has produced a total of 22,589 graduates from 2001 to 2007. Out of these, 17.4% were in the regular program; 12.5% from the extension program and the rest 70.1% in the distance mode.

Recently, through service satisfaction surveys, the University College has started collecting feedback from its students while they are still in the program. But nothing has been done so far to trace down and obtain feedback from its graduates. As a result, there have been generalizations and anecdotal evidences concerning the employment outcomes of its graduates, with no accurate information on what these people do and experience after their graduation.

However, the strategic plan of the University College stresses the need to deliver market driven services, and that SMUC has chosen to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of how well its education system has prepared graduates for the workplace, further education and life after college by obtaining feedback both from its graduates and their employers. However, the evaluation has not been performed due to absence of the necessary data on the aforementioned matters.

Taking into account the benefits of graduate tracer studies (Figure 4) for the purpose of filling the aforementioned gaps, SMUC's Top Management initiated a research project to be implemented in 3 phases (with the intention to study graduates from different program divisions separately).

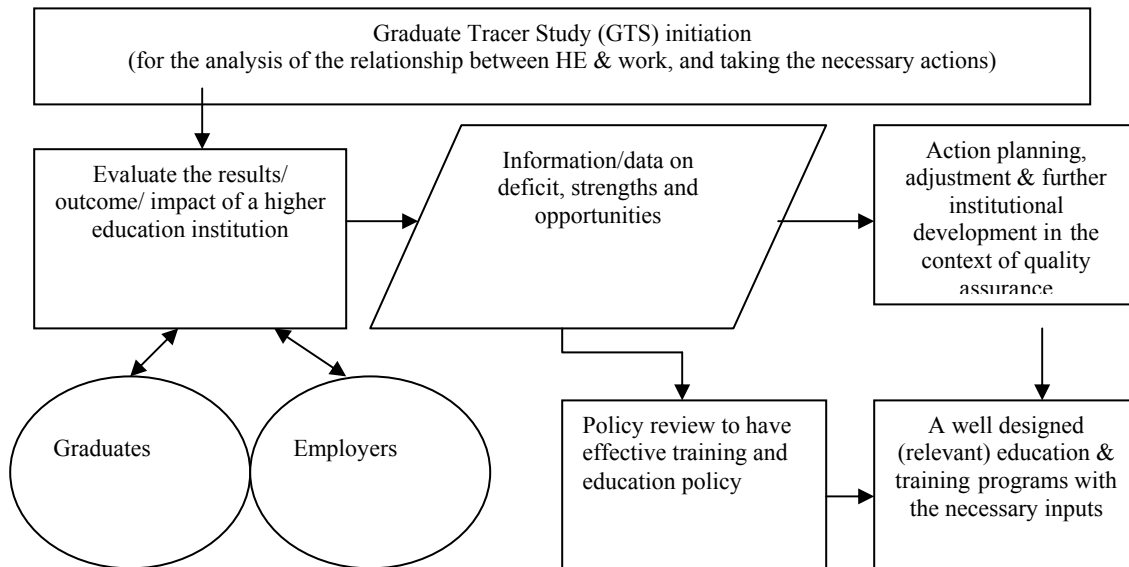


Figure 4: Benefits of graduate tracer study

Objectives of the Study

This study builds on the aforesaid research project. Its general objective (aim) is to examine effectiveness of the University College based on the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of its regular program graduates and their employers. For the realization of its aim, the study was directed towards achieving the following specific objectives:

- Determine whether or not what the University College did is the right thing in terms of graduates' expectations:
 - **Relevance:** employment status & rate; education/ training received versus. the world of work as seen by graduates
 - **Quality:** perception of employers on the overall quality and performance of graduates; and graduates' perception whether and to what extent the education/training in SMUC has helped them in achieving their goal and preparing them for the world of work, further education and life after university/college

- Identify gaps/ problems affecting institutional effectiveness and what should be done to achieve better results in the future; and,
- Pinpoint the implication of study findings for other similar higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

Research Methodology

Within the framework of the mixed research strategy, an illuminative evaluation research entertaining a case study approach (design) was adopted; using qualitative & quantitative data collection. Methods included: an extensive review of the literature and examination of a set of raw data and official document resulted from the responses of SMUC's graduates (n=665) and their employers (n=85) who participated in the recent tracer study conducted by the University College (2008).

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) has been used as automated tool to analyze quantitative data obtained for the study; whereas content analysis was employed in analyzing the qualitative data obtained from documentary sources.

Results/ Findings of the Study

Graduate Attributes and Trend Analysis

The study population consisted 3,923 graduates who completed their studies in eleven different subject areas (Table 1). In terms of sex, the population is largely dominated by female graduates (61%) than males (39%). In terms of discipline, the majority of the graduates studied Accounting (33%); this is followed by those who studied Secretarial Science and Office Management/SSOM (22%), Information Technology/ Computer Science (15%), and Marketing Management (14%). Due to the "age factor" of programs, the huge majority (94%) completed courses leading to certificate or diploma qualification. Those who underwent the recently launched undergraduate

degree programs in five disciplines: Accounting, Management, Marketing Management, Law and Computer Science constitute 6% of the total population. Out of the total study population (3,923 graduates), the University College managed to trace 53% for the study. Due to various reasons, however, only 17% of the graduates took part in the study.

Table 1: Population Size by Field of Study and Sex

Discipline	Level of Qualification						Total		
	Diploma/ Certificate			Degree					
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Accounting	569	709	1,278	38	37	75	607	746	1,353
Marketing Mgt.	254	274	528	10	21	31	264	295	559
Management	-	-	-	42	18	60	42	18	60
SSOM	-	859	859	-	-	-	-	859	859
Computer Sc./ IT	276	280	556	20	7	27	296	287	583
Law	200	103	303	25	17	42	225	120	345
Languages (English)	18	14	32	-	-	-	18	14	32
Social Science	11	2	13	-	-	-	11	2	13
Natural Science	6	2	8	-	-	-	6	2	8
Mathematics	10	2	12	-	-	-	10	2	12
1st Cycle Teacher Education	34	65	99	-	-	-	34	65	99
Total	1,378	2,310	3,688	135	100	235	1,513	2,410	3,923

The current distribution of graduates over administrative regions, given the responses of those participated in the research, is limited to Addis Ababa, Oromiya, Amhara, and Dire Dawa with a very high concentration in Addis Ababa that shared about 97.1% followed by Oromiya (2.3%). More or less a similar distribution pattern is observed

vis-à-vis the origin of graduates where they came from to join SMUC for higher education.

The University College continuously produced graduates in different fields of study and levels of qualification over the period of seven years referred herein. Regardless of the reason behind, however, the flow of graduates exhibited considerable fluctuation in size through time, in terms of both field of study and level of qualification (Figure 5).

According to the Registrar Office (2007) of SMUC, the University College started producing graduates in 1993 E.C. with a total number of 220 individuals qualified with diploma and certificate levels of education. After a slight down turn, (28.6%) during the year that followed, thereafter the number of graduates increased dramatically by 261% and 333% for two consecutive years (1995 and 1996 E.C.), respectively. The year 1996 E.C., with 1,367 graduates produced, was identified to be the peak year through out the period referred herein.

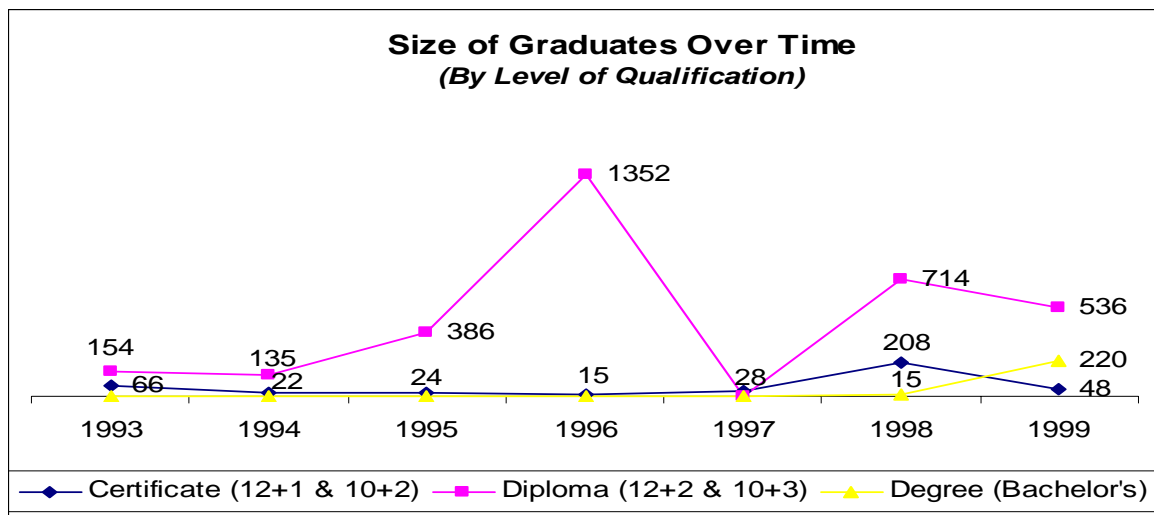


Figure 5: Trend in number of graduates produced (from 1993 to 1999 E.C.)

The up ward trend couldn't be kept for long and the number of graduates dropped sharply down by 98%, or to 28 individuals otherwise, by the year 1997 EC. This down fall, however, was attributed to the implementation of the new education policy at a national level whereby completion of high school education at 10th grade and TVET programs (of 10+1, 10+2 and 10+3) were introduced in to the higher education systems in the years 1993 and 1996 EC, respectively. This resulted in the gap in 1997 EC because the last entrants to diploma program (in 1995 E.C.), based on the old policy, graduated in 1996 EC. On the other hand, the new entrants for degree program based on the new policy in 1996 E.C. graduated in 1998 E.C.

Right after this year (1997 E.C.), the size was brought up again by 33 folds juxtaposed with the introduction of graduates at higher (1st degree) level of academic qualification in Management field of study.

Employers' Characteristics

As indicated on Figure 6 below, the 85 employers participated in SMUC's graduate survey includes government organizations (56%), private companies (35%), and NGOs/ CBOs (9%).

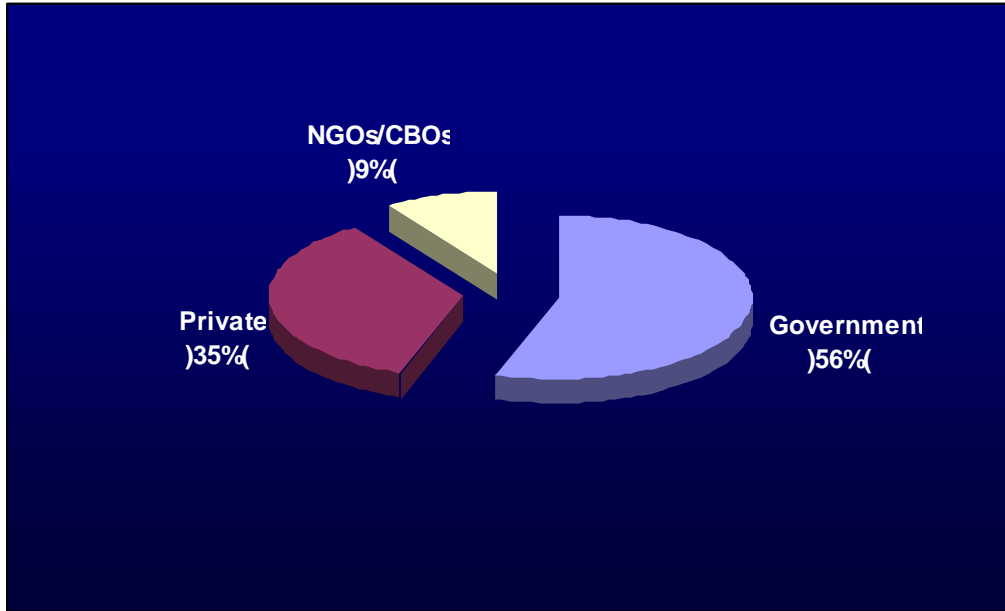


Figure 6: Employers of SMUC's graduates – by type of organization

Results by socio-economic sector indicate that finance and insurance companies are the main employers of SMUC's graduates (48%). The proportion of those employers working in the area of trade, hotel, tourism, recreation, education and training, transport, communication, media, and public administration is also found to be significant (38%). Majority of the employers (46%) acquire the required human resource for their operation by announcing vacancies and evaluating applicants through written exam and interviews (Table 2)

Table 2: Approach to Recruitment

Approach	Frequency of cases	Percent
Announcement of vacancies and examination of nominees	39	46%
Without the above	4	5%
In both ways	10	12%
No response	32	37%
Total	85	100%

Are SMUC Graduates and Training Programs Relevant?

The relevance of SMUC' graduates can't be questioned but needs a significant improvement when compared to the performance of other African countries (Table 3).

Table 3: Graduate Relevance

Current employment status of graduates	<i>n</i>	Percent	Remark
Wage employment	339	51%	
Self-employed	27	4%	
Apprenticeship	7	1%	
Further education	40	6%	
Currently unemployed	53	8%	
Unemployed since exit	199	30%	
Time taken to get the first job	665	100%	
<=3 Months	193	46%	
4 to 6 Months	80	19%	
7 to 9 Months	38	9%	
10 to 12 Months	33	8%	
>12 Months	59	14%	
No response	16	4%	
Employment rate (ER) over time	419	100%	
Ethiopia (SMUC)		64%	Aggregate result
The 1994 graduates		100%	The highest
The 1999 graduates		49%	The lowest
Law graduates		39%	The lowest
Teacher education & English graduates		100%	The highest
Degree graduates		50%	
Diploma graduates		69%	
South Africa		75%	
Uganda		90%	
Kenya		99%	

One can find SMUC's graduates in all types of organizations: private (49%), government (39%), NGOs/CBOs (10%) and other (2%). (Figure 7)

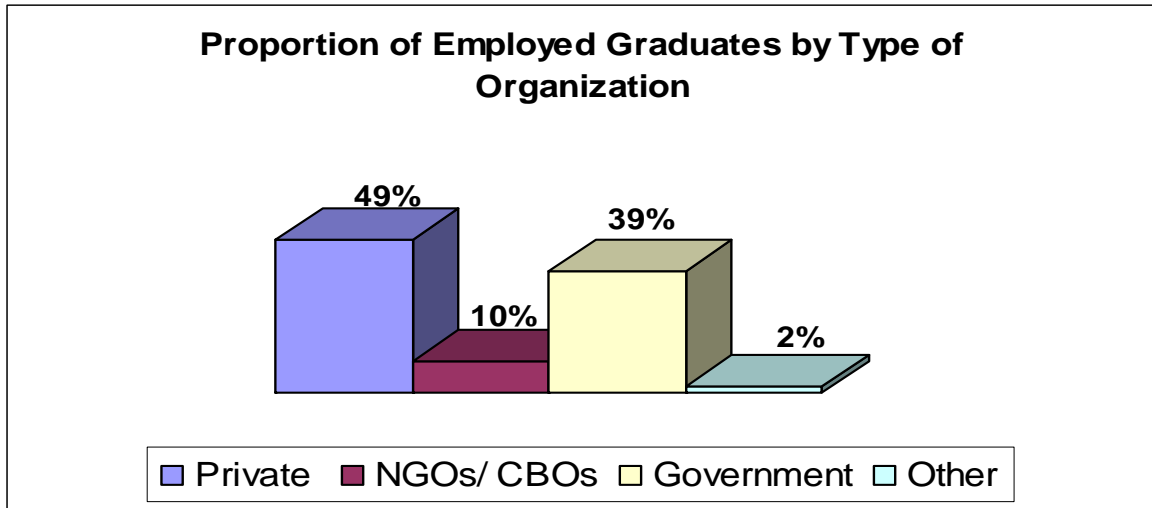


Figure 7: Distribution of graduates by type of organization

As we can see from Table 4, majority of SMUC’s graduates’ education/ training programs are found relevant and significant.

Table 4: Retrospect Evaluation of SMUC’s Education & Training by Graduates

The Curriculum was relevant and timely	n	%
Agree	598	90%
Not sure	20	7%
Disagree	47	3%
Training received compatible with industry need	665	100%
Agree	432	65%
Not sure	173	26%
Disagree	60	9%
Degree of relationship between training received and job offered	665	100%
Highly related	201	48%
Partially related	180	43%
Not related at all	38	9%
Relevance and usefulness of knowledge acquired to the job	419	100%
High	285	68%
Moderate	121	29%
Low	13	3%
Relevance and usefulness of skills acquired to the job	419	100%
High	268	64%
Moderate	117	28%
Low	34	8%
	419	100%

The Quality of SMUC graduates as Seen by Employers

The overall quality of SMUC’s graduates is questioned only by 5% the employers. The rest (95%) rated the quality of the graduates at very high (18%), high (52%) and moderate (25%) level (Table 5).

Table 5: Overall Quality of SMUC’ graduates as Evaluated by Employers

Response category (rating)	Frequency of cases	Percent
Very high	15	18%
High	44	52%
Moderate	21	25%
Low	1	1%
Very low	0	0%
Not sure	4	4%
Total	85	100%

Similarly, a significant proportion of the employers (44%) confirmed that the overall performance (quality) of SMUC’s graduates is better than those graduated from other higher learning institutions (Figure 8).

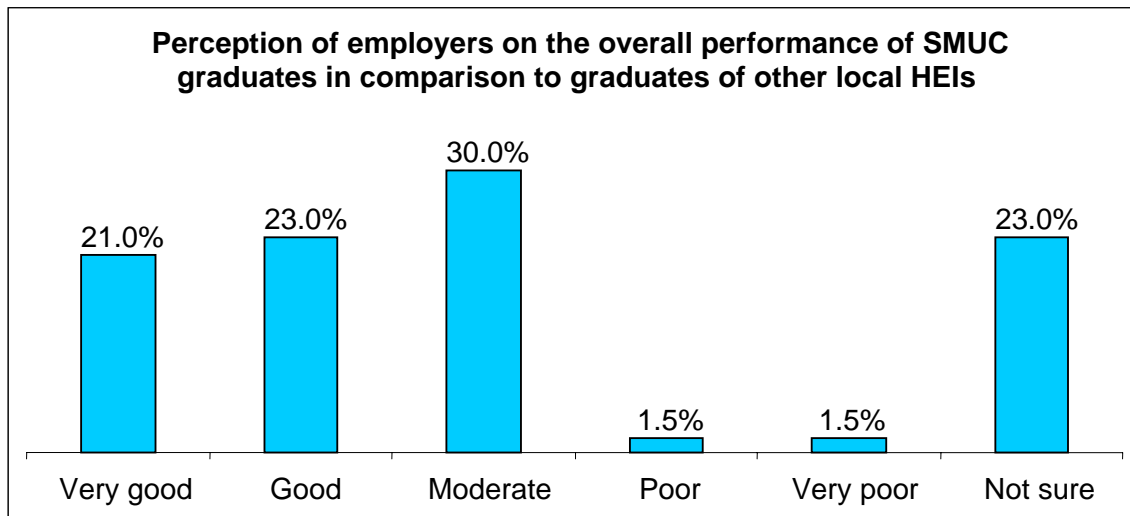


Figure 8: The performance SMUC’s graduates versus others

In addition, employers were also asked to evaluate quality of SMUC’s graduates in terms of possessing employability attributes (skills, knowledge, behavioral competencies, abilities) required at workplace. The results indicate, with the exception of three areas (research, project design/management and entrepreneurship) the graduates are equipped with all other skills required at workplace (Table 6).

Table 6: the Quality of graduates in terms of Possessing Employability Attributes

Employability attribute	Percentage of Employers by Perceived level of Skill Attribute Quality					
	Very Good	Good	Not Bad	Poor	Very Poor	Not Sure
IT skills	39.7	47.4	11.5	1.3	-	-
Communication skills	54.2	37.3	8.4	-	-	-
Theoretical knowledge	49.4	40.5	8.9	1.3	-	-
Capacity to practice knowledge acquired	45.7	44.4	9.9	-	-	-
Capacity of working in team	66.3	28.8	5.0	-	-	-
The capacity of undertaking research	9.7	23.6	13.9	2.8	4.2	45.8
Capacity of project design and mgt.	12.5	19.4	12.5	-	6.9	48.6
The capacity of generating new ideas	27.3	45.5	23.4	2.6	1.3	-
The capacity of entrepreneurship	17.1	32.9	13.2	-	5.3	31.6
The sense of responsibility in work assigned	66.7	23.5	9.9	-	-	-
The sense of professional ethics in work	71.6	24.7	3.7	-	-	-

The Quality of SMUC’s Education/ Training as seen by its Graduates

As confirmed by a large proportion of graduates, SMUC’s education/ training has had quality or effectiveness in terms of contributing to the realization of the personal objectives of its ex-students; preparing them well for further education, the world of work, and towards leading a healthy and successful life after graduation (Table 7).

Table 7: Graduates’ Feedback on Quality of SMUC’s Education/Training

Inquiry	n=665	%
Contribution of SMUC’ education/ training to the realization of personal objectives		
High	306	46%
Moderate	219	33%
Low	100	15%
No response	40	6%
Further education (certificate/ diploma/ degree at undergraduate/ postgraduate level) after graduation?		
Yes	273	41%
No	392	59%
SMUC has prepared you (its graduates) well for the world of work		
Agree	558	84%
Not sure	80	12%
Disagree	27	4%
Contribution of SMUC’ education/ training towards leading a healthy and successful life after graduation		
High	333	50%
Moderate	233	35%
Low	59	9%
No response	40	6%

Graduates who pursued further education include not only those engaged in wage- or self-employment but also those without unemployment (Figure 9).

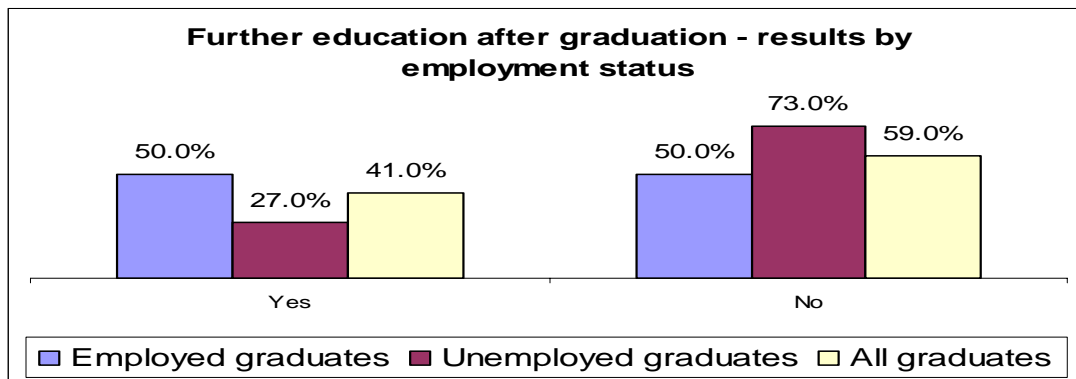


Figure 9: Further education after graduation – results by employment status

Regarding the level of further education pursued, the majority (52%) went for courses leading to undergraduate degrees; and, the minority (6%) for postgraduate degrees (Table 8).

Table 8: Level of further education pursued

Educational qualification sought	Frequency of cases	Percent
Undergraduate degree	143	52%
Certificate	81	30%
Diploma	33	12%
Postgraduate degree	16	6%
Total	273	100%

Gaps/ Problems

The study identified the following gaps or problems needed to be addressed by the concerned bodies.

The employability of the graduates is at satisfactory level. Dominantly, what SMUC has been producing are victims of the ‘payroll mentality’. They lack entrepreneurial mentality and the necessary skills/ knowledge. With the exception of a few (4%), all of them failed to create jobs for themselves and others using what they have acquired from the University College. They also lack important skills in the area of research, project design and management, preparing CVs and application letter for job and managing job interview, etc.

Compared to the case at government organizations (39%) and private companies (49%) the concentration of the graduates in NGOs and CBOs found to be very low (10%). But, generally there is weak working relationship with business and industry, and lack of information on graduate labor market.

The policy environment is forcing the institution not to do ‘the right thing’. In the area of teacher education, for example, SMUC’s graduates observed the highest employment rate (100%) but since government schools operating in the country are instructed not to recruit teacher education graduates from private higher education institutions, the University College’s program and output in the area has been affected greatly. As reported by the graduates themselves, there are unfavorable recruitment policies in the country, like for example, preference for graduates from public universities, preference for highly qualified and experienced personnel, and non-transparent recruitment procedures.

The graduates pinpointed the existence of problems with regard to curriculum, instruction and the associated facilities including the following (1) irrelevant courses, (2) course overload, (3) shortage of practice sessions, (4) inadequacy of training facilities for practice, and, (5) limited effort in the arrangement of practices in industries.

The high concentration of graduates (employed + unemployed) in and around Addis Ababa is not a healthy sign as it is happening in a condition where there is a huge demand for trained manpower across the country, and, the rate of unemployment amongst the recent graduates of the University College is showing an increase.

Implications for other higher education institutions in Ethiopia

The gaps/ problems identified in this study may or may not be shared by all higher education institutions operating in Ethiopia. To be sure, and also for the purpose of identifying and addressing ones unique (special) problems, all the institutions in the country are required to launch on-going tracer study projects and share their findings with each other and with relevant bodies regularly. Identifying common problem areas and gaps is very important (advantageous) in terms of seeking solutions jointly;

designing and implementing intervention programs with less cost, time and effort; and, benefiting/ impacting the society at large.

By undertaking tracer studies regularly, higher education institutions in the country could make a huge contribution to the realization of a system providing information on graduate labor market of Ethiopia. Input data on the demand side of the market is expected to come from MoLSA (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) and respective regional bureaus. If realized, the information system could be utilized for various purposes. For example, to:

- Determine where a HEI stands in relation to its competitors in the country so that it can strive for betterment of its performance.
- Set agreed level quality standards and ranking institutions accordingly.
- Undertake research (economic, policy, educational, etc.).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is possible to say that SMUC has been highly/moderately effective in terms of:

- Creating, with 64% employment rate, relevant workforce for the consumption of various development actors operating in the country: private (49%), government (39%), NGOs/CBOs (10%), and others (2%),
- Preparing graduates for the world of work (81%), further education (41%), and successful life after graduation (85%), and,
- Contributing to the realization of personal objectives set by the graduates (79%).

The institutional effectiveness of the University College has been affected by various factors including:

- Policies, rules and regulations formulated at macro and micro level,
- Absence of close working relationship between the University College and industries (service, manufacturing, etc.),
- Lack of information on graduate labor market at federal & regional level, and
- Gaps in curriculum and instruction.

Finding sound solutions to the aforesaid problems basically requires the unreserved commitment, participation and involvement of all stakeholders in the higher education arena.

Recommendations

SMUC is expected to enhance its institutional effectiveness from time to time through cyclical research and action planning processes. Currently, the institution can achieve better results by:

- influencing the policy environment jointly with other stakeholders,
- effecting the necessary changes and modifications in curriculum, instruction and graduate profile on the basis of the gaps identified through this and the tracer study carried out previously,
- creating and developing mutually beneficial relationships with industries, and,
- determining the reason behind the abnormal geographical and sectorial distribution of its graduates, and taking the necessary actions.

Other higher education institutions in the country are also expected to launch on-going tracer study projects so as to:

- identify problems or gaps affecting their institutional effectiveness
- seek solutions to the identified problems jointly or individually
- maintain a well designed and relevant education/ training programs, and,
- make contribution to the realization of a system providing information on the graduate labor market of Ethiopia.

For the purpose of constructing and maintaining the aforesaid information system, a partnership project involving the following parties has to be initiated and implemented.

- Ministry of Education and education bureaus established at regional level,
- HERQA (higher education relevance and quality assurance agency) and TVET agencies established at regional level,
- Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and similar institutional establishments operating at regional level,
- Higher education institutions from all sectors, and,
- The donor community.

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