Quality Education Assessment in Private Higher Education Institutions: The Case of Private Higher Education Institutions at Mekelle, Tigray Regional State

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to assess quality education in PHEIs in Mekelle by considering educational inputs, processes and outputs as benchmarks. To conduct this research, mixed research design with convergent parallel mixed method was employed. 236 respondents i.e. 4 vice academic deans, 4 quality assurance directorates, 18 department coordinators, 65 instructors and 145 students were selected by using purposive, availability, simple and stratified random sampling techniques. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively by using descriptive and inferential statistics and qualitatively by using descriptive narration. Questionnaires were the main data gathering instruments while interview, observation and document analysis were equally important to enrich the data. The finding of the study mirrored out that the educational qualification of instructors is below the required minimum standard set by HERQA/MoE. The academic staffs are less experienced to conduct instructional process effectively because about half of them are unfamiliar with pedagogical knowledge, below minimum standard qualification and less teaching experiences. Lack of training opportunities resulted in instructors' turnover which in turn resulted in large numbers of parttime lecturers. The physical location of PHEIs is inconvenient for effective instruction due to the noises of neighboring music shops, hotels, and sound of vehicles. Similarly, the management bodies are not devoted to create positive working environment, less experienced to fulfill educational facilities and infrastructures, and unmotivated to initiate research outputs and community services to rank excellence to the standards. Moreover, there is instructors' deficiency in using varieties of active learning methods and formative continuous assessment techniques due to lack of pedagogical know how. Lecture method and summative evaluation are the most frequently utilized methods of teaching and assessment techniques respectively to quest for quality education.*

Key Words: Quality education, quality standards, indicators and benchmarks

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Graduate tracer studies are not carried out to institutionalize structural flow of feedbacks between the institutions and employers. Therefore, less emphasis is given to ensure quality of education from the point of inputs-processes-outputs

1. Introduction

1.1. Justification and Conceptual Framework of the Study

Education as a complex system rooted in the society's economic, political, socio-cultural context, is primarily key to preparing the much needed workforce with proficiency, competences and techniques required to develop and transform global economies of states and governments (UNICEF, 2005 & Kipkebuts, 2010). The education system, therefore, is supposed to be one of the fundamental engines for the development of the country which gears towards economic development, stability and progress. The increase in productivity of the workforce is due mainly to the increase in the education and training of the people.

Modernization in Ethiopia, which started essentially with the time of Emperor Menellik II in the second half of the 19th century, took the form of discarding traditionalism and change- without- continuity (Amare, 1998). Prior to 1950, Ethiopians were sent abroad on government scholarships to higher education institutions (Abebe,1991). However, pressure from secondary education graduates starting in the early 20th century and the needs for skilled man power compelled the establishment of a higher education system in the country (Abebe, 1991). As a consequence, the first University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), the first modern higher education institution, was established in December 1950 following the approval of Emperor Haile Selassie I (Teshome, 2007). After the establishment of UCAA, which was later upgraded to Haile Selassie I University, the establishment of the commission for higher education in 1977 was a landmark for higher education sector in Ethiopia (ETP, 1994). It was also remarked in the new Education and training Policy of Ethiopia that provision of education was prohibited between 1974 and 1991 and therefore, no PHEIs was operated in Ethiopia. This shows that higher education sector's development was limited in terms of teaching, research and community services.

Even though there was a rapid expansion of public higher education institutions in Ethiopia, due to their inability to cope with the increased demands which has been created as a result of the shortage of the state funds to meet rising demands

for higher education, private higher education institutions are needed to be emerged (Damtew and Altbach, 2003). In the Ethiopian context, in addition to introducing a cost-sharing mechanism into public universities, opportunities were given to private sectors to open PHEIs which provide access of education to large number of students who couldn't join public universities (Teshome,2007). This indicates that promoting an access of higher education by itself is an opportunity to increase the skilled manpower

The neo-liberal economic policies and globalization has broadened the scope of higher education with regard to curriculum as well as its structural organization in privatization process (Obasi, 2007). Likewise Materu (2007) confirms that the de-regulation policies under the structural adjustment programs of the government and fiscal incapacity of the state to expand higher education through public universities and respond to household demand for certain market- friendly course led to movement towards increasing social demand for private higher education institutions. Similar to most African countries, the 1990s showed the emergence of PHEIs in Ethiopia (Teshome, 2007). Today, there is an encouraged activity in such a way that higher education is given in a large number of public and private higher education institutions in different corners of the country. Besides, the government of Ethiopia has placed particular emphasis on education with the belief that the long-term development of a country stands on the provision and expansion of quality education. Thus, the government believes that both public and private sectors could meaningfully share the responsibility for addressing the age-old challenges of the country's higher education system. This has shown the road map to the private sectors in order to provide quality education in their higher education institutions. As a result, currently, there are more than 98 accredited private higher education institutions and 35 government Universities in Ethiopia. Moreover, to ensure quality and relevant higher education system in Ethiopian higher learning institutions, Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) was formally established by the Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Teshome, 2007). This autonomous body accredits PHEIs, reviews the performance of both public and PHEIs and safeguards comparable standards for degree programs in both public and PHEIs.

Leu (2000) assures that the new millennium demands change in the role of education and redefinition of educational quality so that education could address

its task of producing human resources that could resolve the challenges that the country has faced in its development. However, Amare and Temechegn (2002) point out that the profile of graduates from the different educational programs has been under attack by employers and researchers and hence, problem-solving graduates were rarely observed in the Ethiopian context. Similarly, Teshome (2004) confirms that the performance of University graduates in the work place, as well as their adaptability and leadership abilities, is not as much as expected. Most graduates are good in the theoretical knowledge but poor in skills and in the application of the knowledge they gained from the universities into the real world of work. This remarks that the rapid expansion of higher education in both public and private institutions has been entangled with deteriorated quality of education. Today, nobody questions about the importance of quality so that assuring and enhancing quality of teaching and learning in higher education is currently of the major concern. Similarly, Middlehurst (1997) distinguishes five perspectives of quality. i.e. quality as exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation.

Exceptional performance is attainable only in limited circumstances. This can happen only when very able and brightest students are admitted to the system, mainly in world class universities (Firdissa, 2009). However, Harvey (1995) considers quality as something distinctive and elitist. Regardless of the process by which students learn, the excellence remains focused on the level of inputs and outputs as an absolute measure of quality but often unattainable by most. Sallis (1993) states that the absolute concept of quality is unaffordable by all educational institutions; especially in less developed countries education with absolute quality is unthinkable. Quality as perfection or zero defects deals with producing consistency through continuous improvement by adopting Total Quality Management (TQM) to create a philosophy about work, people and human relationships built around shared values (Firdissa, 2009).This notion of quality perhaps is applicable to administrative tasks but it does not fit well with the idea of expository learning. Many authorities put their ideas of fitness for purpose (Ayalew,2002). Quality can be judged by how effectively the institution achieves its educational goals (Abebe, 2007). This indicates that quality is judged by assessing to what extent the intended outcomes are being achieved. This is to use quality as the ability to provide value for resources invested and to be publicly accountable for the 'bucks' and for the 'bangs' (Firdissa, 2009). Value for money is a market view of quality that relates quality

of education to "Value for money" through its demand for efficiency and effectiveness. Quality as transformation is an on-going process which deals with empowerment and enhancement of the students, allows them to take control of themselves and the learning process.

Privatization has been embraced in developing countries as a means of mounting access to higher education by harnessing private resources (World Bank, 2004).

Varghese (2004) reflects core changes happened in higher education such as the use of market principles in the operation and management of institutions of higher education while the ownership rests within the public domain and the development of the non-state sector in tertiary education. Hence, the aims of private higher education institutions is to enhance the flow of private wealth in higher education to make higher education more approachable to the working of the market, economic growth and make academics more responsive to the realities of a production-oriented society (Rae, 1996). Private higher education institutions are not exactly similar rather they vary in their management and source of finance. PHEIs are institutions that comprise both Universities and Colleges which necessarily totally privately funded and acknowledged for imparting tertiary education (Wongsothron and Yibing, 1995). They are relatively small in size, limited in programs, market - oriented, fee and tuition dependent.

Ashcroft (2005) assures that the adequacy and strength of academic staff is expressed in the form of a desirable proportion of staff possessing Master's degree and PhD qualification. This depicts that a staff member with higher academic qualification and appropriate professional experience to handle a particular study program is better than one with lower qualification and shorter relevant professional experience. Therefore, the minimum teaching staff combination in higher education institutions offering degree courses should be 30% with PhD, 50% with Master's Degree, and 20% with Bachelor's degree (HERQA, 2008).

HERQA (2008) states that student- academic staff ratio is one of the indications of an appropriate education and shows the status of instructors in higher learning institutions. Likewise, the established instructor- student ratio for lecture classes, and technical and laboratory classes are 1:20 and 1:15

respectively (HERQA, 2005). This indicates that a high instructor-student ratio means an instructor has hardly to guide more students, which is not realistic as the very essence of learning occurs where there is a close contact between instructors and the students. Similarly, the ratio of full-time academic staff members to part-timer academic staff is an indicator of the strength of higher institutions in securing quality of education. As a minimum requirement, in Ethiopia, 70% of the total population of higher education instructors should be permanent workers and 30% should be part-time workers (HERQA, 2008). But the student- instructor ratio in the University is currently around 30:1 (World Bank, 2004). This reflects that a high student part time ratio may indicate and large burden placed on full-time academic staff and it indicates high level of dependence on part- time instructors. Moreover, most Universities in Ethiopia do not have modern libraries with up-to date facilities, publications and resource materials for students (Teshome, 2007). This indicts that it contributes to deteriorated quality.

Most private higher education institutions have a centralized, profit- oriented management structure similar to that of private enterprise (Varghese, 2004).There are few mechanisms for internal consultation and have little influence on overall planning and management. The greatest problems private higher learning institutions face is lack of leadership competences due to the fact that leaders are appointed on the basis of seniority without appropriate training and qualification that are required for higher education settings. Different scholars also noted the prevalence of methods of teaching in higher education institutions and urge the need for undertaking reform on the instructional practices (Tjeldvoll et al, 2010). A constructivist epistemology assumes that knowledge is produced or made meaningful through interaction between the learner and the world around him/her. This interaction leads to interpretation and understanding, not just memorization (Leu, 2000). While there are various methods of teaching that teachers can use, the central focus and purpose is enhancing students' performance (Firdissa, 2005).

Hence, an educator's teaching style can be conceptualized on a continuum ranging from teacher- centered to student- centered teaching spectrum. Similarly, Amare (2000) describes the importance of learner involvement in the instructional undertaking by stating that learning is an active not a passive process and it is the learner's activity not the teacher's activity that results in

learning. From the point of constructivism, teachers are considered as midwives who guides, facilitates and leads learners towards meaning creation. Therefore, in order to mitigate the already indicated quality of education, the study deals with quality education assessment at PHEIs in Mekelle City.

Educational institutions take input from the environment, undergoes educational process, and delivery output to the environment (Shavelson et al, 1987). Hence, one can think of educational institutions as systems composed of three subsystems: The input subsystem, the process subsystem, and the output subsystem as follows.

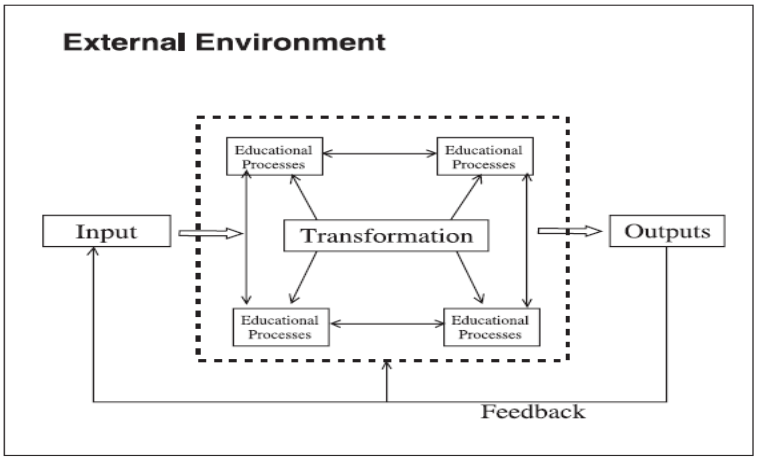

Fig: Systems View of Quality in Education (**Source: Shavelson et al, 1987)**

It is essential for all public and private HEIs in Ethiopia to note that HERQA has identified ten major areas that form the focus points of institutional quality audit (Abebe, 2007, Tesfaye, 2007). The university admits students (inputs) and then transforms them through teaching and learning which is reflected by the students' academic performances (outputs).These quality assurance focal areas include the entirety of inputs, processes and outputs of educational systems as theoretical frameworks. These are:

1. Vision, mission and educational goals
2. Governance and management system
3. Infrastructure and learning resources
4. Academic and support staff
5. Student admission and support
6. Program relevance and curriculum
7. Teaching, learning and assessment
8. Student progression and graduate outcomes
9. Research and outcome activities
10. Internal quality assurance (audit)

services

1.2. Statement of the Problem: Rational of the Study

Although higher education is one of the pillars of economic, social and political development of a country, rapid expansion of HEIs in general and PHEIs in particular aggravate the problem of quality of education. In line with this, MoE (2007) states that the expansion of higher education without necessary planned intervention is compromising quality of education. Thus, the Ethiopian higher education system is demonstrating a rapid increase in students' enrollment which has not been accompanied with sufficient encouragement by quality. PHEIs are experiencing challenges from the quantity and quality of inputs, processes and outputs of education system. With respect to this, Seemnk and Teelkun (2003) in their study reflect that quality of higher education is distinguished between input, process and output indicators by justifying that quality of education is evaluated as a system with all its intertwined components. Besides, Ross and Mahlck (1990) asserts that educational inputs, processes and outputs are status indicators of quality of education. Bekalu and Maru (2004) in their study further indicate that PHEIs did not available inputs such as number of facilities, less academic staff qualifications and poor college governance in comparison to public HEIs. Similarly, Tsegaye (2008) in his study states that the implementation practice of quality assurance and accreditation system in many PHEIs in Ethiopia has been seriously impaired in contrary to the expected policy directions.

Moreover, Damtew (2005) in his study confirms that some of the notable challenges confronting the enterprise include that PHEIs go through stringent regulations in light of the ratio of senior personnel which cannot be met at least in the short run. Some studies also state that "there is a tendency towards "accreditation of program and institution" in the private and "institutional audit" in both public and private higher education institutions in Ethiopia by justifying that there is also a tendency of implementing "quality control" in private and "quality improvement" in public higher education institutions.

However, some studies carried out in few PHEIs of Addis Ababa on quality of education had laid a promising start but it does not comprehensively address the problems of quality education in all Private Higher Education Institutions of Ethiopia. However, as far as the knowledge of researcher was concerned, no research has been conducted on quality education assessment at PHEIs in

Mekelle City. Therefore, based on the above substantial information and reflections, his professional knowledge, work experiences and reading about quality of education, the researcher was initiated to conduct this research.

1. 3. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study was to survey quality education in Private higher education institutes. More specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the quality of educational inputs and processes with respect to the acceptable quality standards.

2. To scrutinize the competences of internal stakeholders to ensure quality of education.

3.To evaluate the quality of outputs (students' performance, and research outputs) to the acceptable quality standards across the departments and programs.

4.To seek out the echelon to which the educational outputs (students' performance and research outputs) are achieved and utilized respectively?

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were raised to be answered in the course of the study. These are:

1. What is the status of quality education when examined from the point of the input-processes-outputs indicators?

2. How do instructors implement instructional processes in light of quality standards?

3. To what extent does the quality of students' academic performance and achievement align with accepted standards across the departments and programs?

4. To what extent do the internal stakeholders initiate the academic staffs to rank excellence through research outputs and community services?

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1. The Research Design

A descriptive survey research design with convergent parallel mixed (quantitative and qualitative) method was employed with the intention of getting the general picture of quality education in private higher education institutions

in Mekelle City. Koul (2008) states that descriptive survey requires expert and imaginative planning, careful analysis, and interpretation of the collected data, logical and skillful reporting of the research results. As a result, the rational for selection of this research method was that it is an appropriate method to describe an on-going process and trends that are developing and useful for the purpose of identifying standards against which the existing condition can be evaluated.

2.2. Sources of Data

Both the primary and secondary sources of data were used to get adequate information about quality of education with particular reference to PHEIs in Mekelle City.

2.3. Samples and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of each target population was determined according to the ideal sample size of a target population which is large enough to serve as an adequate representative and small enough to be selected economically in terms of both time and complexity of analysis "(Best and Kahn, 1989). The sample size was determined by Yamane's Formula, $n=N/1+N\ (e^{2})$. Where: e = the level of precision with plus or minus 5%, n=sample, N=Total population, at 95% confidence level and P=0.05 for categorical level for an alpha level (Yamane, 1967).

Table 1: Target Population and Samples of the Study

S/N	Participants	Population	Samples
1	Vice Academic Deans	8	4
2	Quality Assurance Directorates	4	4
2	Instructors	202	65
3	Department Coordinators	24	18
5	Students	1494	145
	Total	**1728**	**236**

A total of 236 respondents were selected as samples of the study by using different sampling techniques from a total of 1728 target population. Accordingly, four vice academic deans were selected from eight academic deans by using purposive sampling technique on the basis of their relevance to academic affairs and work positions to give adequate information. Four quality assurance directorates were also selected by using availability sampling

technique. Moreover, 65 instructors and 18 department heads were selected from 202 instructors and 24 department coordinators by using simple random sampling technique through drawing a lottery. This sampling technique was chosen because it provides an equal and independent chance for each instructor in the definite target population to be selected as a sample of the study. Finally, second and third year undergraduate regular program students were included in the study as data sources by assuming that they might have enough experiences and knowledge to give genuine information compared to first year and diploma program students. Then, 145 degree students were selected from a total of 1494 undergraduate regular program students by using stratified random sampling technique based on their educational level, department and fields of the study. Therefore, 10% from each department or stratum of the target population of PHEIs were chosen randomly by drawing lottery to make proportional allocation of samples of the study.

2.4 .Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used to gather data were questionnaires, semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis. With respect to this, Creswell (2009) stated that employing multiple data collection instruments help the researcher to combine, strengthen and amend some of the inadequacies and for triangulation of the data. Accordingly, questionnaires were used as the main data gathering instruments whereas semi-structure interview, observation and document analysis were used to enrich the data obtained through questionnaires.

2.5. Procedures of Data Collection

Before the actual study was carried out, a pilot test of instrument was made on a none sample college. Accordingly, questionnaires were distributed to 25 instructors and department heads, and 35 students. By calculating using Cronbach alpha, the questionnaires were designed to be filled in by instructors and students have got a reliability coefficient of 0.864 and 0.827 respectively (>0.75 which are accepted). Moreover, the clarity of the questionnaires was checked by English instructors. On the basis of the feedbacks obtained from a pilot study and comments from instructors, some improvements were made on instructions and sequences of few items. Therefore, the questionnaires were corrected and refined for the final study. Similarly, reliability coefficients were calculated post final data collection and found to be 0.918 and 0.889 for instructors and students respectively.

2.6. Methods of Data Analysis

The data obtained through closed questionnaires were analyzed by using percentages, means, standard deviation, rank order and chi-square test followed by discussion of the most important points. The data gathered through open ended questions, interviews, observation and document investigation were analyzed qualitatively through descriptive narration.

3. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Table 2: Profiles of Respondents by Qualification, Experiences and Terms of Employment

No	Variables	Profiles	Ins &Dep't heads		QAD		VAD	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Educational qualification	B.A/B.Sc. degree	61	74	-	-	-	-
		M.A/ M.SC.	22	26	4	100	4	100
		Total	**83**	**100**			**4**	**100**
2	Teaching Experiences	1-5	17	20			-	-
		6-10	12	14			-	-
		11-15	41	49			1	25
		16-20	9	11			2	50
		> 20 years	4	5			1	25
		Total	**83**	**100**			**4**	**100**
3	Employment	Permanent	44	54			4	100
		Part – timer	38	46			-	-
		Total	**83**	**100**			**4**	**100**

Table 2 item 1 reflects that 71% of instructors were B.A/B.SC. degree holders whereas 29%) of them were M.A/M.SC degree holders. Thus, the educational qualification of teaching staffs was found to be below the required minimum standard set by HERQA (2008). From this, one can deduce that low qualification of teaching staffs appear unlikely to carry out the instructional process effectively. This calls for inferior quality of education because teachers' professional development and educational qualification have paramount importance to promote quality of education. The 2nd item of Table 2 reflects that 26% of instructors have 1-5 years of teaching experience, 19% of them have 6-10 years teaching experience and the majority, 35% of them have 11-15 years teaching experiences and 20% of them have above 16 years teaching experiences. Thus, 74% instructors have above six years teaching experiences

which are promising in improving quality of education. However, 26% instructors have 1-5 years teaching experiences which have significant impact in handicapping the quality of education. Moreover, the 3rd item of Table 2 shows that the majority, 68% of teachers were permanent academic staffs while 32% of teachers were part- timer. This academic staff ratio is below the required minimum standard set by HERQA to maintain quality of education in higher education institutions. But, 100% of the vice academic deans were permanent workers. To strengthen this, Boum and Tolbert (1985) point out that in developing countries unqualified and insufficiently qualified teachers are high which makes educational quality inferior.

Table 3: Teachers' Pedagogical Training as an Indicator of Quality Education

No	Items	Instructors and department heads	
		F	%
1	Have you taken teacher's pedagogical training?		
	A. Yes	45	54
	B. No	38	46
	Total	83	100
2	To what extent does teacher's pedagogical training have an effect on the quality of teaching-learning process?		
	A. Very high	45	54
	B. High	25	30
	C. Average	13	16
	Total	83	100

As Table 3 depicts, 54% of them noted that they had taken part in pedagogical training while 46% of them reported that they have not taken part in any pedagogical training. Although large number of instructors had taken part in pedagogical training, unbelievably, around half of them had not participated in any teacher's training program. With respect to the effect of teacher's pedagogical training on the quality of teaching learning process, the majority of respondents, 84% rated it as very high/ high. As to Anderson et al (1998), teaching involves a wide range of activities that are related to essential purpose of helping others understand. Thus, pedagogical knowledge helps teachers to figure out ways of making abstract topics understandable and utilization of technology.

Table 4: On the Job Training Opportunities Offered to Academic Staffs

No	Modes of Training	Respondents						
		Veryadequate		Adequate		Inadequate		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	Mean
1	Short-term trainings	17	26	15	23	33	51	1.75
2	Professional or research projects	10	15	12	19	43	66	1.49
3	In-staff training, faculty meeting, evaluation	16	25	17	26	32	49	1.75
4	Visiting other colleges	17	26	12	19	36	55	1.71
5	Opportunities for overseas study	-	-	5	8	60	92	1.08

Item 1 in Table 4 shows that the majority, 51%, of instructors indicated that short-term trainings given to academic staff in the form of workshops, panel and seminars were found to be inadequate. The mean value of responses of instructors was also found to be 1.75 which lies below the ideal mean (2). In item 2 of the same Table, 66% of respondents confirmed that on the job training opportunities given to academic staff were found to be unsatisfactory. Accordingly, the mean responses of respondents were 1.49 which lies below the ideal mean. Furthermore, in items 4 and 5 of the same Table, 55% and 92% of instructors assured that experience sharing practices with other equivalent Colleges and opportunities for overseas study were found to be inadequate respectively. Hence, the calculated mean values of item 4 and 5 were found to be 1.71 and 1.08 respectively

TABLE 5: Proficiency of Teaching Staffs as Indicators of Quality Education

No	Quality Indicators	Inst &dep't heads		Students		GM
		M_1	SD_1	M_2	**SD_2**	
1	Transmitting enough knowledge to students	3.05	1.54	2.81	1.32	2.93
2	Respecting students' ideas in class	3.28	1.40	3.04	1.61	3.16
3	Assisting, guiding and counseling students	2.69	1.58	2.78	1.41	2.74
4	Problem solving studies and research	2.42	1.47	2.69	1.13	2.56
5	Working in teams and collaboratively	2.71	1.55	2.74	1.57	2.73

In Table 5 item 1, the mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 3.05 and 2.81 respectively. Besides, the grand mean value (2.93) lies below the ideal mean value (3). This indicates that the proficiency of teachers with respect to transmission of enough knowledge to students was not to the point of ensuring quality of education. The mean values of responses of item 2 were found to be 3.28 and 3.05 for instructor and students respectively.

Likewise, the grand mean value (3.16) lies above the ideal mean (3) . For item 3 of Table 5, the mean values of the responses of teachers and students were found to be 2.69 and 2.78 respectively. The grand mean value (2.74) was less than the expected mean value. which indicates that respondents were unsatisfied with guidance and counseling services. In the same manner, in Table 5 item 4 also depicts that problem-solving studies and research were rated the least by both respondents. The mean values of responses of respondents concerning these scholarly activities were 2.42 and 2.69 for instructors and students respectively. The grand mean value (2.56) was also below the ideal mean.

Moreover, item 5 of the same Table shows that the commitment of instructors to work in teams collaboratively was not encouraging. The mean values of responses of instructors and students were 2.71 and 2.74 respectively. Similarly, the grand mean value (2.73) was found to be below the ideal mean. Firdissa (2009) states that it is difficult to expect quality to happen by people of less quality, uncommitted and poorly motivated staffs by justifying that quality demands quality.

Table 6: The Teaching Staff-Student Ratio as Indicator of Quality Education

No	**Items**	**Instructors**		**Students**	
		F	**%**	**F**	**%**
	The teaching staff-student ratio in your college is approximately:				
1	1:30	4	5	13	9
2	1:40	18	22	71	49
3	More than 1:40	61	73	61	42
	Total	**83**	**100**	**145**	**100**

As it is shown in Table 6, the majority of respondents, 95% ,of instructors and 91% of students asserted that the overall teaching staff-student ratio in the PHEIs under investigation was found to be approximately 1:40/ more than 1:40. Besides, all of the interviewees commonly indicated that due to a large number of students, the teaching staff- student ratio does not match with the national standard. Therefore, from the view point of the majority of both respondents, one can deduce that the ratio is above the national figure of 1:20 set for the teaching staff student ratio in higher education institutions. This indicates that having such high population of students, it would be difficult to give quality instruction.

Table 7: The Adequacy of Support Staffs

No	**Support Staffs**	**Instructors & dep't heads**				**Students**		
		Avail		**Inav**	**M_1**	**Ava**	**Inav**	**M_2**
1	Support staff for libraries	F	35	48	1.70	70	75	1.80
		%	42	58		48	52	
2	Support staff for laboratories	F	40	43	1.82	70	75	1.73
		%	48	52		48	52	
3	Support staff for pedagogical centers	F	39	44	1.73	65	80	1.79
		%	47	53		45	55	
4	Support staff for internet services	F	40	43	1.85	70	75	1.88
		%	48	52		48	52	
5	Support staff for guidance & counseling services	F	38	45	1.70	58	87	1.57
		%	46	54		40	60	

As shown in Table 7, item illustrates that 58% and 52% of instructors and students respectively reported that the services provided by the support staff for libraries was found to be unsatisfactory. The mean values of responses of instructors and students were 1.70 and 1.80 respectively. Likewise, the majority, 52% and 52% of instructors and students respectively reported against item 2 of the same Table that the services provided by the support staff for laboratories were also found to be below the standard.

The mean values of response of instructors and students were found to be 1.82 and 1.73 respectively which lie below the ideal mean (2). Similarly, 53% of instructors and 55% of students indicated that the service provided by the support staff for pedagogical resource centers was not promising to test quality. Consequently, the mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 1.73 and 1.79 respectively both are below the ideal mean. Moreover, the majority of respondents, 52% of instructors and 52% of students respectively remarked that the service provided by the support staff for computer and internet utilization was not adequate. Accordingly, it was rated by instructors and students the mean values of 1.81 and 1.88 respectively. These mean values lie below the ideal mean and thus, contradict with using latest technology to enrich students' knowledge and acquaint them with up to date information. Finally, item 5 of the same Table depicts that the support staff for guidance and counseling services was rated the least by the majority, 54% of instructors and 60% students. The mean values of the responses were 1.70 and 1.57 for instructors and students respectively.

Table 8: Academic Competences of Students as Indicators of Quality Education

No	Items	Instructors		Students		Total	Chi- square test
		F	%				
1	Types of students joining PHEIs						x^2 cal= 0.921 x^2 cri = 3.841 df=1
	Those who couldn't join public Universities	66	80	117	81	173	
	Those who search for quality education	19	20	28	19	37	
	Total	83	100	145	100	210	
2	Academic competences of students is						x^2 cal= 22.088 x^2 cri= 7.815 df=3
	Good	14	21	55	47	64	
	Fair	33	50	50	43	78	
	Poor	13	20	8	7	21	
	Very poor	6	9	4	3	10	
	Total	66	100	117	100	173	

In Table 8, item 1 shows that the majority of respondents, 80% of instructors and 81% of students viewed that students who could not join public universities join PHEIs. Moreover, it was viewed that some of them were admitted to PHEIs searching for quality education and to upgrade their qualification from diploma (10+3) to first degree level. The respondents had also responded to the open ended questions that few of them are those who were dismissed from public Universities. With reference to this, the chi-square test assured that the computed value, i.e. 0.921 is much less than the critical value of x^2, i.e. 3.841 at 5% level of significance for 1 degree of freedom.

Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between respondents' responses on the types of students' joining PHEIs. In the same Table, item 2 reveals that 71% and 90% of instructors and students respectively viewed the competences of students as good/fair level. Hence, the competences of students were viewed differently by respondents even though the majority of respondents responded it as good/ fair. In a similar manner, the chi-square test justified that the computed value of x^2, i.e. 22.088 is greater than the critical value of x^2, i.e. 7.815 at 5% level of significance for 3 degree of freedom. This shows that there is a statistically significant difference between instructors and students in evaluating the competences of students.

Table 9: Availability of Educational Facilities and Infrastructures

No	Items	Instructors		Students		GM
		M_1	SD_1	M_2	SD_2	
1	Physical location of the University College	2.66	1.57	2.69	1.53	2.68
2	Sufficient buildings & classrooms in the college	2.80	1.41	2.93	1.31	2.87
3	Well-equipped and up-to-date library	2.77	1.64	2.70	1.44	2.74
4	Well-equipped laboratory	2.65	1.53	2.68	1.54	2.67
5	Sufficient number of computers for students	3.05	1.38	2.80	1.40	2.93
6	Reading rooms, water supply cafeteria& toilets for teachers & studentsseparately.	2.85	1.47	2.70	1.46	2.78

As it can be seen from Table 9 item 1, the mean values of the responses of instructors and students were found to be 2.66 and 2.69 respectively. Likely, the grand mean value (2.68) was found to be below the ideal mean which indicates that the respondents have unfavorable feelings on the suitability of their Colleges. In line with this, it was also evident from observation that most of the PHEIs are neighboring with roads of vehicle music shops, hotels and bars without any demarcation. Moreover, some Colleges are without enclosure, without sport fields and staying places, inadequate water supply, without toilets for teachers and students separately.

In strengthening this finding, HERQA (2008) states that HEIs should not be connected with music shops, hotels, other offices and living rooms. The second item of the same Table shows that the buildings and classrooms in PHEIs were not appreciated by respondents in terms of their adequacy. Instructors and students rated the mean values of their responses as 2.80 and 2.93 respectively. The grand mean value was found to be 2.87 which lies below the ideal mean (3). In the same manner, item 3 of Table 9 shows that the libraries in sampled PHEIs were not up-to-date and well equipped to provide enough services to the high population of students.

Accordingly, it was rated the mean values of 2.77 and 2.70 by instructors and students respectively and the grand mean value (2.74) lies below the ideal mean value which indicates the obsoleteness and lack of sufficient instructional materials in their libraries. This does not fulfill the essential requirement that the library must accommodate at least 25% of the students at a time (HERQA, 2008). Furthermore, the availability of well-equipped laboratory was rated the least by both respondents to item 4 of the same Table. The mean values of

responses of instructors and students were 2.65 and 2.68 respectively and the grand mean value was 2.67.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the problem is more serious concerning the facilities and qualities of laboratories in the sampled PHEIs. The availability of computers for students was also shown in item 5 of the same Table. The mean values of the responses respondents were above and below the ideal mean value i.e. 3.05 and 2.80 for instructors and students respectively. This shows that the accessibility of computers was viewed by respondents in two extremes. However, the grand mean value (2.93) was found to be below the ideal mean. This finding contradicts with the idea of Sallis (1993) who states that quality of education demands good buildings, plentiful resources, the application of latest technology, etc.

Table 12: Class Size as an Indicator of Quality Education

No	Items	Instructors & dep't heads		Students		Total	Chi-square test
		F	%	F	%		
1	The average class size in your lecture class is						x^2 cal= 3.708 x^2cri= 5.991 df=2
	A.31-40	6	7	27	19	33	
	B. 41-50	62	75	83	57	128	
	C. Above 50	15	18	35	24	49	
	Total	83	100	145	100	210	
2	The desired optimum class size:						x^2cal= 4.321 x^2cri= 5.991 df=2
	A. 11-20	7	8	11	8	18	
	B. 21-30	61	74	115	79	158	
	C. 31-40	15	18.	19	13	34	
	Total	**83**	**100**	**145**	**100**	**210**	

Table 10 items 1 depicts that the majority of instructors and students 75% and 57% respectively remarked that the average class size was found to be 41-50 students. Similarly, 18% of instructors and 24% of students reported that the class size was large with above 50 students. From this data, 93% of instructors and 118 (81%) of students remarked that the class size in their respective College was above 41.

Furthermore, the chi-square test illustrated that the computed value of x^2, i.e. 3.708 is much less than the critical value of x^2, i.e. 5.991 at 5% level of significance for 2 degree of freedom. Hence, there is no statistically significant difference between the views of instructors and students with respect to the average class size in their Colleges. In item 2 of Table 10, respondents were further asked to recommend the desired optimum class size from their point of view in order to create favorable conditions for the smooth functioning of teaching - learning process. Accordingly, the majority of instructors, (66%), and most of the students, (79%) had given their opinion that the average class size would be 21-30.Thus, the teacher would check students' academic progress continuously. On the other hand, 23% of instructors and 13% of students suggested that 31-40 students per class should be the desired optimum class size. For this assumption, they had put their reasons such as high population of students and shortage of human and non-human resources. Similarly, the computed value of x^2, i.e. 4.321 is much less than the critical value of x^2, i.e. 5.991 at 5% level of significance for 2 degree of freedom. This reflects that there is no statistically significant difference between respondents in viewing the desired optimum class size to provide effective instruction at degree level. Smith (1996) confirms that in the large class size individualization of instruction is limited and lecture method is most frequently utilized.

Table 11: Competences of Leadership and Management

No	Items	Instructors &dep't heads		Students		GM
		M_1	SD_1	M_2	SD_2	
1	Performing technical management	3.28	1.37	3.26	1.21	3.27
2	Creating transparent, collegial and positive work environment	2.74	1.48	2.80	1.11	2.77
3	Research and problem- solving skills	2.55	1.14	2.60	1.04	2.58
4	Creating participatory decision-making capacity for teachers and students.	2.74	1.52	2.83	1.03	2.79
5	**Mobilizing resources and providing educational facilities**	2.94	1.51	3.01	1.14	2.98

As shown in Table 11, item 1, responses of both instructors and students rated the highest mean values as 3.28 and 3.26 respectively with the grand mean value of 3.27. This competency of officials is pointing towards performing technical management. From this, it is possible to say that institutional leadership mainly focuses on articulation of vision, mission and setting direction

to meet societal expectation. On the other hand, item 2 of Table 13 shows that creating transparent, collegial and positive work environment was negatively perceived by instructors and students with the mean values of 2.74 and 2.80 respectively. Their grand mean value was found to be 2.77. Likely, in item 3 of the same Table, the researching and problem- solving skills of leadership and managements were not appreciated by both respondents. The mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 2.55 and 2.60 respectively and their grand mean value was 2.58. Similarly, item 4 of the same Table indicates the challenges from respondents' views include creating participatory decision - making capacity for teachers and students.

The mean values of the responses of teachers and students were 2.74 and 2.83 respectively. Besides, their grand mean value was 2.79. Furthermore, in Table 11 item 5 depicts that the responsibility of leadership and managements in mobilizing resources to fulfill educational facilities was rated below the ideal mean by instructors and students respectively. Their mean values were 2.94 and 3.01 respectively. Similarly, the grand mean value was found to be 2.98. With respect to the above responsibilities of educational leadership, Sallis (1993) assures that a leadership who is transparent, accommodative and acting as assistance and colleague establishes a good working environment which makes the process of instruction effective and efficient.

Table 12: Availability of Curricular Materials

No	**Items**	**Instructors & dep't heads**				**Students**		
		Avail		**Inav**	**M_1**	**Ava**	**Inav**	**M_2**
1	Course guides & teachers' handouts	F	65	18	2.20	107	38	2.17
		%	78	22		74	26	
2	Different audio visual materials	F	40	43	1.82	67	78	1.72
		%	48	52		46	54	
3	Up-to-date copies of reference books	F	44	39	1.88	66	79	1.70
		%	53	47		46	54	
4	Abstracts, journals and articles	F	38	45	1.69	70	75	1.68
		%	46	54		48	52	

As it was noted in Table 14 item 1, the majority, 78% of instructors and 74% of students assured that course guides and teachers' handouts were available in their colleges. Besides, the mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 2.20 and 2.17 respectively. Thus, the mean values of the responses of both respondents lie above the ideal mean (2) which shows that the course guides or outlines are available. On the other hand, item 2 of Table 14 reflects that different audio-visual materials were not available in the sampled

private higher education institutions to promote quality of education. This was confirmed by the majority, 52% of instructors and 54% of students with their corresponding mean values of responses of instructors and students, i.e. 1.82 and 1.72 respectively. Both mean values lie below the ideal mean which mirrors that both respondents have got unfavorable feelings on the availability of materials. In the same manner, the majority, 53% of instructors and 55% of students suggested that up to date copies of reference books were not available.

Likewise, the calculated mean values of the responses instructors and students were found to be 1.88 and 1.70 respectively. This finding contradicts with the essential requirement for HEIs set by HERQA (2008) that the reference books to student ratio should be 1:15. Likely, item 4 of the same Table justified that even though abstracts, journals and articles are the main sources of information for instruction and research, they were found to be insufficient in the sampled PHEIs. This was asserted by 54% of instructors and 52% of students with their corresponding mean values of 1.69 and 1.68 respectively which lie below the ideal mean. This finding also contradicts with the essential requirements for HEIs that the journal to student ratio should be 1:30 (HERQA, 2008).

Table 13: The Frequency of Utilization of Teaching Methods

No	**Items**	**Instructors**					**Students**			
		Al/oft		**SS**	**Ra/ ne**	**M_1**	**Al/oft**	**SS**	**Ra/ne**	**M_2**
1	Lecture method	F	63	13	7	4.08	73	39	33	3.86
		%	76	16	8		50	27	23	
2	Demonstration method	F	48	18	17	3.39	99	24	22	3.83
		%	58	22	20		68	17	15	
3	Questioning & answering	F	52	22	9	3.93	96	29	20	3.85
		%	63	27	11		66	20	14	
4	Project work	F	12	22	49	1.93	29	28	88	2.70
		%	14	27	59		20	19	61	
5	Group discussion	F	26	20	37	2.96	34	41	70	2.83

Table 13 item 1 shows the majority, 76% of instructors and 50 % of students remarked that lecture method was always/often used. The mean values rated by instructors and students were found to be 4.08 and 3.86 respectively. These mean values are much greater than the ideal mean value (3). This shows that lecture method was dominantly used by instructors in the classrooms compared to other methods of teaching. Similarly, item 2 of the same Table shows that 58% of instructors and 68% of students confirmed that demonstration method

was always/ often used. The mean values of responses of teachers and learners were found to be 3.39 and 3.83 respectively. This depicts that demonstration method was also frequently utilized by instructors. Moreover, item 3 of Table 13 asserts that 63% of teachers and 66% of students responded that questioning and answering were always /often used as methods of teaching. The calculated mean of responses of instructors and students were found to be 3.93 and 3.85 respectively. This shows that the mean values of responses of both respondents lie above the ideal mean which in turn mirrors that this method was frequently utilized. On the other hand, item 4 of the same Table shows that the majority, 59% of instructors and 61% of students reported that project work/ term paper was rarely/never used.

The mean values of the responses of instructors and students were found to be 1.93 and 2.70 respectively. This reflects that the mean values of responses lie below the ideal mean which in turn justifies that project work was less frequently utilized. Likely, item 5 of the same table describes that the majority, 45% of instructors and 48% of students suggested that group discussion method was used. The mean values of the two respondents were 2.96 and 2.83 respectively. With respect to utilization of methods of teaching, Aggarwal (2004) states that teacher-centered method is also advisable when there is scarcity of teaching materials and pragmatically speaking, learning cannot be child- centered in absolute terms. This implies that teachers have some controls in adjusting, evaluating and facilitating the teaching learning process.

Table 14: Utilization of Assessment Techniques

No	Methods of Assessment	**Instructors**					**Students**			
		Al/oft		**SS**	**Ra/ne**	**M_1**	**Al/oft**	**SS**	**Ra/ne**	**M_2**
1	Formative continuous assessment	F	11	30	42	2.62	26	41	78	2.57
		%	13	36	51		18	28	54	
2	Summative evaluation	F	64	15	4	3.67	110	20	15	4.22
		%	77	18	5		76	14	10	
3	Papers and research defense are used	F	16	23	44	1.78	28	33	84	2.37
		%	19	28	53		19	23	58	

Table 14 item 1 shows that the majority, 51%, of instructors and 54% of students pointed out that formative continuous assessment including tests,

quizzes, interviews, attendance, etc. were rarely/never. Accordingly, the mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 2.62 and 2.57 respectively. The mean values of both respondents lie below the ideal mean. This shows that formative continuous assessment was not frequently utilized by instructors to assess students' academic performances. On the contrary, item 2 of the same Table reflects that most respondents, 77% of instructors and 76% of students suggested that summative evaluation was always/ often used. The mean values of both respondents were surprisingly found to be 3.67 and 4.22 respectively. These mean values are much greater than the ideal mean which in turn remarks that summative evaluation was being dominantly utilized in the form of mid and final exams as unlike to formative continuous assessment. Likewise, item 3 of the same Table reveals that most instructors and students, 53% and 58% respectively confirmed that papers and research defense were rarely/never used as assessment methods at all. Only few students, 19% rated that papers and research defense were "often" used. The mean values of responses of instructors and students were found to be 1.78 and 2.37 respectively and are below the ideal mean. Therefore, papers and research were not frequently utilized as methods of assessment. Therefore, instructors use summative evaluation more frequently compared to formative continuous assessment. However, today, schools and Universities are turning to continuous assessment where by recording of the student's performance during the course are kept (ICDR, 1999).This shows that continuous assessment is much more complete and reliable assessment of the student performances than is possible by a single examination.

Another source of information was an interview conducted with academic vice deans and analyses of graduate tracer study documents and SED. Accordingly, there were no any gradate tracer studies and self-evaluation documents (SED) in institutions under investigation to check the performances and employability of graduates, and internal quality assurance respectively.

3. Summary of Major Findings

Based on the analysis of the data, the following major findings were obtained from the study. These are:

1. The educational qualification, staff- ratio and teaching experiences of the academic staffs were found to be unsatisfactory. The finding of the study shows that the majority, 73% of instructors in the sampled PHEIs were B.A/B.SC.

degree holders while few, 27% of them were M.A/M.Sc. degree holders and without any PhD degree holders which does not match with the required minimum standard set by HERQA/MOE to give instruction at degree level i.e. at least 30% PhD, 50% M.A/ M.Sc. degrees and 20% B.A/B.SC. degree holders teaching staffs. Likewise the finding of the study also shows that 54% of the instructors were permanent academic staffs while 46 % of them were part-timer which is not up to the essential required minimum standard of qualification mix set by HERQA/MOE, i.e. 75% permanent and 25% part-timer academic staff ratio. The finding of the study also illustrates that due to high population of students, the teaching staff-student ratio was greater than 1:40 which doubles the 1:20 national standard set for higher education institutions.

2. Even though teachers' pedagogical training is backbone of instruction and the heart of quality in education, about 46 % of instructors had not taken part in teachers' pedagogical training. Similarly, on the job training opportunities given to academic staffs were discouraging.

3. The finding of the study shows that the services provided to students and instructors by the support staffs were below expected and inadequate to contribute their parts in improving quality.

4. The findings of the study point out that the majority of instructors (80%) and students (81%) remarked that the majority of students joining PHEIs were those who couldn't join government universities due to high requirement of the Ethiopian higher education qualification examination certificate results. 86% of instructors and 84% of students asserted that the pass rate of private higher education graduates was found to be high.

5. The availabilities of educational facilities and infrastructures were not promising to ensure quality of education. The physical location of most private higher education institutions are inconvenient for proper functioning of the teaching- learning process because they are neighboring with roads of vehicles, music shops, hotels and bars without any demarcation. Educational facilities and infrastructures were not encouraging both in quantity and quality to maintain a good and acceptable quality of education. Likewise, 95% of instructors and 91% of students assured that the class size was found to be above 41.

6. The quality of leadership and management of private higher education institutions with respect to their responsibilities and duties was found to be

unsatisfactory. The finding of the study depicts that the officials were competent enough in planning, organizing, coordinating, scheduling and controlling. However, they had failed to accomplish their tasks such as creating positive working environment, conducting research and problem - solving activities, managerial and academic decision-making, ensuring academic excellence and mobilizing resources to fulfill educational facilities.

7. The finding of the study illustrate that private higher education institutions had faced an implementation bottle neck with respect to the teaching - learning process. Instructors were not dedicated to use various learning strategies to address different learning styles, to cover the course instruction on time, to provide academic advice and tutorial support to students. Teacher-centered methods of teaching were dominantly used by instructors compared to learner-centered methods of teaching. Especially, lecture method was frequently used by instructors. Similarly, although formative continuous assessment focuses on monitoring learning progress while the teaching - learning process is undertaken, most instructors use summative evaluation more dominantly to assess their students' academic performances in the form of mid and final exams only for the sake of grading. This finding contradicts with the recommendation of MOE which is 70% continuous assessment to 30% final exam ratio.

8. There were no graduate tracer study documents and institutional self-evaluation documents (SED) in PHEIs under investigation.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the major findings of the study, it is possible to conclude that the status of quality of education in PHEIs in Mekelle was not found to be not promising. Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations were made to be looked critically by the concerned bodies to alleviate the problems associated with educational inputs, processes and outputs.

1. The educational qualification of the majority of instructors was below the minimum standard set by HERQA/MoE. Hence, PHEIs should provide instructors with sponsorship to upgrade their educational level or employ additional Masters & PhD holders teaching staffs to maintain quality in the teaching learning process.

2. The teaching staffs were not competent enough in playing their roles and accomplishing their responsibilities due to the lack of pedagogical knowledge

and on the job training opportunities. Thus, it is imperative to enhance the frontline implementers' empowerment and commitment by introducing teachers' development program implementing it through higher diploma program.

3. Consideration should be given to the quality and quantity of the support staffs as they are one of the inputs of education monitoring elements which address multiple problems in providing quality services so as to secure quality of education.

4. Even though the pass rate of graduates was high, the study evidenced that the academic competences of students attending their education was fair because of their weak academic background. Therefore, to maximize their students' academic competencies, instructors and managers should adjust consultation hours, tutorial support, project activities and introduce criterion-referenced assessment.

5. The physical location of private higher education institutions are inconvenient for the smooth functioning of teaching - learning process. Therefore, the top managements of the Colleges should device a communication system that strengthens partnership between their respective PHEIs and the regional government to have standardized and proper location for educational investment.

6. The availabilities of educational facilities and infrastructures are very essential to improve quality of education. Thus, the managements of private higher education institutions should equip their University College with necessary educational facilities by mobilizing resources from private owners and by generating resources through preparing projects.

7. The class size should be in line with the standard set by HERQA/MoE which enables teachers to employ experiential and problem - solving learning which in turn promotes students' motivation, effective learning and achievement.

8. The leadership and management of PHEIs should build their capacity to create a positive working atmosphere through making experience sharing practice with other equivalent University which in turn invites academic staffs to be committed and increase their sense of belongingness and enthusiasm to ensure academic excellence.

9. The managements of PHEIs should also respect the academic freedom of teachers through making strong and transparent collegial relationship, standardizing their work loads, avoiding imposing teachers on students' evaluation, allocating earmarked budget for educational research and giving promotion for their excellent performances.

10. Instructors of private higher education institutions have not had a sense of ownership in improving qualities of instructional process. Therefore, attention should be given to alleviate the problems through employing various learning strategies to address different learning styles, engage students in problem-solving activities and academic advice to students.

11. Diversified learner-centered methods of teaching should be utilized more frequently by introducing pedagogical training to instructors, standardizing class size and the teaching loads of instructors. Experience sharing practice should also be recommended as a key tool to-up-date the proficiency of instructors on the application of active – learning. For instance, with institutes of pedagogy in Mekelle University.

12. Private higher education institutions should revise and modify the criteria and procedures for assessment and examination to produce competent and top level graduates. Accordingly, instructors should develop the habit of applying formative continuous assessment to monitor the teaching learning-process through identifying and diagnosing the learning difficulties.

13. Having structural and timely feedbacks from employers contribute its parts for the success of private higher education institutions in improving quality of education. Therefore, they had better conduct graduate tracer studies to have data about the performance level and employment of graduates, and employers' satisfaction.

14. PHEIs are expected to prepare self-evaluation document (SED) that remarks internal quality assurance/audit.

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