

Factors Affecting Quality of Education in Ethiopian Higher Educational Institutions: the case of Dilla University

Mesfin Ibido

Department of Agricultural economics, Dilla University, 419, Dilla Ethiopia

Abstract

Education has received increased attention by the current government of Ethiopia in the recent years because it is believed to be a long term determinant of sustainable development. To this extent, the importance of educating people to ensure a country's continuous competitiveness and sustainable development is unquestionable. Higher education quality will have a significant contribution to alleviate problems such as suffering from relatively slow social and political progress, and becoming increasingly marginalized from the world economy. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors affecting quality education at higher educational institution and to know the cause and effect relationship for ensuring quality education from the comments of teachers and students in higher institution. To attain the objective of the study, semi-structured pre-formulated questionnaire has been used. Secondary sources, moreover, were reviewed to gather input to make this study reliable and valid. The study revealed that the greatest challenge to achieve the standard level quality in higher education is student and teacher's politics problem. Beside to this, it has found that higher educational institutions are not providing quality of education and the main reasons are lack of teachers motivation, poor salary and allowance package, political based research inputs and outputs, shortage of financial and lack of managerial capacity, availability of corruption, political intervention, less educational qualification of Instructors i.e. below the required minimum standard to give instruction in the institution. Thus the concerned body must free the higher institution from politics and create conducive environment for teachers in order to feel academic freedom.

Key words: *Higher Education, Education Quality, university, Institution, politics, academic freedom*

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I. Introduction

Education is one of the key determinant features to guarantee development and improvements in human wellbeing. Above and beyond, as widespread economic competition grows sharper, education becomes an important source of competitive advantage and a way for countries to attract jobs and investment (Kahsay, 2012). So, still education appears to be one of the key determinants of lifetime earnings. Consequently, Countries therefore normally see raising educational attainment as a way of tackling poverty and deprivation (Merriam, 2009). Subsequently, it is quite sure that education is widely accepted as a leading instrument for promoting economic growth and generally enhancing development in the world.

Quality is a key concern of academia across the globe and several efforts in multiple directions are made by the administrators and academicians to induce quality components into the teaching learning situation (Zaki and Rashidi, 2013). An effective and efficient quality higher education system is vital for sustainable economic development in developing countries like Ethiopia. Such a system, among others, improves the education and training of future employees, harnesses future leaders, fosters an enabling learning environment, and enriches the academic and intellectual landscape. The focus on higher education in developing nations such as Ethiopia can bear fruit if education is delivered by emphasizing quality over quantity in the delivery of education (World Bank, 2009).

In Ethiopia, modern higher education began in 1950 with the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa, a government institution, which later became Haile Selassie University and still later Addis Ababa University (Teshome, 1990). In 1991, the country had only two public universities and six colleges, with a capacity to enroll only about 10,000 intake. The expansion of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Ethiopia brought a remarkable increase in student number. The rapid expansion in the number of HEIs and student population without adequate human and investment capital is affecting higher education in Ethiopia. The education reform and expansion agenda of the Ethiopian government in the mid-1990s was so significant to some that it was feared that it would compromise the quality of education.

In spite of efforts made by Ethiopian ministry of education (MoE) and ministry of science and higher education (MoSHE) to maintain high-quality education as implementing an aggressive higher education expansion program, poor-quality education throughout the system became an issue that caused all stakeholders such as educators, business leaders, government leaders, and citizens to call for action. The signs of poor quality in higher education were justified among others by showing different indicators like: (i) serious academic staff shortages with quality implications such as huge teaching loads eventually leading to discontinuation of tutorials and employment of unqualified personnel, (b) dissatisfaction of stakeholders with the quality of graduates which can be explained by large number of graduates who cannot be productive without being retrained to meet applied technical skill and communication skill requirements, and (c) nonresponsive governance lacking institutional management and strategic planning to maintain quality standards and set quality enhancement goals. The purpose of this study was therefore to identify major key factors that contribute to the decline or poor quality of education in HEIs in Ethiopia the case of Dilla University.

Statement of the Problem

The process of teaching and learning process at the higher education level can be hindered by the internal and external factors that faced the university teachers (Maria J., 2010). They are not only blocking the true flow of learning but also endangered the educational environment which is the passport to the true achievement of the knowledge at that level. (Zafar J.,2008) So far there are several internal factors that challenge the university teachers. It can be either from students, colleagues or from the administration for achieving their most wanted goals through legal or illegal manner. (Norman R., 2010). On the other side there are external influences such as political parties, students' friend and family and other social factors are some of them that play a meaningful role for obtaining their maximum benefits.

There are so many factors that influences a faculty member undergoes at the higher education level in universities. We wanted to comb the universities for the internal and external influences on the university teachers and their consequences. It was done to determine the loss we bear due to the influences on the university teachers, and to generate such influence-free-mechanism in the universities in order to make the learning and teaching process more efficient and also to create attractive teaching environment. (Abdul R., 2008)

II. Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used so as to assess the quality of education in the selected higher institutions. The design was selected on the assumption that it is helpful to gather enough information from many people for achieving the objectives under this study. The appropriateness of this design for such study was well known by many scholars. For instance, Koul (2008) states that descriptive survey design becomes useful particularly when we needs to understand some particular information. In line to this, Best and Khan (1989) have noted that a descriptive survey research design involves a clearly defined problem and definite objectives.

2.1 Data Source

For this study, both primary and secondary data sources were used to gather adequate information for examining factors affecting quality education in higher educational institutions. **Primary Source:** It was tried to collect data through questionnaire, interview, observation and focus group discussion. **Secondary Source:** It consists of studying and reviewing related books, journals, articles newspapers, published research documents and magazines. To do conduct the study, we shall overview books, journals, articles and published documents relating to assessing factors affecting quality education in selected universities.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

On the basis of this research objectives, scope and types of information, the following methods of data collection have been used.

Questionnaire: Two questionnaires were formed for interview. There were separate questionnaire for both teachers and students. Most of the questions were closed ended questions and there were few open ended questions also.

Interview: Most of the interview was structured interview where responders answered following a pre-selected questions. To collect information from the targeted respondents for this study, interview method was followed so that it could bring additional information in addition to questionnaire method. Both structured and unstructured interview method have been used to collect information for the study.

Observation: This has used to observed current status of quality education in different universities. It is a method whereby the knowledge and understanding are drawn through the use of sense organs. It is a basic of this research that we have to come out some sort of factors that are seen in the university.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): The main purpose of using FGD was to collect data and compare those data on evaluating factors affecting quality education from both students and teachers side.

2.3 Data Analysis

After the primary and secondary data gathering procedures were completed, the data was presented and analyzed in a way that produces important information that ensure objectives of the study and also show future implications. The responses of respondents were presented and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The researcher used statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version 20.0 to analyze the collected data. First the relevant data was coded, summarized and then transferred to SPSS to be analyzed and presented. It is also used to find the performance of the higher institutes towards the implementation of the quality of education practices.

III. Findings

Major factors that affect quality of education in higher institution in the selected universities are

3.1 Political interference:

Now a day's political interference in the country's higher education system is the major factors that affect quality of education. One of the major problems in higher education quality is teachers and students politics. As the interview result illustrated, around 65% of students are not willing to do assignment individually; they prefer to do in group because only one or two students from the group take the responsibility of working the assignment on behalf of other members of the group. If the teacher forces them to do individually, they go for protest and collect petition on the teachers. Besides the staff replied that the university higher officials including the department head not willing to keep the rules and regulation of the organization because they afraid of political measure from the top leaders (from the ministry of education and other politically concerned body at different level). This indicated that the government focused on keeping the sustainability of their politics than the education quality.

Most of the academic year schedule is wasted by political meeting both with students and teachers. Then the teacher rush to cover the course in the academic semester since most of the schedules are busy by political meeting. The other worst thing is that in order to be employed as a university lecturer, priority is given for those who support the government political party than having good academic records. The same response has been obtained during FGD.

3.2 Student's misbehavior:

Misbehaving of students in the campus is another factor that influences quality of higher education. Some of the students want to get pass mark by protesting or making petition on teachers because they know that the government gives favor to students than staffs. They are so eager to cheat on exam, when the invigilator want to take measures they disturb each other or want to fight with the invigilator because the implementation of rules and regulation of the organization is weak since the rule of law is dominated and interpreted from political point of view.

The study result also indicated that around 67.5% of respondents believe that the external factors such as Low quality of primary and secondary education, political recruitment, and teacher's politics play a major role in affecting quality of higher education. On the other hand teachers also criticize political interference as the biggest threat for quality of education.

3.3 Positive physical learning environment:

Around 70% of respondents believe that class size and students' ratio is imbalanced in their class, large number of students per class. This factor exposes opportunity for students to develop cheating activity during exam period.

3.4 Insufficient Library Facilities and poor presence of students

Thinking education quality without library and library related facilities is impossible. Overall study result showed that around 54% students think that the library facility is inadequate in their university. Focus group discussion (FGD) respondents concluded on their discussion that the government focuses on the quantity of the higher education than keeping the quality. Therefore the necessary facilities in the universities are insufficient because of unplanned expansion of higher education institution by the government and miss-use of the budget allocated for the academic issue. The government simply focuses to achieve their political goal by increasing the number of universities in the country without taking the quality and basic facilities in to consideration. In connection to this about 70% of students are not getting adequate research and laboratory facilities as well.

3.5 Insufficient IT Facility and Computer Labs

Technology in the field of education can be a powerful tool. Most of the higher education especially the new generation universities in the country have been lagging behind from the global competition due to lack of modern laboratory and ICT facilities, because the government give due attention for massive expansion of the university than giving attention for quality of education. Teachers' working conditions also affect their ability to provide quality education. Many aspects of university life and educational policy go into teachers' perceptions of their employment. We were asked teachers about their working condition, almost 100% teachers said that they are not satisfied with the teachers working condition those are pre request for quality education.

IV. Conclusion

Both internal and external factors exist at the higher education level particularly in Dilla University and teaching learning quality is being highly affected by such grubby activities. These factors not only deteriorate the teaching process but also affect the educational environment. Students threaten the teachers for the marks, and try to use their organizations in this regard; whereas the colleagues approach the teachers to ask for the favor for either their favorite student or for that student(s) is his from the relations. External influences make less chaos by influencing the teachers. However they cause harm for the teachers. Those all factors must discouraged at all the platforms in order to encourage the influences-free environment for the teachers as they could employ all their potential and capabilities for the improvement education in higher institutions.

V. Recommendations

Here based on the study result I am suggesting some specific recommendations that will help to ensure factors affecting quality education as follow.

- ❖ Teacher's and Student's politics should immediately banned from higher educational institution
- ❖ Avoid celebration of political holidays and political meeting in higher institution since those will consume teaching learning time table.
- ❖ The administrator office must give due attention to modernized and updated infrastructure and all educational equipment as much as possible.
- ❖ Provide pure and only pure academic trainings and seminars for teachers that will help them to improve the quality of education.
- ❖ Give full academic freedom for teacher and hire the teachers only based on their academic performance.

Finally education is a corner stone of life for one nation. It has power to destroy or to build the nation. Therefore the government must ban the political involvement from the higher education if it is really responsible to change the nation. Priority must give for assuring quality of education than keeping their political doctrine.

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