

Quality Matters

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College

In this Issue

From the Editorial Desk.....	2
News	3
Research Corner.....	4
Interview.....	5
Perspective.....	7
Photo Gallery.....	11

Quote of this issue

"Research is to see what everybody has seen,
and to think what nobody else has thought."
Albert Szent Gyorgi

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St. Mary's University College (SMUC). The objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Accreditation Gained

The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) accredited St. Mary's University College to run graduate programs in Rural Development, Agricultural Economics and Agri-Business. In its letter issued on 16th March 2012, HERQA stated that SMUC had fulfilled the required resources, including the staff mix and learning materials. The Institute of Agriculture and Development Studies (SMUC) publishes peer-reviewed journal entitled Journal of Agriculture and Development; one of the requirements for accreditation. In addition to the eight accredited programs of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), with which SMUC is a partner, SMUC also runs its own programs of general MBA and an MBA with HRM concentration.

Conference on Internationalization of Higher Education Held

At a two-day conference, organized by the British Council and the UK Trade and Investment Department, Ato Wondwosen Tamrat (Asst.Prof.), Founder and President of SMUC, presented a paper entitled "Internationalization of Higher Education: the Ethiopian Experience" on March 23, 2012. His presentation was chaired by Dr. Admassu Tsegaye, President of Addis Ababa University. The key issues addressed by Ato Wondwosen were identification of aspects of internationalization, which are prominent in the Ethiopian Higher Education Sector, and the benefits, risks and barriers of internationalization as perceived by sector representatives. The paper also examined national and institutional frameworks that promote or hinder the internationalization of higher education.

(...Continued to page 3)

From the Editorial Desk

Our country has gone a long way in its research culture in both the local and imported universities. Ethiopia, as one of the oldest civilizations, has had its own indigenous university, serving the nation for nearly 2000 years. The religious learning centers, which are labeled by scholars as ‘traditional’ education system contribute greatly to the county’s development in art, architecture, medicine, law and music. The curriculum of the traditional learning centers do not address scientific investigation in astronomy and technology probably because heavenly inquiry is considered as sinful and technological investigation is not their major duty. Consequently, their contribution to science and astronomy is not rich.

When the missions of education shifted from religious to cultural, economical, environmental, scientific and technological developments, Addis Ababa University took over the role of the religious centers. It has been generating researches in medicine, engineering, humanities and development studies and disseminating its findings through journals since the 1950s. The University nowadays publishes 18 reputable journals. The other University which is a pioneer in agricultural research is Haramaya. It contributes a lot by introducing different crop varieties, improved livestock and new agricultural practices.

The new public universities are also contributing their share to the national development. The interplay between research and teaching in the new universities requires scrutiny. The transmission of knowledge should be wedded properly with knowledge generation. They should focus on progressive, generative and creative activities. Besides, the outputs should be communicated to the public through appropriate

journals and proceedings. Some of them are doing the above tasks efficiently, but the rest seem to focus more on knowledge transmission than handling research properly which needs rectification.

The other emerging research center is the private higher learning institutions. Despite lack of funds and skilled man power particularly at PhD level, few of the private institutions are publishing journals and conducting conferences regularly. For example, Saint Mary's University College is exemplary in this respect. It held nine conferences and published nine proceedings. Besides, it publishes three journals in Law, Business and Agriculture. Some of the private institutions are not, however, active in their research engagements. The trend should be changed towards active involvement.

At the national level, there are about 44 journals being published which is an encouraging achievement. It seems that the country has well understood the need of knowledge generation. However, research is conducted in Ethiopia in a fragmented manner, each institution being an island which requires change in terms of approach. All stakeholders should interact by applying the triple helix theory while setting the research priority of the country to avoid wastage of manpower, resources and time. This refers to the interaction of the private and public universities, the industries and the private economy and, of course, the government. By doing so, it may be possible to transform the existing agricultural economy into knowledge based economy.

This Newsletter focuses on higher learning research. Enjoy reading it!

News

The conference had participants from diverse sectors of the national economy, public and private higher education, banking industry, construction and consultancy firms. More than ten higher learning institutions and consultancy firms from the UK had also representations at the conference. Ms. Barbra Wickham, British Council Director, made a welcoming speech and H.E. Greg Dorey, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Ethiopia, made opening remarks. Ato Mitiku Berecha, Head, External Relations and Scholarship Office of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, also briefed participants on the Ethiopian Education Sector about the primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Finally, the business-to-business contact was made between Ethiopian higher learning institutions and their UK counterparts. Representing St. Mary's, the EVP, Ato Tedla Haile, and the Dean of SGS, Ato Elias Noru, exchanged ideas with three universities in the UK.

Annual Research Review Conducted

The Annual Research Review of SMUC took place here at the Main campus on March 9, 2012. Organized by the Research and Knowledge Management Office, the review covered diverse thematic areas, which focused mainly on the teaching-learning, assessment and institutional service delivery. Four of the research works, being at their final stages, communicated their findings. The remaining five papers were proposals that need rigorous scrutiny toward getting acceptance for financial assistance by the University College.

Lecture on Thinking Maps Delivered

Dr. David Hyerle, Thinking Schools International Founder and Creator of Thinking Maps, had talks with the

leadership of SMUC and gave a public lecture on Thinking Maps here at St. Mary's Multi-purpose Hall, Main Campus, on March 7, 2012. His lecture focused on integrating content learning with thinking process instruction.

There was active participation of students and staff throughout the lecture and during the question and answer session. Large number of students from the Business Faculty and a sizeable number of staff from the Teacher Education Faculty attended the lecture.

Virtual Links

Ethiopian Ministry of Education
Web site: [http:// www.moe.gov.et](http://www.moe.gov.et)
Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)
Website: www.higher.edu.et
PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education
Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/
International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
Website: [http:// www.inqaahe.org](http://www.inqaahe.org)
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>
Center for International Research on Higher Education
Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soc/cihe
Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia
Website: <http://www.qsae.org/>
International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)
Website: <http://www.bc.edu>
International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in higher Education
Website: <http://www.inqaahe.nl>
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Website: <http://www.enqa.eu>
Asian Pacific Quality Network
Website: <http://www.apqn.org>

If you have comments on this issue of the newsletter or would like to contribute to future issues, please contact our office on 011 553 79 99,
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Research Corner

Title: Postgraduate Programs and University Research

Publication: A research paper published in Amharic by Forum for Social Studies in 2002 E.C.

Researcher: Tsige Gebre Mariam (Professor)

The driving forces to begin postgraduate programs in Ethiopia in 1971 E.C (1978 G.C.) were the high cost the country incurred to train students abroad, the irrelevance nature of foreign studies to Ethiopian context and the high salary the country used to pay to foreign academic staff.

Postgraduate studies these days show dramatic increase in the number of both students and programs. According to the researcher, the present postgraduate programs confront different problems from need, resources and quality issues. For him, this reality is in conflict with the missions of Ethiopian higher learning in general and that of Addis Ababa University (AAU) in particular.

The study aimed at examining the quality of Ethiopian postgraduate programs, giving special attention to AAU. In addition to AAU, ten public universities were included in the study. The classes of 2001 graduating postgraduate students, deans, associate deans, program coordinators were taken as a sample of study, applying convenience sampling.

While conducting the study, reports of international and national organizations, published researches, audit reports and archives were used as sources of secondary data. On top of these, three different types of questionnaires, having open and closed ended types of questions, were employed to gather primary data.

The content of the questionnaires focused on the appropriateness of the programs, curriculum, students' enrolment, services such as library, computer availability, internet access, laboratory and budget. It also incorporated the qualification, teaching effectiveness and the availability of adequate number of academic staff. The

evaluation of students, their satisfaction and potential to pursue their education were also taken into account. As to research, the content covered policy issues, relevance, focus of research priority, team work and coordination, budget, publication and the involvement of academic staff and students in conducting research.

The findings revealed that there are 11 public universities which offer postgraduate programs of which AAU takes the lions share in masters (63%) and in PhDs (71%) programs. The public universities in general have serious shortages of academic staff, and the existing limited academic staff members are overloaded with teaching. Due to different factors, the quality of postgraduate programs is too low, and the budget allocation for research is also too little which does not motivate staff to conduct research, and research is done namely to get academic promotion. In other words, it is not perceived as the duty of higher learning. The culture of teamwork in research is poor, and there is no strong tie between universities, industry and other sectors except in few universities; as a result, it is not common to conduct researches which have large scale impact. However, some departments are so strong in research work that they frequently publish their findings in international journals. All in all, to make postgraduate programs responsive to the need of the country, the researcher highlighted the need to have clear strategy and adequate resources.

Those who are interested to get the full text may visit the Library of Forum for Social Studies.

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on quality related issues. In this edition of the newsletter, we interviewed Professor Masresha Fetene, Vice President for Research and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University, on research related issues.

Professor Masresha Fetene is a Plant Physiologist and Ecologist who has been teaching at Addis Ababa University in the Department of Biology for many years. We had an interesting stay with him. Share our excitement!



Quality Matters: *Among scholars, there is a debate regarding the contributions of applied and basic research. Which type of research is useful to our context?*

Professor Masresha: This is an interesting question! As you know, in any country, fund is not likely to be released for basic research. Budget is usually allowed for applied research. Within any applied research, however, there is pure research. For example, to get cure for malaria, there is a need first to study the nature of mosquitoes. This holds true to other forms of health related problems. That is why we say basic research is, in most cases, embedded within applied research.

Quality Matters: *How do you evaluate the progress of research at AAU from quality and quantity perspectives?*

Professor Masresha: The role of higher learning is to offer quality teaching, conduct pertinent research and deliver community services.

Research is one of the integral parts of a university. When it comes to AAU, it is too broad, having many segments under it. In relation to research, it has ten centers. The qualities of research in our University differ in such a way that there are cutting edge researches and, at the same time, modest ones. The rest can be placed in between the two.

University research should solve problems being studied by local researchers who know the context of their country very well. No country develops with the help of foreign scholars. As one of the oldest and principal University, AAU has been producing qualified researchers for years and their contributions are praiseworthy.

In Ethiopia, researches are, by and large, done in the universities. Theses and dissertations are the means to solve problems in different fields related to our local issues. Within each field of study, there are students with high research caliber from both our Masters and PhD programs.

In the past, research at AAU was fragmented and individual based which affects both the quality and responsiveness of the institution to our national interest. Discipline specific researches were dominant. Now, we

are moving towards thematic research which is going to change the entire platform of AAU's research culture by bringing demand driven and multidisciplinary topics together.

As you know, in developed countries, there are research universities. Innovative findings emanate from such universities. The USA and Germany are good examples for this. In our country too, I personally believe that we should have at least two research universities. In fact, AAU is planning to be one. Nonetheless, it should be noted that having research universities is not an end by itself. We should have qualified and experienced professors, competent students, adequate resources and encouraging working environment.

Quality Matters: *Research and budgets are inseparable. Do you think AAU has enough research budgets?*

Professor Masresha: As you put it rightly, research and budgets are two sides of a coin. This year, AAU has received a substantial amount of budget from the government. It does not mean it is enough. It is very small. Yet, our Office allocated over two million Birr for projects to be conducted by researchers of the different faculties in this academic year. This amount is a record in the history of AAU. We also get funds from SIDA in the form of block grant fund. There is also progress in the University in terms of facilities and resources. Forty nine electronic databases, having a wide range of journals and books are made available. Nearly, 2000 books are bought for our various PhD programs. Many computers are also procured.

Quality Matters: *Which faculties are successful in generating research funds from local and international donors?*

Professor Masresha: The Hard Science fields particularly Natural Science and Medicine are in the lead in generating funds. They have different projects, and whenever call papers are announced, they succeed easily.

They publish around five international research papers per year. In the fields of Humanities and Social Science, there are significant funds being won. When we compare, as I said it earlier, it is the Hard Science stream which takes the lions share in generating funds.

Quality Matters: *What does the figure of female researchers look like in comparison to their male counterparts at AAU?*

Professor Masresha: The number of female instructors is quite few. Even if there are improvements, their number is still insignificant. If you look the figure of female students enrolled in the School of Graduates Studies in this academic year, they are about 19%. The figure of female students in the PhD program does not exceed 2% which signals that there is too much work to be done to realize gender parity. In fact, AAU has been offering scholarship to female students on merit basis since 2010. This is done to boost up the participation of females in graduate studies and we are observing the fruit of the scholarship.

Quality Matters: *What role is AAU playing in assisting the new universities in relation to research?*

Professor Masresha: Some of the universities are doing well in the field of research. Haramaya, Mekelle, Jimma, Bahir Dar, Awassa and Gondar are in good shape. The rest are trying to establish the system. AAU carries out joint researches with both the old and new universities, but the level of partnership is not satisfactory.

Quality Matters: *How promising is the position of AAU in its research outputs, compared to other East African universities?*

Professor Masresha: This question needs data to answer. It requires external evaluation. Generally speaking, in some cases we are better, in others they exceed us.

Quality Matters: *Thank you very much for sharing your views and experiences!*

Professor Masresha: Thank you!

Perspective

AFRICAN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: AN EVALUATION

By: Atalabachew Getaye getayeatalabachew@yahoo.com

In the past, countries with the highest population were considered economically productive, assuming that population is labor intensive. This supposition no more works today due to change of lifestyle from agriculture and manufacturing to technology and science which require very limited workforces. If sheer number could have brought productivity, most African countries had been categorized as developed countries. The reality is, however, the other round which makes Africa the continent of the future. African countries confront a lot of overwhelming challenges such as poverty, corruption, health problems, illiteracy, lack of empowerment of women, unemployment, high mortality rate, short life span, poor communication system and technology, poor infrastructure and management skills, substandard and unsustainable policy, inflation, dependency on primary products and environmental degradation.

What adds fuel to the fire is Africa experiences the highest brain drain which makes its future gloomy. Highly skilled professionals migrate to other continents being pirated by developed countries due to internal and external factors.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa has estimated that between 1960 and 1975 an estimated 27,000 highly qualified Africans left the continent for the West. This number increased to approximately 40,000 between 1975 and 1984, and then almost doubled by 1987, representing 30% of the highly skilled manpower stock — skilled personnel whom Africa can ill-afford to lose. Africa lost 60,000 professionals (doctors, university lecturers, engineers, scientists, etc.) between 1985 and 1990, and has been losing an average of 20,000 annually ever since (Joseph, 2004, p.7).

The brain drains of African professionals widen the knowledge divide immeasurably between African countries and other developed nations.

National development, these days, is determined by the quality of human capital a nation has. That is why Galtung links development to the knowledge level of a given society. For him:

Development is development of the people.... It should not be conceived in terms of the production of goods and services, their distribution, the creation of institutions, structural transformation, cultural development or ecological balance. All these things may be indispensable social means or conditions, but development as such is that of man, of the members of society (Galtung, 1983 in Hajinal and Kiss (1983, p. 19)).

In other words, a nation's growth and their well being depend upon the level of their knowledge. Knowledge society is "... a society that is nurtured by its diversity and its capacities" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 17). That is why we say knowledge is the engine for productivity and economic growth.

Knowledge, in general, is dynamic formed through personal experience, reflection, observation social interactions and research. And the role of higher learning is to protect, modify, discover and invent "knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery" through relentless investigation (Sheehan, 1995, p. 27).

Research "... not only helps solve practical problems and brings about material improvements via high-tech products; it also provides insights and new ideas that enrich human understanding of various social, economic and cultural phenomena" (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2004; Creswell, 2008). In line with this, Suwanwela (2006, p. 7) has this to say:

In the present era of the knowledge-driven economy and the knowledge-based society, knowledge policy – including policy regarding science and technology as well as knowledge management and tacit knowledge – is crucial. Developing countries must find appropriate positions and strategies to cope with change and to take advantage of this. Research on the research system itself, which must include knowledge production, innovation and knowledge utilization, offers this type of opportunity.

Research is normally done by highly skilled experts. According to the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge (2009, p.11), “The research function of academia remains a prime source of knowledge and innovation at national, regional and international levels.” It should be noted that it is not the research skill of few individuals which can bring the above changes at national level but a nation’s capacity which can be sources of transformation. Universities play the central role in equipping society with research skills and making findings accessible to the public even if there are other institutions which play prominent role in the field of research activities.

Universities do not simply disseminate the existing knowledge rather they are supposed to generate new knowledge and disseminate the existing ones efficiently. They put high level scientific knowledge at the service of development. They convert knowledge into different assets through application and impact assessment. They share good practice to the community to realize large scale benefits. Higher learning institutions, therefore, should have suitable environment in facilitating and conducting research, linking their outputs to service, industry and agriculture sectors (UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2009).

Research performance evaluation is usually conducted applying different indicators, and it can be done either before or after the execution of the research. Universities use different criteria to evaluate their research performance. It is hardly possible to say one criterion is better than the other. Across the literature of research performance evaluation, it is common to encounter transversely terms like quantity, quality, impact, utility and research density. Quantity refers to the number of publications while quality is understood as the originality of ideas and methodology, being superior to the existing knowledge; it also refers to the significance of the study for a field of specialization and its audience. The third term is impact. It is perceived in terms of its influence on other researchers or on the improvement of knowledge. If many researchers cite the research article of a given author and if the article has contributed something to the advancement of knowledge in some way, it can be inferred that the article has brought impact on the scientific community and knowledge advancement. Utility is all about benefit which can be technological, economical, cultural, environmental or social. The other indicator, which is research density, refers to the number of researchers in relation to the total population of a country (Geuna and Martin, 2000; UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2009).

Applying these indicators to evaluate African scientific research performance, which is at its infancy stage, appears difficult and may make the whole discourse of research evaluation futile, but there is no other option.

According to Teshome (1990) African universities face a dual challenge. They are supposed to undertake

relevant technology research in order to solve the problems of the communities and at the same time they are expected to undertake basic research to be on a par with other international universities. However “So far, efforts to meet this dual challenge remain the weakest link in African higher education” (p.24). Findings by other studies regarding African research outputs are also dissatisfying. The production of academic research in Africa is insignificant (5,839) in comparison to Latin America and the Caribbean (14,426) and South Asia (15,995) (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005). Another study also comes up with dismal news regarding African research contribution to development: “In Africa, gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) as a percentage of the gross national product (GNP) continued to remain under 0.5 per cent between 1992 and 2000” [UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) S&T database, June 2005 in UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, 2009, p.15]. Still another study makes the output of fifty four African research performances analogous to a European country- the Netherlands (Joseph, 2004).

This signals that the 1962 Tanarive conference mission has not yet been met. The mission explains the role of African institutions of higher education in such a way that it is “the main instrument of national progress, the chief guardian of the people’s heritage and the voice of the people in the international councils of technology and scholarships” (Teshome, 1990, p.12&13). The mission is well explained, but the reality on the ground is still bleak compared to universities of other continents.

Without promoting research excellence to discover and invent new frontiers of knowledge in the field of technology, science, agriculture and health, the conti-

nent can not go anywhere. This is because social development embraces intricate issues in

political governance, economic growth, employment trends and income distribution, education levels, access to healthcare, rural and urban population patterns, energy and use of natural resources; it also includes factors affecting quality of life, such as private consumption, life expectancy and access to communication technology (UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge (2009, p. 11)).

When we examine the performance of African universities scientific research based on the data of UNISCO forum on higher education, research and knowledge, the findings are as follows:

The world share of scientific publication of Africa between 1999 and 2004 is closely 1.6 percent which is by far behind compared to Asia (12%) excluding Japan and China. This may be attributed to the fact that the availability of the remaining human resources from brain drain is weak and the scientists are aged who find themselves in fragile institutional and infrastructure capacity. For example, 55% of the laboratory equipment in Africa is out of service. Despite this reality, Africa is giving due regard to higher learning and things may change positively through time.

When we examine the distribution of publication output by country, South Africa takes the front seat publishing 3,850 papers followed by Egypt (2,740), Tunisia (1,080), Morocco (860) and Algeria (730). Then comes into view Nigeria (560) succeeded by Kenya (550), Tanzania (300), Cameroon (280), Uganda (260), Ethiopia (240) and Ghana (200). Five countries publish between 100 and 200 papers. These are Senegal (140), Zimbabwe (130), Malawi (120), Burkina Faso (115) and Ivory Coast (105). Nine countries are categorized as small science countries which produce between 60 and

100 scientific papers. Botswana (95), Zambia (90), Madagascar (90), Gambia (80), Sudan (75), Mali (75), Gabon (75), Benin (67) and Namibia (60) are the countries. The remaining 27 countries are labeled as very small science countries whose output ranges between 1 and 60.

Research density is the other indicator applied by the document to examine the number of staff of African countries. The number of researchers per million inhabitants is used as an index. Accordingly, Botswana has 12,400 researchers per million followed by South Africa (11,100), Tunisia (8,400), Algeria (7,000), Morocco (4,600), Egypt (4,300), Ghana (2,500), Cameroon (2,300), Sudan (2,000) and Zimbabwe (2,000). Then, turn up nine countries such as Gambia (1,900), Senegal (1,800), Ivory Coast (1,600), Uganda (1,500), Burkina Faso (1,200), Kenya (1,200), Benin (1,100), Nigeria (1,100) and Ethiopia (1,100) trailed by the remaining 26 African countries.

As to utility, most of the higher institutions in Africa are influenced by foreign models, copying their ex-colonial style. As a result, the scientific culture of research is not pertinent to home countries reality;

therefore, it needs reorientation in terms of relevance and utility. According to Nouroudine (2008, p.141) "The de-contextualization of knowledge is not a problem *per se*, but it becomes one when the search for conceptual and methodological equivalency is not undertaken". The implication is there is a need to have indigenous methodology and frameworks.

"Where is the good news?" you may ask. In the continent of the future, you will find the good news in the future, not now.

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Photo Gallery



Annual Research Review



Lecture on Thinking Maps



St. Mary's University College

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The Association of African Universities (AAU)
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS AFRICAINES

اتحاد الجامعات الافريقية

Call for Papers

International conference jointly organized by:
St. Mary's University College, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
and

The Association of African Universities (AAU), Accra, Ghana

Venue: AU Conference Hall, Addis Ababa

Date: 13-15 July 2012

Conference Theme:

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Conference Sub-themes:

- Privatizing Higher Education Provision in Africa: Strategies for Success and Quality;
- Private Higher Education at the Crossroads: Strategic Planning and the Pursuit of the Public Good;
- Public-Private Partnership and the Sustainable Funding of Higher Education in Africa;
- The Role of Private Higher Education Institutions in Community Service in Africa;
- Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Private Higher Education Institutions in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities.

The deadline for submission of abstracts or full papers is Thursday, 31 May 2012.

For further information, please contact:

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Alternatively,

Conference Secretariat Association of African Universities (AAU) Aviation Road Extension, Airport
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