



Major Problems Impeding the Progress of Private Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Private higher education provision in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon which is at the early stage of development. In the demanding task of building an educational institution, problems emanating from within and without the institutions challenge the efforts of education institutions. However, in order to sustain the efforts for the better, considering the significant contribution the private higher education institutions are making in alleviating the lack of trained human power in Ethiopia, the problems have to be identified and corrective measures should be taken in time. A problem well identified is a problem half solved. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to identify and project the major problems encountered by some selected private higher education institutions in this country, and forward likely solutions.

The relevant data is gathered from primary sources through interviewing of the people responsible for the academic management of the selected institutions. The selection of the institutions is done based on the type of training they offer and an attempt is made to incorporate a representative sample. Observation made by the researcher is also incorporated in the identification of the problems and in the interpretation and forwarding of the suggestions.

The results of this study show that private higher education institutions have faced major problems in the implementation of the new curriculum of TVET programs mainly because there has been no sufficient transitional time to make preliminary preparations and also mainly because the new curriculum presupposes no consideration of the condition of the society's readiness and capacity, which has been explicitly evidenced in the implementation of long stretched classes and apprenticeship. Besides, private higher education institutions still experience major impeding problems, though there have been some changes and improvements during the last five years with regard to accreditation, cooperation, resource management and research endeavors.

1. Introduction

Private higher education in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is making significant contributions in alleviating the country's severe shortage of trained manpower. Over the last four years, private higher education institutions have been growing in substantial number and toiling to lay a firm foundation in the provision of higher education. In this effort, noticeable developments have been made and a significant number of them have been able to register promising performances.

However, in this process the institutions have passed through challenging circumstances that have resulted from several factors among which higher education, the new experience and the resource

deprived environment, are the glaring ones. For some time now, some of the problems experienced have persisted and long remained with them while others are newly emerging and threatening the very existence of what has been built so far. When the institutions are about to pass the early stage of laying a foundation and move to the subsequent stage of strengthening themselves, they are being forced to go back and start from scratch anew. Taking the significant contribution they are making in the overall educational development of the country, it is imperative that the major problems be identified and appropriate measures be taken to stop the jeopardy. If efforts are put to identify and check the deterring problems in time, the institutions will continue to play a significant role in upgrading the country's capacity to offer quality education and to train more humanpower.

Hence, the objective of this paper is to identify major challenges experienced by Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) and to forward possible measures that might be employed to put the perils under control.

2. Research Methodology

For the identification of the pressing problems, the relevant data was gathered through interview from primary sources; i.e., PHEIs in Ethiopia. The institutions were selected based on random sampling technique. However, to obtain a reasonable distribution and representation, seven PHEIs were selected based on the fields of specialization they offer. To this end, private higher education institutions that offer basic sciences, business, engineering, distance education, medical science, teacher education, information technology were selected as targets of the study. In the data gathering process, with major problem areas in focus; i.e. TVET curriculum, accreditation, cooperation, research and problems related to management. Data were collected by interviewing the Academic Deans of the institutions and the responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics.

3. Review of Related Literature

In the process of establishing and expanding higher education institutions, there are naturally stumbling blocks encountered in various aspects. The threats could sometimes be disillusioning and disastrous if not well identified and addressed in time. Timely measure could give the actors the chance to change the threats into opportunities that can be explored and used for the better. Therefore, for every concerned party, it is important to consider this important fact and recognize the extent to which each challenge is an opportunity to explore (Carnesale 2000).

The experiences of other countries reveal that the society as a whole is responsible for the alleviation of the problems that private higher education institutions might face since in the final analysis the outcome of the institutions is for the use and benefit of the society at large. Thus, it is

momentous that the stakeholders, users, the society and the government play a significant role in ascertaining the continued existence of PHEIs. With respect to the government's role, the government without being limited to just only the initial stage of popularization of higher education, it should continue to further what has been started by strengthening the education offering bodies. In countries that have established and developed private higher education institutions, efforts have been put towards strengthening private education alongside public education. China in the past years has done this and can be taken as the best example that has benefited from such strategy. Experts have indicated the importance of the strategy of not only establishing private higher education but also nurturing its continued growth. In response to that, the Chinese government supported private higher education and as a result private higher education in China is well expanded and developed (Aijing 1999).

Along this line, what can be mentioned here is that the society at large should free itself from long standing and deep rooted misconceptions. Having realized the outcome of private higher education institutions, in the United States of America the government and the society as a whole have changed their course of actions and rendered assistance to the growth and expansion of the institutions. Albert Carnesale states,

...there was almost an unwritten rule that the private universities wouldn't go after public money and the public universities wouldn't go after private money. That understanding is now gone on both counts. Stanford University would have a terrible time without all the federal support for research and the Cal grants, and UCLA would have a terrible time, if not for private giving and foundation-supported research.

The world has reached a stage of knowledge explosion. To be able to fit into this changing world, educational systems and infrastructures just like other sectors have had to change and are doing so. To this effect, the whole educational milieu has to change along the changing world. Specifically, for private higher education institutions to survive in the competitive world and register successful results, they have to move in line with changing forms of education and knowledge (Duderstadt 2002).

Hence, the conducive environment for change should be made available so that the institutions might upgrade their status to be able to be competitive nationally and internationally. The old approaches such as centralization of the educational system expressed in terms of accreditation, curriculum and working guidelines should cease to function. Referring to Luc Weber, Duderstadt states that the institutions should be granted subsidiarity and autonomy in the sphere of higher education. This implies that the institutions should be allowed to have

... more control over all aspects of their operations, including academic programmes, budgets, student selection, and faculty hiring. Luc Weber, former rector of the University of Geneva, applies the economic term "subsidiarity" to describe this in the sense that it involves pushing authority and decision making down to the lowest possible level. Centralization is a very awkward approach to higher education during a time of change (Duderstadt 2002 Page No.).

In this regard, a very crucial problem to be raised is the fact that private higher education institutions are controlled strictly to the extent of prescribing every thing needed and to be done. Such kind of system is too restrictive and prevents the institutions from being innovative. Public policies will no longer be as effective as they used to be in the new global market competition. James states that public policies and leaders are discarding public policy in favor of market forces to determine priorities for social investment. Higher education can no longer assume that public policies and investment will shield them from market competition (James 2002).

With regard to innovation in higher education, the private institutions and others should have autonomy to fit into the fast growing world. In the Ethiopian case, the Ministry of Education is at the moment making constant change as far as the new educational policy is concerned and at the same time strictly and paradoxically supervising and restricting the institutions. When situations are in constant change, the future is unpredictable and disruptive in many aspects. To wisely tackle such a challenge, what is needed is planning based on experimental approach. Institutions should be allowed to have the authority to be innovative and experimental (James 2002).

Besides realizing the importance of the contribution of the private higher education institutions, the Ministry should create the grounds for the provision of the necessary and timely support. The support could be rendered in various forms one of which is to set realistic accreditation process by taking the country's existing practical situations. Also, the accreditation process should be geared towards creating a conducive, constructive and encouraging environment for the institutions to grow.

What follows from here is that institutions should be able to operate smoothly despite the challenges. This will be practical if all concerned provide them support. The society should be there to support, the institutions themselves have to support one another and the Ministry of Education and government run institutions should also facilitate the conditions whereby the private institutions contribute significantly and meaningfully. James maintains that alliance is significant among those parties. He explains that " the same market forces that drive our colleges and universities to focus on core competencies where they can be competitive also provide strong

incentive to build alliance to address the broader, and more diverse needs of society" (UNESCO 2002 page No).

The alliance should be from all aspects. As the experience of the other countries show that socializing the system of higher education is significant. The society should work in close collaboration with the institutions constructively not negatively as it has been the practice. Jin states

In the 21st century, higher education will also further strengthen the alliance between universities and industrial block by trying to build scientific zones within some of the universities. The aim here is to encourage closer relations between academic institutions and economic society in order to encourage the application of research results in the development of industrial products. Presently, there is separation of the outcome of scientific experiments and their practical application (1999 Page No.).

What Jin has stated has a far reaching meaning that applies to all spheres of knowledge and society. In addition to producing trained workforce that a country needs, this is highly felt in the implementation of apprenticeship and office practices.

Maintaining the importance of inculcating new approaches in every respect, the institutions, both private and government, need to work in collaboration in the areas of research, teaching and resource management. The collaboration has to go to the extent of becoming a formal entity. Experts have stated that "the context of globalization, interdependences of nations and human institutions calls for the private higher educational institutions to form into reputable associations and consortia for maximizing resources, benchmarking of standards, and peer evaluation" (UNESCO 2001 Page No.).

Despite the practical problems, research should make up some part of the institutions' activity. For this, the institutions, the students and the instructors should join hands and register results. The institutions should lay the ground for both basic research and action and management research. As far as basic research is concerned, it is only in universities that it can be carried out (Albert 2000).

For effective management of resources, action research and management research are very necessary for emerging institutions. Besides, these researches might help the institutions to contribute significantly to immediate needs of the society (Albert 2000).

In collaboration with all concerned, the private higher education institutions must work towards curbing major problems that deter their progress and reduce their contributions to the society. This requires an awareness of the real problems and changing them into opportunities to explore and

work for the better. The following section highlights on the major problems impeding the private higher education institutions in this country.

4. Findings and Analysis

In this section an attempt is made to categorize and analyze major and common problems experienced by private higher education institutions in the areas of the TVET curriculum, accreditation, cooperation, research and managerial problems. As it has been evident in the study, the problems expressed by all of the respondents are of a similar nature and, therefore, fall in the same category.

4. Major Problem Areas

4.1 The TVET Curriculum and Its Implementation

4.1.1 Extended Class Hours

In the TVET curriculum, class hours are long and stretched which demand much work from teachers and students. Teachers have to teach for many hours for which naturally they have to be paid. In practice, in private higher education institutions teachers are supposed to teach for a maximum of 15 or 18 credit hours (cr. hrs). If the credit hours exceed this limit, the instructors are entitled to part-time payments. The TVET curriculum has it that an instructor teaches 35 cr. hrs per week and in studies in which there are laboratory classes, the hours could be more. As the respondents pointed out, considering the already existing capacity, the institutions have and the absence of transitional period before the implementation of the TVET curriculum, this new situation is demanding for the institutions. To be able to accommodate the many hours of the TVET curriculum requirement, the institutions will have to maximize their capacity by making a substantial increase in school tuition fee. The applicability of this increment will not be smoothly welcome by users owing to the low economic status of the majority of the society. As it has been tried out in some cases, there have been mass outbursts of dissatisfaction and unwillingness. The society is neither ready nor capable to accept this kind of change which has been observed in the fierce disappointment and resentment expressed so far. In some cases, the users were so disappointed that they failed to understand that this is the government's policy in implementation and in worst cases the users took it as if they were cheated. Practically speaking, if the institutions are going to work as they should work and make increments; it is possible to assume that the number of students who would be able to afford the payment and learn will drop drastically. Unless the institutions do some kind of reform to implement the curriculum in the proper form, the education system will be in a problematic situation. Therefore, on the one hand, the institutions will have to adjust their ways of operation. Doing this is a national responsibility as well as a survival question for private higher education institutions in the country. On the other, the society's capacity is not ready to entertain this kind of adjustment.

4.1.1.2 Unstable Educational Policy

According to almost all of the respondents, the instability of the new educational policy has been a source of complications for the PHEIs. It is known that educational institutions have to operate in accordance with policies and guidelines set by the MOE. However, the guidelines and policies are being altered now and again by the Ministry. This constant change of the policies and guidelines has had adverse effect upon the institutions in all respects. For instance, with respect to admission requirements, curriculum design, teaching and learning process preparation and implementation, evaluation system, etc., the institutions have had to restructure themselves over and over again even up to this very recent time. These aspects are at the heart of the institutions systems of operation which means that the recurrent changes and instabilities are shaking the very base of the institutions in terms of resource and time management.

Private higher education institution is only five years old. A few years before the government encouraged private investors to invest on education and some responsible citizens responded and opted to go through the tedious and challenging process of making education accessible to a significant number of the population. Now that the new educational policy is in operation, the institutions have had to reorganize and start from scratch so to say. They have had to undergo through demanding and frustrating changes in terms of material preparation, accessing expertise, and co-ordination. Rather than building upon what has been established, they have been forced to begin anew which in turn is deterring the refinement process they have had to go through. Hence, they have been deprived of the opportunity whereby they could work to contribute hugely towards upgrading the quality of education they provide.

The respondents pointed out that the instability of the policies not only affects their present performance but it also makes the future unforeseeable for the institutions. What might happen tomorrow can't be positively foreseen because what has been done so far is shaky and there seems to be no fixed terms of reference that can be relied on for some substantial period of time. This lack of reliability reflects the new educational policy's nature of being too dynamic to be permanent.

From this, it can be said that the institutions are facing problems that emanate from the MOE's administration. The MOE restructures its systems of operation over and over again. The restructuring might not be a cause of serious concern for government owned higher education institutions for the reason that they are supported by the government and the Ministry. Nevertheless, the grave consequences of the constant restructuring are highly felt by PHEIs. The impacts have been deterring to their progresses for the MOE has been taking no active role in

providing any support or compensation. Insurmountable though the problems are, the government and MOE simply leave the institutions to wade through the difficulties and fend for themselves.

Another example of reshaping that has significantly affected the PHEIs has been the government's decision to transform some high schools into diploma offering colleges as a result of which the intake of PHEIs almost dried up. In addition to this, the government has doubled the intake of students. In line with this change, the respondents indicated that the PHEIs have had to make dramatic changes in order to continue working. Accordingly, some have begun to offer degree programs even if the chances are very narrow. Some are struggling to fulfill the requirements of the TVET curriculum. However, the tiring efforts don't seem to be promising because of the Ministry of Education (MOE) inconsiderate supervision which is in particular reflected in the accreditation process.

It can be observed from here that the MOE's new direction is hindering the growth of the PHEIs. This is so because in all respects, on the part of the MOE, there is an attempt to accommodate every eligible candidate for higher education by maximizing their student intake capacity which in effect leaves no room for PHEIs to survive let alone expand. It can be said that the MOE's exercise does show an intention quite contradictory from what has been projected before PHEIs came into existence. At the outset it was encouragement to invest on education. Presently, however, the MOE is heading towards amassing every student population into its hold. This monopolizing indicates that the MOE is heading towards a new intention and direction. The given situations do not seem to open a promising future. 14% of the respondents in this regard have the opinion that may be the institutions might have to think of reforming themselves into high schools which calls for an upsetting, discouraging and devastating restructuring again. The time lag and the resource wastage that might result in from this kind of constantly shifting charge is a crucial problem for PHEIs.

4.1.1.3 Rigid Curriculum

In the new educational policy institutions are expected to adhere to the new policy which deprives them of their capacity to be innovative. To compete at international levels in the global market, the institutions will have to have an opportunity to explore innovative ways of providing education. However, the chances that they can be so are very limited as it has been observed in the pre-accreditation process. In fact, as it was reported, in 28% of the situations the curriculum is way behind the practical situations of the country. In the curriculum of the TVET program, particularly in the Secretarial Science and Office Management fields, students are expected to learn typewriting using the old typewriter and yet when students are looking for apprenticeship, offices do not welcome them for they want students who can type using the computer rather than

typewriter. Due to this, it was pointed out that first year students are experiencing difficulties during apprenticeship.

4.1.1.4 Flaws in the Curriculum

14% of the respondents have reflected that they have discovered sequence problems in the courses to be offered. As evident in the curriculum, a course which should be taught at a higher level is supposed to be taught at a lower level and vice-versa. The implications this might have for students in the knowledge acquisition and for the institution in resource management and knowledge provision are grave. Also, there is said to be category problem as stated in the new education guideline. Because of title similarity some courses are categorized in a field of study that they should not belong too. The institutions have suggested that there should be a revision of the courses to be offered in consultation with experts in the specific areas of knowledge. They have also indicated that the PHEIs should be given the opportunity to involve in this kind of endeavor.

4.1.1.5 Apprenticeship

a) Lack of Awareness

From the reports of all the respondents, it is observed that apprenticeship is another major area of problem in the TVET curriculum implementation. The problem in this regard is the readiness of the society which is supposed to provide opportunities for office practices. From the outright refusals of the various offices, it can be said that the society at large is not ready for apprenticeship. The society does not recognize the benefit of the apprenticeship for itself and for its members. The very few that have some awareness about apprenticeship prefer students from government owned institutions to students who come from private owned ones. They open their doors for those students who claim to have come from government owned institutions rather than those who are from private owned institutions.

b) Lack of Resource

The respondents have revealed that the number of students and the offices that are available are not proportional. Private investment is a recent phenomenon in the country. The infrastructure is limited to accommodate the huge number of students who seek apprenticeship. Leave alone the readiness, the physical presence of the offices is also another problem. There are no enough offices to accommodate the huge number of the students' population that seek for apprenticeship.

It is also doubtful to think that apprenticeship is carried out properly in the manner it should be. Added to the above problem even those that might get an office might not be in a position to practice well. Even if they might accommodate the students, as in many cases, the offices won't

provide them with any work to do. This would be a clue to lack of awareness of how apprenticeship would be of value to them, lack of preparedness, and lack of sufficient capacity.

The practical problem forces all concerned to view the TVET curriculum in question. Is the TVET curriculum the only way to curb the society's problems? Why should it be necessary to deconstruct rather than build upon already existing resources and systems? Is it worth for the country to go through this cost to change the prevailing poor educational and economic situations? If the TVET curriculum and the new educational policy are said to be the only means, there, at the center, is the student the future generation upon whose shoulder lies the future of this country. Whose responsibility is to nurture and cherish this most valued treasure?

4.2 Accreditation

In this regard, it was said that the MOE is functioning as a competitor rather than a regulatory body. It seemed at the beginning that the PHEIs were needed to be supportive hands of the MOE which in the due course, however, has turned out to be rather different. The MOE is building and strengthening the government owned institutions by maximizing and upgrading their capacity. However, nothing of this nature is rendered to PHEIs. The MOE is neither working towards maximizing the PHEI's capacity nor is it sharing the country's resources with PHEIs. The privileges, for example, the MOE gets from foreign grant givers is made available to GHEIs whereas PHEIs are allowed to get no share of that.

4.2.1 Rigid Accreditation Process

The respondents have indicated that the MOE has not been flexible in its evaluation mechanism. In some cases, institutions that have launched degree programmes have not been entitled to pre-accreditation on the grounds of having no sufficient qualified staff but is expressed in terms of having MA and PhD degree holders. The reality of the country shows that there are only a few PhD and MA holders. In some fields of study, it is not possible to find sufficient number of graduates holding an MA let alone PhD. On the whole, the practical situations of the country show that the country has not been in a position to train as many scholars as the country might need.

It was also reported by 14% of the respondents that even those that are already trained do not possess a satisfying level of expertise. They have revealed that there are observed problems with regard to subject knowledge mastery, teaching methodology, research capacities and language skills. This shows that the MA programs at the already existing government owned universities have not been strong enough. Given a very limited resource, the private higher education institutions are expected to have a given number of qualified instructors. It is really paradoxical to be demanded to have as many as a certain number of scholars where the source from which the institutions can take is scanty or non-existent. Added to the above mentioned situation, the

institutions have suggested that there might be experienced people who might perform far better than a PhD or an MA holder due to many years of real life work experience. The institutions, therefore, require to be allowed to be given some room for their own decision, selection and action. Accordingly, it could be underlined here that the accreditation requirement will have to be mindful of the existing realities of the country in which the institutions are operating.

In relation to this, the other issue raised by the respondents was the failure on the part of the MOE to consider the practical realities the institutions are working in. The institutions are at the initial stage of establishing the base for the provision of higher education. This means that the expectations from the MOE should not be too demanding to expect the institutions to fulfill every aspect of what is needed of them. The institutions have demanded that they should not be assessed ambitiously. From their responses, it can be observed that for example the institutions are required to have a building which they can't share with other offices. They are expected to have sports field, a quite surrounding which actually means that they have to go to the outskirts of the city to have spacious land at their disposal. Moving to the outskirts of the city is not realistic for the recipients are in the city and, if that happens, the institutions will have literally no student to enable them keep on functioning. What can be said from here is that the MOE doesn't have priority areas in the process of accreditation with due consideration of the existing situations in the country. The institutions are not measured in terms of priority issues — areas that they are expected to fulfill before other matters. An institution might have the necessary curriculum, the qualified staff but might be sharing building with another office. The fact that the institution has managed to prepare the curriculum which is the core of the education will lose its value due to the other aspects. This is not a fair and realistic measurement. In a situation where the government is not supporting the institutions in any way, it is not fair to judge based on this strict requirement. If at all the MOE has thought of giving any kind of support, this could be the situation to be seized; that is, setting priorities for their levels and evaluating them on this ground. This is giving the institutions a grace period. The MOE could check in the other aspects too when the appropriate time comes. Here it doesn't mean that the institutions should not be required to have a play ground, for example. What is meant here is that they should be allowed to make a natural growth and be evaluated stage by stage depending on set priorities. It was also stated that this kind of accreditation process would be a good opportunity for MOE to give a hand to the institutions and to create a realistic ground for growth which will significantly and meaningfully expand education.

What is more, if sharing a building is something that can't be tolerated, and too affecting to the educational provision, 14% of the respondents said that a measure could be taken. However, if the sharing part is not that dangerous some sort of consideration and compromise has to be reached.

It was also reported that in some cases they have been required to have separate buildings for different programs. This is again an issue that should be left for the institutions' management. What should be seen is how they can manage to entertain their students within the existing resource they have. Such requirements are too ambitious for a developing country such as ours and for a country that is doing its best to expand higher education despite its limited resource. It was pointed out that in developed countries there are cases where different programs are run in the same building. Hence, looking at the practical situations of the country, requiring such a condition to be fulfilled will be too farfetched.

4.2.2 Partiality of the MOE

The other problem raised by the respondents was the partiality of the accreditation implementation. It was pointed out that there seems to be a double standard in operation. What is allowed in one institution is not allowed in another. Still more, the respondents have revealed that some institutions that are sharing a building with other offices are allowed to be accredited while others have been denied for the same reason. In relation to the above mentioned fact, what can be said here is that, as the respondents put it, the MOE's credibility in its implementation of the accreditation process is doubtful. It can be said here that the MOE seems to have another set of standard which is not evident for the institutions.

Another aspect where partiality reflected is the stand the MOE has regarding the government and private institutions. What is not required of the government institution is required of the private owned institution. For the TVET curriculum for example, both are now at the same footing. Nevertheless, there is no pre-accreditation/accreditation for the government owned institutions. More specifically, the private institutions are harshly measured against already set criteria even for the TVET curriculum for which there has been no transitional period. It is known that government institutions have not yet produced modules full scale and yet the private institutions are required to have modules ready at their disposal. If not, they would be denied even the pre-accreditation. What can be said here is that may be the MOE has its own reasons for not evaluating the government owned institutions. However, what is really a problem is its stand towards the private institutions. What cannot be practically done even by the government institutions that have rich experience and resource at their disposals is required of PHEIs. What can be assumed to be practically impossible is expected to be done by them and if not, measures that threaten their visions and efforts are taken. At times, exaggerated measurements that belittle their performances and warn the public have been taken. The stand that the MOE has taken towards the private institutions, which is one of the gravest problems for the institutions, is deconstructive rather than

constructive. From this, it can be said that it sounds as if the MOE doesn't want to see them continue to exist which adds up to the MOE's competitive approach.

4.2.3 Status of the Assessors

The other problem regarding accreditation is the assessors themselves. Those people who represent the MOE and who come to evaluate the institutions do not show a good level of maturity in terms of expertise and value judgment. They don't consider the practical situation of the country and are simply guided by the rules. They simply follow the rules from A to Z. 85% of the respondents have also said that the assessors reflect subjectivity and act according to their own interests and wishes. The comments they make on the spot at the institutions site and the results released from their offices or the MOE do not coincide. As was aired out at the site of evaluation, institutions expect those comments to be incorporated in the formal evaluation comment. However, there are cases when such a thing doesn't happen. For instance, an institution is told that there are no enough rooms and yet they are told that they are not accredited because they have not prepared modules.

It was also mentioned by the respondents that there are technical problems in the accreditation process. At some instances, the assessors visit the institutions in a team while in other cases two individuals are sent to carry out the work. Two is a small number to assess an institution which is the result of a painstaking and demanding job. It was said that the reliability of the assessment will be affected by this limited number. Maximizing the number might give the institutions the benefit of being assessed by different minds from various points of views which will contribute much to the reliability of the assessment.

Still more, when the assessors execute the evaluation, they do it in a very casual way. They request casual questions, questions they feel like to ask but which are not in the stated criteria set by the MOE. Some of them come with set minds and already formulated expectations and biases which are reflected in their questions which seek for matters that are totally out of the MOE's requirements to be fulfilled. In a certain case, it was reported that texts with specific titles were requested. The assessors were naming titles and checking the availability of the requested named book. This is against what has been stated in the MOE's criteria. The expectation regarding books is either to fulfill a certain number of similar copies or different titles; which titles there are, no specific prescriptions as such. Besides, there are no clear points of evaluation which are followed and made evident by the assessors at the time of supervision. As the respondents recounted, the assessors just went around and had a casual look, nothing at hand to tick or cross out, and again when the results were released and sent to the institutions, the comments were too generalized and limited. The institutions have neither been told nor encouraged on their strong and weak sides and

have not been shown the method of the assessment in detail. What happened was that they were simply told either they were accredited or not in a formal letter with a very generalized and limited comment.

Moreover, 14% of the respondents expressed that there have been cases when the institutions have to beg the assessors to go through their curriculum. This indicates that because the assessors have come with an already set and closed mind, they shut off their judgment to other important areas such as the curriculum or catalogue. If the MOE believes that catalogue is not a significant matter then the institutions have to be informed of what is expected of them before hand. If a playground is believed to be a priority issue then this has got to be made evident ahead of time. If this is again the judgment of that particular individual then this is something the MOE has got to see into and reconsider.

Furthermore, the institutions feel that the time for pre-accreditation is not sufficient, particularly for the new curriculum; when every concerned party is at a very demanding preliminary stage, when things have not hold a firm and clear stand, and when there has been no transitional period and when things are hazy for everybody and even for the MOE, the time limit is something to consider as 78% of the respondents said.

4.2.4 Bureaucratic Procedures

In some cases the process is long and bureaucratic. 14 % of the respondents believe that they have to be given accreditation at a time they have asked for not at a time the MOE wants it to be granted. Accreditation is survival to the institutions. Therefore, it should reach them immediately when they have asked for it.

4.2.5 Accreditation: a Means to Instruct or Penalize

Regarding accreditation, the other complication that is expressed by the respondents is the understanding the MOE has about accreditation. The practical experiences show that the MOE has exercised accreditation as a means of penalizing the institutions rather than as a means of learning experience. The respondents said that accreditation should be practiced in a way that it benefits the society; in a way where the weaknesses and strengths are identified and the institutions are advised to take corrective measures in time. Nevertheless, the MOE has been harshly criticizing and discouraging the institutions to the extent of going out public over the media to warn the society. This has somehow created a gap between the institutions and the society and the society has considered the institutions as alien powers that work against them. It was stressed that constantly the MOE has been for quite sometime pointing fingers at the institutions and accusing them of lack of concern they have had for the society. It was also stated here that there might be some situations where some negative practices might have been observed and found but this should not

be taken to mean that there are no concerned and responsible institutions at all. Hence, the MOE's criticism that categorizes all PHEIs in one group is not justified and fair. It can be implied here that this mass penalization reflects that the MOE has viewed itself as the only concerned body in the area of education and that this is an exaggerated self understanding and a denial of the existing realities.

In line with this, 78% of the respondents have suggested that the accreditation body should be an autonomous body that could fairly and realistically evaluate the performance of the institutions for the nation's benefit. A Quality Assurance Agency has been established very recently; however, the institutions have indicated their doubts that still the Agency is under the supervision of the MOE. Hence, they doubt the occurrences of similar strategies that have been implemented so far by the Ministry. 14% of the respondents have said that the Ministry has not been in a position to assess its own policies and regulations because of its being a single body that acts two roles at a time. This implies that the MOE should not be doing two things at a same time; and hence, this calls for a separate body to be established to grant accreditation.

4.3 Co-operation

All of the respondents raised the significance of cooperation among the private institutions and the private and government institutions for the growth of education. They have also pointed out that there are promising initiatives taken in this regard. However, the endeavors with regard to cooperation are not well developed and expanded. They are at the early stage of development as a result of which much is not happening to the benefit of every concerned party. It was pointed out that a union of private higher education institutions is established and is working towards bridging the gap between the private and private and government/private institutions. However, the respondents have suggested that much has to be done in this regard.

What has been practical so far has not been much for one thing due to personal reasons. The institutions are tied up with their own personal achievements. Their businessperson's interest outweighs other responsibilities.

It was also reported by the institutions that even in the limited cooperative work that has been started, there are problematic practices that need to be checked in and improved. Some institutions are not willing to be embraced under the umbrella of a union. Some want to propagate only their own interests undermining the cause of other members. The respondents have emphasized that to solve problems and to ease the building up process in a meaningful way which is beneficial to be organized. It is necessary to underline here that the institutions will have to collaborate in resource sharing, research endeavors, and managerial issues. It was also suggested that they develop

positive understanding among them rather than exaggerated competitive spirit. For example, it was suggested that in the time of registration they can help one another by informing customers who knock at their doors and do not get the training they need from their institution to go to other private higher education institutions. They can exchange books that might be more important for one institution rather than the other if there is supportive feeling among them.

Concerning cooperation with government owned institutions, it was said that opportunities for cooperation are not exploited fully. The two entities are operating in their own divided shells making little effort to close up the gap. Because the government institutions are the oldest and experienced, the PHEIs have taken the initiative to approach and establish connection. Though not all the time, in most cases the responses are discouraging. A typical example here is the case of the government owned institution (AAU) that does not make accessible external reader membership to instructors of PHEIs. Those that tried to exploit this opportunity were denied the chance right away saying that they were from PHEIs.

What can be said from here is that the fact that cooperation could be beneficial for both parties is not well felt. Also, when approached, the government institutions do not seem to realize that they have the responsibility to shape up the newly emerging institutions. Though they have different ownership, they are working for the same cause towards the same goal - to produce well-trained, capable and dependable citizens that could build a better Ethiopia for the generation ahead. It is high time that the mistrust on the part of the government owned institutions are ceased and that the feeling of cooperation is cultivated.

4.4 Problems Related to Management

Managing the issues that revolve around the main actors; that is students, teachers and stakeholders has been an issue of concern for PHEIs.

As the respondents reported one of the problems in this regard is the students' capacity. In some areas, particularly in areas where mathematical computations make the base, this problem of capacity is highly pronounced. Coupled with the students' poor background, the intellectual levels of the students have been the sources of challenge to the institutions. The students have to graduate successfully and competently because that is the goal; the country has invested on them. However, with the problems stated above, this has been tedious and time consuming in all respects.

It was also pointed out by respondents that present day college instructor is by far different from what should be in the real sense of the term. Today's instructors are business-oriented rather than academic-oriented. The instructors are on the move trying to make money rather than devoting time to academic development and research engagement. The instructors are too self-involved to

the extent of total denial and disregard of their responsibility for which they are paid. Leave alone produce original and upto the standard work, they are not duty bound and conscious to fulfill their elementary duties such as punctuality, presence in class. The instructors do not differentiate their rights and duties. The instructor who does not recognize and who disregards his duties and responsibilities will not be discharging his knowledge properly. It is suggested here that the money-conscious stance has to change and abusing one's right will only contribute to the country's development negatively and, therefore, there has to be a lot of awareness training on the part of the institutions and other concerned bodies.

Regarding stakeholders, the major issue of concern is their readiness to accommodate graduates of PHEIs. It was revealed that 95% of the stakeholders would prefer government institution graduates. This has its roots in the prevailing bias towards PHEIs. PHEIs are associated with commodity-selling enterprises whose sole concern is believed to be money. Hence, stakeholders, being part of the society that is biased towards PHEIs, believe that PHEIs are not sincerely engaged in the provision of education which leads them to believe that their graduates are not as competent as the Government owned Higher Education Institutions (GHEIs).

4.4.1 Resource Acquisition

In the process of resource acquiring, the PHEIs undergo lots of hardships. As it was stated by the respondents, one area of problem is reading material acquisition. 28% of the respondents stated that it is not possible to have books that students can take for home reading or outside reading. Because the number of books is limited, students are confined to spot reading only.

As it was mentioned, the market within the country does not provide as many and different books as possible for those who want to invest money and buy. In some fields, it is not possible to get books at all. Up to date, books are not available. The educational world is changing and technology is moving ahead. Book publishing is growing rapidly. The scanty market does not allow keeping up with this rapidly expanding knowledge-based world.

It was pointed out that though there are some improvements now compared to the previous years, still there are critical problems in reading material acquisition. For the TVET program, the MOE has not made enough textbooks available. And again from the limited number of those supplied, much of it went to GHEIs. The MOE should have been prepared earlier, and supplied the institutions (GHEIs and PHEIs) in all fields.

In some fields, it is literally impossible to get books. In some streams, there are fast growing changes for which the institutions have to catch up before it is too late. In order to be able to do this, the provision of up-to-date books should be made available. The new technology has made

reference materials available with CD-ROMs. This is now the trend. However, in the Ethiopian situation, this is not happening. The new technology could be a means of accessing a vast number of data in the shortest time possible. The institutions, therefore, have to be tuned in this line and be ready with facilities.

4.5 Research

The importance of research in the development of an academic institution is shared by almost all the institutions. However, 78% of the respondents expressed that the PHEIs don't have the capacity in terms of expertise and resource. Because they are at the early stage of establishment, they have limited resources to be expended in research. To support research, and for example, to allow instructors to work on sabbatical leave is not affordable for the PHEIs. They have other pressing, life and death matters that need attention. On the other hand, it was also mentioned that the instructors are not research oriented. Even if institutions are ready to invest on research, the active participants are engaged in personal matters rather than institutional, academic matters.

The other reason for little focus on research is the realization that the institutions have about the return value of research. The over cautious closely consider the benefit that can be obtained from research. They have said that the returns for research are not immediately felt. If the institutions allow instructors to do research, it will be immediate expense. So for institutions that are at the early stage of establishment, they revealed that extensive engagement in research is problematic. Though they don't deny its significance to some extent, they hesitate to indulge in research for the time being due to resource constraints. They are vulnerable because survival is a determining issue for them. According to the respondents, research is not an immediate answer to survival questions. Given this practical stance of the institutions, it can be said here that support from the government should be rendered to PHEIs in a way that the government is offering to GHEIs for both parties are working towards a common goal of producing trained manpower for the country. Besides, for starters, the institutions can lay the ground for research by putting into practice action research and management research that could significantly contribute to their profitability which in the final analysis empowers them to indulge in full scale, extensive basic research.

5. Recommendations

Based on the discussions and analysis made in the preceding section, the recommendations forwarded hereunder are believed, if put into practice, to redress the major problems that PHEIs are grappling with.

1. On the part of the MOE, there should be a reconsideration of the new educational policy;

2. There should be extensive awareness raising program at a national and institutional level regarding the new educational policy and particularly the TVET curriculum;
3. The MOE should release a stable and permanent curriculum that might at least function for five years;
4. The government and the MOE should render assistance to PHEIs;
5. The MOE should not only make education accessible at a higher level but also work towards raising the standard of education at a lower level (elementary and high school education);
6. Cooperation among higher education institutions should be strengthened;
7. Research should be one component of PHEIs' educational system and particularly at the initial stage of PHEIs' development, action research and management research should be exercised; and
8. Every citizen should undergo behavioral change and develop national sentiment rather than individualistic attitude.

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