

# Quality Matters

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement, Research & Quality Assurance (CEIRQA)

St. Mary's University College

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## Quote of this issue

*“The surest way to keep people down is to educate men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family.”*

Dr. J. E. Kwegyir Aggrey (1875–1927)

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) 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

## The Seventh Annual National Conference on Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) Held

St. Mary's University College (SMUC) held a national annual research conference on private higher education institutions in Ethiopia on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. The conference, which focused on contemporary and cross-cutting issues of the higher education sector, was conducted with the motto of “charting the roadmap to private higher education institutions in Ethiopia”.

In the conference, local and foreign scholars presented various research papers of vital importance. His Excellency, Ato Demeke Mekonen Minister of Education, opened the conference. Members of the academia, students as well as invited guests attended the day-long conference, which was held for the 7<sup>th</sup> time in a row. This time, the conference was held at the United Nations Economic commission for Africa (UN/ECA) Conference Hall.

Show cases of publications and services by Ethiopian Knowledge and Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS), Macmillan books, British Council and St Mary's University College also added colour to the conference. ■

## From the Editorial Desk

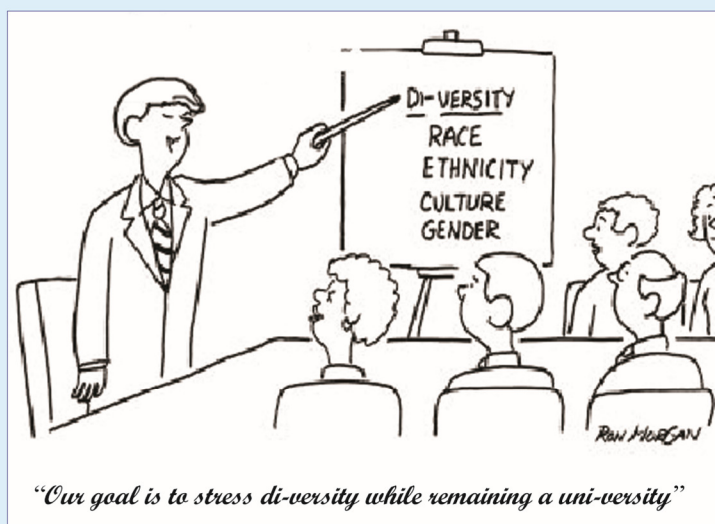
In both the developed and developing countries, improving schools is frequently high on the policy agenda. The nature of their policy focus, however, differs across countries. While the majority of the developing world increasingly emphasizes on school attainment, others focus on quality concerns. However, as far as sustainable development is concerned, one can argue that these two aspects are not mutually exclusive but different faces of the same coin.

The persistence of gender inequality in many developing economies has in fact forced governments to focus on policies of investment in girls' education. Women in these countries comprise the huge untapped reservoir of talent. Though there are quite good starts in girls' school enrollment, the quality of girls' education is far from adequate: only a few of them are university graduates and successful business entrepreneurs.

The impact of girls' education to a country's socio-economic development is not contested. First, such investments lead to increased labor force participation and expansion of economies. Second, a variety of positive health outcomes for women and their families are known to flow from increased education. Third, education generally leads to lower fertility rates. Fourth, as primary caregivers, women have a key role in the intergenerational transmission

of knowledge. In a nutshell, girls' education is one of the most powerful means to increase female participation in the politico-socio-economic matters of this nation.

As powerful as these benefits may be, the case for increased investments in girls' education is nonetheless easy to make in countries, like ours, where girls are traditionally required to assume household chores.



## Forthcoming Event

Conference to be held at the University of Latvia, Riga, Raina Bulv. 19. (December 6-9, 2009)

*"Higher Education Spaces and Places: for Learning, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange"*

For more information: <http://www.oecd.lu.lv>



# News

## **The First Multi-Disciplinary Seminar Held**

St. Mary's University College (SMUC) conducted the first multi-disciplinary symposium on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. The seminar aimed to promote research-based enquiry and mastery in the University College and enhance academic dialogue and discussion amongst people drawn from various fields of studies.

The seminar entertained papers drawn from the Faculty of Informatics, Business, Law, Teacher Education and the College of Distance and Open Learning of SMUC. Also, a researcher from the University of Limerick, the Republic of Ireland, took part in the seminar.

The day-long event was attended by students, faculty and department members, as well as invited guests from the higher education sector. This event is planned to be held annually.■

## **The Third Student Research Forum Held**

The Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) of St. Mary's University College organized and conducted the third Student Research Forum on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009. The day-long forum, which entertained twelve papers by graduating students from the Departments of Management, Accounting, Marketing, Law and Informatics, was held at the main-

campus. The papers presented in the forum were selected on merits of excellence.

The forum is organized with the intention to enhance research culture of students during their stay at the University College. In his opening speech, SMUC's President, Ass. Prof. Wondwosen Tamirat, indicated the University College's commitment in encouraging such forums. Students, Faculty members and invited guests attended the forum.■

## **St. Mary's University College joined the Association of African Universities (AAU)**

St. Mary's University College joined the Association of African Universities (AAU) – a forum for consultation, exchange of information and co-operation among institutions of higher education in Africa. The Association, which represents the voice of higher education in Africa, supports networking of the institutions in teaching, research, information exchange and dissemination.

With initial members of 34 higher learning institutions, cutting across language and other divides, the Association now has grown to 199 members from 45 African countries. In its 40 years of existence, the Association has provided a platform for research, reflection, consultation, debates, co-operation and collaboration among institutions on issues of higher education.■

# Research Corner

**Research Title:** Academic, Social and Psychological Correlates of Gender Disparity in Higher Education: The Case of Debu University

**Researcher:** Tesfaye Semela (Ass. Prof)

A research paper presented at the Second Annual National Conference on Private Higher Education in Ethiopia. St. Mary's University College

The study was made to investigate the patterns of female academic achievement in higher education and the prospects of progression through the system. The study was conducted by drawing data related to their academic status, socio-cultural and psychological factors, and personal background variables.

Sample for the study included 134 (Male=94 and Female=40) first year students admitted in the 2003/2004 academic year. The data were collected from students' academic performance records, and from a self-administered questionnaire assessing gender attitude, general academic self concept, and perceived parental expectations.

Results of the study indicated, with the exception of students in the College of Health Sciences, the attrition rate amongst girls ranged from 33 percent at the Faculty of Natural Sciences to as high as 46.7 percent in the College of Agriculture. Furthermore, analyses of the data generally showed that females have low self-

concept and are particularly less confident about their ability in traditionally masculine subjects like Mathematics and Physics. The low self-concept of ability in girls was related to their low academic performance. But boys and girls did not significantly vary in their gender attitudes indicating pervading traditional stereotypes. Implications of the findings dictated that it is relevant to address gender equity in higher education institutions. ■

## African University Day to be Celebrated

African University Day will be celebrated on the 12th of November 2009. The theme for this year's day is "African Universities: linkages with the productive sector". The day will be celebrated with show cases, forums for public dialogues, seminars, workshops and panel discussions in which both policy-makers and major stakeholders actively participate.

The day is meant to critically explore linkages of higher education institutions with the productive sector of the economy in the continent. In Ghana, the celebration will be hosted by the Association of African Universities. The event is hoped to bring together members of the association, universities from public and the private sector, as well as the general public. ■



# Interview

*This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, researchers, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on issues of importance in the higher education sector. This edition presents an interview with Professor Yalemtehay Mekonnen on issues of Girls' Education. The center would like to extend its thanks in advance for sharing her valuable time.*



## **Background**

*Dr. Yalemtehay Mekonnen is Professor of Biology at Addis Ababa University (AAU). She obtained her PhD in Endocrinology (Human Physiology) from the University of Heidelberg in Germany (1992). She served as Head of the Department of Biology and as Director of the Aklilu Lemma Institute of Pathobiology in AAU. Currently, she is Head of the Gender Office at the Faculty of Science, AAU.*

*Professor Yalemtehay is a pioneer, award winning female scholar who has a proven track record in research and fellowship. She had a number of research stays in Germany, the UK and Japan. She is also an active participant in scientific conferences at national, regional and international levels. Currently, she is engaged in teaching, advising and research at her department.*

**Quality Matters:** *What are your thoughts on Girls' Education in Ethiopia?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** Thank you. Let me first give my opinion regarding Girls' Education from a historical perspective. When education was pioneered in Ethiopia, some 60 years back, there was a big challenge to address the needs for educated citizens. During the time of His Imperial Majesty, I remember very vividly that there was an encouragement to allow and involve girls in education and also convince their families that they need to send children to school. When I think of that, I could imagine how leaders of that time were very much challenged to convince young people to go to school. However, this was not an exception to girls. In my elementary school years, I remember the number of girls in schools was not as high as the boys but fortunately there were girls in every class. Even though many parents believe in educating girls and indeed girls go to school, they usually quit when they reach puberty. The awareness at that time was if you know how to write and read, that is education. However, education goes well beyond literacy. As I go through the years and see what is happening currently, there is a lot of encouragement to involve and send girls at all levels of schooling. Currently, there is a favorable environment for Girls' Education in Ethiopia. I am



indeed very much pleased to see this. I hope this encouragement will reach a state where we can say the representation of girls at different levels of education is going to be at its best.

**Quality Matters:** *Well, you indicated that there are improvements in Girls' Education. Do you think that girls' progression to higher education has also improved?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** Yes, in terms of enrollment, I have observed a significant increment because of affirmative action in recent years. Girls are given a lower cut-off points as compared to boys in admission to universities. Such affirmative actions are good temporary means to increase girls' participation. But my worry is number versus quality. We have to work hard to improve quality and the education system has to look into these quality issues very closely. But there is also the question of how we should improve it. Educators, policy makers, institutions and professional societies have to forward recommendations. Number by itself is a plus but number versus quality, I repeat again, is a challenge. So we have to start working on the issue starting from the lower levels. You can't start on the top when things are not good at the bottom. So there is a lot to be done in this regard and the major role is that of the policy makers. They need to look into issues of quality beyond quantity.

**Quality Matters:** *What do you think are the roles of Girls' Education to the socio-economic development of the country?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** Well this is a very crucial issue. Girls represent the potentially working population of any country let alone Ethiopia. Especially, Ethiopia being the least developed one; we need a lot of women participation in all sectors of the economy. So I believe, it is also said time and again, that if a country spends more resources on Girls' Education, it means educating the whole society because girls are going to be leading members of the family as mothers, housewives and professionals in different fields. So spending resources, time and effort in this endeavor is a rewarding strategy for sustainable development. What I witnessed at this time on the encouragement of girls to go to school in rural areas of the country is going to pay back as they fully participate in the socio-economic development endeavor of the country. They would be good teachers, health officers, business persons, etcetra. So a society is half a society if it does not involve efforts on Girls' Education.

**Quality Matters:** *What peculiar challenges do you think girls in higher education institutions face?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** It is a very good timely question. I have been Head of the Gender Office at the Faculty of Science. I can witness some of the challenges female students face. As I have said they come in large numbers, they come from different parts of Ethiopia. First, they face problems of adaptation to this rigorous environment of higher education.

**(Cont'd to P. 8)**



# Perspective

## Girls' Education: An Issue of Development

By Markos Mezmur (CEIRQA)

Female education is a catch-all term for complex issues and debates surrounding sustainable development. It is, indeed, important for economic prosperity not only because of the income it generates, but also because it helps break the vicious cycle of poverty. Researched evidence supports the fact that educating girls is one of the most cost-effective ways of spurring socio-economic development. Female education creates powerful poverty-reducing synergies and yields enormous intergenerational gains. It is positively correlated with increased economic productivity, more robust labor markets, higher earnings, and improved societal health and well-being (Mercy and Lucia, 2008).

In countries like Ethiopia, women represent the untapped human capital. The majority of women in the labor force who are currently employed are engaged in 'elementary occupation' (54.8 percent), 'Crafts and related trade' (10.3 percent); whereas the proportion of women along the 'Legislator, Senior Officials and Managerial occupation' comprises the least share (0.1 percent), and those engaged in 'Professional occupation' comprises only 0.3 percent. In contrast, the proportion of men along the 'Legislator, 'Senior Officials and Managerial' and Professional occupation' is greater by five folds (CSA, 2006).

Greater investment in Girls' Education is, therefore, vital for increasing female participation and productivity in the labor market. Whether through self/wage employment, working women in the labor market, help their households escape poverty traps. When women have more schooling, the returns flow not only to themselves, but to the next generation as educated mothers are more likely to send their children to schools as compared to women with no education. Indeed, studies have shown that giving women more access to education, markets (labor, land, credit), and new technology, as well as greater control over household resources, often translates into greater household well-being (Elaine, et al., 2006).

There is also well-documented evidence that shows a strong positive correlation between girls' level of education and significant social and health benefits. Among such benefits are lower rates of HIV/AIDS infection, as girls with education are more likely to practice safe sex than those with no education; lower rate of fertility as they are more likely to use family planning services; and less child mortality as they have better child nutrition practices (CSA, 2006). Also, more education reduces the rate of violence (domestic and/or sexual) against girls and/or women. Education also empowers them to reject adverse cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation.

Despite the prominence given to the issue by governments of the world, the gender gap in education in developing countries is still there, albeit closing slowly. Ethiopia has made considerable progress over the last two years in girls' enrollment. Yet, according to government report for the academic year 2007/8, there were approximately 1.5 million girls out of school in the country. Yet again, measured in terms of learning achievement, the quality of educational services remains low. Gender inequalities in both learning and earning outcomes persist. Additionally gender inequality in both education and the workplace are exacerbated by HIV/AIDS (DFID, 2009)

Put simply, gender equality is not just a women's issue, it is a development issue. We can no longer neglect the education, well-being, and intellectual advancement of half our society. Making girls' education a high priority and implementing a range of interventions including scholarships, female teacher recruitment, and gender-targeted provision of materials might be effective in increasing girls' enrollment in school ( be it in primary, secondary or tertiary level).■

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Mercy, T and Lucia, F (eds.) (2008). *Girl's Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and economic Growth*. World Bank, Washington DC

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### *(Cont'd from P. 6)*

For any young girl coming to a new environment, there is a need to adapt to the physical environment in addition to the educational environment. The girls who are separated from their families for the first time need time to adapt because there is what is called cultural shock though not to a very higher extent. What we usually do is give them orientation; we tell them to come to us and give them advice. The quality of education is a big challenge for some of them. In fact some improve their grades as they go along but the first semester of the first year is quite a big challenge. They have lack of communication skills. The English language, as you know, is the medium of instruction in the universities and the girls in this regard have a problem although these can also apply to boys too. And some times they lack confidence even if they have the capacity. To tackle this problem what we usually do is we organize workshops, and give them assertiveness training.





This is done actually not only in the Faculty of Science but also in all other faculties of the AAU.

**Quality Matters:** *What do you think needs to be done to enhance female participation in societal matters?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** There is, at the start, a need for a growing effort to improve the perception of the society on the importance of female participation in societal matters. What I advise is that at an individual level, young girls, and of course young boys, should be raised in an environment where they can be challenged and where they can be shown that they can do their best. This is done like you plant a seed and water it now and then so that it grows to be a full plant. So every family has to do its level best to make sure that the offspring/young children deserve the best. Well, this depends of course on resources at hand but at least the change in attitude is the best change that one can start with. This means making sure that a child is confident to achieve what s/he has planned to achieve. Of course, this may raise a question in circumstances where there is still a challenge to feed a family.

**Quality Matters:** *If you have any other remark?*

**Professor Yalemtehay:** Well my remark is, there is a lot to be done in terms of publicizing and sensitizing the various communities and the society at large about the importance of Girls' Education.

Thank you. ■

## Virtual Links

### Ministry of Education

Web site: <http://www.moe.gov.et>

### Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)

Website: <http://www.higher.edu.et>

### Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

Website: <http://www.qsae.org/>

### Ethiopian Knowledge and Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS)

Website: <http://www.ektts.org>

### Association of African Universities (AAU)

Website: <http://www.aau.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>

### Asian Pacific Quality Network

Website: <http://www.apqn.org>

### Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)

Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

### European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Website: <http://www.enqa.eu>

### PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education

Website: <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/>

### International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

Website: <http://www.inqahe.org>

### Center for International Research on Higher Education

Website: [http://bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe](http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe)

# Fun Corner

## The College Food Chain

**The Dean:** Leaps tall buildings in a single bound. Is more powerful than a locomotive. Is faster than a speeding bullet. Walks on water. Gives policy to God.

**The Department Head:** Leaps short buildings in a single bound. Is more powerful than a switch engine. Is just as fast as a speeding bullet. Talks with God.

**Professor:** Leaps short buildings with a running start and favorable winds. Is almost as powerful as a switch engine. Is faster than a speeding BB. Walks on water in an indoor swimming pool. Talks with God if a special request is honored.

**Associate Professor:** Barely clears a Quonset hut. Loses a tug of war with a locomotive. Can fire a speeding bullet. Swims well. Is occasionally addressed by God.

**Assistant Professor:** Makes high marks on the walls when trying to leap tall buildings. Is run over by locomotives. Can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self-injury. Treads water. Talks to animals.

**Instructor:** Climbs walls continually. Rides the rails. Plays Russian Roulette. Walks on thin ice. Prays a lot.

**Graduate Student:** Runs into buildings. Recognizes locomotives two out of three times. Is not issued ammunition. Can stay afloat with a life jacket. Talks to walls.

**Undergraduate Student:** Falls over doorstep when trying to enter buildings. Says "Look at the choo-choo". Wets himself with a water pistol. Plays in mud puddles. Mumbles to himself.

**Department Secretary:** Lifts buildings and walks under them. Kicks locomotives off the tracks. Catches speeding bullets in her teeth and eats them. Freezes water with a single glance. She is God.

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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 8001 Ext 145 Or email: ceirqa@smuc.edu.et



# Photo Gallery

The Seventh National Annual Conference on Private Higher Education in Ethiopia



- measures outputs against inputs.  
d) Satisfaction of the consumer  
- "student ... quality is described a ... has quality when it meets ... expectations of the consumer"

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# Call for Proposals

The Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) of St. Mary's University College (SMUC) invites research proposals for researches which will run from February 2010 to July 2010. The center solicits proposals two times a year for activities, events, and initiatives that promote interactions of the academic community in Ethiopia and considers four categories of research areas in its Research Grant schemes:

- ▶ Planning, management and governance issues of higher education;
- ▶ Performance appraisal practices, grading systems, students' performance, motivation and attitude;
- ▶ Distance learning;
- ▶ Highly relevant issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Proposals are peer reviewed and awards are announced within few weeks. Template for research proposal can be obtained from our center.

SMUC faculty and non-SMUC faculty members can apply for funding.

Submission Deadline: December 15, 2009

Proposals should be submitted to:

Center for Educational Improvement, Research  
and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA)  
St. Mary's University College  
P.O.Box 18490  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Center for Educational Improvement, Research &  
Quality Assurance (CEIRQA)**

# St. Mary's University College