

## **A Glance at the Ethiopian Higher Education from the Developmental State Perspective**

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**Abstract:** Modern higher education in Ethiopia has a short history of a little over six decades. Over the past two decades there have been tremendous reforms that aimed at expanding and modernizing the higher education subsector so that it would make meaningful contributions for the country's development. However, despite the rapid expansion of the sector, its process and roles have not become a research agenda to assess whether Ethiopia is following the 'right path' of the developmental state model in its various economic and social policies. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on the nature of the Ethiopian higher education taking the perspective of the developmental state paradigm. Based on the method of document analysis, the findings of the study indicate that the Ethiopian higher education shows strong manifestations of the characteristics which were evident in those developmental states in early stage. Strong state control, central admission process, focus on certain priority areas, massive expansion, emphasis on technology transfer and using higher education to serve non-economic national agendas are typically observable in the Ethiopian higher education system. The study has also identified some inconsistencies and shortcomings. For instance, the Ethiopian higher education falls short in terms of institutional diversity, adequacy of research on technology transfer, and the role of the private sector. Finally, some implications are highlighted to pinpoint the areas worthy of more detailed policy research.

**Keywords:** developmental state, higher education, Ethiopia

### **Background of the study**

Since the time of its ancient civilization, Ethiopia has had its own indigenous formal education. This two millennia old traditional education is strongly linked to the Ethiopian Orthodox church and had remained as the predominant form of producing the elites of the country for a long time. Modern and secular higher education was introduced in 1950 with the establishment of the then University College of Addis Ababa with about 1000 students and less than fifty teachers, most of whom were foreigners (Wondimu, 2003). In the following two decades a number of specialized technical colleges were also established to offer professional trainings in the fields of agriculture, engineering, public health and teacher education (World Bank, 2003). Reorganizing most of these junior colleges under it, the university college was upgraded and renamed as Hailesillasiye I University in 1960. In 1974, when the imperial government collapsed, the university was renamed Addis Ababa

University (Wondimu, 2003). Addis Ababa University is not only a pioneer and the largest higher education institution (HEI) to date, but it also remains a central player in the social and political dynamics of the country.

During the period 1974 to 1991 the development in the Ethiopian higher education was very slow. For instance the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for higher education that was about 0.2% by the year 1970 increased only to 0.7% after twenty five years in 1995 (World Bank, 2003; Weldemariam, 2008). Addis Ababa University had remained the only university until the opening of Alemaya (now Haramaya University) in 1985, and no graduate program had been launched until mid 1979 (Araia, 2004). This can be attributed partly to the widespread civil war and political unrest during that period and partly to lack of encouragement to the development of the higher education subsector in developing countries by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. However, it should be noted, that during this period, besides the establishment of several junior institutions, the 'quota system' was introduced to enhance access for women and students from rural areas and other disadvantaged regions (Semela, 2007).

The 1991 change of government opened a new chapter in the history of the country, and consequently in the development of its higher education. By that time, education in general and higher education in particular was lagging far behind even by the standards of Sub-Saharan Africa. Cognizant of this, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) identified education as one area of priority and in 1994 set up a comprehensive education and training policy (ETP). The policy aimed at improving the overall state of education at all levels and ensuring that education makes the required contribution in the country's development. The policy essentially opened the door to a period of all-inclusive, far-reaching reforms and massive expansion.

In the wake of the issuance of the policy, a number of radical reforms have been introduced in the higher education subsector. Since 1998 four successive five-year Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP I -IV) have been formulated and implemented; in 2003 the Higher Education Proclamation (HEP) was enacted and later revised in 2009; and a number of other reforms were introduced addressing different aspects of higher education. In effect, the subsector was opened up for private investment, tuition fees in a form of student cost sharing have been introduced, HEIs have been granted substantial autonomy, diverse new fields of study have been launched, block grant method of budgeting has been introduced, government agencies for quality assurance and strategic direction have been established, and other changes have been introduced.

During the first few years of the reform program, the entire focus was on primary education and expansion and reforms in higher education began in the late 1990s. The Ministry of Education (MoE) launched five new universities by the turn of the century – by upgrading junior level institutions – marking the beginning of this aggressive expansion program. Ethiopia set a big plan to have 33 full-fledged universities by the year 2014/15 compared to

only two by the end of the 1990s. Total enrollment has increased from 42,132 in 1996/97 to 192,165 in 2004/05 (MoE, 2005) quadrupling in less than a decade. The annual enrollment growth rate of 50.86 % was possibly the highest in the world during this period (Waweru & Abate, 2011). In line with a target of 467,445 by 2014/15, it had actually reached 319,217 in 2010/11 (MoE, 2010a).

While the investment by the government takes the lion's share which made Ethiopia, as of 2010, one of the top eleven higher education spending nations in the world and the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (Molla, 2012), the expansion was not circumscribed only to the public institutions. Taking advantage of a favorable policy environment, private investment in higher education has witnessed a sharp rise in the sector. In about a decade after the sector was liberalized, the number of accredited private HEIs, with undergraduate and above programs, grew from zero to 44 in 2009/2010 academic year, enrolling about 18% of the total student body (MoE, 2011).

However, in spite of this glamorous success in terms of reform and expansion, the Ethiopian higher education has been struggling with a number of challenges. These include, among others, the issue of equity, quality, autonomy, accountability, brain drain, academic freedom, lack of adequate resources and facilities, teachers' working condition, salary and incentives, etc. (Semela, 2007; Woldegiyorgis, 2013). The government has indeed identified some of these challenges and is trying to implement solutions; the problems seem to persist, though.

### **Research question**

Having officially claimed to be a developmental state, government controls and leads with a firm hand in Ethiopia. Since the current ruling party came to power in 1991, the country has undergone a number of reforms in different sectors including education. Higher education has also seen its share of changes both in policy and practice. While there is a lot of debate on whether Ethiopia is following the 'right path' of the developmental state model in its economic, agricultural, trade and industry policies, there exists no study addressing the question in the education sector – particularly the higher education subsector.

In fact, this is also, more or less, the picture at the international level. The astounding economic success of Southeast Asian countries in the 1970s and 1980s has attracted considerable interest in academic work trying to explain how those countries achieved such a swift progress. Yet, much of the research is concerned with different aspects of economic policy making and implementation. In the field of education, most of the academic work is overwhelmingly focused on lower level education and, to some extent, on vocational trainings. Researches attempted to explain and theorize how education contributed to economic development by examining the triangular relationships between education, economy and the state. Higher education largely appears to have been left out of such inquiry within the notion of the developmental state. Consequently, there is poor literature that elaborates the nature and role of higher education in the developmental state paradigm,

particularly in the context of those early developmental states, the background of which is more or less similar to that of current day Ethiopia.

This paper, therefore, by using major characteristics of higher education in early-stage developmental states (Woldegiyorgis, 2015) as analytical framework, examines how the concept of developmental state is represented in the Ethiopian higher education. Put differently, the research question is:

- How does the Ethiopian higher education system correspond to the tenets of the system in those developmental states?

## **Rationale**

Determining how much the nature of the Ethiopian higher education is consistent with that of those developmental states often deemed to be examples of success, helps to identify its strengths and shortcomings towards learning from the experiences of other countries. Furthermore, with the appropriate contextualization to the current situation of Ethiopia, the findings of this study can provide implications to determine the alternative courses of action necessary to make sure that the country's higher education is in the right track towards its development agendas.

## **Research design and methodology**

### **Research design**

Following Babbie's (2006) categorization of social research on the basis of purpose as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, this qualitative research employed an exploratory research design, with certain characteristics of descriptive research. In social science an exploratory research design is most suited to a research problem/topic where there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. In such a case the exploratory research focuses on gaining insights into and creating familiarity to a subject for later investigation (Cuthill, 2002; Labaree, 2014). The goal of exploratory research, therefore, is not to produce a conclusive result that can be used for decision making, but rather to create more understanding of an issue for further research. An exploratory research design also provides maximum flexibility since it can be used to address questions of all types (what, why, how) and can use various methods of data generation (Labaree, 2014).

The subject of higher education in the context of the developmental state has been little researched. Particularly in the case of Ethiopia no prior research is available on the issue. Hence, this research is intended to provide preliminary understanding on the subject, instigating specific questions in this line of inquiry. Therefore, the exploratory research design is most suited to the purpose sought – exploring the nature of the Ethiopian higher education from the developmental state perspective.

## Sources of data

Data for this research was primarily obtained from official government documents and analyzed using the content analysis method (Bowen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Mogalakwe, 2006). More specifically, a theory driven deductive qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000) was used where previously formulated aspects of analysis, originating from the theoretical concept of developmental state and built up based on literature review, were used in connection with the content of the selected documents. Reliability and convenience explain the choice of the source of data. On the one hand, review of [official] documents has the edge of providing objective and verifiable information on a subject (Berelson, 1952 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006). On the other hand, considering the physical and communication technology gap between where the researcher was located (Finland) and where primary data was available (Ethiopia), relying on existing data was the obvious option.

Having in mind the purpose of obtaining the most reliable and sufficient system level information, both in policy and practical spheres, the following documents were used as the main sources of data.

- a) Education and Training Policy, henceforth ETP, (TGE, 1994). This, was issued by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in 1994, and is still in action. With sections emphasizing objectives, overall strategies, and areas of priority and special attention, this document provides the broadest direction for all levels of education and various forms of training. However, it is discernible that higher education is addressed here as part of the overall direction defined by the policy and did not receive any special attention, nor was it given a priority.
- b) Higher Education Proclamation, henceforth HEP, (FDRE, 2009). This was issued by the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia, the current higher education proclamation number 650/2009 is a revision of its predecessor proclamation 351/2003 (of the same title). The proclamation, with multitude of sections addresses a number of major aspects of higher education at both system and institutional level.
- c) Education Sector Development Program, henceforth ESDP, I to IV (1997 to 2015). Following the development of the education and training policy, the Ministry of Education organized a series of consultation to design implementation plan for the policy. This consultation, which involved stakeholders at regional and federal levels as well as donor agencies and others (Martin, Oksanen, & Takala, 2000), resulted in the development of a series of five year programs the first of which was launched in the 1997/98 to last to the year 2001/2002. Later it was decided to align the programs with the five year office-term of the government making the second phase cover between years 2000/2001 and 2004/2005 – therefore the overlap between the last two years of the first phase were integrated into the first two years of the second phase (MoE, 2001). The ESDP derives its goals and strategies from the policy and identifies specific time-bound objectives for each level of education along with the resource and organizational requirements.

The education and training policy gives a general direction, the proclamation provides the legal framework within which the policy goals are to be achieved, and the ESDP presents the practical aspect in the development of education in the country. Hence, a combination of these three kinds of documents gives more or less a complete picture of how higher education is placed in Ethiopia. To supplement this, the following documents were also consulted in the research:

- Directive for placement of regular undergraduate students to public higher education institutions (Amharic) (MoE, 2010b)
- Council of Ministers regulation on cost sharing in higher education (FDRE, 2003b)
- National employment policy and strategy (MOLSA, 2009)

Additional data were also obtained from different secondary sources as well as review of literature such as annual education statistical abstracts; annual reports on various issues by recognized institutions; budgetary and financial reports; surveys, studies and academic researches; and other sources including websites, news, opinion articles, videos, interviews, speeches, etc.

### **Data analysis**

The analytical framework used in this study was developed based on review of relevant literature. It has identified seven major characteristics of higher education typical to the developmental state of the 1970s and 80s in the East Asian region. A document review guideline, which follows the components of the analytical framework, was used to dictate the review of the key documents identified in the previous section. The guideline includes a total of 27 specific questions under the seven categories. Each document was reviewed and relevant information was obtained and categorized in accordance with the guideline and in a manner that addresses each specific question under each category. Similarly, the analysis and interpretation were made following the framework. Finally, the developmental nature of the Ethiopian higher education is discussed in light of what higher education looked like in the time and region of what is often considered the pinnacle of the developmental state model.

### **Methodological limitations**

First, the incorporation of primary data would have enriched the information available. Accordingly, attempt was made to get interview with officials of concerned institutions and experts involved at policy making level. However, the attempt was met with challenge when targeted potential interviewees refrained from responding to e-mail requests for an interview schedule, though some of them had initially expressed their willingness.

Second, education in Ethiopia, like any other policy area, is highly politicized and a clear difference on opinions is reflected along the lines of political differences. While there is a relatively fair degree of agreement on certain issues such as access, the differences are very

vivid on issues like quality, governance and administration, institutions and teachers' autonomy, professionalization of the teaching job, academic freedom, etc. This can be seen in different reports and commentaries. Even scholars often appear to stand on diametrically opposite sides. Some (e.g. Ashcroft, 2004, 2010a, 2010b; Teshome & Kebede, 2009; Yizengaw, 2003, 2005) write about the success and triumph of higher education while others (e.g. Bishaw, 2002; Kahsay, 2012; Negash, 2006; Telila, 2010) write about the crisis and collapse of the same. This has made it difficult to determine the reliability of available literature to be considered in the study.

Third, the attempt made to read through publications of the ruling party, EPRDF, looking for background information and justifications for the policy directions followed was unfruitful since these documents predominantly justify policy choices by appealing to the polarized political relations with the opposition, than based on scientific reasoning rooted in the practical needs of the society. The documents seem to be more dedicated to glorifying and protecting the ideology of revolutionary democracy and the political power arrangement of ethnic federalism by categorically condemning the alternative views on social policies as threats.

Finally, in several documents, including the education and training policy and the ESDP, higher education is presented blended with other levels of education. There is no separate long term strategy specifically for higher education. Therefore, extracting the data/information was subject to contextual interpretations.

### **Towards analytical framework**

Since the human capital theory emerged in the mainstream economics, there have been a number of researches substantiating the thesis that education and training increase the stock of human capital of a given society, which in turn interprets itself into economic growth by increasing efficiency and productivity (Amsden, 1989; Ashton, Green, James, & Sung, 1999; Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994; Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008; Wolff & Gittleman, 1993).

In a more recent and practical experience of the developmental states in the Southeast Asian region, the role of education, and higher education in particular, in accelerated economic development has been observed as central. Advocates of the developmental state argue that rapid economic growth in the region is, at least partly, attributable to the vast expansion of education and training through centrally coordinated planning and resource management towards building stock of human capital (Green, 1999; IMF, 1991; Morris, 1996; Morishima, 1997).

As a result of this relationship between economy and education systems, there has been a discernible relationship between the level of economic growth and the emphasis on educational expansion. As countries transformed from agrarian to advanced industrial economies, they also moved from relying more on primary education to advanced higher education. Cummings (1997 in Abe, 2006) commented that at the early stage of economic

growth the state investment in tertiary education was negligible, which later came to take a sizable proportion of total educational budget. However, this did not happen in all developmental countries in the same way while its pattern was more visible in countries such as Singapore.

At the beginning, during the low-cost and labor-intensive manufacturing stage of economic growth, basic literacy and numeracy amongst the workers was vital. The economy required no sophisticated knowledge, but rather needed low-wage labor. Therefore, the primary focus of the education system was to provide universal, basic general and technical education (Tan, 2007) to the workforce.

In the meantime, in preparation to the next stage of economic development – the capital intensive stage – investment in infrastructure development for secondary schools, vocational education schools and training centers was underway. Many developmental countries adopted a flexible approach for recognizing informal trainings for up skilling and trainings for those who did not come through the channel of the formal education (e.g. workers who dropped out of primary schools but have been working for several years would get the chance to be trained in vocational schools as long as they meet some basic requirements such as basic English and Math). Lastly, the knowledge-intensive stage of economic growth was characterized by its aims to move up the global value chain to catch-up with advanced economies. Thus education and training policies focused on skills upgrading required for effective participation in an advanced industrial society, the enhancement of intermediate level technical skills and expansion of higher education focusing on science, technology and engineering (Sung & Raddon, 2013).

Once higher education had come to center stage in development strategies, it was planned and managed in a manner that would fit the overall economic development plan – hence higher education in developmental states showed a peculiar pattern of behavior. Indeed, according to Castells (1993), some of the features and roles of higher education in developmental states are similar to that of the traditional universities in Europe and elsewhere, but with a different level of emphasis or unique combination of goals and functions. In the face of the paucity of solid model to describe higher education in developmental states, Woldegiyorgis (2015<sup>1</sup>) has identified the following features as a general framework of understanding. This framework was developed using extensive literature review from the experiences of East Asian countries back in the 1970s and 1980s. These countries not only had a similar context to current day Ethiopia but also are often cited as model of success in the discourse of the Ethiopian developmental state.

- a) Strong state control system

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1 This analytical framework is an excerpt from a previous work of the author. For the full account see: Woldegiyorgis, A. A. (2015). Higher education in early-stage developmental states: lessons for beginners. Working Papers in Higher Education Studies, 1(1), 1-22.



The interventionist developmental state intervenes in and closely controls its higher education system to make sure that the higher education development and strategy are well coordinated with the other aspects of its social and economic policies. Such a centralized system is commonly referred to as the state control model. Though this model has been criticized for its shortcomings such as leaving minimum level of autonomy for the higher education institutions and in effect hindering innovation, a number of countries have proved successful in promoting rapid economic growth if well aligned with overall developmental goals and properly coordinated with other policies and sectors.

b) Centralized admission procedures

The desire to ensure that the higher education system supplies the required amount and mix of graduates to the labor market has made developmental states have a control over the details of higher education institutions. Admission is one such area where government involvement was crucial, even in private academic institutions. Central government agencies, such as ministries of education, were directly involved in determining the admission process to higher education with three purposes in mind: ensuring quality of higher education, making up for social injustices, and determining how many people join each discipline in response to the needs of economy. Many developmental states used centrally administered strict higher education admission test and/or national system of assessment that sought the most competitive ways to identify the best of every cohort that would join higher education and a complimentary system of assigning students to different institutions and/or fields, often more according to the national plan than their preferences.

c) Major emphasis on technology transfer/learning from others

Science and technology play a critical role as sources of economic productivity and competitiveness in the contemporary global economy. Hence, countries try all means possible to keep up with the changes in technology and global markets. Traditionally, the unindustrialized countries were dependent on the industrialized ones, largely being consumers rather than producers of science and technology. However, the successful developmental states realized that they cannot, in the long run, rely on others to produce all of the knowledge and skills needed for their emerging technologically-based industries. At the early stages they opted for un-systematized and unreliable methods where technological inputs were purchased from abroad or were sometimes simply copied without regard to the legal niceties. Later on they started developing their own scientific system and academic institutions as well as building a research base in order to effectively analyze, interpret, and use advanced research and technology from abroad. In those countries higher education institutions were acknowledged for contributing significantly in not only assisting the technology transfer and adaptation but in the development of indigenous technology as well.

d) Diversified institutions

Higher education systems of developmental states are diversified on the basis of what specific function they perform and what needs they have to satisfy. A majority of institutions are devoted to training bureaucrats and technocrats and preparing the supply of professionals

for the dynamic needs of the economy, while few high quality institutions are the breeding ground for the elites of the political leadership and policy makers. Similarly, in terms of their engagement, many of the institutions are primarily concerned with training (and teaching) while few selective institutions with the brightest staff and students are set for scientific leadership through research. It is also discernible that there are distinctions between comprehensive and specialized institutions, the later ultimately dedicated to a certain small area of specialization but with greater intensity.

e) Focus on science and technology as priority areas

Considering the availability of limited resources, countries need to identify and pursue certain areas of high priority consistent with their socioeconomic needs and integral to their development plans. In doing so, they determine their comparative advantage, choose between different fields and disciplines and foster links between research and development (R&D). Though it took effect in different ways, the emphasis on science and technology was a common phenomenon. Some of the techniques applied in different systems included controlling and manipulating the admission process, establishing government agency in charge of the promotion of science and technology (at commission or ministerial level) to enact various laws, opening many more science and technology universities, altering student choices at lower level, establishing high class science and technology institutes, providing better incentive for those who prefer to join those fields (both at undergraduate and graduate levels), providing more generous grants to researches in the priority fields, etc.

f) Large scale expansion

While the second half of the twentieth century saw significant expansion of higher education in many developing countries, particularly in developmental states the rate of expansion was exceptional and purposefully directed (China's case of building 500 universities in five years time in the 1980s epitomizes this narrative). Recognizing the valued contribution of higher education in producing the desired high level human power, governments were willing to make substantial investment in the sector. In the 1970s and 1980s, the share of expenditure in higher education progressively increased in percentage of both GNP and total education budget of several countries.

g) Non-economic functions/goals

Higher education institutions have diverse purposes that cover a wide range of social, economic and political aspects of a society's life. Over different historical epochs in different societies, higher education institutions have played varying roles relevant to the respective circumstances. For developmental states, where economic growth was an agenda of top priority, higher education was not maintained only for its economic benefits. In fact, nation building was an important issue in Southeast Asian developmental countries such as South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. Hence, (higher) education, used for fostering a strong sense of social cohesion and political identity, was seen as a vital component of the process which targeted at overall socio economic and political development of those countries.

## **Discussion and analysis of findings**

### **[Higher] education as a tool in development**

To understand the developmentalist nature of a given education system or how education is integrated in the overall developmental approach of a country, the first thing to look into would be how education is connected to development and the significance attached to it in the overall development strategies. In the reviewed official documents, there is sufficient evidence substantiating the critical role of education in the development endeavors of Ethiopia. The importance attached to education in the documents is, in the words of Teshome (2008, p. 52), ‘almost biblical’.

The ETP gives a definition of education that is strongly rooted in the purpose and role it plays in the human life in general:

Education is a process by which man transmits his experiences, new findings, and values accumulated over the years, in his struggle for survival and development, through generations. Education enables individuals and society to make all-rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes (TGE, 1994, p.1).

It further details how education at all levels has the purpose of strengthening the problem solving capacity of the individuals, and hence the society, towards creating a better life. Through education, according to the document, human beings can not only identify harmful practices to replace them with the useful ones, but also preserve, develop and utilize their environment towards all-rounded development by diffusing science and technology into the society. Education also creates the condition for equality, mutual understanding and cooperation among people by way of promoting respect for human rights and democratic values (TGE, 1994).

The document emphasizes the important roles of education in the development efforts of the Ethiopian government and justifies the necessity of formulating a new policy that gives direction for education and training that will help in changing the alarming situations of the country at the time. Therefore, it can be observed that education has become one of the priority areas of government since the time of the transitional period wherein a comprehensive policy on education was among the urgent areas of action (MoE, 2001; TGE, 1994).

The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) articulates the importance of education as a justification for why the program is needed and how it can contribute to the overall development of the country (MoE, 1998). All the different phases of the program address this same issue in different manners, with a small shift pertinent to the overall atmosphere of the development plan of the respective periods.

The importance and value of higher education have been not only embedded in the general statements about education, but also specifically emphasized in different manners in the documents. The ETP, for instance, in its assessment of the chronic problems in education at the time, stated that “higher education institutions are found only in very few regions. They are overcrowded and their research capacity is very low” (TGE, 1994 p. 3).

Of course, this emphasis is very insufficient in that it represents only a small portion of the problems higher education had, and still has. However, it tells that the shortcomings of the subsector were recognized and used for justifying the necessity of the policy. It is worth noting that much of the need assessment and much of the respective emphasis of the ETP was on general (primary and secondary) education. Indeed, one cannot help but notice that in the 33-page document ‘higher education’ was mentioned only seven times reflecting how insufficiently the subsector was emphasized. Since the ETP is still the broadest governing document regarding education of all levels, the level of emphasis placed on any subsector can be seen as having an impact on the development of the same. By the same logic it can be argued that the complex problems in the Ethiopian higher education were caused by, among other things, the insufficiency of vision and direction given at policy level.

This can be supported by the observation that in the early phases of the ESDP, no clear articulation has been made about the role of higher education in development. Of course, it is only logical that at the early stage of education development, following the practices of other developmental states, the major emphasis given to primary education gradually extends to secondary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and finally to higher education. Nonetheless, it was necessary to create such a clear picture of this progressive development, to be interpreted in terms of specific goals for each phase, which would have enabled the government to undertake the foundation work for the massive expansion that was to be introduced in the later stages of the program.

ESDP-II states that higher education is central in the national capacity building program of the country and that investment in higher education is “important for socio-economic development, which in turn is a critical prerequisite for sustained poverty reduction” (MoE, 2001, p. 47). Similarly, ESDP-III stresses that TVET and higher education are given the responsibility of training the manpower that is needed for the various kinds of development projects particularly in “infrastructure development, education, agriculture and health services” (MoE, 2005, p. 31).

However, these general statements have been articulated in neither a long term vision nor specific actionable targets. The HEP, in its part, justifies itself by referring to the importance of relevant and quality higher education and research in terms of efficiently satisfying the “Ethiopian peoples’ aspirations of peace, democracy and development” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4976).

It is only in ESDP-IV that a clear long term vision is articulated in connection to the purpose the higher education subsector is expected to serve.

For higher education, the goal is to develop highly qualified, motivated and innovative human resources and produce and transfer advanced and relevant knowledge for socio-economic development and poverty reduction with a view to turning Ethiopia into a middle-income country by the year 2025. (MoE, 2010a, p.9)

This vision, in other sections, is reinterpreted in what would be the specific targets for the particular phase of the program and indicators are identified for later evaluation purposes.

In summary, it can be noted that Ethiopia has assigned irreplaceable role in the overall development of the country to education in general, and higher education in particular. However, this only forms the foundation for the conception of the developmental state attributes in the education sector. Using the analytical framework, the following sections further examine the developmentalist nature of the Ethiopian higher education.

### **Level of state control**

One of the well-established and sufficiently evidenced developmentalist characteristic of the Ethiopian higher education is the high level of state control over the system. Legal and strategic documents reveal that the government has a strong control that is underpinned by different mechanisms of influence and supervision. The need for centralized control is commonly justified by the state's desire to coordinate activities among concerned institutions within the education sector, as well as to coordinate the higher education system with other sectors and social policy areas, such as the economy.

There are a number of mechanisms devised for state control over the Ethiopian higher education system. The broadest and the strongest type of such mechanisms is the establishment of different laws and institutions, which together form the overall legal framework within which the system (HEIs and other concerned institutions and individuals) operates.

The HEP provides that all public institutions financed by the "federal government shall be established by regulation of the Council of Ministers... [those] financed by a state government shall be established by law enacted by the state" (FDRE, 2009, p. 4979). In the same manner, merger, splitting into two or more, changing names and dissolution of a public HEI are all done by regulation of the respective bodies (p. 5022 ).

The higher education proclamation recognizes or establishes institutions that have different kinds of involvement in the system and identifies their roles, powers, responsibilities and rights. All HEIs, except those established for religious teaching, are required to operate according to the proclamation and other legal directives issued by the concerned institutions authorized to do so by the proclamation. The Ministry of Education is mandated to issue

directives necessary for the implementation of the proclamation and regulations under the proclamation. The proclamation also establishes agencies under the Ministry – the Higher Education Strategy Center (HESC<sup>2</sup>) and Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) – and grants them considerable power to direct and supervise the HEIs.

The Ministry is endowed with a wide range of responsibilities enabling it to control the overall nature and direction of higher education in the country. Among others:

...ensure that preparation and delivery of curricula of higher education are in accordance with international developments and national demands and requirements; approve and ensure the implementation of strategic plans of public institutions; conduct studies to identify as well as to meet the professional and intellectual manpower needs of the country; encourage government organs, professional associations, business organizations, and other appropriate persons to work jointly on matters concerning education, training, research, practicum or apprenticeship and research and technology transfer; (FDRE, 2009, pp. 5038-39).

HERQA, on its part, is granted powers and responsibilities related to controlling the quality and relevance of higher education. This includes evaluating and accrediting programs (as well as renewal of accreditation every three years), ensuring that institutions have the required capacity for enhancing internal quality, ensuring that education and training programs offered by HEIs are consistent with economic, social and other relevant policies of the country, evaluating institutions to make sure that they have met various standards set forth in the proclamation, etc. (FDRE, 2009, pp. 5039-41).

Even more detailed powers and responsibilities, typical to the kind of control a government agency might have in a developmental state, reside in the HESC. The center is given mandates that would allow it to deal with issues both at system and institutional level and that can effectively determine the nature and future direction of higher education in general. The following, among the list of powers and duties of the center, are archetypal in this regard (FDRE, 2009, pp. 5041-42).

- a) prepare national strategy for the development of higher education and institutions;
- b) prepare long-term national plans for the development of education and research within the system of higher education;
- c) ensure that institution level planning and strategy are in line with the national higher education macro plan and strategy; and for this purpose, work closely with institutions; examine strategic plan agreements and, upon approval, follow up their implementation;
- d) ensure that higher education is in line with the overall socio-economic development needs of the country and abreast global trends in orientation and approaches;

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<sup>2</sup> The HESC was later re-established as Education Strategic Center with extended responsibilities covering all levels of education

- e) give opinion on higher education reform and development strategy and plan of the country;

Reporting and supervision constitute other mechanisms for state control. HEIs are required to collect and publish accurate and comprehensive statistical data on educational and financial matters (TGE, 1994). This, besides allowing for information exchange between HEIs and concerned bodies, enables the central government to follow on the capacity and performance of each HEI which can be used for supervision and planning purposes. However, though the policy prescribes it for all institutions, private institutions are not obliged to publish details of their financial statistics. Following the policy, the HEP also requires particularly public institutions to:

- (a) submit to, as the case may be, the Ministry or the appropriate state organ duly evaluated and approved annual performance and audited financial reports based on the strategic plan agreement; and publish the educational and expenditure data for the fiscal year...
- (b) furnish information to the Ministry or the concerned state organ whenever it is required to do so. Any public institution may be subject to supervision by the Ministry or the appropriate state organ to ensure its compliance with the law and strategic plan agreements (FDRE, 2009, p. 5027).

Besides the quarterly meeting of the Steering Committee, Annual Review Meeting is established in the ESDP as a mechanism of supervision. The meeting, involving a range of concerned bodies including donors, private institutions and NGOs, discusses performance in the implementation of the programs, identifies challenges and recommends solutions (MoE, 2001). Reports are also produced quarterly, bi-annually and annually.

For the public HEIs, financing establishes a strong tie with government. Public HEIs are funded by the federal or state government through block-grant system based on strategic plan agreements that run for five years period, and which shall be revised annually (FDRE, 2009, p. 5023). However, the application of block-grant system of funding is conditional to the capacity and preparedness of the institutions, line item or program budgeting being an alternative in practice.

While public HEIs are encouraged to generate their own income through different means, their capacity to do so is very limited. Also, public institutions are allowed to accept donations from third parties, provided that such donation may not negatively influence their mission. Loyalty to government direction is very important that it is protected by this provision restricting the ability of the public HEIs to negotiate with third parties on terms of donation.

Non-government owned and private HEIs may receive government subsidy, if they are not profit-oriented and if they strive to strengthen the developmental effort of the country in their services. The Ministry is empowered to issue directives on how non-profit private HEIs may

apply for budgetary subsidy or capacity building, and the mechanism of monitoring their use (FDRE, 2009, p. 5037).

Yet another very strong mechanism of state control over HEIs is the appointment of the top management. Governments may use mechanisms to make sure that the top management positions of universities are filled by individuals who are committed to the developmental directions and approaches/ideologies of the state. The procedures provided in the HEP for the selection and appointment of board members, presidents and vice presidents of public HEIs reveal that the government is directly or indirectly involved in the appointment of each.

The board, the supreme governing body of a public institution, according to the HEP, has seven voting members, and is accountable to the Ministry of Education. Four of the board members including the chairperson are directly appointed by the Minister. The remaining three voting members of the board are appointed by the minister upon nomination by the president of the institution (FDRE, 2009, pp. 5011-12). The president, who is also a non-voting member of the board, is appointed by the minister from a short list of nominees provided by the board. On the other hand, the vice presidents are appointed “based on merit and through competition by the board” (P. 5015).

Membership to the board of a public HEI has very vague requirements, nor is it publicly advertized. Only the positions of vice presidents are to be filled based on merit and competition. Moreover, the minister can remove the president from his/her position (p. 5019), and the Ministry can reform the board in part or in whole (p. 5012). Similarly, the board may remove the vice presidents from position, and the president in some exceptional cases.

In a nutshell, these complex relationships ensure that, by law of transitivity, the preference and ideological predispositions of individuals in top management of public HEIs originate from one source – the minister.

State control that comes through these different mechanisms stands in contradiction with the autonomy of the HEIs, which is widely elaborated in the HEP. Though state control gives important advantages for a more synchronized and coordinated developmental approach, it is also noticeable that undermining institutional autonomy is pressing against one of the fundamental features of academic institutions.

Put together, the Ethiopian higher education system has devised multiple mechanisms for state control. State control mechanisms, however, are not everything that a developmental state needs for effective planning and coordination in higher education. There is no sufficient evidence which shows that the education sector, and the higher education sub sector in particular, is sufficiently coordinated with other sectors, as it is within itself. Such coordination requires a central body responsible for continuously monitoring the other sectors and use data for coordinating the planning and implementation of education policies and strategies with that of other sectors. There is no clear statement as to the existence of a central



body responsible for the long term planning of higher education and for the coordination of such with the economic and other social policies. The HESC seems to have a broad range of responsibilities concerned with shaping the future of higher education, though coordination with other sectors in its activities seems overlooked.

### **Central admission procedures**

The centralized admission procedure is, in a way, an extension of the quintessential character of higher education system in a developmental state – the central state control. The ETP appears to remain detached from the practice on the ground with regard to higher education admission procedures. It formulates secondary education to cover four years of duration consisting of two cycles of two years each. The first cycle is for general secondary education in which students will identify their interest for further education and world of work. The second cycle “will enable students to choose subjects or areas of training which will prepare them adequately for higher education and for the world of work” (TGE, 1994, pp. 14-15). Though stated here as if students have the possibility of choosing their line of study and career, twenty years after the issuance of the policy, admission is still done by a central body where only the small percentage top performers get to be assigned to the field and/or institution of their choice.

After completing the second cycle of secondary education, the policy requires students to “sit for examinations of relevant institutions for admission” (p.19). By this, the policy implies that the different institutions would have different entrance exams. It further calls for the establishment of a national organization of educational measurement and examination, but limits this organization only to providing central resources of professional support and expertise, and to coordinating from the center. However, the practice is rather that one centrally administered entrance exam is given and all admission is handled by the Ministry of Education.

In a more recent development, the 2009 HEP recognizes the role of central admission procedure by emphasizing the objective of higher education, among others, being to prepare “knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4979). By this it implies that there is a need for making a centralized national level decision as to how many candidates should be accepted into different fields in order to maintain the required mix of professionals in the market to meet the competitive demands of the country.

The proclamation grants the Ministry the mandate to administer the university entrance examination and decide on eligibility for admissions to any institution. Further, the Ministry determines the admission requirements for students who completed secondary schools in other countries and the special circumstances and procedures for admission of adults, in consultation with concerned institutions. The Ministry (2010b) has also issued a directive for

the implementation of this provision – directive for placement of regular undergraduate students to public higher education institutions (Amharic).

Under the title ‘Rights of Students’ (pp. 5001-02) the proclamation makes no provision that makes it a right for students to choose an institution, department and/or field of study they want. Neither do they have the right to change from one institution, department or field of study to another.

The proclamation suggests that the centralized placement of students shall someday come to an end. The following paragraph depicts such a change:

As and when direct selection of students for admission by public institutions becomes feasible and desirable, the Ministry shall limit itself to administering the entrance exam, deciding on pass marks and eligibility for admission, including entitlement to affirmative action, monitoring the admission process and ensuring compliance by institutions to its directives (p. 5004).

However, it remains unclear as to the circumstances under which the central student placement shall be dismantled. This calls forth the questions: is examination to remain indefinitely as a sole basis for determining admission to higher education? Will other competencies and skills remain having no place in higher education admission?

A point of interest here is that, for the 2015/16 academic year, the two science and technology universities (Adama and Addis Ababa) have administered their own entrance examination, coordinated by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), to those candidates who already have scored a passing mark in the national university entrance examination.

This being an exceptional case, the Ministry remains fully in charge of admission and placement. All those who have passed the entrance exam will make their choice of institutions and specific programs. The Ministry then assigns students to different HEIs and specific programs. Though the criteria and procedures are not clearly stated, the directive (MoE, 2010b) states that the assignment, as much as possible, is made to accommodate the interest and choices of the students, while it also subscribes to the notion that assignments need to meet government’s desire to produce certain combination of professionals as seen fit for the needs of the economy. From this, it can be argued that the central placement system deprives students of their right to pursue a field of study and career of their choices. Moreover, it appears that aptitude, motivation, and skills have no place in the placement process.

### **Technology transfer/learning from others**

Learning from others, through research focusing on technology transfer, adaptation to fit to local needs and circumstances and dissemination of results to industry and society in general, forms one of the pillars of higher education within the developmental state paradigm. Such a purpose of HEIs can also be achieved through different engagements the institutions may have with their environment, such as consultancy services, non-formal short term trainings of different kind, partnerships with industry and community services. The idea of technology transfer is among the major dimensions of the Ethiopian higher education addressed in policy documents, extensively discussed on different platforms but far less put into practice (MoE, 2010a).

The ETP gives a generic recognition to technology transfer where it identifies one of the objectives of education and training to be the creation of competent citizens who, among other things, “show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society” (TGE, 1994, p. 8). Similarly, the HEP sets objectives for higher education that include “promote and enhance research focusing on knowledge and technology transfer consistent with the country's priority needs” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4979). This objective not only emphasizes the importance of technology transfer but also implies the identification of priority areas for the country, though it remains unclear what these priorities are, who determines them and how HEIs’ activities are practically linked to these priority areas.

The proclamation further directs the attention of research at institutional and individual level to focus on problem solving through technology transfer. It stipulates that research, in any institution, shall be focused on "promoting the relevance and quality of education and on the country's development issues focusing on transfer of technology" (FDRE, 2009, p. 4990). Besides, every institution is required to allocate sufficient fund specifically earmarked for research focusing on technology transfer and innovation. Institutions and their academic staff are also entitled to “enter into joint research and receive research funds from external and foreign sources if the research falls within the research standard, code of professional ethics, and norms of the institution” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4991). This provision provides the opportunity to do research with advanced systems and tap the available research funds in the international academic arena. In doing so, it creates better chance of knowledge and technology transfer not only in the content of the research itself but also in using the research facilities of the partner institutions, and learning more advanced methodologies.

The ETP provides for all levels of formal education to be complimented by non-formal education, which should be “concrete in its content, focusing on enabling the learners develop problem-solving attitudes and abilities” (TGE, 1994, p. 15). This is also reaffirmed in the HEP, which allows institutions to offer any type of degree, by the decision of their respective senates, besides those formally recognized by the proclamation. Moreover, HEIs may also offer short term trainings with the goal of “imparting knowledge and skills in specific fields, and award appropriate certificates” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4987). This flexibility in designing programs and trainings would enable HEIs to be responsive to the needs of market and the industry. Trainings focused on disseminating specific knowledge, building particular

skills, or transferring knowhow learned from elsewhere would be possible with such flexibility at disposal.

Endeavors of technology transfer can only be enhanced if appropriate channel is built between HEIs and their stakeholders – relationship with industry and the society at large. The ETP addressed this by stipulating that students, teachers and researchers in higher education would participate in programs that enable them to gain the necessary practical experience in their respective fields. It also provides that professionals of different organizations shall participate in teaching at HEIs (TGE, 1994). Similarly, the proclamation not only requires individuals and institutions to perform consultancy and other supplementary activities related to their areas of expertise, it also obliges HEIs to establish “cooperation relations with industries and other institutions in pursuit of its mission” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4982). These multi-directional and multi-dimensional relations that would be formulated to serve mutual benefits facilitate the possibility for the HEIs to understand the challenges of their partners and conduct researches that can resolve the challenges, while the partner institutions assist in the teaching and research functions of the HEIs.

While the legal framework addresses the issue in such a manner, the practical aspect (the ESDP) also follows up. ESDP-III, admitting that HEIs are not performing well in the areas of research and consultancy, states that they are expected to "produce new knowledge through research, serve as conduits for the transfer, adaptation, and dissemination of knowledge generated elsewhere in the world, and support government and business with advice and consultancy services" (MoE, 2005, p. 18). In order to meet this goal, research forms part of the job description for academic staff, who are supposed to spend a quarter of their time in research activities.

ESDP-IV goes even further and provides a well-articulated outline of actions for improving technology transfer. In the section that describes the policy and strategies for the higher education subsector it reads:

...a framework for national research priorities will be developed in line with which HEIs will develop their own priorities... Universities will receive support for the establishment of research policies, including through innovation funds... university-enterprise partnerships shall be enhanced, ESDP-IV will extend support to selected universities for the creation of technology transfer business units and consultancy centers, in particular at Institutes of Technology (IoTs). ESDP-IV will also build the research and development system that gives emphasis to technology transfer and to expand and exercise useful technologies. This implies building the capacity of technology institutions in technology transfer by giving due emphasis to exercising and expanding useful technologies and making universities' research and development systems to be the principal factor to evaluate their outcome and contribution for country's development. The research and development system will

get due attention to have its own budget and capacity building program will be arranged (MoE, 2010a, p. 65).

However, the same document gives the primary responsibility of technology transfer for TVET institutions (p. 9) calling for them to become “centers for technology capabilities’ accumulation and transfer” (p. 55). HEIs, on the other hand, are meant for “knowledge creation and transfer” (p. 64). While there is no harm in sharing the responsibility, if there is effective coordination mechanism in place, it is doubtful if the TVETs have the required capacity to do in-depth research on technology transfer and adaptation, while in the same fashion, the HEIs may not have the capacity for knowledge creation. What would have made a better sense is if HEIs were responsible to undertake the researches while TVETs provide tailored and practical training for lower and middle level professionals needed in the market.

Finally, an important issue pertinent to technology transfer is the choice of language of instruction. Countries that decide to catch up in development by learning from others are always faced with this critical decision, because language determines how much higher education systems can interact and engage in academic and research activities with other [more advanced] systems. Not only has Ethiopia chosen English to be language of instruction in secondary and higher education, it also has decided that English shall be taught as a subject starting from grade one (TGE, 1994; FDRE, 2009). Since a huge majority of academic literature and ongoing research projects are available in English – the international *lingua franca* of academics, this choice opens up the door of opportunity for accessing unlimited knowledge already accumulated elsewhere.

### **Diversity of institutions**

Different HEIs may be set to serve different purposes, to perform different functions, to have different capacity and status, to garner different types and amount of resources, to set up different governance structures, to have different levels of specialization and focus, etc. Literature has shown that in the developmental state paradigm institutions are often established with such differences so that different types would serve different purposes within the overall mission of education in development.

Examination of the official documents reveals that such differentiation of HEIs seems to be largely missing from the Ethiopian higher education. Specifically, focusing on teaching at the higher education level, the ETP calls for research oriented approach which targets on problem solving capacity. Its statement which reads “higher education at diploma, first degree and graduate levels, will be research oriented, enabling students become problem-solving professional leaders in their fields of study and in overall societal needs” (TGE, 1994, p. 15) implies that there is no distinction among the institutions since all are to be research-oriented teaching institutions.

As the highest governing law of the subsector, the HEP is generally expected to provide details about how institutions may differ from one another – if they do. In the section

describing institutions as legal entities the HEP identifies four levels of status for HEIs: (1) university, (2) university college, (3) college, and (4) institute (FDRE, 2009). Though these types of institutions are not ranked in any particular order, from the requirements forwarded in subsequent articles one can infer the respective orders by looking at how tough the requirement is for each type of HEI. Further, there is no clear articulation of the differences between these types of institutions with regard to their nature and the respective roles they are expected to play in the higher education system. The proclamation does not mention anything about whether they have specific focus area, method of financing, status in recognition, teaching-versus-research orientation, etc. Besides, all institutions are endowed with the right to offer programs that lead to the award of any level of degree (1) Bachelor (BA/BSc); (2) Medical Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM); (3) Master's (MA/MSc), or a Medical or other Professional Specialty; (4) Doctorate (PhD) or its equivalent; (FDRE, 2009, pp. 4982-83).

The proclamation sets out the same function for all HEIs where it says that “the core business of any institution shall be to offer education and training through regular programs, conduct research, and render community services” (p. 4987). Research is to be carried out by all institutions which are required to establish research and innovation fund and are granted the right to use research fund originating from non-public sources. Moreover, “every institution shall ensure that all and every one of its academic staff are engaged in study activities based on literature or research focusing on developmental issues” (p. 4990). This can be seen as a reflection of the determination to use academics as army of research to address the country's development issues.

Expansion of graduate programs (masters and PhD) has been the goal of both the third and fourth phases of the ESDP. This is primarily to meet the growing demand for qualified teaching staff that is created by the continuously increasing intake capacity at undergraduate level. Simultaneously, expanding graduate programs is also explained as a "strategy of revitalizing relevant and quality research undertaking" (MoE, 2005, p. 55) in all HEIs. The HEP also recognizes institutions for having different capacity for offering graduate programs and calls up on those institutions better endowed with resources in this regard to “assist, free of tuition charges and as a matter of national priority, in the academic staff development of less so endowed public institutions” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4994). However, both the ESDP and the HEP refrained from identifying specific institutions and dedicating them to this mission of training academic staff for higher education and conducting more research.

Another possible dimension of institutional diversity is the governance structure of institutions. The HEP puts strong restrictions on public HEIs in this regard, determining what their governance structure should look like (pp. 5006-07) and allowing restructuring when it is meant to achieve more effective performance in the fulfillment of the HEI's mission and, only if it is approved by the Board and endorsed by the Ministry. For the reorganization to take effect, the president “shall submit to the Board an exhaustive proposal discussed by the managing council, the university council, the senate, and by unions of students and teachers

of the institution” (p. 5007). Such a rigorous procedure of review and approval seems to have made it very difficult for institutions to change their organizational system.

Though the proclamation does not seem to appreciate diversity of institutions, what appears to be a more tangible differentiation of HEIs is introduced in ESDP-IV. In the higher education section the document sets a target of having established ten institutes of technology and two science and technology universities (MoE, 2010a), both by the end of the program (2014/15). Nevertheless, the document does not give any further explanations and justifications – it is not known if the institutes of technology will be independent institutions by themselves or as part of the already existing universities; what unique features these institutions will have; what differentiates science and technology universities from other traditional universities; what special arrangements will be made for these institutions, and so on.

It is also worth noting that, in the HEP, institutions are required to offer training in at least one field/discipline (which is the minimum requirement in the list), and are not required to conduct research. However, the experiences of other countries implies that institutes are rather specialized for certain field and engage in wide research activities in the area – often multi/inter disciplinary.

### **Focus on priority areas**

A higher education policy and strategy in a developmental state is expected to identify a priority area that fits in the development plan of the country, articulate it in terms of targets and expected outcomes, define a systematic scheme for how to achieve it, designate the responsible institution(s) for coordinating activities and identify the role of each HEI in the process and setting out mechanisms of support. Though the policy, the HEP, and the ESDP documents make references several times to priority areas, there is hardly a clear articulation of what the priority areas are, what specific targets are expected or how they are to be achieved.

The notion that education and training has to be linked and integrated with development efforts in certain priority areas is first introduced in the ETP. One of the specific objectives of the policy is to “...make education, training and research be appropriately integrated with development by focusing on research” (TGE, 1994, p. 9). Similarly, the HEP identifies that one of the responsibilities of HEIs is to “undertake and encourage relevant study, research, and community services in national and local priority areas and disseminate the findings as may be appropriate” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4981).

The important question that follows would be: what exactly are these priority areas and how are they justified? In this regard, what the policy puts in its objectives as “the development and dissemination of science and technology in society” (TGE, 1994, p.8) seems to be the overarching focus area that has been repeated in the ESDP documents as well.

Primary and vocational education was focused in ESDP-I as a means of addressing the demands of the country and its economy. Therefore, expanding equitable access in these subsectors was set to be a strategic priority (MoE, 1998). Consequently, the share of budget in higher education was reduced in favor of boosting the share of primary education. This appears to be in line with the general practice of developmental states – identifying and pursuing priority areas that are relevant to developmental goals, which at the early stage of economic development are often concerned with building generally educated and vocationally trained workforce.

ESDP-II not only identifies the priority areas justified by the government's goal on poverty reduction, but it also names higher education and TVET as being its area of focus, given the responsibility they have in training the required skilled manpower. "Expansion of the road infrastructure, education, agriculture and health services" (MoE, 2001, p. 27) was identified as major areas where substantial number of trained manpower was required. This explicit statement about the specific role of higher education in the development of the country through emphasis on certain priority areas is a considerable improvement in its own. However, the document does not set specific targets for these priority areas (e.g. in terms of number of new programs to open or graduates to produce, etc.).

ESDP-III largely emphasizes attaining universal primary education by the year 2015 in its vision and mission for the education sector in general. Its fundamental thrust is described as being:

to improve quality, relevance, equity, and efficiency and to expand access with special emphasis on primary education in rural and underserved areas, as well as the promotion of education for girls in an attempt to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 (MoE, 2005, p. 6).

Assessing existing situations, the document asserts that expansion in higher education was guided "as per the national development priorities and skilled labor market demand" (MoE, 2005, p. 13), indicating that new degree programs were to be opened in teacher education, engineering, health, agriculture, ICT and business.

As for ESDP-IV, driven by the long term vision of transforming Ethiopia to a middle income level country by 2025, it stipulates that the economic transformation, among other things, requires a "conscious application of science, technology and innovation as the major instruments to create wealth" (MoE, 2010a, p. 11).

The two key outcomes most emphasized for higher education in ESDP-IV are:

- (a) a balanced distribution of higher education opportunities throughout the country through the widening of access to higher education, in particular to science and technology; and



- (b) increased student learning, personal growth and improved employability through high quality higher education and relevant professional mix (p. 9).

Focusing on balanced access to science and technology does not particularly point at improving the role of science and technology in economic development. The emphasis, therefore, remained focused on fairness of access. However, though it seems inconsistent (if not contradictory), ESDP-IV in later part sets targets that reflect the priority given to science and technology. It targets to increase the number of technology institutes to ten, and to open two universities of science and technology. This is further advanced by the goal of increasing ratio of intake in science and technology to that in social sciences and humanities from 58:42 in 2008/2009 to 70:30 in 2014/15 (p. 64).

Generally, it can be observed that the mass production of competent and innovative graduates in the fields of science and technology sums up the priority goal of ESDP-IV in the higher education subsector. The introduction of “high quality science and mathematics curricula at primary and secondary schools and ... the policy of the 70:30 university intake ratio” (p. 11) are devised as the major mechanisms to achieve this goal.

In the document there is no clear guideline stipulated on how the ESDP and the focus on science and technology shall be coordinated with the works of the Ministry for Science and Technology. Indeed, according to the establishing law of the Ministry, one of its major responsibilities is to facilitate conditions to ensure strong linkage among higher education, research and development and the industrial sector with regard to scientific research and technological advancement focusing on production activities (MoST, 2012). Nonetheless, nothing meaningful has been mentioned in the ESDP that ensures the co-working of these two concerned government bodies.

### **Massive expansion**

A large scale of expansion is perhaps one of the typical features of education in Ethiopia at all levels in the past two decades. In higher education an unprecedented scale of expansion was started in late 1990s and early 2000s. Access and equity are the driving justifications for the ongoing expansion which is also considered one strategic dimension in the ESDP. The HEP states that to “ensure fairness in the distribution of public institutions and expand access on the basis of need and equity” (FDRE, 2009, p. 4979) is one of the objectives of higher education. This is further assured in the ESDP which outlined the establishment of new HEIs to be distributed over different regions of the country.

Another important factor that led to the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia was the apparent demand the country had for professionals of different kind needed to supply its development endeavor. While ESDP-I was restrictive in a sense that it preferred to limit expansion to a few areas that were deemed with high immediate demand, ESDP-II takes a broader look at the need for expansion.

In a country such as Ethiopia where the sector is negligible in its development, where there is a huge demand for graduates (teachers, health workers, lawyers, engineers, etc) and where not only the current but also the future demand for highly trained personnel to serve the public sector as well as the growing private sector is large, it will be a dire necessity to develop and invest on higher education (MoE, 2001, p. 47).

When higher education expansion is planned in a poor country like Ethiopia, an immediate and crucial question the government faces is the question of how to finance it. In this regard four alternatives are apparently discernible: increased government budget, introduction of tuition fees and cost sharing, income generation by the HEIs, and encouraging private and non-government investment.

Table-1 Budget of higher education in ESDPs

ESDP	Higher Education Budget		Increase from previous phase	
	Amt ('000 Birr)	% share	Amt ('000 Birr)	% share
I	1,306,496	10.7	NA	NA
II	3,459,033	22.9	2,152,537	164.8
III	12,937,600	24.0	9,478,567	274.0
IV	30,516,000	21.7	17, 578,400	135.9

Source: compiled by author from MoE, 1998; 2001; 2005; 2010a

Increase in absolute amount as well as the relative share of higher education in the overall budget has been recorded in the ESDP along with the increase in the total budget of education relative to the overall budget of the country (see table-1). At the outset of the program, the main emphasis was on lower levels of education and expansion in higher education was meant to address immediate needs in certain sectors. However, as the program moved forward with later phases, higher education became more emphasized and this emphasis was manifested in expansion of the subsector.

The idea of tuition fees and cost sharing was first introduced in the ETP. The policy clearly puts that the priority of the government in financing was up to the completion of general secondary education, while an increasing cost sharing would be introduced for higher education. It also stipulated that appropriate mechanism shall be devised for students to cover their educational expenses through service or payment after graduation (TGE, 1994). This was brought into effect only in 2003 with the promulgation of the higher education proclamation (FDRE, 2003a) and later in the revised 2009 proclamation. Subsequently, a regulation (no.91/2003) by the Council of Ministers (FDRE, 2003b) provided the detail for the implementation of the cost sharing scheme. The HEP also allows HEIs to charge tuition fees which would be determined according to a directive their board would issue regarding the kind, amount and manner of payment (FDRE, 2009).

Allowing and encouraging public HEIs to generate income of their own to finance part of their activities was another measure introduced by the ETP. The policy states that “the

necessary conditions will be created for educational and training institutions to generate their own income and to use it to strengthen the educational process” (TGE, 1994, p. 32). This is reestablished in the HEP which reads as:

...an income generating enterprise may be established by any public institution upon the request of the president and approval by the board; the enterprise shall have its own legal personality and operate, like any business organization, in compliance with all legal requirements; the initial capital required for the establishment of the enterprise may be a budget allocated by government. The institution shall use the net profits of the enterprise in the pursuit of its mission and objectives in accordance with the provisions of this Proclamation (FDRE, 2009, p. 5026).

Income generation was also one of the target outcomes of ESDP-IV which aspires that by the year 2014/15 (end of the planning period) 22 universities would be able to raise 5% of their budget from their own internal sources, which would be used to strengthen the relevance and quality of their services (MoE, 2010a). However, this seems a very small amount to ease the financial burden on the central government.

Finally, encouraging investment in education and training by non-government and private parties is another trend of development observed in Ethiopia. In this regard, the policy urges the government to “create the necessary conditions to encourage and give support to private investors to open schools and establish various educational and training institutions” (TGE, 1994, p. 32).

The HEP also considers private and non-government HEIs as partners that contribute in the development efforts of the government in the subsector. This is reflected in ESDP-III wherein it stipulates the modalities of engaging private investors and institutions:

The private provision of higher education will be encouraged through the facilitation of quick access to incentives (e.g., land, tax exemption, etc.), provision of technical support and short-term training programs... Mechanisms to foster public-private partnerships will also be developed by undertaking joint studies and designing development strategies (MoE, 2005, p. 54).

By the time ESDP-III ended, private and non-government institutions accounted for 17.3 % of the student population in the country (MoE, 2010a), which is very small compared to the relative share they hold in terms of number of institutions.

Generally, ESDP-II can be taken as the actual beginning of the ongoing expansion program. It sets out goals for higher education expansion with specific numeric targets in undergraduate (30,000 per annum at the end of the planning period) and in graduate (6,000 per annum) programs; it stipulates the opening of new programs deemed necessary for economic development, and provides that opening of new institutions and upgrading the existing ones as a means for intake increase. It also outlines the need for major undertakings

in certain selected HEIs to increase graduate admission as well as diversity of programs at masters and PhD levels. It also acknowledges the contribution of private HEIs in terms of increasing capacity (MoE, 2001), though it refrains from putting a clear target in that regard.

The document also recognizes the changes that are necessary to come about with the expansion of the subsector in terms of infrastructure, facilities, qualified teachers and leadership and management capacity. It stipulates the need to increase the capacity of teaching staff and the leadership in terms of number and qualification locally as well as abroad, and stresses the need for establishing a clear and comprehensive legal framework specifically for the subsector. The 2003 higher education proclamation is consequently promulgated.

The expansion is predominantly financed by the state and is focused on ensuring fairness and equity in the distribution of HEIs in different regions. This predisposition has caused the government to open as many universities as possible in different regions which are the same to one another, as opposed to strengthening and specializing the existing ones in line with the needs of the economy and towards maximization of their economic contribution. Partnership between the private and public HEIs is also deemed to be very low and ESDP-III called for strengthening such partnerships, though nothing has been reported in ESDP-IV.

### **Higher education for non-economic functions**

Though the primary characteristics of higher education in the developmental state paradigm relate to addressing economic needs, through production of the required human power and undertaking research aimed at accelerating economic growth, the non-economic functions of higher education also take a pivotal place. Since developmental state materializes in countries with multitude of challenges, HEIs are also expected to serve purposes that are related to nation building – creating an environment and spreading values that are crucial in building stable state. Such issues are addressed both in the ETP and HEP.

The policy (TGE, 1994), referring to all levels of education, envisages as its ultimate goal, bringing up citizens:

who are endowed with humane outlook, countrywide responsibility and democratic values having developed the necessary productive, creative and appreciative capacity in order to participate fruitfully in development and the utilization of resources and the environment at large (p. 6);... who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline (p. 7); ...who stand for democratic unity, liberty, equality, dignity and justice, and who are endowed with moral values (p. 10).

The policy also aspires for education and training that promote the culture of respect for work, positive work habits and high regard for workmanship, in which traditional education

will be “improved and developed by being integrated with modern education” (TGE, 1994, p. 25).

Similarly, the HEP stipulates that the higher education system shall be oriented towards such values both in institutional practice as well as in the content and approach of the teaching-learning process. This can be observed in the objectives of higher education which include, among others:

ensuring that education and research promote freedom of expression based on reason and rational discourse and are free from biases and prejudices; promoting and upholding justice, fairness, and rule of law in institutional life; promoting democratic culture and uphold multicultural community life (FDRE, 2009, p. 4979).

As an extension of this the HEIs are expected to have guiding values such as “a culture of fighting corruption; economical use of resources and effective maintenance of assets” (FDRE, 2009, p.4981). However, it is highly doubtful if the HEIs have the institutional capacity to demonstrate and promote such values.

In the ESDP, on the contrary, the issue seems to be less emphasized. ESDP-II reinforces the ETP in its predisposition on nation building through promoting certain values but defends that it was too early to practically see the changes realized in such aspects.

The education system will be revitalized so that it nurtures and produces responsible citizens who participate actively in and also knowledgeable about public affairs. To this end, the central mission of all educational institutions will be to provide citizenship education (MoE, 2001, p. 32).

Though the document says that many and varied activities will be planned in order to achieve this central mission, no further elaboration was given, and neither was the issue addressed in depth in the consequent phases.

In response to the growing tensions among students of public HEIs, in 2011 the Ministry of Education (in collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Affairs) has issued a guideline that is intended to promote religious tolerance, development and democracy under multi-ethnic federalism, and peaceful learning environment. The document provides detailed guidelines that aim to regulate everyday interaction among students, teachers and other HEI staff such as religious practices, dressing and dining manners and the like. This demonstrates the notion that higher education is used for addressing the pertinent issues of the country targeting on strengthening the nation state by bringing about stability and promoting certain selected values desired at national level.

Generally, neither the legal documents nor the strategies on education development view higher education to be a purely economic instrument. A repeated statement has been made about the non-economic functions of higher education in shaping citizens with desired values

and in terms of contribution in state building. HEIs are required to promote such values both in their institutional practice as well as in the content of their teachings and research.

## Conclusions

The Ethiopian higher education system shows strong resemblance to that of the developmental states. The objective of the Ethiopian higher education, stated in Article 4 of the 2009 proclamation, to prepare “knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive”, is typical reflection of the nature of a developmental state that targets at improving the economic standing of a country by considering its international comparative advantage using a mix of economic and human capital policies. Likewise, the major characteristics of higher education in developmental states, as identified in the analytical framework, are vividly perceived in the examined documents. Nonetheless, there are also observed shortcomings which could potentially inhibit the system from realizing its expected advantages.

Therefore, it is possible to answer the research question as: the Ethiopian higher education does indeed correspond well with the tenets of those in early stage developmental states, but with limitations of its own.

First, there is a lack of clarity with regard to how higher education is coordinated with other development and social policies and who is responsible to oversee this coordination. The 2009 National Employment Policy and Strategy, which states that the public sector accounts for about 68% of the employment among those with higher education, strongly stresses on the seriousness of the gap between the demand and supply sides of the labor market. This implies that economic policies directed to improving the private sector and the strategies in higher education development should be in tune with each other. Internally, a clear outline is not laid for how emphasis would move from one level of education to another in tune with the corresponding changes in the economy, and development in general.

Second, there are inconsistencies in the documents that lead to the assertion that the different laws, policies and strategies for higher education are set separately and independently with a very loose link among each other. It can be seen that there is lack of a long term and well-articulated vision that serves as an umbrella for all actions that need to be taken in the subsector. There are ample examples of such inconsistency and shortsightedness. For instance, the education and training policy, the broadest framework of action in education at all levels, ultimately concerns itself with improving access at lower level (which was the most pressing problem of the time the policy was issued). Once access was sufficiently expanded at lower levels, it was imperative to move on to the higher levels to which the policy lacks provision of guidance. Similarly, the early phases of the ESDP were entirely concerned with expanding access at lower levels which forced the later phases to abruptly introduce changes to higher education without enough foundations laid down and necessary

connections established. The same can be said about the issue of quality. A far-sighted policy framework should be able to predict the impact of expansion on quality and come up, from the very beginning, with methods of maintaining and improving quality rather than focusing on the expansion, at one time, and then suddenly shifting resources towards improving quality after a good amount of loss in that aspect has been suffered.

Also, it is observed that there are discrepancies between the HEP and the ESDP about certain issues such as diversity of institutions. While the proclamation provides a monotonous definition of HEIs that fails to recognize diversity, in time it was realized that new type of institutions –science and technology universities for instance – are needed and hence had to be created in ESDP-IV. Such differences indicate that the documents are concerned with addressing issues at hand and are shortsighted in that they fail to provide a wider scope with in which future changes and demands could be accommodated.

Third, though technology transfer is put as one of the central ideas in education strategy and in development narratives in general, there seems to be a lack of clarity as to how it materializes and who is responsible for it to take effect. In the proclamation knowledge and technology transfer are put to be among the main functions of HEIs while the main responsibility for the same is given to TVET institutions in ESDP-IV. Knowledge and technology transfer requires extensive research undertakings to identify what is to be transferred and how to adapt it to the local needs. However, TVET institutions do not have research capacity fit for this responsibility; rather they are strong in training lower and middle level professionals. Besides, such coordination between the HEIs and TVET institutions appears missing.

Fourth, while different mechanisms are in principle set out as a means to finance expansion of higher education, the huge majority of the resources come from government budget. Similarly, the expansion is mainly crafted and pushed forth by the state, rather than being driven by demand (which often requires egalitarian distribution of income creating more middle class that is willing and able to invest in education and in turn attracting more private institutions to provide higher education). Reflecting the overall nature of the Ethiopian developmental state, the share of the government in the higher education is substantially large. Even after two decades since higher education has been opened for private investment, the share of private HEIs in terms of student population remains just about one-fifth. As a result, the contribution of the private sector in easing the financial burden of expansion on the government is very small.

On the other hand, the expansion appears to be dominated by the atmosphere of ethnic politics where fair distribution of public HEIs and expanding access in all regions has preoccupied the pattern of the establishment of institutions. Hence number has been highly emphasized and some HEIs have been established in remote areas where there are low facilities and it is very difficult to attract and maintain qualified academic staff – significantly compromising quality.

Fifth, while of course absolute institutional autonomy is fundamentally contradictory to the notion of the developmental state, the Ethiopian higher education proclamation seems to have offered a massive institutional autonomy to HEIs. However, in what looks like a compensatory move, the proclamation takes back the institutional autonomy by posing a number of requirements and restrictions. For example, institutions are autonomous in choosing their area of research (as part of academic freedom); however, in other instances they are required to define their research programs to be consistent with the government priority; they are allowed to receive donation but they are not allowed to alter their mission because of it – (if a university receives money for research from a third party on the condition that it will be engaged in a certain area of research and if that happens to be not within the priority area of the government, the institution is no position to negotiate). The proclamation calls for participation of society in the governance of institutions and democratic leadership, but the appointment of top management to HEIs is nothing democratic. Institutions are allowed to prepare and implement organizational structure, but any change to organizational structure has to be only to improve efficiency and has to go through a rigorous review and approval. Institutions are not at liberty to set their own values, rather they have to uphold what is set for them. Also, the Ministry reserves the right to annul the decisions of the board, to reform the board in part or in full, to fire the president, etc.

### **Implications of the findings**

Proper and effective coordination of higher education policies and strategies with other social and development policies requires a specific institution designated responsible. Such an institution should be engaged in research, coordinate its activities with other agencies and set the directions of higher education, considering both the demand and supply sides, based on evidence and future plans of the country. Considering the mandate given in the proclamation, the HESC appears to be the closest to this responsibility, if it is strong enough to have the capacity for effectively discharging those mandates.

A long term, vision-driven policy framework needs to be established: that would serve as an umbrella for all legal and strategic establishments. The framework should be vivid enough to be interpreted in to smaller scope plans and wide enough to accommodate changes that are likely to happen over a reasonable period of time in the future. Only in this way can there be consistency between the different versions of the plan.

In pursuing technology transfer as an instrument of development through learning from others, more effective coordination is needed between HEIs, TVET institutions and other private and government bodies, such as the Ministry of Science and Technology. The Ministry, being in charge of overseeing the overall activities, shall set the areas of priority at a macro level, and the HEIs then identify the relevant technology and engage in research to adapt it to local needs, while the TVET institutions train professionals on the practical application of the technology. Moreover, industry and society at large have to be widely engaged in the whole process.



While the public sector accounts for a significant majority of the formal sector employment, the private sector remains small and weak for managing the supply and demand of education and training in the country. Therefore without being more open to private investment, unemployment is unlikely to change and individuals' motivation to take up higher education will be discouraged – in effect discouraging the growth of the private higher education. On the other hand, too small a private sector leaves all the burden of financing expansion on the government – keeping away its attention and resources from more pressing reforms. A developmental state is not equivalent to state owned development, it is rather state planned and directed. Moreover, the expansion of HEIs into remote regions shall be reconsidered, the alternative being focusing on improving the existing ones. If at all further expansion is required, it has to be based on the economic benefits it could produce, rather than fairness in distribution. Those in poor conditions should be revitalized with investment towards making them specialized institutions pertinent to the economic and environmental context of their localities which could attract more staff and students interested in the respective fields of specialization.

What one hand gives the other takes – that is the state of institutional autonomy in the Ethiopian higher education. There is a need to make a clear separation in the areas where institutional autonomy is necessary, such as in academic freedom and research financed by third parties, and to limit autonomy particularly on defining the contribution of HEIs in developmental projects and on how public money is used by the institutions.

### **Need for further inquiries**

The findings of this research indicated that the Ethiopian higher education clearly demonstrates indicia of the developmental state concept. However, this research was meant only to provide a preliminary view that establishes insight into the issue by examining certain documents and related literature as its source of data. It did not deal with details of the practical aspects on the ground.

Therefore, taking this research as a starting point, future inquiries need to go deeper looking at aspects of both policy making and implementation, and by incorporating primary data pertinent to both processes. Furthermore, the developmental nature of the Ethiopian higher education needs to be carefully examined in terms of each of the major aspects identified in this study.

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