Enhancing graduate employability for enhancing the role of higher education in poverty reduction: a gap analysis study with particular reference to private providers operating in Ethiopia

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Abstract

With the aim to identify and document gaps and good practices for enhancing graduate employability, what private universities doing in Ethiopia and the associated macro environment were assessed with mixed approaches, using qualitative and quantitative data collection. Methods included: an extensive review of literature, examination of official documents and key informant interview at five institutions selected for case study. Document survey results show that since the second half of the 1990s, Ethiopia has been made to have national policies and strategies promoting and supporting the education for employment agenda which needs to be supported by national graduate employability focused policy framework, vision, strategies, programs, guidelines and working group dealing with the matter. Regarding the situation at micro level, it was found that all private higher education providers covered in the study are well aware of the fact that graduate unemployment or underemployment problem has been manifesting in unprecedented way in present Ethiopia. Paradoxically, however, none of them managed to have a full-fledged system function dedicated to the enhancement of graduate employability. Unlike pre-program need assessment, the practice of conducting tracer studies and/or industry satisfaction surveys for identifying the employment situation of graduates and taking the necessary corrective measures with industry feedback and participation was found a rarity. In so far as interventions seeking to enhance graduate employability through curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities are concerned, much has not been done in all cases. In nutshell, the agenda of graduate employability has not been given adequate attention at all levels: policy, strategy, curriculum & instruction, research and development. Changing such a scenario will definitely enable the case study institutions produce employable graduates capable of emancipating themselves and others from the yoke of poverty.

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Introduction

Relatively, the term 'employability' is a new addition to the vocabulary of higher education. Knight (2001) describes it as a chameleon concept for simple reason that it can be defined differently for different purposes. Some relate it to immediate employment (e.g. proportion of graduates into fulltime employment within 6 months). Others focus on immediate employability; 'work readiness', ability to 'hit the ground running'. Longer term views emphasize lifelong sustainability of the individual's employability (Relton, 2009). Widely, reference is made to a set of skills, understandings and personal attributes that could make the individual graduate employable both in short- and long-term (Ibid, 2009). And, exceptionally, the description given by Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education (2012) on the basis of the learner-centered approach is very comprehensive in nature; hence, very useful in terms of having a broader view of the concept and how it differs from employment.

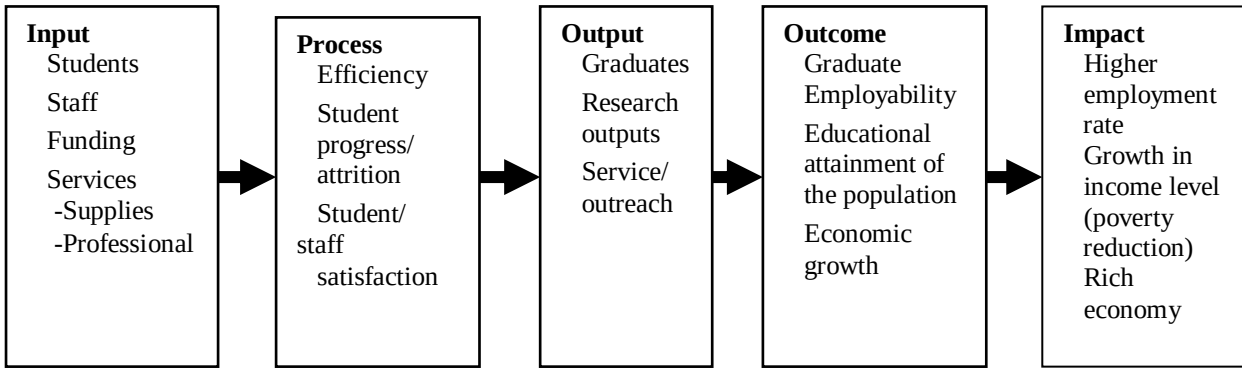
> Employability is about the potential of obtaining and building a fulfilling career through continuous development of skills that can be applied from one employer to another; possessing the set of attributes and skills that match those required by industry; taking the responsibility for self-development through learning and training, either through the employer or self initiatives; adopting the concept of life-long learning; being employed according to their level of qualification, functional competencies and being awarded accordingly in terms of wages & benefits; whereas employment is a contract between two parties - one being the employer and the other being the employee (p.6).

As indicated in the work of Cranmer (2006), there are two opposing views debating on whether or not higher education institutions need to ensure the employability of their graduates through curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The first view bases itself on the Human Capital

Theory that displayed the role of investment in education in order to boost economic and social achievements (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). Accordingly, it promotes the education for employment (E4E) agenda and the associated notion that all academic courses should include employability enhancing content. Whereas, the second view (which is labeled as the liberal view) stands against all this. In fact, for centuries, employability had never been raised as an issue in the agenda of higher education across the globe. This, however, no longer the case in the era of globalization, competitive market economy and massification of higher education; where graduate unemployment and underemployment is pervasive (Cranmer, 2006).

Research has shown that education at any level could make significant contribution to poverty reduction, if institutions manage to produce employable graduates for the consumption of societies (Figure 1). This is very critical in countries where a significant proportion of the population lives in poverty. Unless they intend to enhance the employability of their graduates through ongoing interventions, higher education institutions operating in poor economies, will definitely lose their key role in poverty reduction, and become irrelevant.

Figure 1: Higher education and poverty reduction: The link



Source: Adopted from the work of Nel and Barnard (2009).

This paper throws light on relevant best global practices and what has been done or not done at the case study organizations and their macro environment in so far as the need for enhancing graduate employability for the purpose of poverty reduction is concerned. By standing against the liberal view that opposes the E4E agenda, the paper argues that higher education institutions operating in poor economies must and should raise their contribution to poverty reduction by enhancing the employability of their graduates from time to time.

The problem and the practice in global context

Here, it is worth noting the fact that employability has become so important not only in the context of poor economies but also for a number of other reasons to be seen in global context. In this regard, growth of knowledge economies; greater international competition resulting from globalization; call for improved forecasting of skill needs and education-based solutions; move away from the traditional job-for-life practice; increasing unemployment levels; notions of social justice, with employment seen as a solution to poverty and social exclusion; and, trend toward greater civic participation, can be mentioned as examples (Relton, 2009). In fact, as stated in the work of Cranmer (2006), all societies in the developed part of the world have been introducing policies that seek to enhance employability through educational initiatives with a view to boosting national wealth. In line with this, notions of graduates 'work-readiness' are embraced by many societies as a means of ensuring economic competitiveness in a global context. Concerning the nature and pervasiveness of the problem, it was noted that 'concern from employers that undergraduate programmes are failing to provide graduates with the necessary skills for their careers is a worldwide issue' (Ibid, 2006).

It was since the down of the 1960s that the world started observing efforts directed towards enhancing graduate employability. Europe is a pioneer as far as institutional response and research on higher education –vs- the world of work is concerned (Teichler, 2009). The Institute for Economics of Education was established in 1970 in Dijon, France when worldwide debates focused on the contribution of educational expenditures to economic growth. Following this, the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies was born in Enschede, the Netherlands when governmental steering and institutional management of higher education became more strategic in the mid-1970s. Not only these but, in 1978, the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work was also established at the Comprehensive University of Kassel, Germany as a response to growing concerns about graduate employment and work in the wake of educational expansion and of graduate employment problems visible since the "oil shock" of 1973. Following these three phenomenal events, the continent started seeking solution to the problem through policy research and graduate tracer study, which has become a popular tool for the analysis of the relationship between higher education and work, and taking the necessary actions towards ensuring graduate relevance and employability for the benefit of all parties having stakes in the higher education sub-sector (Schomburg, 2003).

Accompanied by industry satisfaction surveys, the practice of conducting tracer studies was extended beyond the boundary of Europe in the 1980s. This period witnessed not only the expansion of problem-solving research in the area but also policy debates and emergence of government initiatives and programs. In the UK, for example, two government-funded programs; namely, Higher Education for Capability (1988) and Enterprise in Higher Education (1989) were initiated to support the development of

employability skills (Cranmer, 2006). In the 1990s, especially following the conclusion of the 'Cold War' the period witnessing fundamental changes in the political economy of the bipolar world; consequently raising unemployment to higher level everywhere, a number of nations behaved in unprecedented way in their commitment to more closely aligning higher education with the world of work. Accordingly, the graduate employability agenda was made to take centre stage at higher level; and, the liberal debate standing against it was silenced (Cranmer, 2006). Since then, depending on the magnitude of the problem, and institutional and national interests expressed at local, regional, continental and global level, various interventions seeking enhancement in graduate employability have been designed and implemented with varying approaches and scope. Case studies conducted in different parts of the world show the importance of adopting a holistic approach to the problem (Ibid, 2006; Relton, 2009). In fact, what has been documented as best global practice so far in the area indicate that better results can be achieved if various efforts to be expressed in terms of policy, strategy, quality & relevance control, research & development, curriculum & instruction, etc are made at different levels, macro, supra-institutional and micro/ institutional (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A Comprehensive intervention modality for enhancing GE

At Macro Level				
Policy and strategy driving the GE agenda	A national GE framework and working group	Long-term plans with GE focused vision, goals and programs	A national labour market information system	HE relevance and quality control

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At Supra-Institutional Level	
Large scale research and development (R&D) projects	Collaborations between students, employers and institutions; sharing of best practices

At Micro/ Institutional Level			
Institutional policy, commitment and vision with long-term plans, employability strategies and programs - making employability core business across the institution	Pre-program need assessment (market research), graduate tracer studies and industry satisfaction surveys	Creating curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for developing employability skills & attributes for all subject discipline trainees	i) GE profile for all subject disciplines – a set of employability skills and attributes required; ii) Student centered and experiential learning experience for all subject discipline trainees; iii) Ccareer/ personal development planning (PDP) and self-assessment exercise; and iv) Volunteerism for acquisition of work experience while in program

Source: Adopted from the work of Relton (2009).

For better results, the intervention at micro/ institutional level is expected to ensure the engagement of industry (employers) and students in number of areas (Figure 3). The participation and involvement of such stakeholders is sought not only at micro/ institutional level but also at macro level as member of the national working group (Relton, 2009).

Figure 3: Industry and student engagement at micro/ institutional level

Industry engagement	Student engagement
▪ Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular design ▪ Work placement and site visits ▪ Role in course instruction, student assessment and mentoring ▪ Guest speaking ▪ Career/ job fairs & recruitment ▪ Opportunities for institutional staff to update knowledge & skills	▪ Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular design ▪ Membership of institutional boards and committees ▪ Student/ tracer surveys ▪ Responsibility for own skills development/ supported with personal development plan and other reflective learning tools

Source: Relton (2009).

The kind of employability skills and attributes to be developed through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities may or may not be one and the same everywhere. Depending on the labour market target (local and/or global) and industry needs to be fulfilled accordingly, a set of skills

and attributes to be prescribed and included in graduate employability profile (GEP) could show variation as we go from one country/ institution to another. But, equally, it is also possible to find matching prescriptions here and there. This is true in case of 'generic' or cross-cutting skills, knowledge and attributes usually recommended for all students regardless of their subject discipline, like for example, communication, multilingualism, IT, understanding the business, enterprise and entrepreneurship, team working, analytical thinking and problem solving, self-management, learning how to learn, and foundation skills such as a positive approach (can-do attitude), willingness to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism, and take responsibility for outcomes (Ibid, 2009).

Normally, for the purpose of enhancing graduate employability, effective program, skill and knowledge prescriptions need to be made on the basis of research which is why need assessment, tracer studies and industry satisfaction surveys are made part and parcel of the intervention modality presented above. Research is needed not only to identify skills, knowledge and attributes to be developed but also to determine institutional performance (the success of intervention being implemented) in terms of the outcome of graduate employability in employment terms so that corrective measures can be taken to further enhancing employability now and in the future.

Recently published reports show that developed nations adopting the best practices presented above are recording remarkable achievements. In case of Scotland, for example, the following has been observed (Table 1).

Table 1: Employability of graduates from Scotland Universities: 2009/2010 – 2011/2012

University	Graduate employability		
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Robert Gordon University	95.7%	97.1%	97.7%
Glasgow Caledonian University	91.0%	87.8%	96.2%
Queen Margaret University	92.0%	93.5%	93.8%
Edinburgh University	93.2%	93.6%	92.3%
University of Abertay	87.1%	89.2%	92.1%
University of the West of Scotland	86.9%	90.9%	84.7%
Total Scotland	92.2%	93.0%	92.8%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, UK (2013)

If GE is adopted carefully, since its intervention modality has been proved successful in the developed part of the world, it could also bring in excellent results in the other parts of the globe characterized by chronic poverty. Accordingly, the case in Ethiopia has been studied.

The problem and study rationale in the context of Ethiopia

Tertiary education is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. It was introduced at the beginning of the 1950s with the establishment of Addis Ababa University (then known as University College of Addis Ababa) and three other junior colleges. Data obtained from Ethiopia's Ministry of Education (MOE) show that, up until the beginning of the 1990s, the country had two public universities only, while there were literally no private providers. At beginning of 2010, the population of public universities was raised to thirty-two; and a number of private providers came into the scene (MOE, 2011b; 2011c).

With the aforementioned phenomenal events, higher education enrolment in the country (at public and private providers) has exceeded the mark of

400,000 (Ibid, 2011a). And, the share of private providers has been over 17% since they entered the market (Ibid, 2011a).

According to the World Bank (2011), Ethiopia's tertiary level Gross Enrolment Ratio of 5% places the country among the lowest ranking countries of the world or the region (Figure 4). This means that the professional and technical capacity needed at tertiary level is extremely limited in Ethiopia. Given this state of fact, the current massification of higher education in the country is justifiable, but without graduate employability, it can take the nation nowhere.

Figure 4: Higher Education in Ethiopia

	1950s	**1960s**	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1991**	**1999**	**2000-12**
Public HEIs (universities)	1	1	2	3	2	4	32
Private HEIs (universities/ university colleges)	0	1	0	0	0	0	68
Enrolment (in thousands)			<=4.5	18.4	43.8	52.3	467.843
Public							78% - 82%
Private							17% - 22%
Gross Enrolment Ratio (Ethiopia)				0.5%	0.8%	1.7%	5.0%
Low income countries							9.2%
Sub-Sahara Africa							7.9%

Source: MOE (2011a; 2011b; 2011c); World Bank (2011)

Actually, the trend that the country is observing now-a-days is not highly encouraging. Since the 1980s, unemployment has been manifesting mainly among secondary school graduates and dropouts from primary and secondary levels of schooling. This is no longer the only case in present day Ethiopia; in that, with massification of higher education, the country started witnessing the existence of a new youth group facing unemployment after completing college/ university education in the country. The trend is that,

graduate unemployment is growing at alarming rate. It was 0% up until the 1980s; below 3% throughout the 1990s; more than 20% at the end of 2000s; and now estimated >=40% (Berhanu, Abraham and Deijl, 2005; CSA, 2011). With the increase in graduate output; undoubtedly, the rate will continue to increase further unless otherwise effective intervention is sought for combating it in the short, medium and long-term.

If not reversed, the effect would be devastating: higher education providers will lose their value, significance and influence, and become irrelevant; money and other resources spent or to be spent on higher education can't be justified; and most importantly, unemployment and poverty remain chronic problems possibly leading to social and political unrest in the country. So, for all stakeholders (government, higher education providers, businesses which are the major employers, etc), the task of ensuring graduate employability is not something optional but mandatory.

The reality on the ground may or may not go with expectations. Whatever the case might be, with study objectives presented below, researching and documenting macro and micro initiatives that Ethiopia has been observing in relation to best global practices has paramount importance not only in terms of identifying gaps and pinpointing the way forward for the betterment of institutional performance in addressing the problem referred herein but also in sharing experiences and lessons with others and stimulating further research in the area.

Aim and objectives

Identifying and documenting gaps to be filled and good practices to be adopted for enhancing graduate employability and the role of higher

education in poverty reduction in Ethiopia is the whole idea (aim/ general objective) of the study. For the realization of its aim, the study was made to have three specific objectives: i) assessing the type and scope of existing interventions at macro and micro level, ii) investigating institutional awareness about the problem and recorded achievements (if any), and iii) examining limitations or unmet needs with existing scenario.

Methodological considerations

The methodological choice of this research carries a cluster of commitments as reflected in a multi-strategy approach to research. A case study design and a document survey methods were adopted for assessing micro and macro initiatives, achievements and gaps using qualitative and quantitative data obtained from various sources through various techniques (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Data sources, type and collection methods

Data sources targeted	Type of data sought	Collection method	Purpose
Official documents produced at national (macro) or level*	• Secondary, qualitative	• Official document search and examination	For assessing the macro situation
Official documents produced at enterprise (micro) level*	• Secondary, qualitative & quantitative	• Ditto	For assessing the micro situation
Academic officials	• Primary, qualitative	• Key informant interview with semi-structured tool	
Relevant research outputs (grey and published)	• Secondary, qualitative & quantitative	• Literature search, examination and review	For defining the conceptual framework and assessment parameters; and, examining the macro and micro situations as well.

*Includes relevant policies, legislations, strategies, programs, projects, guidelines, working documents, reports, curricula, etc.

Study population and sampling

At the time of initiating the study, Ethiopia had 68 accredited private universities or university colleges. Out of this, five institutions were selected

for case study. In selecting the institutions popularity was used as selection criteria with the assumption that good or best practices to be shared with others could be found more at popular institutions than the unpopular ones. The key informant interview was conducted by targeting and participating one respondent from each of the five institutions. The institutions were asked to nominate and prepare their representative (academic official) for the purpose. For covering only five institutions with case study design, the study had no intention of generalizing its findings at micro (institutional) level to the population of private providers (68) operating in the country. But macro assessment findings obtained through document research could provide a general picture about provisions and limitations (gaps) for the whole nation. Accordingly, the study has covered all policy, legislation, strategy and program documents released for the education sector of Ethiopia in general and its sub-sector, higher education in particular. Additionally, related macro policy and strategy documents prepared for other sectors like industry, agriculture, etc. were also consulted. The list was prepared and accessed by visiting and consulting not only the official websites of the Federal Government of Ethiopia ministries, associated agencies, their documentation/ resource centers and relevant information and communication staffs but also other sources on the net or otherwise.

The data collection process

First, the search for official documents and relevant literature was done via the Internet. Then, the documentation centers or libraries of government ministries, related agencies and institutions were visited. During the visit consultation was made with relevant information and communication staffs. Following this, based on a checklist prepared for the purpose, the existence and contents of relevant documents produced at national and institutional

level were checked and examined to determine the type and scope of existing interventions, their achievements and limitations. This was augmented by conducting key informant interview soliciting feedback from academic officials (institutional representatives) so as to determine institutional awareness and perception about the problem and verify initial desk/ document research results on the basis of which adjustments were made for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of data needed for the study.

Data analysis

On the basis of assessment parameters derived from best global practices, qualitative data gathered for the study from various sources were analyzed using the content analysis technique. In case of quantitative data, descriptive statistical functions and presentation tools were utilized. With the application of the triangulation technique, results obtained through document research were checked against key informant interview results so that to ensure quality in study findings to be reported about the case study organizations. As per the request of the five private providers included in the study, naming names in reporting findings or other aspects of the study was found unnecessary. But, instead of names unique codes assigned by the researcher were used whenever necessary.

Presentation of data, study results and discussions

Apart from their popularity, the five institutions covered in the study also reflect homogeneous characteristics in many respects. In terms of history, most of them were established in the second half of the 1990s. In terms of program, all of them render a variety of training and educational services at TVTE (technical and vocational training and education) and undergraduate

level; and, with the exception of the youngest institution that came into existence in the first half of the 2000s, the rest found to have courses leading to postgraduate (second) degrees in one or more subject areas (Table 2).

Table 2: Characteristics of institutions studied

Provider Code	TVTE programs (n)	Undergraduate degree programs (n)	Postgraduate programs (n)
PHEI[1]	10	22	1
PHEI[2]	7	7	5
PHEI[3]	5	10	2
PHEI[4]	7	8	1
PHEI[5]	4	5	0

Source: Document survey and key informant interview results

The base academic and administrative facility of the institutions is located in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. Again, with the exception of the youngest private provider, all the institutions conduct their training and educational services both through the conventional and distance modes of instruction. Accordingly, they have had branch campuses and/or distance education coordinating offices almost everywhere in the country, that is, in the nine regional states and two special city administrations of Ethiopia.

The macro situation

Since the second half of the 1990s, the macro environment in the country can be characterized by existence of relevant policies, strategies and programs promoting and supporting the E4E agenda. For instance, the Education and Training Policy and Strategy (1994); the Education Sector Development Program (1997-2017); the Industrial Development Strategy (2003); the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (2006); and, the 70:30 Higher Education Enrollment Policy (2009)

emphasize on the place given to education in reducing poverty and steering economic and social development. In congruent with this, in her recent work, Ashcroft (2010) noted the following:

> The Ethiopian Government sees higher education as an important plank in its strategy for social and economic development. Particular ideas related to the purposes of higher education are valued and prioritized. Some of the purposes are seen as relatively less important (for example furthering the arts and culture) than others (especially employability, democracy and entrepreneurialism) (p.1)

Even the Higher Education Proclamation (2003) demands all providers to equip their students with employability skills mentioned above.

> Higher education or training offered at any institution shall be that which focus on experience and student participation; that is practice-oriented; that take the objective situation of the country into consideration; encourage independent thinking, reflect modern views; and that is problem – solving (Article 13, p.2238).

Following the aforementioned proclamation, a quality watchdog for the HE sub-sector of Ethiopia, which is known as HERQA (Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency) came into the scene to function in three main areas: ensuring institutional standards, quality and relevance; offering pre-accreditation and accreditation; and, providing information to the public about standards, programs and status of higher education institutions (HEI).

By design, HERQA is made to address the graduate employability agenda in one way or another. In pre-accreditation process, for example, the agency's accreditation or quality audit protocol demands every HEI to justify the relevance of its programs and to have robust procedures for curriculum design, approval and review by conducting pre-program need assessment,

involving external professionals and employers in curriculum design, evaluation and review process; and, maintaining appropriate balance between subject knowledge and transferable (employability) skills. Failure to fulfill such requirements will lead to denial of accreditation by the Agency. If allowed, in the post-accreditation period, the institution is expected to document student progression and graduate outcome and to seek improvement in student retention and achievement by maintaining data/ information on the graduation rate, the employment of graduates in appropriate graduate level posts; and, taking the necessary actions to maximize such employment; creating and maintaining links between the institution and potential employers that facilitate graduate employment; maintaining contacts with graduates (alumni), and with employers as well to collect feedback on graduates and taking the necessary actions for improvement. This in turn demands the institution to carefully plan and conduct tracer studies/ industry satisfaction surveys regularly. Cognizant of this, in 2007, a data gathering tool (survey questionnaire) for conducting graduate tracer studies has been developed for use by all providers. When it comes to practice, however, what has been done at national level is not encouraging. In fact, Bewketu's recent work (2013) - basing itself on data obtained from HERQA showed that 'no higher education institution has so far undertaken fully fledged employers' satisfaction and graduate tracer studies. There is no such trend at all. The first and last available survey undertaken by the HERQA on employers' satisfaction was in 2010.'

Since the second half of the 2000s, HERQA has been auditing private and public HEIs and publishing its reports for use by stakeholders. One important thing missing in such exercise is that the rating of institutional performance using multi-faceted criteria including graduate outcome (GE

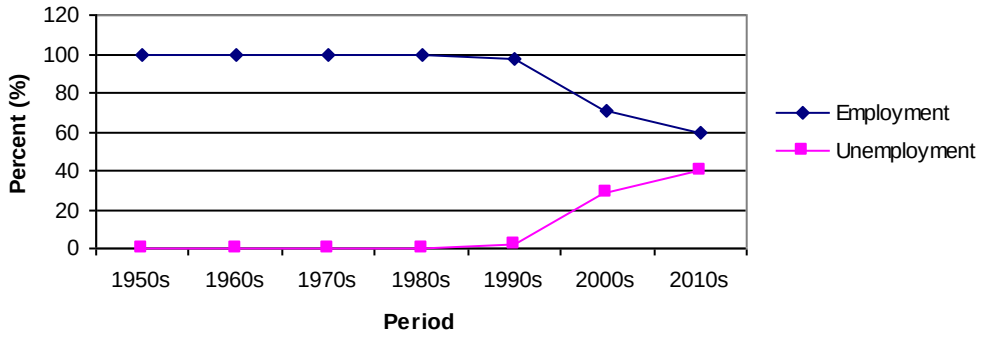
rate), rewarding the best performers and communicating results to the public has not been put into practice yet. Possibly, the aforementioned gap in the area of research would have been narrowed, if this missing component had been considered in the audit exercise.

A government official recently interviewed by local newspaper said that the Government of Ethiopia is making efforts towards addressing the graduate unemployment problem being observed in the country. In this regard, the introduction of a common course on entrepreneurship and enterprise development at all public universities and the provision of technical support and seed money (loans) made available from the newly established government agency working on micro and small scale enterprise development were mentioned as examples. More recently, the Ministry of Science and Technology has come up with a new initiative that seeks to strengthen the university-industry linkage in the country. The Ministry's proposal has been reviewed by stakeholders at national level; and, a final working document is expected to materialize soon. But, in general, when compared to the practice elsewhere, what has been tried and put in place so far in Ethiopia is still far from complete.

The micro situation

It was found that all institutional representatives interviewed are well aware of the fact that graduate unemployment/ underemployment problem has been manifesting in unprecedented way in present Ethiopia (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Trend of graduate Un/employment in Ethiopia



Source: Berhanu, Abraham and Deijl (2005); CSA (2011)

Without differing, the representatives see graduate unemployment or underemployment both as institutional and national problem; and they believe that effective solution to the problem can be found through public-private partnership; which is being discussed as one of the loose areas in the higher education sub-sector of Ethiopia.

When asked what has been the institutional response to the problem being observed, their feedback as well as document examination results showed the existence of gaps in number of areas. As shown on Table 3, the type and scope of interventions existing at the case study organizations is very limited. Pre-program need assessment study, industry participation in curriculum design or review, the invitation of employers for guest-speaking, and IT skill development training for all subject discipline trainees are the only good practices commonly observed at the five institutions studied. Relatively, one institution is found to have more intervention components than others. In all cases, however, graduate employability has not been considered as policy and strategic issue. Accordingly, no institutional working document or framework developed for addressing the problem. Moreover, research endeavors made, and curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular

opportunities created for enhancing GE found to be very insignificant. Respondents identified various factors that they think are attributable to the gaps being observed at their respective institutions; the most common ones being underestimation

Table 3: Graduate employability enhancing initiatives at the case study organizations

Assessment (audit) checklist	Cases (*n=5*)	
	Yes	**No**
Supra-institutional efforts, micro policy, strategy and GE framework		
Taking part in supra-institutional efforts?	0	5
Have had micro policy driving the GE agenda?	0	5
GE considered as core business, strategically?	0	5
GE framework developed at institutional level?	0	5
Curriculum and instruction including co- and extra-curricular activities		
GE profile developed for all subject disciplines?	0	5
Work placement/ experiential learning opportunities created for all subject discipline trainees?	0	5
Student volunteerism exercised?	1	4
Personal development planning and review exercised?	0	5
Entrepreneurship development education and training for all students?	0	5
IT skill development training for all subject discipline trainees?	5	0
Industry participation in curricular design and review?	5	0
Industry participation in extra-curricular design and review?	0	5
Industry made to have role in course instruction and student assessment in all subject areas?	0	5
Employers invited for guest speaking?	5	0
Career / job fairs organized with involvement of employers?	1	4
Research and development		
Pre-program need assessment study conducted?	5	0
Graduate tracer studies/ industry satisfaction surveys conducted?	1	4

Source: Document survey and key informant interview results

of the problem (as unknown/ unfamiliar and new phenomena to Ethiopia), resource constraints, and lack of cooperation and absence of a national framework stimulating and enforcing initiatives at institutional level.

Institutional GE performance

Exceptionally, one institution has managed to conduct a tracer study in 2007. The study had participated 665 graduates and 85 employers; and, it enabled the institution to measure its graduate outcome in varied ways (Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4: Employment status of graduates reported

Status	Frequency of cases (n)	Percent (%)
Engaged in wage employment	339	51
Self-employed	27	4
Apprenticeship	7	1
Further education	40	6
Unemployed – at the time	53	8
Unemployed – since exit	199	30

Source: Hailemelekot and Mesfin (2008)

Accounting the timeframe (6 months) that the literature suggests for calculating a GE outcome, makes the GE performance of the institution to be 45%. If the evaluation timeframe raised to 12 months, then the GE performance for the institution would become 58%.

Table 5: Time taken to get the first job

Time taken	Frequency of cases (n)	Percent (%)
<=3 months	203	31
4 to 6 months	90	14
7 to 9 months	48	7
10 to 12 months	43	6
>12 months	63	9
No response	19	3
Unemployed since exit	199	30

Source: Ibid, 2008.

Due to lack of data, trend analysis as well as comparison with other Ethiopian institutions couldn't be made. Despite this, the effort made by the case study institution deserves appreciation.

The recorded performance for some African universities in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Botswana is between 70 and 80 percent. This and the achievement of Scotland universities presented earlier (which ranges from 85 to 98 percent) show the existence of incomparable scenario in and outside Ethiopia (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2013).

The graduates as seen from the perspective of employers

The 2010 industry satisfaction survey revealed the existence of a wide gap between employer expectations and performance of graduates - especially in quality of work, productivity, specific job related knowledge and skills. Forty percent of employers responded that higher education institutions did not respond appropriately to their needs, in terms of the competencies of new graduates. In fact, 'the only thing that employers considered positive about new graduates was that they could be hired cheap' (Bewket, 2013).

A recent management visit report (Misganaw, 2013) on feedback collected from two giant employers (Ethiopian Airlines & Commercial Bank of Ethiopia) and a well-established employee recruiting agency, Ethiojobs showed that graduates of recent years (over the last 3-5 years) are observed to lack appropriate attitude for their jobs; they lack practical skills, professionalism, office etiquette, discipline, integrity, the readiness to learn new things and taking responsibility for a certain task. Moreover, it was commented that graduates' communication and language skills are very poor; they cannot sell themselves; most applicants fail to express themselves and cannot communicate their ideas; and, lack of confidence in one's potential is observed in many job applicants. All these show the existence of unmet needs to be fulfilled for enhancing the employability of graduates.

Conclusions and recommendations

Ethiopia has had relevant macro policies and strategies driving the E4E agenda in the country. However, the existence of a high level policy support alone can't bring in the desired results unless otherwise it is supported by other important intervention components to be considered at different levels: macro/ national, supra-institutional, micro (institutional). At macro level, beside the existing high level policy support, broadening provisions with GE focused framework, vision – long-term plan with necessary intervention program (projects) supported by working group and institutional performance rating and rewarding scheme using GE outcome as one of the criteria could make a difference. At supra-institutional level nothing has been done in so far as GE focused joint initiatives (collaborative research, experience and resource sharing) are concerned. This needs to change for getting things done with less cost and time so that addressing the problem by undergoing cyclical research and action planning processes is possible. At micro level, the GE agenda has not been given serious attention in many respects: policy, strategy, curriculum and instruction and research and development. The skill, knowledge and attribute deficits reported for recent HE graduates indicate the fact that there is unmet industry need to be met. In sum, with existing interventions, it is hardly possible to enhance graduate employability and the role of the case study institutions in poverty reduction. Thus, the need for change and improvement can't be questioned. The approach to be followed should be a holistic one - considering all aspects of the problem including but not limited to the following: skills, understandings and attributes that students possess upon joining HEIs, staff competence, the ever changing industry needs, labor/ job market information including human resource requirements of the country in short-, medium-, and long-term in the context of the regional, continental and global market.

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