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Full Length Research Paper

Unveiling the Academic Tapestry: A Comprehensive Analysis of Haramaya University's Programs: Performance, and Challenges

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of academic programs at Haramaya University, specifically focusing on graduate competencies and employment opportunities. The research adopted a concurrent nested mixed design and collected data from 724 graduates from various universities through questionnaires and document reviews. Sampling techniques included both stratified and purposive sampling methods. Statistical analysis, including percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Chi-square tests, revealed the significant impact of graduates' knowledge and skills on their job performance. The study recognized the university's success in achieving its primary objectives while also identifying areas for improvement. Recommendations were made to enhance staff profiles, refine course content and delivery methods, promote collaboration projects, and diversify assessments. Furthermore, the study emphasized the need to foster innovation among graduates for self-employment and to address factors like increasing female student enrollment, enhancing stakeholder participation, and improving English proficiency among students and faculty. These findings recognize the accomplishments of Haramaya University while providing directions for further advancement and development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian government has been working to expand higher learning institutions, increase enrollment rates, and overcome the shortage of teachers over the past decade. Despite a rise in the number of institutions and teachers prepared through higher diploma programs over the last half-decade, efforts have been ineffective in bringing about significant improvements. To address this, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has implemented active learning practices such as cooperative learning and continuous assessment, as well as standardized undergraduate curricula, issued higher education proclamations, and differentiated higher learning institutions. However, according to the Ethiopian Integrated Education Development Roadmap (2018-2030) and the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP IV, V, and VI), the aforementioned changes have made little headway (Ethiopian London Embassy, 2020; MoE, 2018). The efforts made during the last half and decade have primarily concentrated on input elements. However, it is equally crucial to assess the outcomes of these efforts. While it is critical to focus on input factors such as facilities and enrollment, it is also critical to focus on the educational outcome and the quality graduates. It is important for these programs' long-term success to make certain that learners receive a high-quality education and that graduates are well-prepared for the workforce. It may be necessary to emphasize toward assessing the effectiveness of the educational system and the quality of graduates in order to guarantee that investments in universities are producing the desired results.

The Growth and Transformation Plan II states that, greater shares of economic production will come from industry and manufacturing, creating a demand for intermediate

and advanced skill labor that the educational system will supply (FDRE, 2016). Therefore, in Ethiopia, the need for economic growth requires that graduates not only to have expertise in their academic field but also possess knowledge and skills that would improve their employment prospects (Hodge *et al*, 2011). The expansion of Universities in Ethiopia makes increased the number of undergraduate and postgraduate programs being offered. However, in order for these programs to be effective and meet the needs of the job market, higher education institutions must be proactive in ensuring that their academic programs are responsive to the changing needs of the economy and meet the requirements of employers (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2021). To this end, it is important for institutions to regularly evaluate and adapt their programs to make certain that they are preparing graduates for success in the workforce.

Studies have revealed that Ethiopia's educational system has struggled to effectively balance the demands of international requirements and stakeholders (Yirdaw, 2016; Zengele & Alemayehu, 2016; Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). On the other side, the higher education system has faced challenges such as a lack of properly qualified instructors, and insufficient quality assurance and regulatory processes, which have hindered the ability to deliver high-quality instruction and produce qualified graduates. Furthermore, these difficulties have harmed the overall performance of higher education and the employability of its graduates. In this regard, a study conducted by Fenta and colleagues' highlighted the correlation between graduates' transitional employability, their cumulative GPA, instructors' qualifications and commitment, and internship experiences. The study recommends the curriculum

should be updated to enhance employability and ensuring graduates meet the long-term employment needs of the labor market. (Fanta *et al.*, 2019).

According to reports from the Ministry of Education, challenges within the higher education system encompass a shortage of qualified instructors, inadequate infrastructure, and deficiencies in quality assurance and regulatory processes. These obstacles have impeded the delivery of high-quality instruction and the production of qualified graduates (MoE, 2018 ; MoE, 2015). The challenges have adversely affected both the higher education system's performance and the employability of graduates, impeding Ethiopia's goal of reaching middle-income status by 2030.

Academic programs, whether within or outside the university, vary in their objectives and structures, yet all aim to cultivate market-driven, skilled, and industrious graduates (Tomlinson, 2018). These programs act as a link between a university and the wider world, prompting a need for universities to assess their academic programs comprehensively evaluating performance, needs, challenges, successes, and opportunities (Aitken & O'carroll, 2020). In line with this, it is quite important to attain insights from accomplished graduates to glean essential information, including their relevant knowledge, performance vis-à-vis job demands in their respective fields, and the alignment between acquired skills and job requisites. Moreover, understanding graduates' perspectives on the educational settings and learning experiences they encountered is pivotal (Lucitasari & Khannan, 2019).

Continuously conducted tracer studies are essential for evaluating graduate destinations and assessing the effectiveness of academic

programs in universities. These studies are indispensable for comprehending a university's success in developing students' competencies and preparing them for the professional world (Cagasan *et al.*, 2017). These studies serve to assess institutions' success in fostering student competencies and acquiring insights into graduates' employability and their post-graduation status, including feedback on the academic programs they pursued (Menez, 2014; Gines, 2014 & Aquino *et al.*, 2015). Assessing graduates' employability becomes a pivotal gauge of how well an institution aligns with its mission, vision, and overarching educational objectives (Pacleb-Ulanday, 2021).

In order to guarantee that students are well equipped skills and knowledge needed for success in the job market, universities should take a proactive approach to developing employability skills. This can involve providing academic staff with the support and resources needed to teach and promote these skills, integrating incorporating employability skills into the curriculum and course design, offering work placements and other opportunities for students to gain professional experience, and providing career guidance and support through dedicated services (Sun and Yuen, 2012). Additionally, universities can involve students in the process of designing and developing academic programs, giving them a voice in shaping their own education and getting them ready for the workforce. By regularly evaluating and addressing any gaps in graduate employability skills, universities can improve the chances of their alumni being hired and help to meet the needs of the global market (Schomburg, 2003).

Albina and Sumagaysay's research underscore the imperative of bolstering the marketability of academic programs and the employability of their graduates. One of their suggestions is for academic leaders, alumni, and industry representatives to review programs on a regular basis. This ensures that graduates are outfitted with requisite knowledge and skills demanded by the industry (Albina & Sumagaysay, 2020). Additionally, Cornillez and associates' study suggests that communication, human relations, and self-assurance skills rank highest among Competencies and values in the workplace. The students' preparation at the university level significantly contributes to their employability (Cornillez et al., 2021)

Since its founding, Haramaya University (HU) has undergone significant expansion and revision of its academic programs to produce competent and skilled graduates in a range of fields that meet the needs of the nation. These efforts have led to an increase in the number of staffs, students, and graduates at the university. HU aims to contribute to the national development goals of Ethiopia by introducing new technologies and providing practical training that supports the growth and transformation of the country. The university has set a goal of becoming one of the top researches and postgraduate institutions in East Africa by 2030 (HU, 2020). Therefore, faculty, administrators, and leaders at HU have a responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of the university's academic programs. Despite the proliferation of available programs, it's crucial for the university to conduct research to ensure each program's curriculum aligns with potential employers' needs. However, there has been limited research, particularly in certain study areas, regarding tracer studies that ex-

plore graduates' destinations and their integration into the workforce. This research aims to uncover the needs, opportunities, and challenges confronting academic programs at HU. The outcome this study is critical for the government to make informed decisions and implement reforms that can lead to improved educational achievements and better alignment with economic demands.

The study holds significance in addressing Ethiopia's employment market needs amid its growing economy. It stresses the adaptability of academic curricula to meet evolving economic and employer requirements. For institutions like Haramaya University, it underscores the importance of reviewing and adjusting curricula to align with employment demands, emphasizing proactive measures to enhance employability skills and integrate successful graduates' insights. Additionally, it highlights the pivotal role of academic leaders, faculty, and administrators in designing, executing, and evaluating academic programs. The study's primary goal was to gather crucial information on HU's academic performance, requirements, opportunities, and challenges. It was structured to address the following fundamental research questions:

1. What was the employment status of HU graduates?
2. To what extent does HU produce high-quality graduates?
3. What was the graduates' level of satisfaction with the quality of their respective academic programs?
4. What were the challenges that graduates face in finding meaningful employment related to their competence?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Theoretical Frameworks

The research titled "Unveiling the Academic Tapestry: A Comprehensive Analysis of Haramaya University's Programs, Performance, and Challenges" includes three major dimensions. To begin, the element of graduate employability and labor market results is based on human capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of education and training in increasing individuals' productivity and employability (Becker, 1964). Furthermore, according to Spence (1973), education serves as a signal to employers about the quality of prospective seekers. These theories serve as a platform for examining the employment status of Haramaya University (HU) alumni and the barriers they face in finding meaningful work.

Second, the concept of educational quality and program effectiveness informs the theoretical framework for evaluating program effectiveness and quality assurance. This draws on program evaluation, curriculum development, and student satisfaction literature (Biggs, 2003; Harvey & Green, 1993). Furthermore, the analysis uses the notion of graduate qualities and employability skills to evaluate the alignment of HU's programs with labor market demands (Yorke & Knight, 2006). This methodology attempts to assess how well HU produces high-quality graduates and how satisfied graduates are with their academic programs.

Finally, the theoretical foundation for comprehending the issues faced by graduates in the labor market depends on mismatch theory literature, which digs into the dissonance between the skills acquired by graduates and the labor market requirements (Sicherman, 1991). Furthermore, the study considers structural barriers and local economic variables that influence graduate employability (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). This paradigm serves as a prism through which to explore

the challenges that HU graduates face in obtaining meaningful employment that is relevant to their local competence.

b) Academic Programs Preparation and Implementation in Higher Education

Universities are expected to design and implement academic programs that meet the needs of the job market and contribute to the intellectual, economic, cultural, and social development of their countries. To this end, universities should invest in the development of academic programs that provide students with the skills and knowledge needed for success in the workforce (Sun and Yuen, 2012). Ethiopian universities are no exception, and are tasked with providing quality education that prepares students for employment and contributes to the research capacity and technology transformation of the country. These institutions offer a range of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities that aim to develop students' competencies and prepare them for success in the job market (Dotong et al., 2016). These programs play a critical role in equipping students for success in the job market and contributing to the research capacity and technology transformation of the country.

Ethiopian Universities offer students a range of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities that are designed to develop their competencies and prepare them for success in the job market (Dotong et al., 2016). The process of designing, implementing, and evaluating curricula is an important part of this effort, as it is responsible for addressing any gaps in students' employability skills and pursuing relevant improvement. By supplying pupils with the skills and knowledge they must succeed in the workforce, these institutions can help to meet the needs of the job market and contribute to the intellectual, economic, cultural, and social development of

their countries.

According to research data, there are a total of 462 undergraduate, 671 master's, and 276 PhD degree academic programs being offered across Ethiopian public higher education institutions. Of these, Haramaya University gives 224 programs, including 74 undergraduate programs, 114 second-degree programs (such as M.Sc., M.Ed., MPH, specialty, and special programs), and 30 PhD-level training programs. This data suggests that Haramaya University is a significant provider of universities in Ethiopia, offering a wide range of academic programs designed to meet the standards of students and the job market.

The quality of higher education at any institution is closely tied to the quality of its academic programs. Program reviews, which involve both self-study and external peer review at the discipline, department, or program level, are an important tool for maintaining and raising the academic program's quality. These reviews are widely respected in higher education as they create an environment that encourages instructors to use intrinsic motivators, engage in self-reflection, and collaborate with their colleagues in a trusting and cooperative manner (Andari, Setiawan, & Rifqi, 2021). By conducting regular program reviews, Universities can ensure that their academic programs are meeting the needs of students and the job market, and are continuously improving in terms of quality and effectiveness.

In summary, academic programs at universities play a critical role in empowering countries and driving their socio-economic, political, and technological development. As such, it is crucial for higher education institutions to carefully consider the structure

of their course programs and create learning environments that support the development of employability skills. By focusing on the performance of their academic programs and ensuring that they are meeting the needs of students and the job market, universities can contribute to the sustainable development of their countries.

c) Current Competences of University Graduate and Employability Rate

Universities are meant to be centers for personal, societal, cultural, and economic growth and development (MoE, 2020). This growth and development is largely driven by the core competencies taught in academic programs, which are designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of graduates and improve their employability in today's society. The employability rate of university graduates is often linked to the quality and relevance of their academic programs, which should be structured in a way that provides students with the required competency for success in the workforce. As such, higher education institutions that have well-designed academic programs are seen as crucial to the socio-economic development of a nation (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021; Rajabifard et al., 2021).

Universities are required for educating the needs of society by producing flexible, highly qualified, independent, and entrepreneurial graduates (Bleiklie, 2004). According to Dotong et al. (2016), subjects such as English and mathematics, as well as proficiency in Microsoft packages, are important for students' success in the job market. Additionally, the instructional competencies of academic staff and instructional quality and teaching facilities can have a significant impact on the employability skills of graduates (Zhu, Yang, & Bai, 2019). By focusing on these factors, universities can ensure that

their academic programs are preparing students for success in the workforce and ensuring to the socio-economic development of their countries.

Kalaw has conducted a survey and reached to conclusion that many higher education institutions offer academic programs that provide training to a variety of clients, but do not adequately judge their students' performance in terms of employability and satisfaction (Kalaw, 2019). This suggests that there may be questions and concerns from stakeholders about the performance, needs, and challenges of academic programs at education institutions. Conducting a study to gather information about these areas can help to address these questions and provide insight into ways in which the university's academic programs can be improved and better fulfill the requirements of students and the job market.

Siraye and his team done a comprehensive tracer study focusing on the Business and economics graduates' employability from Bahir Dar University. The findings revealed that problem-solving abilities, information technology expertise, adaptability to change, and willingness to take risks stood out with the highest mean weighted discrepancy scores. Graduates emphasized that the ability to identify problems swiftly and make quick decisions ranked highest in terms of both mean weighted disparity scores and urgent need for curriculum enhancement (Siraye et al., 2018).

Likewise, Fenta and colleagues undertook a survey aimed at analysing the supply-side factors influencing the employability of recent graduates. Their research discovered a positive relationship between graduates' transitional employability and factors such

as GPA overall, chosen field of study, and participation in internships (Fenta *et al.*, 2019).

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Using a concurrent nested mixed design, researchers combined surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews to collect data simultaneously (Morse, 2016). They employed structured interviews, focus group discussions, self-administered questionnaires, and secondary data sources to gather information for this study. To secure more information on their experiences and perceptions of HU's academic programs, structured interviews were performed with a deliberate selection of recent graduates, employers, and peers. Focus group discussions were held with a sample of recent graduates to delve deeper into their experiences and views. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to a larger sample of recent graduates to collect more extensive data on various topics related to their employability and satisfaction. In addition to survey and interview, secondary sources like academic program documents, reports, and publications were gathered to complement and provide context to the primary findings.

This study examined 12 academic programs within four academic units: College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Haramaya Institute of Technology, College of Social Sciences, and College of Business and Economics. Utilizing a mixed-method design, both probability (simple and stratified sampling) and nonprobability (purposive and snowball) sampling techniques were employed. The sample size was determined using the scientific formula advocated by Yemane, a widely used method for survey sample size calculation, supplemented by judgmental methods. The scientific formula

considers the total population size, the proportion of the population that has a certain characteristic (in this case, employers' satisfaction with graduates), the desired margin of error, and the desired level of significance. Using this equation, the researchers determined that a sample size of 1385 graduates would be sufficient to accurately represent the population and meet the desired margin of error and level of significance. This sample was then proportionally allocated to each stratum (college, department, and year of graduation) and final selection was made using simple random sampling, meaning that each graduate in the population had a fair possibility of getting chosen for the sample.

In total, 724 graduates took part in the survey, with a 100% response rate. A list of organizations that had employed HU graduates in the last three years was obtained from the Career Development and Alumni Affairs Office of HU, and a total of 183 employers participated in the study, representing with a response rate of 91.5%. In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews with important in-

formants such as HU's President, Deans, Directors, and Department Heads were undertaken. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the performance, needs, and challenges of HU's academic programs.

Three experienced professionals from HU's Colleges of Education and Behavioral Sciences meticulously reviewed the questionnaire items for content validity. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all perception, expectation, and satisfaction dimensions, averaging a score of 0.91, confirming the tool's reliability. The pilot study affirmed its consistency, establishing its suitability for data analysis. The survey and interview data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Thematic analysis was used to assess qualitative data and statistical software was used to analyze quantitative data. The findings of the study were then used to provide suggestions for improving efficiency, needs, and challenges of HU's academic programs.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) Students' Employability

Table1: Employment status of recent graduates

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	644	89
	No	80	11
	Total	724	100
Missing	System	0	0
Total		724	100.0

According to a study of 724 participants, the employment rate of HU's regular undergraduate program graduates was 89% ($80/724 = 0.11$, or 11% not employed). This is higher than the national employment rate for college graduates aged 25 and over, which was

84.3% in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

In addition to the overall strong employment rate, these findings imply that HU's recent graduates are highly sought after in the job market. However, it cannot be said that the

employment rate of graduates was the same across colleges. Graduates from Haramaya Institute of Technology (HiT) complained that there were few job opportunities for them. According to a study of graduates from HiT, some respondents reported facing challenges in finding job opportunities (Fenta *et al.*, 2019). Some graduates stated that the government had encouraged more students to pursue technology and science fields without fully considering the capacity and needs of the job market in those fields. As a result, some HiT graduates may have struggled to find employment in their chosen fields. However, other HiT graduates have been able to find employment in different parts of the country as experts. Some graduates have also turned to full-time politics or have remained jobless (Fenta *et al.*, 2019).

Similarly, females graduate from the Department of Agribusiness and Natural Resource Management graduates complained that there were having a difficult time finding suitable jobs. According to several studies, the employment prospects for female university graduates in the area of agribusiness have been somewhat limited in recent years. Fizer, (2013), found that many women who completed degrees in agribusiness were unable to find work in their chosen profession,

Table 2: The type of organizations for graduates' employment

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Self-employed	23	3.2
	Government	564	77.9
	Private organization	73	10.1
	NGO	13	1.8
	Other	5	.7
	Total	678	93.6
Missing	System	46	6.4
Total		724	100.0

with some being forced to take on roles in unrelated industries.

A Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce study found that fields such as engineering, computer science, and business tend to have higher employability rates compared to education and humanities (Georgetown University, n.d). The data in our study showed that the rate of employability was high among graduates from the Sport Science Academy, the College of Social Science and Humanities, the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. In comparison, the College of Health and Medical Sciences had an exceptionally high rate of employment, with 77% of graduates being offered jobs by government organizations upon graduation. Furthermore, the highest number of graduates who secured employment before graduation came from the College of Social Science and Humanities and the College of Natural and Computational Sciences. These findings align with the trends identified in the Georgetown University study, indicating that graduates from certain fields may have an advantage in the job market.

More than three-fourths, 564 (77.9%) of the recent graduates of HU were employed in government organizations. Only 73 (10.1%) graduates were employed in private organizations, whereas 23 (3.2%) of the graduates were self-employed. This means that HU plays the major role in fulfilling the demands of the government in terms of supplying skilled manpower to different government institutions.

A study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that certain fields, such as engineering, computer science, and business, tend to have

Table 3: Graduates interest for further education

Interest to continue for further education		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	29	4.0
	Yes	686	94.8
	Total	716	98.8
Missing	System	9	1.2
Total		724	100.0

Table 3 in our study also illustrates the large number of graduates who aim to advance their careers through additional education. It indicated many of recent graduates, 94.8% or 686 respondents, intended to continue their education. This finding is consistent with previous research on the importance of further education in career advancement. For example, a study by Makarenko, Oliinyk, and Kazakova (2018) found that individuals who actively pursue additional education are more prone to reach their professional goals and achieve career success.

Continuing education can take many different forms, including earning additional degrees, obtaining professional certifications,

higher employability rates compared to education and humanities. In our study, a large majority (77.9%) of the recent graduates from HU were employed in government organizations, while only a small percentage (10.1%) were employed in private organizations and 3.2% were self-employed. The result of this finding suggests that HU plays an important role in meeting the demand for skilled workers in government institutions. Of the 564 recent graduates, 564 were employed by government organizations, 73 were employed by private organizations, and 23 were self-employed.

and participating in training and development programs. A Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce study found that those who hold advanced degrees tend to have higher employability and earning potential in comparison to those who only have a bachelor's degree. Additionally, the report found that certain fields, such as engineering, computer science, and business, tend to have higher employability rates compared to education and humanities.

Table 4: Course contents relevance in job placement success

Course contents of your major field of study		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
Valid	Very poor	19	2.6	4.03	.948
	Poor	33	4.6		
	Fair	98	13.5		
	Good	324	44.8		
	Excellent	246	34.0		
	Total	720	99.4		
Missing		4	.6		
Total		724	100.0		

A study conducted at HU found that the majority of respondents, 72.8% or 570 individuals, rated the course content of undergraduate academic programs as good or excellent. Only 13.5% of respondents, or 98 individuals, considered it fair, while a small percentage rated it as poor or very poor. These findings suggest that the curricula at HU provide a high-quality body of knowledge and skills to students.

These results are supported by research on the importance of course content in universities. A study by Ali and Ahmad (2011) found that the standard of course content is a major factor in student satisfaction and success in college. The authors argue that relevant, engaging, and well-organized course content can improve student learning outcomes and increase retention rates.

However, in an interview with a member of the HU academic staff, the following major problems were cited:

Numerous issues surfaced during the implementation of the academic programs, which were of significant

concern to us. These included structuring the course sequence, organizing parallel and block courses, and striking a balance between theoretical and practical components within the curriculum(R-1)

The balance between theoretical and practical components is crucial in the implementation of academic programs. Palm (2009) found that a mix of both theoretical and practical components can help students apply their knowledge to real-world situations. However, if there is an excess of emphasis on one aspect over the other, it can lead to an imbalance in the educational experience.

In addition, according to research, continuous assessment can enhance the learning environment in higher education, promote positive student-learning experiences, and facilitate interactions between students and teachers (Sotiriou, CH Tong, & Standen 2018). It has also been found to improve student motivation by encouraging the adoption of formative assessment practices, and to empower students to take ownership of their learning and education (Sotiriou, CH Tong, &

Standen 2018).

Table 5: Assessment of the teaching learning process

Assessment conditions of students		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Valid	Very poor	33	4.6	3.62	1.866
	Poor	98	13.5		
	Fair	168	23.2		
	Good	269	37.2		
	Excellent	152	21.0		
	Total	721	99.6		
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		724	100.0		

In this regard, only 58.2% (or 421 respondents) reported that the assessment of the teaching learning process was good or excellent. The remaining respondents rated the current assessment practice as fair (23.2% or 168 respondents), poor (13.5% or 98 respondents), or very poor (4.6% or 33 respondents). This suggests that the assessment of learning in the academic programs may be an area that requires attention from university leaders. Research has shown that assessment of learning, or the evaluation of what students know, understand, or can do in relation to relevant achievement standards, is a key part of an academic program's overall quality (Fawns & Sinclair, 2021).

b) Graduates' level of satisfaction with the quality of their respective academic programs

Academic staff should place greater emphasis on higher levels of thinking skills so that

students may learn to support their ideas and beliefs with evidence and make critical judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods by examining how others gathered and interpreted data (Dewey, 1933; Bloom et al., 1956). In order to foster these skills, it may be helpful for staff to place a greater emphasis on them in their teaching. In addition to focusing on student learning, it is also important to consider the satisfaction of graduates with the academic programs in question. The graduate survey, which provides detailed information about the future plans of all graduates and alumni, organized by college and other categorical selections, can be used by the institution for accountability, program review, and accreditation purposes (Astin, 1993).

Table 6: Teachers' quality in terms of subject knowledge

Teachers' quality in terms of subject knowledge		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Valid	Very poor	24	3.3	3.97	2.103
	Poor	46	6.4		
	Fair	138	19.1		
	Good	302	41.7		
	Excellent	210	29.0		
	Total	720	99.4		
Missing	System	4	0.5		

Total	724	100.0		
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According to a recent survey, a high percentage of respondents (over 70%, or 512 out of 720) believed that the academic staff at HU were competent in their subject matter. Only a small percentage (9.7%, or 70 respondents) voiced dissatisfaction with teacher quality in terms of subject knowledge. The remaining respondents rated the quality of their teachers as fairly good. This suggests that the subject matter knowledge of HU's teachers is generally satisfactory. However, in an interview with a graduate of the English Language Program, concerns were raised about the subject matter expertise of some of the instructors. The graduate stated,

Back in our graduate studies, there was speculation among us about whether

some of our English instructors had specialized knowledge in the English language or not. It was quite intriguing and made for some memorable conversations(R-2).

The quality of teachers is a key aspect in the success of higher learning institutions. In the face of changing needs and large, diverse classrooms, It is critical for teachers to receive adequate support and professional development. Unfortunately, this is an area that is often neglected in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ayodele, 2018). Adequate preparation and professional development opportunities are essential for teachers to be able to effectively meet the challenges of their careers.

Table 7: Teachers' quality in terms of their pedagogical skills

Teachers' quality in terms of teaching skills		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
	Very poor	22	3.0	3.79	.99
	Poor	53	7.3		
	Fair	157	21.7		
	Good	313	43.2		
	Excellent	178	24.6		

Note: The mean and standard deviation are computed from a five-point Likert-Scale measure

Accordingly, a high percentage of respondents (over 68%) reported that the academic staff at HU were competent in their pedagogical knowledge and skills. Only a small percentage (10.3%, or 75 respondents) voiced dissatisfaction with teacher quality in terms of the delivery of lessons. The remaining respondents (21.7%, or 157 respondents) rated their teachers as fairly good in their pedagogical knowledge. While this indicates that the

pedagogical knowledge of HU's teachers is generally satisfactory, there may be room for improvement in terms of enhancing their teaching skills.

Research has demonstrated that teachers have a significant impact on student achievement, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and language (Canales & Maldonado, 2018). As a result, to effectively assist student learning, instructors must continue to

expand their knowledge and competencies.

Table 8: Students involvement in research projects

Chances to participate in research projects		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Valid	Very poor	90	12.4	3.08	1.265
	Poor	170	23.5		
	Fair	165	22.8		
	Good	188	26.0		
	Excellent	111	15.3		
	Total	724	100.0		

Having a strong infrastructure to aid research can help to foster a research culture within an institution and provide necessary resources for research endeavors. According to a survey of Haramaya University graduates, their involvement in research projects was rated as fair. 41.3% (or 299 respondents) rated the research experience as good or excellent, while 36% (or 260 respondents) rated it as poor or very poor. The remaining respondents (22.8%, or 165 respondents) rated their participation in research projects as fair. These findings imply that there is room for improvement in terms of providing opportunities for students to participate in research.

Research projects can be an important way for students to engage in inquiry and independent research, and to apply their scientific skills in real-world contexts (Delaram, Etemadifar, & Shams, 2020). By providing more opportunities for students to participate in research, universities can help to promote these valuable learning experiences.

c) Challenges that graduate face in finding meaningful employment related to their local competence

According to the survey, a high percentage of the graduates (89%) were employed. This represents a strong employment rate in the job market and suggests that the academic programs and graduates were well-prepared for the workforce. However, It should be noted that this does not mean that there were no challenges or difficulties faced by these individuals. Some graduates may have had difficulty finding employment, and even those who were successfully employed may have faced challenges in their jobs. Further research may be needed to understand the specific challenges and difficulties that graduates of these academic programs face in the job market.

Table 9: Emphasis on practical aspects of teaching and learning

Emphasis on practical teaching and learning		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Valid	Very poor	42	5.8	3.49	1.355
	Poor	124	17.1		
	Fair	164	22.7		
	Good	241	33.3		

	Excellent	151	20.9		
	Total	723	99.9		
Missing	System	2	.2		
Total		724	100.0		

According to a survey of HU students, only 54.2% (or 421 respondents) reported that the emphasis on practical aspects of teaching and learning at the university was good or excellent. A significant number of respondents (23.2%, or 168 respondents) rated the practical aspects as fair, while 13.5% (or 98 respondents) rated them as poor, and 4.6% (or 33 respondents) rated them as very poor. These findings suggest that there may be room for improvement in the emphasis on practical aspects of teaching and learning at HU, and that university leaders may need to focus on this aspect of the academic programs. In connection to the practical aspects of learning and teaching, one of the graduates of HiT said:

My experience at HU was enjoyable, yet I believe the Civil Engineering program at HiT could enhance its resources, particularly in terms of practical equipment such as machinery. I noticed graduates from Adama Science and Technology University had more hands-on experience with operating large machinery, which made me slightly self-conscious in comparison. Shifting HiT's technology campus focus from purely theoretical learning to incorporating more practical experiences could be highly beneficial (R-3).

According to the evidence of HU graduates, there is a shortage of practical resources, such as machinery, in some colleges and departments, including the Civil Engineering program at HiT. This scarcity of resources might put students at a disadvantage, limiting their capacity to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world circumstances and obtain a deeper comprehension of their course material. (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2018). In particular, recent graduates from the College of Natural and Computational Sciences reported a lack of value placed on laboratory facilities, which are important for academic performance and achievement. Despite these challenges, it has been noted that HU is still better equipped than many other universities in the country.

When asked to assess the significance of classes and job skills for their future careers, a graduate from the College of Social Sciences and Humanities expressed:

Within the field of social science encompassing history, geography, and English language, the perceived importance is relatively low. According to this graduate, this field primarily directs individuals toward teaching roles, which may offer inadequate compensation. Drawing from personal experience as a graduate of HU, time management emerged as the most

crucial job skill, while foreign language proficiency

and international experience were considered the least important (R-4).

Table 10: The graduates' attitude towards the government jobs

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	43	5.9
	Disagree	67	9.3
	Undecided	27	3.7
	Agree	268	37.0
	Strongly agree	285	39.4
	Total	690	95.3
Missing	System	34	4.7
Total		724	100.0

In addition to a lack of practical resources and laboratory facilities, HU graduates also identified personal attitudes towards work and high costs of local internet access as challenges in finding employment (Bauer, 2018). While a majority of respondents believed that government jobs could improve their lives (Kettl, 2015), only 15% disagreed with the idea that the government should be the sole provider of employment (Lerman, 2019).

Furthermore, 65.5% of respondents were unable to afford the expense of internet access, which is necessary for searching and applying for job openings advertised online (Brown, 2020). These findings suggest that HU graduates may face barriers to employment beyond their qualifications and skills and that addressing these issues could improve job prospects for graduates.

Table 11: Description of respondents in terms of locality

Locality	Number	Percent	Chi-square	Asymp.sig(2-sided)
Rural	269	37.7	15.35	0.63
Semi-urban	201	28.2		
Urban	243	34.1		
	713	100.0		

Table 11 shows that a majority (37.7%) of HU graduates came from rural areas prior to enrolling in the university. However, a significant proportion (34.1%) also came from urban backgrounds. Overall, recent HU grad-

uates had a diverse range of backgrounds, including rural, semi-urban, and urban areas. This indicates that the university has experience in accommodating a diverse group of students. The Chi-square test indicates that there was not a significant difference in the

frequency of graduates from urban, semi-urban, and rural backgrounds. This suggests that the proportions of recent graduates were relatively equal.

Geographical location can be a challenge for recent graduates in finding meaningful employment, especially for those who come from rural areas. In Ethiopia, where 80% of the population lives in rural areas, many graduates return to their ancestral homes after completing their studies. In addition to geographical barriers, nepotism, or the practice of giving jobs to relatives of officials, can also be a challenge in the job search process (Gagliarducci & Manacorda, 2020). One graduate reported that nepotism not only affects the recruitment process, but also influences internal promotions and the ability to secure higher positions.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals the challenges recent graduates from HU encounter while seeking employment within their local community. Despite the university's high employment rate and strong employer recognition, various factors hinder graduates' job prospects. Inadequate training for HU educators impacts both educational quality and graduate employability. Insufficient physical infrastructure and learning resources further limit the practical application of acquired skills.

Personal attitudes towards labor and employment significantly affect graduates' struggles. Respondents highlighted obstacles linked to nepotism and political influences during hiring processes. Additionally, graduates, mainly from rural backgrounds, face hurdles due to limited connections in urban job markets where opportunities are more abundant, exacerbating their employment challenges. In response to these challenges, it's crucial

for the relevant authorities to take proactive steps addressing the study's findings. Actions could include updating HU's curriculum and teaching approaches to ensure relevance, supporting educators in accessing professional development, and ensuring the university has adequate facilities for student learning. Addressing systemic issues like nepotism and political influence in hiring processes is also vital. Moreover, providing support for rural graduates transitioning to urban settings, where job opportunities are more abundant, is key.

These measures are geared towards improving the employability and job satisfaction of HU graduates, enabling them to make substantial contributions to local community growth and development. Therefore, the support provided by the university's career office plays a significant role in assisting graduates.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of the study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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