

Quality Matters

Volume 2 No.7 April 2008 *A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance*

St. Mary's University College.

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Quote of this issue

- *Quality is not just the absence of defects (Backward looking) but the presence of value (forward Looking.)*

Karu Isikawa

This newsletter is published every three months by SMUC's Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance. The Objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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Graduate Tracer Study underway

Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CERIQA) of St. Mary's University College is currently undertaking a graduate tracer study on its graduates of the regular program.

According to Ato Hilemeleket Taye, Director of the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance of the University College, such a study is one of the essential tools to enable universities, colleges, technical and vocational schools develop a well designed education and training programs by obtaining a comprehensive and detailed picture of the labor market outcomes of their graduates. Also, it was learnt that such information on graduates is important to governments, donor agencies, and other key stakeholders in civil society in terms of developing and maintaining effective education, training and employment policies at macro and micro level.

It was disclosed that the design of the study is made in line with the present strategic plan of the University College that stresses on the need to deliver market (demand) driven services. SMUC is required to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of how well its education/training system has prepared graduates for the workplace, further education and life after University/

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From the Editorial Desk

In today's world, knowledge is a cornerstone of human development: a means of expanding people's capabilities and a tool for overcoming human poverty. Recently, it is becoming increasingly clear that knowledge is not only a prerequisite for designing and producing competitive goods and services, but has become, thanks to scientific and technological developments, an integral component of such goods and services in themselves.

It is with this presumption that the educational system of our country has recently undergone series of reforms making quality issues of the higher education institutions the core of its agenda. This is done with the intention of enabling our universities primarily contribute to the creation of the needed infrastructure that facilitates the acquisition, dissemination and generation of knowledge for the socio-economic development of the country.

ADRCs are recent phenomena in the Ethiopian Higher Education system and thus represent something of a fresh start in our thinking about our peculiar quality assurance and enhancement needs in the higher education institutions. It is in this spirit that institutions have been, recently, urged to offer quality education to students. Currently, ADRC projects among higher education institutions in the country are expected to join efforts for the enhancement of quality assurance and institutional planning in universities across the country. This is done through promoting valid instruments of quality assurance at national level through evaluation of programs, courses, assessment of instructors,

student performance, and establishment of comparable statistical databases of participating universities.

The ADRCs should, therefore, play their indispensable role in creating enabling academic environment in higher education institutions. This is achieved through staff development packages: providing training on instructional skills, and program as well as course design as part of continuous professional development for academic staff members. Second is promoting quality education through quality assessment, advice and research on academic programs. Third is professional service by providing services and resources to support the teaching-learning process and to improve quality and relevance of courses and programs. ■

Useful Links

Ministry of Education

Website: <http://www.moe.gov.et/>

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)

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

PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education

Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/

International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

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

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)

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

Center for International Research on Higher Education

Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe

Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

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

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>

International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)

Website: <http://www.bc.edu>

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

Website: <http://www.inqaah.nl>

News Items

Graduate Tracer Study ...

College by obtaining feedback both from its graduates and their employers.

The study is well expected to trace 3,911 SMUC graduates from 1993 to 1999 Ethiopian calendar at three different levels: certificate, diploma, and degree. The study also seeks to collect data from employers of the graduates. ■

The fifth exhibition of Salesmanship in Action

St. Mary's University College hosted an exhibition of salesmanship in action for the fifth time. This year, the department of Marketing Management organized the event, from 10 to 16 March 2008, at Mexico campus. In an interview held with the department's head, Ato Terefe Feyera, it was learnt that the event is organized for regular TVET first year Marketing Management students. The program needs 70 percent practical training and 30 percent theoretical training. Around 81 first year students of the department took part in the event.

More than 100 students and SMUC staff attended the opening ceremony. The exhibition was aimed at equipping students with practical skills of salesmanship. Also, the profit collected from the sales will be donated to the community service program of the university college. ■

A half-day Practicum enhancement workshop

The Practicum and Apprenticeship office at St. Mary's University College organized a half-day practicum enhancement workshop for practicum tutors on March 15, 2008. The workshop, which was conducted at the moot court in Mexico campus, is part of the continuous professional development package of the office. In an interview with Ato Fisshea Tesfaye, Head of the Office, it was also learnt that such an experience sharing forum is organized at least once every year.

The workshop aimed at enhancing the quality of the practicum by focusing on outstanding issues, sensitizing participants on concepts, components and present practices of practicum, the new practicum grading policy. Close to 21 academic staff members from the faculty of Teacher Education attended the workshop.

The resource person for the workshop was Ato Melaku Girma, Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Education. Areas of his presentation focused on the major components of practicum (preparation, school activities, reflection and portfolio) and their execution in respect to the national curriculum guideline for pre-service teacher education programs, commonly known as TESO. Moreover, he discussed on the strengths and weaknesses of the present practices of practicum sessions in the University College. ■

The workshop was concluded after having thoroughly discussed on the need to put the new grading policy in place, handling of portfolio, as well as the importance of attendances in reflection sessions. ■

Quality Assurance Special Interest Group(SIG) held its second workshop.

Quality assurance Special Interest Group (SIG) of pioneer and newly established public universities met for three days, 28 February 2008 to 1 March 2008, to discuss on ways of ensuring quality educational service delivery in higher education institutions of the country.

The workshop is the second of its kind since the Dutch-Government-funded project of establishing Academic Development and Resource Centers (ADRCs) phased out and the project is passed onto the higher education institutions with only the logistic support of EQUIP to stay.

Issues addressed in the workshop were related to staff development through the provision of training on instructional skills, and program as well as course design as part of continuous professional development for academic staff. Promoting quality education in universities through quality assessment, advice and research on academic programs through quality care units was also emphasized. Last but not least is Professional service and Extension by providing service and resources to support the teaching-learning process as well as improve quality and relevance of courses and program. ■

Title: Enhancing Quality at Input level: Remedial/ Developmental Education in Ethiopian Private Higher Education.

Researcher: Teshager Mersha.

Research type: Descriptive / Analytical.

Date of Publication: August 18 & 19, 2006 (a paper presented at the 4th national annual conference on private higher education institutions)

The paper explored the essential purpose of remedial courses to college students. Beyond this, it is reasonable to assume, that there are societal and economic benefits associated with the provision of remedial education to less prepared students. Literature in the area indicate that remedial education contributes to better employment opportunities for students, improved skill for the workforce, and subsequent benefits for the society and the economy.

The study aimed to identify gaps in basic arithmetic and linguistic skills through students' questionnaire. It also tried to identify the organization and delivery of remedial (developmental) education in two private higher education institutions namely St. Mary's University College and Unity University College.

Teachers' perception of students' difficulty and their ratings of perceived importance as well as difficulties were also considered in the study. This was done with the intention of identifying specific basic college skills needed in language and arithmetic. The study finally suggested ways of establishing a system that would respond and propose methods in responding to the needs. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on quality related issues.

In this edition of the newsletter we present the view of a Dutch Volunteer, Mr. Jan Smid, to St Mary's University College.



Background

Mr. Jan Smid was born in 1944 together with his twin brother in the Netherlands. After his primary and secondary schooling, he studied Mathematics and Physics at the State University in Groningen, the Netherlands.

After he completed his study in 1961 he became a part-time teacher at a secondary school in Delfzijl, the Netherlands. After some years, he became Deputy Principal of the school and Principal of the school from 1980-2005. Later, from 1986 to 1991 he served as a General Secretary for the Dutch Association of School Managers.

From September 2007 until January 2008 he worked as a volunteer for management and education at St. Mary's University College. In his stay at the University College, he gave special attention to subjects like quality of education, quality assurance, decision making and management structure. ■

What does quality education mean to you?

Education is very important not only for individuals but also for the society. Because education costs a lot of money, the government or private institutions must try to give effective and efficient education of high quality.

In this regard, the most important persons in education, in my view, are the teachers. They can be very inspiring for their students and stimulate the students to make the best of their lives. The teachers should, of course, be well educated and highly respected and they ought to earn a rather good salary. For teachers, it is important to work together with their colleagues and the management. They should have a clear vision about educational goals and how to reach these goals. Of course, teachers should not only be interested in the subjects they teach. A good teacher will also be interested in his/her students and s/he should be willing to help the student^{en} if possible and when necessary.

But a college also needs good organization and clear rules for everyone. This is a very important task for the management of the college. It is also important that the management knows how to inspire the teachers and other personnel.

"The most important persons in education, in my view, are teachers."

If a college has a clear and inspiring mission, broadly accepted by the teachers and the students and the atmosphere at the college is good and the exam results are above average, you may be sure that there is enough quality at the college. Teachers and students will be proud to work or to study at such a college. The problem for many colleges is how to reach such a high quality.

From your experience, what do you think should be done to improve quality of education?

In my opinion, St. Mary's is on the right track in improving the quality of education. Things like a good Faculty Handbook, listening to students and teachers for their opinion about the quality of education and the practical non bureaucratic way of organization certainly contribute to the quality of education. But I think the quality of education can be further improved if the management and the teachers are aware of the fact that quality assurance is a must for every organization and surely also for University Colleges. In this regard, it is very important to practice what you preach.

Quality assurance should not be a theoretical treatise but a description of how, what and why the college is doing in the educational process. Therefore it is important to ask the following questions regularly:

- Does St. Mary's do the right things?
- Does St. Mary's do things in a right way?
- How does St. Mary's know that?
- Do external stakeholders have the same opinion about St. Mary's?
- What will St. Mary's do to improve things?

If you find things that surely should be improved, then it is useful to make a "quality plan" for such subjects.

A good quality plan has at least two general targets or goals: justification and enhancement. A quality plan must not be a big book lying on the desk but a realistic clear plan with the most wanted elements for improvement. Examples of elements are for instance:

What are the goals for quality assurance?

How is the decision making about the subject?

How will we organize the process?

What boundary conditions (like finances, available time, internal and external support) are relevant? How and when will we evaluate the plan?

Many things go well or even very well at St. Mary's. But a learning organization should always try to do things better or best. Some subjects of which St. Mary's possibly could raise the quality by making quality plans are the following: Teaching and learning in the classroom situation.

Questions could be:

Is the method of teaching motivating to the students?

Do the teachers have sufficient aid for their lessons like books, cassettes, demonstration materials, computers, computer software etc.?

Is the method of testing students' knowledge objective and accurate?

Are the time tables for students good and published in time?

Do teachers of the same subjects work together?

Do the teachers get the right information from the management and do they get it in time?

Are important appointments registered?

-Who does what?

" Learning Organization should always try to do things better or best."

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Perspectives

*This article is a continuation of an article posted in the earlier publication of *Quality Matters* (Volume 2, No 6).*

"Total dedication to continuous improvement" personally and collectively is the second underlying principle of Total Quality Management. Within a Total Quality school setting, administrators work collaboratively with teachers. Gone are the vestiges of "Scientific management" whose watchwords were compliance, control and command. The foundations for this system were fear, intimidation, and an adversarial approach to problem-solving. Today, it is in our best interest to encourage everyone's potential by dedicating ourselves to the continual improvement of our own abilities and of the people with whom we work and live. In other words, Total Quality is, essentially, a win-win approach which works to everyone's ultimate advantage.

One of the claims of this maxim states that no human being should ever evaluate another human being. Therefore, TQM emphasizes self-evaluation as part of a continuous improvement process. In addition, this principle also underscores the importance of focusing on students' strengths, individual learning styles, and different types of intelligences.

The third pillar of TQM as applied in academics is

the recognition of the organization as a system, and hence the work done within the organization must be seen as an ongoing process. The primary implication of this principle is that individual students and teachers are less to blame for failure than the system in which they work. Quality speaks to working on the system, which must be examined to identify and eliminate the flawed processes that allow its participants to fail. Since systems are made up of processes, the improvements made in the quality of those processes largely determine the quality of the resulting product. In the new paradigm of learning, continual improvement of learning processes based on learning outcomes replaces the outdated "teach and test" mode.

The fourth principle of TQM as applied in the education sector dictates that the success of TQM is the responsibility of the top management. The school teachers must establish the context in which students can best achieve their potential through the continuous improvement that results from teachers and students working together. Teachers who emphasize content area literacy and principle-centered teaching provide the leadership, framework, and tools necessary for continuous improvement in the learning process.

“Individual students and teachers are less to blame for failure than the system in which they work ”

Recent practical evidences in the area reveal that application of the principles of TQM help the schools in the following aspects: redefining the role, purpose and responsibilities of higher education institutions, improve schools as a "way of life", plan comprehensive leadership training for educators at all levels, create staff development that addresses the attitudes and beliefs of their staff, use research and practice-based information to guide both policy and practice, design comprehensive professional development initiatives that cut across a variety of agencies and institutions.

In order to achieve these and other opportunities, participatory management among well-trained and educated partners is crucial to the success of TQM in education: everyone involved must understand and believe in the principles. Their vision and skills in leadership, management, interpersonal communication, problem solving and creative cooperation are important qualities for successful implementation of TQM. ■

Markos Mezmur

Continued from page 6

A Question could be: Are the things done by certain persons always done by the right person? The top management of St. Mary's or a Faculty head should not do too many routine things; they should formulate and control the policy. On the other hand, things should not be done by persons who are not capable enough to do complex things.

-The decision making process

Questions could be:

Who decides about what?

Who should be heard about changes in policy?

Who is responsible for financial matters? What procedures are used for financial matters?

-The personnel policy

Questions could be:

How can the recruitment procedure be improved?

How can the induction procedure be improved?

What are the rights and duties of the personnel?

What are the motivating factors for the personnel?

The management may have brilliant ideas and may be very enthusiastic about quality assurance but executing a plan is quite another thing. The plan (s) should be accepted by a large majority of the college. Therefore the plans should be widely and clearly communicated.

What is the quality assurance system like in your country?

In the Netherlands everyone seems to have an opinion about the quality of education and most people think that education was better in the past. There have been many changes in education since the 1970s. ◀

Fun corner

Rabbit Thesis

A rabbit was taking a break from writing his graduate thesis. He had just come out of his hutch for a stroll and a breath of fresh air, when he was caught by a fox.

"Ha, you're my lunch now," the fox says.

"Oh no you can't eat me now! I've almost finished my thesis. It's a very important work that must be completed for the good of all animals," the rabbit exclaims.

The fox, confident and non-chalant, asks, "What is this great work of yours about?"

"It's entitled 'A study into the superiority of rabbits over foxes and wolves', and it's almost complete," replies the rabbit.

"Rabbits superior to us?!" The Fox almost loses the rabbit in his laughter.

You only need to read it to be convinced. Come down to my hutch and see for yourself, if you don't agree, you can eat me then," said the rabbit.

Not wanting to lose a chance for a good laugh the fox agrees and enters the rabbits hutch. The fox never came out.

A few days later, the rabbit comes out again to stretch his legs only to be instantly caught by a wolf. The rabbit again pleads for his life along the same lines as before, and again the wolf is so amused he follows the rabbit into the hutch. The wolf never saw the light of day again.

Several days passed. The rabbit finally finishes his thesis on the superiority of rabbits over foxes and wolves. He invites his friends over so they can celebrate, read his thesis etc. When his friends enter the rabbit's hutch they see the normal graduate student abode - messy, with papers everywhere. But in one corner of the room is a pile of fox bones, and in another is a pile of wolf bones. In between the two piles is a lion.

The moral of the story is that the title of your thesis is not important; it's who your thesis advisor is that is important. ■

If you have comments on this issue of the newsletter or would like to contribute to future issues, please contact our office on Ext 152 Or email: CEIRQA@SMUC.edu.et

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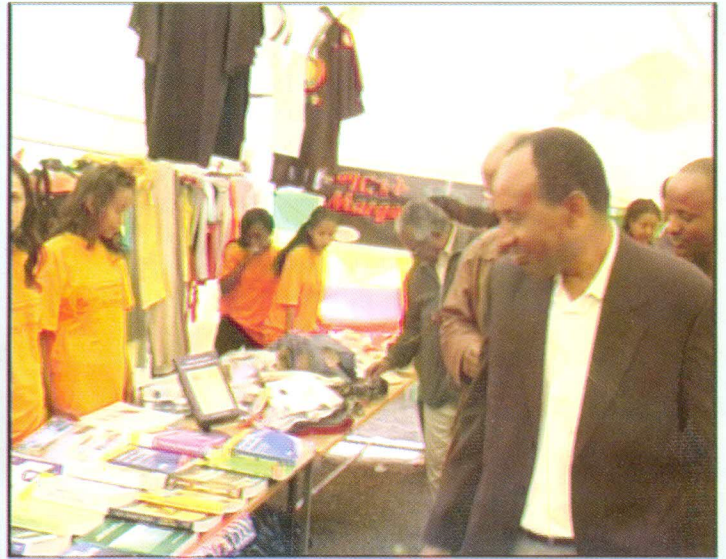
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Photo Gallery

Events of the fifth salesmanship in action, 2008.



The launching of graduate tracer study.



"NURTURING THE TEACHING -RESEARCH NEXUS IN ETHIOPIAN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS"

The sixth National Annual Conference on Private Higher
Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Ethiopia , August 2008 in Addis Ababa

The conference focuses on the following issues:

- ☞ Encouraging collaborative learning and student research in private higher education institutions;*
- ☞ Quality education and research;*
- ☞ Promoting research quality and productivity;*
- ☞ University industry linkage;*
- ☞ Upholding/ maintaining good academic and scientific practices & surveying the magnitude of misconduct in academics among Ethiopian Higher education institutions;*
- ☞ Cross cutting themes like gender, environment and HIV/ AIDS.*

Deadline for Submission of Abstracts: May 30, 2008

Final paper submission date: July 30,2008

Abstracts should be submitted to:

St. Mary's University College

***Center for Educational Improvement, Research
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Honorarium will be paid for selected papers

Quality Matters

Volume 2 No. 10 November 2008

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St. Mary's University College

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Quote of this issue

“Quite simply quality is what it takes to satisfy a customer”

Karu Isikawa.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Gender Needs Assessment Survey Completed

The Special Interest Group on Gender (SIGG) at St. Mary's University College has finalized needs assessment survey on gender. The study focused on both students and teachers who play critical roles in the quality of educational service delivery in the University College.

The instrument of the survey was developed by SIGG members of pioneer and newly established universities through a series of consultative workshops organized by EQUIP (Educational Quality Improvement Program). It was also piloted by a university which was selected for the purpose. The questionnaire had two versions for different study subjects. The English version was used to collect data from teacher respondents and the Amharic version was used for student respondents.

Accordingly, 100 questionnaires were distributed both to teachers and students each on the basis of which data were collected and analyzed. As part of educational quality enhancement programs of the University College, the result of the study is intended to be used as input to determine training areas and packages for the University College's students and staff members. ■

From the Editorial Desk

Globalization is nowadays accepted as a reality across governments. Thus, education and training remain central to governments' initiatives in making citizens of all ages aware of the market and social dynamics. Consequently, the policies of countries in education and training are increasingly focusing on the acquisition of employability skills. Equally important is the role of employers in curricula development of the learning programs; a shift in education and training policy approaches from the human capital theory, which emphasizes achievement in terms of formal qualification, to a new policy commitment of lifelong learning, which places stronger focus on the process of learning more than the qualification. Learning for its own sake now has a higher value- in policy terms- than it has had in the past.

To date, the federal government of Ethiopia has laid investment in formal education and training. This is done in the belief that an increase in qualifications would contribute to economic growth in terms of increased productivity. This policy has led to the expansion of publicly-funded universities, a commitment to increase participation in post-secondary schooling. However, the importance of employability and global skills in our educational system should also be areas of critical engagement in the fight against

poverty and of course in enhancing our competitive advantage in today's global market. Otherwise, the fight against poverty will turnout to be a nightmare and the country will sustain continued global market disadvantage.

In the past, most people remained in one type of job for life, and the education that was completed at young age was deemed sufficient to last their lifetime. In today's economic climate, however, industry requires workers to upgrade their skills, knowledge and understanding continually in the face of the ever-changing needs of the labor market. On the other hand, those who do not have the motivation and the capacity to do so will be marginal to the labor market.

Generally, there is little doubt that the nations which will succeed in the 21st century will be "knowledge societies" – societies rich in human capital, effective in their capacity to utilize and successful in the creation and commercialization of knowledge. In such a world, therefore, there is a greater need for lifelong learning essential for the preparation of not just the first job but for succeeding jobs. And, this demands strong efforts of actors in the educational sector and other stakeholders. ■

News Items

The Second Student Research Forum Held

The Second Student Research Forum was staged on October 2, 2008 at the SMUC's multipurpose Hall, Mexico campus. The forum was organized by the Academic Vice President's Office of SMUC. The papers presented in the Forum were selected from degree awarding programs on competitive basis.

Attendants were students, teachers, advisors, faculty deans, and invited guests from SMUC and other universities. The Forum which is organized annually is meant for sharing students' research findings with the academic community and the industry; thereby developing their research skills. Also, the Forum provides junior students with a lesson on communicating research results.

The papers presented in the Forum are due to be published as proceedings of student research forum. Presenters of papers were drawn from five disciplines; namely, Law, Computer Science, Management, Accounting, and Marketing Management. ■

Training on Instructional Methodology, Measurement and Evaluation conducted

The Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) of St. Mary's University College, in collaboration with the Department of Education, organized training on Instructional Methodology, Measurement and Evaluation for new and senior faculty members. The importance of such a training is justified by the need to enhance quality of the education provided by the University College. The training was held from 15 - 21 October 2008 at Mexico campus.

Attendants were 11 new and senior faculty members from the departments of Law, Computer Science, Marketing Management, Management and Accounting. The training, which was aimed at familiarizing instructors drawn from the aforementioned departments with instructional skills and assessment techniques, has a practical significance of enhancing quality of educational service delivery in the University College.

The trainers were faculty members from the Department of Education at SMUC, Addis Ababa University and Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA). Upon completion, trainees were awarded with certificates. ■

Research Corner

Title: *The Need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Professionals in Higher Education*

Researcher: *Yalew Ingidayew (PhD)*

Research type: *Descriptive*

Date of publication: *August 2006 (a research paper presented at the 4th annual research conference on PHEIs organized and sponsored by St. Mary's University College).*

The study attempted to examine the need of higher education instructors and researchers for grading and up-grading their professional competence (CPD) through continuing professional education (CPE).

The study bases its discussions on the assumption that professionals in higher education face challenges related to inadequate pedagogical and professional training to render efficient and effective services in their fields.

Accordingly, the study highlights three major problems: (a) lack of awareness and commitment to the current opportunities and possibilities of CPD programs (b) inadequate training and (c) limited access to and participation in the formal and non-formal CPE programs.

In conclusion the work stresses that professions are always dynamic, evolving, growing and changing. Thus, professionals in higher education should always undergo a process of professionalizing through CPE. ■

Student Assessment Special Interest Group (SASIG) conducted its first workshop

A three-day consultative workshop on Student Assessment was conducted from 3 - 5 November 2008. The workshop was held at EQUIP's office in Addis Ababa. Attendants were representatives of ADRCs from both private and public universities.

The objective of the workshop was to develop training modules that would be used for staff development training on Student Assessment methods at tertiary level of education.

Participants of the workshop shared their experience on activities carried out with regard to enhancing the effectiveness of Student Assessment techniques that are practiced in their respective universities.

The module which is expected to be finalized at the end of a series of consultative workshops is planned to be used in training faculty members on instructional and assessment techniques for enhanced learning on the part of students.

During the three-day workshop, participants enriched the preliminary document to be compiled as a module, revisited and improved SIG guidelines. Finally, identification of tasks of the next workshop and other issues were raised and discussed thoroughly. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, researchers, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on educational issues. In this edition we present the views of Dr. Girma Mitiku on issues of employability and global skills. The center would like to extend its thanks in advance for sharing us his time.



Background

Dr. Girma Mitiku is Director of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Office at St. Mary's University College. The primary functions of the office are academic researches complementary to business area and community outreach services.

Dr. Girma has a PhD in life sciences (Natural Resource and Agriculture) from The Ohio State University, USA. As an Assistant Professor, he has taught Natural Resource and Plant Physiology for ten years at the University of Illinois, at Champaign- Urbana in New York State, USA. Marcos from the center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) was able to talk to him at length on issues of employability and global skills central to the global education and training. ■

Quality Matters: At this time of globalization and technocracy, employability and global skills are nowadays becoming central in the education and training systems. How do you describe the phenomena in our country?

Dr. Girma: Employability and global skills are broader concepts that involve broader aspects of education and training. The following can be considered as the basic dimensions (priority areas) of employability and global skills as global education. Basically, the fact that employees need skills for employment is not in question. However, the impact of education also extends to people's wider role in society. In this regard, people, young and old, need to be able to deal with complex social, environmental and financial issues. Also, the fact that education and training for a global society should lead to the acquisition of skills is not in question. However, unless this includes essential skills of critical engagement areas (poverty alleviation, sustainable development, human rights, global citizenship, social justice, global terrorism, climate change, cultural values, and the like) and also leads to the adoption of impact-oriented behaviors, learning will be ineffectual. That generic skills that enable to function in a global market and society to compete in a global economy need to be embedded in education and training is irrefutable.

However, there is a need to set a framework on how these skills can lead to effective involvement in critical engagement issues stated above so as to think globally and act locally. Also, it is undeniable that language learning needs a far stronger focus. Countries like Ethiopia do not often have frameworks of employability and global skills in their educational system. The only exception in sub-Saharan Africa is South Africa. However, as the world shrinks into a small technocratic village, the need to integrate employability and global skills in the educational system is becoming far more greater.

Quality Matters: How do you think we can mainstream these critical areas of engagement in the educational system?

Dr. Girma: Probably the first thing that is needed, in this regard, is to initiate research based dialogue involving all stakeholders. This would allow searching ways for adopting these skills to fit into the local needs of the society. In this regard, all actors and agencies have crucial roles to play. This should be in partnership with learners. Actions also need to be taken from curriculum planning and staff development to strategic planning which will influence approaches to learning in varying contexts. Government policies and initiatives therefore, provide a framework of integration in this aspect. Currently, the Office for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at St. Mary's University College is carrying out survey research on employability skills.

This is done with employers in the industry. The output of the survey will allow the University College to prioritize the local needs of the industry on what are alternatively called employability skills, transferable skills, workplace know-how, basic skills by countries involved in such aspects of education and training in their educational system. Thus, the results of the findings will obviously be predictors of the quality of educational services offered by the University College, and accordingly be used to enhance quality of the education and training provided by the institution. However, 90% of the finding is expected to confirm the international trend as measurement of the issue based on the 67 globally defined employability skills around .

However, the challenge in this country is, there is lack or somehow absence of professionals in career counseling and consequently no units or offices exist to facilitate professional services in this regard. Moreover, all these lead to difficulty in identifying employability skills in line with the Ethiopian reality and ultimately fit them in a global context that builds our competitive advantage in the global market. No research in the country so far studied the skill levels and very little is known about the issue. However, there seems to happen a greater paradigm shift from the human capital theory of education to the theory of lifelong learning in the global labor market. ■

By Andualem Tamiru, CEIRQA

The teacher, engaged in the learning process, is very close to the learner. She/ he has a direct access to all the activities that enable her/him to investigate the pros and cons of the situation of learning, the context as well as the problems the students may be facing in learning the material presented. The teacher, therefore, is an insider to the learning activity.

Ferriance, (2000) refers to action research as a process in which participants examine their own educational practices systematically and carefully using the techniques of research. Accordingly, the teacher can solve the problems she/he faces while teaching through action research. Through action research the teacher can view her/his activities and that of the students. S/he can also identify students' problems in learning, and revise her/his strategy of teaching. "Action research aims to solve pertinent problems in given contexts ...to seek and enact solutions to problems of major importance to the stakeholders" (Greenwood and Levin, 2000).

While teaching, the teacher uses various strategies; she/he observes many problems which obstruct students' learning. The problems may vary with the context of the school environment. Thus, the teacher needs to scrutinize all the activities in the learning process. This requires the use of action research.

Classroom Action Research is systematic inquiry with the goal of informing practice in a particular situation. It is a way for instructors to discover what works best in their own classroom situation, thus allowing informed decisions about teaching." (Mett et. al, 2002-2003).

Classroom action research enables the teacher to adjust to the learning situation in which students are operating, and use new strategies to tackle students' problems. Thus, the teacher has the opportunity to carry out action research since they are the experts very close to the problem at hand and the sources of information. In Greenwood and Levin's words, "The insider has extensive knowledge of the problems at hand and the contexts in which they occur, as well as the knowledge about how and from whom to get additional information" (Greenwood and Levin, 2000).

In doing action research, teachers may need assistance from professional researchers but their role is indispensable since they are very close to the context in which the learning process is taking place. In this connection, Greenwood and Levin have the following to say:

Action research is built on interaction between local knowledge and professional knowledge. ... Is based on the assumption that professional knowledge is important and valuable, but local knowledge is a

necessary ingredient. ...The central inquiry processes of action research are linked to solving practical problems in specific locations (Greenwood and Levin, 2000: 96-97).

Thus, in order to study the problems that bother her/him and act accordingly, the teacher has every resource in terms of immediate access to the culture of the classroom and other sources of information. What she/he may need is consultation from professional researchers. The very important ingredient of action research - the context of the school environment - is well known by the teacher. She/he has a direct access to the sources of information in relative terms which is a very important condition for carrying out action research.

The methods of teaching we are employing here are not indigenous, they are adopted from the western world, which are produced through continuous research which had been updated based on the changing circumstances in our socio-economic and political environments. We need to, at least, check through action research whether it is working well to our context so as to make the necessary amendments with respect to the social, and cultural setting of the country.

It is also possible that the students have problems in understanding some facts or issues. The instructor may want to study and come up with some solution, which possibly is a new technique. Then, she/he makes use of the outcome of the study-the new technique- and, finally, checks whether it is working well or not.

My experience as a mathematics instructor has shown me that there are lots of misconceptions that students will bring to mathematics classes in the university which they have acquired while learning high school mathematics. I believe that these problems could be curbed if not eradicated through identifying the areas of misconceptions and acting accordingly. To do this the teacher needs to know about action research and needs to be convinced of the power that doing action research has in alleviating the problems that are faced in learning including misconceptions.

Since action research is doing research upon your own actions, and acting based on the research, it could be used in non-formal Education that don't lead to qualifications. In mainstreaming certain values which may not be part of the prevailing culture, the instructor needs to know how this could be done. The methods and approaches that best suit the particular topic at hand and the specific group of learners, paying attention to the individual differences that might exist among the students, are as important as the topic/the values to be mainstreamed.

Through action research, problems could be identified or understood. New approaches, techniques and methods could be tested and informed decisions can be made about learning. Thus, we can make improvements in courses which lead to qualifications as well as in those which don't lead to qualifications. ■

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Virtual Links

Ministry of Education

Web site: [http:// www.moe.gov.et](http://www.moe.gov.et)

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)

Website: www.higher.edu.et

PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education

Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/

International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

Website: [http:// www.inqaahe.org](http://www.inqaahe.org)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)

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

Center for International Research on Higher Education

Website: [http://bc.edu/bc_ org/avp/soe/cihe](http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe)

Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

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

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>

International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)

Website: <http://www.bc.edu>

International Network for quality assurance Agencies in higher Education

Website: <http://www.inqaahe.nl>

Forthcoming Event

The Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) of St. Mary's University College has planned to organize and run a monthly research and experience sharing forum for academia and Students as of January 2009. All interested are invited.

The exact date and time of the event will be posted on the University College website.



Fun corner

Joke

A student at Baylor University named Jesse was taking one of the hardest psychology teachers on campus. Throughout the semester he was not doing so well on his exams and papers. It came time for finals and he studied very hard for that class knowing that it would be a one question test. During the year they talked about a number of different things like why people act the way they do and how to change that. What actions are taken in what situations and so on. To receive a good grade on the test the student had to write everything they knew on the test subject. The day came for the test and the students, especially Jesse, were very nervous. The teacher came in and wrote on the board the question:

What is it to Be Courageous?

All of the students started writing frantically. Jesse sat there for a while and simply wrote in his blue book:

This is being courageous.

Jesse received the only A in the class.

Score: 0.0, votes: 0

Source: the Internet

If you have comments on this issue of the newsletter or would like to contribute to future issues please contact our office on 011 553 8001 Ext 145 Or email: CEIRQA@SMUC.edu.et

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Photo Gallery

The second student research forum(above) and partial view of Staff pedagogical training(below).



Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA)

Areas of Internal Quality Management

Internal quality management and assurance mechanisms shall be departmentally generated and are continuous. The mechanisms shall be coherent with the quality assurance framework set forth in the university policy and approved by Senate and shall include mechanisms to assess the following areas.

- ▶ Quality of program and courses
- ▶ Quality of academic staff
- ▶ Quality of teaching and learning experience
- ▶ Quality in student assessment: Internal moderation
- ▶ Quality in support services
- ▶ Quality of resources and facilities
- ▶ Quality of research
- ▶ Quality of leadership

Source: Quality Assurance Special Interest Group, (2008)

St. Mary's University College

Quality Matters

Volume 5 No.18, May 2011

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College

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Quote of this issue

"Education is the movement from darkness to light"

Allan Bloom

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St Mary's University College (SMUC). The Objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Two Policy Documents Drafted

Two policy documents, Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and HIV/AIDS Policy of St. Mary's University College were drafted recently by the Gender Office.

In its mission, the HIV/AIDS Policy draft noted that "The University College strongly believes that the best mechanism to deal with these problems [HIV/AIDS] is by designing workable policy"

Meanwhile, the Office also introduced SMUC Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy (SMUCASHP) with seven sections and 33 articles compiled into 20 pages.

Both policy documents await the approval of the University College's Senate to become officially functional. Up to now, the draft of the policy documents has been distributed among different officials of the University College and a discussion session organized by the Gender Office was held to collect comments that would enrich the documents. ■

From the Editorial Desk

Ethiopia is undergoing a remarkable change in the higher education sector. Expansion of HEIs in the country is still in progress. Currently, the number of public and private higher education institutions has reached 22 and 55 respectively, while the construction of ten new universities is underway. More than 80% of the student population, at present, is in the public HEIs.

Along with the expansion of HEIs, due attention is also given to the quality aspect of education provision by establishing a quality assurance agency (HERQA), which is mandated by proclamation to safeguard the relevance and the quality of the programs provided by each institution through internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. HEIs, on the other hand, are obliged by proclamation to establish a robust internal quality assurance system.

To assure their internal quality, higher education institutions should provide, among others, well organized and effective student support services. Student support services, as an internal quality assurance focus area, underpins the quality of the learning experience particularly in times of institutional changes as the basic block that can support the shift to student-centered learning, and is indeed one of the best mechanisms to monitor the activity of institutions including student attainment.

Gender mainstreaming is one aspect of student support services and a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. It is a process of creating

knowledge and awareness of and responsibility for gender equality among all education professionals engaged in tertiary education. It is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality in higher education institutions through sensitization and educating key stakeholders since the costs of women's marginalization and gender inequalities are borne by all in the education sector. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to gender equality are central to all activities - education policy, curriculum, research, advocacy, resource allocation, facilities and planning, implementation and monitoring of tertiary education programs. It essentially involves systematic evidence gathering and analysis of the differential participation and completion of education by women and men, analysis of why gender differences persist etc. It also involves extensive consultation with students, instructors and the management, and opening up of a broader, free and frank dialogue on gender and higher education.

Ensuring equal access and opportunities for men and women and creating a level playing field involves engaging with the system and enabling decision-makers to work towards greater gender equality.

In this edition, it is our pleasure to have included a perspective on Gender mainstreaming as quality indicator, an interview, and a research review in relation to gender issues in the higher education sector. ■

News

HERQA's Conference on Quality of Higher Education

A two-day conference organized by HERQA was held at the Ethiopian Management Institute on the 3rd and 4th of May 2011. In the conference, seven papers were presented enabling participants have in-depth discussions on salient issues.

The conference was conducted under the theme "The influence of HERQA on the Quality and Relevance of Ethiopia's Higher Education System: Reflections on the Evidence". Participants ranged from leaders of higher education institutions - public and private – to those who have a stake in the education sector, including members of the House of Representatives. St. Mary's was represented by the President, EVP and AAVP.

The conference was officially opened by H.E. Ato Demeke Mekonnen, Minister of Education, and a welcoming address was made by HERQA's Director General, Dr Tesfaye Teshome.

From the private sector, Wondwosen Tamrat (Assist. Prof.), President of St. Mary's University College, presented a paper titled "Evaluating the Evaluator: HERQA in the Eyes of Private Higher Education Institutions". Dr. Arega Yirdaw, President of Unity University Board Chairman of the Ethiopian Private TVET and Higher Education Institutions' Association gave a closing speech and made remarks on such issues as the new 70/30 higher education intake policy and public-private partnership. Although no paper was presented from public HEIs, their active participation in the discussions made their presence felt in the entire sessions ■

Training on Effective Leadership

The Offices of the Vice-President of Business and Administration & the Human Resource Management have collaboratively prepared a two day training on 'Effective Leadership' for top & middle level managers of SMUC from 20th to 21st of May 2011. The total number of participants in the training was twenty one. Ato Teshome Bekele, Lecturer at Addis Ababa University, gave the training. ■

St. Mary's has become an associate member of INQAAHE

SMUC has recently become an associate member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), a well-known world-wide association of over 200 member organizations. INQAAHE promotes theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education across the globe. ■

Training on Pedagogy

A pedagogical training was organized by the Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) of CEIQA for academic staff members of SMUC from 10th to 21st of May 2011.

The training was offered by internal and external resource persons from the Faculty of Teacher Education, Testing Center, Executive Vice-President's Office, CEIQA and Addis Ababa University. A total of 14 staff members of SMUC have successfully attended the training. ■

Research Corner

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

Date of Publication: A research paper presented in the 4th annual national research conference on Private Higher Education organized and sponsored by St. Mary's University College. The proceeding was published in August 2006.

Researcher: Tesfaye Semela (Assistant Professor, Debu University)

The paper emphasizes that encouraging women enrollment is only the first step in the process of bridging the gender gap in HE participation in Ethiopia. Despite the fact that female participation has shown a marked increment over previous years, the female survival and success trend at HEIs does not seem to show an impressive picture due to factors that are not yet addressed but are inherent in academic activities, socio-cultural experiences, and psychological development of learners.

Having understood this fact, the study endeavored to describe the female enrollment and participation at national level; investigate gender differences in enrollment, attrition, and survival trends institutional level; empirically reveal the extent to which academic, socio-cultural and psychological variables impact female participation and survival based on case study; and derive policy recommendation based on the data generated.

The study revealed that HE participation is still considered low as compared to the region.

Regardless of gender, post secondary enrollment until 2000 was below 1% among the eligible age group (World Bank 2003). According to EMIS-MoE Education Statistics (1998-99 academic year), only 15.4% were female, which was the lowest participation rate next to Central African Republic (Mama. A, 2003 - *Journal of Higher Education for Africa*).

In describing the socializing agents toward female students success in higher education, the study shows that parental expectation affects scholastic achievement of their children in Physics i.e. parents expected their daughters to have lower ability in Physics than they expected their sons.

On the other hand, self-concept is considered to be an important variable in explaining and predicting students' achievement. Subsequently, such studies have also documented the existence of gender differences in academic self-concept relative to the kind of subjects students learn in school.

In the study, which included 134 (male=94; female=40) respondents, it is indicated that female students enrollment has generally increased; however, despite the claim that females tend to choose traditional streams like language and humanities, all areas were found to be dominated by men.

The paper concluded that traditional sex-role orientation among female college students undermined their academic self-concept by associating hard science areas like mathematics and physics, which are considered as key subjects to succeed in college, to masculine students. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, researchers, and presidents of universities or colleges as well as students on issues of importance in the higher education sector. This edition presents interview with W/ro Mekdes Eyoel - the director of Gender Directorate at the Ministry of Education.



Background

W/ro Mekdes Eyoel is currently Director of Gender Directorate Office at the Ministry of Education. She received her Master of Arts in Gender Studies from Addis Ababa University.

She has worked as a lecturer and Head of the Gender Office at Hawassa University before she joined the Ministry of Education. ■

Quality Matters: *What does the status of women in teaching-learning activities of higher education look like?*

W/ro Mekdes: The number of female academic staff increased from 468 in 1998 E.C. to 1465 in 2002 E. C.. These data show that we have to work a lot to increase the number of female academic staff. So, MOE targeted in ESDP IV to increase share of female leaders and academic staff from 3% to 16% in 2007 E.C.

Quality Matters: *How important is gender mainstreaming in tertiary education and which mechanism should be in place to address gender issues in the Ethiopian Higher Education Sector?*

W/ro Mekdes: Tertiary education is a means to generate highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel for social and economic advancement of a country. It is the source from where the future decision makers and policy makers emerge. Therefore, in order to see empowered women at decision and policy making positions, gender mainstreaming will be a key process at tertiary level. More over, it is interlinked with development of a country, the MDGs and EFA goals. The presence of access and opportunity for women at tertiary level pulls children to the education system.

Quality Matters: *To what extent is the culture of our Higher Education Institutions supportive of equal opportunities for women?*

W/ro Mekdes: Currently, there is a good start to ►►

support female students in all our higher education institutions by establishing Gender Offices that assure equal opportunities for female students. The Gender Office gives academic support counselling and financial support for needy female students so that they can successfully attain their studies. The monitoring and evaluation system at the Ministry of Education has put Gender in place as one component for higher learning institutions.

Quality Matters: Do you think that handling gender issue can be one of the quality indicators of higher education?

W/ro Mekdes: Yes, one of the major gender issues at HEIs is gender insensitive classroom interaction. This means the teacher handles a class and teaching material without assessing the different factors that affect the learning teaching process. To alleviate the problem, the instructor must assess the different factors that hinder girls not to be active participants. The other indicator is creating in class and on campus enabling environment and encouraging atmosphere for students to learn. This means the teaching learning environment should be gender sensitive and free of gender based violence to make it conducive for female students. Generally, if quality indicators are achieved the gender issues in learning and teaching process will be addressed.

Quality Matters: How is Ethiopia addressing Gender issue (especially in higher education)?

W/ro Mekdes: There are promising activities and results of mainstreaming gender in higher education sector. Gender offices are established at all public higher learning institutions and some private higher learning institutions to ensure gender equality and address gender issues. Affirmative actions for female students are being implemented to give access for female students to tertiary education.

The affirmative actions like tutorial and special support programs continue to improve the retention rate of first year female students. In order to create conducive learning environment, MOE prepared a draft sexual code of conduct which is in a process to be appraised by university senates. In addition, the ESDP IV and GTP have given special attention to gender mainstreaming at higher learning institutions. In ESDP IV, we targeted female students' completion rate to be 90 %,to increase enrollment rate at higher education institutions from 29% to 40%.

Quality Matters: What is your recommendation to mainstreaming gender in higher education?

W/ro Mekdes: In order to mainsream gender in higher learning institutions,the following measures should be considered:

- The commitment of the management is the first step to address gender issues at HEIs;
- The community (academic, nonacademic and students) of the HEIs should consider ensuring gender equality as part of their job. It should be included in the job description of all staff and students' code of conduct;
- Creating conducive and gender friendly environment;
- Making indicators of quality to address gender issues;
- The gender offices with the necessary resources; putting in place sexual harassment code of conduct and gender policy; and
- Giving special support and mentoring services for needy female students.

Perspective

Gender: a Quality Indicator in the Education Sector

By Ergogie Tesfaye
(Head, Gender Office)

The importance of education has been emphasized time and again by a number of international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Moreover, the fourth world conference on women held in Beijing in 1995 recognized that women's literacy is key to empowering women's participation in decision making in society and in improving families' well-being. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emphasize the essential role of education in building democratic and civilized society and creating a foundation for sustainable economic growth. Therefore, education as a social right and a development imperative should involve both women and men equally.

The inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the MDGs suggest that the importance of addressing gender equality in meeting the challenges of poverty and development has been recognized. But, its quantitative measurement do not go nearly far enough in terms of assessing what the value of formal education is for the increasing number of girls and women who are accessing education.

What do we mean by quality education? Policy makers, instructors, parents and learners have different perspectives and opinions about what quality

education is. There are many frameworks for thinking about quality education and many different notions of quality that underpin policies. Many frameworks consider issues of gender equality and equity more broadly as a separate issue and restrict quality to a list of educational inputs, while others consider equity-subsuming gender equality within it – as one distinct dimension of quality. Often, too, quality frameworks focus exclusively on schooling as if it were disassociated from the wider social, cultural, political and economic environment-at the local, national and global levels.

If one begins with the importance of social justice and examining educational practices in terms of the values that they are built upon, the dimension of quality gender equitable education could be achieved. Working towards such education recognizes that gendered roles and relationships as well as educational practices and processes are outcomes of negotiations of power and find expressions within specific historical and social contexts.

The status and quality of higher education are useful indicators of a country's social and economic development. In addition, it critically influences the quality and depth of public discourse and policy making to generate highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel for social and economic advancement. Equally, proactive and promotion of greater and equitable participation of women and men of all social groups in education can have a significant downstream impact. More women, both in public and ►►

private sectors, have a greater effect- creating role models for women and girls in traditional communities where gender discrimination and sex segregation are taken as the norm.

The quality of education, as a means for social change, does not stand alone. Rather the cumulative package of educational, social and gender-based disadvantages is carried into the higher education space. Therefore, it is not possible to analyze quality of education without addressing gender inequality in education. Thus, higher education institutions are strategically placed to undertake multidisciplinary research and practices giving due attention to gender equality issues. If this has taken place practically, quality education contributes directly to the growth of national income by improving the productive capacities of the labour force. Moreover, it is a key strategy for reducing poverty.

But on the other hand, in the increasingly open global economy, countries with high rate of illiteracy and gender gaps in educational attainment tend to be less competitive. As women cover half of the world's population, an education institution could not attain the aforementioned positive expected outcomes ignoring half part of the society. So, that is why the issue of gender equity and equality in the education sector must be an indicator of the quality of education. The education sector could provide quality education, if and only if, it incorporates gender into consideration. In order to bring sustainable development and growth of a country, half of the working task force, the women, should not be neglected. Giving more

emphasis to gender, particularly to women, for sure increases labour force that contributes to the economic growth.

It is not enough to make education more widely available; the quality of education also needs to be improved. Education should not only be 'means of perpetuating social stratification and poverty reduction' but also a means of increasing social equality. Gender sensitivity and responsiveness is a key aspect of the quality of education. Educational system should be sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of women. Yet, the curricula and teaching materials – and the media which has a powerful role in shaping people's knowledge and opinion – often reinforce traditional roles that may deny women opportunities for full and equal participation in the society. As a result, efforts to improve education in general and female education in particular, need to go beyond rhetoric and should involve policies and programmes with measurable results.

Therefore, the government should make the MDGs part of the national development plans and monitoring progress toward those goals. The government also needs to make an extra effort to ensure that education is more accessible to women, as this signifies the quality of the national education and the most rewarding investment a country can make. Investing in female education will accelerate the country's economic and social development by enhancing human capital, handling population growth and alleviating poverty. In addition, gender

mainstreaming, which requires high-level commitment among advocates, policy makers and top management at different levels, is essential for promoting gender equality in Higher Education Institutions. ■

FORTHCOMING EVENT

27th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching & Learning

Organized by: University of Wisconsin-Madison
Division of Continuing Studies

Contact name: Kimary Peterson

Recognized internationally for the quality and integrity of its program, the conference provides an exchange of current resources, research, and best practices that are relevant to the design and delivery of distance education/training.

For latest details, please visit:

<http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/index.cfm>

For registration information, please visit:

http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/Registration_2011.cfm

Virtual Links

Ethiopian Ministry of Education

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PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education

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Center for International Research on Higher Education

Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe

Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

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International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)

Website: <http://www.bc.edu>

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in higher Education

Website: <http://www.inqaahe.nl>

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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

Asian Pacific Quality Network

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

Ethiopian Knowledge and Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS)

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

Association of African Universities (AAU)

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

HEDDA , Higher Education Development Association

Website: <http://uv-net.uio.no/wpmu/hedda/about/>

The African Quality Assurance Network

Website : <http://afriqan.aau.org/>

Fun Corner

Grading the Essay

A professor was grading the essay finals he had just given his class and opened the exam book of a failing student to reveal blank pages and a \$100 bill. The only thing written in the book was "\$100 = 100% - I get an A."

A month later, the student approached the professor. "I don't understand," he said. "I failed the course. Didn't you read my final?" The professor handed the student the exam book.

The student opened it to reveal \$50 and the phrase "\$50 = 50% - You fail!"

Fooling the Professor

Two college seniors had a week of exams coming up. However, they decided to party instead. So, when they went to the test, they decided to tell the professor that their car had broken down the night before due to a very flat tyre and they needed a bit more time to study.

The professor told them that they could have another day to study. That evening, both of the boys crammed all night until they were sure that they knew just about everything.

Arriving to class the next morning, each boy was told to go to separate classrooms to take the exam. Each shrugged and went to two different parts of the building. As each sat down, they read the first question. "For 5 points, explain the contents of an atom."

At this point, they both thought that this was going to be a piece of cake, and answered the question with ease.

Then, the test continued... "For 95 points, tell me which tyre it was."

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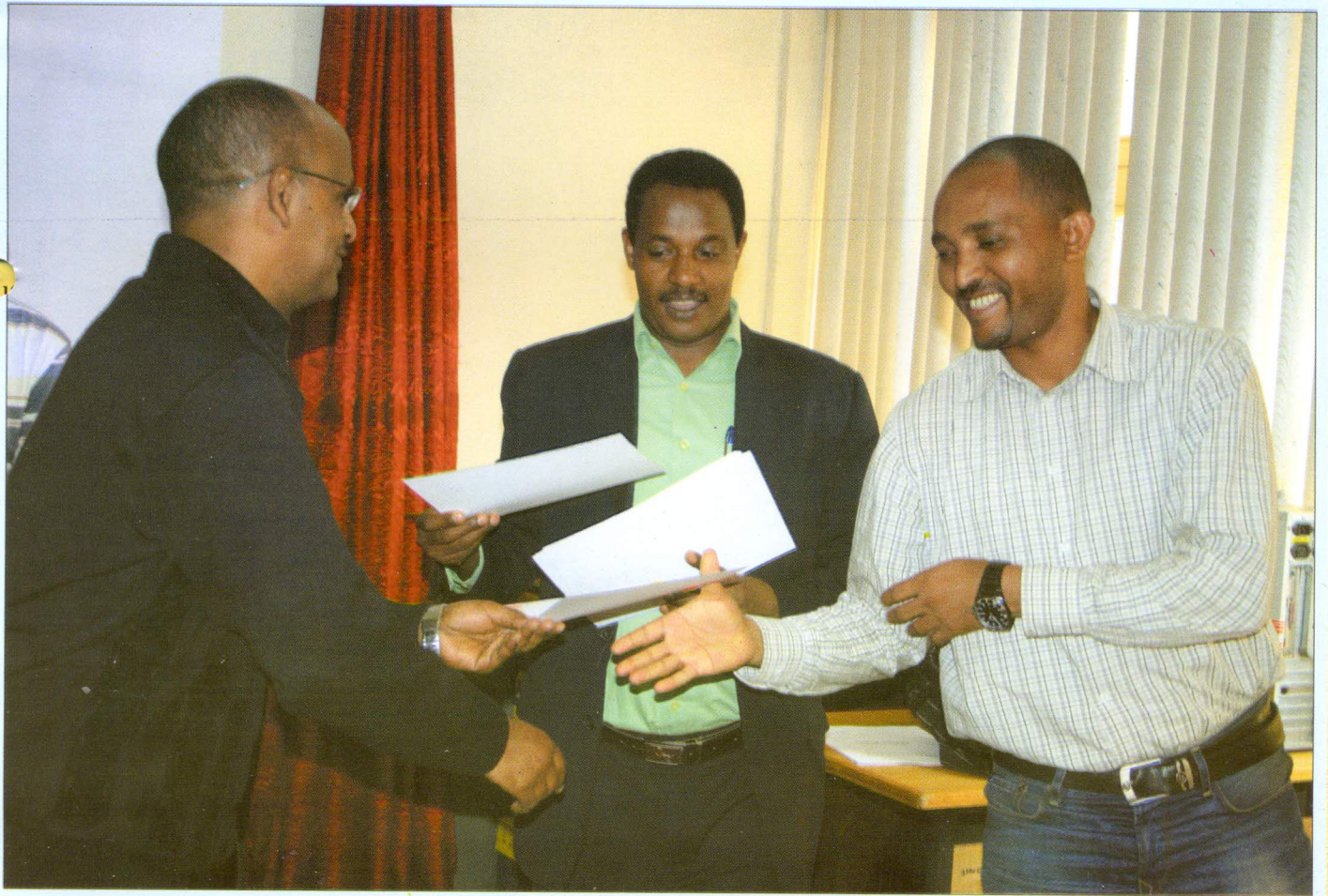
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If you have comments on this issue of *Quality Matters* or would like to contribute to future issues, please contact our office on 011 553 79 99 Or email: ceirqa@smuc.edu.et

Photo Gallery

Leadership Training



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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College

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Quote of this issue

"High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectations."

Jack Kinder

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St Mary's University College (SMUC). The objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

4,597 Students Graduated

Saint Mary's University College graduated a total of 4,597 students who specialized in different fields of studies with the level of post graduate, degree, TEVT and certificate programs, from its regular and continuing streams. The graduation ceremony was held colorfully at three different places: Hilton Addis, National Theatre and Hawassa in the presence of guest of honors, delegates and the UC community.



The graduation ceremony of 195 post graduate students took place at Hilton Addis on Meskerem 6, 2005. The postgraduate program is being run in collaboration with Indria Gandhi National Open University. On the occasion, the President of Saint Mary's UC, Ato Wondowsen Tamirat (Associate Professor) said that the day marks a new chapter in the life of graduates. During the last three years, according to the President, students exerted their effort with all sorts of dedication to accomplish their studies, and time has come to change their personal and national visions into reality. A delegate from Indian Embassy, Mr. Sanjive Kanduri, expressed that the training students gained during their stay at the UC would enable

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From the Editorial Desk

Envisioning the provision of quality education, SMUC usually implements its strategic plan (SP) assiduously. The priorities of the SP serve as the guiding principles of the UC. SMUC has established a strong tradition of implementing and monitoring SPs. Its culture of handling SP can provide useful insights for other new institutions, and it is good to share such a tradition mainly with other sisterly higher learning institutions.

The implementation of action plan, for instance, is executed at SMUC as follows. Units and offices formulate their action plan based on the five year SP and submit it to CEIQA (Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance Office). CEIQA is responsible for collecting all action plans from the major units of the UC. It gives comments using SMART measures as yardsticks regarding the content of each plan. Returning the plan for the major units after revising, it organizes a general session for all units and offices to come together for multi directional discussion: top down, bottom up and horizontal. The components of the action plan are usually deliberated and reviewed critically again by participants and amendments are made by the respective units and offices which pave the way for having refined ideas. These ideas serve as input for the effective implementation of its yearly action plan and the general SP.

CEIQA collects the edited action plan of each major unit and compiles and publishes it in the form of a book. Then, it distributes to units, offices and HERQA. In the meantime, CEIQA suggests useful ideas to major units and serves as a coordination center for educational improvement and quality assurance related issues. For example, it gives training to staff members on how to formulate action plan, performance plan and strategic plan. It also offers training on quality related issues to both the academic

community and external interested groups. It coordinates different staff development trainings for the academic staff.

The Office is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the action plan of the major units. There is a monitoring and evaluation framework which the Office produced in 2007/8. The framework clearly identifies the scope of the monitoring and evaluation of the UC. The major areas forwarded for the M&E exercise entails audit, performance monitoring, performance evaluation/ assessment, quality audit, reporting and revising strategic and action plans. Seven types of M&E systems are identified: monthly progress reports, bi-annual monitoring reports, revised action /annual plans, annual reports/ reviews, revised strategic plan, midterm evaluation report and summative evaluation report to which the UC strictly adheres.

In relation to action plan, for instance, CEIQA makes visits to major units and produces quarterly reports and communicates the quarterly monitoring results to all units including the top management. It also assesses, measures and values the institutional performance of the first half, second half and the entire period plan implementation in reference to the SP.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation system is indispensable for universities to transform their mission and vision into practice. If there are institutions which do not establish the system, they can draw lessons from those which already have the system and experience especially in conducting and handling regular monitoring and evaluation of action plans. Most colleges and universities have SP. Their difference lies in how they handle monitoring and evaluation. To avoid differences, it is good to share experiences.

This newsletter focuses on strategic planning of higher learning. Enjoy reading it!

News

Continued from page 1...

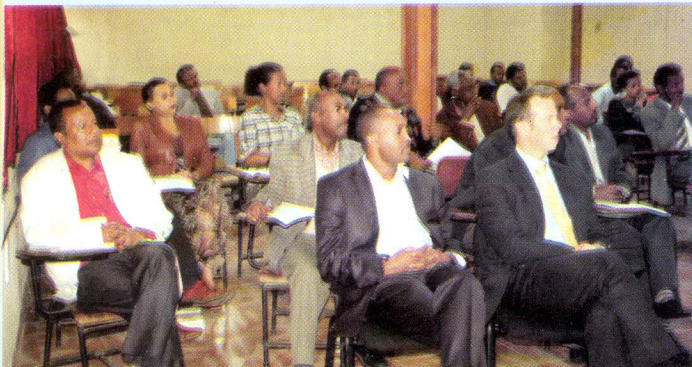
them to succeed in life, adding that their education would be instrumental in realizing the development of their country. He also appraised the tie which has been established between Indria Gandhi National Open University and SMUC as very successful.

Similarly, one thousand and seventy seven students graduated with degree and TEVT program at the National Theater on Pagume 5, 2004. The guest of honor, Dr. Ellene G/Medhin, informed graduates to exploit the favorable condition of the country by applying their knowledge and skill vigorously and dutifully to the betterment of the society. Addressing the graduates, Ato Wondowsen Tamirat (Associate Professor), advised them to work industriously to eradicate poverty from the country. He also reminded the grand contribution of the private institutions in Ethiopia through the expansion of access to those students who would not have been reached otherwise.

The institution also graduated 3,325 students with degree, diploma and certificate in continuing education program from both Addis Ababa and Hawassa campuses on September 23, 2005. The guest of honor, Dr. Sime Gebella, Agricultural Science Researcher, recommended to graduates to create jobs. He also stressed the need for TVET graduates to be proactive in promoting new agricultural technologies. ■

Multi-Disciplinary Annual Seminar Held

Multi-disciplinary annual seminar was held here at the Multi-purpose Hall of SMUC on September 22, 2012.



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Organized by Research and Knowledge Management Office of SMUC, nine papers were presented by researchers coming from different fields of studies. Members of St. Mary's community and invited guests participated at the seminar. The 4th in the series, the topics addressed in the seminar include papers related to agricultural land, conflict resolution, and social marketing. The opening and closing remarks at the seminar were made by Ato Tedla Haile, Executive V/President, and Dr. Wondimagegn Chekol, Director of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance, SMUC, respectively. St. Mary's UC organizes and sponsors three annual conferences including this one. The others are the recently held annual conferences on Private Higher Education in Africa and the National Student Research Forum. ■

Public Lecture Delivered

A public lecture, conducted by Professor Ronald L. Jacobs from the University of Illinois, USA, was delivered here at St. Mary's main campus on September 05, 2012. The lecture focused on employee motivation and performance improvement. Professor Jacobs discussed, among others, the context in which organizations operate in the globalized world that they need to compete for customers on a global basis; adopt complex and flexible work design, and recruit, develop, and retain talented individuals.

Participants in the lecture were students, lecturers, and administrative staff from the four campuses of the university college. After the presentation, they raised different questions and the speaker addressed them in a participatory manner. The lecture was organized by SMUC in collaboration with the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. Mr. Robert Post, the Public Affairs Officer of the Embassy, gave introductory remarks while introducing Prof. Jacobs. ■

Research Corner

Research Title: An Evaluation of the Five Year Strategic Plan of Saint Mary's University College

Researcher: Dr. Wondemagegn Chekol, Shegaw G/Medhin and Atlabachew Getaye

Saint Mary's University College formulated its first strategic plan (SP) in 2007/8, and it served for the last five years as a roadmap. It contained seven major priorities. They were the pillars which guided the overall direction of the UC. The first SP was usually formulated with the intention of strengthening and enhancing the performance and quality of SMUC. However, the field of education is so fluid that an institution may not achieve what it plans as desired due to policy issues, curriculum, resources, budget, the quality and quantity of man power and their research skill, the potential of students, the link between the institution and other sectors, management skill, etc. Thus, the UC conducted a research to check whether the aspired components of the SP were enacted efficiently or not. The researchers developed seven specific objectives while evaluating the five year SP, and they used purposive sampling to select subjects.

As to sources of data, the study employed both primary and secondary data. An interview and a questionnaire were the primary data sources. An open ended type of interview was conducted with the top management, faculty deans and department heads, members of the committee that produced the first Strategic Plan. From members of the committee that prepared the first Strategic Plan, six team members and the President of the UC who had been engaged actively from the conception to the preparation and implementation of the SP were selected intentionally and interviewed with six cassettes which were then transcribed into 65 pages, aiming at generating appropriate data regarding the successes and weaknesses of the five-year SP. A questionnaire was also distributed to different delegated staff members. The Top

Management, heads of major units, faculty deans department heads were the target groups for the questionnaire. A critical analysis of document analysis was the secondary data source. Secondary data such as various monthly and quarterly monitoring reports, five annual plans, five annual performance reports and monitoring and evaluation framework documents were analyzed critically.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages were employed. The responses of the interview and questionnaire were analyzed thematically. Moreover, the contents of the various documents related to the five-year SP were analyzed critically. This enabled the researchers to triangulate ideas from various sources.

The findings revealed that at the preparation stage, the core team considered the basic requirements of SP formulation by identifying the purpose (mission and vision), forming workgroup (core team and taskforce), benchmarking contents (local and international ideas) and collecting internal and external data (environmental scan and SWOT analysis). The annual plans operationalized the priorities of the SP successfully. In the five academic years, the UC executed 2060 activities. The highest number of activities fell under SPs one and three, which indicates that the UC gave emphasis to teaching, research and technology.

The UC has established a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation. There is a M&E framework which dictates CEIQA to conduct seven types of M&E of which most of them were effective. Moreover, all members of the UC community had positive attitude to M&E, and the leadership had strong commitment and insight about M&E. Recognition of performances was given on the basis of the findings of CEIQA, and so were corrective measures which made the decisions of the UC performance based. Besides, the UC published its performance and action plans on a yearly basis. This made the UC exceptional in assuring quality at national level.

The UC had, however, data handling problems. Pertinent and useful data were not easily accessible. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, and presidents of universities and colleges as well as students on quality related issues. In this edition of the newsletter, we interviewed Ato Tedla Haile, Executive V/President, of Saint Mary's, on the implementation of the first strategic planning of the UC. We had an interesting stay with him. Enjoy our conversation!



Quality Matters: How important is a Strategic Plan for higher education in general and for St. Mary's in particular?

Ato Tedla: A strategic plan is like a road map that would lead you to the intended destination. Without it, an institution cannot be sure of attaining its goals. It might take the wrong path and find itself in an unknown land. This kind of journey forces one to be back to square one, after wasting one's time, energy and money. The analogy might sound simplistic, but it best describes what a strategic plan is all about.

With that in mind, any higher education institution worth the name can in no way underrate the significance of a strategic plan; St. Mary's is no exception. The differences among institutions of higher learning could be attributed to the presence and effective implementation of a well-thought-out strategic plan.

Quality Matters: How did you go about the preparation, creation, implementation and evaluation of SMUC's SP?

Ato Tedla: To be frank, we had little knowledge about a strategic plan at the beginning and we thought of having selected staff members go through training on concepts and key features of a strategic plan. Prior to that nearly forty of our academic and administrative staff had training on quality audit processes in a higher education institution. This helped us gear our strategic plan toward including quality issues essential to the effective implementation of planned activities pertaining to higher education.

Having had the basic tenets of a strategic plan, we formed committees who represented employees and students to work on the details of the strategic plan informed by the vision and mission that guide St. Mary's. Of all the activities, the SWOT analysis took much time; for it involved stakeholders across the country due to the distance education programs we run. After consolidating the documents by the strategic plan steering committee at institutional level, it was presented for deliberations by Academic Commissions, Councils and the Senate. After the deliberations of the respective organs of the University College, the SP became an institutional document duly approved to guide every activity undertaken by the UC.

While the SP is a five-year plan, every department and office had to produce their annual plans, derived from the strategic document. This has been done for subsequent

years upon the completion of the implementation of an action plan of a specific year. It has also been closely monitored by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA). The center makes quarterly visits to the offices to monitor performances in line with their respective annual plans. In addition, a bi-annual performance review sessions are held to ensure the execution of annual plans.

Quality Matters: What were the major focus areas of the UC's first SP?

Ato Tedla: Our first SP had seven strategic directions, of which enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, research, outreach activities, and strengthening the human resources were the prominent ones.

Quality Matters: What benefits does the SP bring to the UC to enhance quality education to achieve the set institutional goals?

Ato Tedla: The SP serves as a reference point. Every activity is aligned to it. Without it, the entire institutional core activities may have witnessed disastrous results because we would not have known what to attain, when and how. The three question words are embedded in each strategic direction. Performance verification requires yardsticks by which planned activities are measured.

Quality Matters: What factors make the UC peculiar from other private institutions in relation to structure and quality education?

Ato Tedla: What makes the UC peculiar is the value it gives to its human capital. It is almost two years now since the UC, with the help of the Ministry of Education, has created opportunity for its staff to pursue their studies in diverse PhD programs at Addis Ababa University. It spares no effort to create a friendly

environment that would make the campus community feel like being at home. There is a system at work, which makes employees and students have their voices heard. No person in management position is inaccessible to any one on campus. The organizational structure is there to show duties and responsibilities of those in charge toward serving stakeholders rather than have them locked in their offices.

Quality Matters: Would you share with us the major achievements of the UC, which stem from the SP in relation to teaching, research, and community services?

Ato Tedla: From the start, the UC has viewed education as a public good; and hence the urge to live up to the expectations of the public. To this end, the major achievements can be stated in the light of the three pillars, which guide our activities; teaching-learning, research, and outreach activities. It is almost seven years now since we have established an internal quality assurance office, which monitors the performance of the academic and administrative offices. This is an achievement that guarantees the maintenance of quality services in a sustainable way. Related to this is our Testing Center, which is entrusted with giving training to our teachers on test blue print preparation and exam item development. It is also charged with internal exit exam preparation and administration, which has now become compulsory for our students. The center has brought about significant changes in the attitude of both students and teachers toward the importance of exit exams. Still another addition to our services is the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, which offers training to potential entrepreneurs and to those who seek to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

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Perspective

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ITS DIFFERENCE FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR



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The term strategy is a Greek word derived from stratos (army) and agein (to lead), applied in the military, to mean according to Torres (2001, p. 15) in Margaret (2008), “as the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy”. The term refers to overall plan, not to specific plans of winning war. The idea of thinking big and focusing on long term goal were its original meanings which still remain true after being adopted in the fields of business and education while formulating all round design. The turbulent and competitive environment compelled the business field to apply strategic planning at the beginning, followed by the public and education sectors later.

There is a need, however, to understand differences in the style of planning between sectors and the changes which take place in the way we define knowledge and execute planning. Between the business and education sectors, there are differences in terms of objective, customers’ interest, income sources and types of stakeholders. So, before transferring experience from business to education enterprise, there is a need to understand their differences carefully not to end up in educational fads and frills. Further, there are changes in the way we view knowledge and in the manner we formulate educational planning.

In terms of goal, the business field has a clear objective- making profit. Nevertheless, it is not as simple as the business field to spell out the goal of educational

enterprise. It serves as change agents of people through its teaching and learning. Students come to a higher learning with diverse interests: to add values, to make money out of their education, to fulfill a different life mission, etc. Their different attitudes and expectations require innovative and, at times, maverick thinking. What makes educational planning more difficult is that students’ interest is in a state of change. There is a need to manage and challenge both the past and the present and sometimes to unlearn intentionally the past to create a better future for students with the help of SP. Students join these days higher learning institution primarily to secure jobs by outsmarting their competitors in the job market which is an additional burden for educational institutions. Institutions are, therefore, expected to equip students with the best and, if possible, with exceptional knowledge, attitude and skills. In developing countries like ours, people learn to beef up their livelihood, generating income through education. An effective institution should, thus, be like Ethiopian gold winning athletes. Successful Ethiopian athletes always run not for bronze and silver but for gold. Like the best Ethiopian athletes who always run for gold, an educational strategic planning of an institution should be designed to have a bright future for students. In other words, the goal of educational institution requires the consideration of many factors to make learners innovative and problem solvers, which in turn enable to win their competitors hands down.



The source of income is the other difference. The business field gets its income from sales of goods and services rendered to customers and clients; whereas the education sector has varied sources such as government grants, student fees, sponsoring organizations and alumni contributions. These require from educational institutions the development of an effective communication with various organizations to acquire funds. The income of customers buys finished items. On the other hand, the income of students does not buy education; it rather pays the cost for the provision of educational services. Consequently, educational planners need to concentrate on the quality of the process of education to retain the already enrolled students and to attract new ones.

Moreover, the business field always plans in reference to the customer, and yet the education sector has always different groups of stakeholders: students, instructors, top and middle line managers, parents and the community, which makes its planning too complicated for it should get the consent of all constituencies. Unlike the past where the top management along with planning department used to formulate the possible mission and vision of an institution and hand down to the middle line and academic staff to be implemented, these days, all groups come together to foresee their organization's future and exert their maximum effort to put into effect the agreed upon goals. Administrators manage and instructors teach and, at the same time, both come together to envision the mission and vision of their institution so as to offer quality education to their students applying their deep insights and high minded thoughts. This way of doing enable to build consensus around the educational strategic priorities, provide the basis for resource allocation and plan operation, define baseline for controlling outcomes and help to monitor and evaluate the performance of departments, offices and units.

Knowing the difference between the business and education field is not enough. Knowledge itself is always in a state of transformation, and planners should consider the changes. There is a shift, for example, from finite knowledge to infinite knowledge, from certainty and predictability to uncertainty and unpredictability, from specific specialization to multidisciplinary and holistic field of study, from positivism and structuralism to post structuralism and postmodernism, from an entirely western mode of thinking to new forms of discourse between the western and the local wisdom. And planners should update themselves to make adjustments.

There is one more change- the planning approach itself. The change is from traditional to modern type. Unlike the traditional planning, which is input oriented, technocratic, neutral, linear, rigid, routine, document based and obedient, modern planning follows result oriented, participatory approach, resource mobilization style, iterative planning, flexible implementation, change oriented technique, process based approach and performance type of monitoring.

Therefore, educational planners should know all the above and other changes before they engage themselves in strategic planning.

The definition of SP varies from one field of study to another and from one writer to another in substance, abstraction and level of acceptance. Generally speaking, it is working towards the same goal by organizing one's resources. Strategic planning is a systematic process of organizing the present by predicting the overall desires that an organization wants to attain in the future. It is a roadmap which leads towards the aspired destination, overcoming all the hurdles that arise along the way to an institution's future. It is not a document of today, but a preparation for the future. Bryson and Alston (1996:3) argue that strategic planning is a "disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape

and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future". As to its merit, Zhongqiu and Junwei (n.y :871) explain that "Its principal purpose is to connect the future of higher education institutions with the predictable changes of circumstances, and to make the gained volume of resource greater than the consumed ones...".

Strategic planning provides general idea regarding the major activities that should be executed to materialize the mission and vision of an institution. It simply traces the path in the form of hypothesis without specifying the detailed actions, and it should under-
way through regular modifications and adaptations in response to the internal and external factors of an institution. Metaphorically speaking, it is like a sailor who wants to know about the port where he wants to arrive at, adapting and resisting along his way the winds, storms and pirates, designing appropriate actions during his voyage.

Specific and detailed actions and steps are found in the action or operational plans. It is here all sorts of nifty ideas are implemented. Action plan specifies the day to day tasks of an organization. According to Shapiro (n.y:4), "It is the process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done, and what resources or inputs are needed to do it. It is the process of operationalizing the strategic objectives." The action plan states the desired goals, describes the strategic activities, specifies the responsible body, and articulates the basis of measurement, duration and cost.

'What factors should be represented in the educational SP?' is the most fundamental question that planners should be of critical. Both local and global issues should be blended appropriately, and the four pillars of education suggested in the UNESCO report

such as to know, to do, to be and to live together should be represented in a balanced manner. Besides, educational planners should treat the following crucial questions seriously: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? How we will know when we arrived there?

The process of strategic planning involves preparation, assessment, creation, communication, implementation and evaluation not in a linear manner but in an iterative way. At the preparation stage, planners lay the foundation by identifying the purpose of the SP, stakeholders, needed information, resources, timeline and pertinent data that appraise the internal and external environment of an institution. At this stage, team members of the SP should raise the following questions: What is the purpose of our strategic planning effort? What is the schedule for the strategic planning process? What resources do we have for the SP process? What resources do we lack, and how can we obtain them? What internal and external data do we have that can inform the process? Then, assessment follows. Here, SWOT analysis is made regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an institution. A thorough analysis, in relation to an institution's position, performance, problems and potential (internal factors) and forces which affect the functioning of an institution (external factors), is made. The third stage refers to creation. The core team identifies the priorities of the SP and writes the document by explaining and describing the contents of the SP. During communication, an institution shares its strategic plan and related program documents and products with program stakeholders with the help of both lean and rich media. Implementation is the fifth step where by the SP is put into action. While implementing, an institution should ensure that there are experienced and motivated academic staff, sufficient funding, enough resources, friendly working atmosphere, regular professional

development provision and up to date technology. Monitoring and evaluation which is the last step facilitates the effectiveness of an institution by proposing practical actions after analyzing data and grading performances of the implementation of priorities, identified in the SP. It should inform stakeholders the extent to which they achieved the SMART objectives in their annual action plan. Stakeholders should get useful insights to make the required adjustments. Recognition to efficient performances and corrective feedback to poor performances should be given on the basis of the monitoring and evaluation results. To do so, an institution should first identify the appropriate type of monitoring and evaluation framework which can enable to assess information periodically to know the progress of performances of departments, units and offices.

Educational planners not only should know the steps but also should know the key elements of SP. An SP starts with the formulation of vision and mission. The vision statement explains the rationale for the existence of the institution, adding the ideal state of affairs an organization would like ultimately to achieve. The mission statement contains the overall goal of an institution, the method it uses to reach to its goal and the basic principles and values that guide to the fulfillment of the mission. Next, environmental scan trails. SP is sensitive to the environment. There is a need to scan the internal and external environment critically. After environmental scan, gap analysis follows: an institution assesses the difference between the current position and its aspired future to fill the gaps. Benchmarking is the other important feature which involves the comparison and contrast of the operations, performances and practices of an institution against other local and international institutions to

draw lessons and incorporate refined and best practices in the SP. Then, the essential strategic issues would be identified followed by the formulation of strategic goals, action plans and tactics, giving room to flexibility to accommodate unanticipated issues. Evaluation and review of the SP are the other indispensable components. By doing all the above, it is assumed that SP would become the norm of an institution. Stakeholders are expected to carry out the activities of an institution by checking the best fit among the institution, environment and available resources.

To realize the above steps and processes, good governance and committed leadership are imperative to facilitate the development, communication, implementation and evaluation of the goals set in the mission and vision of an institution. The leadership should create friendly atmosphere by valuing and respecting the views of the stakeholders and by taking timely response to the need of the academic community, students and would be employers.

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Regarding research, a lot has been done to date; these include the annual conference on Private Higher Education Institutions, the annual Multi-disciplinary Conference and the annual Student Research Forum. St. Mary's has also contributed to the academic community by publishing three bi-annual peer-reviewed journals: Mizan Law Review, Journal of Business and Administrative Studies, and Journal of Agriculture and Development.

Outreach services, as a key component of the UC's mission, are led by an office, which caters to the needs of stakeholders. Although the UC has reached out to service seekers at local and national level, the Kebele and Kifle Ketema in which we are located are the primary beneficiaries of our training packages.

Quality Matters: What were the challenges the UC encountered while implementing the previous SP, and how did you overcome them?

Ato Tedla: There were testing moments during the implementation of the SP. One was when distance education programs were suspended for a year at national level, and the other was when the private sector was banned from running the Law program. Paying salaries to the employees without registering new students was a challenge indeed. The sky rocketing prices of stationery items have added to the problems we faced. However, we sorted out alternative strategies that would enable us retain the staff. For instance, we ventured into general education, K-12, widening our services and extending the quality services we rendered at tertiary level. In addition, we've joined the publishing industry focusing on primary readers.

Fortunately, the external quality audit initiated by HERQA has ended the moratorium imposed on distance education allowing us to continue running our programs.

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Quality Matters: What lessons have you learnt from the implementation of the first SP?

Ato Tedla: Well, the previous SP has now become an essential reference material and a repository of knowledge from which every one of us at St. Mary's have learnt a great deal. One is the open-mindedness to grab opportunities, while at the same time handling challenges with tact. The other is the hard work we passed through to put in place a system that would enhance our quality services effectively. Although costly, strengthening our quality system in the coming five years more than it was in the preceding SP will certainly be what we anticipate.

Quality Matters: Thank you very much for sharing about the implementation of the UC's SP!

Ato Tedla: Thank you!

Virtual Links

- Ethiopian Ministry of Education
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- Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)
Website: www.higher.edu.et
- PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education
Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
Website: [http:// www.inqaahe.org](http://www.inqaahe.org)
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>
- Center for International Research on Higher Education
Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe
- Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia
Website: <http://www.qsae.org/>
- International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
- International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)
Website: <http://www.bc.edu>
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in higher Education
Website: <http://www.inqaahe.nl>
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Website: <http://www.enqa.eu>
- Asian Pacific Quality Network
Website: <http://www.apqn.org>

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Passing through all these steps and fulfilling all the requirements of an SP, you will not be disappointed if I add one more point which educational planners always say: there is no perfect plan!

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