# **Quality Matters**

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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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### Ouote of this issue

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

Nelson Mandela

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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# Saint Mary's University College Held its 10th Annual Conference

In collaboration with the Association of African Universities, African Union Commission, Association for Development in Education in Africa and Covenant University, Saint Mary's University College held its 10th Annual Conference successfully at African Union Conference Hall on August 8 & 9, 2012. The major theme of the conference was "The role of Private Universities in Higher Education in Africa".



Ato Demeke Mekonnen, Education Minister, made the welcoming remarks. In his speech, he emphasized the need to African universities- both public and private to work together to realize sustainable development. He also notified that public universities alone can no longer shoulder the delivery of higher education services in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. Accordingly, he expressed the dedication of his Ministry to work with private institutions in Ethiopia to enhance the academic and research undertakings of the institutions.

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### From the Editorial Desk

Education is always a function of time, place and circumstance. It requires an educational philosophy which reflects the socio economic context of a given country, feasible for a given place and for a particular time. That is why educationalists always claim that the education system of Ethiopia should not be American, French, British or Chinese; it must be Ethiopian. They insist that our education system should not be packed with foreign and alien thoughts. To this end, the curriculum should reflect the different experiences of the country which can be its hopes or fears, aspirations or frustrations, successes or failures. Ethiopian education system should be devised in a relevant and up to date manner so that the ideology would transform the country by solving its problems in a well timed manner. The unique circumstances of the country should be emphasized by recognizing the interrelationships of all relevant experiences which can be drawn either from within or outside as far as they are useful to make the education system responsive to the problems of today's Ethiopia.

To achieve the above cardinal goals, stakeholders should perform their duties appropriately. Policy makers, as always, should formulate fitting mission by drawing the best elements from the Ethiopian social environment that facilitate the platform to build a better society, and teachers should bring to classroom living thoughts, but not dead wisdom; for life activities are dynamic, not static which require a higher order of intelligence for social insight and problem solving. They are also expected to be lifelong learners. Students should not be passive recipients. They should take the front seat to lead their school learning, making all sorts of adjustments to liberate and construct themselves in the way they want. Moreover, improvements in our education philosophy should undergo the required adjustment in congruent with the needs and problems of the country. Human capital theory puts forward that individuals and society get economic benefit from investment in people. Nonetheless, if the quality of higher learning institutions is in a state of predicament, they may not raise the cognitive skills of graduates as desired. As a result, tertiary education may not bring the aspired growth.

To avoid this problem, there is a need to provide assistance to private higher learning institutions. The PHEIs in Ethiopia are not strong in their funding and academic staff profiles which affect their education delivery negatively. A mechanism ought to be created to support them and to award free scholarships to their academic staff. By doing so, it is possible to alleviate the quality problem they experience and to raise their contributions to the national development of the country.

This newsletter focuses on educational philosophy. Enjoy reading it!

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## News

### Continued from page 1...

Short addresses were also made by AAU Secretary General, Vice Chancellor of Covenant University and the President of Saint Mary's UC. Ato Wondwosen Tamirat (Assistant Prof.), President of SMUC, pointed out that private higher education institutions in Africa should seek ways of networking with one another to share and mobilize resources and exchange their experiences. Then, a keynote address on the theme of the topic was made by Professor Olubemiro Jegede who was a former Secretary General of AAU, presently working as the Secretary to the Government of Kogi State, Nigeria. He spelled out the need for African universities to focus on quality of teaching and research to advance the continent socially, economically and technologically.

In the conference, thirty seven papers were presented by high caliber scholars, coming from different parts of Africa. More than 200 participants representing universities, ministries, national and international organizations and experts from professional associations and development organizations attended the conference, sharing their views and strengthening the themes of the papers during discussions. It was really inspiring and breathtaking to see so many scholars while pinpointing possible solutions which can serve to solve the problems of the continent with all sorts of commitment and zeal at times being overtaken by emotions but in most cases by reasons and in the middle of the discussion bursting into laughter by the jokes presenters and participants told.

Towards the end, Professor Michal Omolewa, former President of the General Conference of UNESCO, presented the draft proposal of the Addis Ababa declaration on the role of private universities in higher education in Africa, and it was adopted. Finally, closing remarks were made by the representatives of participants, representatives of proprietors of private universities, AAU delegates, Professor Ehile and the Executive Vice President of SMUC, Ato Tedla Haile.

### **Europe-Africa Connect Conference**

The Association of African Universities (AAU), in collaboration with European University Association (EUA) and St. Mary's University College (SMUC), held a conference from June 21 to 22, 2012 at the UN Conference Centre here in Addis Ababa under the theme Europe-Africa Connect: A Bi-Regional Approach to Strengthening University Capacity for Change. The conference aimed at disseminating the results of a two-year pilot project for university quality evaluations in Africa and discussing the future viability of such a program with donors and the African university community. Five institutions from Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon, Namibia and Kenya took part in the evaluation process and presented their reflections at the event. The Quality-Connect project was supported by the Erasmus Mundus Program of the European Commission with the objective of enhancing international dialogue and cooperation on institutional development and quality assurance, fostering exchanges, links and networking between universities in Europe and Africa. The participants were of high profile professionals. Welcoming remarks were made by Wondwosen Tamrat (Asst. Prof.), President of St. Mary's University College, and Prof. Helena Nazare', President of the European University Association. As organizing partner of the event, St. Mary's contribution was hailed at the opening and closing remarks.

## A workshop was Held

A workshop was held from June 2 to 6, 2012 at Adama Maya Hotel which was organized by the Higher Education Institutions Forum against HIV and AIDS in collaboration with UNICEF to prepare a standardized HIV/SRH Intervention Package and SPM for Higher Education Institutions. Representatives from International Organizations, University partners/ Donors, Federal HAPCO, Public and Private University HAPCO Heads/ Directors, students and HEIs Forum coordinators participated in the workshop.

## Research Corner

**Research Title:** Assessing the Roles and Challenges of PHEIs in Creating Access and Human Capital Development

**Publication:** Presented at Saint Mary's University College Research Conference

Researcher: Kibrom Mengistu

According to the writer, this century is a century of knowledge economy. In the era of knowledge economy, countries work hard to produce skilled people to achieve social and economic development. For this to happen, tertiary education is the key. Private higher learning, which is one of the segments of Ethiopian higher learning, is contributing its share. It is becoming one of the dynamic branch due to globalization and a shift in balance between public and private involvement in tertiary education. The major cause behind expanding private institutions is the inability of countries in financing higher learning institutions, and Ethiopia is not an exception.

The paper is a qualitative study which applied document analysis and personal diary as tools for data gathering. Relevant policy and institutional documents were analyzed. The main purposes of the paper were to assess the role of private higher learning institutions (PHEIs) in relation to access and employment opportunities, to identify their contribution to human capital and economic development and to examine the opportunities and challenges Ethiopian PHEIs confront with.

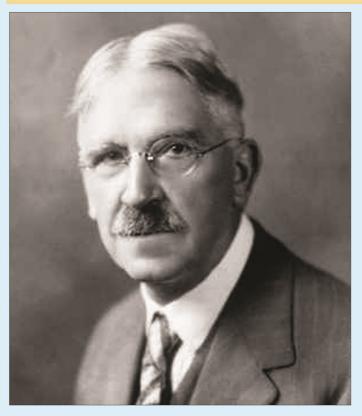
The main purposes of Ethiopian PHEIs are to absorb surplus demand; to offer education which is different from the public higher institutions and to give quality education. In relation to enrolment and access, the PHEIs in Ethiopia entertain a quarter of the total enrolment of the country's higher education system and are providing better access to female students. More than half of the students enrolled in private higher learning are females. They also reach marginalized group of students. The disciplines they offer include business, nursing, law, IT, management, accounting, economics, secretarial sciences, banking and finance which are highly skewed to social science, humanities and business fields. Their specializations focus on market oriented studies, offering programs which can create good employment opportunities. And it is possible to generalize according to the writer that the private sector is growing in its weight as one of the important sectors for the contribution of the national development.

The Ethiopian PHEIs face, however, many challenges. They do not get government subsidies like other countries. The land procurement process is low, and they encounter high cost of leased buildings. The programs of teacher education and law are banned. The 70:30 policy has its own impact for the majority PHEIs since they do not have the culture of providing hard science fields. Most PHEIs are experiencing poor quality of teaching which has its own effect in their output. For example, 90% of the nursing graduates could not get jobs. Distance education was also banned (after the study for some selected PHEIs the ban has been lifted up) due to quality dilemma. Regional inequality is the other problem. Most of the private institutions are based in Addis Ababa, with limited branch campuses.

The writer concludes his paper by suggesting the need to support, subsidize and create positive attitude and favorable policy towards PHEIs. He also pinpointed for the PHEIs the need to open up branches in remote regions and small towns by offering both hard and soft sciences to better serve the need of the society.

# Interview

Professionals in the field of education came up with a new educational philosophy as a result of their dissatisfactions against the excessive formalism of traditional education. Progressivism is an American philosophy which emanated from the pragmatist philosophy of Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, John Dewey, etc. Some of the elements of progressivism are parts of our education system, and the problem solving approach is highly useful for the classroom instructor. We presented the ideas of **John Dewey** in the form of simulated interview who contributed greatly to the philosophy of progressivism, being classed among those who have made philosophic notion applicable to the needs of their own day.



**Quality Matters:** How does progressivism view education?

**Dewey:** Progressivism focuses on the growth of the whole child from mental, physical, emotional, social and cultural perspectives. Progressivism claims that education is constantly in the process of development, and the realization of change through education is the focal point. Educators should modify their methods and curriculum in accordance with the new knowledge and changes, occurring in the environment. The quality of education should be measured by the continual reconstruction of experience, not by the application of perennial standards.

Quality Matters: You claim that learning should be

directly related to the interest of the child. Why do you give too much prominence to this issue?

**Dewey:** Plato at one time defines a slave as someone who accomplishes the purposes of another. There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his/her activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the pupil in the construction of the purposes involved in his/her studying. My stance is teachers should not be the sole sources of knowledge. They should serve as facilitator by setting the stage, co-operating with and guiding learners' activities and, of course, learners should assume the role of decision making in selecting pertinent learning experience to fulfill their own desires and needs. After all, knowledge is a means for managing one's experience, and it seems very logical to put learners at the center of the teaching learning process.

Quality Matters: If learners are given this much freedom, what kind of curriculum are we going to have?

**Dewey:** The nature of the curriculum is again experience centered which, by and large, focuses ▶▶

on problem solving method. The curriculum is not pre-determined. It is a sort of outline which the teacher anticipates, using an array of resources. The actual detail is developed in the classroom with the active participation of students. The curriculum is not static like traditional schools; it is responsive to the need, interest and experience of learners.

**Quality Matters**: How about the teaching methods and evaluation techniques?

Dewey: The teaching method is flexible and action oriented, which employs project and scientific methods. Teaching is exploratory but not explanatory. Any method which can develop learners understanding and inquiry skill can be employed. The method should also promote cooperative group activities. By doing so, the reconstruction of experience leads to the reconstruction of human nature. As far as classroom activities support critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills, they can be applied as teaching methods. The model of the teaching learning should include the following steps: identification of a problem, representation of a problem, selection of strategies, examination of results of the strategies, implementation of the strategies and evaluation of results.

With regard to evaluation, it applies continuous assessment in a process oriented manner. Continual feedback is given about the task a student performs which facilitates the way for self monitoring of his/her learning. In other words, it is not product oriented.

**Quality Matters:** Don't you think it will be difficult for the classroom teacher to manage the classroom?

**Dewey:** Not at all! The focus of this philosophy, as I explained it earlier, is on the whole child. The

environment plays a key role in shaping the learner's nature. Classroom management is expected to promote active participation of students in a democratic manner without being confined to the actual classroom. Hence, self directed, experience centered and active atmosphere are essential. For better understanding of exploration of social study, for instance, students might visit historical sites, museums and the theatres. They would experience social studies by interacting with individuals from diverse social owners and social conditions. The same holds true for other fields of studies.

Quality Matters: The curriculum appears too general, lacking specialization. It directs the teaching-learning to problem solving approach, taking bits and pieces from here and there, failing to explore a certain issue in its wholeness and entirety. Besides, it rejects traditional values. One of the short comings of this philosophy again is that it is against subject matter. How do you see these criticisms?

**Dewey:** Every philosophy has its own strengths and weaknesses. I'm not in a position to say that progressivism is free of problems. Through time, other educators will fill the gaps, and in the end we will have a coherent and full-fledged educational philosophy.

**Quality Matters:** Thank you very much for your informative and insightful explanation!

**Dewey:** Thank you for having me!

# Quality Matters

# Perspective



# THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ETHIOPIA: IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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The source for feasible philosophies of education is general philosophy. General philosophy usually enables mankind to understand about him/herself by answering basic questions such as who am I, why am I here, and to some extent where am I heading? Similarly, any philosophy of education answers three fundamental questions: what is education? What should education accomplish? And how should it be accomplished? The what aspect of education can be fetched from the culture of a given society which encompasses languages, values, beliefs, norms and practices. And the how aspect and what should be the mission of education are usually dictated by the different stakeholders of education taking into account the various social contexts of a given country.

Ethiopia has gone through the implementation of different educational philosophies, which range from idealism to modernism by answering the above questions differently at different times.

Initially, the philosophy of education in Ethiopia appeared to be idealism. Its metaphor was supernaturalism. The epistemology of the education system was faith. The role of education was to prepare youngsters for church service. The church system of education in Ethiopia had its own coherent indigenous philosophy. In its teaching, man is assumed to be made of two entities: a body and a soul. The body has four elements: water, fire, earth and air which make man part of the material world having its own desires being

in conflict with the soul. The soul is spiritual and it is eternal and higher. According to the church, the main goal of life (education) is to attain the wish of the soul and to that end trainings were given to overcome the cravings of the body in the form of praying, fasting, hardship and at times self torture. The church believes that man is the replica of the omnipotent God, and he is endowed with innate knowledge. The mind is perceived as the jug of this wisdom and the act of learning should activate the hidden treasures and use them for good intentions. The power of God is essential to release knowledge from within and He is at the center of everything. The role of the teacher is to interpret knowledge, and his authority could not be questioned. In most cases, however, students revered and loved their teacher- Yeneta which is to mean Master.

Educationalists analyze the education system of the church differently. For some, it nurtured the required psychic and spiritual energy to sustain life in a modest manner withstanding foreign aggressors and creating solidarity and conviviality within the nation through sharing and loving one another. For others, the education of the church was trying to prepare learners to accept the existing status quo as it is with the intention of preserving whatever has been handed down through the years, and in turn to pass it on without modifying to the next generation. Consequently, learners failed to get room to be critical and reflective thinkers.

In fact, students were restricted to accept the prevailing order which clashed with the principle of education i.e., to take the initiative in order to engender new dimensions and skills and be responsive to the social and environmental needs of man. That is why Mulugeta Wodajo's remark, made in 1961, still reverberates. "With her three thousand years of history, although Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in the world, she is also one of the youngest. Nowhere else is this paradox more evident than perhaps in the field of education." This is the case probably because education was limited only to religious aspects, leaving aside other major socio economic needs of the country mainly technology and science, and the country followed a closed policy for years.

The lag of the church education in being responsive to the material need of the nation led the way to modern education, at least in its crude form. Modern education was started during the reign of Emperor Menelik who is called by many as "the far sighted and technology friendly Emperor". He realized the inadequacies of church education. Consequently, he declared the historic educational proclamation saying, "In other countries not only do they learn, even more they make new things. Hence, as of today all six year old boys and girls should attend school." Despite his enthusiastic proclamation, the achievement on the ground in expanding schools and in making new things was little, so it seemed that the Emperor was crying for the moon. It was simply the basics, particularly languages along religion, that the curriculum presented as the contents of education. There was a tendency to shift from idealism to basics (existentialism) but it failed to succeed due to its foreign based curriculum and teaching staff and the conservative nature of both the church and the people.

Through time, the coming of change became inevitable. Invasion followed which brought attitudinal changes towards education. The Italian invasion wiped out the country's educational system which had been at its infancy. The invaders killed the elites systematically. They tried to preach the philosophy of fascism with the intention of propagating the superiority of Italians over Ethiopians. It was a short-lived philosophy due to their eviction after their five year stay. However, the conquest had thought people in the hard way that modernization was compulsory for the existence of their beloved country. To maintain independence, in the eyes of the people, modern education was seen as key to equip oneself with the required technology.

During the restoration period, education became secular without facing any resistance from the people. The late Emperor also felt that education was the key for development. The aim of education was to produce semi professionals hinging upon the British school system at the beginning and the American system later. The state was engaged excessively in the expansion of the education system without giving due regard to the relevance of the curriculum probably because the education system did not have the right educational engineers so as to formulate relevant educational policy. Enrollment at all levels rose from 196,000 to 1,100,000 1960/61 and 1974/75. From philosophy between perspective, it followed essentialism, having other traits too. The education system was highly elitist, divorced from practical aspects.

Then, Ethiopia experienced political revolution. The unanticipated military regime came to power, upholding socialism as its guiding principle. The country's education system went through a very radical type of change which was almost educational revolution as a result of which it lacked legacy. The shift was so extreme which took the nation from fear of God to the denial of God.

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Marxism Leninism personally reminds me of an Arabic poem which reads:

I am above God and Satan

My ways are deeper than Theirs
Whatever stuff the philosophy sermonized, it was very
difficult to swallow such a philosophy for a religious
society like Ethiopians.

Anyway, the education policy concentrated on implementing three major themes: using education for production, scientific consciousness and socialist consciousness. With regard to education for production, it attempted to develop in the minds of students the dignity of labor and the need for the community which is interesting. Education for scientific consciousness claimed that the "world is knowable". Accordingly. critical thinking, research and creativity were encouraged, again something desirable. Finally, education for socialist consciousness which emanated from Marxist-Leninist philosophy dictated class struggle. Here lies the problem. Man for Marxist-Leninist is not many but one i.e., proletarian. So, the system was not inclusive: it did not want to see feudalists, capitalists, merchants, religious people, etc; hence, bringing its own negative impact on the education system.

The educational philosophy of the military regime was absolute modernism, applying reasoning as its epistemology which is not bad by any standard since it was the fashion of the day and has been for years both in the West (not in its absolute form, of course) and East Europe, but it did not have the appropriate native intelligence which could advance the borrowed thoughts by amalgamating with the local needs of the country. Besides, the training failed to link thoughts with actions due to lack of finance and infrastructure. The indoctrination of Marxism Leninism at the expense of native

culture was intolerably promoted and it brought serious repercussions in the life styles of the people. That is why it is so common these days to dream as one Ethiopian writer put it "to visit New York instead of Lalibela, to value the guitar than "Kirar", any western dance than "Iskista", western outfit than "Shemma" and "Yetbeb Libs", beer than "Tella", and whsiky than "Katikalla". On top of these, like the church education, it could not advance friendship, tolerance and modesty. Instead class struggle was the fashion of the day, and so was the killing of one another which were the outputs of socialist 'consciousness.'

On the other hand, the education system had its own strength. The literacy campaign which reduced illiteracy from 93 per cent to 37 within a short period of time was praiseworthy. Minimum higher learning institutional standards were maintained both in teaching and research, and colleges and universities used to entertain only the fine minds of the country and graduates were not worried about securing jobs. Once they finished their study, they were sure that they would find themselves in a certain office. It does not necessarily mean that the economy of the country was able to absorb graduates, but the government used to assign them in the different sectors of the economy.

The present government enacted federalism as a political ideology. The education system has been decentralized at region level and is instrumental in realizing the rights of nations and nationalities. The aim of education, according to the Education and Training Policy (1994), "is to strengthen the individual's and society's problem solving capacity, ability and culture starting from basic education and at all levels". The curriculum contains some of the elements of progressivism as part of its education system.

Unlike the previous regime, the actor of education is not the government alone but the private sector too. The private sector which contributes 17.3% of the higher learning has brought its own merits to the education system particularly by creating space for female students and paving the way for multidisciplinary studies. When it comes to the government, higher learning has expanded, having 32 public universities at hand, and more to come, which enrolled 447,693 undergraduate degree students and 20,150 post graduate students in 2003 E.C. (2010/11). Compared to 1997 E.C (2004/5) whereby the total enrollment of undergraduate students was 138,159; the figure of 2003 showed a notable progress.

Nevertheless, the issue of quality is a pressing problem for the present education system. Universities cannot meet the minimum standards due to lack of professors, and the economy of the country is not in a position to absorb graduates due to their continuing outflow which casts doubt on the problem solving ability and creativity of the higher learning curriculum. The English language competence of students and the issue of fresh instructors is extremely worrying. It seems evident that there is a need to make emphasis on quality along side with the expansion of higher education, and educational policy makers should also balance the level of graduates with the country's market capacity. In addition, from the fertile ground of Ethiopian traditional education, the values of friendship, tolerance, modesty and self pride should be incorporated in the curriculum in a secular manner to utilize one's intelligence for good intentions and to avoid unnecessary sectarian conflicts and excessive Western acculturation.

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#### Virtual Links

Ethiopian Ministry of Education

Web site: 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

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

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

# Photo Gallery



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