

Quality Matters

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement, Research & Quality Assurance (CEIRQA)

St. Mary's University College

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Quote of this issue

"Quality is not an act, it is a habit."
Aristotle

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance 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

HERQA Conducted a Workshop

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) of Ethiopia conducted a day-long workshop at Desalegn Hotel on the 27th of March 2009. The workshop was meant to enhance cooperation between the agency and stakeholders aiming at developing the agency's communication with key stakeholders.

In the workshop, four papers were presented by a team from HERQA. The focus of the papers was on issues of accreditation, quality assurance practices, and stakeholders view on HERQA's practices in Ethiopian higher education. In retrospect, the workshop gave participants the chance to reflect on issues raised by participant scholars. More than 30 stakeholders from private and public higher education institutions as well as from the regional education bureaus attended the workshop.

Activities and outputs of the agency were explained in brief. Accordingly, it was indicated that the audit report of St. Mary's University College will soon be published together with the audit reports of Unity University, Royal University College and Admas University College. ■

From the Editorial Desk

The quest for enhancement of quality in education has always posed significant challenge in the higher education system and is regarded as a national priority that requires involvement and engagement not just in the higher education system but at all levels of our education system. This holds true as countries face fiscal deficit and consequently a disproportionate rise in the number of student population and staggering growth of facilities. In such circumstances improving quality of education is particularly critical to ensuring that learning needs of students are met, and providing pathways for families and communities out of poverty.

To make its own contribution towards quality enhancement in the provision of higher education in Ethiopia, SMUC has established its own quality watch dog: the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) in the mid 2000s. The primary purpose of the center is to enhance quality of the teaching-learning process in the University College. Our continuous quest for proactive and sustained intervention in quality enhancement in the years ahead will increasingly strengthen our task in spearheading our efforts in this direction. It is, thus, a high level, cross-cutting initiative as education is a key to eradicating poverty and building prosperous economy.

This season we are indeed pleased to present this issue of our newsletter about a wide range of issues in which we are increasingly involved in the higher education sector. ■

The final round of student's Hot Seat competition is to be held

SMUC students' final hot seat competition is to be held on 5th of June 2009. Students who took part in the competition are drawn from 4 departments of the Business Faculty: Accounting, Management, Marketing Management, and Secretarial Science and Office Management. The event has been organized by the Business Faculty of the University College with the presumption that it would create awareness among students on the need to have multi-disciplinary knowledge and create an atmosphere of inter departmental competition.

Such an event is the first of its kind at a faculty level. And this season two rounds of competition had already occurred and the finalists are awaiting to compete for the final round. ■



News

Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) Conducted a Conference

Academic Development has been championed in the Dutch-funded Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) project between 2005 and 2009. Staff Development centers called Academic Development and Resource Centers (ADRCs) are now established in many public universities and in few private higher learning institutions. Upon completion of the program, EQUIP organized a two-day, 7th - 8th April 2009, conference in Bahir Dar. The conference was meant to discuss on a variety of issues; staff development, material development, ADRC development, sustainability and future issues, as well as formation of Academic Development (AD) association. The program was concluded by a joyful visit to the monasteries of Lake Tana and the Royal enclosure of Gonder. ■

National Conference on Promoting Quality and Quality Award in Ethiopia

St. Mary's University College attended a conference organized on quality and quality award at Addis Ababa Ghion Hotel on the 23rd of April 2009. The conference was organized by the Ethiopian Quality Award Organization (EQA) and Engineering Capacity Building Program (ecbp). The highly interactive event was meant to engage and bring leaders of the industry together to learn, network, discuss

and be inspired on how to improve their competitiveness through excellence.

The conference entertained various papers which were presented by foreign and local scholars. The papers dealt on issues of Globalization and Competitiveness, Business Excellence and Awards, European Quality Awards, Activities and Achievements of ECBP (GTZ) in Ethiopia with respect to Quality Infrastructure.

Finally, call for participation in award competition was made by EQA to industries in the manufacturing, construction, service (for profit and non-profit) sectors, regardless of whether they are publicly or privately owned. ■

SMUC Alumni held its 1st General Assembly

The SMUC Alumni held its 1st General Assembly on 22 March 2009. Assistant Professor and President of the University College, Ato Wondwosen Tamrat in his speech congratulated the Association for its achievements and called for enhanced effort of members of the Association for its growth. The Assembly, in the mean time, approved annual report and plan of action for the coming year. It was also learnt that the meeting is important in promoting link between the Alumni and the University College's community. Graduates, top management, faculty and other invited guests attended the Assembly. ■

Research Corner

Title: *Ethiopian Private Higher Education and the Pursuit of Social Responsibility*
(A paper presented at the 2nd annual national conference on Private Higher Education organized and sponsored by St. Mary's College, now SMUC)

Research Type: *Descriptive*

Researcher: *Shimelis Tsegaye, Canadian Physician for Aid and Relief (CPAR)*

The paper attempts to assess issues of social responsibility in higher education institutions in Ethiopia. More specifically, the paper explores the extent to which private higher education institutions fulfill their moral responsibility and ethical concern. The issues are weighted from different angles: pertinence, quality, management and financing, and international cooperation. The paper also investigates other aspects of social responsibility; the engagement of higher education institutions in pursuing social, cultural, economic and at times political agendas that are directly beneficial to the general public.

This qualitative study uses primary data collected from randomly selected colleges through semi-structured questionnaire, document exploration, focus group discussions and personal observations.

The findings of the study, thus, highlighted that higher education institutions in Ethiopia have failed to satisfactorily live up to fulfilling

their social responsibilities that may include, inter alia, spearheading socio cultural endeavors, nurturing the accumulation of social capital, safeguarding social justice, promoting environment protection, advocating social and political debates, designing conflict resolution mechanism, etc. It is noted in the paper that few private colleges have made a good start in fulfilling their social responsibilities in areas like the promotion of environmental sanitation programs, the organization of research and discussion forums, the promotion of sports activities, and the like; but still, a lot remains to be done.

The study also shows that some colleges spearhead environmental protection activities, while others play a leading role in promoting gender equality and in building the capacity of the public sector and the community. It was also found out that almost all colleges surveyed play a participatory and at times a leading role in sports activities, and still few others said that they get involved in health related interventions and in fostering social justice.

Finally, the paper makes suggestions that would help these institutions strive better to get engaged in championing this responsibility and be able to avail their services to the society in which they have germinated to the level of expectation and ultimately be able to “survive” in this competitive world of fast evolving academic breakthroughs and scholarly excellence. ■

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 interviewed Dr. Seleshi Zeleke on issues of Educational Quality in Higher Education Institutions. The center would like to extend its thanks in advance for sharing us his thoughts.



Background

Dr. Seleshi Zeleke is Coordinator of the Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC) at Addis Ababa University. The center provides services and resources to support the teaching-learning process and promote quality and relevance of education through Staff Development Packages, Quality Assessment, Advice and Research on academic programs.

Dr. Seleshi is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, Addis Ababa University. He did his PhD in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway. Marcos from the Center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) office was able to talk to him at length about issues of quality education.

Quality Matters: Now that ADRCs are established in many Universities, what sort of changes/impacts have they made in promoting quality in education?

Dr. Seleshi: There are actually practices pertaining to Quality Care in public universities and as you know in some private colleges. Since then, awareness has been created among the management and staff of the universities. There is now well informed management and staff about quality education and what need to be done to sustain and to promote quality in education. Since their establishment in the nine universities, the ADRCs have been conducting training in their respective universities. And those trainings have helped instructors to be concerned about their pedagogical practices. This is especially important in the relatively new universities; for staff, more or less, are new to teaching at university level and most of them do not have adequate pedagogical background for their current position.

Quality Matters: Do you think ADRCs have achieved their desired goals?

Dr. Seleshi: Well, I think it is too early to say

on that. In other words, we need to evaluate the impacts of these trainings on instructional practices of university staff. In our case, we conducted 2 trainings, one of them very recently in March 2009. Most of the instructors told us that they liked the training. That tells you something about the probable impact. Although we have not seen it yet, the impact appears to be good as one can imagine from their responses. Generally, however, the important point is whether and how they put these skills on practice. I think it is too early to evaluate the impact of the offices.

Quality Matters: What other efforts do you think should be added to effectively maintain educational quality in higher education?

Dr. Seleshi: One of the issues is, now, the admission criteria and who is doing the admission. The higher education proclamation entitles universities to administer entrance exams and to accept students with the requisite knowledge and skills necessary for the programs. But the practices suggest that universities accomplish the task together with the Ministry of Education. That means universities are not independently doing it. So the problem is you may get so many students who don't have the requisite knowledge and skills which are essential for the program. So I think that is one of the problems that needs to be addressed to maintain quality in our education.

That is one possibility; in the mean time, there is a need to expand university facilities proportionally to the growing number of students to be admitted: books, libraries, other services should be expanded if a growing number of students is to be admitted to the university. Facilities, in other words, should be improved commensurate with

the number of students. What we have been seeing for the last 4 or 5 years, however, is student number increases remarkably but the facilities are not increasing the same way. This implies that there is disproportionate growth in the number of students and the facilities.

Quality Matters: Nowadays, all too often, we talk of quality of education. However, quality is a perception, isn't it difficult to legislate quality in the context of education?

Dr. Seleshi: Well you can have different definitions of quality in education. But I don't think it is difficult/impossible to talk about quality and sustain quality. People/scholars can understand each other when talking about quality education. The problem is if you have adopted different definitions, then you go differently in different paths. This means there is a need to adopt an operational definition for quality. What do we mean by quality? If they adopt the same operational definition, then there will be no problem in understanding each other. I mean, for example, quality might be defined as fitness for purpose. You have objectives, if you can fully achieve those objectives, then we can say that the program has quality. But it is relative. One may consider perfection as quality whereas others may consider it achieving objectives. So the relativity is obvious; one may consider it as perfection or others might consider it as less than that; simply achieving your objectives set at the beginning of a program. Then if you achieve those objectives as planned, you can consider yourself as perfect. So in that case there are obviously differences in perception about quality but generally people can also agree by using one operational definition. **(Cont'd to P. 8)**

Perspective

Understanding Private Higher Education in Ethiopia

By Markos Mezmur (CEIRQA)

How do we see the recent growth and development of private higher education in much of the country? Do we really make sense of this latest educational development that has left scholars, policy makers, and development experts surprised? No doubt, such questions arose because our historic tradition of higher education is primarily public, though the phenomenon is now a days changing with few emerging institutions of private higher education. As academic interest in this sector of higher education grew, new questions became relevant: What roles do private higher education play? What regulatory environment should guide its growth and development?

This perspective is, therefore, an attempt made to indicate the various facets which are critical to understand the context of private higher education in a state largely dominated by public higher education. I, therefore, believe that such a perspective is indeed relevant in prioritizing issues within the current debates that underlie discussions in private higher education in Ethiopia.

The role of private higher education in Ethiopia has always been controversial. Conventional wisdom has always regarded private higher education as unhealthy competitor to the public sector. On the contrary, there are cases which

demonstrate that the sector has a well-defined niche that serves to complement the public sector role. In this regard, there are cases that illustrate the demand-absorption role of private higher education: enrollments clustered in lower qualification levels and in fields with high demand, teacher education (though recently faced prohibition) legal and business studies. These observations provide evidence showing that private institutions are demand-driven and provide career/ vocational-oriented education.

This constitutes complimentary functions that meet the national demand for intermediate, middle-level training and education. Let us take this demand-absorption discourse further, unveiling its intra-sectoral differences: most private institutions meet demand for specialized education, different from that offered in public institutions; a small but influential sub-sector meets the demand for "better" (high status, internationally portable, career-oriented) education; and a small segment meets the demand for more education, absorbing those excluded by the public sector due to finance and certification reasons.

The regulatory environment shaping the growth and development of private higher education in our country offers us a historical trajectory of the evolution of higher education. The fact that expansion of higher education activities

required government support and intervention, demonstrates the centrality of state policy in the growth and development of private higher education. Over time, government policy led to a functional divide between public and private higher education institutions: the former largely catering for the high achievers and the latter catering for average and low achievers.

Quality assurance as a regulatory policy suffers from anomalies in the registration and accreditation processes. I, thus, want to convey a succinct message for Quality Assurance: I personally believe that the culture of quality needs to evolve from within the institutions themselves in response to learners' needs, the labor market requirements and the society in general. In my estimation, this underscores an important, but frequently ignored reality in higher education: quality is more of a perception and, thus, difficult to legislate.

Since quality is related to the relationship between institutions and stakeholders, the labor market and the society at large, questions arise as to the education sector's relation to the well-being of the polity and the resultant regulatory framework for its existence. Since higher education has both public and private benefits, it is a social good. ■

Cont'd from P. 6

Quality Matters: what do you think are the ways of achieving quality in Education?

Dr. Seleshi: Well, yeah, there could be several ways. I suggest one way and you may suggest another, still another person may suggest

another. So the ways could be different but the target is the same. You know, for example, producing graduates of good profile could be one way of looking at quality. Do our graduates have the necessary profile for employment? For example, employers require new recruits to have best skills and to the extent that they fulfill certain standard criteria, then we can say they have good profile. This can be seen as one way of examining quality. These are the outputs - the programs' outputs. But the process could also be seen. How do we reach at that point? How were the practices? How were the assessment procedures? The input aspect is still another and I have already talked about it.

Quality Matters: What do you think should be done to enrich quality culture in Higher Learning Institutions?

Dr. Seleshi: Well, the first thing to be done is creating awareness. We should be able to convince key stakeholders that the training and other staff development activities that the ADRCs are undertaking or planning to undertake are important components of Quality Care and that they will have considerable contribution to improving and/or maintaining quality of higher education. The ADRCs should strive to make their training attractive to instructors. One way of doing this, I think, is by conducting needs assessment. The results of the needs assessment would help us to invite instructors for training in areas that they showed some interest.

There are so many things that we can do to develop quality culture in universities. But let's start with the above and see whether we can succeed. ■

Forthcoming Event

The 7th National Conference on Private Higher Education Institutions will be held in August 2009 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA) Conference Hall. This year's conference will focus on Charting the RoadMap for Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia. This is a double blind peer reviewed research conference.

UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education: The New Dynamics of Higher Education. The conference will be held in Paris, France, July 5-8, 2009.

For more information visit:

<http://portal.unesco.org>

Panel Discussion on 'Entrepreneurship' Conducted

SMUC's office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in cooperation with the department of Management organized and conducted a Panel Discussion on entrepreneurship. The panel discussion aimed to enhance students' awareness about issues of entrepreneurship and foster entrepreneurial skills of SMUC students. The panel discussion which was held on 21st March 2009 was attended by SMUC students, faculty staffs and other invited guests. Dr. Worortaw Bezabih and Ato Andualem Tegegn were invited guests who were able to share their insights and valuable experiences to participants. ■

Virtual 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:

<http://www.albany.edu/dept/eapt/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://www.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>

Interantional Institute for Higher Education in Ethiopia (NHEA)

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

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

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

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

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

Asian Pacific Quality Network (APQN)

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

Fun Corner

Once all the scientists die and go to heaven. They decide to play hide and seek. Unfortunately Einstein has to seek and is supposed to count upto 100 and then start searching.

Everyone starts hiding except Newton - he just draws a square of 1 meter and stands in it right in front of Einstein. He keeps counting 97, 98, 99, 100.

He opens his eyes and finds Newton standing in front. Einstein says "newton is out-newton is out." Newton denies and says I am not out. He claims that he is not Newton!

All the scientists come out and he proves that he is not newton. How?

Proof:

Newton says:

I am standing in a square of area.

That means I am Newton per meter square.

Hence I am Pascal, since newton per meter square = Pascal;

Pascal is OUT ■



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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

Photo Gallery

The First General Almuni Assembly



Research Grant Scheme

Funding Information

The center for Educational Improvement, Research and Quality Assurance (CEIRQA) has got three research grant schemes in place. Thus, both faculty and non-faculty may apply for one of the three research grant schemes toward supporting their research undertaking;

SMUC Research Fund;
Faculty Research Fund;
Graduate and Undergraduate Student Research Fund.

SMUC Research Fund

This scheme is intended to promote outstanding and professionally recognized contributions in the form of original research leading to publication. Eligible faculty members will receive a fund for this scheme.

Eligibility

Eligibility applies to all members of the University College

Application Deadline

Application deadline are December 31 and June 30 each year

Faculty Research Fund

The faculty research fund scheme will be a competitive scheme which is designed to contribute to the University College's strategic research objective of increasing the number of research- active SMUC staff.

Eligibility

Applicants must be full- time faculty members at SMUC

Application Deadline

Application deadline for this scheme are December 31 and June 30 each year

Student Research Fund

This research scheme is meant for undergraduate and graduate students who are preparing their research project as partial fulfillment for the requirement of their first and second degree respectively. The area of their research projects should, however, be aligned with SMUC's research interest.

Eligibility

Applicants must be full-time graduate (masters) or undergraduate degree program students.

Application Deadline

Deadline for the application of research grant for this scheme is on or before December 31 every year.

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