



**The Views of PHEIs on the Accreditation Practice in Ethiopia**

**by**

**Belay Tefera (PhD) and Wondwossen Tamirat (Asso. Prof)**

**A paper presented at the first national conference on private higher education in  
Ethiopia**

**Organized and sponsored by St. Mary's College**

**July 26, 2003,  
Sheraton Addis,  
Addis Ababa**

# ***The Views of PHEIs on the Accreditation Practice in Ethiopia***

Belay Tefera\* and Wondwossen Tamirat\*\*

\*PhD, Addis Ababa University and \*\* Assistant Prof., St. Mary's College

## ***Abstract***

Accreditation of Private Higher Education Institutions is a worldwide practice undertaken in order to ensure quality and institutional integrity through a comprehensive review process. The benefits that this practice has by way of providing an assurance of quality to students, parents and the public at large is well-established. However, the manner in which it is conducted, the methods and principles of accreditation used, and the processes through which an institution must pass before being accredited could be different from one country to another. This paper purports to explore worldwide practices with a specific focus on the accreditation process in Ethiopia. With regard to the Ethiopian scenario, an attempt has been made to gauge the attitudes of high-ranking officials in PHEIs about the current practice of accreditation. The results obtained are discussed and suggestions are forwarded in light with the major elements identified.

## ***1. Purpose and Research Questions of the Study***

The major purpose of this survey is to determine the views of higher officials in Ethiopian private colleges regarding the processes and practices of accreditation. It, more specifically, focuses on the following questions.

1. Is accreditation generally viewed as an important task a private college should go through?
2. How should accreditation be conducted to be effective?
  - 1 Is pre-accreditation beneficial?
  - 2 Should accreditation be voluntary or otherwise?
  - 3 Should accreditation be enhancement-oriented or control-oriented?
3. How do the higher officials generally view accreditation practices currently put in place by the Ministry of Education?
  - What strengths do they observe?
  - What are the problems observed? and
  - What should be done to improve the accreditation process?

## ***2. Research Methodology***

## 2.1 Sampling Techniques

The survey questionnaire was administered to higher officials in 19 different private colleges. Five questionnaires were originally sent to each of these colleges. The name of these colleges, their status of accreditation, year of establishment, and the number of completed and returned questionnaires are generally summarized and presented on Appendix 2

Note that the average age of the private colleges is 2.81 years, 54% are accredited (and the rest 46% are not) and that the total completed and returned questionnaires was 59.

Table 1 presents the position held by respondents in their respective colleges.

**Table 1: Position of Respondents in Their Colleges**

<i>Position</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>
Deans/Presidents	16	27.1	27.1
Instructors	3	5.1	5.1
Officers/Directors/Heads	15	25.4	25.4
Registrars	5	8.5	8.5
Vice Deans/Presidents	15	25.4	25.4
Others	3	5.1	5.1

## 2.2 The Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was designed to gauge the opinions of high-ranking officials in private higher education colleges about accreditation in general and current practices in Ethiopia in particular.

It has three parts. Part one is meant for respondents to provide background information. Name of institution, date of establishment, area of training, programs currently offered, institutional status (i.e. whether accredited or not), and the position held by the respondent in the college. Part two presents 17 Likert type items regarding accreditation so that they can indicate their type and level of agreement to each item on a five point scale: Strongly agree (SA = 5), Agree (A = 4), Neutral (N = 3), disagree (D = 2), and strongly disagree (SD = 1). Items focus on importance of accreditation and pre-accreditation, procedures of accreditation, and accreditation practices by the MOE. The third part presents open-ended questions so that respondents can freely give their opinions about the strengths of practices, weaknesses of practices and recommendations

to improve.

Note that the summary of responses to items in the second part of the questionnaire are presented in Appendix 1 along with the mean and standard deviation of responses to each item and the correlation between the responses to the seventeen items to the age of the colleges and status of the colleges on accreditation

### ***2.3 Procedure of Analysis***

The analysis is organized in such a way that the responses to items about general importance of accreditation and procedures are presented first. Then, opinions about current accreditation practices in Ethiopia are analyzed. The responses to open-ended items are presented at the end. For the purpose of simplicity, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' are put together. And the same is true with disagree and strongly disagree. Readers interested to know the separate responses are advised to refer to the summary Table of Appendix 1.

### ***2.4 Result and Discussion***

The first important issue to contend within the then opinion of higher officials in private colleges about the importance of accreditation is summarized and presented in the Table below.

**Table 2: Opinion of Respondents about the Importance of Accreditation (N = 59)**

Item	Description	Table 2: Opinion of Respondents about the Importance of Accreditation (N = 59)														
		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks	Impact	Success	Should	Effect						
Item 1	Accreditation is one way of ensuring the quality and standards of an institution	54	92%	4.20	.68	Agree	As significant	It is an important role in the success of an institution	People tend to join institutions which are accredited	50	85%	4.19	.74	Agree	A failure to meet accreditation requirements may mean awarding of diplomas having an effect different from the accreditation one (62%).	Similar to accreditation has to do with the importance of pre-accreditation.
Item 2	Accreditation has the effect of ensuring quality and standard	54	92%	4.20	.68	Agree	As significant	It is an important role in the success of an institution	People tend to join institutions which are accredited	50	85%	4.19	.74	Agree	A failure to meet accreditation requirements may mean awarding of diplomas having an effect different from the accreditation one (62%).	Similar to accreditation has to do with the importance of pre-accreditation.
Item 3	Accreditation has the effect of ensuring quality and standard	54	92%	4.20	.68	Agree	As significant	It is an important role in the success of an institution	People tend to join institutions which are accredited	50	85%	4.19	.74	Agree	A failure to meet accreditation requirements may mean awarding of diplomas having an effect different from the accreditation one (62%).	Similar to accreditation has to do with the importance of pre-accreditation.

e

**Total Responses to all of the three items tend to depict favorable attitude towards accreditation.**

As it can be clearly seen on Table 2, respondents seem to favor the importance of accreditation in ensuring quality and standard (92%), which in turn is believed to account for the success of an institution (85%). A failure to meet accreditation requirements may mean awarding of diplomas having an effect different from the accreditation one (62%). A more focused issue in relation to accreditation has to do with the importance of pre-accreditation. Responses are

Item	Description	Table 4: Opinion of Respondents about the Importance of Accreditation (N = 59)												
		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks	Impact	Success	Should	Effect				
Item 4	Pre-accreditation before embarking on the task of training individuals	32	54%	5.9	2.22	Neutral	Pre-accreditation procedures on new institutions discourages private initiative	25	43%	3.21	1.36	Neutral	Total	Similar responses to both items such that the proportion of those who endorse and fail to endorse is comparable.
Item 5	Pre-accreditation before embarking on the task of training individuals	32	54%	5.9	2.22	Neutral	Pre-accreditation procedures on new institutions discourages private initiative	25	43%	3.21	1.36	Neutral	Total	Reponses on Table 4 show that there is a difference in opinion when pre-accreditation is the issue at stake, however. A comparable proportion of respondents seem to endorse and fail to endorse the

m

ilar responses to both items such that the proportion of those who endorse and fail to endorse is comparable. Reponses on Table 4 show that there is a difference in opinion when pre-accreditation is the issue at stake, however. A comparable proportion of respondents seem to endorse and fail to endorse the

use of pre accreditation as the first hurdle and the possible effect that this may have

7	Accreditation should be enhancement than controlled oriented	53	90	2	3	3	5	4.30	0.78	Agre
<i>However, the majority support the view that accreditation be enhancement oriented.</i>										

Although respondents do widely differ in terms of implementing accreditation voluntarily or on will, the great majority support that it should be enhancement oriented.

There is in fact a surprisingly significant difference between respondents from accredited and unaccredited institutions particularly with respect to item 3. More respondents from accredited institutions seem to endorse that accreditation should be a voluntary process than being enforcement oriented (see the summary table on the appendix).

Coming to the accreditation practices in Ethiopia, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about how the Ministry of Education is doing the job. To begin with standards, their opinions are summarized on Table 6.

**Table 6: Opinions about the Standards of Accreditation Currently Employed by MOE**

s um		marized on									
		6.Table of Ac cr		6: Opi editat io		nions about t n Curr en		he Sta tly E mpl oyed by			
Responses Agreement N l Disagre		em	ent	To	tal			F eq.	% Freq %		
q.	% Mean Sd Remark The accreditation standa rds are easy to achieve 8 14	15	25	34	58	2.	40	.92	Disagr	ee	
e	standards me	asure the quality of education needed at the tertiary level							24	41	18

16 27 3.10 1.05 Neutral *Total remark It could measure quality but the stan  
ds are not easy to achieve.* Differences in opinions being constant, responden

ts seem more skeptical about the achievability of standards to validity of s

t

**Table 7: Opinions about the Process and Procedures of Accreditation**

		procedures														
d		creditation		n.Tabl		e 7: Opinion		s about								
		Proce	ss	an	Pr	ocedu	re	s of	Acc	redita						
ation. <b>Table 7: Opini</b>		<b>Pro</b>	<b>ces</b>	<b>s a</b>	<b>nd</b>	<b>Pr</b>	<b>oce</b>	<b>dures</b>	<b>of A</b>	<b>ccred</b>						
<b>o</b>		<b>n Responses</b>					<b>Agreement Neutral</b>									
<b>tal</b>	<b>Freq % Fre</b>	Mean	Sd	Remark	12	ure	auc	rat	ic	41	70	11	19	7	2	4.0
accreditation process takes long time and is b																
Agr	ee	See the correla														
tions of this item with bot		tus	wh	ic	h	are	si	gnifi	cant.							
h age of the colleges and sta																
		accreditation process in the years to come will be controlled oriente														
		n enhancement oriented														
27	22	37	18	31	3.10	1.0	re	gul	arl	ys	upe	rvi	sed a	fter	being	
0 Neutral should be																
accreditation		44	75	4	7	11	18	3.69	10.4	Neutral	See the cor					
		item with age of institutions in the appendix which is significant.														
		10 The renewal ti														

for accredited institutions is too short 33 56 11 19 15 25 3.39 1.11 Neutral  
*Remark While the majority believes that the process is time consuming and bureaucratic, a comparable proportion endorses and fails to endorse items 13, 16, and 10. The majority of the respondents has the opinion that the process of accreditation is long and time consuming. On the other hand, comparable proportion of respondents agree and disagree with future-orientation to be taken by MOE in accreditation, the need for regular supervision after granting accreditation, and the duration of renewal of accreditation. The contradiction observed here is that respondents seem to endorse that the renewal period is too short and at the same time endorse the belief that institutions should be regularly supervised after being granted accreditation. Another observation to be made on the same table (and on the summary table attached in the appendix) is that respondents from relatively older institutions and those from accredited institutions tend to endorse that accreditation is a long and bureaucratic process compared to their counter*

r		st but equ									
ts		n importan		t issue		is the respon		dents'			
La		on ab	ou	t who	s	ould	d	o the	jo	b of a	
i	ion and how. The respon	e (	Tab	le	8)	Ta	ble	8.	Opini	ons ab	
stat	ses are summar										

those who are from unaccredited institutions.

In the third part of the questionnaire, respondents were left in their own to figure out what they think are the strengths and weaknesses of the practices and ultimately suggest ways of overcoming the weaknesses.

Below is presented the summary of their responses to each of the three questions beginning with strengths. For convenience, attempts are made to present responses under different classes.

## ***1. Strength***

### ***1.1 General***

- 2 Creates ground for cooperation
- 2 Makes the public aware of their rights
- 3 Encourages competition for excellence
- 4 recognizes that investors can contribute to this sector
- 5 provides statistical information about institutions
- 6 help get more qualified professionals
- 7 gives vast opportunity for people to learn

### ***1.2 Quality***

- Ensures quality education
- Prepares institutions to give quality education, students get good education, and the country gets qualified professionals
- Awakens institutions to be up to the standard
- Regulates the quality of learning
- Gives proactive care in the management of the teaching-learning process
- Encourages quality
- Maintains standard and uniform education in different institutions
- Checks against the possibility of having disorganized higher institutions
- Appreciates the need to have accreditation



### **1.3 MOE Staff**

- Consider current situations and make the process of accreditation easier.
- Willing to help institutions seeking accreditation
- Cooperative staff
- Cooperate to give information
- Small but cooperative staff
- Have involved PHEI in various forums
- Give renewal requests
- Make a visible cooperation
- No corruption
- Experienced and highly qualified staff

### **1.4 Criteria/Standard**

- Are of acceptable standard
- Set minimal requirement for fulfillment
- Set standards to start with
- Clear criteria
- Discourage money orientation
- Discourage those who are not determined to work in the sector
- Feasibility of the standard set by MOE
- Examine all major inputs before accreditation
- Promote private colleges
- Give moral to attendants
- Give confidence
- Help get more professionals
- Try to see all elements required for quality education

### **1.5 Procedure**

- Allows time to iron out inadequacies
- Conduct formal and informal visits
- Quality and enhancement oriented than control in the coming year

### **1.6 Accountability**

- At least it holds private colleges accountable to maintain a certain degree of quality of education
- Accountability

### **1.7 Negative comments**

- No strength
- Practically none
- None I can say
- Do not see any

## **2. Weaknesses**

- 1 In a free market economy and liberal practice, government should only interfere in major aspects like controlling the services & quality of education
- 2 MOE should not serve both as a regulator & competitor
- 3 Process too long
- 4 Accreditation made remain valid for a minimum of 5 years
- 5 Bureaucratic
- 6 Lacks continuous evaluation & supervision
- 7 Shortage of experienced personnel
- 8 The profile of academic staff is hard to meet
- 9 Book requirements are too stringent
- 10 Accreditation is a matter of joint concern both by the MOE and private & public colleges
- 11 Delay
  - Too short period
  - Shortage of staff to process the accreditation
  - Not enough staff to go to different parts of the regions for accreditation
  - Time is small
  - Most students and government institutes and offices assume accreditation is the only standard that ensures quality education and employment opportunity
  - Not well handled

- Supervisory activity is weak
- It is only for government interest or consumption
- Time taking
- Do not include people from private institutes
- They set enrollment limit while they should not
- Renewal period is short
- Lack of self-evaluation
- Not independent institute
- Scheme for accreditation in consultation with private institutes

### ***3. Recommendations Suggested by Respondents to Overcome Weaknesses Observed***

#### ***3.1 General Purpose and Approach***

- Respondents commonly recommended that the purpose of accreditation should basically be that of an encouragement and facilitation rather than that of control so that beginning institutions can feel more confident, responsible, and accountable for what they do.
- Appreciative of the MOE's effort so far in gauging quality education only with a very limited staff, respondents as yet recommended that the MOE shall preferably follow more flexible, democratic, and transparent procedures of accreditation. Others also recommended that MOE should not impose in any case. Let excellence and democratic values ride us.

#### ***3.2 Who Should Do the Accreditation***

It is recommended that alternative accreditation agency be established to take over the responsibility of accreditation. That is, the issue of accreditation needs to be a joint

venture forthcoming from different stakeholders. It was commonly indicated that it can't be left to the monopoly of either the state or the owners. It should rather involve credible citizens, private professionals, government bodies, and experts.

### 3.3 The Role of MOE

Respondents also recommended that MOE should conduct continuous assessment, supervision, and support. That is, it should assume partnership.

### 3.4 Criteria of Assessment

The MOE should be less demanding in its expectation. Moreover, it should also evaluate institutions on the basis of their own experience rather than adhering to normative assessment every time. No matter how the assessment is conducted, it should focus on the process; not just on input and output

#### Appendix 1 Summary of Responses to the 17 Items

S.N	Statements	Responses									
		SA =5		A=4		N=3		D=2		SD=1	
		1	SD	=1						F	
F	% F % F % 1. Accreditation is a necessary product should be enforced on every higher e	ati	on	ins	ti	tu	ti	on	26	4	4
1.	25 -.94 -.191 2. Institutions should first acquire pre-accreditation before embarking on the task of t	rai	nin	g i	ndi	vi	du	als	1	2	20
1.	40 .022 -.050 3. Accreditation should be a voluntary pro en n institution should involve in only wh	it	fe	els	t	he	ne	ed	11	19	8
.18	8 .332 pc.010 4. Accreditation is one way of ensuring the s o f a n i nst it ut io n ity and standard	f a	n i	nst	it	ut	io	n		18	31
A .	68 -.064 -.002 5. Enforcing pre-accreditation procedures on new institutions discourages	pri	vat	e i	nit	ia	tiv	es	14	2	4
1.	36 -.011 .015 6. Accreditation has a significant role in th whi ch are ac cr ed it ed ss of an institution as people tend to join institutions	ch	are	ac	cr	ed	it	ed		20	3
.7	4 -.011 -.085 7. Accreditation should be enhancement-oriented n	ot	con	tro	l-o	ri	en	te	d	2	8
A	.78 .028 .192 8. Diplomas awarded by unaccredited insti ed it ed in sti tut ion s itutions should have similar effect as those diplomas awarded by accr	ed	it	ed	in	sti	tut	ion	s	1	2
D .	98 .202 -.015 9. The accreditation standards currently se a r e eas y t o a chi eve t by the Ministry of Education (MOE)	r	e	eas	y t	o a	chi	eve		8	1
.92	-.180 -.061 10. The renewal time for accredited institut ye ars )i st oo sho rt 8 14 2 5 (i.e.3	ye	ars	)i	st	oo	sho	rt	8	14	2
N 1.	11 .232 .232 11. Accreditation should be granted by an i tio n t han by th e M OE pendent organiza	n t	han	by	th	e M	OE	19	32	1	4
.22	-.232 0.45 12. The accreditation process currently in p and is bu rea ucr ati c takes long time	is	bu	rea	ucr	ati	c	16	2	7	25
.001	.528 pl.000 13. The accreditation process in the years to nh anc eme nt- ori ent ed come will be control-oriented than e	nh	anc	eme	nt-	ori	ent	ed	6	10	1
N 1.	00 .143 .049 14. Institutions should be allowed to work on if th ey ch oo se to 8 14 21 out accreditati	on	if	th	ey	ch	oo	se	to	8	14
N 1.	32 .052 .090 15. The accreditation process should includ olv es in the pr oce ss 13 2 2 25 self-evaluation and evaluation by other institutions (i.e peer ev aluation) before the Ministry of Education inv	olv	es	in	the	pr	oce	ss	13	2	2
.041	.270 pl.040 16. Institutions should be regularly supervis ant ed acc red it at io n ed by MOE after they have been gr	ant	ed	acc	red	it	at	io	n	10	1
.261	pl.046 .157 17. The standards set for accreditation by MOt th e t ert iar y l eve 1 3 5 2 1 assure the quality of education needed a	t	th	e t	ert	iar	y l	eve	1	3	5

#### Appendix 2 Sampled Colleges, their Status of Accreditation, Year of Establishment and Number of Completed and Return

Questionnaires.	No.	Name of the College	Year of	Establishment in EOC	Status	Year of Accreditation	No. of
-----------------	-----	---------------------	---------	----------------------	--------	-----------------------	--------

11.	Microlink Information Technology College	1991	Accredited	6
12.	New Generation University	1994	Not Accredited	4
13.	Nur Selam College	1993	Not Accredited	2
14.	Queens' College	1992	Accredited	2
15.	Royal College	1992	Accredited	4
16.	St. Mary's College	1991	Accredited	4
17.	Softnet College	1995	Not Accredited	1
18.	Unity University College	1991	Accredited	4
19.	Zega Business College	1993	Not Accredited	1
	<b><i>Total</i></b>			<b>59</b>

- Ramanujam, R. (1995) Reflections on Distance Education for India. New Delhi
- Tait, A., and Mills, R.,(1999) The Convergence of Distance and Conventional Education.  
Rutledge Studies in Distance Education.
- TGE (1994) Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Education and Training Policy. Addis  
Ababa, Ethiopia
- Tilson, T.and Getachew Kelemu (1998) “*Decentralizing Distance Education: Challenges  
and Opportunities\_ the Experience of Ethiopia.*” *Proceedings of the  
National Conference on Quality Education in Ethiopia: Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup>\_  
Century*", Awassa,12-18 July 169-182,IER,Addis Ababa.