The Dynamics of Higher Education Governance Policy Process in Ethiopia

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Abstract: Ethiopian higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon and has been through three governments whose ideological makings hold different forms. Since its foundation, the country embarked on rigorous expansion and diversification in HE. In order to make the ambition a reality and make higher education attain the intended purposes, it requires a policy that channels efforts, activities, and resources. The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore the dynamics of higher education governance policy process in Ethiopia through a review of different documents related to higher education policies at different times. A contextual discourse analysis was used to materialize the study. To this effect, a review on higher education governance policy that has been maintained in the last three governments in the country i.e. articles, books, book sections, published and unpublished policy documents was carried out. Finally, the findings indicated that the Ethiopian higher education governance policy process observed across the three government forms seemed the mirror reflection of the respective governments' ideologies. The dynamics of higher education governance policy seems incremental in which the last policy is relatively comprehensive, well-articulated and regulated. It is suggested that while universities remain an important sector in maintaining sustainable development in the country, higher education governance policy should be well articulated and precisely define the role of state and universities and should be revisited within a reasonable time frame through continuous policy research and feedback loop.

Key words: Higher Education, Governance and Governance Policy, Policy process

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Introduction

Ethiopia is a home for more than 100 million residents with large proportion of young generation who are supposed to be provided with education. Though the genesis of higher education (HE) worldwide is not precisely defined, in Ethiopia secular HE was initiated in 1950 (Aklilu, 2017) lagging about 860 years behind the establishment of the oldest university, Bologna, in 1088. Ethiopia founded HE during the time when it became an international phenomenon that resulted from social and technological changes of post-World War II (Agarwal, 2015; Fernie and Jardine, 1981). Addis Ababa University College (AAUC), the first higher education institution in Ethiopia, enrolled 21 students as its first entrants with nine international staffs (Aklilu, 2017). These numbers have been escalated in many folds and in 2017 Ethiopia had 43 government and four private universities whose enrolment reached 788,033 in the undergraduate programs with a teaching staff of about 32,734.

Until it is proclaimed through HE proclamation in 2009, the term Higher education, in Ethiopia, constitutes post-secondary education provided at diploma level and above (see HSIU charter, 1954; FDRE, 2003). Later from 2009 onward, higher education has been limited to institutions, which provide education at first degree level and above (FDRE, 2009). Thus, in this article higher education refers to institutions that provide at least a diploma for a period prior to 2009 and a bachelor's degree after that.

Governance is an instrument that serves the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives, involving structures, processes and activities in the planning and direction of the institution and workforce (Fielden, 2008). To secure the management of the dynamic nature of institutions and purposes, the governance system should be guided with a given principle or policy.

Higher education sector seems the most dynamic and globalized sector because of two major reasons: first, universities have creative and

innovative nature and are expected to confront pressure from globalization and second, governments have ever changing expectations particularly towards higher education in realizing countries' sustainable development in a globalized world (Fielden, 2008). As far as higher education policy is concerned, there are relatively few studies on its nature and the way the specific policies were maintained (Locke, 2009). Likewise, policies that guide governance of higher education institutions have not been traced much (McLendon, 2003). To this end, this article aims to review how higher education governance policy was maintained during the last three governments in Ethiopia focusing on the time following the foundation of higher education in the country. To address the purpose, two major questions have been addressed: What are the trends of higher education governance policy in Ethiopia? What policy processes have been placed in the three different governments in Ethiopia?

Methods and Procedures

This study employed a contextual discourse analysis which deals with long term analysis of fundamental causes and consequences of issues, which is higher education policy analysis in this case. According to Locke (2004), contextual discourse analysis targets to explore often impervious relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power. Since texts are also located in key social institutions like universities and offices of departments of education, discourse analysis emphasizes the analysis of such original documents. According to Rogers *et al.* (2005), the first goal of the analyst is to describe the relationships among certain texts, interactions and social practices; the second goal is to interpret the configuration of discourse practices; and the third is to use the description and interpretation to offer an explanation of why and how social practices are constituted, changed, and transformed in the ways they are. The aims, choices and

criteria of critical discourse analysis are to monitor theory formation, analytical method and procedures of empirical research (Van Dijk, 2006).

The substantive focus of this article and the methodological rigor employed how the ideology of government (politics) across different governments affects higher education governance policies and this was taken into consideration in screening and selecting resource materials. Achieving the purpose of the review was carried out using three strategies: the first search strategy involved examining electronic data-bases at AAU e-resources through which different data bases could be accessed (Jstor, Emerald group, African Journal online, policy press journals), Google scholar and Google search engines, using a combination of keywords and descriptors related to higher education policy. The second strategy involved searching Ethiopian education policy documents such as university Charter, Ethiopian education sector review, ERGSE, Ethiopian education and training policy, higher education proclamations, and education road map. In addition, books, book sections, handbooks specific to higher education and policy were identified. In so doing, the abstracts and table of contents of journals have been widely regarded as primary outlets for higher education policy. The final strategy involved was careful screening of the reference lists of relevant articles, chapters in books and relevant studies for use. Though the initial search yielded more than 40 documents, some articles were left out because they were found less important as the review progressed. Hence, the final search yielded 14 articles, 2 books, two book sections, three handbooks, four published and four unpublished policy documents, and two conference proceedings. These documents were accessed to understand the trend and how HE governance policy processes were maintained. Based on the review questions, the ideas from these selected sources were organized in themes followed by critical evaluation and thick descriptions.

Theoretical Approach

So far, various theories such as 'Punctuated Equilibrium Theory', 'Social Construction Framework', 'Policy Feedback' and others have been developed to specify the scope of inquiry in studying policy process (See, Sabatier and Weible, 2014). These policy approaches have loosely emphasized the dynamics of policy process across different time lines. On the other hand, Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) explains how policies are made by governments under conditions of ambiguity, a diversified thought about a given circumstance or phenomena, which leads to confusion (Ackrill, Kay, and Zahariadis, 2013; Zahariadis, 2014). MSA is also helpful in drawing insight across different periods of time and different political contexts where there is change in government forms, actors, events, and contexts, and the policies' outcomes that are guided by the assumptions of the approach (Ackrill *et al.*, 2013; Zahariadis, 2014). As a result, MSA is found appropriate to frame this review intended to focus on the complex nature of higher education governance policy during three different governments in Ethiopia (see, Zahariadis, 2014).

According to Zahariadis, MSA has three streams, problems which refer to the events that attract policy makers' and other stakeholders' attention or perceptions of problems that require government attention; policies which constitute ideas or solutions that are developed to address pressing problems of the day by experts or the experts proposition about perceived problems by the public; and politics, which refers to the broader environment within which policy is made or the pressures that challenge the politics (Ackrill et al., 2013; Zahariadis, 2014). These three streams are supposed to be coupled in to a single package at a given point in time and opened a policy window (Beland and Howlett, 2016; Zahariadis, 2014). Thus, MSA is found helpful to understand how these streams have been coupled to create a policy window and thereby gives chance to compare the policy agendas across ideologically different governments in Ethiopia.

Higher Education Governance Policy

There is no universally agreed upon single definition for policy as is true with other social science concepts. Variation in defining policy is rooted in the nature of the society, perception of power and the role of government (Fowler, 2009). The theme of different definitions of policy is a solution to a problem, and thoughtful decisions made by top authority that guide courses of action in attaining a given purpose (Fowler, 2009). Similarly, a policy process is a concept that coincides with public policy which has also been defined differently having themes equated with statutes, laws, regulations, executive decisions, government programs, and commonly understood rules-in-use and others that guide courses of action or that structure behavioral situations (Fowler, 2009; Zahariadis, 2014). Thus, it is possible to consider public policy as something initiated by government and framed to address felt needs of the society. But the motivation of government responses to solve societal problems might vary according to the interaction and interest of the actors/politicians. Similarly, a given public policy does not work in every society, place and time (Fowler, 2009). This entails that public policy could vary within varying political, geographic and demographic, economic, social and cultural settings as well as priorities.

These days, the strategic shift that countries have been making towards knowledge-based economies and societies, for which higher education systems have been considered as an instrument, has placed knowledge at the centre of contemporary public policy and policy-making (Chou, Jungblut, Ravinet, and Vukasovic, 2017; Fielden, 2008). Thus, higher education policy is subject to the collaboration of multiple actors permeated with respective sector's concerns such as different ministries and agencies, representatives from universities and businesses, and non-state actors (Chou et al., 2017). The interactions that could be made between universities and its environment are ranging from national to international level. As a result, national policy makers and universities all over the world have been considering the experiences of global higher education environment. Thus, willingly or by some form of pressure,

there has been a tendency and practice of policy convergence (Halpin, 1994; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton, 1999; Scholte and Wallace, 2001).

On top of vested expectations on higher education, globalization has been affecting universities elsewhere in the world. The pressures of globalization on HE have been manifested through different actors. For instance, information communication technology, supra national organizations (World Bank and UNESCO), and sub-regional organization (Bologna process) have been playing a pivotal role in globalizing HE policies (Abri, 2011). Similar to other phenomena in the world, HE system has been pressured by neo-liberal ideologies like decentralization, privatization, competition, autonomy, internationalization, multiple funding and other policy issues (see World Bank policy paper, 1994). The influence of these pressures have enormously challenged higher education systems of countries, more specifically, those of developing countries. For instance, besides African countries' economic crisis during the 1980s, World Bank's policy that recommended budget cut down and reduced funding on higher education victimized the continent (Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck, 2013). Ethiopian higher education system, similar to other universities in developing countries or elsewhere, has engaged in reforming the governance system and its policies to adjust itself to global dynamism (Yizengaw, 2005).

In addition, policy process, as its name indicates, refers to events or steps through which the political system responds to public problems. More specifically, educational policy has been understood as a plan articulated by an authoritative body and codified in regulatory texts such as laws, decrees, proclamations, etc. that define expectations for behaviours and reasserts the authority of government in requiring those behaviours (Bascia , *et al.* 2005).

Historical Foundations of Ethiopian Higher Education

It is believed that the key determinant for competitiveness is the quality of labour force. To this end, higher education institutions have been considered as an instrument that enhances the quality of labour force and the likely capacity of the country to become competitive (Fielden, 2008). In Ethiopia, three major reasons might be well thought out for the foundation of higher education system. According to (Aklilu, 2017), the first aspiration for the establishment of higher education in Ethiopia was made by Emperor Haile Selassie. He believed that Ethiopia was defeated on the battle with Italy because of lacking technologies that Italy was armed with. Second, the Ethiopian government failed to afford the provision of post-secondary education abroad, as it did so far. Third, the number of graduates from secondary schools increased from time to time in Ethiopia and post-secondary education became a public demand (See Aklilu, 2017.). This implies that be it economic, social and/or political, the intention behind the foundation of higher education system in Ethiopia was competiveness.

Government ideology (beliefs, values and world view) or political forms have a direct implication on the kind of governance system in higher education and policies (Monalisa, 2014). Higher education and state relations have been defined through two major models: state control model, the approach that emphasizes controlling higher education system strictly; and supervisory model, the approach that provides substantive autonomy with accountability for what is performed by universities. These two models are not exclusively different; rather they might be on a continuum. Thus, state ideology has a significant role to play in the dynamics of higher education policies (Monalisa, 2014). In this article, in order to understand the dynamics in higher education governance policy, it might be best to consider the three state forms in Ethiopia since the foundation of secular higher education system.

The First Higher Education Era and Governance Policy (1950- 1974)

Ethiopia has been through three governments since the foundation of secular HE system. The first era was from 1950 to 1974. The type of government was the feudal monarchy system in which the emperor holds the supreme power of the land. The government system was highly centralized and the country was governed by the emperor rather than rule of law. For instance, every law, decree, proclamation, and constitution of the land had been considered as the gift of the Emperor (See University Charter, 1954.).

From world experience it is clear that colleges and universities drew their inspirations, ideas, and practices in HE governance from other countries in the world. For instance, American HE institutions, at formative stage, copied their inspiration from England, France, Germany and others (Brickman, 1972). In addition, most African countries had been affiliated to their respective colonizing country's HE system in the course of establishing their own. Unlike other African countries, Ethiopia had no specific country to fetch HE experiences in governances from.

Having the freedom of choice, during the establishment of the first secular HE institution in Ethiopia, the country explored different governance policy alternatives from different countries. For instance, the emperor instructed not to deploy teachers and leaders from a single country (Aklilu, 2017). In this regard, Dr. Susan Mat, who was the first president for the first higher education institution in Ethiopia, introduced the governance system by fetching experiences from his country Canada and more importantly from the United Kingdom (UK). In addition, international staffs were deployed from different countries such as Canada, America, UK, India, Egypt and others (Aklilu, 2017). This does not mean that Ethiopia was not free from the influence of the global HE system. It was observed that country's freedom of choice has largely been negated by fund providers. For instance, Haramaya Agricultural College was funded by the American government, and its governance was under the Americans letting Ethiopia out of the game (Aklilu, 2017).

In respect to the global push in the form of international standard of higher education, the country tried to collaborate with UK universities. To this end, the emperor sent Dr. Matt to UK to fetch experiences and negotiate on how the two countries could run Addis Ababa University College jointly. In response to the request of the Ethiopian government, UK sent a team to study the matter. But the Ethiopian government did not take the recommendations from UK, it rather decided to shape the experiences and recommendations the way it felt, focusing on the country's interest. In addition, a committee was established at the Ministry of Education to study higher education issues and come up with policy recommendations (Aklilu, 2017). On the other hand, the diversity of international staff that had served the teaching and leadership of the college challenged the governance and its policy by imposing own respective country's interest (Aklilu, 2017).

As a result, the Ethiopian HE system lacked focus and was deprived of a steady influence of a single administration during the formative years of development and thus frequent changes of direction in the University policy were common. In addition, while the country had strived to have a university that promoted the social, cultural and political situation of its own, UK and America were trying to impose their own policies. Lack of precise policy at early stage led to having two different scenarios in secular HE governance in Ethiopia. The first scenario was about governance of HE institutions founded by the Ethiopian government alone, and the second was about an institution established with the collaboration between governments of Ethiopia and America.

Scenario One

The governance of Addis Ababa University College, established in 1950, and that of other flourishing colleges during subsequent years whose establishments were initiated by the Ethiopian government, was under the different bodies such as the Ministry of Education with a Rector at the top (the emperor), board of trustees, and University President. The emperor assumed two positions as far as university governance is

concerned: Minster for Ministry of Education and Chancellor of AAUC. The intention was to strengthen higher education system in the country (Aklilu, 2017). The board of trustees was organized from different government sectors and individuals assigned by the emperor himself and given the power to make all decisions concerning higher education and control. The president was also assigned directly by the emperor and acted as the top leadership of higher education institutions. This implies that at its early stages, Haile Selassie I University (HSIU) was under close scrutiny of the supreme authority (the emperor) of the country (Aklilu, 2017).

Scenario Two

The other scenario was the governance of Haramaya Agricultural College founded by the collaboration of the American and the Ethiopian government in which the college was financed by 'Point Four', an aid initiative established by the then American President Truman (Aklilu, 2017). Based on an agreement made between the governments of America and Ethiopia, the college president had been given absolute authority on student and teacher deployment as well as financial management. Though the college had a governing body such as board, it had no power to make decisions and control over the college. Thus, no one, including the state itself, was in a position either to supervise or control the college (Aklilu, 2017). The role of the board of the college was facilitating its proper functioning whenever there was a request from the president.

In these two scenarios, one could find different events that trigger policy issues. For scenario one, firstly, it was difficult for the emperor to be a rector for all HE institutions established. Secondly, there was no clear guideline or policy on how to guide actions in higher education institutions. Thirdly, the utilization of human and financial resources was not efficient. From the second scenario, it is clear that the interest of the state was overlooked and uniformity in governance of higher education system was not maintained. These are events which Kingdon

considered as a 'problem stream' in a multiple stream framework (See Ackrill, *et al.*, 2013; Weible, 2005; Zahariadis, 2014), which insists that government, as a policy stream, look for a public policy that might help to respond to these problems. In addition, as it is indicated above, different countries had imposed their interests, experiences, and concerns through their aid, and citizens working as a staff and alumni (Aklilu, 2017). Furthermore, globalization had its own pressure in the form of maintaining international standards. These three conditions (three streams) were in place to insist on the state's assertive ambition to rule or exercise control and shape the events and postulate a policy solution in such a way that it coincides with the will of the public.

The first policy measure that the state took was merging seven colleges under the governance of Haile Selassie I University. This policy was initiated to realize more coordinated development of higher education and make the utilization of resources more efficient (Amare, 1988). The second measure that took place was introducing a charter based on two major recommendations. Primarily, the provision of a charter was intended to grant universities an autonomy that helps them protect themselves from external interference. Secondly, it was to secure funds that allow universities pursue their mission and engage themselves for further expansion (Assefa, 2008). Based on these two recommendations the charter of HSIU was formulated (Assefa, 2008) which could be considered as the first higher education governance policy and regulatory framework in the higher education history of the country.

The charter defined the roles and responsibilities of different parties that directly or indirectly took part in university governance. This policy specified the governance structures of HSIU putting the rector at the top, board of trustees at the middle and then university president at the next layer. According to HSIU Charter, university chancellor was the emperor himself and if not the emperor, the position might be occupied by someone appointed by the emperor. The responsibility of a rector, as it was defined by this policy document, was awarding diploma on a graduation ceremony and whenever there is an ambiguity in interpreting

the charter, the rector was the only authority to explain (See HSIU charter, 1957.).

The policy clearly indicated that the staffs of the university, except the president, were not entitled to be a member of the board of trustees. The board was given the right to define rules and policies of higher education and nominate university president and submit to the emperor for approval. The board had the freedom to establish and lead faculties, colleges and institutes for HSIU. In addition, responsibilities in employing researchers and presenting university budget for approval were given to the board of trustees (See HSIU Charter, 1957.). It is clear from this that the government gave more power to the board which was serving its interest.

As a top leader in HSIU, the university president, upon the approval and directives from board, had the freedom to hire and fire both teaching and administrative staff. At the same time, s/he had the power to determine staff salary and per diem. Such powers were under the scrutiny of the government as it used to approve any decision and give green light through the board. This implies that the president or the university as an institution had no freedom to make any decision by itself and without the knowledge of the board. Though HE governance policy seemed to have been shaped in a centralized fashion and the charter emphasised control, in practice, different scholars argued that HSIU provided substantive autonomy. For instance, the university was autonomous to the extent that it did not accept any instruction or directive from the government. In this regard, Dr Aklilu Habte, who was among the first 12 graduates from the first university in Ethiopia and the second Ethiopian president of Addis Ababa University, proudly mentioned in his speech held at Addis Ababa University on December 28, 2018 that, save for his appointment by the state, he, as a president, rejected any government interference such as determining the size of student intake and opening new programmes.

Twenty years after the foundation of higher education in the country, the old order came to be condemned by the public, more importantly by university students. On top of that, the system that functioned for over two decades was criticised for poor expansion as there were only two universities by then (the universities of Addis Ababa and Asmara). In addition, disparity among citizens and between gender in enrolment as well as poor alignment between the required manpower the university programmes (Amare, 1988) intensified the challenges. Similarly, lack of clearly defined national ideology that emanated from the diversity of international staff working in universities obstructed the likely contributions that universities were expected to provide (Amare, 1988; Saint, 2004). Having these problems and policy issues, and political pressures in place, the government initiated a policy study called 'Education Sector Review' in 1973. Although that effort was exerted, it did not secure the monarchical regime a survival. Finally, the Education Sector Review recommended a number of policies as a solution, but the government did not get the time to implement. This implies that if problems were perceived, got recognition, and the environment-imposed pressures, public policy require a conducive political environment for implementation.

The Second Higher Education Era and Governance Policy (1974 to 1991)

Students' strikes, demonstrations, and other political factors that were against Haile Selassie resulted in regime change which ended with disasters that cost human life. The *Derg* regime that substituted the old regime was aggressive and victimized higher education more than did the former regime. During the time, the 'whole generation of Ethiopian intellectuals has disappeared - assassinated, exiled or battered to the point of extinction' (Amare, 1988, p. 47). In addition, a large number of students either left the country or were killed. Those challenges worsened the chronic manpower deficiency in the country.

During the *Derg* time, HE policy promoted: imparting knowledge, research and indoctrination of socialist ideology. The regime was engaged in deconstructing the prior monarchical order and its governance system. However, the close collaboration that was already in place between Haile Selassie and America as well as some European countries became a challenge to the military government as those countries labelled it socialist where every sector and the market was under the control of the central government. Similarly, HE governance including university affairs experienced extended government intrusions. For instance, the state intervened in security surveillance, the determination of courses to be offered, student organisations and academic promotions (Amare, 1988; Saint, 2004). This pushed a number of intellectuals to flee the country. Because of the government's political alliance with socialist countries, Ethiopia closed its doors to the westerners and non-socialist countries and was ignorant to potential knowledge, experiences, technologies, and innovations in the non-socialist countries.

In order to overcome the human capital deficiency in the country, the military government promoted expansion and reorganization policy of higher education (Amare, 1988). Problems observed before the military government came again and these were: inefficient utilization of resources (human and financial); poor alignment of university programmes with human resource needs of the country in which science and technology were not emphasized (See, Amare, 1988); lack of coordination among higher education institutions and poor proportion of higher education enrolment in terms of ethnicity and gender. For instance, Amare, referring to Basic (1979), quoted that "students whose mother tongue was Amharic constituted 50-55 % of university enrolment between 1951 and 1973, Tigrigna speakers only 10-15 %" (Amare, 1988, p. 50). This implies that the vast majority of Ethiopian citizens had been deprived of access to HE constituting only 30-40% enrolment. Furthermore, the Ethiopian HE system was swinging between different international staffs and higher education leaders like Jesuits, Soviet communists, western capitalists and Ethiopian clergy who had been

fighting for supremacy. Graduates lack of fullest and best influence from any national tradition was the consequence (Levine 1964, in Amare, 1988).

To respond to the aformentioned problems, the military government introduced different policy measures. Firstly, the state's guiding ideology was decided to be socialism. Secondly, the entire education system was restructured and the functions were redefined, and the composition of student enrolement and staff profile were altered. To this end, out of the recommendations of Education Sector Review made in 1973 (See Eduacation Sector Review, 1973.) the military government established the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) to secure its strong desire of putting higher learning institutions under close surveillance (Amare, 1988).

The established commision was authorized to make HE-related policies, including budgetary matters and it made decisions without involving members from the institutions where the decisions and policies were to be implimented (Amare, 1988). This commission itself was under the control of the Council of Ministers and through it to the head of the state. The commission was authorized to make all decisions and policies of higher education such as "admissions, academic standards, research, external assistance, accreditation, establishment of new institutions, and merger or abolition of existing ones and all budgetary matters" (Amare, 1988, p. 52).

From this, it seems clear that HE governance policy placed all institutions of higher learning under the control of the Commission for Higher Education. It also promoted public participation in higher education internal policy and decision-making processes (Amare, 1988). Thus, the policy dictated HE institutions to adhere to the decisions of higher organ. This revocated the substantive autonomy provided by the previous governemnt and the state strictly controlled higher education sector through CHE. For instance, merger of departments and faculties were made by the commission for higher education. According to Amare, the

commission was responsible to make decisions. See the following examples.

> *In 1977 departments of English and Ethiopian Languages were combined in the Institute of Languages. In 1980 the Faculty of Engineering and the Building Colleges were merged into the Faculty of Technology. … Bahir Dar Academy of Pedagogy was brought under the administration of Addis Ababa University. In 1979 the College of Theology was closed … (Amare, 1988, p.53).*

The military government's centralization policy also urged HE institutions to be indoctrinated to Marxist-Leninist ideology and also teach this ideology. In addition, the internal matters of the institutions decided by the senate were also interfered in the name of public involvement. The members of the senate were representatives from Ministry of Education, Central Planning Supreme Council, the All-Ethiopia Trade Union, Peasant Associations, and Addis Ababa Urban Dwellers' Associations all of which were members of the ruling party (Amare, 1988). This implies that HE's technical and professional matters had been decided by non-professionals. Thus, it is straight forward that the military government had controlled the universities' internal and institutional affairs.

Saint argued that HE system in Ethiopia was highly structured in its management and demonstrated conservative intellectual orientation which resulted in poor quality, poor research output, demotivated university community, weak commitment for creativity and innovation, lack of interest to learn from others' expertise and poor collaboration with international community (Saint, 2004). In addition, this era had been criticized for lack of clear direction, vision and commitment to the development of HE and HE did not adequately play the role that it is supposed to play (Teshome, 2005).

From what has been observed so far, problems, government interests, and political pressures were considered in the attempt to bring about

policy proposal to respond to public problems. In addition, while policy was on progress, different problems were flourishing and if the government failed to respond to them in time they would contribute to the cracking of the state. On the other hand, non-democratic governments that try to maintain their status by force deny due attention to public complaints.

The Third Higher Education Era and Governance Policy (1991 to present)

In the history of the country, peaceful government change had not been exercised. Once a given group came to power, it has all along been unwilling to be substituted by any other. For instance, Haile Selassie stayed on power for more than 40 years, *Derg* for 17 years and the current government has been in power for the last 28 years. As a result, forceful revolution had been the only mechanism to make regime change which hence disregards the interest of the citizen. The regimes' policies seemed to have emphasized the rational choice model in which politicians calculate their benefit and maximize their advantage over the interest of the public at large.

The EPRDF government came to power by overthrowing the *Derg* regime through armed struggle. The regime from 1991 to present is a capitalist-oriented one whose economic model is different from the neo-liberal approach. Unlike the neo-liberal thought, the assumption behind it is that leaving the market for competition might harm poor people in the country. Thus, it advocates what the government calls 'revolutionary democracy' which allows some degree of government intervention in the market either by regulating it or participating in it. Unlike its predecessors, the current government follows a decentralized system. It introduced Education and Training Policy which is new in its organization and structure (See FDRE, 1994.). The policy process in this Education and Training Policy was, through numerous discussions, organized to collect views and opinions of stakeholders before its ratification (Teshome, 2005).

The policy is assumed to provide solutions to four basic problems of preceding practices of education in Ethiopia: relevance, quality, accessibility, and equity (FDRE, 1994). According to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), the former education system did not address the felt need of the society and lacked future direction (FDRE, 1994). Thus, the FDRE policy is aimed at tackling the aforementioned problems and promoting problem solving ability of learners. As far as governance of education is concerned, the policy emphasized decentralization of educational institutions and management which could be governed with democratic and professional principle (FDRE, 1994).

The policy promotes autonomy for educational institutions in which the coordination and leadership responsibility is left to a board whose members come from all stakeholders. It also makes the learners responsible for sharing the cost of their learning in a form of student loan which is assumed to be paid back either as graduate tax or through provision of service in some fields (FDRE, 1994). Specific to higher education, the government provided a policy framework for guiding the growth of Ethiopian higher education. The higher education and training policies were geared towards ensuring national development and competitiveness (Teshome, 2005).

Late in the 1990s, Ethiopia conducted a series of conference held to determine the future direction of higher education in Ethiopia. Participants were university governance (Board and senate members, and university leaders at different levels), education experts and other stakeholders. The conference, according to Teshome (2005), focused on the overall higher education issues including governance of higher education. The conferences finally ended with the ratification of Higher Education Proclamation in 2003.

The proclamation was aimed at enabling universities to transform themselves in such a way that they could be able to secure the expectation and aspiration of Ethiopian people and benefit the country

in the context of globalization; establish peace, democracy and development; set a balance between autonomy and accountability; realize freedom of expression and secure consistency with constitution of the land (See, FDRE, 2003, 2009). Higher education institutions have been given the mission to uphold technological transfer, promote competitiveness and cater for the development needs of the country. In the process of governance, the policy promotes the participation of stakeholders, justice, fairness and rule of law, and rational thinking and democratic culture (FDRE, 2003, 2009). Different institutions have been in place to regulate and support the higher education system. These institutions are Federal quality assurance agency, and higher education strategic centres. Higher education quality assurance agency is in charge of university education relevance and quality. The rationale for the emergence of higher education quality assurance in Ethiopia is associated with the government's interest to control universities and the flourishing private institutions and to converge to global higher education policy (Adamu and Addamu, 2012). The higher education quality assurance agency is an authority responsible to realize the implementation of state policy in terms of relevance and quality of education in universities. This is a kind of policy initiated only in the era we are in.

Similar to the previous military government which was aggressive and strict in making decisions about universities' internal affairs, the current government has continued to do the same. Though the higher education proclamation in Ethiopia has given substantive autonomy to HE institutions, government intrusions in their internal affair were common. For instance, Ethiopian universities had encountered harsh and reckless measures taken upon their professors. A case in point is the dismissal of 42 Addis Ababa University teachers by the government in 1993. In public the EPRDF-led Ethiopian government had condemned its predecessor but practically it has until very recently been taking measures against university teachers and students without any legal ground. This has somehow been reversed as evidenced by the new prime minister's decision made to reinstate the dismissed university

teachers at the meeting held in his office with professors from all universities in the country (See: http://borkena.com). Although some scholars have complaints about the government's practice which they say is contradictory to the stipulations in the higher education proclamation, it is, on the other hand, assumed that the proclamation gave substantive autonomy and accountability to higher education institutions in the country (Saint, 2004). The proclamation is aimed at reducing state intervention in deciding number of students to be enrolled, employing teaching staff, and regulating financial issues (Assefa, 2008).

Since the introduction of education and training policy, stakeholders and the public at large have been complaining about the deterioration of quality of education. But the state made no response until a policy study called education road map was conducted in 2018. This means that the education policy has been operational for the last 28 years without any modification. Currently, the government commissioned an education policy study that came up with myriads of possibilities for policy action and inaction that addressed public interests and feedback on existing programmes. The change in government leadership made in 2018 has brought a relatively conducive policy environment and created an opportunity for policy windows.

The policy study led to an education road map. It identified that boards of universities have been poorly devoted in supporting universities and are non-existent in some universities. Poor university industry linkages were also identified as the problem of university governance. In addition, the researches conducted by higher education institutions were poorly aligned with the problems of the society and teaching and learning in the universities. Fund providers often decided the theme of research undertakings. Furthermore, the scarce resource allocated has been poorly geared to execute the core missions of universities. The proposed education road map is under public discussion and it is hoped that it would bring about some changes to the higher education governance policy.

Similar to the *Derg* regime, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which is the ruling party, did not respond timely to the criticisms made on education policy. Finally, because of extended resistance and violence, the government was forced to change its leadership as well as policies. This implies that public policies should be revisited within a reasonable time frame. In addition, a good policy for a given time does not properly work for indefinite time.

Conclusion

Ethiopian HE and its governance policies have been through three different governments. Contrary to being highly centralized during the monarchical government, during EPRDF, HE governance policy was characterized by substantive autonomy in which government intrusions were minimal. At the early stage of introduction of higher education in Ethiopia, lack of precise governance policy resulted in lack of uniformity and accountability among different institutions of higher learning. Among other things, these problems were supposed to be the cause of inefficient utilization of resources and poor alignment of HE programmes with the required qualified human resource needed in the country.

On the other hand, during the second era HE governance policy promoted strict control in which both internal (professional) and external (strategic) decisions of HE institutions were made by the Commission for Higher Education on behalf of the state. Among other things, scholars argued, such a strict scrutiny has been the major cause of deterioration of quality of HE and increased brain drain.

Following the overthrow of the military government, lots of education related policies flourished. In addition, different buffer institutions such as Quality Assurance Agency and Higher Education Strategic Centres have been organized to control higher education programmes both public and private. Unlike the military government, FDRE provided substantive autonomy for higher learning institutions which were proclaimed through higher education proclamation. But scholars argued

that the state has been interfering in university decisions breaching its own policy. This implies that having a policy does not guarantee actions unless the state abides by the policy and universities develop the capacity to protect their rights.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that higher education governance in Ethiopia has been swinging between substantive autonomy and strict control. In addition, in Ethiopia it seems that public policies (higher education policies), in most cases, are the mirror reflections of the ideology of the state or the ruling party rather than that of public interest.

The Ethiopian HE and its policy and the establishment of buffer institutions that are supposed to govern higher education on behalf of state have in effect been dominated by global pressure and they poorly reflected the country's socio-economic and political context. Though it is difficult to have a HE governance policy which is purely Ethiopian, the country's choice to align its interest with that of international experience is worthwhile. In practice, while it was dominated by the UK and the USA, and by the socialist countries during the first and second era respectively, currently the country is not strictly affiliated to any specific country's experiences. It is rather inclined towards higher education policy imposed by organizations such as UNESCO and the Bologna process.

In the history of HE governance in Ethiopia, policy issues have been the functions of events and perceptions of problems by actors, expert propositions about perceived problems, and broader policy environment put together to bring policy proposals but with varying involvement of different parties. For instance, while the involvement of the larger public had been minimal in policy process, the emperor had been taking the lion's share during the first era. The second era was characterized by a policy process that had been limited to the ruling party and its circle. Currently, FDRE has been involving stakeholders at different levels, experts, and government employees in identifying the public problems and proposing solutions.

Though their policy process varies, the three governments have some features to share in common. Firstly, all of them lacked flexibility. Once they formulated a given policy, they kept it for long time and did not have the willingness to listen to policy feedback. Secondly, each succeeding government in Ethiopia assumed positions with force and were always opposed to the policy of their predecessor. Besides, it is common to find some elements of previous policies in the later ones. Generally, the Ethiopian HE governance policy have been progressing and getting more and more comprehensive over time. It is possible to conclude that HE governance policy in the country has been serving the ruler rather than the public interest.

Future Action

So long as universities have been given due considerations and remain an important sector in maintaining sustainable development in the country, it is suggested that policy makers need to do the following.

- Acknowledge the fact that the policy process requires evidence that should emanate from rigorous analysis of the problem, policy, and political streams.
- Articulate HE governance policy adequately and define precisely the role of state and universities
- Revisit HE governance policy within a reasonable time frame, through continuous policy research and feedback.
- Ensure that politics of higher education governance policy sticks to the country's desire while government forms change

Higher education policy process and its politics have not been well explored through research. Likewise, the link between HE governance policies and government forms, especially in developing counties, is almost untouched. Thus, it demands the focus of researchers.

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