The State of Continuing Education Program in the Ethiopian Higher Education: Quality Perspective

Tesfaye Negewo[1] and Fireweini G/Egziabher[2]

Received: 18 October 2019; Accepted: 11 Dec 2020

Abstract: In Ethiopia, Continuing Education Program (CEP) is taken as an alternative modality to provide higher education since a single regular modality alone cannot reach out all the segments of the population. It is intended to realize the citizens demand to pass through the ladder of tertiary education and acquire intended competences at required momentum to navigate the national socio-economic development. Thus, evening and/or weekend, distance and summer programs, collectively referred as CEP, are being widely run in Ethiopian higher education institutions (EHEIs) and contributing to the production of remarkable number of graduates who have been joining the world of work and serving the nation. Despite its significant contribution to the development of qualified manpower, there is public concern on quality of CEP. This has not yet been thoroughly researched. The purpose of this study was thus to look at the status, opening process, delivery methods, management, and factors affecting quality of CEPs. Embedded cross sectional mixed design was employed to conduct the study. Thirteen public and private universities and university colleges were involved using random and purposive sampling methods. Primary and secondary data sources were employed and key informant interview, focus group discussion, survey questionnaire and observation checklist were used as data collection tools. The results of the analysis showed the quality of CEPs is constrained by several factors among which are opening of programs without rigorous needs assessments, absence of basic resources, underutilization of available resources, under-qualification of staff who are mostly part timers, weak link between learning and practical work, poor implementation of continuous assessment, and absence of uniform implementation of nationally harmonized modular curricula. Management of CEPs is poor and this is manifested by weak exam administration and unfair grading, leadership by individuals alien to education, weak admission criteria, poor time management, low rate of students' class and tutorial attendance, poor supervision from MoE and HERQA, and little attention from university leaders and university quality assurance office. It was also found out that negative attitude of students, the society and university community towards CEP, poor academic background of students, little commitment from students and teachers, inconsistent guidelines on the procedure of CEP, shortage of time and poor student services and supply of facilities were the major factors affecting the quality of CEP in EHIs. The conclusion drawn from the study is that CEP is poorly managed and factors that affect the quality of the program are multi-dimensional ranging from inception to implementation. If higher institutions are to provide quality education, the management of CEP has to be strengthened; factors negatively affecting the program need to be taken care of; policy and guidelines need to be properly implemented; national CEP policy has to be initiated; and every stakeholder should play its role so as to improve the quality of CEPs.

Key words: Continuing Education Program, Quality, Management

[1] Higher Education Strategy Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Email: tesfayenegewo81@gmail.com
[2] Higher Education Strategy Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Introduction

Most scholars recognize education as essential foundation for cultural, social and economic development. In line with this, the importance of education has been sufficiently reflected in Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 1994). The policy explains that education enables individuals and society to make all-rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes. Specific to higher education, the objectives are stated in the policy as: to produce competent graduates who have appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in diverse fields of study; to produce research which promotes knowledge and technology transfer based on national development and community needs; and to ensure that education and research promote the principles of freedom in exchange of views and opinions based on reason, democratic and multicultural values as mentioned in higher education proclamation, 650/2009 (FDRE, 2009). For Ashcroft (2004), higher education institutions are expected to produce skilled personnel and equip them with the requisite knowledge and generic wisdom necessary to sustain and develop the national economy. In order to attain this, the government of Ethiopia has demonstrated greater commitments to expand access to higher education and realize its quality.

The country's development policy, knowledge-based economy, new technologies, growing speed of technological changes and globalization all influence the needs to improve the population's skills and competences (Colardyn and Bjornavold, 2004) in order to respond to national and global challenges. This demands the implementation of different modalities to improve access to and quality of higher education. CEP is useful to realize the citizens' demand to pass through the ladder of higher education and acquire intended competences in order to navigate the socio-economic development of the country. Literature says, in terms of resources, traditional means of education are not sufficient to meet the needs of relatively large populations even in developed countries (Junaid, *et al*., 2001). Thus, it is advisable to use

different modalities to timely and adequately respond to educational demands of the society. In response to this, both the public and private higher institutions (PrHEIs) in Ethiopia are running undergraduate academic programs using CEP, although the summer education program is being offered only at public universities.

CEP is contributing to the production of graduates accounting for an annual average of 33.28% of the total graduates as calculated from 16 years series of ESAAs (1999/0- 2014/15). These graduates have been joining the world of work and serving the nation since the commencement of CEPs. Hence, CEP in the country is playing a pivotal role in the human resource and economic development. Even though it is significantly contributing to the development of the country, CEP is the least researched area. Therefore, it is reasonable to investigate multiple aspects of quality to assess the current status of CEP from quality perspective.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the well-known contributions of CEP, there are indicators for poor students' performance and wrong procedures in providing CEP in the Ethiopian higher education institutions. Universities' malpractices, absence of program accreditation at public universities, and providers' intentions to commercialize CEP are among the most cited quality problems which have been making CEP lose its attributes from time to time. These problems attract public and government attention.

For instance, according to the directive issued by Ministry of Education in August 2010, law and teachers' education programs that were being given in distance modality in PrHEIs were closed down because of their quality problems. Besides, there are indicators of poor academic performance in majority of students enrolled in CEP as compared to those in regular programs. The figure below (Fig 1) demonstrates low performance of students in law exit exam by modality at a standard passing mark of 50%. Accordingly, it has been observed that even

though there is slight improvement from year to year, students who had graduated from CEP modality were performing less across the years 2014-16. Their share ranged from 0.8 - 10.24% of passing rate in the exit exam which can be explained by their low performance and high failure rate as compared to the performance of their counterparts, regular students, with ranges from 44 - 82.36% passing rate.

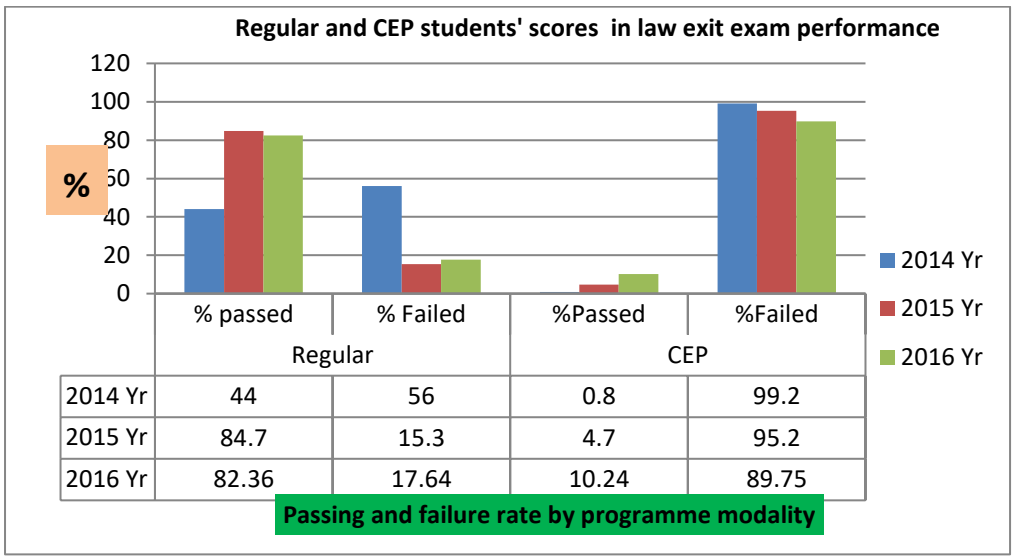

Fig.1 Performance of undergraduate regular and CEP students in law exit exam.
Source: Law exit exam reports from 2014-2016 academic years

Additionally, the 2014 report of the committee formed from public and private higher education institutions under the guidance of Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) has identified five problems in distance education which were mainly related to registration of students, institutional organization, resources and student supports, student assessment, institutional quality assurance system, and implementation process of policy and procedures. All these show the

existence of pressing problems associated with quality CEP provision. These problems need to be surfaced, and strategically tackled to ensure and sustain the quality of CEPs being delivered at EHEIs.

So far, HERQA has audited many higher education institutions, generated enormous reports, published and disseminated the feedback to stakeholders with an intention to support HEIs and bring improvement in CEP delivery (HERQA, 2014). Particularly, among the CEPs, it assessed programs in distance education and forwarded suggestions to the extent of specifying those programs that need to be closed down or improved to meet the stated quality criteria. However, significant changes were not brought to ensure quality of education in general and that of CEP in particular necessitating for an in-depth analysis of the situation.

What is more, even though some researches were conducted on distance and evening education programs, no comprehensive research work has been yet conducted on CEP (all the three in one) to explore the real situations in which CEPs are operating and therefore, CEPs are the least investigated programs. Thus, the current study has been conducted with the objectives to investigate its status, opening process, delivery methods, quality assurance, management and factors affecting quality of CEPs and come up with possible suggestions that would contribute to the improvement of the quality of CEPs provided at EHEIs.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of the study was to investigate the quality of continuing education program in Ethiopian higher education institutions.
Specific objectives:

- To see the status of continuing education programs in Ethiopian HEIs

- To describe the opening process of continuing education programs in Ethiopian HEIs
- To look into the delivery methods of CEPs in Ethiopian HEIs
- To explain management of continuing education programs in Ethiopian HEIs
- To identify key factors affecting quality of continuing education programs in Ethiopian HEIs

Basic research questions were:

1) What does the state of continuing education programs in the Ethiopian HEIs look like?
2) How are continuing education programs in the Ethiopian HEIs opened?
3) How are continuing education programs delivered in the HEIs of Ethiopia?
4) How are continuing education programs managed in the Ethiopian HEIs?
5) What are the major factors affecting the quality of CEPs in the Ethiopian HEIs?

Scope of the Study

The study covers public and private higher education institutions of Ethiopia that run CEPs at an undergraduate program.

Operational Definitions of Terms

CEP: In this study, CEP is defined as an academic program provided in the evenings (extension), weekend, distance, and summer modalities in the Ethiopian HEIs.

Quality: is grounded on purposeful classification of definitions of quality in higher education as institutional products and services that conform to a stated mission and vision or a set of specifications,

requirements, or standards, including those defined by accrediting and regulatory bodies (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Green, 1994; Harvey and Knight, 1996).

Continuous assessment: is a systematic and objective process of determining the extent of students' performances and all the expected changes in their behavior from the day they enter into a course of study in a continuous and progressive manner to the end of the course. It is a judicious accumulation of all pieces of information derived from this purpose, with a view of using them to guide and shape the students in their learning from time to time, and to serve as bases for important decision about the students (Ezewu and Okoye, 1981).

Conceptual Framework

In this study, a theoretical framework developed by Zaki and Rashidi (2013) is adopted to conceptualize quality in higher education by identifying the parameters which are central in contributing to quality of higher education. The study identifies and explains these parameters, including higher education policies and practices, curriculum, faculty knowledge, skill and attitude, institutional design and strategy, institutional leadership, learners' profile, resources, open-system thinking and change, and the sub factors in each parameter of this "octet of quality in education." However, it recognizes that the starting premise has always been that each and every institution has to find its own route to quality, and that externally prescribed approaches are usually the least effective (Edward, 2002). With this understanding among the many possible indicators or parameters used, program opening process, resource availability, curriculum, delivery methods, assessment, quality assurance system and management are considered to investigate the quality of CEP in Ethiopian HEIs in this study. The following figure (Fig. 2) shows the conceptual framework used in the analysis of CEP quality. The direction of arrows used in the model reflects the direction and

strength of interaction and relationship among the factors and how they together contribute to quality, at the center.

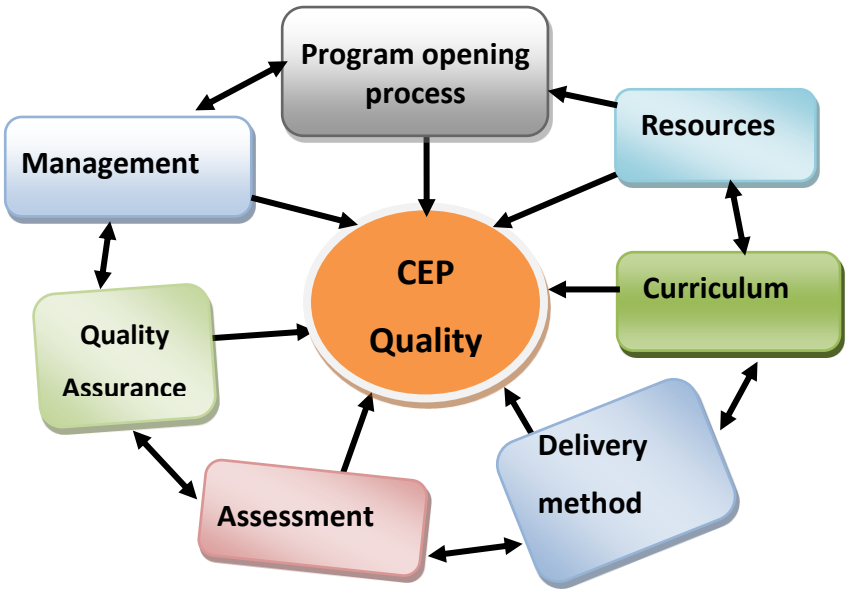

Fig.2 Conceptual framework adopted from Zaki and Rashidi (2013) in which different factors work towards quality as a central point

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

The study employed cross-sectional mixed methods in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were used concurrently. Creswell (2014) states that mixed design incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The core assumption of this kind of investigation is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in order to proportionally involve all generations of PUs in the study. Then simple random sampling was used to select universities from each generation. Thus, 20% of the public and PrHEIs offering CEPs were taken as representatives of the universities. This made five randomly selected PUs and one purposively selected PU which was not accountable to the Ministry of Education. Further, four PrUs and three colleges which run distance, evening and weekend programs were purposively selected to participate in the study. All the six bands available in each HEI were treated and 842 students attending the CEP programs in all bands and 160 teachers were selected randomly to fill the questionnaires. Presidents, academic vice presidents and CEP coordinators were purposively selected for interview. In the same manner, deans, quality assurance directors, program officers, and department heads were also purposively selected to involve them in FGDs. In order to assess the reflection on the efficiency and effectiveness of graduates of CEPs, employers' opinions were randomly collected from 17 leaders of 6 different sectors and 1 professional association through interviews.

Instruments and Data Collection

Before the deployment of data collection tools, the draft instruments were reviewed and commented by colleagues at Higher Education Strategy Center. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted at one public university which was not part of the sampled universities to make sure of their validity, and thus modifications were made as necessary. To ensure reliability of the data, the researchers met the CEP directors of each university in person to find appropriate participants including teachers and students.

Three data collection tools, namely, survey questionnaire, structured interview, and focus group discussion (FGD) guides were used to collect primary data. Secondary data were collected using published

documents and Education Statistical Annual Abstracts (ESAA). Two sets of survey questionnaires with close and open-ended items were used for teachers and students. Questionnaires were filled out in the presence of the researchers at each institution from where data were collected. While semi-structured interview was used for presidents, academic vice presidents, CEP coordinators and leaders of professional association, FGD with semi-structured guide was employed with all college deans, directors, heads and employers. All interviews and FGDs were conducted by the researchers themselves. Relevant documents, reports, and research findings on CEP were used to augment the original data.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered through interview and FGD were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorised, interpreted, analysed and integrated with quantitative data. Quantitative data were subjected to appropriate statistical software and analysed using various data analysis techniques. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20) was used to process and analyse data. Descriptive statistics were deployed to quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

In this study, presidents, academic vice-presidents, college deans, quality assurance directors, registrars, department heads from public and private higher institutions who total to 117, and 160 teachers were involved. Moreover, 17 employers from different ministries participated in the survey. These are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 hereunder.

Table 1. Universities and leaders that participated in the study

No	Position	Name of University and Colleges													
		Mekelle	Sheba College	New Mill. College	Haramaya	Jigjiga	Hawassa	Wachemo	Yardistick College	St Marry	Rift Valley	Alpha	Unity	Civil Service	Total
1	President/VPs	1			1		1	1		1		1			6
2	Deans	2	1	1	2	3	2	5	3	1	3		1		24
3	Heads	1	2	-	-	-	1	3	-	2	1		2		12
4	Coordinators	1	1	2	3	5	1	4	1	2	3		1	1	24
5	Directors	5	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1		1		13
6	Registrar	1	1	-	1	2	1	1	1		1				9
7	Others	-	-	-	-	2	3	3	2	1					11
Total	**11**	**5**	**4**	**8**	**13**	**10**	**18**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**1**	**5**	**1**	**100**	

Table 2. Employing institutions and their leaders that participated in the study

No	Position	Name of employer institutions							Total
		Ministry of Education	**Jigjiga University**	**Ministry of Culture and Tourism**	**Ministry of Health**	**Ministry of Transport**	**Ministry of Trade**	**HERQA**	
1	Directors	1	1	1	1	1		1	6
2	Team leaders	1			1	1			3
3	Experts	1		1	1	1	1	3	8
Total		**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**17**

In the current study, 757 students were involved, and the demographic characteristics of these participants are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Educational level of the students who participated in the study of CEP

Educational level	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
High school completed	122	14.5	16.1	16.1
Diploma or TVET	380	45.1	50.2	66.3
Bachelor degree	240	28.5	31.7	98.0
Masters	15	1.8	2.0	100.0
Total	757	89.9	100.0	

Quantitative data analysis showed that among the student participants, 50.2% were diploma holders in TVET and other fields, 31.7% were BA/BSc. degree holders, 2% were MA/MSc. degree holders and 16.1%

were high school completes. From this we understand that majority of the respondents were diploma holders reflecting that such people are more eager to upgrade their educational qualification. The students were enrolled in all the six bands (engineering and technology, natural and computation sciences, medicine and health sciences, agriculture and life sciences, business and economics, and social sciences and humanities). Among these, the largest number of students (49.6%) was enrolled in business and economics and the least (3.1%) in agriculture and life science. This has possibly happened mainly due to the high employability rate of business and economics graduates. In support of this, a research done on alumni by Education Strategy Center (ESC) showed that business and economics has better employability rate as compared to other fields, and agriculture is the discipline with the least employability rate (ESC, 2015).

Status of CEPs in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

Based on the document analysis, the study has shown that the regular modality accounts for 56.17%, while CEP covers 43.83% out of which evening accounts for 17.97%, summer 13.93% and distance 11.93% (MoE, 2015). Proportion of enrolment in their respective modality indicates that distance is getting shrunk gradually due to its reduction in PUs contributing to the shift to evening program. Of the total graduates, a graduate of CEP accounts for 33.85% and regular is 66.15%. Among the graduates of CEPs, 15.3% is summer, 11.18% is evening and 7.25% is distance (ibid). This indicates that significant number of students is graduated from CEPs and added to the world of work each year. Therefore, recognizing their role in the country's socio-economic development, the quality issue of CEP needs to be critically considered in order to enhance performance of the graduates.

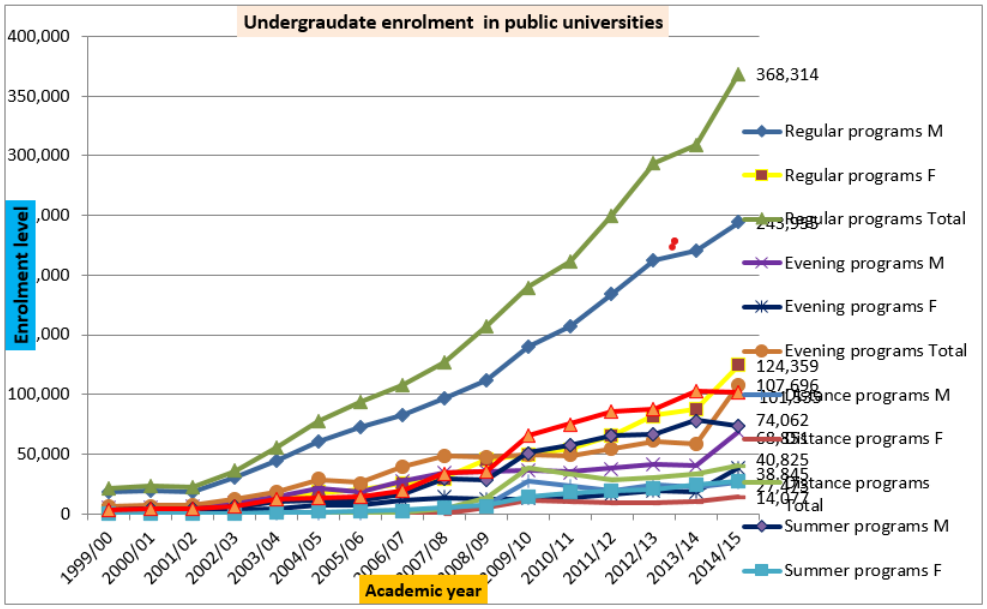

Fig 3. Trends of undergraduate enrolment in public HEIs (1990/0-2014/15 academic year) Source: Extracted from ESAAs (from 1999-2015), EMIS, MoE.

The above figure (Fig. 3) shows the rate of student enrolment in regular, summer, evening and distance programs of public universities. The enrolment rate shows that there has been a significant growth in the CEP programs after 2009/10. This could be due to several reasons. The first one includes the government's commitment to ensure access to tertiary education, the commencement of CEP by second generation universities, and the expansion made to increase intake capacity of first generation universities during this period. The second one is the emergence of PrHEIs and their engagement in running CEPs at an undergraduate level which could, in fact, be potential for the increment of enrolment in CEP. The third one is the growth in the community's demand for professional development so as to acquire knowledge and skill using different modalities. It can be recalled that Ethiopia implemented business process reengineering in public sectors during

the indicated time and this became a concern to the public servants who were expected to deliver differently in the new approach. Thus, they needed to upgrade their qualification to fit the positions they held.

Enrolment in the evening program has generally shown a consistent increment with slight fluctuations. However, female students' enrolment across the years has been low although it has, since 2013/14 shown an exceptional and radical increment. Perhaps, such an increment could be due to the opening up of the program in the new universities and particularly in the third generation ones. Another possible reason could be the influence of the direction given by the MoE in 2010 to gradually reduce enrolment in distance education and this might have resulted in a shift to the evening program.

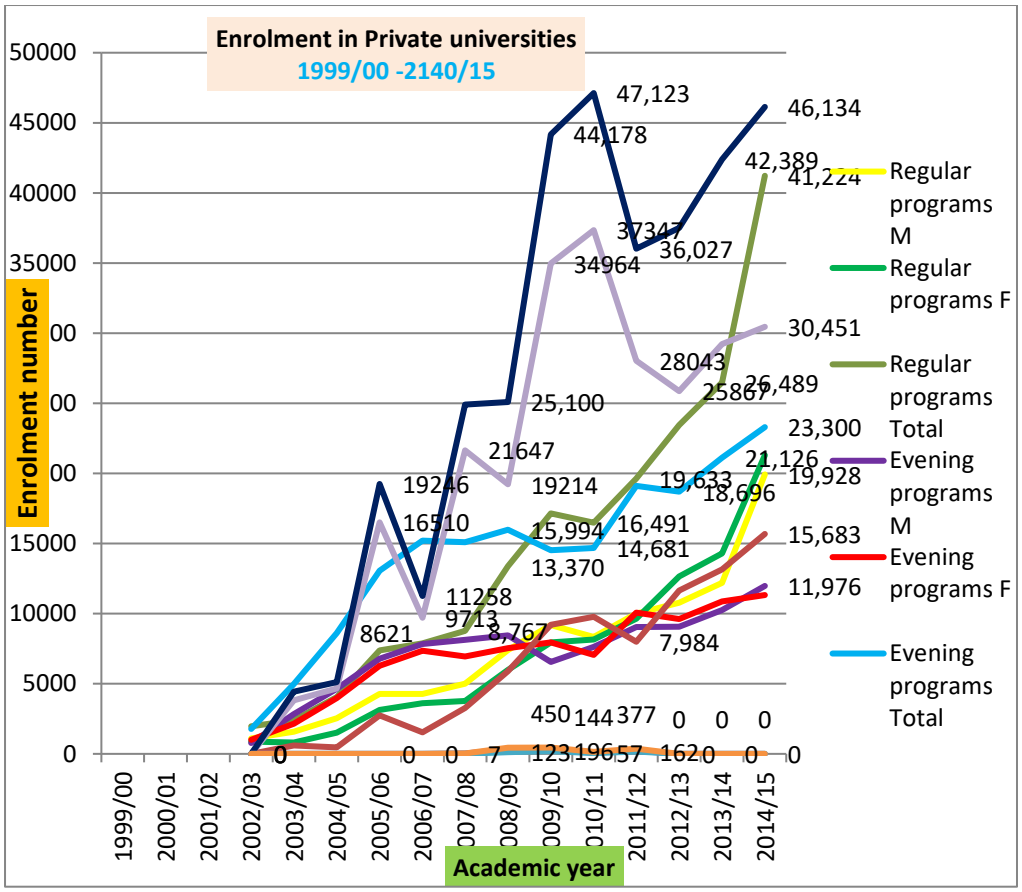

Fig 4 Trends of undergraduate enrolment in PrHEIs (1990/0-2014/15 academic year)

Source: Extracted from ESAAs (from 1999-2015), EMIS, MoE.

Figure 4 shows that CEP enrolment at PrHEIs is characterized by drastic ups and downs which implies instability in the sector. The fluctuation is more stretched in the distance program. This could be due to high enthusiasm of PrHEIs to address the need of the public for access to tertiary education. On the other hand, it could also be due to less feasibility study conducted to run CEP, less management skill to handle

CEP, and lack of fulfillment of the quality standards set by quality assurance bodies. The frequent changes in direction from regulatory bodies concerning CEP can also be another determinant factor for the over fluctuating trends of enrolment at PrUs. With exception to distance and summer modalities, evening enrolment has consistent growth with a bit of fluctuations between two academic years—2005/06 and 2010/11 and with balanced enrolment of both females and males, which is 48.6% and 51.4% respectively in the year 2014/15.

Summer program has no good history in Ethiopian private universities. Based on the data obtained from ESAA, it started in 2007/8 and has been extinct after 5 years of its existence in the private education system. Therefore, there was not summer education program in private HIs from 2011/12 to the end of 2014/15. Thus, it can be said that enrolment in this program is the most suppressed in private universities as compared to the rest of CEPs. Its extinction is associated with the origin of summer program which basically focuses on teacher education. The government has shown firm stands and made decision to cease teacher education program provided by private universities due to their poor quality in handling the program (MoE, 2010). The following figure (fig.5) shows the summarized recent total enrolment and graduate trend of CEPs at the undergraduate level.

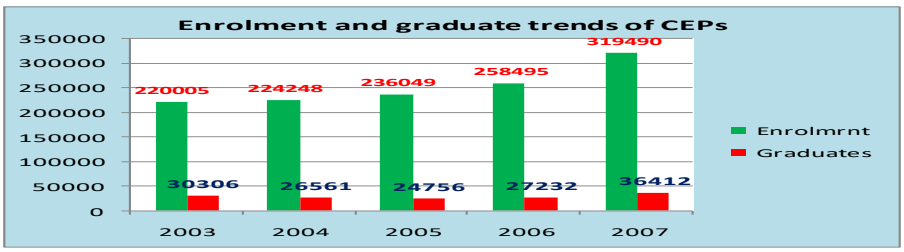

Fig. 5 Trends of enrolment and graduates in CEP at undergraduate level

Source: Extracted from ESAAs (from 2011-2015), EMIS, MoE.

As shown in the figure above, the trend in graduates can be partly explained by the trend observed in its respective enrolment, because the size of students enrolled into HEIs can potentially affect the trend in the number of graduates.

CEP Opening Process in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

The opening process of new academic programs has its own procedures and basic principles to be followed to make it justifiable and ensure its feasibility. One of the incredibly important procedures is conducting necessary needs assessment. Both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of this study reveals that majority of universities and university colleges conduct needs assessment to open CEP. Some HEIs conduct needs assessment to identify and open fields of study that are slightly or partially covered by government and other PrUs. Moreover, CEPs are opened based on official request from the federal government, regional government bureaus and demand from the community. Sometimes, however, HEIs open CEPs without conducting needs assessment but by simply adopting government's needs assessment report. It is also found out that CEPs are mostly market-driven programs, so they are opened if there is reliable market. In addition, few lecturers try to force departments to open new programs even though this happens in rare cases. Furthermore, CEP is opened because HEIs believe that offering CEPs by itself is community service which is one of the core functions of universities. Hereunder in Table 4, the major ways of opening programs have been summarized.

Table 4. University lecturers' responses to how CEPs are opened by universities

Means of program opening		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Assessment conducted	71	44.4	51.8	51.8
	Request from community	31	19.4	22.6	74.5
	Lecturers' interest	8	5.0	5.8	80.3
	Government interest	27	16.9	19.7	100.0
	Total	137	85.6	100.0	

The analysis of quantitative data revealed that 51.8% of the lecturers said programs are opened based on needs assessment whereas 22.6% said it is because of request from the community. Lecturers' and government's interest respectively accounted for 5.8% and 19.7%. The result has shown that CEP opening process is mainly based on assessment conducted to identify the needs of industry or market while the least is based on the interest of the lecturers. The finding coincides with the qualitative results that revealed majority of HEIs conduct needs assessment to open CEPs and it is in rare cases that lecturers initiate the opening of the programs.

Literature supports the conducting of needs assessment as part of program opening process. According to Gupta (1999), needs assessment enables an organization to obtain valid information which helps better target services and efforts. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) describe needs assessment as a series of procedures for identifying and describing both present and desired states in a specific context, deriving statements of needs, and placing the needs in order of priority for later action. Soriano (1995) also states, "It is important to determine and understand unrealistic expectations of the needs assessment with supervisors before getting started". Thus, what can be generally understood from the literature is that conducting a planned and well

organized needs assessment is essential and mandatory to universities to properly identify feasible and justified academic programs. However, when it comes to the Ethiopian case, needs assessment is conducted only once by HEIs. Involvement of stakeholders especially in recognition of core values in the group and the value and necessity of broad-based participation by stakeholders in needs assessment are not taken as a culture and major components. This limitation contributes to the mismatch between market demands and programs being offered resulting in high unemployability rate in addition to low quality education.

Resource Availability

Another important aspect of quality is the availability of resources to an institution. These resources can be physical, i.e., infrastructure, building, labs, furniture, equipment, books, research journals etc; human, i.e., faculty, administrative and other support staff; and finance available to carry out different projects and managing events or petty cash to run day to day affairs (Zaki and Rashidi, 2013). In this regard, this study revealed that all resources available to the regular program are also accessible to CEPs. Specially, evening and weekend programs share the same resources with regular students while resources are scanty in the distance modality.

Table 5. Students' responses with regard to resource availability

Resources availability	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
enough halls	74	8.8	9.6	9.6
enough lecture rooms	223	26.5	29.0	38.7
enough laboratories	70	8.3	9.1	47.8
enough workshops	34	4.0	4.4	52.2
enough internet rooms	31	3.7	4.0	62.1
enough teachers	83	9.9	10.8	72.9
enough libraries	33	3.9	4.3	77.2
All are not enough	175	20.8	22.8	100.0
Total	768	91.2	100.0	
Teaching Material				
Enough reference books	140	16.6	18.2	18.2
Journal	42	5.0	5.4	23.6
Hand outs	267	31.7	34.6	58.2
Modules	161	19.1	20.9	79.1
Lecture notes	110	13.1	14.3	93.4
Do not know	51	6.1	6.6	100.0
Total	771	91.6	100.0	

As seen in Table 5, 9.6% of the students believed there were enough halls, 29.0% enough lecture rooms, 9.1% enough laboratories, 4.4% enough workshops, 5.9% enough computer rooms, 4.0% enough internet rooms, 10.8% enough lecturers and 4.3% said enough libraries. This shows that relatively high percent said there were enough lecture rooms, the basic requirement to run teaching-learning, even though this is also not at the required level. Generally, it can be understood that the overall resource availability is poor and this would affect the quality of CEPs. The results of qualitative data analysis also show scarcity of resources, especially physical resources such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, workshops, computer rooms and internet resulting in poor quality teaching.

Additionally, the above table shows students' responses with regard to the availability of teaching materials. The percentage of respondents along with the kind of materials they said were available is reported as follows: 18.2% of them reported availability of enough reference books, 5.4% journals, 34.6% handouts, 20.9% modules, and 14.3% lecture notes. 6.6% of them did not know whether the resources are enough or not. What can be concluded from this is that the availability of handouts is relatively better than other resources. This indicates that most of the CEP students are limited to handouts which does not as such broaden their insight into the subject they study. It has been also identified that CEP students are not attitudinally positive and psychologically ready to exploit all available resources and learn under stressful condition. This is supported by the qualitative data analysis. According to the discussants and interviewees from universities, there was a major problem in utilizing available resources by students and lecturers involved in CEPs basically due to two reasons: scarcity of time and power interruption. When time shortage is added to scarce resources and students' poor appetite to learn and lecturers' less commitment to teach things go much worse. The FGDs and KIIs participants, for example, elaborated the problem of time shortage as follows.

> *There is major scarcity of time when it comes to evening, weekend, and summer programs in general and, therefore, students cannot make reasonable use of available resources. Short duration of summer programs, which last only from July to August, does not give room for healthy teaching-learning process. Students are much overloaded and do not have time to visit libraries, computer rooms and use internets to assist themselves with technologies and reference materials. There is good access to internet but distance students still do not make efficient use of it due to physical distance from institutions.*

It has also been identified that acute scarcity of time and frequent power interruption affected the class time or the teaching-learning process of CEP particularly that of evening, weekend and summer programs. This problem is serious since it is very difficult to make up for missed classes given the already short time available for the program. There is also

shortage in finance required to conduct research as partial fulfillment of a program of study. This, combined with shortage of time and lack of quality research advisors, puts CEPs students, particularly summer program followers, in difficult situations. All these challenge the quality of CEP in many ways.

One of the requirements for quality education is availability of plentiful resources (Edward, 2002). In agreement with this, Zaki and Rashidi (2013) say that adequate, continuous and timely availability and utilization of educational resources assures the proper implementation of various policies that are essential to achieve quality objectively. The same authors argue that availability of physical and virtual resources today is a key factor for proper functioning, future growth and development and quality assurance of an academic unit, and is also catalytic in greater motivation and satisfaction of the key stakeholders: staff, faculty and students. Thus, universities in Ethiopia should think about the availability and wise utilization of available resources by students and lecturers.

One of the universal indicators of quality education is the ratio between the number of teachers and students. The qualitative research of this study revealed that there has been unusual academic staff shortage in some fields of study such as engineering, business and economics. As a result, teacher-student ratio was inflated necessitating a balance between the number of students and academic staff. FGD participants reflected their opinions on this problem as follows:

> *In some programs of our university, a teacher can teach up to 80 or more CEP students in a class and you can imagine how it is difficult to manage and ensure quality of education. So, before opening a CEP, in addition to conducting needs assessment, ensuring availability of manpower, particularly academic staff, has to be critically considered in order to avoid large class size and guarantee quality of CEP graduates.*

Teacher-student ratio ranges from 1:80 to 1:150. Such large classes would make it difficult for the lecturers to regularly reach out individual student, implement active learning, and give appropriate feedback and other supports to all students. Also, it would suppress lecturers' commitment, decrease students' engagement and limit the contact between lecturers and students. In summary, teacher-student ratio is high and this adversely affects the quality of CEPs.

Curriculum, Delivery Method and Assessment of Continuing Education Programs

Among others, crucial to quality education are the curriculum, the content, and the way the content is delivered. It is the curriculum that is increasingly viewed as the foundation to educational reforms aimed at achieving high quality learning outcomes. The curriculum represents a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values: a selection that shapes the way teaching, learning and assessment processes are organized by addressing questions such as what, why, when and how students should learn (Philip, 2016).

Table 6. Students' response to what they learn and how they are taught

Items		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Nationally harmonized modular curriculum (NHMC) is used					
	Yes	391	46.4	55.0	55.0
Valid	No	178	21.1	25.0	80.0
	Do not know	142	16.9	20.0	100.0
	Total	711	84.4	100.0	
Practical teaching					
Valid	Yes	310	36.8	44.3	44.3
	No	390	46.3	55.7	100.0
	Total	700	83.1	100.0	

Table 6 shows students' responses to the kind of curriculum they use. In connection to this, 55% said they use the nationally harmonized curricula while 25% said they do not use such curricula. Some 20% said they did not know the kind of curriculum they use. It can be concluded from here that the curriculum used in EHIs is mainly the NHMC one. According to the results of the current study, the curricula under operation are not standardized for CEP and information technology is not integrated and properly used in majority of CEPs. Majority of evening and weekend students rely only on lecture notes, worksheets and do not use libraries, computer rooms and internet. Students of distance program are given modules and they depend on print materials distributed to them. This is characterized as generation-one model of distance education.

Table 7. The students' response to delivery methods used in CEP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Delivery method					
Valid	Only lecture	116	13.8	14.7	14.7
	Lecture and group learning	276	32.8	34.9	49.6
	Active learning	176	20.9	22.3	71.8
	Lecture and project	71	8.4	9.0	80.8
	lecture and essay	31	3.7	3.9	84.7
	Module-based	121	14.4	15.3	100.0
	Total	791	93.9	100.0	
Practical teaching					
Valid	Yes	310	36.8	44.3	44.3
	No	390	46.3	55.7	100.0
	Total	700	83.1	100.0	

Table 7 shows the views of students on delivery method used in CEPs. As seen in the table, 14.7% said that only lecture method is used while 34.9% said that lecture method and group work are applied. Further, 22.3% mentioned that active learning method is employed whereas 9% said lecture and project method are used. Still 3.9% said lecture and essay are used while 15.3% reported that module-based teaching method is used. It can thus be concluded that lecture and group work are the dominant delivery methods used. Active learning is not well promoted and implemented in CEPs. Indeed, it is logical to think that majority of distance education students would say the dominant method of teaching is a module-based one. Cross tabulation analysis of delivery methods and respondent type confirmed this idea.

One of the means to equip students with required skill is supporting the teaching learning process with practical work. In this regard, the study discovered that 44.3% of respondents claimed the existence of practical work while 55.7% said there wasn't any. This agrees with the result of the qualitative analysis of this study which showed little practical engagement of CEP students. It has been mentioned that laboratory

sessions of evening and weekend programs of many universities are held on weekends. It has also been found that practical activity is not properly implemented and that the sessions are more frequently canceled compared to regular programs. Particularly, health programs are practiced in situations where lab assistants or their teachers are not available. This would impose immense impact on the quality of teaching which in turn affects the quality of CEP and its graduates.

However, there were few arrangements of internship made through students' career development and internship unit. Students were also exposed to teaching strategies like writing portfolios, research forum, and defense sessions for graduate candidates in particular. Moreover, diverse students' supports carried out in some private higher learning institutions such as St. Mary's University are appreciable. This kind of teaching style can be taken as good practice to help students and other HEIs gain new experience.

Little practical work would have a negative impact on the quality of CEP and competence of its graduates. The current public concern on the quality of higher education, particularly on CEPs, could be partly related to the deficit in practical work reflected in the poor skill and competence of graduates. Findings by recent alumni study (ESC, 2015) and review on Ethiopian HE (ESC, 2017) attest to this. Thus, rethinking the pedagogy or delivery method for the twenty-first century is as crucial as identifying the new competencies that today's learners need to fill the skill gaps. This is essential because traditional approaches emphasizing memorization or the application of simple procedures, as articulated by Cynthia, will not advance learners' critical thinking skills or autonomy (Cynthia, 2015).

In Ethiopia, active learning and continuous assessment methods were introduced to encourage participation of the learner in the teaching and learning process (FDRE, 1994). Normative continuous assessment was intended to track learning progress and to incorporate the results of feedback into the progressing teaching learning process to ensure

student learning. However, the results of the current study have proved that continuous assessment and active learning are not properly practiced in majority of sample HEIs, and feedback is not given to students. Such situations impede students' engagement and their further learning activities.

This study has also explored the reason why students are weak in their academic performance. It was found that teachers themselves are incompetent in teaching and that andragogy is poorly implemented. Further, the high number of part timers, under-qualification of lecturers, and non-professionalism of those teaching in the CEPs contributed to low student achievements. In support of this, literature reveals that faculty knowledge, skills and abilities are vital to bring quality in higher education and, in fact, teachers are seen as the principal agents of inducing quality in education (Zaki, 2006). Quality learning requires highly competent and committed teachers employing active pedagogies (UNESCO-IBE, 2013), and outstanding teachers are among the sources of quality education (Edward, 2002). To achieve quality learning, an adequate supply of well-trained and motivated teachers and leadership; improved teachers' training, conditions of service and deployment; and ample professional development opportunities' are required (UNESCO and UNICEF 2013). In connection to this, Reeves (2000) contends that policies, curriculum, and socio-economic factors can improve academia only if the teachers are armed with the necessary knowledge, skills and supports. The same author mentions that quality of education is directly proportional to the quality of teachers, what students learn is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach depend on the knowledge, skills and commitments they bring to their teaching.

In the current study, it has been revealed that there is no special teaching methodology devised for adult learners other than the conventional lecture method of teaching. This is partly due to teachers' lack of special skills to approach adult students of CEPs. For adults are almost always voluntary learners, therefore, they simply disappear from learning

exercises that do not satisfy them. To bring positive changes and develop more interest in students, creation of attractive learning environment is central. Thus, to create conducive learning environment and keep adults motivated, it is advisable to get in touch with their learning and teaching characteristics so as to examine some of the factors hindering their participation in the evening extension classes (Berhanu, 2014).

Assessment is believed to be indispensable for effective teaching because it is the essence of a good teaching. One should constantly be attempting to gauge the levels of students' learning in order to lead them to further development (Kelly, 2009. p147). In view of this, it is described in the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy that continuous assessment in academic and practical subjects, including aptitude tests, will be conducted to ascertain the formation of all round profile of students at all levels (EEP, 1994. p.18). Continuous assessment methods were introduced to encourage the participation of the learner in the teaching and learning process. However, in the current study it has been observed that there are poor assessment systems, academic dishonesty or misconduct, lack of professionalism and ethical value, and less accountability to prevent unfair grade awarding. Particularly, the assessment system and exam administration process in distance education is too meager to evaluate individual students discretely due to academic misconduct. In this regard, the qualitative data analysis reveals that it is difficult to measure students' performance only using exams in CEP, because most of the time, assignment is done by other individuals who are not the real student. This malpractice might make the students' effort less important and result in poor quality learning.

Moreover, there are inflated exam results and grades awarded to the students. To say this differently, participants in this study are not sure whether or not the exam results are the actual performance results of the students. This triggers a question of reliability of the assessment system, academic honesty, professionalism, ethical value and accountability on the part of the students, teachers, institutions, and even

the regulatory bodies. It is also well expressed that exams are almost open book type in many institutions especially in distance education. Evidence shows that unacceptable culture of exam administration and absence of continuous assessment is dangerous to quality of education. Cynthia (2015), for instance, argues that it is not possible to address the issue of transforming twenty-first century instruction without addressing formative (continuous) assessments. Continuous assessments enable teachers to evaluate learning while it is occurring. Likewise, assessment in the form of continuous feedback will take the lead in twenty-first century assessment. It is especially beneficial for clarifying learning goals, ensuring continuous monitoring, providing feedback, responding to learners' progress, encouraging adaptation and improvements in learning outcomes, and involving students in meaningful self and peer assessment (Facer, 2011).

Quality of Continuing Education Programs in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

Quality is becoming the primary concern and public issue in Ethiopian higher education. It is known that almost all the public and private universities or colleges have established quality assurance system. But universities do not have independent long-term quality sustaining strategy for CEP in particular. Moreover, only few institutions conducted tracer study to follow up the whereabouts of their graduates and quality of their programs. Comparatively, more than the public universities, private universities and colleges conduct tracer studies to know the locus of their graduates, the quality of their programs and their position in human and economic development, although the quality of graduates from private institutes is generally believed to be inferior to that of graduates from public universities as evidenced by some national reports and this study as well. However, literature reveals that the economic, political and social environments that we live in today are continuously changing and it is, therefore, very essential that all programs, especially continuing education programs, offered by HEIs could respond to the needs of society in a dynamic and flexible manner

(UCC, 2011). The ultimate aim of any quality assurance exercise must be improvement and enhancement of a program activity and it is important to make sure that all stakeholders (students, staff and external stakeholders) are well engaged in the process. Funding agencies including government and industry, where applicable, should also play an important role in the quality assurance since they have an interest in the outcomes and developments (UCC, 2011).

In the sample universities, although this happens rarely, there are times when courses are offered by unqualified and incompetent lecturers which actually relates to workload and the subsequent payment for lecturers. Some HEIs use many part time teachers to solve scarcity of manpower despite all its drawbacks. Nevertheless, literature reveals that, holding other factors constant, institutions with higher proportions of adjunct faculty have lower graduation rates. An increase of 10% in part-time faculty is associated with a reduction of 3% in graduation rates. Similarly, it is argued that first-year students who are taught to a greater extent by adjunct faculty are less likely to persist into the second year (Ehrenberg, 2006). This implies that increasing the number of full timers would help increase the quality as well as internal efficiency of institutions, whereas increase in part timers would trigger quality problems.

Table 8. Students' response to whether or not their learning is ICT supported

	ICT support	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Internet	261	31.0	34.3	34.3
	Digital libraries	101	12.0	13.3	47.6
	e-Books	134	15.9	17.6	65.3
	Video conference	58	6.9	7.6	72.9
	None	206	24.5	27.1	100.0
	Total	760	90.3	100.0	

In the current landscape of higher education, learning is much supported with different technologies to enhance quality of education. Particularly, open learning demands various technologies to ease communication among learners, providers and teachers. With this understanding, the current study asked CEP students whether or not there are additionally used technologies in learning experiences. The finding showed that comparatively only the internet is being used by students of CEPs among the technologies assumed to be utilized. 34.3% of the respondents said that internet is a more widely used technology in learning while 27.1% of them reported that no technology is used in the CEPs. Availability of e-books, digital library and video conferencing was respectively confirmed by 17.6%, 13.3% and 7.6% of the respondents. In general, additional technologies used in CEPs are too limited and, therefore, students' learning experiences do not seem to be supported by information technologies.

Management of Continuing Education Programs

To run CEPs, HEIs have a clear organizational structure. In all public universities, a separate directorate called Continuous and Distance Education is created. In some universities it is organized as College of Distance and Continuing Education while in others it is organized as an institution. The following table shows how different program modalities are run and managed in terms of semester length and duration of the program modalities.

Table 9. Semester length by type of CEP

Respondents program semester length		Type of CEP and Attendees				Total
		evening	weekend	summer	distance	
1 and 1/2 month	Count	8	6	50	19	83
	% within respondents program semester length	9.6%	7.2%	60.2%	22.9%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	3.6%	8.3%	19.5%	10.4%	11.3%
	% of Total	1.1%	0.8%	6.8%	2.6%	11.3%
2 months	Count	23	5	162	19	209
	% within respondents program semester length	11.0%	2.4%	77.5%	9.1%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	10.2%	6.9%	63.0%	10.4%	28.4%
	% of Total	3.1%	0.7%	22.0%	2.6%	28.4%
3 months	Count	62	19	25	56	162
	% within respondents program semester length	38.3%	11.7%	15.4%	34.6%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	27.6%	26.4%	9.7%	30.8%	22.0%
	% of Total	8.4%	2.6%	3.4%	7.6%	22.0%
4 months	Count	132	42	20	88	282
	% within respondents program semester length	46.8%	14.9%	7.1%	31.2%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	58.7%	58.3%	7.8%	48.4%	38.3%
	% of Total	17.9%	5.7%	2.7%	12.0%	38.3%
Total	Count	225	72	257	182	736
	% within respondents program semester length	30.6%	9.8%	34.9%	24.7%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	30.6%	9.8%	34.9%	24.7%	100.0%

As shown in Table 9, 11.5% of the students said semester length of their program is 1 and 1/2 months while 28.4% reported it is 2-month long. Further, 22.0% reported a 3-month long semester while 38.3% reported

4 months. Indeed, the largest proportion, 60.2% and 77.5%, of students in the summer program reported that their semester lasts 1 and 1/2 months, and 2 months, respectively. This proves that summer program has comparatively the shortest semester duration. This has been supported by the qualitative data analysis in the current study.

Table 10. Students' response to the duration of CEPs they enrolled in

program length to complete the program		Type of CEP and their attendees				Total
		evening	weekend	summer	distance	
3 years	Count	101	21	36	132	290
	% within respondents program length to complete the program	34.8%	7.2%	12.4%	45.5%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	46.8%	30.0%	14.2%	76.3%	40.7%
	% of Total	14.2%	2.9%	5.0%	18.5%	40.7%
4 years	Count	86	35	20	31	172
	% within respondents program length to complete the program	50.0%	20.3%	11.6%	18.0%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	39.8%	50.0%	7.9%	17.9%	24.1%
	% of Total	12.1%	4.9%	2.8%	4.3%	24.1%
5 years	Count	20	6	99	8	133
	% within respondents program length to complete the program	15.0%	4.5%	74.4%	6.0%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	9.3%	8.6%	39.0%	4.6%	18.7%
	% of Total	2.8%	0.8%	13.9%	1.1%	18.7%
6 years	Count	9	8	99	2	118
	% within respondents program length to complete the program	7.6%	6.8%	83.9%	1.7%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	4.2%	11.4%	39.0%	1.2%	16.5%
	% of Total	1.3%	1.1%	13.9%	0.3%	16.5%
Total	Count	216	70	254	173	713
	% within respondents program length to complete the program	30.3%	9.8%	35.6%	24.3%	100.0%
	% within type of CEP respondents attending the program	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	30.3%	9.8%	35.6%	24.3%	100.0%

Pertaining to length of programs delivered in CEP modality, 40.7% of the students said the length of programs is 3 years, 24.1% said 4 years, 18.7% said 5 years and 16.5% said 6 years. To further investigate which programs take long and which ones take short time, cross tabulation of length of program, types of program and the departments the students belonged to has been made. The result showed that there was mixed duration of programs which does not go with their actual and expected length to complete the programs. For example, a 3 year program in regular modality might be completed in 3, 4 and 5 years, a 5 year program might take 3, 4, 5 and 6 years. This indicates that some programs are completed earlier than the actual and expected time while others are completed in longer time than the standard program duration. In this regard, HERQA's Committee Report (2014) elaborated the problems as follows: absence of academic calendar and/or failure to dispatch it to students, graduating students outside the stipulated duration of the program, enrolling and registering new students while the duration of the program is close to an end and allowing the students to sit for exams, conducting continuous registration without letting students know their exam results and academic status.

Moreover, a unique delivery method of extension or evening program has been identified in this study. The quantitative and qualitative data analysis showed that in many public universities under the study, there was a newly emerged epitomized evening modality which is known as weekend program. In this modality, as the name indicates, courses are taught during weekends. In other universities, there was a special weekend program as particularly mentioned by discussants form Jigjiga University whereby programs are delivered continuously for 10 consecutive days per month instead of offering them over the weekends — *a ten day-per month approach*. In this approach, extension students who live far away from the main campus are taught for ten consecutive days during the day times. Course instructors also leave the main campus and forget the regular students for ten consecutive days. The discussants claim that this mechanism was devised to reduce the mobility and transport cost of course instructors and students. It can be

argued that a ten day continuous approach increases concentration of students to have more focus on the topics and reduce the rounding of learning but has negative impact on regular students learning exercises.

Even though it seems advisable to offer weekend programs continuously for many days without interruption, it might have its own drawbacks. For example, someone can imagine how this would affect the regular classes if the teachers leave the campus for 10 days every month especially if the institutions use teachers in the regular programs. Additionally, availability of students consistently every month for 10 consecutive days is likely to be a challenge provided that majority of weekend students are on job or part timers. These all require in depth investigation on the pros and cons of *a ten day-per month approach*.
Like in the extension program, there is another mode of delivery in few academic programs, which is a derivative of the summer program. Some universities, for instance, chose to deliver summer agriculture programs in three months of the winter season which they call *special winter program* because professionals in agriculture are busy supporting the farmers during the summer season. It was reported that the *special winter program* has better semester length than the usual summer program and would allow teachers and students to take time and conduct effective and proper teaching learning process. It can be thought that having such different alternatives to provide CEP in a convenient manner is encouraging and can be considered as innovative. But, this newly created modality is not nationally known and has not gained recognition from governing bodies of the sector. It is not led by an approved national guideline. Therefore, both approaches should be communicated to the responsible regulatory bodies so they draft guidelines and directives for the programs.

The management of CEPs is loose as compared to that of the regular programs in public universities in general. For instance, there is no serious academic dismissal and limited grace period in the case of CEP; quality audit experts from HERQA and supervisors from MoE focus only on the regular programs; and HERQA gives more emphasis to private

institutions particularly to distance education. Literature reveals that the real relevance and importance of the increasing level of CEP offerings highlight the need to include all the CEPs offered by HEIs in the quality assurance systems. Attention should be given to developing appropriate approaches in order to ensure the continuous improvement of these programs and guarantee their quality (UCC, 2011). Such irregularities in quality assurance, poor support from the government, and deprivation of attention would discourage the overall efforts made to improve the quality of CEPs, but can result in uncontrolled expansion of the programs. In light of this, it is evidenced that weak supervision in universities would lead to a plethora of institutions in terms of size and quality (Steven and Janel, 2009 as cited in Roger *et al*., 2009).

Besides poor exam management system, the major drawback in the management of CEPs is the sale of certificates at some institutions. This contradicts with the objectives of learning and what literature says in line with assessment. Wilson and Scalise (2006) argue that it is perhaps too easy to justify the existence of underprepared students, and to support ‘‘natural’’ filtering mechanisms that eliminate students through attrition or failing grades. Similarly, Karassavidou and Glaveli (2006) found that academic dishonesty is positively related to students' attitudes towards unethical managers' business behavior. This suggests that the impact of academic dishonesty extends beyond the classroom (Jacqueline, *et al*., 2008). Moreover, academic misconduct is found to be a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of academic scholarship; defrauds society, the institution, the faculty, and other students; and undermines the efforts of those who eventually depend upon the knowledge and integrity of faculty and staff (Pearl River Community College, 2014). What is more, it is believed that academic dishonesty in different educational systems and levels increased negative effects on the academic institution, society, and the students themselves (Antonio and Maria, 2014).

In the quality assurance process, HERQA is not controlling quality but auditing quality in favor of establishing quality auditing culture without

controlling the quality of programs. Consequently, it has opened room for the existence of a lot of problems related to admission criteria. Students from technical vocational education and training institutions are admitted to university without CoC result, required work experiences and school leaving exam certificate. Moreover, in some private universities or colleges, individuals who are alien to education are leading the branches and centers disrespecting HERQA's guideline.

Additionally, several policy and strategy issues are raised especially with regard to distance education in EHEIs. Among the issues are program review manual, quality assurance policy, HERQA institutional quality audit and areas of focus for quality auditing, accreditation and reaccreditation guideline. However, the implementation of these policies, strategies, directives and guidelines is not satisfactory as institutes are not uniformly implementing them in CEPs per se. Fair to say, the management and leadership commitment demonstrated at all levels to ensure the quality of CEP in EHEIs is feeble, and this is seriously affecting the quality of the programs under study.

Summary and Conclusion

Program opening process

- Even though there were different efforts made at different levels by higher education institutions in the course of opening CEPs, rigorous needs assessment and feasibility studies have not been conducted. CEPs are opened without adequate preparation and fulfillment of the required educational resources. Therefore, the conduct of needs assessment is ritual and only to make it appear that markets are available for graduates rather than to ensure that the necessary preconditions to open programs are fulfilled. It was not to address priority educational programs required for economic development and give opportunity for access to quality higher education and graduate competence so that the graduates would play parts expected of them in social and economic

development of the nation. Therefore, the way CEPs are opened by higher institutes would potentially affect the quality of teaching and learning process as the quality aspect is not sufficiently considered as central point when programs are opened.

Resources availability

- Shortage of time and frequent electric power interruption are affecting the class time and other learning activities of CEP resulting in inefficient time and resource utilization which in turn would have implication to quality education particularly in the evening, weekend and summer programs.
- Combined with shortage of time and lack of senior research advisors, constraints of research budget do not allow CEPs students specially summer program followers to conduct standard senior research for the fulfillment of degree programs. That means students enrolled in summer programs do not gain adequate research skill that would help them conduct problem solving researches in the future.
- Missing many tutorial classes due to lack of tutors, students' absenteeism from such classes, poor commitment from both teachers and students is a common phenomenon in distance education program but institutions do not react much to reverse the situation. Thus, the three major stakeholders: tutors, students and institutions themselves have their own contributions to the provision of quality-deficient distance education.
- In general, both shortage and underutilization of available educational resources (infrastructure and/or facilities like workshops, laboratories, computer rooms, libraries, internet, etc. and human resources) are equally affecting the quality of CEPs.

Delivery method and assessment

- Active learning is not well promoted and implemented in CEPs. Students' engagement is so minimal and learning- teaching is not enhanced to improve learning achievements. Additionally, there is insufficient practical work to assist program delivery in CEP indicating teaching is less supported with practical work. Due to this, learning is taking place in poor learning environment, and therefore, the required skills and competence that students should gain might not be achieved.
- There is lack of differentiated pedagogical skills or teaching skills by teachers to approach adult students like those in the CEPs. There is also lack of compatible curricula and tailored standardized teaching materials that could have positively influenced the learning appetite of the students and improved the poor quality of education.
- Particularly distance education students do not have access to internet, digital libraries, websites, video conferences, and other modern ICT services. Thus, distance education program delivery is still limited to generation-one approach or the oldest approach in which only print or reading materials, mainly modules, are distributed and tutorials are given to students every term.
- There are poor assessment systems, academic dishonesty, lack of professionalism and ethical value, and absence of accountability for awarding unfair grade particularly in the distance education program.
- Actual students' achievement is compromised as the students do not optimally utilize available resources, their time and potential for better learning and academic performance. Due to this, there is high rate of exam cheating and unfair exam results/grades which would subdue the real effort of the students resulting in poor quality learning and unreliable learning achievements. Therefore, institutions are misleading the public by producing high

exam scorers but low task performers or graduates that cannot discharge what is expected of them at the world of work.

Quality assurance

- Although Quality Assurance Office makes efforts to enhance quality and audit the process, the quality assurance system in public and private universities is feeble and, therefore, quality of CEPs is not ensured.
- Tracer study is rarely conducted by the Ethiopian HEIs. In comparison, stronger than the public universities, many private universities or colleges used to conduct such studies to know the whereabouts of their graduates, the quality of their programs and their position in the human and economic development. It seems private higher institutions are more concerned about the relevance and quality of their programs and graduates' employability as these would impact their future markets. This is not a concern in public universities perhaps because of their loose accountability for market availability (in this case graduates' employability) and public expenditure.
- Paradoxical to the tracer study conducted by private universities, the quality of their graduates is not found to be any better than that of public universities as evidenced by some national reports or national exam results and empirical data. Thus, what can be drawn from this is that the conducting of tracer study by private higher education institutions is not serving the objective of improving the quality of their teaching and that of their graduates. In this regard, an interviewee from a private university said: *Through launching CEP, it is mainly money that is highly generated, not knowledge.*
- A significant number of part-time teachers and unqualified individuals who are alien to the courses are teaching especially in private higher institutions. This compromises quality teaching and

results in weak academic performance and poor graduates' competence.

- CEP has been more commercialized and made business-focused than education-centred. In this regard, distance education in particular has been the most beneficial to providers and exposed the modality to corruption as compared to others. In short, CEP marketization has been a public concern as it ends in quality compromization.

Leadership and management

- In some private institutions, there is a tendency to sell certificates without properly teaching and equipping students with necessary competence. This reflects weak leadership and management of CEPs.
- CEPs offered in the summer modality are exclusively time constrained (1 and 1/2 months long) programs and thus have the shortest semester length with occasional high workload of more than 20 credit hours to be carried by the students.
- A derivative of summer program which is known as *winter modality* is emerging in some fields of study such as agricultural sciences to substitute the short summer modality. In few universities, weekend programs have been further evolved into special weekend programs whereby they are delivered continuously in day and evening times for 10 consecutive days per month instead of offering them at weekends. These new modalities have not been recognized nationally and do not have approved national guidelines to run them.
- Some of the evening programs have been evolved to be offered at weekends implying that existence of the so-called evening modality might be challenged as many of them have been shifting to weekend programs.
- Negative perception by CEP providers of assessment has resulted in academic dishonesty explained by the fact that

institutions do not want to give standardized exams and see high attrition rate of their students which could be treated as normal phenomenon in the academic niche.

- The absence at national level of agreed upon self-instructional material preparation guideline to control the quality of modules in distance education affected the quality of modules used in higher education institutions.
- Institutes are reluctant to implementing quality assurance policy, guidelines and procedures in the course of ensuring CEP quality probably due to the fact that HERQA is not controlling quality but auditing quality in favor of establishing quality auditing culture, so quality assurance functioning is feeble.
- MoE does not give enough attention to CEPs (less emphasis during supervision, monitoring and evaluation) and HERQA also does not evaluate CEPs curricula on equal footing with that of the regular programs. Summer, evening and weekend programs are run without control and follow up from statutory bodies, so it can be said that CEPs are the most neglected programs.

In conclusion, CEP is operating in EHEIs without ensuring its quality which is affected by multitudes of factors such as the way programs are opened, scarcity and underutilization of educational resources, poor delivery methods and assessment system, meager quality assurance system and weak management and leadership.

Recommendations and Implications

Based on the major findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made.

Status

- There should be a well established system that equally treats and encourages both the public and private universities ensures continuous enrolment growth in CEPs and stability in

private universities so that access to and graduates from higher education are sustainably enhanced.

Program opening process

- Universities should conduct a meticulous needs assessment involving different stakeholders to make sure that the intended programs are demanded, feasible and the required resources are fulfilled to meet quality parameters from inception. To this effect, the sector should have and uniformly implement a stringent national guideline or policy framework which guides the opening process of CEPs and that universities should abide by.

Resources availability

- There should be improved national resource standard that universities should fulfill as basic educational resources or inputs before opening programs. The government has to put in place an enforcing mechanism to utilize available resources by students and teachers in order to provide quality CEPs.
- Institutions should have alternative source of electricity at least to supply classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, health services and computer centers with electricity in order to avoid problems that crop up from frequent power interruptions.
- Sufficient budget has to be allocated for CEPs by MoE, especially for summer teacher education programs in order to properly undertake all the teaching-learning activities including senior researches.

Delivery and assessment

- If to offer quality CEP in general and distance education program in particular, the curriculum has to be standardized,

modern and ICT-supported, and special independent policy should be introduced into the system to properly govern and manage it.

- The sector should identify and implement only programs that are convenient to run in the CEP modality based on the available educational resources and level of advancement of technologies in the country.
- Practical work, field visit, active learning and continuous assessment have to be properly implemented in CEPs in order to ensure quality of education and competence of graduates.

Quality assurance

- To be very visionary and far reaching in their access as well as reputability in terms of quality CEP provision, universities should devise and implement quality assurance policy practices and independent long-term quality sustaining strategy.
- There should, at a national level, be an agreed upon self-instructional material preparation guideline which serves as a means to control the quality of modules prepared specially for distance education.
- Standard evaluation criteria should be established for CEP since especially the evaluation criteria for distance learning programs affect the instructional quality and performance of students, which in turn influence how much potential employers trust distance education.
- A great effort has to be exerted in order to change the attitude of program providers or owners of higher institutions towards the purpose of assessment and its implication for quality education and national development at large.
- Teacher training on differentiated pedagogical skills of how to approach or teach adult or mature students like those of CEPs

has to be arranged for teachers in order to improve their teaching skills and competence.

- Implementing holistic or comprehensive exit exam as part of degree fulfillment in CEPs before graduation is a good practice that should be taken as one of the mechanisms to enhance students' engagement, ensure quality of education, and minimize academic dishonesty, unfair exam results and grades.

Leadership and management

- National CEP policy has to be initiated to improve quality of CEPs. This new national policy framework has to be adopted by higher education institutions and uniformly implemented to ensure quality of CEP.
- There should be a clear distinction between evening, weekend and special weekend programs or modalities to properly manage and regulate the system. In this regard, there must be a policy framework, consistent and stringent guidelines, procedures and policy practices referring to only these programs to govern and ensure their quality.
- To ensure healthy teaching-learning process and smooth learning environment at the universities, it would be necessary to revise the duration of summer program and offer it in a reasonably adequate time to provide quality summer programs. Otherwise, it should phase out from the CEPs and leave the summer season for preparation for the forthcoming academic year.
- There should be multiple checking points of documents required for admission (during entrance) and exit point authentication system in all graduates of CEPs to control ineligible students. The country should have national learners data base which has to be realized through the implementation

of qualifications framework (EQF) that need to be brought to attention to fully optimize the efforts made to mitigate the problem.

- It is necessary to work on the attitudes of students, teachers, university communities, institutes and private owners so as to reshape their views towards CEP and quality education.
- MoE and HERQA should meticulously conduct monitoring and evaluation to prevent HEIs from malpractices in implementing and managing CEPs so that management at institution level is improved to end in quality CEPs.
- HERQA and MoE should give equal emphasis to all CEPs in order to uniformly leverage and ensure their quality.
- There should be a strong link and cooperation among HERQA, MOE and ESC in order to bring about a productive synergistic impact on the quality of CEPs.

References

Antonio, M. and Maria J.A. (2014). **Effects of academic dishonesty in dimensions of spiritual well-being and satisfaction: A comparative study of secondary school and university students.** https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263143136. Accessed on 28 Dec. 2017

Kelly A.V. (2009). **The curriculum theory and practice**. 6th ed. SAGE publications Ltd.

Berhanu Nigussie (2014). *The quality of evening education Program at Jimma Teachers' Training College (JTTC), in Oromia, Ethiopia.* **European Scientific Journal** October 2014 edition vol.10, No.28

Cheng, Y., and Tam, W. (1997). *Multi-models of quality in education.* **Quality Assurance in Education**, 5(1), 22–31.

Creswell J. W. (2014). **Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach**. 4thed. SAGE Publications, Inc. USA.

Cynthia Luna Scott, (2015). *The Futures of Learning 3: What kind of pedagogies for the 21st century? UNESCO Education Research and Foresight, Paris.* **ERF Working Papers Series**, No. 15.

Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold (2004). *Validation of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning: policy and practices in EU Member States1.* **European Journal of Education**, Vol. 39, No.1, 2004. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Edward Sallis (2002). **Total quality management in education.** 3rd ed. Taylor and Francis Ltd. UK

Ehrenberg, R .G. (2006) **What's Happening in Public Higher Education?** Westport, C T: Praeger.

ESC (2015). *A Study on Alumni of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions.* Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Unpublished.

ESC (2017). *A Study on the Current Status of Higher Education in Ethiopia: Policy Implications Ethiopian Education Roadmap* (2016-2030). Education Strategy Centre, Addis Ababa. Unpublished

Ezewu, E.E. and Okoye, N.W. (1981). **Principles and Practice of Continuous Assessment.** Ibadan: Evans Publishers.

Facer, K. (2011). **Learning Futures: Education, Technology and Social Change**. New York, Routledge.

FDRE (2009). **Higher Education Proclamation No 650/2009. Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.** 15th Year No. 64 Addis Ababa 17th September, 2009.

FDRE (1994). **Education and Training Policy**, Addis Ababa, EMPDA.

Green, D. (Ed.). (1994). **What is Quality in Higher Education?** London, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Gupta, Kavita. (1999). **A practical guide to needs assessment.** San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/ Pfeiffer.

Harvey, L. and Knight, P.T. (1996). **Transforming higher education.** London, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

HERQA, (2014). **International Leadership Institute Institutional Quality Audit Report.** HERQA Publication Series -067.

Jacqueline K. Eastman, Rajesh Iyer, and Timothy H. Reisenwitz, (2008). *The Impact of Unethical Reasoning on Different Types of Academic Dishonesty: An Exploratory Study.* **Journal of College Teaching and Learning.** V 5, Number 12.

Junaid A. Khan Salman A. Khan and Reslan H. Al-Abaji (2001). *Prospects of Distance Education in Developing Countries.* International conference on Millennium Dawn in Training and Continuing Education 24-26 April 2001 University of Bahrain, Bahrain.

Karassavidou, E. and N. Glaveli. (2006). *"Towards the Ethical or the Unethical Side? An Explorative Research of Greek Business Students Attitudes",* **The International Journal of Educational Management** 20 (5), 348-364.

Mark Wilson and Kathleen Scalise. (2006). *Assessment to Improve Learning In Higher Education: The BEAR Assessment System.* **Springer, Higher Education 52**, 635–663

MoE (2010). ትምህርት ሚኒስቴር፣ 2002. **በከፍተኛ ትምህርትና በቴክኒክና ሙያ ትምህርትና ስልጠና የትምህርት አግባብነትና ጥራትን ለማስጠበቅ የወጣ የአፈጻጸም ሥርዓት**

MoE (2015). **Education Statistics Annual Abstract. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.** EMIS and ICT Directorate, Ministry of Education.

Pearl River University College (2014). *Quality enhancing plan: Policy and procedure manual.* www.prcc.edu./policy and procedure/educational programs. Accessed on 25 Dec 2017.

Philip Stabback. (2016). *What Makes a Quality Curriculum?* In-**Progress Reflection No.2 on Current and Critical Issues in Curriculum and Learning.** IBE UNESCO,2016.

Reeves, D. B. (2000), **Accountability in Action: A Blue Print for Learning Organizations.** Advanced Learning Press, Denver.

Sajida Zaki and Mohammad Zaki Rashidi,(2013). *Parameters of Quality in Higher Education: A Theoretical Framework.* **International J. Social Science and Education** 2013. Vol.3 Issue 4, ISSN: 2223-4934 E and 2227-393X Print

Soriano, I. Fernando. (1995). **Conducting needs assessments.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Steven Green and Janel Bayastanova, (2009). *Country reports on student affairs and services practice in Kazakhstan:* In **Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: Global Foundations, Issues and Best Practices.** Eds. Roger B. Ludeman, Kenneth J. Osfield, Enrique Iglesias Hidalgo, Danja Oste and Howard S. Wang UNESCO, France

UCC- University College Cork (2011). **Quality Assurance for Continuing Education Programmes: A Handbook for HEIs.** Quality Promotion Unit, UCC, Ireland, on behalf of the QACEP Project Quality Promotion Unit.

UNESCO-IBE (2013). **Statement on Learning in the post-2015 Education and Development Agenda.** Geneva, UNESCO International Bureau of Education. www.unesco.org/ newfileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/UNESCOIBE Statement.pdf. Accessed on 27 Dec 2017.

UNESCO and UNICEF (2013). **Envisioning Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Executive Summary.** Paris, UNICEF and UNESCO. http://en.unesco.org/post2015/sites/ post2015/files/Post-2015_en_web.pdf. Accessed on 20 Nov 2017.

Witkin, Ruth Belle and James. W. Altschuld. (1995). **Planning and conducting needs assessments: A practical guide.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Zaki, S. (2006). *"Rethinking Quality through Components of Teaching Process in Teacher Education."* Paper presented at "International Conference on Quality in Education", AKU-IED, Karachi, proceedings pp 746-755.