

Higher Education in Pre-Revolution Ethiopia: Relevance and Academic Freedom

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Abstract: This paper presents the history of Ethiopian higher education (HE) before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. By giving a historical account, it concluded that the then Haile Selassie I University was dependent on Western models in its staffing, curriculum, duration, timing, philosophy and ideology. It combined the American experience of a research university, which itself borrowed from the German idealism of the Humboldtian University that favoured a combination of teaching and research. The absence of a graduate program, and the Newmansque ethic of a teaching method, characterized by the philosophy of cultivating the cognitive domain of the learner with what they call the disputation techniques of critiquing and debating, in the context of an environment characterized by values of monarchy and autocracy, lack of tolerance and the rule of law, the Addis Ababa University destroyed itself as a result of a context produced by the disharmony of the alien culture with the indigenous one. It had completely missed the disharmonizing discourses of the West and the East and was swallowed in a political turmoil that had still made it difficult to get ride of. Academic freedom, teacher or institutional autonomy did not help in a context characterized by limited local or national capabilities (Sen, 2001).

Introduction

This part covers the history of higher education in pre-revolutionary Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 marked a new form of higher education and a new attitude to traditionalism that defined the pre-Christian (before 330 AD) and post-Christian period of Ethiopia. Of course, the history of higher education in Ethiopia is still a thorny issue. Many Ethiopians believe that Ethiopian higher education started in the 1950s with the advent of a Western type of colleges and universities. However, writing the history of higher education in Ethiopia, the starting point is not the 20th century. It preceded the arrival of modern Western type of education which started in the first half of the 19th century; or the arrival of missionaries who saw the

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provision of educational facilities as the most effective way of winning new converts (Bahru, 2002:22). later, the government took this new responsibility, as exemplified by the first embryonic Ethiopian technical school built mainly to produce weapons by Emperor Tewodros at *Gaft* near the town of Debretabor now in the Amhara Regional State mainly to counter the major threat of colonialism. Girma Amare (1967:1), drew a parallel between Ethiopian traditional church education and the Western-type of education by considering the levels of elementary, secondary, college and university type of education. He argued that completion of elementary, secondary and college education is the requirements for entry to university education in the traditional education system of Ethiopia (1967:1). He also said that although two to three years might suffice to complete the elementary level, it takes about 12 years to complete secondary education.

Completion of *Kene* School (college-level) is a pre-requisite to university level education. The education offered in the *Kene* School introduces students to Geez grammar (the Ethiopian Latin), the translation of Geez texts into Amharic and composition of verses. At this level, the student starts to make sense of what he/she has learned before in the form of rote learning (Teshome, 1972: 12-13). The student was considered now a mature scholar entitled to use the methods of discussion groups, and the criticism of composition to shore in the spirit of social non-conformity, which was observed among the masters of *Kene*, and other sophisticated scholars in the Ethiopian society (Girma, 1967: 3).

University education starts with the completion of the fundamentals of *Kene*. Thereafter, students begin to specialize in *Kene*, *Mesthaft Bet* (House of Books) and *Zema* (church music and dance) as the three major branches of specialization. Usually, the philosophically talented enter *Metshaft Bet* where there are four areas of sub-specialization: the Old Testament, The New Testament, Dogma and Philosophy, and Astronomy. It is also possible to specialize in two or three areas. A

person who has succeeded in mastering all four areas of learning becomes known as “The four-eyed” (Girma, 1967:3).

In parallel with Medieval European universities, which were known for their centres of excellence, schools in Ethiopia also existed whose reputation in particular fields of study drew students from every corner of the Empire (Girma, 1967: 4). Thus, the *Ghedamat-Adbarat* at Bethlehem, Axum, Debre-Damo, Debre-Abai, Waldiba and Debre-Libanos were known for being centres of excellence (Abebe, 1991:127). Girma (1967:3-4) argued that Waldiba and Debre-Abai were known for *Kiddasse* music (Abuna Yared’s hymnody with musical notations); and Bethlehem was the best seat for learning *Deggwa*, a type of specialization in traditional higher education curriculum characterized by such metaphors as highway and supermarket to represent the knowledge contained in Dugga as illuminating, profound, and insightful (Kassie, 2003:3). Washera Mariam and Dimma Ghiorgis in Gojjam were known for *Kene*.

Clearly, Ethiopia had a highly elaborate, largely transmission-oriented system of education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Koranic school system. One also observes that the notion of prescribed school curricula varying from one level of schooling to another, administration of examinations to test the completion of prescribed curricula, ceremonial manifestations marking graduation exercises, the awarding of a diploma with a seal affixed to it, and other aspects of present day formal education had existed for many centuries, especially in the Northern provinces of Ethiopia (Aklilu, 1975:116; Haile-Gabriel, 1968:52).

It is not, however, clear whether or not traditional higher education grew side by side with the growth of the lower levels of traditional education, which had shown a tremendous growth during the introduction and expansion of Christianity during the Axumite ruler, Emperor Ezana in the 4th century. A broad mass base and literature was achieved, during this period, as a result of the advent and vigorous evangelical activity of nine clerics from Asia Minor (known as

the nine saints in Ethiopian tradition). The Bible and other holy books were also translated during this period. The extensive construction of churches and monasteries during this period established the foundation for religious and intellectual reflection (Bahru, 2002:20). Another argument for an early dating of traditional higher education was the history of Abune Yared (The Ethiopians call him Saint Yared), (Kefyalew, 2004), and the father of one of the curricula of traditional higher education, *Kiddassie (liturgy)* and writer of the hymnody of the Ethiopian church in the 6th century (p.1). Essaias (1955:18) further argued that *Andemta commentary* (interpretation of the books), the highest stage in the Ethiopian church educational system, started long before Christianity during the time of Solomon's rule of Israel and when Emperor Mnillik I of Ethiopia visited his father, Emperor Solomon of Israel and brought with him the 19 books of the Old Testament. It appears that traditional higher education has longer history than is commonly accepted. Such claims are however highly contested by many Ethiopians.

Learning centres such as Gondar, Lalibella, Axum and Debre Abai reached their climax at a time when many European colleges and universities started to appear as innovations, in the 12th or 13th century. Church education in Ethiopia, nevertheless, had discontinued for a brief period (1527-1632) as a result of a war by Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim al Ghazi (popularly known as Gagn Ahmed, the left-handed, by Ethiopians), the Sultanate of Adal, who in 1527 launched a devastating onslaught against the Christian highlands, destroyed churches and schools, and burned manuscripts. This was followed by the capture of the port of Massawa by Ottoman forces in 1557. During this period the glory of medieval Christian Ethiopia was brought to a halt (Binns, 2004:7).

A robust church education was once again re-established in 1636, during the reign of Emperor Faciledes (1632-1637) who set up his capital in Gondar (in the North West of the Amhara Regional State now) by building palaces, casteless and churches. Of course, Ethiopian capital cities were moving continuously southward from

Axum (the first millennium) to Lallibela during the Zagwe rule in 1150-1270 (during which the monolithic rock hewn beautiful churches were constructed) and later from Gondar to Shoa (with some interruption by Emperor Yonnes II who made his capital city at Makelle in the North but who was also known for supporting the reviving traditional scholarship in Gondar), to where the present capital city, Addis Ababa is situated. The city of Gondar once again became a centre of scholarship until traditional education system again started to regress when confronted with the modernization process, especially in the 20th century.

Development and Decline of Traditional Higher Education

Ethiopia has a well-established form of traditional higher education, which is mainly based on Quranic and church schools. Currently as much as 50 percent of the population is estimated to be a follower of the Orthodox Church. Some estimate the figure to be larger, such as, 40 million out of 70 million of the total Ethiopian population in 2004 (Bin, 2004:2). Church education was primarily aimed at preparing priests, monks and *debateras* (the most educated philosophers) and teachers to serve in the church programs as well as civil servants, such as, judges, governors, scribes, treasures and general administrators (Teshome, 1972: 11).

Islamic religious education was well established in Ethiopia for a long time probably starting from the 7th century with a two-tier Quranic system of lower and higher levels (Seyoum, 1995:34; Abebe, 1995:8; Haile-Gabriel, 1968:58). The lower level is called *tehaji*, which is essentially teaching Arabic letters and reading of the Quran. The higher schools are known as *Badiya* as *ilm* where Islamic Cannon Law (Fiqh.), Arabic Grammar (*nahew*) and the commentaries (*tefsir*) are taught and studied (Seyoum, 1995:34). A student with a fair knowledge of classical Arabic joins the school of interpretation and specializes on either *fiqh* or *tesfir* depending on his interest. Students who decide to devote their lives for the cause of Islam attempt to learn both for the rest of their lives (Seyoum, 1995:34). These two higher

levels of Quranic education are considered parallel with *Kene School*, a level of higher education in the church education system (Haile-Gabriel, 1968:59-60). The main purpose of Islamic education in Ethiopia is to preach the religion and preserve the cultural heritage with such method of translating the Quran which uses the Arabic language and script exclusively, and understanding the interpretation of verses by Islamic scholars called Imam, Sheik, Kabira, Uluma, etc. These people are highly respected by the community as they lead the mosques, the schools, and the courts (Haile-Gabriel, 1968:60-61). Although not much explored by Ethiopian researchers, the imprint of Islamic education on the development of Ethiopian traditional culture seems to be significant. It is also surprising to observe that the two religions had coexisted for a long time, with some exceptions of conflict for a brief period, during the war by Ahmed Gragh of Adal in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Pankhurst (1974:75) has counted well over 15,000 schools although he still believes there are still a lot more uncounted. The teacher in the higher education system of traditional Ethiopia is often called a *Lique* or *Lique- Liquant*, or professor who knows much learning (Pankhurst, 1974:78). Binns (2004:3) has said that "In fact, despite acute material poverty, Ethiopian priests, deacons and debteras are educated to a level far in excess of Western standards and show a commitment and dedication to study which is impressive to the extent of being terrifying. The main difficulty for a Western observer who tries to understand this tradition, that is, the teaching methods, the content of the courses of study and the personal qualities cultivated are completely different from anything he has encountered before". Herbert (1861:81-82 cited in Pankhurst, 1974:77) said, "Many humble church teachers had more real knowledge than the most learned professors in European schools". The comments of Herbert seem to be a little exaggerated, yet much is not known in this field because researchers have not paid much attention to it. However, the length of the course of the study, which is very long, might tempt one to reach similar conclusions: seven years to *Zema*, nine to *Sewasew* (grammar), four to *Kene* and ten to Old and New Testaments. To

these are also added some years to study Civil and Canonical Law, Astronomy and History in which only a few have the courage to embark on (Haile-Gabriel, 1968:49-68).

Although individual initiative and inquiry are discouraged in the then traditional education (Hailu, 1974:19-24), because it places emphasis upon obedience, subservience and compliance to authority, Girma (1967: 7) has argued that the truly educated Ethiopian is polite and courteous both to foreigners and to his own countrymen. He is also capable of exhibiting great courage and bravery when circumstances demand it. The ability to contain highly armed Islamic expansion such as, the *Derbush* from the Sudan during the 19th century; led by the Ottoman Turks, which had controlled and converted Christian North Africa, half of Europe and Asia including part of India, and the ability to maintain Ethiopia un-colonized by the west (with the exception of a brief period of Italian occupation during World War II), despite repeated efforts, especially by Italy, during the scramble for Africa, are some of the evidences that demonstrate the courage and bravery of the Ethiopians, which may partly be attributed to the values of traditional education.

Many foreigners are highly amazed at Ethiopian hospitality, specially, the attitude of Ethiopians toward any foreigner who is often perceived as the *Engida* (guest), and need help because he/she is in a new place (at a disadvantaged position) as contrasted to the unsympathetic language use by some cultures, for instance, *Huwaga* (alien in Arabic). The Ethiopian ethical principle of supporting the weak seems to be quite obvious in this sense. Of course, these values are less clearly observable in the streets of many Ethiopian towns today as a result of the overwhelming poverty that has characterized this country. The Christian and Islamic instinct of Ethiopians to remain with high morality (who are not easily tempted to low tastes), despite empty stomachs and chronic starvation, to protect their cultural heritage, such as, the museums of Axum and its priceless treasures; highly valued gold plated crowns of all Ethiopian emperors; and highly expensive archaeological artifacts including The

Ark of the Covenant, even in severe times of crisis; wars, lawlessness and famine; are clear demonstrations of higher level values that can only be explained by an age old traditional education and culture. A friend of the writer has always said, “an Ethiopian dies of starvation nearside a window display of gold worth a million dollars”, to imply that the victim could have saved his life by breaking in the window and stealing some gold.

Birth of Modern Higher Education

Modernization of Ethiopia, which started essentially with the time of Emperor Menillik II in the second half of the 19th century, took the form of discarding traditionalism and change-without-continuity (Abebe, 1991; Amare, 1998). Even later, in the early 20th century, with the establishment of modern schools, such as, Menillik School at Addis Ababa, the influence of church schools was marginal. The church schools started to be perceived by the Westernized elite as conservatives and irrelevant to the development needs of the country. The traditional elite, graduates of traditional education, and those foreign educated reformists of the early 20th century (Bahiru, 2002) were excluded from the modern schools that had started to flourish after the 1940s. The very few traditional elites that were retained to teach a few subjects, (Amharic, Geez and Moral) were looked down upon by the young. They had low esteem in the eyes of the young as a result of mainly their styles in speaking, clothing and lack of smartness (Aleme, 1973:145). This new perception was further exacerbated by more contacts with the west in the form of international relations, and the “country’s felt need” for laying out a modern bureaucratic structure (Pankhrust, 1967:1; Kiflu, 1993:9) after the Italian occupation (1935-1941).

A major landmark in the modernization process was the post-Italian government’s position. When the emperor returned from exile in England (where some believed he led a government in exile during the occupation period), the traditional elite which continued fighting the occupation army, was excluded from power and replaced by the

Western educated émigré and those who were believed to have accumulated Western experience from the Italian colonial administration. These people were called “Banda” by the Ethiopian people to designate them as traitors. This position of the government had evoked some political resistance mainly by the member of Black Lions (a resistance movement to Italian occupation), but culminated in the state execution of Belay Zeleke, a young patriotic fighter and an important member of the resistance movement, Black Lions, for defying the Emperor (Kiflu, 1993:9). This cultural conflict marks the historical context for establishing modern higher education systems in Ethiopia. The more Westernized elite won control of the bureaucratic administration excluding the traditional ones, with the exception of the Emperor and his family members who were also extremely exposed to the Western way of life especially during their exile. Ethiopia has now more dilemmas and paradoxes in its development efforts. Once a prosperous and rich country before the early 20th century, Ethiopia is now infamous for its famine and abject poverty.

Prior to 1950, candidates were sent abroad on government scholarships to higher education institutions in Europe, North America and the Middle East (Abebe, 1991: 121). Pressures from secondary education graduates starting in the early 20th century, such as, from the Menillik School in 1908, and the Emperor’s goodwill have compelled the establishment of a higher education system in the country (Abebe, 1991: 123).

The University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), the first modern higher education institution, was established in December 1950 following the approval (by government and the Emperor, Haile Sellassie I) of a study in 1949 by Dr. Lucien Matte, a Director of Taferi Mekonnen (now Entoto Technical School) who was requested to give preparatory courses to a group of secondary school graduates, specially in science, history and philosophy. This program began in January 1950 at the Taferi Mekonnen Secondary School. On 20 March 1950, the Emperor decreed the opening of a Junior college to

be named Trinity College. Eight months later, the Emperor changed the name to read the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA).

The pioneer of HE in Ethiopia, UCAA started with a two-year junior college and four years later, was extended to a four-year college, consisting of the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Sciences. Utilizing some of the bilingual Jesuits of various nationalities, *déclassé* refugees from England and Poland (Kiflu, 1993:15) who were teaching at the Secondary School of Taferi Mekonnen, as a nucleus of the faculty, classes started on 11 December 1950 with 30 students, 7 faculty and 2 administrators (Burke & Blaesser, 1960: 2). The Emperor appointed Dr. Lucien Matte, the Canadian Jesuit as the founding President of UCAA. The general objective of the college was stated as: Providing Ethiopian youths with a sound academic background for professional studies abroad and eventually, at the Haile Selassie I University, and then in course of construction and organization (UCAA, 1962)

On 25 July 1954, UCAA was given an autonomous status by an Imperial Charter (Abebe, 1991: 122). Unlike other higher education institutions in Black Africa that were approaching independence, UCAA was not externally controlled through systems of formal affiliation and/or examinations by external institutions (UNESCO, 1994: 19-11), though it was influenced by the educational philosophy and practices of its predominantly French Canadian Jesuit staff (Abebe, 1991: 122). UCAA, by and large, was mainly a Liberal Arts Jesuit College of North American type in curricular content and structure as well as in operational and leadership style (Abebe, 1991:122).

A Survey Team from the University of Utah commissioned by the Imperial government with the assistance of USOM/Ethiopia (presently called USAID/Ethiopia) chaired by Harold W. Bentley reported in 1959–1960 that the College was housed in attractive relatively new building near the Ministry of Education (now the Science Campus of the Addis Ababa University). There were 426 students (381 male and

45 females), all full time students, all housed in quite adequate dormitory facilities, almost luxurious for “this part of the world” and ate at the College dinning hall. The Ethiopian students numbered 376, and the balance of 50 students came from 14 foreign countries including Tanganyika, Kenya, Greece, India, United Kingdom, United States, and Yugoslavia (Bentley, 1960:7). The College paid all expenses. There were also more than 600 students taking classes in the Evening Extension Department, many of them from government offices, who paid a fee and received no living allowance (Bentley, 1960:12).

From the 40 academic and administrative staff present in the year 1959/60, the Survey Team reported an academic profile as depicted in Table 3.1. With the exception of four appointed Ethiopians (recent arrivals), all staff were foreigners during the Survey. The majority of them were Roman Catholics, 10 were Canadian Jesuits some working as administrative officers, including the President, Dr. Matte (Bentley, 1960: 12-13).

Table 3.1: Academic Profiles of UCAA Teachers

Qualification	Number	Percent
Doctorates (PhDs & others)	12	30
Masters	16	40
Bachelors and miscellaneous	12	30
Total	40	100

The UCAA Library consisted of 26,000 volumes and the laboratories were generally good although not comparable to American standards. The Museum, though small, was rated as exceptionally good. The Charter, which had given the College far-reaching powers and protection amounting to autonomy in its operation, did much to give the College strength, stability and prestige.

A Board of Governors including six members and the Chairman was established to determine the general policy of UCAA, appointed by the Chancellor, the Emperor himself and the President who serves as a Secretary (Burke and Blaesser, 1960: 3). Members of the Board were appointed from among the favorite government ministers of the Emperor, Haile Sellassie I and members of his family whom he believed to have some personal exposure to matters of higher education (Tadesse et al, 2000:4). The earliest list published in 1956-57 (UCAA, 1962), has as a Chairman of the Board, the famous prolific writer, scholar and educator, who prepared among other things, the First Modern Amharic grammar for school use, *Blattengetta* Mersie Hazen Wolde Kirkos, who was then Vice Minister of Justice, and the well known poet and writer, Kebede Michael (later awarded Honorary Doctorate by Addis Ababa University just before his death in 2000), who was then Director General of Education; the two young noble men with Oxford education, *Lij* Mikael Imiru who was Assistant Minister of Defense, and *Dejazmach* Dr. Zewdie Gebre Sellassie who was Vice Minister of Public Works; and the zealous Boston-educated Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ketema Yifru, as members. Two years later the list had another young Oxford-educated nobleman, *Lij* Endalkachew Mekonnen who had been appointed Minister of Education, and as a new Chairman of the Board, and *Blattien* Mersie Hazen, who had then become the Speaker of the Senate. A new member added to this list was one of the Emperor's grand daughters, Princess Aida Desta (Tadesse et al, 2000: 4).

The Utah University Research Team has also observed that a large majority of the graduates of the University College (about 205), had gone abroad on scholarship for further study (Bentley, 1960: 13). The first graduation ceremony took place on 26 August 1954 presided by the Emperor in his capacity as Chancellor of UCAA. About 18 of the 23 graduates went overseas for additional training: 7 to McGill University for Law; 3 to McGill for Commerce; 1 to McGill for Pre-medicine; 3 to the University of Manitoba for Education; 2 to Fordham University for Engineering; and 1 to Rensselaer for Engineering (Burke and Blaesser, 1960: 3).

The budget that comes from the general fund of the government was estimated to be two million Ethiopian dollars (the exchange rate was ET\$ 2=1 US\$) with USOM/Ethiopia providing an assistance of US 80,000 dollars to support teacher education programs.

One of the striking characteristics of UCAA was its numerous student societies and clubs in which every student was very strongly encouraged to participate on the basis of personal interest (UCAA, 1962:127; AAU, 2000b). Some of these student organizations were: the Ethnological Society, the Debating Society, the Poetry (writers) Club, the Drama Society, the Glee Club, the Society of Artists, the Photography Club, the Radio Club. Such societies were so highly valued by the College authorities that they were called not extra-but-co-curricular activities (ibid).

A committee of elected students ran each society with a member of a teaching staff specially appointed to assist in and monitor the activities. Many of these societies had their own publications, which were very much celebrated and reprinted in the Golden Jubilee of AAU in 2000 (AAU, 2000b). The Ethnological Society published an extremely valuable Bulletin with a number of pioneer studies some of which were quoted by researchers on Ethiopia with much respect (UCAA, 1962: 129).

There was also a Radio Club of which the objectives were to familiarize student members with the theory and practice of radio, with amateur radio activities carried out as a hobby (UCAA, 1962:127). The College had a 500-watt radio transmitter and UCAA was even licensed by the then Imperial Board of Telecommunications to carry out amateur radio transmission (ibid).

Out of such societies developed a robust student union, with annual membership fee of only ET 2.00 dollars (US 1.00 dollar), which at first was composed of the elected student officials of all the co-cultural clubs and societies. The Union was officially defined as a legislative, judicial and executive assembly of elected officers of the various co-

curricular activities working in cooperation with the Dean of Students (UCAA, 1962:127).

Social and Political Participation of UCAA Students

An examination of the content of student publications, in the various newspapers and student journals (Alula, 2002; AAU, 2002b) demonstrates stories and contributions mainly reflecting issues that address the living conditions of the Ethiopian poor. Examples include, *Let the Poor Speak Out*, by Tamiru Feyissa; and *The Contrasts of Life* by Yilma Kebede, published in ***Endih New***, a student newspaper. The University College students therefore started to be sympathetic with the poor and began to be active as early as the mid - 1950s with what they called Off-Campus questions, issues that transcend their immediate lives in Campus. In addition, their readings on the rapid changes that were taking place in the outside world, as well as the revolutionary developments in Africa and the rest of the developing world brought home to them how backward Ethiopia had become (Fentahun, 1990).

They became increasingly conscious of the great contrast, as depicted by the contribution of student Tamiru Feyissa, *The Contrast of Life* (AAU, 2000b), between their own privileged positions in their comfortable boarding schools, and the miseries of their own families in the country sides, and therefore, began, as early as the mid-1950s, to increasingly take up the causes of the poor and the under-privileged (Balsvik, 2003:4). In the absence of structures and sources of development other than the Emperor, UCAA students became a strong united force in public-opinion formation. They saw themselves as future leaders (Balsvik, 2003:4), and as the conscience of the people (Fentahun, 1990:102). They started challenging the government authorities with their publications by writing long poems in Amharic. Every year, there was a contest among students, and three winning poems were read out on the Open University Day in the presence of the Emperor.

All poems were very critical of the monarchical government and sympathetic of the Ethiopian poor farmer, who is patriotic, taxpayer but always exploited by the rulers. The poems were printed and sold to the public. The Amharic poetry tradition had, in the face of autocratic suppression, developed a tradition for wrapping the message in a language rich in ambiguities such as *Kene and Wuste Weira* (inside the olive tree) and people were eager to seek the hidden messages (Balsvik, 2003: 4; Kiflu, 1993:36). One observes that the traditional way of criticizing and expressing differences with subtle messages, such as, poems and *Wiste-Weira* as used by the *Debteras* and *Lique-Liquant* seems to have its grips in modern higher education in Ethiopia, contrary to the intensions of modernizing elites. Such messages are a demonstration of capacity to interpret verbal artistry and ingenious reflections, which now are replaced by a demonstration of factual knowledge in contemporary curriculum.

The establishment of a Community Service Committee in the academic year 1958/59 was one of the manifestations of the growing concern students felt for the poor and the needy (Tadesse, 2000 et al: 7; Kiflu, 1993:17). Students started to give free evening classes in the late 1950s and 1960s for the College gardeners, cleaners, guards and other personnel of general and student services department of the College. They organized a regular school in a Rehabilitation Center for the children of the poor; participated in UNESCO-organized mobile school where students went out of school in a specially equipped car to spread literacy to many shepherds and the peasant families (Tadesse, 200 et al.: 7 Kifle 1993:17).

Although such robust social and political activities were underpinned by the spatial-temporal factors, such as, the nationalist movements, African liberation fronts, and the post-war (2nd World War) radical ideas from Marxist and Socialist movements in Asia and the Soviet system, many of these activities can be attributed mainly to the nature of higher education offered at the University College (Liberal Arts Curriculum) and the privileged position the College enjoyed.

Expansion and Consolidation of HE

After the establishment of UCAA in 1950, many other colleges started to appear one after the other. In 1952, the College of Engineering was established in Addis Ababa with a two-year certificate program. The curriculum was extended to a four-year program later in 1954, and to a five-year program in 1959 to qualify for a BSc degree. Options were offered in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. A survey conducted in 1959-60 showed that, to that date, only 20 students had completed the program with BSc degree (Bentley, 1960: 16).

The Institute of Building Technology was established on 13 October 1954 by an agreement between the Ethiopian Government and the Swedish Government. The Institute was organized into three departments: the Building College, the Building Research Institute, and the Building Materials Testing Research. The aim of the Building College was to train qualified foremen, designers, supervisors, surveyors and inspectors in the building field, and to prepare students for university education in architecture and structural engineering. The two other departments were more concerned with the research aspect in the field, especially with exploring and experimenting the use of locally available low cost building materials. In the 1959/60 academic years, 80 students were enrolled with 17 teaching staff (7 full time and 10 part time, one of whom was an Ethiopian).

The College of Agriculture, now called Alemaya University, which is located in the Eastern part of the country, in the Oromia Regional State, was founded in 1952 through a joint arrangement between the Imperial Ethiopian Government and the United States Government. The Survey Team from the University of Utah in 1959/60 (Bentley, 1960: 14-15) observed that the Agricultural College which was also located five kilometers off the Dire Dawa Harar Road on lake Alemaya in the then province of Harar (now the Harari Regional State) was organized like the Addis Ababa University College with a President (American) and a Director of Administration (Ethiopian). There were two co-directors; the Vice Minister of Agriculture, and chief of

USOM/Ethiopian Agricultural Division (p.14). The Board of Trustees composed of the President (*ex officio*) and four Ethiopian members governed the College. Of course, the Emperor was the Chancellor of this College too.

Having a strong affiliation with Oklahoma University, the Agricultural College started with four departments, Arts and Sciences, Agricultural Mechanics, Animal Science and Plant Science. Laying out on a thousand-acre of land, and enhanced convenience for research and teaching, the College started with 160 male students. It had a small library with 4,500 books, 2000 bulletins and 600 journals during its early history. The Ethiopian Government and United States Government jointly funded the College (ET \$609,745, and US\$500,000 through the Oklahoma Contact) and with additional amounts from USOM funding (*ibid*). In 1960, the College had staff profile as shown in Table 3.2. During this time, the Agricultural College had 29 academic staff, 20 of which were Americans with varying qualifications. All nine Ethiopians had only BSc, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Staff Profiles of Agricultural College in 1960

Qualification	Ethiopian	American	Total
PhD	-	2	2
Masters	-	10	10
D.V.M.	-	1	1
Bachelors	9	6	15
Others	-	1	1
Total	9	20	29

A Public Health College was established in 1954 at Gondar in the historic north central part of the country in cooperation with the World Health Organization and USAID. The College had played the important role of training rural public health personnel, producing health officers, sanitarians, and community nurses. Practical work in rural health centres and stations has always been an important and

integral part of the College curriculum (Aklilu, 1975:118). The College had a 150 bed hospital, pre-clinical and clinical laboratories, at the time of its establishment. It had later transformed itself into a medical school to offer MD programs.

In 1960, the college division of the Theological College of the Holy Trinity was inaugurated in Addis Ababa to train high-level educational personnel for church administration and for the mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (ibid). It seemed that the church had also adopted the modernization model of education as it used its graduates in development activities, including in training the rural clergy.

In the late 1950s, the Ethiopian higher education system was characterized by the presence of several military colleges, such as, the Military College at Harar (with 250 enrollees). The Air Force College at Debreziet (77 enrollees) and the Naval College at Massawa, an old Ethiopian sea port (now part of Eritrea) at the Red Sea coast. These colleges were of comparable standard in facilities and staff who often were Indians (Military College), British (Naval College) and Americans (Air College). These non-civilian colleges had provided technical, professional and academic courses beyond the secondary school level.

Unlike the University College of Addis Ababa, all Ethiopian higher education institutions were administered and owned by the respective ministries, such as, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Agriculture, etc. They were highly diverse in their philosophies, programs, and academic organization. They were never granted charters, and in effect, were part of the bureaucracies. All of them had, however, a mission of producing professionals or technicians in the various occupations what were very badly needed in the different public sectors.

One could also observe that, with the exception of UCAA, Ethiopian HE had more vocational and technical orientation than Liberal Art

education in the 1950s. Most of the college programs, and structures of these HE institutions were multidisciplinary. They were also mainly staffed by expatriates and affiliated with Western universities. After 1960, these colleges had undergone a process of merger or phasing out--such as, the military colleges. The influence of these professional and technical colleges on development and function of a university will be explored at a later stage.

The fund provided by Western donor agencies and universities was also very significant and was as much as 50% of the total budget, such as, the case of the Alemaya Agricultural College. It is possible to argue that the Ethiopian HE system, though born in a non-colonial context, was not much different from the African colonial universities in being influenced by Western ideas and institutional structures.

Transition to a University

The idea of a modern national university, bearing the name of the Emperor, goes back to 1930, five years before the invasion of the country by Fascist Italy. An educational advisor, Earnest Work, was assigned to develop a project proposal whose implementation failed mainly due to the war, which delayed it for about three decades (until 1961). This delay was also the result of other problems, such as absence of broad general education base, domestic resource constraints and lack of international cooperation (Abebe, 1991: 23).

The Haile Sellassie I University (HSIU) was created later in 1961 through consolidation of existing colleges and higher education systems in the country following to the recommendations on May 1960 of a high profile 7-member Survey Team from the University of Utah chaired by Dr. Harold W. Bentley who later served as the first Academic Vice President and also as Acting President of the new University. The Team strongly advised the government of Ethiopia to establish a "service-type" institution with a mission and orientation largely parallel to those of the state universities of American land

grant or otherwise (HSIU, 1969:1-3). The following six colleges became constituent parts of HSIU during its inauguration:

- The university College of Addis Ababa (UCAA)
- The Imperial College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (Alemaya)
- The Gondar Public Health College
- The Imperial College of Engineering
- The Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology
- The Theological College of the Holy Trinity

As per the recommendation of the study Team, the Emperor granted the Charter of Haile Sellassie I University in February 1961, the same month of its constitution and inauguration. The inauguration was celebrated at a colorful convocation by the end of the same month (28 February 1961). This convocation ceremony involved a long academic procession in which the Emperor himself participated as Chancellor. The main purpose of the new University was two-fold; to coordinate and conserve all available resources for higher education in Ethiopia and avoid duplications, and rapid production of educated and trained human resources. It was also given the mandate to coordinate and supervise the academic activities of present and future colleges (HSIU, 1972a).

The new University inherited these institutions with their weaknesses and strengths, and a challenge to create coordination, harmonization, and gradual fashioning of these institutions into a coherent, purposeful, and integrated university (Aklilu, 1975:118). This background, however, served as a good starting point in adopting a diverse curriculum and experience of which many of the elements were retained in the new University for further development. Some of these were (Aklilu, 1975:119-120):

- The extension program of the University College of Addis Ababa, the ad hoc courses given by the staff of the Engineering College, and the Agricultural Extension services of

the College of Agriculture were precursors of the expanded university activity in extension programs .

- The early concern to meet the manpower needs of the country, as manifested in the activities of the Public Health College and the Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology. They remained a strong feature of the new university.
- Concern for rural development and the exposure of students to practical training in the area and situation where they were going to work was exemplified by the Public Health College. It was this same concern that led the University to inaugurate the Ethiopian University Service (**EUS**) that year.
- The orientation of university research to the solution of some of the real problems facing the development of the country which was early manifested by the building materials and low cost housing research of the Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology; and the Debre Zeit Experiment Station of the College of Agriculture .
- The admission of experienced school teachers to the University College without the usual requirement of the Ethiopian Leaving Certificate Examination, and the summer in-service training organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Without integrating these important features of the different colleges into the new University programs and structures, the progress of HSIU over the two decade period would have been limited as is often the case when one discards the old and starts from zero.

The Charter of HSIU stipulated the establishment of the Board of Governors composed of at least one representative from each of the ministries of education, agriculture, health and five members appointed by the Emperor; and an executive Vice Chancellor (or President) of the University. The Emperor appointed H.E. Ato Yilma Deressa, the Minister of Finance as the first Chairman of the Board of Governors of HSIU. While the Board dealt with very general policy matters of the University, the Senate (Faculty Council) and academic

commissions in the various faculties enjoyed the highest authority. The most substantive tasks of determining programs of study, educational standards and all academic matters concerning students and faculty, fell within their jurisdiction (Negarit Gazeta, 1961).

In addition to academic autonomy, the Charter of HSIU had also given full administrative and fiscal powers, such as, entitlement to block grant, purchase, lease, sell, mortgage, invest, all movable or immovable property, erect and or contract all such buildings and to expend the money required for any of these purposes and for the furnishing and equipment of the University.

With all those powers and authority, the University started its operations with its First President (appointed by the Emperor), a dynamic American-educated person *Dejazmach* Kassa Wolde Mariam, who was married to one of the Emperor's grand daughters. Previously, he served in the Private Office of the Emperor where it was said he had proved loyalty, discretion, personal dignity and efficiency (He was awarded a prize for being the Best President in the history of the now Addis Ababa University and the old HSIU, during the Jubilee Celebrations). It was remarked that his tenure of office, 1962–1969, marked a period of extensive development of the University.

The Motto of HSIU was adopted from the *vignettes* of the traditional church education in Geez (the Ethiopian Latin, now only used in churches) and reads as follows:

*ኩሉ አመክሩ
ወዘ ሠነዩ አገዛዙ
Deliberate freely on all matters
And hold onto the best*

This pragmatic statement, which had its roots in the Old Testament, was engraved on wood and still displayed in a central location in the door of the Mekonnen Hall (now the library of the Institute of Ethiopian

Studies) of the Central Administration, which is next door to the Senate Chamber. The first Board Chairman of the University College of Addis Ababa, Blata Mersie-Hazen Wolde-Kirkos, introduced this motto (Levin, 2004). The first phrase advises people to try all, experience all, and experiment all. The second phrase advises to follow the truth firmly, which must be found through rigorous searching, experimenting and separating the wheat from the chaff (Levin, 2004:5). Such early beginning of the University had aroused social expectations, which it tried to respond with responsibility.

Societal Expectations and the University

Many Ethiopians had placed high expectations in HSIU: that Ethiopia now has a modern University which makes it comparable to sister African countries, such as, Egypt, Sudan, etc., which had already established Western type of universities. Many modernizers felt Ethiopia lagged behind the world in the modernization process (Westernization). They expected the University would serve as an engine of development. They thought the responsibility of HSIU transcended the European traditional university roles--such as, conserving and transmitting cultural heritage, cultivating intellectual values and abilities, promoting research, providing trained manpower and rendering public service--by being a guardian of freedom and truth (Abebe, 1968:28). In addition to the traditional roles of the university, HSIU was expected to play political roles by being a change agent.

Owing to the backwardness of the society, the University in the Ethiopian context was placed in a privileged position, comparable to the "one-eyed proverbial person who has assumed of a kingdom in the country of the blind" (Abebe, 1968:28). Many Ethiopians had great expectations that HSIU would be an initiator of change (Abebe, 1968:29), of a society that is characterized by backwardness, limited knowledge and experience due to lack of modern education (Solomon, 1968:70). Many Ethiopian scholars including the President of the Addis Ababa University, Dr. Aklilu Habte (Aklilu, 1972:2)

strongly believed that a university in a developing country ought to be more responsible to the society much more than the traditional (European) idea of a university--an ivory tower tribe, operating in a social vacuum or isolation.

It was, however, strongly believed that for a university to be responsible, freedom is imperative (Abebe, 1968), and that the Charter of HSIU and the Consolidated Legislation of the Faculty Council (now the Senate) presumed academic freedom and institutional autonomy (HSIU, 1973c). The model of the American Association of Professors was adopted by the Ethiopian University Teachers Association (EUTA) to define academic freedom as involving three major ingredients (Abebe, 1968:31):

- The teacher has unrestrained right to teach his/her speciality. The professor is also free to discuss controversial issues relevant to his/her classroom teaching and his/her specialty. He/she is free to interpret, discuss and present his/her subject or findings to his/her class.
- The university professor is free to do research and publish his/her findings without neglecting his/her teaching duties.
- The university professor can write and/or speak as citizen outside class or his/her institution but should however abstain from speaking on behalf of his/her institution, unless authorized (Abebe, 1968:31).

Such freedom was, however, presumed on a special type of obligation due to the spatial-temporal context in which HSIU operated. The social, political and economic milieu in which the University was situated in the 1960s has been described as follows (Abebe, 1968):

1. The University finds itself in a society, which looks up to it for guidance and ideals. It does so with considerable degree of reverence and awe.
2. It is like many of its contemporaries in Asia and Africa, young and new, and therefore should be uninhibited by too rigid traditions and entrenched norms of behaviors.

This was an advantage which cannot be overestimated for it permitted flexibility, daring and adaptability.

3. It must, from the start, improve and identify itself with the concrete and real needs that dominate its society. The isolationist and aristocratic disposition of the ivory-tower tribe should not prevail. Nor should it cater by design or intension to the gentleman-scholar. Instead it in the main should serve the able and deserving irrespective of station of birth.
4. It has the unique advantage of utilizing rich intellectual resources and experiences through the employment of foreign staff from various countries with different ideological backgrounds and the training of its staff abroad. This permits the broadening of knowledge and perspectives of thought.
5. It has been borne and characterized by dynamism, change, concern for fellow men and a growing effort to develop the citizen of the world. It was an age that was exciting and interesting to live in. It was an age of unlimited opportunities for innovating and experimenting.

These contextual characteristics placed the University in the late 1960s in an advantageous position to influence society and play crucial roles of initiating change, serving as intellectual critic, serving as intellectual courts, and advancing the principles of freedom that need to be deliberately and consciously pursued. Located in a historic period of the 1960s which was characterized almost by universal social and political upheavals, including anti-colonial movements in Africa, and freedom struggles in the Americas, Asia and Europe, HSIU was expected by the Ethiopian society (as expressed by its own students and alumni) to be relevant to it, to guard it against exploiters and above all to be the custodian of its freedom (Kiflu, 1993:19). Of course, these expectations had partially borne fruit as the University started to operate in close proximity with the Ethiopian society and became its vanguard by actively engaging in and fighting for major

social, political and economic reforms, such as, መሬት ላራሹ (*Land to the Tiller*), which many say has very much contributed to the 1974-Ethiopian Revolution (Kiflu, 1993; Balsvik, 2003; Fentanun, 2003). Students were always rallying around the land issue, the most important economic resource to Ethiopians, which was controlled by a few, leaving the majority landless tenants. One of the slogans about land issue is shown below:

እንጠይቃለን ፓርላማውን ደጋግመን

ፍርድን መወሰን ሳይሆን

መሬት ላራሹ ለሁሉ እንዲሆን

We demand the Parliament again and again

Not for the reduction of feudal dues

But for Land to the Tiller Land to All (Kiflu, 1993:39)

The student demands reflected in the above slogans were raised at a time when the Parliament was discussing a land reform proposal, the abolishment of the 1944 Land Tax Proclamation (tax in Lieu of tithe which many criticized for rough justice in allocating the tax burden and as a bad revenue instrument), and replace it by a new Agricultural Income Tax system, which also failed to address the radical land reform expectations of the Ethiopian peasants. Gebru Gebre Wold, the President of UCU (University College Union) handed a letter to the President of the Parliament containing the UCU resolutions of abolishing landless tenancy instead of government proposed legal protection of tenant farmers (Kiflu, 1993:39). In a book, **The Ethiopian Revolution**, Fentahun Tiruneh (1990), one of the five student-activist-group members who were sentenced to a five year term in prison in 1961, for allegedly distributing illegal pamphlets, argued that the Ethiopian student movement (ESM) which was spearheaded by students of HSIU, through its networks with the Ethiopian diaspora in America and Europe, was the main engine that provided the thrust for the dismantlement of the ancient regime in 1974.

The involvement of University students in politics had its roots in 1960 when UCAA students had openly shown their support through their demonstrations and placards in the streets of Addis Ababa to the foiled *coup d'état* attempt by the body guards of the Emperor (Kiflu, 1993). Since then, student activism in UCAA and later in HSIU was getting tough resulting in open confrontations with security and regular class disturbances. During the second half of the 1960s, students created spectacular demonstrations every year to raise the consciousness of fellow students and people in the city, always focussing on pertinent political issues. Clearly, the aim was to dismantle the imperial regime (Balsvik, 2003:5).

Confrontation between the government and student activists, backed by the large majority of the student body in demonstrations and boycotts reached its climax in 1969 after a turbulent Spring when university and secondary schools all over the country had been closed (Balsvik, 2003:5). The student journal, **News and Views**, was replaced by a more radical paper, **Struggle**, that has been banned several times, due to its serious offences to the Emperor and the political system as a whole. Defiant positions, such as, *The Question of Nationalities*, challenged the myth of *Ethiopian culture*, which was not inclusive of the culture of many other ethnic groups (Kiflu, 1993:17). The very foundation of a nation state: one language, one nation; sovereignty, territorial integrity and Haile Selassie's divine kingship with its origin in the Biblical union between Emperor Solomon and the Queen of Sheba was being challenged, which, in turn, resulted in overreactions of the government. For instance, the President of the Student union, USUAA (University Students Union of Addis Ababa), Tilahun Gizaw, was assassinated by the security in the streets of Addis Ababa one evening in late December 1969.

Many argued that such unflinching student movement was motored by an underground student group called the *crocodiles*, which has been operating since 1964 to study political literature on Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse Tung's thought. They emulated Che Guevara, as a selfless internationalist fighter for social and political liberation of the

poor in any country. These beliefs were also reinforced by literature from the Ethiopian students abroad by such clandestine imports of journals, such as, *Challenge; Get Armed* (ግግቻ), etc. Balsvik (2003) argued that the Ethiopian student movement was inspired by the literature of Franz Fanon, *the Wretched of the Earth*, and their commitment to remedy the problems of the poor through an ideology of scientific socialism which they thought was an all out social cure, but unfortunately proved a disaster. Yet, Ethiopia had to pay sacrifices in economic stagnation, instability, conflicts, and human lives unprecedented in Ethiopian history after the 1974 Ethiopian Socialist Revolution.

The overwhelming May 1966 demonstrations to protest government actions of dumping the most wretched (orphans, the crippled, lepers, and outcasts who crowded the streets) in a concentration camp at Shola, a few miles away from the capital city, Addis Ababa, surrounded by barbed wires (Kiflu, 1993:43) was a stark example to the feeling of university students towards victims, the poor and the weak.

Couldn't this be a critical application of liberal art education to the Ethiopian situation? Couldn't students use liberal art curriculum in the context of critical theory, which Barnett (1997) calls critical thinking, or critical being? Couldn't HSIU students learn the Western curriculum, which mainly aims at self-promotion, but fail to comply with it? They had instead critically applied it to their situation. Thanks to the American system of education, which did not teach only Western values, such as, competitiveness, but also freedom and independent thin Emperor, which is also demanded by the *Debteras*, the most highly educated people in the traditional system of Ethiopian church education. The Liberal Art education system was, however, to discontinue after the Ethiopian Revolution whose curriculum was characterized by groupthink and indoctrination—the creation of a socialist personality (CHE, 1985: Abebe, 1991); and complete silencing of student voices.

Governance and Management at HSIU

The management of University affairs, whether directly affecting its day-to-day activities or the development of plans, both short term and or long term, including its relationship with other government and non-government agencies, was carried out by corporate resolve (HSIU, 1972a: xi). Every decision taken by HSIU was a group decision, in which the faculty participated, either directly or through their elected representatives (HSIU, 1972a: xi). To bridge some gaps, the President's Annual Tour discussion with faculties, colleges and departments provided a strong link between staff and administration. Some problems were explored between heads of centers and individuals during the tour, which were a matter of communication gaps and not serious substantial conflicts.

HSIU had also a very strong and highly committed Board of Governors. For instance, in 1972, it discussed 45 agenda items of the University, all concerning development, and conducted 19 meetings (HSIU, 1972a: xii). In the same year, the Faculty Council met 13 times, and its Executive Committee 15 times (p.12). Some of the innovative decisions of the Board during one of its deliberations (for instance, on April 10, 1965 E.C) were:

- Advising Government to use the knowledge of the highly educated Ethiopian teachers at the university .
- Proposed a staff development program to incorporate Western educational experiences with other facets of life in Ethiopia: in industry, agriculture and the service sector, particularly, in rural Ethiopia.
- The need for direct involvement in rural development activities to be emulated by present and future generations of Ethiopia.
- Creation of a Committee composed of University staff and government officials that help with the formulation of policies and procedures and the creation of a mechanism to ensure appropriate consultation among interested parties.

During the tenure of office of President Kassa Woldemariam (1962-69), the University registered an impressive quantitative and qualitative development. During this time, the President was assisted by two highly experienced and competent Americans who acted as vice-presidents. Dr. Harold W. Bentley, the Academic Vice President, was a highly reputed Associate Professor in the University of Utah before he was sponsored by USAID to lead a Survey Team that studied the state and future directions of higher education in Ethiopia in 1959/60. Under his chairmanship, the Team recommended consolidation of all colleges under one umbrella, HSIU. He acted as HSIU President during the interim period until Kassa Woldemariam was appointed the Ethiopian President in 1962. The Vice-President for Administration and Business Development, Dr. Kenneth M. Montgomery, was a partner of the noted Chicago and New York Consultant Group, Arthur and Anderson & Co., who had set up the Business Office of North-Western University at Evanston, Illinois (Tadesse, et al, 2000:14).

It was argued that a very successful organization and development took place during the 1962-1974 period mainly due to the Charter, competent leadership and access to the Emperor by the two consecutive presidents, Kassa Woldemariam (1962-69), and later Aklilu Habte (1969-1974). The path followed by the HSIU University from the beginning was to be free and responsible. This was reflected in its Charter, and in the Consolidated Legislation of the Faculty Council (HSIU, 1973c), and in its concrete activities, such as, its relevant academic programs, public services and professional development activities, including the organization of teachers and student associations.

The Faculty Council (now the Senate) which was the highest decision making body of the University was composed of the president and vice presidents, the university librarian, deans of all faculties, directors of research institutes, and three representatives of each faculty elected by their colleagues from full time academic staff members. The Faculty Council operated by establishing many standing

committees to advise it on issues of curriculum, finance, admissions, research, publication, promotions, staff development, library and teaching materials, academic standards, etc.

The Executive Committee of the Council, which was composed of the president, the vice presidents, the secretary of the council, and seven elected others, facilitated all matters of the Council. The number of voting members of the University organs is shown in Table 3.3. Faculties and research institutes had statutory decision powers regarding all academic and fiscal matters. The Faculty Council sees to it that faculty decisions are consistent with rules and regulations of the University. For instance, Academic Commissions recommend appointments and promotions to the Council, and the Council approves these recommendations, with the exception of the full professorial rank whose approval is finalized by the Board.

Table 3.3: Number of Ethiopian and Expatriate Voting Members of the Faculty Council, the Executive Committee and of the Standing Committees of the Council for 1971-72

Name of Body	Ethiopian Members	Expatriate Members	Total
Faculty Council	43	11	54
Executive Committee	9	1	10
Academic Standards	8	3	11
Curriculum Committee	7	5	12
Editorial Board	5	5	10
Admissions Board	9	4	13
Ethiopian University Service	11	-	11
Extension Committee	12	-	12
Staff Development and Promotion Committee	9	4	13
Freshman Committee	7	5	12
Library Committee	8	7	15

Research and Society

As per the motto of HSIU to search and research, the Faculty Council, since its constitution, has encouraged research that focuses mainly on rural development and the Ethiopianization process and produced teaching materials. The University stipulated broader aims of research, such as, generating knowledge to make teaching more relevant integrating theory with practice, evaluating and upgrading curricula, and addressing the felt needs of society (Habtamu, 2003: 322). While expounding the importance of research to the Ethiopian Society, President Aklilu Habte reiterated the mission of the university as:

Although the nature of a university, as it seems to me, must incorporate an unflinching loyalty to the idea of truth, its primary mission must include the search for the symbolic or tangible presence of this truth in the affairs of man. Universities as institutions of learning must be able to shape ideals into reality, and thus attend to things more mundane and more relevant to the needs of the societies around them...The responsibility of a university in a developing country is three-dimensional. First it must locate its appropriate position in the socio-cultural and historical perspectives of the country; second, it must be instrumental in the development of socio-economic life of the people; and third, it is an important factor in strengthening the material progress of the country (Aklilu, 1972:2).

A search for factual truth, objectivity in problem analysis, unbiased and educated proposals for solution of problems, the ability to present alternative solutions, and the avoidance of rigid or narrow perspectives were believed to be the best strategy to gain an acceptable status among the society in which the University operates (HSIU, 1972a: 3).

HSIU encouraged research by creating the necessary institutional framework as well as structures. In 1971, the Faculty Council passed a decision for the creation of an office, the Research and Publications Office (RPO) under the Office of the Academic Vice President (AVP), to be headed by an Associate Academic Vice president. Its main aim was to coordinate research, to be carried out in faculties and in research institutes, and develop criteria for disbursement of research funds. It was also to liaison the AVP with existing research centers since the Associate AVP for research and publication was an ex-officio member of the Board of Advisors of research institutes, and with external agencies and organizations with which these research institutes collaborate. Some research institutes that had developed their own statutes preceded the RPO. The RPO also managed all publications by having the HSIU Press (publishing house) and the Printing Press (factory) under its control.

Research Institutes

Research institutes were established in HSIU with their own permanent staff in parallel with faculties. Although the exact date of legislation is not known, the tradition has been that staff of research institutes have both research and teaching responsibility with the ratio, 1:3, that is, 25% teaching and 75 % research. The Faculty staffs on the contrary are responsible for exactly the reverse ratio, 75% teaching and 25% research. These ratios still exist. However, whether or not they have meaningful correspondence to teaching and research will be a matter of exploration. The major objectives for establishing these research institutes in HSIU were to (Aklilu, 1973b: 16):

- develop continuously the Ethiopian teaching materials, specially in the social sciences, law, history and geography;
- apply research in agriculture, education, public health and biological phenomena;
- develop innovative teaching methods;

- study one's own culture by collection and preservation of Ethiopian archives, art, music and historical artifacts ;
- develop better testing devices (aptitude tests, objective tests, etc.);
- advance Pan-African Research in collaboration with UN and OAU (now AU);
- build up research infrastructure.

Many research institutes were given mandates for undertaking research in respective fields in HSIU.

The University and Public Service

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was much effort to make the university more relevant to rural Ethiopia where 95% of the people lived at that time. One of the evidence for rural orientation of the University was rural location of the two campuses of HSIU, the Gondar Health College and the Alemaya Agricultural College. Another indicator for the rural orientation of the University programs was the case of the Health Clinics that used to send teams of students to rural health stations, where students lived and worked for extended periods, as part of their regular training. Some say the Health Clinic concept was the basis for promulgation of the Ethiopian University Service Program (EUS) by the Faculty Council, which was later to become a model to Africa and the rest of the world (Quarmby and Quarmby, 1969:26).

The Ethiopian University Service Program

The Ethiopian University Service program (EUS), which has been inaugurated on 17 April 1964 required university students to serve, for one academic year, mainly in the rural areas of Ethiopia. Some Ethiopians argue that the rationale for EUS developed out of a concern by many university educators that; (1) education was becoming the privilege of a minority; (2) how to educate this minority so that its expertise and know-how benefit and serve the majority; and

(3) that education has tended to be too theoretical, too abstract, hardly touching on the real fundamental problems of rural transformation. Many educators showed concern of the excessive use of foreign teachers, texts and other books, and all other forms of teaching materials, which continued to accentuate alienation of the educated Ethiopians from their socio-economic and political milieu and uprooting them from their historical and cultural backgrounds (Aklilu, 1973b: 129). It was believed that the utilization of the educated, not only after they have completed their courses, but also while in training, raises the issue of human resource development in the light of the needs of poor and less developed countries.

It was interesting to observe that this public-service idea emerged from the faculty and students, perhaps as a result of their orientation and partisanship with the poor; the early involvement of students in practical welfare activities (Tadesse et al. 2000:6-7); and the experience of the old colleges that had shown signs of concern about the nature of the education of their students (Aklilu, 1973b: 129-131). For instance, one finds several articles that express student indebtedness to the rural poor of Ethiopia in the published poems of HSIU students (AAU: 2000a); and a written proposal by Mesfin Wolde Mariam. In one of his contributions, the **Rural-Urban Split in Ethiopia**, Mesfin (1968:7-16) had warned early the stagnating trend of the rural areas of Ethiopia as a result of the privileged position of the towns that were becoming distinct due to a favoured construction of infrastructure such as roads, factories, schools, health services, etc.

There was much public expectation from the university, and rhetoric of how the university situates itself in the Ethiopian polity. Mesfin (1968:15) wrote a letter to the President of HSIU proposing a one-year compulsory service for university students to be applied one year before their graduation and by forming a team of 10 or 20 drawn from the different specialties and operate on the same community (rural) in order to make the rural community literate and politically conscious

(Mesfin, 1968:15). Such benefits were assumed to spread gradually to other communities resulting in tremendous transformation of the rural areas in a period of five to ten years (Mesfin, 1968:15).

When the EUS program started in April 1964, it took a slightly different shape from the proposal of Mesfin Wolde Mariam, a controversial figure now, yet a brilliant political analyst. As the idea gained momentum in the University academic community including students, the University arranged study teams. Two committees studied the practicality of the project and presented a draft statute, which in turn was studied by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council. The Council approved the program and ratified the statute, decreeing that the first group of students would be on the move in September 1964. The program was finally approved by the Board of Governors and welcomed by the government (Aklilu, 1973b: 130). A summary of the EUS statute is presented as follows:

By this University Statute, the Faculty Council implements the resolution of its Executive Committee of 1963 and creates a Program of Ethiopian University Service as a requirement for all degrees and certain diplomas awarded to Ethiopian citizens attending the University as full-time students. The idea of national service by University students has been conceived, discussed and studied by various groups, students, faculty, and administration; and the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council approved the proposal in principle. The program has been welcomed by the Council of Ministers from the standpoint of government collaboration and it is now formally established by the Faculty Council in accordance with its Charter powers to fix requirements for degrees and diplomas and to establish the basic elements of University academic policy. Our University is Ethiopia's national institution of higher learning; it has a challenging mission to provide liberal education to young men and women in various fields of learning and thus to serve the nation by producing indispensable human resources who will aid Ethiopia's development and progress. The Council believes that a program wherein university students spend one academic year using their university training to provide services to local

communities will be beneficial, not only to the national welfare but to the students in an educational sense; the program will enable students to understand, in a much more significant way, the problems and the needs of their country, particularly its less developed areas (HSIU, 1973c: 56).

This program was launched by a statute with its own commission and administrator to work in collaboration with the National Union of Ethiopian University Students (NUEUS), deans of students and the various faculties. Each fulltime regular student was required to spend a year in the countryside, working in a service capacity related to his/her field of study, while paid only a modest living allowance by the employing agency. The program was intended to assign 60 percent of the students to rural schools and 40 percent of them to various civil service organizations, mainly located in rural towns (Aklilu, 1973a: 3). In reality, 73% went to teaching and 27% to other sectors (Tadesse et al, 2000:19). This happened because of a pressing need for teachers and other organizational problems in the rest of the sectors.

A total of 3,792 students have been deployed in ten cycles in the period, 1964-1974, serving in teaching, local administration, courts or tax offices, in community development, construction projects, provincial banks or in others related to their professional studies.

While service was the main aim of EUS, its greatest advantage was educational: to create greater appreciation of the diverse regions of country, the way in which most Ethiopians live, the problems of rural development, and the value of practical experience in that setting. This program also gave opportunities to students to relate their theoretical knowledge to practical experience and provide ample opportunities for working out an integrated research program, which was part of their senior essays. It was also claimed (by university authorities) that these essays were rated excellent by external evaluators. The Faculty was also directly involved through supervision, selection of service projects for students, staffing of EUS orientation courses, assigning individual research projects and

maintaining liaison and seminars in the field with students (Aklilu, 1973b: 4).

Apart from being an academic requirement, the EUS program however, never counted to any additional credit to the academic requirements of HSIU students, a major weakness in motivation and valuing the program in academic terms. Charging the program with three-to-six credit hours would have been fair and more productive.

Though preceded by many countries outside Africa, such as, China, Russia, and some institutions in the USA, the EUS program was later adopted by many African countries, such as, Zambia, Tanzania, and Zaire (Aklilu, 1973b:4). A review of the EUS program both by the University and the government has yielded results that have led to a proposal to extend the service requirements to secondary school students. The EUS program had also attracted visitors from inside and outside Africa and earned recognitions, such as, (1) the most impressive venture; (2) an attempt to find the true identity of interest that would link academic work with real situation of people's lives; (3) research was encouraged and the recognition of the duty of the university to serve its fellow men; and (4) By Sir Eric Ashaby, quoting an American educator, as an inspiration of genius, etc. (Aklilu, 1973b: 136). There are also contentions that the EUS program has contributed much to the radicalized activism of students in Ethiopia.

In 1973, the University had also a new vision of further ruralization of university services; and further expansion programs for the late 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s, not knowing, of course, those ideas of long term planning would be overtaken by the revolution of 1974. Such vision was grounded on the proposed newly structured educational policy of 1972 popularly known as, **the Education Sector Review** (Girma et al. 1974:1-26), an educational reform, developed with high participation of the academic staff of HSIU, but produced strong pessimistic public reactions, including by Teacher Unions, and which was believed to be one of the immediate causes for the downfall of the monarchical government. This has resulted in the

abandonment of the reform proposal after the 1974 Revolution. The salient features of the reform program were emphasis in rural prioritization. Aklilu (1973b: 7) has summarized the implication of the Education Sector Review reform to higher education as:

A basic re-design of a new set of priorities in efforts to develop rural communities, including a new system of district administration and a new system to deliver, in tandem, education, health, agricultural and related technical services to district communities; a significant shift of resources within the educational system to expand first-level rural schooling and extension and non-formal education in districts; and initiation of a National Service Program (NSP) which enlists secondary school leavers and others into rural public work cadres: provide them with subsistence allowance; teach them job skills; and accord service priority in terms of university admission; redesign of many programs within the Faculty of Education and participation in the development of new methods, curricula and teaching materials for rural education, both elementary and secondary.

The Education Sector Review report recommends continued enrolment growth of the University at the rate of 5% per year to the end of the century. As per the 1968 planning of the University, this expansion was largely to take place on the rural campuses of Alemaya and Gondar, where students were to be streamed in training programs for education and teacher training, technology, agriculture, community development, medical and health services (Aklilu, 1973b: 8-9).

All these efforts, of course, were dreams to make the University relevant to society, particularly the rural poor. This was what Tjeldvoll (2000) in the new millennium called the service function of a university. HSIU was undoubtedly a service university in its commitments and programs. A memorable undertaking that demonstrated clearly the University's partisanship with the Ethiopian poor was the case of its reflective reaction to the draught of 1973. Members of the Ethiopian University Teachers Association disclosed

the 1973 Famine of Wollo and Tigray, when in fact, government officials were trying to deny it, despite the fact that many refugees were fleeing to Addis Ababa had often were met with detention by the security in order to hide the truth (Tadesse et al, 2000:23). In April 1973, a Committee of three senior members of the University was dispatched to Wollo by a chartered plane to assess the famine situation. The Committee members returned with many photographs that depicted the depth and breadth of the tragedy. When these photographs were exhibited in the main campus of the University, they generated tremendous amount of interest among both national and international community, despite the anger demonstrated by government officials. These pictures steered the British Dimbelby's famous TV disclosures publicly shown in Ethiopian TV, the night before the monarch was deposed by the Military Government in 1974 (Tadesse et al. 2000:23).

Later, the University Community: professors, students and other members, established a Joint Committee, called University Famine Relief Committee (UFRC) first to publicize the tragedy, and later, to collect relief funds. I remember, 6 I was a Grade 12 student at the Prince Bede Mariam Laboratory School of the Faculty of Education, residing at the main campus of the University and participated in the discussion of the University Student Union on how to contribute to the relief funds. We decided that the money that went to payment of our breakfast bills be withdrawn from the University cafeteria (for 2-3 months) and donated to the relief funds. Those of us who came from distant rural areas had faced the challenge of staying without breakfast in order to save some lives.

UFRC immediately changed itself to UFRRO (University Famine Relief and Rehabilitation Organization) with the intent of enriching the scope of its participation by incorporating a rehabilitation program and operating at various draught prone sites in Wollo. UFRRO continued to operate even after the 1974 Revolution as an organization of rural development before it was discontinued as a result of government monopoly in development projects. The Addis Ababa University

created the first humanitarian NGO, UFFRO, which became a precursor of the government controlled, RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Commission), and the present DPPC (Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission). These commissions suggest permanence of disasters in modern Ethiopia.

Conclusion

The historical analysis of pre-revolutionary Ethiopian HE has suggested a correlation of academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility. Although the causal arrow could not be easily comprehensible, it was observed that the University was operating in an excellent synch with the needs of the poor, through its modernistic curriculum, which discounted traditional cultures that are believed to be the soil upon which, one harvests using seeds and fertilizers. A more aggressive modernizer that appeared after 1974 wiped out the vestiges of such traditional cultures in the educational environment. This explains why our education in general is not contributing to national development: or “poverty alleviation”, to use the language of the World Bank.

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