

Managing Students' Diversity in Ethiopian Public Universities: Practices and Challenges

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the practice and challenges of students' diversity management by Ethiopian public universities. To accomplish its purpose, the researchers employed convergent parallel mixed method design to guide the study. To this end, a stratified random sampling method was used to select eight public universities and 458 participants in the quantitative part of the study. Furthermore, purposive, availability and snowball sampling methods were used to draw participants for the qualitative aspect. While a modified version of campus climate for diversity instrument was used to collect the quantitative data, key informant interview and document review were employed for the qualitative data gathering. Copies of a modified questionnaire, after trial and necessary adjustment in a pilot study, were distributed to 718 participants and 469 of them were filled and returned. Due to incompleteness of data, eleven of the returned copies were rejected making the final number 458. While SPSS (version-23) was used to run the descriptive and inferential statistics for the quantitative analysis, the qualitative data were thematically analyzed manually. In relation to students' diversity management, the study found out that the sampled universities' internal diversity related policy practice ($t (.05, 457) = 9.89, p < .001$), leadership commitment towards diversity promotion ($t (.05, 457) = 7.71, p < .001$), diversity related co-curricular activities ($t (.05, 457) = 2.86, p < .001$) and curricular activities ($t (.05, 457) = 2.86, p < .001$) related to students' diversity management were rated as good. Concerning perception difference among participants, the study found out a significant perception difference in leadership commitment towards diversity among students in different-generation universities, $F (3, 454) = 6.034, p = 0.000$. Moreover, the qualitative finding showed that the absence of well-planned strategies including invitation of influential figures to discuss sensitive diversity-related issues, the deficiency in the curriculum to respond to diversity-related issues, and lack of commitment of university leaders to promote diversity and act immediately during conflicts were found to be gaps in managing students' diversity at public universities. Based on the above findings, it was concluded that the campus climate for diversity in the sampled universities was moderately positive. Finally, it was recommended that due attention be given by respective public universities to diversifying the top leadership, academic staff and student body by putting appropriate strategies in place. Also, it is suggested that universities should work to make the curriculum responsive to diversity and strengthen the co-curricular activities that can promote diversity. Most importantly, further researches are recommended on the diversity of academic staff in public universities and by relating diversity management to other outcome variables as well.

Keywords: Diversity, Campus climate for diversity, Diversity management, Public universities

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Introduction

Early recognition of the term 'managing diversity' emerged in the USA as a result of a movement for equal opportunity rights and affirmative actions (Dobbin, 2009). It was a product of the civil rights movement of the 1950s waged by the African-Americans seeking political equality as well as improved economic and social wellbeing (Klarsfeld, 2010). Equal opportunity rights and affirmative actions were later labeled as 'valuing difference', and this then became known as 'managing diversity' (Vermeulen, 2011) in the early 1990s. Similarly, in the UK, the term 'managing diversity' developed from the equal opportunity systems. Metcalfe (2010) stated that the diversity scene in the UK has also evolved because of migration from Europe and Asia which resulted in a significant rise in the number of Muslims and women moving into the labor market in professional roles. Moreover, researches also showed that globalization had transformed work environments by constituting peoples of diverse background (Barbosa & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007; Pitts & Jarry, 2007) which made diversity management a subject of great interest for organizations (Aigare, Thomas & Koyumdzhieva, 2011). Just like other organizations, because of their diverse student bodies, issues of diversity and diversity management had also been a central concern for Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) especially during the last few decades.

Diversity management (DM) is the process or strategy of promoting the perception, acknowledgement and implementation of diversity in organizations and institutions (Deshwal & Choudhary, 2012). The promotion and implementation of diversity in organizations is to create an environment whereby all individuals can benefit and be successful irrespective of their background differences. In this regard, Lumadi (2008, p.8) also defined DM as "the process of creating and maintaining a positive environment where the differences of all personnel are recognized, understood and valued, so that all can achieve their full potential". From the definitions given above, one can understand that DM is concerned with the development and deployment of mechanisms

that ensure acknowledgement and acceptance of differences between and among individuals or students in academic settings with the goal of being able to capitalize on the differences in order to create sustainable competitive advantages for all. In academic settings, an effective strategy in DM to create a campus environment that is inclusive and respectful of differences makes an assessment of the campus climate for diversity as it helps institutions to understand more about their students' diversity-related experiences (Jaeger & Reverdy, 2013; Worthington, 2013) and creates conditions to optimize engagement and desired outcomes or enhances the campus climate for diversity (Dawson, 2007; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; 1999).

In order to make diversity a potential for students and institutions success, the campus climate for diversity should be enhanced through the application of different strategies of DM. According to researchers, these DM strategies include showing aspiration to enhance the campus climate for diversity (Brown, 2004), recognizing and including diversity in university's mission statement, policies, and plans (Hurtado, 2005; 2007; Lumadi, 2008, Milem *et al.*, 2005), enhancing students' body composition (Antonio, 2001; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hurtado, 2007; Skelly, 2004), and providing various opportunities for students that help them acquire knowledge about and experience diversity (Engberg, 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006) which includes providing diversity-related courses, workshops and seminars that help students to know about diverse others, reduce prejudice and stereotypes, and challenge inequalities and injustices (Banks, 2001; Bell & Griffin, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Engberg, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopian Public Universities, currently it is a reality to find students from diverse backgrounds mainly due to two important reasons - recent relative expansion of higher education which enabled diverse student body to be enrolled in public universities and the admission and

placement policy to higher education institutes (Abebaw, 2014). The ultimate goal of higher education institutions with such a diversified student body is to ensure positive learning outcomes of all students by properly addressing their needs. In support of this, the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2019) stipulates that HEIs are expected to develop and disseminate the culture of respect, tolerance and living together by rendering their service free from any form of discrimination on grounds of race, religion, sex, politics and other. In principle, the above statement in the higher education proclamation implies that higher education institutes are expected to have diversity-related institutional policies, rules and regulations and management strategies to ensure peaceful co-existence of their students.

Despite the fact that they have to play a vital role in addressing the diversity-related problems of the larger society, currently there are indications whereby Ethiopian public universities are not properly addressing the challenges of diversity even in their own context. Some of the challenges that Ethiopian public universities are facing include several ethnic, religious and gender-related conflicts between students which resulted in interruptions of their academic activity, injury, and even loss of lives of some students. For example, summarizing the recent ethnic and other diversity-related conflicts at Ethiopian public universities, *Ethiopia* newspaper on November 11, 2018 reported that there were clashes between Tigray and Oromo students at Addis Ababa University (AAU) in 2009 which caused injuries to several students. Three students were killed and more than forty were injured due to an ethnic based clash between Amhara and Oromo students at Assosa University in 2017; one student was killed and several injured at Adigrat University in November 2017 due to ethnic based clash among students; two students were killed at Wollega University in December 2017; several were injured and blocks of the university put on fire due to clashes between Amhara and Tigray students at Woldia University in November 2017; and seven were injured due to the clash between Oromo and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's students at Wachemo University in January 2018.

Some local studies indicated that the causes of ethnic conflict are generally related to ethnic polarization, political rivalry and historical relationship among ethnic groups (Abebaw, 2013a, 2013b). Furthermore, playing religious songs and carrying out religious practices such as group prayers by some students created discomfort to others in the same dormitories causing religious conflicts (Arega & Mulugeta, 2017). More importantly, it is argued that public universities of Ethiopia do not have clear plan and strategy for managing their students' diversity and the measures they take to mitigate diversity-related problems such as tensions and conflicts have not been effective and efficient and would thus need further investigation (Abebaw, 2014; Abebaw & Tilahun; 2007; Hailemariam, 2016). Therefore, this study is intended to assess the DM practices and the challenges faced by Ethiopian public universities.

The study was guided by the following basic questions:

- What are the practices of Ethiopian public universities in managing their students' diversity?
- What challenges are faced by Ethiopian public universities in managing their students' diversity?
- Are there perception differences among participants with different background on the students' diversity management practice of Ethiopian public universities?

Significances of the Study

This study will have significance in reflecting students' views on efforts made by public universities and existing gaps with regard to managing their students' diversity. It will also inform policy makers the challenges of diversity faced by the public universities. For researchers, it can be used as a reference material and suggest other exploration areas related to diversity.

Definition of Key Terms

Diversity - A collection of individual attributes (nationality, language, ethnicity, religion, color, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status and gender) that makes all human beings unique and different from each other (Deshwal & Chaudry, 2012).

Campus Climate for Diversity - A part of institutional context that includes community members' attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

Diversity Management - The process or strategy of promoting the perception, acknowledgement and implementation of diversity in organizations and institutions (Deshwal & Chaudry, 2012).

Higher Education – It is, in the Ethiopian context, education offered to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in degree programs (FDRE, 2009).

Diversity Management Strategies – Different activities employed to manage students' diversity which include but not limited to policies, leadership commitment towards diversity, co-curricular activities, and curricular activities.

Public Universities – Universities under the Ministry of Education and they exclude others which are under different ministries or regions/city administrations (FDRE, 2009).

Generation of a University – A conventional classification of Ethiopian public universities based on their year of establishment.

Review of Related Literature

Embedded in the call of higher education is the idea that colleges and universities have the responsibility of shaping and graduating students with the capacities and skills needed to be tolerant and responsible in a diverse democracy (Pillay, 2010) by properly addressing the issues of tolerance, inclusion, access and structural inequities (Naidoo, 2015). According to Hurtado, Matthew, and Mark (2003) this is theoretically possible by exposing and challenging students to new ways of thinking about themselves and the society in which they live. The mechanism for challenging students thinking is by creating opportunities for them to interact with diverse peers inside the classroom through discussion, dialogue and role taking. Researchers hypothesized that a curriculum that exposes students to knowledge about race and ethnicity in classrooms that are ethnically and racially diverse, and that provides students with opportunities for meaningful interaction with diverse peers produces a learning environment that fosters active thinking (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Apart from curricular activities, other DM strategies include showing aspiration to enhance the campus climate for diversity (Brown, 2004), recognizing and including diversity in university mission statement, policies, and plans (Hurtado, 2005; 2007; Lumadi, 2008, Milem *et al.*, 2005), enhancing of students' body composition (Antonio, 2001; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hurtado, 2007; Skelly, 2004), and providing various opportunities for students that help them acquire knowledge about and experience diversity (Engberg, 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006) which include providing diversity related courses, workshops, and seminars that help students to know about diverse others, reduce prejudice and stereotypes, and challenge inequalities and injustices (Banks, 2001; Bell & Griffin, 1997; Bennett, 1999; Engberg, 2004).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Campus Climate for Diversity

Campus climate for diversity refers to communities' real or perceived observations of their campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions (Hurtado *et al.*, 2008) or attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity (Hurtado *et al.*, 1999; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). In other words, it is a framework that provides a way to look at the campus climate to assess 1) how it supports diverse students and 2) whether it creates the type of structures, beliefs, and behaviors that produce the positive effect of diversity on learning for all students (Hurtado *et al.*, 1999). Embedded in the external contexts, government/policy and socio-historical practices, the institutional context of the framework comprises institutional-level and individual level dimensions. According to Milem *et al.* (2005), while the institutional level dimension includes the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion; its compositional diversity of students faculty and staff; and organizational structures (institutional policies, curriculum, processes, the individual level of the climate includes the psychological perceptions of individuals, their attitude towards the campus for diversity, and the behavioral dimension that encompasses individual actions and intergroup contact experiences.

The compositional dimension also known as structural diversity refers to the numerical representation of individuals from diverse social identities among students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Hurtado *et al.*, 1999). The more balanced representation of a diverse set of individuals within a college or university can lead to greater opportunities for interactions across difference for all (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa) and is also positively related to satisfaction with the college experience in terms of racial/ethnic diversity as well as ethnic identity development (Hurtado *et al.*, 2012). As can be understood from the concept, structural diversity and changes toward diversification can be counted through enrollment

of diverse students. However, according to Hurtado *et al.* (2008), the perception of the existence of diversity is seen differently by various populations on campus, and for that the extent of structural diversity of a campus should be understood by assessing how diverse the campus feels.

The organizational dimension of the campus climate identifies structures and processes that embed group-based privilege and oppression or confers resources that often go unquestioned, such as curriculum and other institutional practices and policies (Milem *et al.*, 2005). One of the most consistent empirical findings in reviews of many studies is that diversity in the curriculum has the transformative capacity to enlighten and change the perspectives of individuals, especially in the reduction of prejudice (Denson, 2009 as cited in Hurtado *et al.*, 2012; Engberg, 2004; Engberg *et al.*, 2007). Institutional policies and processes can be seen in university policies, programs and services and have the potential to create more equitable conditions and outcomes for diverse students and can be assessed for equity and diversity (Hurtado *et al.*, 2012). Institutional commitment to diversity, or lack thereof, is also readily identified as an aspect of the organizational dimension of the climate. Such a commitment must be articulated in an institutional mission and may be well-regarded by students, in particular through transparency and the development of trust (Pepper *et al.*, 2010, as cited in Hurtado *et al.*, 2012). Theory and research on or around the organizational dimension of the climate generally approaches the topic from three angles: that of the broader context for institutional policies and practices, specific policies or practices that structure the environment, and processes to improve the climate for diversity on an organizational level (Hurtado *et al.*, 2012).

On the other hand, the first aspect of the individual level dimension of the campus climate for diversity, behavioral dimension, refers to the context, frequency, and quality of interactions on campus between social identity groups and their members (Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado *et al.*, 2008). Categorizing interactions into formal and informal helps educators to

understand those interactions they may have control over, as opposed to chance encounters. According to Hurtado (2005), formal interactions are often referred to as campus-facilitated interactions that may occur in the classroom or co-curricular settings and are the result of intentional educational practice and informal interactions occur in the everyday interactions between individuals outside of campus-designed educational activities. Interaction with faculty is another behavior that is associated with diverse student interactions and impacts student perceptions of the campus climate and subsequent outcomes (Cole, 2007; Cress, 2008 as cited in Hurtado *et al.*, 2012).

Another aspect of the individual level dimension of the campus climate for diversity, the psychological dimension, involves individuals' perceptions of the environment, views of intergroup relations, and perceptions of discrimination or racial/ethnic conflict within the institutional context (Hurtado *et al.*, 1998, 1999); feelings of being somehow singled out because of their background (Nora & Cabrera, 1996); or perceptions of institutional support/commitment related to diversity (Hurtado *et al.*, 2008). Climate research based on the psychological dimension remains vital to understanding the experiences of multiple social identity groups in order to improve the conditions for success of diverse faculty, students, and staff. For example, researchers like Hurtado *et al.* (2008) argue that monitoring of the psychological dimension of campus climate is important for higher education administrators as a hostile campus impacts all students negatively and is detrimental to student outcomes, particularly to students of color.

Methodology

Research Design

The specific design employed in this study was convergent parallel mixed method design. According to Creswell, in convergent parallel research design, the investigator typically collects both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in the

interpretation of the overall results. There are at least two main reasons for selecting the specific design. The first one was mainly related to the advice of prominent researchers in the field to apply this particular design. For example, Hurtado and Guillermo-Wann (2013) suggested that the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously can provide a more nuance picture of the campus climate for diversity and diversity management practices in the 21st century. Also, as the sample universities for this study are located far from each other located in all directions, the collection of both types of data was assumed to save time and energy as was argued by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009). Above all, the research questions stated require both kinds of data to be addressed. While the first research question requires qualitative data to substantiate the findings of the quantitative data, the second question will entirely be answered using qualitative data.

Samples and Sampling Techniques

Primary data for this research were collected from students, teachers and deans of students of Ethiopian public universities. For this research a combination of different probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select appropriate number of samples. These included cluster, simple random and multi-stage sampling of probability samplings and purposive, availability and snowball samplings of the non-probability sampling technique. To be specific, sample universities were selected using cluster sampling after classifying public universities into four based on their years of establishments usually called 'generational classifications of Ethiopian public universities'. Accordingly, eight universities, two from each of the four generations were selected using simple random sampling. The selected universities were Haramaya and Hawassa, Jigjiga and Dire Dawa, Debre Tabor and Woldia, and Salale and Raya from the first, second, third, and fourth generations respectively. The number of student participants in the quantitative study was also determined using a formula to be 398. These participants were selected using multi stage sampling - by selecting four colleges from the sample universities and using simple random sampling to select the final

participants from each college. On the other hand, for the qualitative study, purposive and availability sampling techniques were used to select eight participants each from students, teachers and deans of students. As deans of students are teachers temporarily assigned to the position, the number of respondents for the qualitative study was eight students and sixteen teachers which makes a total of twenty-four participants.

Data Gathering Tools

Questionnaire was the main tool used to collect quantitative data from sampled students in the selected public universities. The questionnaire was developed based on the Diverse Learning Environment instrument prepared and used by Hurtado *et al.* (2012). As the original instrument was developed in the US, it was modified to fit the Ethiopian context by replacing race with ethnicity and religion, adding extra items when needed and including necessary demographic variables to show the background characteristics of respondents during analysis. The resulting questionnaire, apart from its introductory part, had four other parts with a total of 41 items designed to measure the DM practice of the sample universities. Specifically, items 7, 6, 18, and 10 were to measure the institutional policy for managing diversity, the universities' top leadership commitment for promoting diversity, curricular activities, and co-curricular practices to manage students' diversity. The developed questionnaire was made to measure responses using five-point Likert scale. The values for the scale were: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. Before the actual dissemination for data collection, it was piloted at Jigjiga University by incorporating 41 respondents who were not included in the main study and the validity and reliability measures were calculated for the whole instrument in general and for each dimension in particular. The analysis of the pilot study indicated that the dimensions of the questionnaire had items with good internal consistency as the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient obtained ranged from 0.73 to 0.91. The overall Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was 0.95. On the other hand, in-depth interviews and

consultation of documents were used to gather qualitative data. In-depth interview guides were used to stimulate discussions and understand participants' views on items on the questionnaire that needed detailed explanation and to explore the challenges of Ethiopian public universities in managing their students' diversity. Relevant document reviews were also made to add depth to the quantitative data. To this end, availability, contents and applicability of documents such as or related to strategic plans, senate legislations and student code of conduct were reviewed as they are related with the objective of this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were coded, entered into a computer and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS – version 23) which can run all basic descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as measures of frequency, percentages, means, standard deviations and inferential statistics such as independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation and multiple regressions were employed. The mean value of three ($M=3$) was used to indicate agreement of the respondents and scores below three were considered as indicators of disagreement to the statement. Also, for the t-test and ANOVA, results were interpreted as significant when the p value was less than 0.5 ($p < 0.5$). On the other hand, the qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews and pertinent document reviews were analyzed using thematic approach. In doing so, the qualitative data were systematically transcribed and translated (for the interviews conducted in Amharic), categorized, reduced and organized thematically to answer the basic questions of the study.

Results

In order to gather the necessary data for the quantitative study, 718 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the sample universities. More specifically, 231, 197, 181, and 109 copies were distributed respectively to the first, second, third, and fourth generation universities.

Of these, 469 (65.3%) were filled in and returned from all the universities. Out the 469 copies returned, eleven from the first-generation universities were made void as many dimensions of the questionnaires were not properly completed thus making the total valid copies 458. Compared to the required sample of 398 copies, a larger number was secured during data collection.

Background Characteristics of Study Participants

Regarding the background characteristics of the 458 respondents who participated in the quantitative study, 196 (42.8%) were females while 262 (57.2%) were males. In terms of ethnicity, they were from eighteen ethnic groups. Majority of them (324 or 70.7%) were from Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups while the remaining 134 (29.3) were from the remaining sixteen ethnic groups. Religion wise, 128 (27.9%) were Muslims and 239 (52.2%) were Orthodox Christians. The rest, 91 (19.9%) were from Catholic, Protestant and Wakefeta religions. When it comes to participants in the qualitative study, 75% were males of whom 62.5% were from Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. Out of the sixteen teachers who participated in the qualitative study, thirteen (81.3%) held a Masters degree while the remaining three (18.7%) had a PhD degree. In terms of academic rank, eleven (68.8 %) were assistant professors while five (31.2 %) were lecturers. Professional experience wise, ten had a teaching experience of five to ten years while the remaining six had over ten years of experience.

Students' Diversity Management Practice at Ethiopian Public Universities

It was mentioned that one aspect of DM by public universities was having in place and implementing diversity-related institutional policies. It was also mentioned that these policies mainly referred to senate legislations, strategic plans and student code of conduct. Here, it should be mentioned that the availability of the policies by itself cannot be taken as an end but very important is its proper implementation. According to

Tarasco (2012), failure of best plans is mainly related to poor implementation. One way of facilitating proper implementation of policies and plans is attributed to communicating them with the concerned parties and making them accountable in cases of failures to implement.

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on diversity-related policies

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
The university's mission specifically refers to the value of having a diversified student body.	3.04	1.19
Documents on student code of conduct are distributed to all students when they join the university.	3.59	1.16
Discrimination against any student on the basis of ethnicity is not allowed in the university	3.52	1.30
Discrimination against any student on the basis of religion is not allowed in the university.	3.55	1.30
The University has clear procedures for anyone to report prejudiced or discriminatory experiences related to ethnic and religious issues.	3.19	1.28
The university has clear disciplinary procedures to address issues of harassment or discrimination related to ethnic and religious issues.	3.25	1.31
The university leadership immediately takes action if conflict arises due to ethnic or religious issues.	2.94	1.42

In the sample universities of this study, as can be noted from Table 1 above, respondents reported that there were diversity-related policies and that the policies contained important issues that could promote diversity. For example, students agreed that documents on student code of conduct were distributed to them when they joined the universities ($M=3.59$, $SD= 1.16$) and that the code of conduct prohibited discrimination on the basis of ethnicity ($M=3.52$, $SD= 1.30$) and religion ($M=3.55$, $SD= 1.30$). The participants also agreed that there were clear procedures in their respective universities for students to report discrimination due to ethnic and religious differences ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.28$) and if a case is reported, the procedures would be applied to address the issue ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.31$). However, as shown in the table, students

did not seem to be happy about actions taken by the leaders of the universities during conflicts among students over ethnic and religious issues ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.42$).

An attempt was made to understand the inclusion of diversity in the mission statement of the sampled universities through document analysis and interviews with deans of students. Three of the sample universities had clearly posted their missions, visions, and core values on their campuses in places where it is visible to the university community and to anyone visiting the universities. However, there were no indications of having diversity issues included in their mission statements. The interviews held with the deans of students also are in agreement with the absence of the issues in the broader sense.

Our university mission statement does not exactly indicate or mention about diversity. But diversity is one of the core values of our university and is included in our strategic plan. (Dean of Students, #2, November, 2019)

The researcher had the opportunity to look at the strategic plan of that university. It clearly indicates the vision, mission and core values of the university and section 5.3 of the plan states the following:

Diversity: We must embrace and promote diversity in our policy and practice to prepare our learners and staffs to live and work in an increasingly diverse society (pp. 28);

However, despite the presence of diversity issue in the core values of the sample universities, interview with the deans of students indicates that it was not put in action or that the emphasis given to it was minimal. One of the student deans said the following on this issue:

We are trying to accommodate diversity in principle, not in practice. Let alone student diversity issues, the status of diversity of the academic staff itself is not something that we are really proud of. Regrettably, in our university, apart from putting the

issue as a core value, we did not realize it in terms of plans, i.e., we are doing nothing practically. Had we acted properly, we wouldn't have faced this much problem in that regard (Dean of Students, #6, February, 2020).

Similarly, the data from document review on the availability and contents of policies related to students' diversity management also confirm that student's code of conduct, which is taken from the university's legislation and further developed, is prepared and distributed to students when they join universities. In relation to this, one of the Deans of Students said the following:

When freshmen join our university, there is an orientation session organized to make them aware of their university and the existing rules and regulations. On this occasion, the office of Directorate for Students' Service makes clear what is expected of each student when they live together and distributes to them documents on student code of conduct (Dean of Students, #2, November, 2019).

Most of the interviewees similarly agreed that orientation sessions are prepared for freshmen. However, more than half did not agree that documents on code of conduct were distributed to newly joining students.

There was an orientation session prepared for us when we joined this university. The main message by then were mainly about the departments that we could join, expected level of performance to pass a semester and an academic year and, to some extent, what is expected of us as university students, particularly in relation to the rules and regulations of the university. To tell the truth, the university did not distribute materials on code of conduct to us or I did not get any (Student, #6, February, 2020).

An attempt was made to gather documents on student code of conduct prepared by each sample university and it was possible to get one each from three universities. Although the rest also said that they had such documents, the researcher could not get the documents. To make the analysis further clear, below are the contents of the codes of conduct of the three universities, Jigjiga, Dire Dawa, and Salale University.

Student code of conduct of Jigjiga University, in its forward, states that the manual is prepared primarily to teach students the norms of living together in an atmosphere of care and concern for one another rather than to penalize them. The contents of the manual also state that the document contains important information about the consequences of disrespect for others, dishonesty, disobedience of rules and regulations of service giving sections, and offense against the university's justice system, and disciplinary actions and procedures, determination of sanctions, appeal and its proceedings and miscellaneous issues. Related with the very concern of this study, for example, Article 10, Sub-article 1 of the student code of conduct of Jigjiga University (JJU, 2018) states that:

Verbally abusing, slandering, threatening, or harassing a student intentionally or recklessly will result in a sanction of warning and a community service of not less than thirty (30) hours (pp. 16).

Similarly, Article 11 in its section of 'Disdaining and mockery of religion, ethnicity, nationality, languages, etc.'" which has four sub articles states the following:

- (1) Defiling religions of others: This includes but is not limited to abusing, burning and/or defacing holy books, scriptures, religious symbols, preventing the solmization of, or disturbing scoffing at an authorized religious ceremony, or office, profaning a place, image or object used from religious ceremonies will result in an expulsion from the university (pp. 20);

- (2) Abusing religions, languages, cultures, ethnicity, etc. of others verbally or in writing will have a sanction of a suspension from the university for not less than one (1) year (pp. 20);
- (3) Offensive comments with intents to harm others which include but not limited to ethnic slur, derogatory comments about ethnicity, language, tradition, nationality, religion, etc. will result in a sanction of suspension from the university for not less than one (1) year (pp. 20); and
- (4) Vandalism or graffiti that is hate-motivated or conveys an ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, etc. hatred or otherwise hateful message will result in a sanction of suspension for not less than one (1) year.

Article 87 of the student code of conduct, on the other hand, states how to file a complaint by students.

A complaint should be in writing and submitted as soon as possible after the event has taken place preferably within 7 working days but not more than 30 workdays after the incident has taken place. However, the dean of students or any higher official of the university may launch an investigation into a serious violation of the code of conduct discovered later regardless of when the incident occurred (pp. 104).

Article 89 of the student code of conduct states the composition and jurisdiction of the Student Disciplinary Advisory Committee (SDAC) which is mainly responsible for looking over disciplinary problems and putting sanctions or recommending to the top leadership the type of action to be take when it is beyond its jurisdiction. The article reads as:

The SDAC is a committee that investigates alleged violations of the student code of conduct, which would not normally lead to suspension or expulsion, and imposes sanctions according to the provisions given in the student code of conduct. The committee shall refer serious violations of the code of conduct that it believes

will lead to suspension or expulsion to the Student Disciplinary Hearing Committee (SDHC). The committee reserves the right to reject a complaint where it feels that the complaint is out of the scope of code of conduct or when it feels that the complaint is trivial (pp. 104-05).

Student code of conduct of the three universities suggests that an emphasis was there for students diversity in a way that students are not allowed to discriminate, abuse or make any physical harm to any other students due to ethnicity or religion. A broader look at the issue in the sample universities also suggests that all the sample universities' senate legislation gives enough emphasis to students' diversity on a separate chapter which they named it as "Student Affairs". For example, the Senate Legislation of Haramaya University, in Chapter Nine Article 151, states the following:

- 151.5. Students admitted to the University are expected to act honourably based on integrity, common sense, and respect for the law of the land and public morality at all times, both on and off campus settings. They assume an obligation to behave in a manner compatible with the University's function as an educational institution (pp. 218).

- 151.8. When, however, a student abuses his academic freedom, he may be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct institution (pp. 219).

In general, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative data above indicate that the sample universities have policies and plans that can address diversity related issues of their students though their implementation is not given much attention. This may be due to the lack of concern by the universities' top administrators. Norris (2000) and Tarasco (2012) state that no plan can be implemented successfully

without the strong support and commitment of higher officials of an institution.

Perception Difference of Respondents on Diversity-Related Policies

An attempt was made to see if there is a difference in perception among respondents on diversity-related policies, particularly on the basis of students' demographic backgrounds (sex, ethnicity, and religion).

Table 2: Independent sample t-test of respondents on diversity-related policies

Group Statistics						Independent sample t-test		
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Diversity related policies	Female	196	3.39	.816	.058	-.115	456	.908
	Male	262	3.40	.890	.055			

To check the impact of gender difference on perception diversity related policies, a t-test was used. As can be seen from Table 2 above, no statistically significant mean difference between sample population was observed ($p=0.908$). This implies that there was no statistically significant perception difference between male and female students about availability and implementation of diversity related policies.

As can also be seen from Table 2 above, no statistically significant perception difference regarding diversity-related policies was observed by students of different ethnic groups ($F(3, 454) = 0.600, p=0.615$), religion ($F(3, 454) = 0.728, p=0.536$), and generation of universities ($F(3, 454) = 2.070, p=0.103$).

Top Leadership Commitment to Promote Students' Diversity at the Sample Universities

For promotion of diversity at universities, the literature strongly argues that top leaders' commitment in particular and institutional commitment in general are very crucial. As can be noted from Table 3 below, respondents almost strongly agree that a welcome ceremony/an orientation session was organized for freshmen when they joined their university (M=3.91, SD= 1.23). The university leadership also emphasizes about the value of having ethnically (M=3.37, SD= 1.27) and religiously (M=3.21, SD= 1.25) diverse student body when they meet their students at different occasions or meetings.

Table 3: Mean ratings of the university's top leadership commitment to promote students' diversity

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
A welcome ceremony or orientation session was organized for first year students when they joined the university.	3.91	1.23
The University leadership, at different occasions or meetings, emphasizes the importance of having ethnically diverse student body.	3.37	1.27
The University leadership, at different occasions or meetings, emphasizes the importance of having religiously diverse student body.	3.21	1.25
The University leadership is committed to creating a campus environment that welcomes all students of different ethnic background.	3.36	1.25
The University leadership is committed to creating a campus environment that welcomes all students of different religious background.	3.29	1.29
The University leadership promotes the understanding of ethnic differences.	3.20	1.31
The University leadership promotes the understanding of religious differences.	3.09	1.29

Again, as can be noted from Table 3 above, the university leadership is committed to creating a campus environment that welcomes students from different ethnic ($M=3.36$, $SD= 1.25$) and religious background ($M=3.29$, $SD= 1.29$). Moreover, the students' responses also show that they agree with the fact that their university leadership promotes the understanding of ethnic ($M=3.20$, $SD= 1.31$) and religious ($M=3.09$, $SD= 1.29$) differences so as to create an understanding among students.

Attempt was also made to substantiate the findings of the quantitative data using qualitative data from students and deans of students through interview. For example, though students and deans of students have different understandings of the messages passed during the freshmen welcome ceremony or an orientation session. Accordingly, the qualitative data indicates that they agree to the presence of the mentioned program. One of the participant students said:

Two years ago, when I first joined this university, there was an orientation session organized for the freshmen in which I took part. I can't deny the fact that there were some messages on what is expected of students when living together on campus. But most of the focus was on academic issues like minimum requirement to pass a semester, the number of departments in each college and awards for best achieving senior students in general and female students in particular to motivate them for the following semester. I really do not think that the issue of diversity was given much focus though there was a high tension at public universities of conflict between students because of diversity and mainly due to ethnic difference. (Student, #6, February, 2020)

Dean of students from the same university also admitted the presence of orientation session but believed that the messages passed on diversity and tolerance were enough as a starting point which could be further developed after students got used to their campuses:

In our university, time is allotted for student service directorate to briefly discuss the student code of conduct which clearly informs them to live harmoniously and refrain from wrong doings. Given the time allocated for the program, I think the input is enough though I definitely believe that there should be other sessions on this issue. (Dean of Students, #5, November, 2019)

On the other hand, although the quantitative data show that efforts of the university leaders' in promoting diversity and fostering tolerance among students of different ethnic and religious background are appreciated, results of the qualitative data do not agree with this. Both students and deans of students claim that university leaders meet students only during holidays and in some circumstances such as occurrence of serious conflicts but not in a regularly planned manner. For example, a student interviewee said the following:

Our university leaders are personally sociable and easy to approach. They try to discuss different issues with the whole student body in general and student union members in particular when there are serious instances such as conflicts. (Dean of Students, #3, December, 2019)

Similarly, a dean of students from another university said:

Unless it is a holiday or an event of a serious conflict, the university top leaders do not intentionally gather students and discuss with them different issues including diversity. I know they have very frequent contact with the student union. I even doubt if diversity is their main concern in the discussions with members of the student union. (Dean of Students, #4, December, 2019)

Another point of disparity between the quantitative and qualitative data is on the commitment of the top leadership in creating tolerance among

students of different ethnic and religious groups. As the qualitative findings revealed, there were no formal sessions between the universities' top leaders and students to discuss the issue of student diversity.

Perception Differences of Respondents on Leadership Commitment towards Diversity

An attempt was made to see if there is a difference in perception by respondents on leadership commitment towards diversity.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test on leadership commitment

Group Statistics						Independent sample t-test		
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Leadership commitment towards diversity	Female	196	3.3980	.88176	.06298	.955	456	.340
	Male	262	3.3108	1.02475	.06331			

As can be seen from Table 4 above, the result from the t-test showed that there was no statistically significant mean difference between males and females in terms of their perception ($p=0.379$). with regard to leadership commitment towards diversity.

An ANOVA test revealed a statistically significant difference among students of different generation universities on their perception of leadership commitment towards diversity ($F 3, 454 = 6.034, p=0.000$). The result of the post hoc analysis revealed that differences exist between second and third generation universities and second and fourth generation universities. On the other hand, there was no significant difference observed on leadership commitment towards diversity among

students of different ethnicity $F(3, 454) = 0.725, p = 0.537$ and religion $F(3, 454) = 2.011, p = 0.112$).

Co-curricular Practices Related with Students' Diversity at the Sample Universities

The third strategy that can be used to manage students' diversity is involving students in different co-curricular activities. According to Engberg (2004) and Umbach and Kuh (2006), promoting and managing students' diversity in higher education can be related to providing various opportunities for students that help them acquire knowledge about and experience diversity. These co-curricular activities, in Ethiopian context, can range from organizing life skill training for freshman students and inviting different guests that may include religious and cultural leaders to encouraging students to participate in different club activities.

As can be seen from Table 5 below, data from the quantitative study showed that life skill sessions which acknowledged and promoted diversity of students had been prepared for students when they joined the university ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.30$). However, respondents moderately agreed on the invitation of guest speakers from different ethnic groups lecturing on ethnic ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.29$) and religious ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.25$) diversity.

Table 5: Mean ratings of respondents on practice of co-curricular activities to promote students' diversity (n= 458)

Items	Mean	SD
I had attended the life skill trainings that contained issues of ethnicity and religion when I first joined this university.	3.45	1.30
At this university, I had attended themed events and activities organized to promote understanding of students from different backgrounds.	3.44	1.23
I had attended a session whereby invited guest speakers from different ethnic groups gave lecture on ethnic diversity awareness.	3.17	1.29
I had attended a session whereby invited guest speakers from different religious groups gave lecture on diversity awareness regarding religion.	2.99	1.25
I had participated in ethnic/cultural festivals organized by this university.	3.04	1.27
I had watched student-organized performances on ethnic and religious issues.	2.99	1.22
In this university, there are associations and clubs that appeal to students' varied interests.	3.12	1.31
I participate in club activities.	2.90	1.26
Students from different ethnic backgrounds hold positions in student union.	3.09	1.30
Students from different religious backgrounds hold positions in student union.	3.00	1.36

As can be understood from the table above, student participation in ethnic or cultural festivals organized by their university was moderate (M=3.04, SD=1.27). Further, although study participants agreed on the presence of different clubs that appeal to students' varied interest (M=, 3.12 SD=1.31), their participation was minimal (M=2.90, SD=1.26). Regarding the composition of elected members to the student union in their university, students had moderate perception that they were from different ethnic (M=3.09, SD=1.30) and religious (M=3.00, SD=1.36) background. In general, the use of different co-curricular activities by the sample universities to manage students' diversity was rated as moderate.

Relevant qualitative data obtained from students and deans of students on diversity management showed conformity with the result of the quantitative data. For example, a student said the following on the presence and contents of the life skill training he and his colleagues attended three years ago:

There was a life skill training session that lasted for two days. Informative topics were discussed including how to live with friends from different cultures and how to live in the campus peacefully while attaining the main objective of being here, learning. I think that training was very helpful for most students to gain general knowledge of campus life. (Student, #5, November, 2019)

Most of the deans of students also agreed that the session was very helpful and crucial to equip students psychologically and introduce them to the college life waiting ahead.

Actually the life skill training session was organized by the Guidance and Counseling Directorate and most of the trainers were from the Department of psychology. As far as the information I have on the session is concerned, the training was very helpful for students to get exposure to the type of life awaiting them, advice on how to be successful in their training, and psychological guidance pertaining to their life on campus. To materialize peaceful co-existence on campuses, discussions on diversity and respect for differences including, but not limited to, differences in ethnicity and religion are important. (Dean of Students, #5, November, 2019)

The quantitative data also showed that there were different sessions whereby guest speakers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds were invited and held discussions with students to raise awareness on the importance of having a diversified student body on campuses in particular, and in the country in general. The qualitative data gathered

supported this finding in most cases even though the purposes of the sessions were sometimes found to be different. For example, two deans of students said the following:

We invited many peace activists, intellectuals from the region, and even famous artists to make a speech for our students about peace, diversity and its beauty. I can name some of them. Obang Metho, the peace activist from Gambella known for his motto of “Humanity First, Somali professors who taught and served in high positions abroad and here in this country and artists like Solomon came to our university and discussed with our students the issue of diversity and peace. The sessions were very interesting and very informative. I have a feeling that the relative peace that we have had during such turbulent periods of conflicts in many other public universities was the result of these meetings. As I told you, since we have a Diversity Directorate in this university, each of the sessions was planned. (Dean of Students, #2, November, 2019)

Though not frequently, we had invited local leaders including leaders from different religions to discuss the issue of peace with students once this year. I also remember there was a guest speaker from abroad last year. In general, although it was not so much organized and frequent, the effort was there. (Dean of Students, #3, December, 2019)

On the other hand, however, another dean of students admitted the absence of such sessions in his university. His words were:

I certainly believe that such sessions are of paramount importance in promoting diversity. Unfortunately, as to my best knowledge, we did not have such sessions planned and organized by the university. Actually, as I am the Director of Student Service, it was supposed to have been the plan of my office, if there were any. But, I cannot deny the fact that the *Aba*

Gedas, the local community elders, and religious leaders do participate in welcoming our students at the beginning of the year and even participate in the freshmen welcoming ceremony. (Dean of Students, #1, November, 2019)

As was argued in the background and literature session, these types of sessions have to be well planned and targeted to raise students' awareness on diversity issues and should not necessarily be done when there erupt problems of diversity including conflicts among students. But in most cases, platforms were organized to calm students down after conflicts occurred between different ethnic groups. Pertinent to this, two other deans of students said the following:

Honestly speaking, we didn't do much on this issue through purposeful planning. But, after the very terrible and regrettable conflict that occurred between the Amhara and Oromo students and cost us precious lives of two of our students, some students wanted to leave the campus claiming that they did not feel secured. Then we invited local and religious leaders to talk to students and that helped us a lot. Personally, I always felt the importance of such platforms but specifically after that incident, I developed the need and strong initiation to regularly have such sessions in the future. (Dean of Students, #4, December, 2019)

The sessions were not as such planned before the violent conflict that occurred between students and cost the lives of two of our students, injured many, resulted in expulsion of 27 of them and official closure of the university for more than three weeks. Following the event, many students wanted to leave the campus but were convinced to stay with the effort of the local community and religious leaders. After that, we invited guests such as Professor Fikre Tolossa, Ambassador Mrs Mulu Solomon, Mohammed Kope and others to talk about peace, diversity and federalism. We also had *ustazs* (Islamic Teachers) and religious leaders from Christianity to speak on and discuss the issue of

peace and peaceful coexistence with our students. (Dean of Students, #6, February 2020)

Students also had a similar view on the issue. For example, one of the interviewees said the following:

I didn't experience such sessions before this years' conflict between the Amhara and Oromo students. But after the university was reopened, some guests mainly community and religious leaders were invited to talk to us about peace. It is working, I think. However, the university's effort in this regard is very poor. I don't know if you are someone from this city, the people are very sociable, peaceful and very generous. They don't really care about your ethnicity or religion. If you approach them, they will treat you as a family and they are known for this behavior throughout the country. They are the huge resources that our university failed to use to create peace (Student, #6, February, 2020).

Other co-curricular activities that could have helped better to acknowledge and promote student diversity are involvement of students in different cultural events and other festivals geared towards strengthening students' unity and coexistence. The Ethiopian public universities previous trend indicated these festivals included sports competitions, different cultural performances, Irrecha (thanks giving festival of the Oromo ethnic group mainly celebrated at the beginning of a new year), the celebration of Nations and Nationalities day, the day the current constitution of the country was enacted, December 6/7 each year and many more. The results of qualitative data gathered from both students and deans of students, however, showed that the celebration of such festivals was weakened and even in some cases banned by university leaders as the platforms were becoming sources of conflicts for students. One of the students said:

Every year there is a football competition, which we call GC (graduating students cup), held between graduating classes of different departments. I am a graduating class student but since it was banned by the university officials starting from last year claiming that students are getting into conflict for simple issues, I have no chance to enjoy that competition and it is really very sad. Nations' and Nationalities' Day was also banned for the same reason. We didn't celebrate it this year as our campus was not peaceful by then. Actually, it was banned two years ago (Student, #4, December, 2019).

A student dean who shared the same opinion said the following in a very sad tone:

We used to have a sports competition, mainly football, among different batches of students to strengthen their unity. We also used to celebrate the Nations' and Nationalities' Day in a colorful way and students participated in it by preparing foods and wearing clothes of different cultural and ethnic groups. In our campus even, there is a roundabout in front of the main gate named the Nations and Nationalities Square. But these days as they became a source of conflicts, the university administration banned the celebration of such festivals. Students may say that music from their ethnic group was not played and may simply disturb the event getting into conflict with others. In football competitions, you don't know when and how students start fighting. You think that they are from different batches but you may see conflicts between students based on ethnicity. It is really very sad, and that is the reason for the university to ban such competitions and festivals. (Dean of Students, #3, December, 2019)

In general, sports competitions, religious and cultural festivals and other events that bind students together and create a sense of unity are diminishing from time to time.

Another finding of the qualitative study regarding co-curricular activities pertains to the involvement of students in club activities and student union, an association which is legally recognized by the senate legislation of all the sample universities and is assumed to be the voice of the student community. For example, Chapter 30, Article 272 and Sub-article 1 of the Senate Legislation of Dire Dawa University (Dire Dawa, 2019, p. 242) states:

As students constitute a vital component of the University community, they shall be provided with the means and forums to exercise self-governance and enjoy democratic participation in the affairs of the university, particularly by forming students' organizations to promote academic pursuits and personal development.

Concerning students' organizations, the same legislation in its Article 273, Sub-article 6 states the following:

The Director of Students' Services and Affairs shall devise a mechanism for the organization of the Student Union in a manner conducive for a democratic representation of students and inclusive of all student interest groups (p. 243).

In line with the legislation provisions, an attempt was made to explore the presence of varied clubs that students can participate in and more importantly the presence and representation of diverse background students in the Union, the main association of students. Concerning the involvement of students in clubs, in agreement with the quantitative findings, with the exception two interviewee students, the rest had no formal involvement in clubs. Asked what the main reasons were, a student said the following:

I had no such experience when I was at elementary and secondary schools. Besides, after I joined this university, I found academic activities to be time taking and stressful. So I thought that participating in clubs would consume my time and for that I had no involvement in such activities. (Student, #5, November, 2019)

With regard to clubs and associations that work mainly on diversity issues, another student said the following:

In our university, in addition to the various clubs, we do have peace forum and student union that work directly on the wellbeing of the student community. It is known that, even by legislation, student union is an association of students responsible for every matter concerning students and participates in student discipline committee and has a representation in the senate. On the other hand, peace forum, being responsible directly to the president of the university, works on issues related to peace including creating awareness about peace, holding discussions with students on different issues including diversity and handling minor incidents between students before they grow to major conflicts. (Dean of Students, #2, November, 2019)

Although these two student associations are very critical in promoting students' diversity, interviewees further aired the fact that there are some issues in representations of different students in such associations, mainly student union and the peace forum. A student dean said:

One of the findings of the overall performance of the Directorate for Students' Service after the conflict that resulted in the closure of our university was related to the Student Union and Peace Forum associations. We had learned that leaders of the associations, instead of trying to settle down students during the conflict, members of the Peace Forum became actors by siding students from their own ethnic group. Also, when we examine the

ethnic composition of both the Students' Union and the Peace Forum, we had found that it was highly dominated by one ethnic group. Therefore, after the re-opening of our university, we had dismantled both associations and replaced leaders by new members. In fact, many students were not happy about both associations and it really makes sense. (Dean of Students, #6, February, 2020)

Perception Difference in Respondents on Diversity-related Co-Curricular Activities

An attempt was made to see if there is a difference in perception by respondents on diversity-related co-curricular activities.

Table 6: Independent sample t-test of diversity related co-curricular activities

Group Statistics						Independent sample T test		
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Diversity related Co-curricular Activity	Female	196	3.0684	3.1485	.87755	.06268	.636	.456
	Male	262	3.0053	3.0954	.88749	.05483		

As can be seen from Table 6 above, t-test result showed no statistically significant mean difference between the sample population ($p=0.456$). This implies that there was no statistically significant perception difference between male and female students with regard to their attitude towards diversity.

Results from one-way ANOVA also revealed that there was no statistically significant perception difference among students of different ethnic groups ($F(3, 454) = 0.453$, $p=0.715$), religion $F(3, 454) = 0.311$,

$p=0.817$), and generation of universities $F(3, 454) = 1.661, p=0.175$) regarding diversity-related co-curricular activities.

Curricular Practices Related with Students' Diversity at the Sample Universities

The last aspect or strategy of diversity management described in the literature was related to curricular activities at universities. Banks (2001) and Banks *et al.* (2005) argued that students should learn about the complex relationship between unity and diversity through diversity-related courses so as to reduce prejudice and stereotypes and challenge inequalities and injustice. In order to counter the challenges that diversity poses, Hansen (2011) stated that some educational institutes have included diversity contents in the formal curriculum, religion for example, to expose students to different faiths and enable them acknowledge the beliefs of other religions. In addition to inclusion of diversity contents to the formal curriculum, institutions also have recruited teachers from different backgrounds to increase diversity of their academic staff and create a positive environment for diverse students.

Table 7 below presents the responses of students on the curricular practices in relation to diversity in their respective universities. As can be noted from the table, content of diversity in the curriculum is relatively low with an overall mean rating of 2.76. For example, the respondents disagreed that they had taken courses related to religion ($M=2.87, SD=1.33$) which could have given them the opportunity to have a dialogue with students of different religions ($M=2.86, SD=1.28$). This shows that the curriculum was inadequate to expose the students to diversity issues and hold dialogues with those from different religions and cultures. The case of ethnic issues is also not satisfactory as the mean ratings were very close to the cut point, 3.0. Similarly, the respondents disagreed that their university library had a variety of materials on ethnicity ($M=2.74, SD=1.30$) and religion ($M=2.55, SD=1.25$). Lack of these reading materials, in addition to the exclusion of diversity contents from the curriculum, would leave the efforts of the students to know and explore about diversity inefficient.

Table 7: Mean ratings of respondents on practice of curricular activities to promote students' diversity (N= 458)

Item	Mean	SD
In this university, I have taken courses that have a reading on ethnic issues.	3.16	1.34
In this university, I have taken courses that have a reading on religious issues.	2.87	1.33
In this university, I have taken courses that gave me opportunity to make a dialogue with students from different ethnic background.	3.01	1.30
In this university, I have taken courses that gave me the opportunity to make a dialogue with students from different religious background.	2.86	1.28
The university library has a wide variety of materials on ethnicity issues.	2.74	1.30
The university library has a wide variety of materials on religious issues.	2.55	1.25
In classes, teachers pay the same amount of attention to all students regardless of their ethnicity.	3.53	1.29
In classes, teachers pay the same amount of attention to all students regardless of their religion.	3.46	1.30
In classes, teachers treat students more negatively if they are not from their ethnicity.	2.53	1.31
In classes, teachers treat students more negatively if they are not from their religion.	2.48	1.30
In classes, teachers instruct us on good ways to communicate across ethnicity.	3.34	1.24
In classes, teachers instruct us on good ways to communicate across religion.	3.21	1.29
In classes, teachers make students aware of the harm of stereotyping other students on the basis of their ethnicity.	2.87	1.29
In classes, teachers make students aware of the harm of stereotyping other students on the basis of their religion.	2.91	1.33
In classes, teachers encourage students to express different views and perspectives.	3.52	1.23
In classes, teachers encourage students to challenge popular ideas.	3.26	1.25
When assigning groups, teachers place students with different ethnic and religious backgrounds together.	3.26	1.31
In classes, teachers encourage students to participate in discussions and ask questions.	3.60	1.26

Another practice in relation to the curricular activities assessed in this study pertains to the behavior of teachers in giving attention to their students, equal treatment irrespective of the students' background, ethnicity and religion. In this regard, respondents in the quantitative study agreed that teachers were fair in giving attention and treating students irrespective of their ethnic ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.29$) and religious ($M=3.46$, $SD=1.30$) backgrounds. Very specifically, respondents strongly agreed that any student was not negatively treated by a teacher due to his his/her ethnicity ($M=2.53$, $SD=1.31$) or religion ($M=2.48$, $SD=1.30$).

Teachers' behavior related to encouragement of students to participate and communicate with those from different background was also assessed by the quantitative respondents. For example, teachers' effort in encouraging students' to participate in discussions and ask questions ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.26$), communicate across ethnicity ($M=3.34$, $SD=1.24$), and ($M=3.21$, $SD=1.29$), religion, express different views and perspectives ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.23$), challenge most popular ideas ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.25$), and form groups by placing different students from different ethnicities and religions ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.31$) was seen positively by the students. As literature suggests, these kinds of effort by teachers highly contribute to promoting diversity, creating a very good relationship among students and exploring different languages and cultures. On the other hand, respondents disagreed to the idea that teachers' efforts were adequate to raise students' awareness on the harm of stereotyping other students on the basis of their ethnicity ($M=2.87$, $SD=1.29$) and religion ($M=2.91$, $SD=1.33$). In instances where students from different backgrounds are assigned to the same dormitory and later end up in conflict for ethnic and religious differences, lack of commitment of teachers could be a contributing factor.

An effort was also made to triangulate the findings of the quantitative study with that of the qualitative research based on interview with students and teachers. For example, the qualitative results on fair treatment of students by their teachers in academic matters showed an

agreement with quantitative findings though the qualitative data suggested that there were incidents whereby some teachers did not follow their professional ethics. For example, the following was said by one of the students:

Student # 1: ... most of my teachers are very ethical and do not really practice differential treatment of students whether or not they are from their own ethnic or religious group. This does not mean that all are the same. I remember, for example, that most of the students in my batch were complaining about communicative English instructor who taught us when we were freshmen. I mean, we really tried our best by studying to score a good grade, but the final result was not up to our expectation. Very surprisingly, we finally noticed that students from a particular area had excellent grades despite the fact that they were also poor in the subject.

Probe: How did you know they were poor in that subject?

Student #1: Some of them used to live with us in the same dormitory and we studied the subject together. Apart from that, some of their class performances in skills such as speaking were not different from ours if not poorer comparatively. Also, after the final grade when we applied for regrading to the department, they said it should not be possible though they were also convinced that our claim was true. But after I joined this department, I can say that such differential treatment did not exist, to the best of my knowledge. (Student, #1, November, 2019)

Almost similar to the above student, one teacher also said the following about professional ethics of teachers in his department:

As I have been the department head for almost the last two years, I had the opportunity to look into this issue very closely. Generally, the treatment of our academic staff towards our students is very good. This does not mean that there are no cases of complaints by

students regarding few teachers' differential treatment especially in relation to grading. To speak the truth, we found some of the complaints to be well founded. (Teacher, #2, November, 2019)

The same teacher also complains about students' false accusation of their teachers. He said:

.... Sometimes when students find their courses very difficult and score low grades, they also come to the department to accuse the instructor claiming that the teacher illegally punished them or reduced their grades because of their ethnicity or gender. I mean, it is the order of the day to relate anything and everything with ethnicity. They think that they can win the case if they proceed in this way. We take such cases very seriously and do a check following the procedure and put the party accountable on a disciplinary measure. (Teacher, #1, November, 2019)

In any case, the much appreciated effort of teachers to be ethical in treating their students equally irrespective of their background, ethnicity or religion, is an encouraging practice that can hugely contribute to diversity promotion, as such behaviors of teachers will keep students comfortable and create a good relationship between the two. One critical problem worth mentioning here also is the diversity composition of instructors at public universities. As the qualitative findings suggest, most instructors of the sample universities come from the region where the university is located, mainly from the same local area. For example, one of the teachers said the following on this issue which is also supported by teachers and students in the study:

It is a fact that in the last four years, following the worsening of ethnic conflicts in the country and eviction of many from their home, a lot of academic staffs also left their universities in the same way. For example, after the conflict between Somali and Oromo people in this region, many Oromo teachers left our university, formally or informally, and joined universities in Oromia. Because of this, if you

go to such universities, because of the mass presence of staff formerly belonging to this university, they are sarcastically referred to as branches of our university. What is very sad above all is that the number of Oromo and Amhara teachers in our university used to be large but now it is very small and I can feel that this is not good. It may not even give comfort to students from these ethnic groups and direct student complaints in line with ethnicity. (Teacher, #2, November, 2019)

The case of the inclusion of diversity issues in the curriculum of undergraduate programs in Ethiopian public universities was also a point of discussion in the interview with students and teachers. Though students have a huge interest to know about the history, culture, and uniqueness of ethnic groups other than theirs specifically and the history of Ethiopia generally, they say that the curriculum is not giving them such a chance. Except students from some departments such as history, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, many students from other departments indicated that they did not take courses on diversity except in the course known as Civic and Ethical Education which they used to take beginning from the second cycle of elementary education, to be exact. Some teachers said that even in the above departments, the curriculum content of the issue of diversity for students of a highly diverse country like Ethiopia is not satisfactory. A teacher commented the following in this regard:

I do not think that the curriculum exposes students of higher education, especially students in the Colleges of Engineering, Natural and Computational Sciences and Business and Economics to diversity issues. However, this does not mean that all students of the College of Social Sciences, have a better exposure. If you, for example, take our department, psychology, there was a very interesting course called Cross-cultural Psychology that I took during my undergraduate days, but it is no more in the curriculum. I think the issue of such courses has been the question of academicians of the country for long. The courses vanished when

the freshman program phased out by the governments' decision. However, from this year on courses related to diversity which would enable students to know about different cultures and religions are being introduced at freshman level. This is very encouraging and may bring about students' understanding of each other through different discussions in the class. (Teacher, #2, November, 2019)

Capitalizing on the importance of such courses, a student also remarked the curriculum's responsiveness to diversity issues saying:

.... What we understood from the overall situation of the country is that history and ethnicity are in conflict in the Ethiopian society. Higher education institutions should thus teach history of our country and multi-culturalism to help students become problem solvers in the future. Personally, I did not take courses in this regard except Civic and Ethical Education which I knew from elementary school. Even if one took that course, its content at high school level was better as it mostly dealt with Ethiopian context, which the university course is lacking. Honestly speaking, although I was very eager to know about different cultures and the history of Ethiopia, I am very sad to graduate without having enough knowledge in these areas. To the very least, there were no field trips, even a single one, which I had to explore the culture of one ethnic or local group. Everything focused on professional areas. Although the education was good from quality perspective, I think, as graduates of higher education, we needed some knowledge on history and multiculturalism too. (Student, #6, February, 2020)

The Ethiopian Education Development Road Map (MoE, 2018) also states the following about diversity and equity in higher education when revealing the result of desktop review:

Ethiopia, after the adoption of the constitution in 1995, has endorsed federal system, which recognizes unity in diversity. Nations, Nationalities and Peoples were exercising their political,

cultural and language rights. However, while universities have exercised to promote diversity, none of the Ethiopian universities had activities to promote unity (pp.51).

Interestingly, in agreement with the comments by students and teachers who participated in the qualitative study, the document also recommends the following:

Introduce new courses to make students get exposure to the diverse cultures/peoples of Ethiopia. Introducing multicultural course including Geography and Anthropology courses that focus on Ethiopia may help students to focus on unity within diversity, and

The education policy should encourage universities to promote co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that help students to be involved in different clubs that fit their inclination so they can interact with people different from them. The government needs to allocate earmarked budget for these activities and designate an office that would coordinate such activities (p. 52)

Another practice explored in relation to curricular practices of sample universities was students' group formation behavior inside classrooms and the attention given by teachers to make the group diversified so that students of different background can interact, know each other, and get engaged academically and socially inside and outside the classroom. Regarding the issue, a student in an interview said the following:

If given the chance, I think students want to organize themselves on the basis of mother tongue, ethnicity or the area they come from. This is very evident from the fact that students sit in the class that way. However, most of the time, teachers and the departments assign group members for classroom discussion and group assignment based on academic performance so students can help each other. (Student, #2, November, 2019)

Asked the same question, the teachers also aired similar views on the preference of students in organizing themselves for group work and other activities. A teacher said:

.... No question. If we allow them to form groups by themselves, the criteria to be considered would be language and ethnicity in most cases. Some may go for friendship or being in the same dormitory, very possibly. In reality, groups are formed by the subject teachers so as to help low performing students to get help from academically better students. I also consider background mix as I am a sociologist and always wanted my students of different background to interact. That may create a strong relationship between students as they have to meet frequently for group projects and assignments. That way they may share languages and cultures and know each other better and stand for each other at times of conflict or other circumstances. This is because that is the way we live together as Ethiopians. (Teacher, #4, December, 2019)

The quantitative study showed that students disagree that teachers advise their students about the harm of stereotyping others based on their background. Though most sampled teachers said that most teachers were trying to calm the students down during conflicts, they also stated that others were on the opposite side. Taking this as a starting point, they also said that some teachers may not be engaged in advising their students about stereotyping because of their background. One teacher said the following:

I think most of our staffs are very ethical and do advise their students about the issue. But this does not mean that there were no teachers who were found to be out of ethics. For example, sadly, we had found some teachers behind the recent conflicts, let alone giving advice to their students on the harm of stereotyping. These teachers used to wear black cloths to pass a message that they also were with the students as students were also wearing black

cloths to imply that they were mourning the loss of lives of students from their ethnic group in other public universities. (Teacher, #6, February, 2020)

Perception Difference of Respondents on Diversity-related Curricular Activities

An attempt was made to see if there is a difference in perception of respondents on diversity-related curricular activities.

Table 8: Independent sample t-test regarding diversity-related curricular activities

Group Statistics						Independent sample t-test		
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Diversity related Curricular Activities	Female	196	3.0684	.66890	.04778	.940	456	.348
	Male	262	3.0053	.73866	.04563			

As can be seen from Table 8 above, the t-test result showed that there was no statistically significant mean difference between the sample population ($p=0.348$). No statistically significant difference was observed between male and female students on their perception towards diversity.

Further, ANOVA result showed that there was no statistically significant difference in perception on diversity-related curricular activities between students of different ethnic groups ($F(3, 454) = 0.917, p = 0.433$), religion ($F(3, 454) = 0.116, p = 0.951$), and generation of universities ($F(3, 454) = 0.380, p = 0.767$).

Challenges of Ethiopian Public Universities in Managing Their Students' Diversity

As the interview results indicated, the challenges that public universities faced to manage their students' diversity can be divided into two: internal and external challenges. The internal challenges included lack of attention given to the issue by the leadership of the universities, grievance on service provisions in the cafeteria, ethnic composition of the universities' top leadership, dominance of students and staffs from local areas, and political issues run by students and teachers. On the other hand, the external challenges mentioned by interview participants included over all political situation in the country, activists' focus on university students, and the placement criteria of the Ministry of Education.

It was argued earlier in this chapter that most universities did not include the issue of students' diversity in their mission which implies lack of commitment to the issue. Even in cases where some indicated diversity issues in their strategic plan, they failed to translate them into working plans. However, according to Hurtad *et al.* (2008), in countries like Ethiopia where ethnic and religious diversity are markers of the country, higher education institutes should have a lot of concern so as to bring the best out of their students' diversity. Diversity promotion, according to the respondents, can take different forms such as including the issue in annual plans to be implemented, organizing different panels and forums on which known personalities and local and religious leaders take part to create more awareness among the students, and establishing different units and clubs that work on diversity issues. A response by one of the deans of students emphasizes the need for top leaders' commitment to diversity. He said:

Unless there are instances of conflict or some serious matters, top leaders do not meet with students. Although we stated that students' diversity was one of the concerns in our strategic plan, you do not see much commitment on the part of the university in

materializing the issue. This can be witnessed from lack of specific strategies, well planned panels and forums on diversity, and weak commitment to enforce what is in students discipline guideline. For example, after incidents of conflicts between students, we invited community elders and religious leaders to talk to them and that brought a very good result. It means that if we had done this regularly before incidents of conflict, it could have been a very good strategy to promote students' diversity. (Dean of students, #4, December, 2019)

Higher education institutes in Ethiopia are perceived as secular institutes, free from ethnic and religious interferences. In relation to this, the Ministry of Education prepared a guideline for students worship, dress code, and food etiquette in higher education institutes (MoE, 2011). The guideline states what is and is not allowed in relation to religious issues. Among those prohibited are preparing meals similar to one that is made by the various religious groups. However, in reality, this is not the case. As argued by students and deans of students, meals for Christians and Muslims are prepared and served in different compartments during fasting periods of Orthodox Christians and on days when the food contains meat as an ingredient. In addition to that, as some of the deans of students explained, during the fasting periods of Orthodox Christians and Muslims, cafeterias are opened after the normal service time to serve fasting students.

Although we do not assign workers to serve students as we do during the regular meal service time, we open the cafeteria when the fasting for the day is over [for both Christians and Muslims] so they can serve themselves. This usually begins from 2:30 in the afternoon for Orthodox Christians and from 7 in the evening for Muslims. (Dean of students, #5, November, 2019)

If universities fail to serve fasting students during the special circumstance indicated earlier, the issue can be a point of conflict between the students and the university administration. Actually, the

special arrangement causes dissatisfaction to other students, i.e., to the Christians in the case of Muslims' fasting period and the vice versa, and will be an issue during other periods. Student interviewees also indicated that there was a special favor made by members of the administration for students belonging to the same religion as theirs. Most dean of students perceived this practice as something against the secular education policy of higher education institutes and which can at the same time widen religious differences among students.

Another issue raised as a challenge to manage students' diversity is the heterogeneity of the academic staff and university leadership in terms of ethnicity and religion. Because of the political and administrative system at the national level, there was a growing tendency for teachers to work in their own region. For example, according to Abebaw and Tilahun (2007) and Tilahun (2010), there is a tendency for university lecturers from other regions to leave the university they are working in and transfer to those in the region where they come from. This decreases academic staff diversity. It is also customary that the top university leadership, in most cases, was from the same ethnic group residing the region where the university is located. When students see teachers and top leaders from their ethnic or regional group, they feel a sense of belongingness towards their university. When this is not the case, they feel dissatisfied by their university and look for a transfer to another university, mostly to the region where they come from. This will in turn affect the structural diversity of students and may create dominance of a particular ethnic group.

As I was telling you earlier, due to a conflict between Oromo and Somali students, many Oromo students and teachers left our university [Jigjiga University]. That enormously affected the ethnic composition of our students. Not only that, again as I stated earlier, Oromo students who were assigned to our university after that incident were not comfortable that there weren't many Oromo teachers and students in the university. Observing the situation, my colleague and I who speak Afan Oromo were assigned to serve

here in the Student Service Directorate just to make them feel better. (Dean of Students, #2, November, 2019)

I consider universities not only as national but also as universal institutions. If you take, for example, the case of most public universities in our country, it is usual to find Indian professors almost everywhere. Sadly, on the contrary, public universities in our case are staffed with Ethiopian teachers from the locality of the university, take our university for example. Of course, it is advantageous for the teachers as the current political scenario of the country forces one to do that to be secured. On the other hand, it is really very challenging for the university and students coming from other regions for they would not feel comfortable. The discomfort would have reduced had the teachers' ethnic mix been reasonable. I even think that the extreme polarization of ethnicity is mainly related to this case. (Teacher, #4, December, 2019)

The then increasing political activities of students and teachers on campuses were also mentioned as a challenge to managing students' diversity in the sample universities. According to the respondents, students usually bring a political agenda to the campus and informally organize friends from their ethnic group, mainly, to promote it. It was also noted that the same agenda were pushed by teachers and even by administrative staff members. Sadly, most of the agenda were ethnic-centered and they resulted in conflicts between students of different ethnic groups.

In the recent conflict between students [Amhara and Oromo], our assessment showed that there were students who intentionally ignited it. Sadly, and very surprisingly, their agenda were also supported by teachers and administrative staffs making the control very difficult. For example, during peace talks, we observed teachers wearing black cloths [to indicate grief] to show unity with the students. How can other students expect fair treatment in class

from such teachers? Do you think they would feel comfortable? I don't think so. (Dean of Students, #1, October, 2019)

As also argued by the interviewees, fake news, activists and other politicians focus on university students to ignite conflicts between them. The overall political situations in the country were mentioned as external factors that made students' diversity management challenging for public universities. All student interviewees agree on the fact that fake news disseminated through social media such as Facebook was one contributing factor for students not to stand together on an issue irrespective of their ethnicity. The students claim that most of the fake news focused on ethnic issues to divide students based on their ethnic identity. One of the students said the following:

As we know very well, almost all university students are on Facebook and there is a lot of fake news circulating on different social media including Facebook. Surprisingly, most of the fake news was related to ethnic issues and students accept it as true without crosschecking it with other sources. Such fake news always preached that students from a particular ethnic group were oppressed in a certain university by those from another ethnic group. That created a general sense of hatred even for students of different ethnic groups in other universities making them see each other as enemies on campus. Whenever they find situations provoking, they ignite conflicts for simple issues. (Student 6, February, 2020)

In relation to fake news, students and deans of students mentioned that messages from different activists and political groups to public university students were also factors that made students diversity management challenging for public universities. The respondents mentioned that the recent political change in the country had brought out known political activists and parties/groups from different ethnic groups that are very much respected and whose words are heard. The challenging aspect of this trend is that the people, including public university students, take

their words without questioning even if they would result in serious conflicts which may claim lives. Remembering such circumstances, a student said the following:

There are activists of different ethnic groups which, I can say, are worshipped by people including students. Sadly, these activists or political groups pass messages through social media creating a sense of animosity among students. I do not think that they really care about students' lives; they simply pass their message and the result is going to be really very ugly. Taking their words, I heard students saying "I do not want to learn together with students from such and such ethnicity". (Student, #7, February, 2020)

Of course, both the students and deans of students claimed that all the challenges were related with the current political circumstance of the country. After the recent political crisis, it has become the norm to hear conflicts among different ethnic groups which resulted in mass execution and killings. The participants agreed that such circumstance had impacted student relationship at the national level and in the universities leaving student diversity management a challenging task.

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