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Investigation of Challenges that Cast Shadows on the Quality of Education at four Public Universities in Ethiopia

Mandefro Fenta<sup>1</sup>, Yimam Workneh<sup>2</sup>

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#### Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate challenges that cast shadows on the quality of education. To investigate quality education threatening practices, data were collected through focus group discussions, interviews and questionnaire from third year undergraduate regular students and instructors from Jimma, Wollega, Mizan-Tepi and Debre Birhan universities. Then, the data were analyzed textually and numerically. Specifically the findings revealed that students are not doing their activities responsibly for their learning, and instructors are not devoted to accomplish their duties properly. Covering courses based on the schedule has been a big problem too. Besides, the study showed that management bodies have been ineffective to carry out their responsibilities as expected. That means they could not supervise the teaching-learning process, and were not able to supply the libraries, laboratories and classrooms with relevant books and materials to facilitate the teaching-learning process. For the aforementioned reasons, the quality of education has lowered regrettably. Owing to the above problems, students at universities must develop self-efficacy and manage their education responsibly to be competitive and successful in their learning. Further, instructors must be punctual, responsible and devoted to carry out their duties effectively. Particularly, they must work hard to cover courses on time and impart the necessary knowledge and skills to students as much as possible. The management bodies should also supervise the teaching-learning process properly and fulfill the necessary reference books, reading materials and equipment to realize effective changes in the teaching-learning process.

*Key words:* /Challenges /Investigation/Quality/Quality Education/

<sup>1</sup> *✉*Corresponding author Ph.D an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics and Development in the Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Ethiopia. E-mail: [mandefrofenta@yahoo.com](mailto:mandefrofenta@yahoo.com), telephone: 0911836971

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D an assistant professor of English Literature in the Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Ethiopia: [yasmafetah@gmail.com](mailto:yasmafetah@gmail.com), telephone: 0911724951

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

It is clear that education is very vital to empower everybody with essential knowledge and skills to facilitate a better way of life in general. “It is a cornerstone of nation’s development as it is crucial in producing skilled labor force that accelerates the pace of nation’s social and economic advancement” (UNESCO, 2006b as cited in Tadesse, et al, 2013, p. 267). Specifically “Higher education is the facilitator, the bed rock, the power house and the driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural, healthier and industrial development of a nation as higher education institutions are key mechanisms increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital producing industries” (Peretomode,2007, as cited in Asiyai, 2013, p. 160). However, the main question is that to what extent a learner is instructed at his/her level because the education that enables an individual only to read, write and do some arithmetic is inadequate to him/her to lead a better standard of life later on. It implies that acquiring quality education is unquestionable to every individual to lead a better standard of life at any level. Regarding the necessity of quality education, Daniel (2002) cited in Singh and Castro Mussot (2005, p. 41) notes: “... the effectiveness of education within a framework encapsulating three key elements: access, costs and quality. He defined quality as ‘fitness for purpose at a minimum cost to society’”. Here it is necessary to underline whether learners gain the required learning outcomes or not while learning at various levels. If not it is essential to investigate the causes that threaten the implementation of quality education.

To empower learners with the necessary knowledge and skills, there are various responsible bodies who have been working around the teaching-learning process whose involvements have direct impact on the quality of education. For instance, improving education quality (IEQ) researchers in Uganda state the following points regarding the importance of concerned bodies about the quality of education.

*Teachers and students are at the heart of educational reform. Efforts to improve the quality of education in developing countries must consider the everyday realities of the classroom. Solutions to learning problems must involve educators at all levels of the system, especially teachers. Improving the quality of education in the classroom must be based on knowledge and resources from the school and the community (1999, p.4).*

As stated above, teachers, students, educators at all levels of learning institutions and the community have their own contributions in the teaching-learning process. That means they have their own shares to the failure or improvement of the quality of education by any means.

In Ethiopian context too, the quality of education has been blamed for a long time. For instance, Belay and Melaku (2019, p. 2) note: “...education quality remains a daunting challenge.” Abiy (2017, p. 17) also claims, “...to bring quality in our education, we should stand and think and start trekking on our traditional pathway to find our lost child; that is quality in education.” Besides, Tekeste (2006, p. 26) states, “The quality of education in terms of relevance to the cultural, historical and economic needs of the country was not given sufficient consideration as long as returns to investment in education (human capital) functioned well.” These researchers proved that the quality of education in Ethiopia has been at risk for a long time. Therefore, it seems reasonable to investigate practices that affect the proper accomplishment of quality education. Related to the teaching-learning activities in universities, the administrative staff (deans and vice deans, quality assurance and reform officers, registrar officers, department heads and etc.), instructors and students play great roles when they accomplish their tasks as required. On the other hand, their reluctance affects the quality of education directly

too. Hence, in order to improve the quality of education at universities, it seems of great importance to investigate the hindering practices, the responsible bodies and the reasons why they commit the practices. Therefore, investigating of the challenges that cast shadows on the quality of education was found to be the primary concern of this research.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

As stated above, quality education is essential for the development of any country. Asiyai (2013, p. 160) witnesses the importance of quality education for development saying, “It is only quality education that can sharpen the minds of the individual and help transform the society economically, socially and politically.” Thus, in order to achieve the quality of education at any educational institution, the administrative and academic staffs on the one hand and the students and the facilitators of suitable learning environment on the other hand must work in harmony. For instance, Henard (2010, p. 9) states, “The environment of higher education institutions can enhance the quality of teaching through various means.” Besides, UNICEF’s (2000, p.16) document notes, “Quality education puts students at the centre of the process; student achievement must be the school’s first priority.”

However, university instructors complain that the knowledge and skill of university students nowadays has been below the normal standard, so they cannot perform what is expected from them. Thus, maybe the condition of the learning environment, activities of the administrative, academic staffs (instructors and students) or anything else might have potential influence to decrease the quality of education directly or indirectly (or unknowingly or due to lack of proper attention). For instance, “...interest [of learners] is a significant factor affecting the quality of performance” (Boekaerts and Minnaert, 2003, p. 241). As observed from scholars’ views and our informal discussions with friends and students, there are practices like assigning students to departments without students’ choices, assessment problems and other irregularities in the teaching-learning process. Based on the aforementioned reasons, the researchers believed that the presence of various malpractices in the teaching-learning process might have potential effects on the quality of education. Hence, since the impacts of these practices might have held back sustainable development in general and the quality of education in particular, they need scientific and proper investigation.

Previously researches were conducted on education in Ethiopia in general and the quality of education in particular. The first one is Tekeste’s (2006) comprehensive document entitled “Education in Ethiopia: from Crisis to the Brink of Collapse.” This document has three sections. The first one states, ‘Education and development in Ethiopia: The History of dubious correlation.’ The second section of this work deals with, ‘expansion, crisis and collapse of education’, and the third section discusses about ‘constructing a positive role for education in economic and social transformation.’ This work presents ample and significant information about the education policy of Ethiopia set during the three regimes, the ups and downs the education system had passed through and strategies suggested improving the quality of education. In relation to the purpose of this work, Tekeste (2006, p.8) remarks,

*The major focus of this paper is to contextualize the dilemmas of education in Africa in general and those of Ethiopia in particular. Its main purpose is to demonstrate that the crisis of education, despite phenomenal growth in enrolment, has deepened and the education system is in fact on the verge of collapse.*

The above remark notifies education scholars to question the causes of the crisis of education in Ethiopia where a lot of energy, time and money have been invested on education for all for a long time. It is for this purpose reviewing this work has been necessary to the current research.

The second research was conducted on the title “Quality of Education: The Case of Jimma University”. The main objective of this study was to investigate the quality of education, research and services in Jimma University thereby to recommend options for overcoming the constraints (Tadesse, Taye, Bekalu and Abbi 2013, p. 270). The major concern of Tadesse’s et al. (2013) study was quality education status of Jimma University, teachers and students’ perception about quality of education in Jimma University, perceptions of students towards the services provided by Jimma University and major constraints impeding the quality of education, research and services provided at the University. This study investigated the constraints impeding the quality of education, research and services in relation to general administrative practices whereas the study at hand has investigated quality education threatening practices related to the teaching-learning process in the colleges of social sciences and humanities.

As stated above, the study area of the previous study was delimited only at Jimma University unlike the present one which covers four public universities. In addition, regarding the quality status of education, the previous research focuses on how staff members at each college in Jimma University internalize visions, missions and values of the University (Tadesse et al., 2013). As shown in the previous and our researches, even if the major theme, i.e. quality of education, is common, the practices that hinder the quality of education, who commits such practices and why are not addressed in the previous study in relation to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, there are clear grounds that need close investigation to pinpoint quality education threatening practices.

### 1.3 Research Questions

To investigate the challenges that affected the quality of education at four public universities in Ethiopia, the following research questions were designed.

- What are the practices that hinder the quality of education at universities in relation to the teaching-learning process?
- Who is/are responsible body/bodies that carry out quality education threatening practices at universities?
- Why do individuals (who participate in the teaching-learning process) commit practices that hinder the quality of education?
- What are the mechanisms that should be taken to improve the quality of education?

## 2. Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Quality Education

Empowering people with knowledge and skills seems to be materialized through offering quality education. But, before discussing about the quality of education, having clear understanding of the term quality is necessary from the inception. Thus, World Organization of Standardization (1994), cited in Asiyai (2013, p. 161), defined quality as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs. Besides, DuBrin, (1997) cited in Asiyai (2013, p. 161) goes on saying “quality is a desirable attribute of a product or service that distinguishes it for the person seeking the attribute.” Thus, quality is a standard set by an organization to be fit for the intended purpose. Hereafter we see what the concept of quality education consists of. United Nations Children’s Fund (2000, p. 4) document presents the components of quality education as follows.

- *Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;*
- *Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;*
- *Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;*
- *Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;*
- *Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.*

As observed above, the concept of quality education subsumes physical and emotional wellbeing of learners, teachers, appropriate content, suitable teaching method, good assessment and learning environment through which the content of educational curriculum is imparted effectively to produce competent citizens who can play great roles in the development of a nation.

Furthermore, Rita and Portales (2005, p. 2) state, “The idea of ‘quality education’ is to engage the natural curiosity and interest of all students in learning and in improving their skills and talents so they can be academically prepared to achieve success as adults”. Generally, quality education is a key factor to improve the living standard of citizens so that attaining the values and assuring its proper implementation is very vital. Barrett, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nickel and Ukpo (2006) also note that quality is an essential component of education, and it incorporates effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance and sustainability of education. That means the components of quality education should be implemented to the required standard not only at present but also to the future as well. Besides, UNICEF (2000, p.7) document notes, “Another essential ingredient for a successful educational system is a quality learning environment.... The quality of administrative support and leadership is another critical element in school processes, both for students and for teachers”. However, it has been challenging to achieve quality education mainly in poor countries because there are academic, methodological, environmental, administrative, psychological and economic factors that impede the activities of teachers and learners in particular and the educational process in general.

Therefore, to achieve the implementation of quality education in learning institutions, for example at universities, coordinating the administrative and academic staffs greatly is very essential.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

To facilitate the implementation of quality education, Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) initiated Higher Education institutions to prepare focus areas of Institutional Quality Audit (IQA) tools. For example, the focus areas of Jimma University IQA include: vision, mission and educational goals, governance and management goals, infrastructure and learning resources, academic and support staff, student admission and support services, program relevance and curriculum, teaching-learning and assessment, student progression and graduate outcomes, research and outreach activities and internal quality assurance. As presented in the document, each focus area consists of wide concepts (refer to Jimma University Institutional Quality Audit Report, 2008).

By taking relevant components that have relationships with this research from the Literature review and JU's Educational Quality Audit (EQA) 2008 focus areas; the following conceptual framework is prepared as a guide to this research. That means the conceptual framework shows how quality education correlates with the components that facilitate or hinder its realization as indicated below.



Conceptual Framework adapted from literature review and JU's EQA 2008

As stated in the literature, various stake holders participate to achieve the quality of education. For instance, the university's management, the administrative body at college level, the academic staff (instructors and students), student assessment and grading system and availability of learning materials in laboratories and libraries play great roles to up-grade the quality of education. As indicated in the figure, quality education, which is at the center of the diagram has direct relationships with participants of the teaching-learning process. Obviously, it is affected positively or negatively and requires intelligible interaction with the elements surrounding it greatly. Those components have their own impacts to one another, and their harmonized coexistence facilitates the success of quality education. To support this assumption, Asiyai (2013, p. 163) states, "Quality in higher education refers to the worth of the inputs into higher education systems, lecturers, instructional facilities and evaluation procedures which translates to the outputs." Therefore, the researchers believe that this conceptual framework is appropriate to conduct the research accordingly.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Setting of the study

The study was conducted by Jimma University instructors at four public universities namely Jimma, Mizan-Tepi, Debre Berhan and Wollega. Data were collected from instructors and third year undergraduate students who stayed at the universities for three years and were expected to graduate in June 2018 or 2010 E.C. The study was completed in one year, from September, 2017 up to September 2018.

### 3.2 Research Design

According to Vaus (2001, p. 220), “A case is the object of the study. It is the unit of analysis about which we collect information.” Thus, case study is used as a research design in this study. By the help of this design, the researchers have investigated the challenges that could possibly affected the quality of education (cases) by collecting valuable data through interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire from concerned stakeholders who participated in the teaching and learning process directly or/and indirectly.

### 3.3 Participants of the Study

The study participants were third year undergraduate students from English, Amharic and Afan Oromo departments of Jimma, Debre Birhan, Mizan Tepi and Wollega universities. These participants were selected for their longer experiences and various challenges they faced during their stays at universities, so they could explain the problems better than other students, first year and second year undergraduate students. In addition to students, university instructors and administrative staffs (quality assurance and reform officers and department heads) were participants of the study.

### 3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

For this study, purposive sampling technique was used because graduating students (third year) were selected on the assumption that they had experienced different good or/and bad practices and challenges during their stays at universities. Additionally, graduating students were expected to explain their views orally or in writing better than first and second year students do relatively. Similarly, data were collected from administrative and academic staffs who had various practices for their administrative and academic positions. Regarding sample size, totally 60 students and 25 instructors participated to fill the questionnaires. These numbers show respondents who filled and returned the questionnaires. Eleven instructors were interviewed, and seven focused group discussions were conducted with students.

The main data gathering instrument was focus group discussion (hereafter FGD) because it was used to gather genuine and comprehensive data, which was real experience of students during their stays at universities. Seven FGDs were conducted with graduating students of English and Amharic departments. To specify, in Jimma, Debre Berhan and Mezan-Tepi, we conducted two FGDs at each university and one FGD was conducted at Wollega University. The students mentioned problems they encountered during their stays at universities.

For the interview, structured and semi-structured questions were presented to selected instructors and administrative staffs. Through interviews, detailed information was obtained from instructors. Totally, eleven instructors were interviewed. Three of them were quality assurance and reform officers at Jimma, Mizan-Tepi and Debre Derhan universities. One of the instructors was also a department head at Jimma University.

Through questionnaire, close-ended and open-ended questions were distributed to respondents, and enough information was gathered from both instructors and students. Totally 60 questionnaires were filled by students, and 25 questionnaires were filled by instructors. By using the three data collecting instruments, the researchers gathered wide-ranging data and the validity of the information was cross-checked.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

In the questionnaire, there are questions that need yes/no answers and questions that have three and/or five alternatives. These questions were analyzed by describing the quantitative data using percentages. On the

other hand, data obtained through interview, focused group discussions and open ended questionnaire were analyzed thematically. Generally, the data collected through the three aforementioned tools demanded the application of textual and numerical analysis.

#### 4. Results

Under this unit, the data gathered from research participants through focused group discussions, interviews and questionnaires have been analyzed and interpreted. The data analysis intended to answer the research questions concerning investigating the challenges that cast shadows on the quality of education. The analysis is presented under three subsections based on the tools used to collect data as follows.

##### 4.1 Findings of Data from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Teachers' Interviews

A total of seven focus group discussions were conducted with students. Besides, we had eleven interviews with instructors.

The data obtained through FGD and interviews were analyzed based on themes. The themes are related to quality education, factors that threaten the quality of education, responsible bodies, manifestation of low quality education, why various bodies commit practices that threaten quality education and measures to be taken to improve the quality of education.

**Quality of education.** The first point of the discussion was about the quality of education currently offered at universities. To this point, almost all students in the discussion confirmed that the education offered at universities is not to the expected standard because the students reasoned out that “the teaching-learning process focuses more on course coverage than delivering deep knowledge.” Regarding this point, a discussant’s direct words say, “የትምህርት ጥራት የለም ብዬ አምናለሁ፡፡ ለምሳሌ ኮርስ በወቅቱ መጀመርና መጨረስ አይስተዋልም፡፡ /I believe that the current education has no quality. For example, there is no practice to begin and complete courses on time./”

Instructors were also interviewed to comment on the quality of education offered currently at universities. Thus, all instructors replied that the education offered at university currently is at its lower standard; they also suggested that the quality of education is decreasing from time to time. For instance, quality assurance and reform office notes, “በሀገር ደረጃ የትምህርት ጥራት ችግር እንዳለበት ተገምግሟል፡፡ /The quality of education is evaluated at country level and labeled as lower./” Thus, it is clear that instructors’ and students’ ideas concord to each other.

**Quality education threatening practices.** In the discussion, students mentioned various factors that could threaten the quality of education. Let us consider students’ responses as follows:

*በብሉክ የሚሰጡትምህርቶች ብዙ እውቀት የማይሰጡም ፣ በኮርስ አሰጣጥ ላይ ብዙ ችግሮች አሉ፡፡ ብሉክ ኮርሶችን ከ15-20 ቀናት እንድንሸፍን ይደረጋል፡፡ ኮርሶች ለውጤት ማግኘት እንጅ ለእውቀት ማግኘት የሚሆኑ አይደሉም፡፡ ማህረንም ከኮርሱ ጋር ግንኙነት የሌላቸው የሚሆኑበት አጋጣሚ አለ፡፡ ሴሚንተር ቤዝድ ማህንዮስ የሚባሉት ኮርሶች በብሉክ ይሰጣሉ፡፡ ለምሳሌ ሰርቪዬ አፍ ወርሷል ሊትሬቸር 10 ዩኒቶች አሉት፡፡ ይህ ኮርስ በብሉክ እየተሰጠው ይህ አግባብነት የለውም፡፡ ይህን ኮርስ ለማሸፈን ተችግረናል፡፡*

*Courses offered in block modality are not appropriate to acquire knowledge. There are many problems related to course delivery. We are forced to cover block courses from fifteen to twenty days. The courses are used to fulfill the program but not to impart knowledge. There are also situations when teachers are not related with (good at) courses. Courses that should have been offered in a semester are offered in block. For example, survey of world literature has ten units. This course is offered in block. It is not right; we are suffering to cover it.*



As mentioned by the students, a course, which has ten units, is offered in block modality to cover it within fifteen to twenty days. Students added that it was impossible to cover such courses in block modality. Taking courses in block does not make students to acquire knowledge. It only enables students to pass from one semester to the other without benefiting the real teaching-learning process. To cover vast courses properly and impart knowledge to students, they (courses) should be offered in a semester-based approach.

Furthermore, students mentioned shortage of time to finish vast courses in block and scarcity of qualified teachers as obstacles that affect quality education. For instance, one instructor teaches up to three courses which made students be bored of the courses. Nevertheless, an instructor who specializes in TEFL teaches literature courses. Students and teachers faced poor time management practices. In the FGD, a discussant pointed out, “መምህራን ከኮርሱ ጋር ግንኙነት የሌላቸው የሚሆኑበት አጋጣሚም አለ፡፡” “ተያያዥኝን ት አለው እየተባለ መምህራን ያለፈልዳቸው እያስተማሩን ነው፡፡ / There are occasions when instructors do not have relation with courses. Saying that courses are related, instructors offer courses other than their specializations”.

Instructors also mentioned factors that affect quality education: as lack of committed administrative bodies and instructors undermine the teaching profession and emphasize more on access than quality. Nonetheless, limited resources in libraries, laboratories and classrooms, opening new programs without adequate preparation, students’ inefficiency to accomplish their tasks and lack of self-interest to learn and recurrent disputes at universities were some factors that hindered the quality of education. To illustrate, interviewee 2 states, “The teaching learning process was interrupted due to repeated disputes. Universities had been places of disputes rather than center of academics.”

Based on the analysis, it is possible to deduce that the quality of education offered currently at universities had several limitations and the obstacles are numerous as mentioned above.

**Responsible bodies.** The second point for discussion was on who the responsible body/bodies was/were to the failure of quality education. Regarding this question, students first blamed themselves to be accountable for the low quality of education. Look at the following responses of students.

ለትምህርቱ ጥራት መዳደል ዋና ተጠያቂዎች እኛ ተሟዎች ነን፡፡ ለምሳሌ ክላስ የለም ስንባል እልል ገለን ነው የምንሄደው፡፡ ይህ በእኛው ላይ ጭንቀት ያመጣል፡፡

*We (students) are responsible for the low quality of education. For example, when there is no class we feel happy and disperse soon. It has its own negative impact up on us.*

ተጠያቂዎች እኛው ነን፡፡ ሁልጊዜም ቀድሞ አንገበን ክፍል መጣ ባት ነበረብን ይህን ባለመቼረጋችን የራሱ ጉዳት አለው፡፡

*We (students) are responsible for the low quality of education. We should have read the daily lesson earlier before class, but we had not done that. It has its own negative impact on the quality of education.*

Besides, the students discussed their lack of interest towards their own learning. To this question, they revealed their perceptions as follows:

ተሟዎች መሰራት አይፈልጉም፤ መንበሻ አይፈልጉም፤ መጻፍትን ቅ አይፈልጉም፡፡ ፈተና ላይ መሰራትና መሳፍት ብቻ ነው የሚፈልጉት፡፡ ዋናው ወረቀት ነው እንጂ ለእውቀት የሚጻፍ ቅ ሰው የለም፡፡ በአጠቃላይ ሥርዓቱ ለትምህርት የሚገጠው ቀጋ አንስተኛ ነው፡፡

*Students do not want to work hard; they do not want to read; they do not want to be busy. The only thing they need is to succeed in exams and pass. Students’ concern is the certificate; no one worries about knowledge. Generally, the system gives little value to education.*

As noted above, discussants confirmed that most students do not want to learn and strive to acquire better knowledge. Students do not usually read before attending classes. They want to complete the course and score grades. They do not care about acquiring knowledge because they believe that recruitment of staffs is not done based on knowledge or results but with nepotism. They also added that many students fail in exams, and

most of them also lack confidence about their knowledge, so they cannot accomplish their duties attentively. In the FGD a discussant raised the following points.

እኔ በበኩሌ በሦስት ዓመት ቆይታዬ በረብሻው ምክንያት ይህን አወቅያለሁ የምላውነት ገር የለኝም፡ በሙሉ ህፋት እጥረት እንጨቋለን፡፡ አሳይሞን ሲሰጥ በቂ ማብራሪያ አይሰጠንም፡ የፈተና ውጤቶችንም ዝቅተኛ ነው፡ አስተዳደሩ ምን ሁኔታ ላይ እንዳለን የሚያጠራውን ገር የለም፡ ተሟላ እና ማህረር ተፋጥነው ያለው፡

*As to me, during my stay at the university, I did not get anything due to the disturbance. We worried about shortage of books. When assignments were given, enough explanation was not given. Our exam results were low. The administrative bodies did not supervise the situation we were in. Students and instructors were in a state of disharmony.*

As stated above, the students had complained about the devastating impact of the dispute on the teaching–learning activity. Nevertheless, shortage of reference materials and instructors’ negligence to give clear instruction were suppressing to students. Students’ exam results were also low. The administrative bodies did not oversee what was happening in the teaching-learning process. Students and instructors were not working in harmony. Based on the above points, it is reasonable to conclude that the government, administrative staff, instructors and students had roles to affect the education system.

As mentioned by instructors, the other obstacles that hinder the appropriate implementation of teaching and learning are lack of efficient supervision and some education policy problems. The management bodies at university and college level have the possibility to increase or decrease the quality of education. However, they mainly focus in relation to implementing political agenda and reporting activities. For this reason, they do not avail themselves around classrooms for supervision except on first day first class sessions (Interviewee 2).

In addition, the education policy has its own shortcomings that affect the quality of education. For example, interviewee 3 claimed:

ሥርዓቱ እንደ ሥርዓት የሪፖርት ሥርዓት እንጂ የሥራ ሥርዓት አይደለም፡ ማህረን የወደቀ ተሟላ የለም ብለው ነው ሪፖርት ማድረግ የሚጠበቅባቸው፡ ተሟላው አለፈ ሲባል ጥያቄ የለም ወደቀ ሲባል ግን ማህረን ይጠየቃሉ፡፡ ይህ አሰራር ዩኒቨርሲቲውን ጥምሳሌ፡፡

*The education policy as a system is a system for reporting but not appropriate for working. Teachers are expected to report that there is no student who is failed. When students are promoted regardless of their knowledge, there is no question. However, when a student’s failure is reported, teachers are blamed. This kind of system also exists in universities.*

As mentioned above, in primary schools, for fear of being blamed, teachers do not dare to report students’ failure. Therefore, they report that their students are promoted in contrast to the reality. Similarly, the loose continuous assessment and the re-examination system given to failed students at universities have been affecting the quality of education; rather they are against good performance and these activities facilitate easy promotion. Apart from the continuous assessment, when a student’s grade lowers, instructors are forced to give re-exam with no extra support to empower students with knowledge, so after two or three occasions, instructors fade up and begin to give pass mark to failed students, which is against the professional ethics.

Moreover, the society’s negative attitude towards the teaching profession has affected teachers’ morality at large, so most teachers are discouraged in their profession. Most parents do not want to invest much of their time and money on their children’s education because they have been hopeless by the unemployment of graduates. According to interviewee 2, “Nowadays students and the society give more attention to cross cutting ways to get wealth than striving to acquire knowledge.” In general, it is reasonable to infer that irresponsibility of the management, the inappropriate continuous assessment and the society’s negative attitude to the teaching profession have been affecting the quality of education.

Regarding responsible bodies who are accountable to the less quality of education, an instructor (interviewee 4) states.

መንግስት ፖሊሲ አወጪ ቢሆንም አስፈጻሚ መሆን ይገባል፡፡ የመንግስት ተወካዮች ጥራቱን አያውቁትም፡፡ ጥራት ማለት ወርክ ሾፕ ማስጠን ማለቱ ይታያል፡፡ ቀለም አልወጋቸውም፡፡ ማህሪንም ተጠያቂዎች ነን፡፡ ጽንሰ ሃሳቡን በደንብ ማስወቅ ይገባል፡፡ ቤተሰብም ልጆቹን በስዕብና እና በእውቀት አንጻር ማስደግ ይኖርበታል፡፡ ትምህርት ሚኒስቴር ፖሊሲ ማለክ ብቻ አይበቃውም፡፡ ተከታትሎ ማስፈጸም ያስፈልገዋል፡፡

*The government is not only a policy maker but it should also control the implementation [but also an implementer]. Representatives of the government do not know the quality of education. They assume that quality education means preparing workshops. They are not knowledgeable. We (teachers) are also accountable. We must inculcate knowledge to learners in depth. Parents also need to empower their children with ethics and knowledge. The ministry of education should not only send the policy, but it must also control the implementation as well.*

The above interview states that the government is policy designer and agent for implementation. But, government representatives do not know about the quality of education, so they do not accomplish their duties as required. Instructors also lack commitment to teach in depth to inculcate knowledge and skills. Besides, parents are expected to empower their children with ethics and knowledge. It implies that the government, the management at universities, parents and instructors contribute to the low quality of education. On top of that, interviewee 3 stated the following points about responsible bodies.

ተጠያቂው አንድ አካል ነው ብዬ አላምንም፡፡ ፖሊሲው በራሱ ችግር አለበት፡፡ ፖሊሲ የሚያሟላ ጭቃ አካል ተጠያቂ ነው፡፡ ተግባራዊ አካልም ተጠያቂ ነው፡፡ አሜሪካ ላይ የተቀማጡ ሰዎችም ተጠያቂዎች ናቸው፡፡ ማህሪንም ተጠያቂ ነው፡፡

*I do not believe that there is only one responsible body. Since the policy has its own problems, policy designers are responsible. The implementers, the management, and instructors are also accountable.*

As stated in the interview, policy designers, the management bodies, instructors and those who involve in implementing the education policy have roles to weaken the quality of education.

To summarize, the government, the management at university and college level, instructors and students are accountable for the low quality of education.

The third question, during the FGD, was about the three most serious challenges students faced during their three years stay at universities. In answering this question, they responded that shortage of time or problem of time management, teachers’ reluctance to teach or inappropriate teaching of courses and shortage of books and other materials were the three most serious problems. As mentioned by students, teachers did not use their time properly, so students were overloaded by courses. It affected them to a higher extent to acquire knowledge and skills. Students also responded that they did not manage their time wisely. That means, they spent much of their time carelessly. The second point was teachers’ reluctance to accomplish their duties effectively. Hence, as mentioned by students, they rushed faster to cover courses than to impart appropriate knowledge to learners. The third problem was lack of reference books and other materials that can facilitate the teaching-learning process. To conclude this part, unwise use of time, having no interest to teach, shortage of reference books and other facilities had the potential to affect the quality of education.

**Low education quality indicators.** The next question was regarding the indicators of low quality education. Related to this point, students revealed various manifestations. For instance, students suggested,

እኛ ያለ እውቀት ወጥተን ተመረቃችን እንጎዳቸዋለን፡፡

*If we graduate with inadequate knowledge, we will affect students.*

በቂ እውቀት የሌለው ተመረቃ በተለያዩ ቦታዎች ሲሞድ ገደብ ማሰራት አይችልም፡፡

*When a student with inadequate knowledge is assigned for work, he/she cannot accomplish his/her duties properly.*

እውቀት የሌለ ችግሮችን በተሰማሩበት ስራ ችግር ፈጣሪዎች ይሆናሉ፡፡

*Students with inadequate knowledge will be sources of problems where they are assigned.*

እውቀት ከሌለን ለሀገራችን ጥሩ ነገር አናበረክትም፡፡

*If we do have knowledge, we cannot contribute something good to our country.*

As mentioned above, when graduates who do not acquire full knowledge are assigned to teach, they also harm learners. Incapable graduates do not also perform their duties effectively; rather they become sources of problems wherever they are assigned. If they do not have knowledge, they do not contribute relevant things to their country.

Besides, students mentioned, “most students fail in examinations, so they do not get job opportunities after graduation.” They also added, “Students who do not get quality training lack confidence in their personality and become hopeless in their life. Students who passed through low quality education at lower grades lack subject matter knowledge and develop low interest for learning at universities. Students who lack appropriate knowledge do not contribute to their country”. To conclude, implementing low quality education affects students’ success and personality greatly.

Similarly, instructors mentioned various indicators of the low quality education. For instance, instructors mentioned that a significant number of students were incapable to university level, and they did not want to exert energy for their learning and could not ask or explain issues explicitly as the level demands. Interviewee 1 states: “If instructors do not control absentees, students do not want to attend class. They are also afraid of subjective/written exams because they cannot accomplish well individually as expected in examinations. There is a mismatch between their cumulative grades and their performances.” In this regard, interviewee 1 added, “Some students are unable to identify Amharic letters properly”, and interviewee 5 suggested, “Many students write their names in English by using only consonant letters. Unfortunately, BA holders in English cannot communicate in English. Most graduates could not pass exit exams”. It proves that a significant number of university students are by far under the expected standard. For this reason, they cannot ask questions or explain their ideas fully in the classroom. Based on instructors’ views, it is reasonable to conclude that unless students struggle to empower themselves with knowledge and skills and be eager for better learning, the quality of education is getting worse and worse.

**Reasons to perform quality education threatening practices.** Regarding reasons to commit quality education threatening practices, instructors forwarded the following points.

- Mixing politics and education intentionally
- Opening large number of learning institutions without available resources
- Unbalanced teacher-student ratio
- Reluctance to carry out duties
- Lack of control by administrators

As addressed above, there are various reasons for the different bodies committed quality education threatening practices. Some state that mixing political issues with academic matters was a big problem, so the

management gives more attention to politics than the academics. An instructor further explained that if students are not well educated, they do not ask their academic, economic, and moral rights. For this reason, there seems to have a plan to decline the quality of education intentionally. Moreover, the government was busier to open large number of learning institutions without available labor and resources. As a result, the quality of education was forgotten. In some departments, the teacher-student ratio was unbalanced. The management, instructors and students were also reluctant to carry out their duties effectively. That means administrators did not supervise properly, instructors were uncommitted to teach appropriately and students were unwilling to manage their own learning effectively.

**Possible solutions.** Students also discussed about possible solutions that could improve the quality of education. Accordingly, the first thing mentioned repeatedly by students was revising the education policy. Since discussants passed through this education system, they had observed practical problems of the education policy. For instance, they suggested that the free promotion policy at lower grades and the continuous assessment, delivering courses in block modality, and implementation of one-to-five grouping among students at university level were obstacles to acquire full knowledge and skills. Besides, students claimed that the administrative body at university, college, and department levels had not supervised the teaching-learning process as expected. This implies that implementation of continuous assessment, course delivery system, one-to-five grouping among students and supervision system of the management was not appropriate. Therefore, their ways of implementation needs intense revision.

Finally, instructors were asked to suggest possible measures to be taken as solution to improve the quality of education. Thus, according to instructors' views, the possible measures that should be taken to improve the quality of education include the following points.

**Working in collaboration.** Performing educational activities is not the responsibility of a single institution or working staff. Rather, it is a collaborative work of different stakeholders. Interviewee 4 suggested, “በቅንጅት ማስራት በጣም አስፈላጊ ነው።” “It is essential to work in collaboration.” It implies that all stakeholders must work in harmony to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

**Accomplish duties with responsibility.** Education is a life-long process that needs dedication to facilitate the living condition of any citizen. Thus, to improve the society's ways of life, it is necessary to impart knowledge to learners with great responsibility. That means instructors, learners, and the administrative body must accomplish their duties successfully to support the teaching-learning activity effectively. Interviewee 4 notes, “Education should be the concern of all people. All stakeholders should also accomplish their responsibilities fully.”

**Give due emphasis the education sector.** Revise the curriculum in relation to the Ethiopian context. Besides, most candidates join the teaching profession as a means of survival but not as a permanent profession. Hence, it is essential to recruit skillful and interested professionals to improve the quality of the teaching profession at all levels. Respecting the teaching profession is also very vital.

ስርዓተ ትምህርቱን ማስተካከል፡፡ ከሀገራችን ተጨባጭነት ታጋረዖ ተስ ማዋጋጫዎችን ማግኘት፡፡

*Revise the curriculum. Evaluate whether it fits with the country's norms and values.*

ማምህራንን ማብቃት፣ ግብዓት ማደግ፣ ማቆጣጠር፡፡

*Empower teachers with knowledge and skills, fulfill resources and control working system.*

Besides, fresh BA graduates who join the teaching profession are assigned to teach BA degree students at universities immediately. They can assist experienced instructors until they gain valuable experience, but they should not begin teaching. This working system has its own impact on the quality of education. Besides, it is necessary to stick to educational standards by improving the assessment policy at all levels. This enables to assign capable students to universities and to graduate knowledgeable citizens eventually.

### 4.2 Findings of Data Obtained from Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaires were collected from 60 students, and most of the close-ended questions are followed by open-ended questions to seek further information. The close-ended questions are presented in the following table. The open-ended questions are not included in this table, but they are analyzed in harmony with the close-ended questions.

Table 1: Students' questionnaire and responses

No.	Questions	Alternatives and results				
1	Do you believe that the education offered at universities currently has brought the expected educational standard/outcome?	a. Yes <u>29</u>	b. No <u>29</u>	c. I can't decide <u>2</u>		
4	Did you join your department according to your choice?	A. Yes <u>38</u>		B. No <u>22</u>		
6	To what extent do you believe on the presence of the following issues at your university? Tick your preference with an "x" sign in the space provided in the table below.					
6.1	Qualified MA and PhD instructors	very high	high	medium	low	very low
		9	18	19	6	1
6.2	Highly interested and eager students for learning	7	12	28	6	2
6.3	Good service delivery of the administrative staff (e.g., on time registration, assigning students to departments based on their interest and controlling the teaching learning process)	3	15	22	14	4
6.4	Appropriate assessment and grading system	10	18	25	5	-
6.5	Availability and good arrangement of seats	2	14	28	9	1
6.6	Availability of power point in the classrooms	8	17	14	9	1
6.7	Good facilities in libraries (appropriate service from librarians availability of seats, reference materials and the internet)	3	9	24	14	7
6.8	Completing the courses properly on time	7	13	17	13	4
6.9	Conducive teaching-learning environment	2	18	22	7	4
8	What do you suggest about the duration that takes to complete BA degree program in three years?	a. It is enough <u>29</u>		b. It is not enough <u>21</u>		c. I can't decide <u>10</u>

The first question was whether the current education offered at universities is to the expected standard or not. As to this question, 29 (48.33%) respondents replied that it is to the expected standard, and the same number of respondents reacted that it is not to the expected standard. Respondents who said 'No' to the above question were asked to list down existing quality education threatening practices, so they pointed out many factors that impede the quality of education. For example, according to the discussions the implementation of the continuous assessment has its own impact on the quality of education because it does not evaluate students' real individual academic performance. Rather, it focuses more on group activities that are done mainly by group leaders or other individuals. However, it is considered group performance. In addition, the implementation of courses in block modality has its own influence on the quality of education.

Next, students mentioned that there is shortage of reference books, laboratory equipment and seats in classrooms. They explained that they spend a lot of time in search of books and seats. It implies that without adequate reference books, laboratory equipment and seats in libraries and classrooms, proper implementation of

the teaching-learning process is unthinkable. They also blamed that the lesson offered to them is more of theoretical. That means the theoretical knowledge is not supported by practical activities to broaden students' capacity and stabilize their skills.

Moreover, respondents talked that most students face communication problems. For this reason, they do not have the initiative to read and take notes by themselves; rather, they expect handouts from instructors. Some instructors are not also well qualified, and they lack subject matter knowledge and method of teaching. However, they teach more than two subjects each semester. Some instructors do not use their time properly, and some others are not well disciplined. Consequently, they do not treat students politely. For this reason, respondents said that students do not want to ask their instructors even if they need support. Based on the above responses, it seems rational to infer that there is no close relationship between students and instructors, so they do not work in harmony to maximize the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, students responded that the political instability had interrupted the teaching-learning process for extended periods, so it has affected the proper implementation of the teaching-learning process. For this reason, students did not feel comfortable to learn peacefully. Such kind of learning situation has created fear and insecurity upon students because "students learn well when they are physically and psychologically healthy" (UNICEF, 2000, p. 5). It implies that political instability has its own impact on the quality of education.

The fourth question to respondents was whether or not they are assigned to departments based on their interests. In answering this question, 38 (63.3%) respondents answered that they are assigned based on their preferences, but 22 (36.6%) students replied that they are not assigned based on their choices. According to this information, the majority of the respondents said that students are assigned based on their choices. That means even if it is not fair to ignore the interest of 36.6% of respondents, this may not be the root cause to their less achievement while learning.

The respondents were also asked about the educational status of instructors at universities. Thus, 27(45%) respondents mentioned that an instructor whose academic rank is MA and PhD is high/very high, whereas 19(31.33%) respondents suggested that the number of instructors whose academic rank is MA and PhD is medium. Seven (11.66%) respondents answered that MA and PhD holders in their universities are few or very few. Based on the responses, it is possible to suggest that the number of qualified instructors at universities still needs improvement.

The next question raised to respondents was about the presence of highly interested and eager students for learning among them (Ques.6.2). To this idea, 19(31.66%) respondents replied that students' interest for learning is high, and 28(46.66%) respondents suggested that students' interest for learning is medium, and 8(13.33%) respondents mentioned that students' interest for learning is low. Based on respondents' views, it seems puzzling for students to be successful in their learning with medium interest.

The respondents were then asked about the presence of appropriate service (on time registration, assigning students to departments according to their interest, assisting students/controlling the teaching-learning process) rendered to students from the administrative staff (ques. 6.3). Hence, 22 (36.66%) respondents suggested that they get the service at medium level. To the same question, 18 (30%) respondents said that they get the required service at low level. As indicated, it is possible to infer that students need better service from the administrative staff to increase their learning interest and knowledge.

The respondents were also asked about the appropriateness of assessment and grading system. Thus, 25(41.66%) respondents said that the assessment and grading system is delivered at medium level. But, 29(48.33%) respondents said that the assessment and grading system is high/very high. It implies that university students have benefited from the current assessment and grading system. However, the assessment and grading system are not guarantee for acquiring knowledge.

The next point was about the availability of seats in the classroom. Hence, in relation to this idea, 28(46.66%) respondents suggested that it is in a medium level; 10(16.66%) respondents said it is low. Besides, our observation and students' responses in the interviews proved that there are not enough seats in the classrooms at universities. Hence, students move seats from classroom to classroom during class time. This condition is time consuming and disturbs neighboring classrooms, so it affects the quality of education. The other point was about the presence of projectors in the classrooms. Therefore, according to respondents' views, 14(23.33%) respondents witnessed that classrooms then had projectors partially at their university, and 19(31.33%) respondents said that the presence of projectors is low/very low. It implies that the teaching-learning process is not supported fully with better technology. The next idea is about facilities and services in libraries. Related to this point, 24(40%) respondents suggested that facilities and services are medium, and 21 (35%) respondents said that the facilities and services given in libraries are at low level. To cross-check, students' response in the FGD proved that the facilities and the services in libraries are below the standard. This condition affects the quality of education significantly.

The other issue raised for students was about course coverage. Thus, 17(28.33%) respondents replied that course coverage is at medium level. Similarly, 17(28.33%) respondents said that completing courses on time is at low/very low level. It supports the response obtained above. Thus, it implies that course coverage at universities is a big problem. Next, respondents were also asked about the teaching-learning environment. Thus, 17(28.33%) respondents commented that it is at medium level, and 11(18.33%) respondents complained that it is at low level. Based on these responses, low or medium conducive learning environment could not be a guarantee to achieve the quality of education. The respondents were also asked about the duration set to complete BA degree program. Thus, 29(48.33%) respondents said that three years is enough to complete BA degree. Twenty-one (35%) respondents suggested that it is not enough time, and 10(16.66%) could not decide. According to the responses of the majority of respondents, three years is enough to complete BA degree program. However, this response contradicts with instructors views. Moreover, students complained about the problems of course coverage and block course offering modality, so if courses are not covered on time how it is possible to complete BA degree within three years? Rather this response proved that students were not responsible for their own learning.

The respondents were also asked to mention the three most serious problems that affected the teaching-learning process during their stay at university. Thus, lack of reference materials, inappropriate time management of instructors and inability to cover the course on time were the three most serious problems. With these major problems, students could not be effective in their learning.

Furthermore, the respondents listed down indicators of low quality education. Regarding this point, they mentioned acquiring insufficient knowledge from courses, scoring low grades, failing in examinations and developing lack of confidence as manifestations of low quality education.

The next to last question was about bodies who had committed quality education threatening practices. Respondents mentioned as many concerned bodies as possible. According to them, university presidents, college administrative bodies, teachers and students were accountable. Irresponsibility, negligence to accomplish activities effectively, inability to understand others' problems, engagement with non-academic issues like politics and lack of skill are some of the reasons to commit quality education threatening practices.

The last question was about the possible measures that should be taken to improve the quality of education. Regarding this, respondents listed down various alternatives as solutions. The first point was that all concerned bodies at various levels of the administrative and academic position should accomplish their tasks with high responsibility. It enables to control how the teaching-learning process is going on. Then, it is also necessary to revise the education policy, increase the duration of completing BA degree and fulfill necessary infrastructure (like reading materials and books, seats, internet service and laboratory equipment) and the like.



To sum up, it is necessary to revise the education policy and emphasize on imparting deep knowledge by supporting it with practical activities. The other vital issue is assigning qualified and dedicated teachers at university level. Then, fulfilling libraries and labs with necessary learning materials is paramount importance. Otherwise, it will not be possible to implement quality education in the absence of the above mentioned necessities.

### 4.3 Findings of Data Obtained from Instructors' Questionnaire

In the analysis of this data, twenty-five instructors' responses, out of thirty-five, were incorporated. Ten instructors could not return the questionnaires. Close-ended questions are included in the table, and most of them are followed by open-ended questions to get further information.

Table 2: Instructors' questionnaire and responses

1	Do you believe that the education offered at universities currently has brought the expected educational standard/outcome?	a. Yes <u>1</u>	b. No <u>24</u>	c. I can't decide		
4	Do you believe that students are assigned to departments according to their interest?	a. Yes <u>6</u>	b. No <u>18</u>	c. I am not sure <u>1</u>		
6	To what extent do you believe on the presence of the following issues at your university? Tick your preference with an "x" sign in the space provided in the table below.					
6.1	Qualified MA and PhD instructors	very high	high	medium	low	very low
		1	16	6	1	1
6.2	Highly interested and eager students for learning			12	9	4
6.3	Good service delivery of the administrative staff (e.g., on time registration, assigning students to departments based on their interest and controlling the teaching learning process)		3	14	7	1
6.4	Appropriate assessment and grading system		5	13	5	2
6.5	Availability and good arrangement of seats		7	12	5	1
6.6	Availability of projector in the classrooms		3	10	6	5
6.7	Good facilities in libraries (appropriate service from librarians availability of seats, reference materials and the internet)		3	14	6	2
6.8	Completing the courses properly on time		7	11	6	1
6.9	Conducive teaching-learning environment		1	16	5	3
8	What do you suggest on the duration that takes to complete a BA degree program in three years?	a. It is enough time <u>3</u>	b. It is not enough <u>17</u>	c. I can't decide <u>5</u>		

First, instructors were asked to comment on the quality of education currently offered at universities. To this question, 24 (96%) of the instructors believed that the education offered at universities currently is not to the expected standard. The instructors also proved it in the interview. Based on the instructors' responses, it is possible to conclude that the education offered at universities currently is not at the appropriate standard.

Second, instructors were asked to mention the existing problems that could affect the quality of education. Thus, they listed down the education policy, which focuses more on access than quality, as one problem. Moreover, shortage of reference books, laboratories and seats in classrooms has also its own impact to hinder the quality of education. Irresponsibility of students for their learning, due to various reasons, has also hindered the implementation of quality education. Instructors also mentioned that students' low level of educational background and poor time management (both by instructors and students) are factors that affected

the quality of education. With the presence of all these challenges, it is impossible to achieve the quality of education.

Additionally, instructors were asked to explain how the different quality education threatening practices affected the quality of education. Thus, according to the respondents' views, instructors are incapable economically and are demoralized psychologically for being poor and working under the laborious and undermined profession. In addition, according to participant 4, "Students are irresponsible for their learning"; participants 8 and 10 mentioned that students have poor educational background. Most students join universities not based on their own performance rather by cheating. The dispute occurred at universities for a long time also affected the teaching-learning process as well (participant 5). The other reasons were difficulty to assign students to departments according to their interest and unemployment after graduation. Lack of facilities in libraries and laboratories have their own negative impact on the quality of education too.

As mentioned above, the reasons that affected the quality of education can be categorized into three. These are issues related to instructors, students and facilities. Therefore, the first reason was the presence of less committed instructors at universities. That means, most of them are not dedicated to their profession, so they do not teach as properly as possible. Participant 4 proved it saying, "Teachers' lack of commitment due to low motivation as a result of dissatisfaction with life, salary and incentives" has affected the quality of education. Secondly, students are not responsible for their learning. They want to get grades or passing marks without much effort. They do not want to suffer more to gain knowledge. Thirdly, there are not enough reading materials and facilities in libraries and laboratories. Here, it is reasonable to conclude that the existence of uncommitted instructors, irresponsible students for their learning and shortage of facilities at universities affected the quality of education.

The fourth question for instructors was whether or not assigning students to departments is done based on their interests. To this question, 18(72%) instructors responded that students are not assigned to departments based on their interests. The instructors were also asked to mention the impacts of unable to assign students to departments based on students' choices. Hence, the impacts can be summarized as low achievement in exams, dependency on others (during group discussions and assignments), lack of interest to learn, desperate and tension, and low participation while learning. It implies that assigning students to departments without their choice has negative impact on students' performance in particular and on the quality of education in general.

Next, instructors were asked to reveal their opinions whether or not students are highly interested in learning at universities. To this question, 13(52%) respondents thought that students' interest for learning is medium and 12(48%) respondents said that students have low interest for learning. It implies that there is no student who is highly interested or eager for learning. This incident shows that the quality of education is at risk because success without students' interest is unthinkable.

The other question raised for instructors was about the service delivery activities given by the administrative staff at universities. Thus, 14(52%) of them said that the services are considered medium level, which is not an exception to achieve the implementation of quality education. The next question was about the appropriateness of grading and assessment system. To this question, 13(52%) of them said that the implementation of continuous assessment and grading system is at medium level. Whereas 7(28%) respondents reported that the assessment or grading system is at low level. Based on the responses, it is reasonable to infer that with medium or low level of assessment or grading system, it is impossible to achieve the quality of education. Instructors were also asked to comment on the availability and arrangement of seats in their universities. Accordingly, 12(48%) of the respondents said that it is at its medium level. The other question was about the presence of projectors in classrooms. To this question, only 4(16%) of the respondents said the presence of projectors is high, and 10(40%) replied that it is medium, and the rest 11(44%) said it is low. It

implies that many classrooms do not have projector service that can facilitate the teaching-learning process with technology.

Next, respondents were asked about the facilities (seats, reference books, computers and internet services) found in libraries. Accordingly, 14 (56%) respondents said that the facilities are considered to be available at medium level, and 8(32%) respondents mentioned the facilities in libraries are scarce. From this information, it is possible to infer that with medium or low facility or service, it is not easy to achieve an excellent educational outcome. Furthermore, respondents were asked whether or not courses are completed on time properly. In response, 11(44%) respondents said that courses are completed in time at medium level, and 7(28%) respondents assumed that the courses are completed in time at high level; the rest 7(28%) responded that completing courses in time is at low level. According to instructors' responses, it is reasonable to conclude that course completion on time has been a serious problem. Moreover, respondents were asked about the teaching-learning environment, and 16(64%) respondents witnessed that the teaching-learning environment is suitable at medium level, and 8(32%) instructors revealed that the teaching-learning environment is low or not conducive. It implies that with medium or low learning environment great achievement is not expected.

The respondents also ranked the three most serious problems that affected the teaching-learning process. Even if there are individual differences to one another, the most repeatedly occurring problem was students' lack of interest to learn. Students may have various reasons that made them uninterested for learning. The next serious problem was assigning students into departments without their interest. The third problem was lack of resources in libraries. Of course, though libraries may not have ample and up to date reading materials, it could be solved immediately to improve the teaching-learning process. However, it existed as a problem, and it has affected the quality of education. Thus, without interest for learning and inadequate reading materials, students cannot be effective. These factors affected the quality of education.

On top of that, the respondents forwarded their views about the duration needed to complete BA degree program. To this question, 17(68%) respondents responded that the duration (three years) is not sufficient to accomplish the degree program as efficiently as possible. Only 3 respondents said three years is enough to complete a BA degree. They were also asked to mention the impacts of the short-range duration to complete BA degree program. In response, most respondents stated that since most courses are bulky, they are not covered in the specified time, and students do not acquire the required knowledge and skills in three years. Based on these points, it is reasonable to deduce that three years is not sufficient to complete BA degree so that it is one major factor to affect the quality of education.

The next question was to pinpoint the manifestations of under standard or low quality education. Thus, according to respondents' opinions, indicators of low educational standard are low performance at work places and under employment rate after graduation, cheating of others' works (exams and thesis), low performance when doing individually, incompetence in learning, low interest for learning, inability to express oneself etc.

Hence, a question about responsible bodies who commit quality education threatening practices was forwarded. Regarding this idea, respondents mentioned that ministry of education, higher institutions' management bodies, academic staff at different levels, teachers, students and parents are responsible bodies. According to instructors, focusing more on quantity (education for all) than quality for extended periods (the government), accepting and trying to implement policies set by the government without questioning, incapable administrative and academic staff to challenge or minimize problems were observed by responsible bodies.

The final question was about what to do to increase the quality of education. Accordingly, respondents forwarded different alternative solutions. For example, university instructors should work more on increasing the quality of education; the community should give value for education; capable students should be assigned to higher institutions; duration to complete for higher learning should also be revised and offering block courses and re-examination need to be corrected and the current education system or curriculum should be revised.

Besides, working to satisfy instructors' needs and promoting them for teaching, assigning appropriate leaders at different levels, assigning students' to departments according to their choice, giving attention to the quality of primary education (because it is a foundation for higher learning), creating conducive environment for teaching-learning, fulfilling resources for learning, liberating academic activities from political intervention, etc., are mentioned by instructors as solutions.

## 5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the practices that hinder the quality of education. Accordingly, many challenges that affected the quality of education were investigated. Firstly, almost all participants of the study believed that the education offered at universities currently is not up to the standard. There are various causes to this effect. For instance, according to the analysis, dissatisfied and uncommitted teachers, below standard education, and irresponsible university students for their learning and shortage of facilities at universities have affected the quality of education greatly. As students mentioned, there is no close relationship between students and instructors, so they did not work in harmony to maximize the teaching-learning process. Based on instructors' responses with medium facility found in the library and classrooms and/or services offered by the administrative staff and low or medium conducive learning environment, it is impossible to achieve an excellent educational outcome.

As stated above, course completion on time had been a serious problem at universities. If it were impossible to complete courses on time, imparting the required knowledge and skills would be unthinkable. Besides, instructors' responses proved that the teaching-learning environment with medium conducive situation is not a guarantee to achieve the quality of education; without interest for learning and inadequate reading materials, students could not be effective in their learning as well. Three years was not also sufficient to complete BA degree because it does not enable learners to acquire the required knowledge and skills. Thus, it was a big obstacle to improve the quality of education. Regarding the importance of better education for individuals, Sen (2000, p. 19) emphasizes, "...better education and health help in the earning of higher incomes." However, the malpractices committed by various participants of the teaching-learning process at universities seem to have overlooked the values of quality education for citizens. For this reason, the irresponsibility of the management and the inappropriate implementation of the continuous assessment process had put the quality of education at risk. Regarding the lack of proper implementation of the continuous assessment, Tadesse et al. (2013, p.277) witness, "There is favorable attitude from all stakeholders about continuous assessment and active learning methods. However, its implementation is yet not to the desired level." This conclusion agrees with our finding. To sum up, the actors of the teaching-learning process mentioned above committed quality education threatening practices due to irresponsibility, lack of knowledge and dissatisfaction.

Based on the analysis, irresponsibility seems to have affected the education sector at large. Mainly, the management body at various levels, instructors and students executed this misbehavior. That means, since the management staff did not supervise the teaching-learning process effectively in a continuous manner, instructors and students showed irresponsibility to their duties unfortunately. However, instructors and students must develop consciousness to carry out their duties by themselves because they have the potential to affect the education system positively or negatively. Alemayehu (2012, p. 67) proved the impact of teachers on the education system saying, "An educational system is as good as its teachers." Therefore, instructors must be diligent professionals to assist their students and support the education system unlike the current discouraging situation. In general instructors and students coordination and active roles are crucial to achieve the quality of

education. A research conducted by UNICEF (2000) proved this saying, “Well-managed schools and classrooms contribute educational quality. Students, teachers and administrators should agree upon school rules and policies, and these should be clear and understandable.” Besides, Teshome (2004, 18) states, “The [education] sector is expected to produce graduates who can be not only job seekers but also successful entrepreneurs and job creators, at all levels.” Unluckily, as students witnessed and instructors mentioned, mostly students had been irresponsible for their learning because of hopelessness and carelessness as their knowledge and skills is below the expected standard to examine the advantages and disadvantages (if any) of knowledge and skills to human life. Studies proved that university students’ knowledge and skills is below the expected standard. For instance, Sherif (2017, p.178), based on Eba’s (2013) and Ebissa’s (2010) studies and his experience stated, “...first year university students at Wollega University are found [to be] below the level of expected [standard] to carry out their academic performance.” Thus, if students miss their learning goals, how educational quality is maintained? Nothing replaces students’ active learning roles to improve the quality of education because as Qorro (2006, p.3) proved, “Quality education requires that learners take an active part in knowledge creation through critical thinking, discussion, dialogue, asking questions and solving problems”. But, learners at universities lack these qualities currently as mentioned above. Hence, irresponsibility, lack of knowledge and reluctance to carry out duties had affected the quality of education significantly.

As mentioned above, inculcating quality education is the responsibility of various bodies that demands high effort and collaboration because it is essential for the development of a nation. To emphasize, increasing the quality of higher education is unquestionable to achieve an entire development in sustainable manner nationwide. Thus, encouraging the participation of stakeholders who involve in the teaching-learning process and checking the proper implementation of the education policy significantly resurrects the quality of higher education.

## 6. Conclusions

The main objective of the research was to investigate practices that hinder the quality of education. To achieve the research objectives, data were collected, analyzed and interpreted; then, findings were forwarded. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. Obviously, quality education is the result of collaborative activity of various bodies. However, the management body at different levels of the four universities, instructors and students did not work together effectively as expected. In addition, the management body was not keen enough to supervise or control the teaching-learning process and supply libraries, laboratories and classrooms to fulfill with necessary materials and equipment. Besides, university graduates have been experiencing the worst effects of under standard education. That means university graduates did not develop the expected knowledge, skills and learning confidence. In other words, even if universities are expected to produce educated human power to materialize a country’s entire development, they have not been accomplishing their duties properly to produce well-educated graduates and improve the livelihood of the society eventually. Course coverage was also a big problem at universities. Consequently, it affected the learners at large, and its impact on the quality of education is tremendous. Generally, the management at different levels of universities, instructors and students failed to accomplish their tasks properly due to negligence, dissatisfaction, and hopelessness.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following points were recommended. First, the management bodies at different levels of the universities, instructors and students must work hard and in harmony to maximize the quality of education. Moreover, the management bodies must supervise the teaching-learning process properly and fulfill the necessary reference books, reading materials and equipment to realize effective changes in the teaching-learning process. Second, students should work hard and be responsible to their duties to empower themselves with knowledge and skills and then to be confident and competent in their lives. Thus, students at universities must develop self-efficacy and manage their education responsibly to be successful in their learning and career later on. Third, instructors must be punctual, responsible and devoted to carry out their duties effectively. Particularly, they must work hard to cover courses on time and impart the necessary knowledge and skills to students as much as possible.

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**Author details:**

<sup>1</sup> Mandefro Fenta, Ph.D, corresponding author; an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics and Development in the Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Ethiopia. E-mail: [mandefrofenta@yahoo.com](mailto:mandefrofenta@yahoo.com), telephone: 0911836971

<sup>2</sup> Yimam Workneh Ph.D co-author: an assistant professor of English Literature in the Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University, Ethiopia: [yasmafetah@gmail.com](mailto:yasmafetah@gmail.com), telephone: 0911724951

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