

The Neoliberal Policy Agenda of the World Bank and Higher Education Reform in Ethiopia: The Problem of Inequality in Focus

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Abstract

Partly as a consequence of the knowledge-driven poverty reduction discourse of the World Bank (WB), higher education (HE) has assumed a central place in the development plans and strategies of aid-recipient nation-states in sub-Saharan Africa. Accordingly, governments in the region have introduced planned changes to revitalise their HE subsystems. Given the increased economic optimism associated with the reforms and the neoliberal ideals underpinning them, it is necessary to question the social equity implications and consequences of these changes.

Drawing on a critical policy analysis approach, this study examines: the neoliberal higher education policy prescriptions of the WB and the national realities and responses to these in Ethiopian higher education; the way the problem of inequality in HE is framed; the specific instruments put in place to address the problem; the institutional arrangements in implementing gender equity-related reforms; and, subsequent changes on experiences of the reform targets – women in public universities. It investigates the reform context, contents and effects. Data were collected through reviews of selected policy documents from the WB, the Government of Ethiopia, and two public universities; in-depth interviews with senior government officials in the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia, and senior management members and gender office directors from the two universities; and focus group discussions with four groups of female staff and students in the two universities. The study applied inductive analysis. In line with the research questions and objectives of the study, close analysis of policy texts and transcribed data revealed patterns of commonalities and emerging meanings, contradictions and tensions between policies and the perspectives of key stakeholders. The study reports the findings through descriptive accounts and analytical narratives of the themes.

The findings from this research provide evidence that i) the WB has used a combination of lending and non-lending instruments to instil its neoliberal policy prescriptions into the reform process; ii) the reform agenda includes decentralizing governance of the subsystem, aligning HE with goals of economic competitiveness and poverty reduction, and promoting the involvement of market forces in the subsystem; and iii) the neoliberal policy elements constrains gender equity efforts at different levels. Discursively, the problem of inequality is framed as a lack of access to HE and as a drawback in the human capital of the nation; and in practice, the drivers for greater efficiency and reduced costs in the educational provision embedded in the reforms are inconsistent with the need for financial and political commitments that are required to benefit women in HE. As a result, qualitative dimensions of gender inequality in HE remain unaddressed and women continue to face structural impediments in their working and learning environments. Therefore, I argue that in order to increase the relevance of reforms to the socio-economic development needs of the nation, policymakers need to contextualise external policy directions; and that to promote gender equity in HE, equity policy instruments should be informed by a social justice principle rather than a narrow human resource development perspective.

Keywords: Ethiopia, higher education, neoliberalism, the World Bank, gender, reform, equity, critical policy analysis

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	Asmara University
AUA	Alemaya University of Agriculture
BDU	Bahir Dar University
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CERTWID	Centre for Research Training and Information for Women in Development
DAG	Development Assistance Group
EFA	Education for All
ECA	(the United Nations) Economic Commission for Africa
ETB	(currency) Ethiopian Birr
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	focus group discussion
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HE	higher education
HEIs	higher education institutions
HSIU	Haile Selassie I University
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFIs	International financial institutions
IGS	Institute of Gender Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOs	international organizations
LICs	low-income countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education (Ethiopia)
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (Ethiopia)
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs

NGOs	non-governmental organization
NICHE	Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OU	Odaax University
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SDPRP	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TFHES	Task Force on Higher Education and Societies
TNCs	transnational companies
UCAA	Addis Ababa University College
UN	United Nations Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WCHE	World Conference on Higher Education
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Health Organization
WU	Washeray University
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Declaration

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made and clearly acknowledged.

Signature:



Tebeje Molla Mekonnen

Date: 26/06/2013

Dedication

To my mother, whose illiteracy and poverty did not impede her from envisioning a bright future for her shepherd son: I owe to her all that I have become and achieved.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The subjects of this study are higher education¹ (HE) reform in Ethiopia, policy prescriptions of the World Bank² (WB) in the reform process, and gender equity implications and consequences of the restructuring of the HE subsystem. In this chapter, I set out the context of the problem under investigation and present the problem itself. The first part of the chapter very briefly outlines the socio-economic and political situation of Ethiopia as a background. As we will see in the background section, Ethiopia has a long and complex history related to its diverse population and its religious heritage. The second part states the research problem, and outlines the research questions that the study seeks to answer.

1.1 Background

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) is located in Northeast Africa, in what is commonly referred to as the Horn of Africa. It hosts diverse cultures, ethnic groups and religious faiths. Of more than 75 ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the top five major ethnic groups are the Oromo (34.5%), the Amharic-speaking cultural group (26.9%), the Somali (6.2%), the Tigre (6.1%), and the Sidama (4%) (FDRE Population Census Commission 2008, p.16). With a 2.6% average annual growth rate and a total population of about 85 million in 2010, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, next to Nigeria (AfDB Group, 2011). While the majority of the population lives on agriculture, the Afar, Somali and some other

¹ Unless otherwise specified, in this thesis higher education (HE) refers to education and training programs delivered at levels of undergraduate and above. It does not include education and training in technical and vocational training schools, professional training institutes, colleges that train personnel at the Diploma and Certificate levels, and other post-secondary schools. Thus, HE as used in this study slightly differs from what the WB refers to as tertiary education, which is comprised of “all post-secondary forms of education, including universities, technical institutes, teaching colleges, open universities, and other programs that lead to the award of academic diplomas or degrees” (World Bank, 2002, p.xxxi).

² While the World Bank usually refers to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, 1945) and the International Development Association (IDA, 1960), the World Bank Group includes other three institutions: the International Finance Corporation (IFC, 1956), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA, 1988), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID, 1966) (Harrison, 2004). In this study, the Bank and the World Bank are used interchangeably and both stand for IDA.

groups in lowlands of the country are pastoralists. About 83% of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, accounting for 46% of the GDP, 85% of the export, and nearly 90% of the labour force (MoFED, 2002; United Nations Country Team, 2011).

Aside from the graphic depictions of famine and war appearing in the Western media, few people outside the region know about Ethiopia's unique position in the history of Africa. The imperial state of Ethiopia emerged from the Axumite civilisation that flourished as a trading state in the Horn of Africa from around 100 BC to 1100 AD – which, at its height of power, controlled a vast territory stretching from the Nile valley in the west to the southern Arabian Desert in the east (Marcus, 2002). Ethiopia is an ancient country of diverse cultures, ethnicities and religious groups with continuous civilization. In addition to its long standing independent political existence, which inspired many colonised or oppressed black peoples as a beacon of hope of liberation in the first half of the 20th century, Ethiopia is the oldest established Orthodox Christian State in the region. Christianity became a state religion in the first half of the 4th century AD and continued in a symbiotic relationship with the state up until 1974. In addition to its critical role in the formation of Ethiopian culture and identity (Turner, 1993), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has remained an educational institution for centuries and has made the country the only African nation with its own written script, *Ge'ez*, also known as *Ethiopic*.

With the birth of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and its fast expansion to the Red Sea region and North Africa, the Ethiopian Christian State was weakened and became isolated from the rest of the world. As a result, up until the middle of the 19th century, the imperial state of Ethiopia operated under its own internal dynamics: these involved power struggles and civil war, provincialism, waves of population movements, the slow expansion of Islam, and the increasing power of the church. With the intensification of Europeans' scramble for Africa in the late 19th century, Ethiopia was in a new era of internal territorial expansion and political and economic integration that included the forceful incorporation of peripheral regions under the central imperial rule. In this regard, Emperor Tewodros II (r.1855-68), Emperor Yohannes IV (r.1871-89) and Emperor Menelik II (r.1889-1913) played critical roles in the making of modern Ethiopia, and forged a strong military force to fight against European colonial aggression, as witnessed at the Battle of Adowa where Ethiopians crushed the Italian colonial forces on 1st March 1896 and successfully defended the independence of the nation.

In the second half of the 20th century, it was apparent that the conservative imperial state could no longer co-exist with the forces of modernization, including the educated classes and the army who sought change in the form of economic and political transformation. The conflict that started in 1960s between the modern (the student movement demanding democracy) and the traditional (the monarchy seeking to maintain the status quo) erupted in the form of popular revolution in 1974 and culminated in the demise of the 225th Solomonic Emperor, Haile Selassie I (r.1930-74). This resulted in the establishment of a socialist state under a junta called *Derg*, which in Ethiopic means committee or council. Despite some fundamental social, economic and political reforms by the new government, regional (e.g., Eritrean) and ethnic (e.g., Tigre and Oromo) secessionist groups grew in power and continued challenging the military regime. With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent decline of foreign support for the military government, the ethnic liberation forces gained momentum. In 1991, a coalition of rebels led by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) eventually succeeded in ousting the *Derg*, putting into effect the secession of Eritrea, and the setting up of a federal government of Ethiopia. With this, the rebels' quest for liberation seems to have been changed into a quest for power, at least at that moment.

Notwithstanding the zealous optimism of the new government regarding socio-economic changes and the country's immense natural resources, Ethiopia is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Due to its subsistence economy, recurrent drought, political instability and chronic poverty, Ethiopia remains aid-dependent and is one of the world's most highly indebted poor countries. The per capita income is said to have steadily increased from US\$117 in 2003 to US\$198 in 2010 (IMF, 2010), yet 77.5% of the population still lives on an income of less than US\$2 a day (World Bank, 2010, p.89).

In the aftermath of the late 1970s economic crisis in the developing world (instigated by foreign debt and increased oil prices), the World Bank³ (WB) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) shifted its attention to macroeconomic adjustment and program lending (Phillips, 2009; White & Dijkstra, 2003). Accordingly, it started to channel its loans and grants through structural adjustment programs (SAPs) associated with economic and social sector policy reforms. The major areas of involvement of the Bank include macroeconomic sectors, agriculture, infrastructure (power, transportation, telecommunications, and oil), governance,

³ Throughout the thesis, except for in-text citations, I will use 'the WB' and 'the Bank' interchangeably to refer to the World Bank.

social sectors (e.g., health, education, and water supply), and urban development (World Bank, 2003a, 2006).

After daunting criticism of the implementation of the SAPs, in the second half of the 1990s, the WB tried to revitalize its role as a key development partner. The Bank has played a critical role in framing global development initiatives including Education for All (EFA) (World Conference on Education, Jomtien, 1990; World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (King, 2007); and in devising the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to the world's highly indebted poor countries. In Ethiopia, as will be seen in Chapter 7, these development initiatives (EFA, MDGs, and PRSPs) have direct links with changes in the education system in general, and the equity policy provisions and strategies in particular.

Since the early 2000s, the WB has intertwined its PRSPs with knowledge-led development programs. This has resulted in a new discourse of *knowledge-driven poverty reduction* that underscores the need for alleviating poverty through economic growth, drawing on increased innovation and productivity. It maintains that narrowing the knowledge gaps across and within countries requires building capacity to tap into global knowledge and to create local expertise. The normative policy thinking is that a nation needs to have a creative and innovative labour force to emerge advantageously in the market and achieve sustainable economic growth. For this to happen, higher education (HE) should play the pivotal role of producing competent knowledge workers, and knowledge itself. Accordingly, the WB has recommended developing countries revitalize their HE subsystems, and focus on human resource development as a means to reduce poverty and promote rapid economic growth.

The new development discourse, coupled with its financial power, has enabled the WB to assume a new position of significance for HE subsystems of aid-recipient sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. With the new spirit of integrating HE with the economic development agenda, the WB has played an active role in reforming HE subsystems in the region (World Bank, 2002a, 2002b). Ethiopia is no exception. With its commitment to SAPs and PRSPs of the Bank, Ethiopia has embraced the neoliberal policy package (Abegaz, 1999, 2001; Clapham, 2009); and the HE subsystem has been one of the key sectors where key elements of the package have been selectively pervaded. This study seeks to understand gender equity implications and consequences of the neoliberal HE reform agenda.

However, before proceeding to the next section, I would like to draw attention to two important points. First, the WB has not been the only external agent that supports Ethiopian HE. For example, HE management and policy experts from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) of the UK have played key roles as advisors, policy researchers and acting directors of the newly established system oversight institutions, namely the Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC) and the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA). Also, among others, the Government of the Netherlands has funded HE projects aimed at improving institutional capacities of public universities (NICHE, 2009; Yizengaw, 2007). Other bilateral agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development, the German Technical Cooperation, the Norwegian Council for Higher Education Programme for Development Research and Education, and the Swedish International Development Agency are among the key external supporters to the subsystem (Semela & Ayalew, 2008). However, unlike the WB, other donors have not aligned their support to the HE subsystem with the broad poverty reduction program and the sectoral (macro-economic) restructuring at large; and hence their involvement in HE had little or no direct connection with the neoliberal policy discourses that framed the reform process.

Second, this study is an attempt to show dysfunctional policy prescriptions and unmet (even reproduced) local challenges such as inequality in HE. Yet it should be noted from the outset that questioning the impact of neoliberal policy prescriptions of the WB is not meant to discredit its contributions to development efforts of aid-recipient countries such as Ethiopia. It is less disputed that increased loans and grants of the Bank have provided governments with much needed financial resources to implement negotiated socio-economic development programs and projects. In fact, the WB is the leading multilateral aid agency from which Ethiopia has drawn a large part of its development aid in the last five years. As the OECD's international development aid flow database⁴ shows, in 2009/2010, out of the total US\$3.8 billion official development assistance (ODA) the government received, about US\$1.04 billion came from the WB. Hence, despite the strong criticisms on the effectiveness of educational development aid of the Bank (see, for example, Klees, 2002, 2010, 2012; Samoff, 2004, 2005; Torres, 2002, 2009), it is hard to imagine how low-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa would finance their ever expanding education systems without the concessional loans and grants of the WB and other development aid agencies.

⁴ The data for international official development aid flow can be accessed at <http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aims at understanding the relationships between the neoliberal educational agenda of the WB, and HE reforms and gender equity in HE in Ethiopia. It seeks to identify themes of external agenda shaping the forms and missions of HE reform in Ethiopia, and to explicate the representation of the problem of gender inequality and the relevance of gender-related changes in order to redress the problem in the subsystem.

Social equity in general and gender equity in particular requires the political commitment of governments to make public services (including health and education) accessible to all sections of society. Despite this, neoliberal policy prescriptions fail to capture the context of poor countries, where market discourse is possible only at the expense of large sections of the society – including the poor and women who cannot afford the cost of education and other marketized social services. As the underpinning principles of neoliberalism – choice, competition, and efficiency – dominate the public policy discourse, the role of the state as a social benefit distributor remains limited and social justice is increasingly at risk (Hill, 2005; Hill & Kumar, 2009; Torres, 2009). For example, in Latin America, the beneficiaries of privatization were the privileged groups while the poor and traditionally disadvantaged classes, including many women, still remain at the periphery (Arnove, Franz & Torres, 2007; Carnoy, 2002; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). The same argument holds true in the case of Africa. In the face of strong external pressures in the form of loan conditionalities and discursive influences, educational reforms are situated in the tensions between economic efficiency and social equity. Sociological and educational studies of the impact of WB policy on women's education in Africa reveal that the economic agenda of the Bank in the HE subsystem have impeded female enrolment (Assié-Lumumba, 2000, 2006a, 2006b; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006).

In restructuring its HE subsystem, Ethiopia, one of SSA countries with exceptionally high levels of dependency on development aid, has drawn a large part of its lending and non-lending support from the WB. The HE reforms of Ethiopia are situated in two apparently conflicting contexts. So long as the country continues to draw money and expertise from external sources, it is more likely to be influenced by the efficiency-driven neoliberal reform agenda of the WB and other donors. On the other hand, pressing social problems such as high levels of gender inequality in HE need a strong political commitment and economic provision

to support equity driven reforms in the subsystem. As an expression of this tension, in the wake of the large scale system-wide and institutional HE reform in the last decade, equitable access remains far from being a reality. The concrete example, here, is the marginal representation of women in the subsystem: women constitute 26% of the full-time undergraduate student body and less than 12% of the academic staff in the public higher education institutions (HEIs) (MoE, 2011). Hence, given the strong financial and discursive presence of the WB in the HE reforms in Ethiopia, it is imperative to understand the alignment (or misalignment) of the reform agenda with neoliberal policy prescriptions of the Bank, and locate where the gender equity concerns fit in the policy discourse and practices. In addition, it is vital to comprehend not only how the government manoeuvres the reform direction, but also to what extent the planned changes effectively localize a global reform agenda.

As other scholars have indicated (see, for example, Douglass, 2007; Sassen, 2000), all global forces are mediated by local interests and realities. As such, each national context is a unique setting worth considering as a unit of analysis to understand the dynamics of the local-global interaction (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). Hence, context-specific empirical data is needed to show the impact of global policy agents on educational policy processes, aims and contents of aid-dependent SSA countries. It is important to explore how and to what extent the neoliberal educational policy agenda have constrained the role of the state in terms of addressing the problem of inequality in the HE subsystem. In this regard, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on the impact of efficiency-oriented policy prescriptions of the WB on the HE reforms in Ethiopia, and on the place and representation of gender inequity in the reforms. Hence, the present study aspires to fill this gap. It seeks to understand the way the Bank's policy prescriptions have shaped the forms and goals of the recent HE reforms, and its gender equity consequences. The study situates HE reforms in Ethiopia in to the context of the financial and discursive influences of the WB, and questions if the HE reforms in Ethiopia are fit for the purpose, in terms of supporting the foundation of a more just society. What does it mean when HE restructuring in a poor country is located in the broader global education policy field? Do the neoliberal HE agenda and policy reforms tend to stabilize inequality? What are the implications of neoliberal HE policy changes and practices in terms of enhancing or limiting the development of the capabilities of women in Ethiopia?

This study endeavours to understand the recent HE reforms in Ethiopia from two perspectives: i) their alignment with the WB's neoliberal reform prescriptions, and ii) the relevance and

implications of the reforms for promoting gender equity in HE. Taking gender as an exemplary case, it seeks to understand equity implications and consequences of neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the Ethiopian HE subsystem between 2000 and 2010. In the history of Ethiopian HE, the last decade can, arguably, be considered period of aid, reform and expansion. During this period, the WB funded two major projects (the *Education Sector Development Project*, 1998-2004, and the *Post-secondary Education Project*, 2005-2009), the Government ratified a new HE law, undertook a series of system-wide and institutional restructuring, and established 20 new public universities. This period also coincides with the introduction of the poverty reduction papers that have initiated a great deal of optimism about the role of HE in supporting economic growth and alleviating poverty in many developing countries such as Ethiopia.

The gender analysis focuses on women because, as Bottomley and Bronitt (2006, p.237) argue: “the sexes have been socially constructed as *unequal* and it is overwhelmingly women who are thought to have been disadvantaged”. Hence in this study, after Morley *et al.* (2006), the problem of gender inequality is understood as a form of structural constraint or disadvantage that limits women’s access to resources; deprives respect for and recognition of their identity, potential and contributions; and thereby inhibits their freedom to exercise agency.

1.3 Research Questions

The guiding research questions of the study are:

- a) How is the neoliberal educational agenda of the WB taken up in HE reforms of Ethiopia?
- b) How does the WB induce its HE policy prescriptions into the national reform process?
- c) Where does the problem of gender inequality fit in the HE reform agenda of Ethiopia?

The first question is related to both the forms of the neoliberal HE reform agenda of the WB, and the specific policy elements of the prescription as endorsed in the Ethiopian HE reform process. The second question is connected with key pathways of influence of the WB, as applied in Ethiopia. Answering the final question requires situating the problem of gender

inequality in HE in Ethiopia in a broad scope: ranging from national level policies (with the background of the neoliberal prescriptions of the Bank) to institutional strategies and practices of public higher education institutions (HEIs). It also includes the meanings and experiences of the equity target groups, women in HE. Thus, as a sub-question, it asks: How do women in the HE subsystem of Ethiopia regard gender equity-related institutional changes in policy and practice?

The study aims to:

- a) Understand the impact of the WB's development policy support on the agenda and forms of HE reforms in Ethiopia;
- b) Explicate how gender inequality in HE is construed in national and institutional policy documents;
- c) Contribute to the body of knowledge on aspects of the neoliberal educational agenda in the HE reform of Ethiopia, its connection with gender inequality in the subsystem, and the relevance of national and institutional gender-oriented policies in tackling the structural challenges women face; and,
- d) Contribute to the development of innovative solutions to improve gender equality in HE in Ethiopia.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Studying the HE reform of Ethiopia in relation to the WB's neoliberal educational agenda (the global) and the social equity question of women's representation and experience in HE (the local) is important for two basic reasons. Firstly, notwithstanding the wide ranging theoretical debate and a few informative studies on the constraints of neoliberal economic policies on social equity in general, and gender equity in HE in particular in Africa (Assié-Lumumba, 2000, 2006a, 2006b; Mama, 2003), there is a paucity of empirical evidence on the impact of WB HE reforms on achieving gender equity goals. It is therefore timely and crucial to fill in the knowledge gap on the role of the WB's policy prescriptions in shaping HE reforms in Ethiopia. In a departure from conventional studies that consider policy a response to social problems, I take a critical perspective to show the constitutive role of policy and explicate how the representation of the problem of gender inequality has undermined equity policy outcomes in HE in Ethiopia. Secondly, by explicating the relevance and implications of the recent HE reform to gender equity, the study presents empirical evidence on the relationship between the neoliberal educational agenda and gender (in)equity in HE. A

critical understanding of global pressures in HE reform, and the gender equity consequences of these reforms would benefit HE policymakers, development planners, donors and activists who seek to promote women's participation and success in HE. By way of informing policy processes, the findings of the study can contribute to building a just society in Ethiopia.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has ten chapters. The first chapter introduces the problem and the research questions of the study, which is followed by the theoretical framework underpinning the conceptual orientation of the project in the second chapter. The third chapter presents the research design and methodology of the study. It discusses the relevance of a critical policy analysis approach to understanding the higher education policy process of Ethiopia; and outlines specific data collection and analysis strategies. The fourth chapter of the thesis covers the relevant literature on globalization and higher education, neoliberalism and the WB, the WB's involvement in the education sector of Ethiopia, a brief history of higher education development in Ethiopia and continuing challenges of the subsystem, and gender culture and gender inequality in education. The fifth chapter presents the changing context of educational development aid and key dimensions of the neoliberal educational agenda of the WB and its manifestations in the Ethiopian context. The sixth chapter deals with the financial and non-financial pathways of influence of the WB in the HE reform process in Ethiopia. Equity as a reform agenda and its connection with neoliberal policy prescriptions is the central issue discussed in the seventh chapter. This is followed by an analysis of institutional gender equity policies and practices of two public universities in Ethiopia in the eighth chapter. The next chapter further narrows the discussion and sheds light on the lived experiences of female academic staff and students in relation to institutional changes and national equity policy elements and strategies. The final chapter draws concluding remarks and puts forward related policy recommendations.

Having introduced the problem, I will now present the theoretical framework that informs the study.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework: The Idea of Equity in Education

In this chapter I outline the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This framework introduces three key concepts — structural inequalities in education, conflict theory, and compensatory capacitation — and explicates the link between them as expressed in education policies informed by a neoliberal policy agenda. Drawing on the framework, I argue that structural inequalities in education require equity policy provisions and arrangements as a means of compensatory capacitation, and this requires active state involvement. Key lines of reasoning in this theoretical framework are anchored in the *politics of positional difference* approach (Young, 1990, 2008), the *conflict theory* in sociology of education (Bourdieu, 1974, 1989; Sadvnik, 2004, 2011), and the *capabilities approach* to equality (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2009).

2.1 Structural Inequalities

The social world is built on networks of relations, norms and values that define those relations. Most relationships in society are not random: rather, they are relatively lasting and have identifiable patterns (Young, 1990). When patterns of relationships within a society are relatively enduring and recognizable, social scientists call them social structures (Connell, 2009; Young, 1990). Key social structures such as class, ethnicity, and gender define inequalities in resources and opportunities, respect and recognition, and power; and the interplay of these categories produces structures of domination and exclusion (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon & Wash, 2009; Morrow & Torres, 1995). As such, structural inequalities are related to social structures, which are embedded in and reproduced by economic, cultural and political systems. In her *politics of positional difference* principle, Young argues:

Some institutional rules and practices, the operation of hegemonic norms, the shape of economic or political incentives, the physical effects of past actions and policies, and people acting on stereotypical assumptions, all conspire to produce systematic and reinforcing inequalities between groups (2008, p.80).

In other words, individuals are in a state of structural inequality when their access to resources and opportunities, and the possibilities to exercise their capacities, are constrained

due to their gender, ethnic background, religion or socio-economic positions in society (Young, 2008). Structural or systemic causes of inequality are entrenched “in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules” (Young, 1990, p.41). Most often, as Tilly (1998, p.9) posits, “what observers ordinarily interpret as individual differences is actually the consequence of categorical organization”. In his seminal work, *Durable Inequality*, Tilly argues:

Large, significant inequalities in advantages among human beings correspond mainly to categorical differences such as black/white, male/female, citizen/foreigner, Muslim/Jew rather than to individual differences in attributes, properties, or performances (1998, p.7).

Young (1990) states that inequality is explained not only in terms of distribution of material resources and opportunities but also in the form of “disabling constraints” , including domination and oppression, that determine patterns of distribution as well as decision-making, division of labour and cultural stereotypes. She identifies five forms of oppression that can be used as criteria to assess inequality in society. These faces of oppression are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. They are structural and institutional relations that determine the position of social groups in society. Material resource deprivation, constraints of full participation in decision-making, the sexual division of labour, lack of recognition and respect for members of a social group (such as women), stereotyped and prejudicial attitudes towards a particular group, and harassment of any kind are typical examples of structural inequalities resulting from these various faces of oppression (Young, 1990, pp.40-60). In society, the dominant groups make use of the structures (including gender, ethnicity, class, rurality, disability, or sexuality) to marginalize, exclude, deprive or misrepresent the less advantaged.

For instance, gender as a category helps us explain structural inequality resulting from differences between men and women. It defines the division of labour, experiences of violence, and differential expectations of men and women. How then is gender culture related to inequality in society? The sex difference is not a problem by itself. The problem comes when the difference fails to entail a different-but-equal relationship between female and male persons. We can see this trait of inequality from two perspectives. First, traditionally, gender difference has been defined in ways that imply hierarchy. Gender as a “system of social practices” not only defines male and female as different but also constitutes shared cultural

expectations and beliefs about being male or female that frame relations between the sexes on unequal terms (Ridgeway, 2009, 2011). As a result, gender difference remains open and easily transformed into inequality. The hegemonic cultural belief about gender is hierarchal in the sense that it presupposes the superiority of men in relation to women as “masculine pursuits are given greater value” (Deutsch, 2007, p.117). In other words, even though the difference *per se* is not a problem, as allocation of power and resources happen to be in line with the category, the difference leads to inequality.

Second, the persistence of this inequality is founded on the act of maintaining gender difference as a natural, and hence acceptable, condition. Candace West and her colleagues argue that one means of justifying gender inequality in a society is through giving gender an objective status as a normal and natural phenomenon (West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 2009). Taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about gender at institutional, social relational and individual levels operate to constrain the agency of women in their social and personal lives. In explaining how gender inequality persists despite all the socio-economic changes in the modern world, sociologist Cecilia L. Ridgeway posits:

everyday reliance on the gender frame in social relations has embedded beliefs about gender status and difference in established institutions of work and family that powerfully control access to resources and power (2011, p.185).

When the difference underpins structural and institutional arrangements in a society with a neutral and objective appearance, it leads to domination of one category over the other and subsequent inequality.

Another important aspect of structural (categorical) inequalities is that they extend from one context to another along the defined category (social grouping) such as men/women. Tilly argues, “the routines, understandings, and justifications that organizational participants have acquired in other settings are readily available for organizational work” (1998, p.58). In the context of Ethiopia, this explains why the repressive gender culture of the society continues to frame the gendered experiences of women in educational institutions as expressed through such gender-based structural inequalities as inequality in participation in the learning process and decision-making, inequality in recognition and respect (including prejudice, and exclusion or misrepresentation of women’s roles and contributions in the curricula), and insecurity related to sexual harassment.

2.2 Conflict Theory and Inequality in Education

There are different perspectives in sociology on how to explain the function of structural inequalities in education as a key social institution. Particularly, *functional* and *conflict* theories of the sociology of education analyse social patterns at a structural level to explain how social events and institutions in society operate, and why particular arrangements and interactions happen the way they do. For functional theorists, society is a structure of parts (e.g., education, family, government); and the parts perform functions to keep society operating in harmony (Sandovnik, 2004, 2011). In this structural arrangement, inequality among individuals is inevitable and “functional” for the society (Abdi and Cleghorn, 2006). For example, exponents of this theory (including Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parson) maintain that education as a social institution primarily functions, through meritocratic selection and placement, to socialise young people for their adult roles; and as such it serves to maintain social order through differentiation of roles and functions in society (Lauen & Tyson, 2009; Sadovnik, 2011). For functionalists, selective access to education is a necessary condition, as a properly functioning society requires differences in rewards on the basis of merit as well as quality and relevance of contribution. However, what this view neglects is the role of social groupings in individual differences (as highlighted above), and the potential of the structures to put certain members of society at a disadvantage.

In contrast, mainly drawing on works of Max Weber and Karl Marx, conflict theorists maintain that social order in society is a function of coercion based on power rather than consensus (Lauen & Tyson, 2009; Sadovnik, 2004, 2011). Inequalities are the result of conflicts of interests in social groups, and they are normalized in structures of power and resource allocation in society. For conflict theorists, the parts of the social structure are built on disequilibrium, and inequalities among groups and individuals are considered dysfunctional (Abdi & Cleghorn, 2006). Therefore, inequalities in society are the result of social structures, expressed in impositions by those in power, through institutional arrangements, such as educational processes. Hence, education is one of the instruments to achieve the dominance of those with power, be it economic, political or cultural. Educational institutions sort individuals along distinct lines of class or gender in order to maintain the status quo, wherein the socially and economically disadvantaged groups can best serve the interests of the dominant groups. For instance, dominant social groups use educational

credentials to preserve their positions of privilege (Ballantine & Spade, 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Hence, through their selection and placement functions, educational institutions play critical roles in reproducing inequality. The processes of enrolment, teaching, and graduation in a higher education institution are means of sorting, preparing and placing students.

[Education] prepares by teaching needed skills and knowledge. It sorts by testing and controlling which students are meritorious and qualify for positions. It places students by tracking, credentialing, grading, and ultimately filling positions in society (Ballantine & Spade, 2004, p.4).

Therefore, the seemingly objective merit-based selection and placement by educational institutions, rather, makes the dominated groups blame themselves for their inequalities and related disadvantages in society. As Sandovnik (2004, p.11) notes: “Ideologies or intellectual justifications created by the powerful are designed to enhance their position by legitimizing inequality and the unequal distribution of material and cultural goods”. In other words, conflict theorists argue that structural inequality serves a purpose, that is, to support and maintain power and hegemony.

To understand how educational institutions reinforce structural inequalities, the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is instructive. As a conflict theorist, Bourdieu sought to understand and explain individual and group actions in the social world; and to theorize the relationship between people and social structures. He argues that, in society there exist “objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations” (1989, p.14). For him, an event or a social phenomenon could better be understood and explained through explicating the social space (field) in which it occurs (Bourdieu, 1974, 1989). The field exists as a social setting where agents (e.g., individuals or groups) occupy different positions on the basis of the capital that they accumulate from their social class, education, dispositions and past choices. Bourdieu (2011) identifies four forms of capital: economic (money and assets), cultural (knowledge, taste, language, aesthetic, etc.), social (affiliations and networks, family, religious and cultural heritage), and symbolic (transformed forms of other capital – e.g., recognition of credentials, knowledge and expertise, financial resources; legitimacy of one’s actions and inactions over others etc.). Capital can be something to be offered by the field (e.g., knowledge and skills, ways of thinking, credentials by HEIs) or be brought into the

field by agents and institutions in the form of cultural values, financial capacity, and social networks.

This leads us to a key question of this thesis: How may the field of HE function to reproduce inequality? In line with Bourdieu's view, HE can be considered a field (social space) in which agents (students and staff) struggle for symbolic capital (recognition associated with credentials, expertise, position, etc.). They compete from different positions in the field. That is, the difference in cultural capital presents differentiated opportunities for different social groups within the institution. Yet by treating students as equal in rights and duties, regardless of differences in social background and gender, "the education system is led to give its *de facto* sanction to initial cultural inequalities" (Bourdieu, 1974, p.38). Hence, an educational institution acts as a social filter of privilege and exclusion in the sense that it "selects students according to an implicit *social* classification and reproduces the same students according to an explicit *academic* classification, which in reality is very similar to the implicit classification" (Bourdieu, 1996, quoted in Naidoo, 2004, p.459, emphasis in original).

Conflict theory focuses on social class, and gives little attention to gender and ethnic-based social power relations. However, its theoretical insights can be used to explain gender inequality in education. To begin with, educational institutions are not neutral in deciding what is to be taught and how it is to be taught and assessed. Through transmitting dominant values, and forcing disadvantaged groups to conform to what the system holds as a standard, educational institutions are committing symbolic violence and reproducing inequality (Bourdieu, 1989). For example, HEIs are reproducing gender inequality through systematic marginalization and oppression when they exclude women's issues and contributions in the curricula. The exclusion of the body of knowledge on women's issues, identities and contributions not only socialises them to conform to the repressive gender order of the institutions, but also regulates their pursuit of capital in the field and their future status in the society.

Secondly, cultural capital defined as the "knowledge, skills, education, and other advantages a person has that make the educational system a comfortable, familiar environment in which he or she can succeed easily" (Oldfield, 2007, p. 2) is passed on mainly by family members. This means, when the possession of cultural capital of students is unequal, it leads to differential levels of participation and success rates in education. To illustrate the point, in a patriarchal society such as Ethiopia, fathers are more educated than mothers, and women

assume a subordinate status in the social system. Hence, in such a society, girls and boys are socialized differently to be close to their mothers and fathers respectively, and this results in unequal “domestic transmission of cultural capital” between the two sexes (Bourdieu, 2011, p.87). That is, the unequal scholastic values and attitudes that male and female students acquire from their families, and gendered experiences within the school system, affect their participation and success in educational settings. HEIs implicitly reproduce gender inequality: by not recognising the gender-based difference in cultural capital, they reinforce the structures of disadvantage and exclusion in the learning experiences.

Finally, capital of one form is convertible into another form (Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). HE as a field presents cultural capital (e.g., knowledge, skills, and beliefs) of varying economic and symbolic values which, in turn, define one’s status in society. Bourdieu argues that educational institutions perpetuate inequality through:

giving individuals educational aspirations strictly tailored to their position in the social hierarchy, and by operating a selection procedure which, although apparently formally equitable, endorses real inequalities (1974, p.40).

In this regard, a concrete example is that, through overcrowding women in economically low-valued disciplines, horizontal inequality (inequality in gender distribution across fields of studies) may lead to inequalities in job opportunities and levels of income. In other words, HEIs, through gender-based disciplinary segregation, may reinforce the status quo of gendered division of labour and subordinate socio-economic positions of women. As Bourdieu rightly puts it: “The formal equality which governs the pedagogical practice is, in fact, a cloak for and a justification of indifference to the real inequalities with regard to the body of knowledge taught or rather demanded” (1974, p.38). Therefore, redressing structural inequalities in HE, beyond equal access, requires substantive/enabling gender equity policy instruments that support human agency. The next section further develops this point.

2.3 Equity as Compensatory Capacitation

Most often, equality and equity are used interchangeably as the antithesis of inequality. Nevertheless, technically, they are different. Equality assumes similarity in different attributes: status, capacity or opportunity. Hence, it presumes similarity of treatments. In a broader sense, equality (or formal equality) stands for the condition in which the same

benefits (or burdens) are enjoyed (or suffered) by same persons (Subrahmanian, 2005; Therborn, 2006). As such, it does not necessarily support an egalitarian form of equality. This is what is commonly known in economics as horizontal equity. For example, gender equality means that the “different behaviour, aspiration and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally” (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2000, p.48).

Equity, on the other hand, refers to fairness. This is not necessarily the same as equality. In the context of public policy, fairness may include differential, but appropriate, treatment of the disadvantaged group. According to Gordon, the basic criteria of equity policies are “distributional appropriateness and sufficiency” (1999, p.76). That is to say, equity is beyond securing equal access to resources and opportunities – it includes reasonable adjustment to provide a differential treatment in accordance with the conditions and needs of the target groups for equality of outcomes. Equity is a state or ideal of being fair. It embraces compensational or redistributive policy measures to redress historical and current social disadvantages. Hence, as an educational policy instrument, equity is a means to achieve equality in access, participation and success in education and training. It is a way of catching-up for historically and socially disadvantaged members of society – for example, women in education in developing countries. The moral and political justification for equity policies is that a shift in a social position for disadvantaged groups requires unequal but equivalent treatment that targets redressing past injustice and existing disadvantages. In the *politics of positional difference* principle, Young (2008) argues:

Identifying equality with equal treatment ignores deep material differences in social position, division of labour, socialized capacities, normalized standards and ways of living that continue to disadvantage members of historically excluded groups. Commitment to substantial equality thus requires attending to such differences (pp.77-78).

[W]here group difference is socially significant for issues of conflict, domination or advantage, equal respect may not imply treating everyone in the same way (p.79).

In the absence of a commitment to fairness, by applying the same standards and rules to all, public institutions may run the risk of reproducing inequality in society. Hence, in this study I use equity as a policy goal aimed at “compensatory capacitation” (Therborn, 2006, p.14) through differential treatments (including but not limited to affirmative action) until a level playing field is established to make equality between social groups real.

In other words, social equity in education is better served through policies and instruments drawn on social justice as a guiding principle. Doing so has a multi-dimensional advantage. To begin with, a social justice perspective brings into the forefront the moral imperative to address deeply rooted structural impediments. Individuals have little or no control on structural factors of disadvantage, such as being a woman or being from a minority ethnic group, poor family, or rural areas. Unlike personal inequalities associated with differences in merit (motivation, ability and effort), structural inequalities are unjust inequalities that need to be redressed through public action, including equity policy instruments and programs. Equity as an instrument of compensatory capacitation requires a strong political and economic commitment and this underscores the role of the state. In his seminal work, *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls argues that social justice as fairness draws heavily on the responsibility of the state to redress “undeserved inequalities” through “policies and programs directed towards removing barriers arising from unequal power relations that prevent access, equity and participation” (1999, p.86). Rawls’ *principle of redress*, in particular, maintains that “in order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favourable social positions” (1999, p.86).

Sen’s *capability approach* to equality highlights the importance of the actual opportunity to the empowerment of the beneficiaries. According to Sen (1992, 1999), individual capabilities and “functionings” (the individual’s “beings” and “doings”) are influenced by a person’s relative advantages in society and enhanced by enabling public and policy environments. For instance, when women are deprived of equitable social opportunities (including high level education and skills formation), they do not have the freedom that enables them to exercise their agency on decision-making at the household level and in the society; or through economic productivity, political participation, and social change in general (Sen, 1992, 1999). The achievement of individual agency in society calls for public action, including institutional strategies and governmental policies and reforms. As such, there is “a deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements;” and individual freedom is “a social commitment” (Sen, 1999, p. xii).

Here, education is a typical case. The role of education in the formation of human capabilities is paramount. It is foundational to other capabilities. Educational capability expands human freedom – that is, freedom to exercise agency and achieve what one values in life (Sen, 1999). Inequalities in the distribution of education and skill formation may mean inequality in the

development of human capabilities that contribute to personal well-being, social transformation and economic productivity (Sen, 1999). Education as a foundational capability rewards the individual with socio-economic returns, raises consciousness to challenge political suppression, and empowers marginalized men and women to resist inequalities of any form. When it comes to HE, this means ensuring that HE policies and practices do not deny capability to the disadvantaged groups of society, such as women, who need to convert the resources they have into functionings they value. According to Sen, “A person’s advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability – less real opportunity – to achieve those things that she has reason to value” (2009, p.231). Therefore, the role of the state is to provide not only equal access, but also compensatory preferential advantages to capacitate her – to achieve her freedom and exercise her agency.

Gender equity refers to “fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” (ILO, 2000, p.48). When it comes to gender in education, equity policies should be compensatory in nature because, in the societies like Ethiopia, women are socially and historically disadvantaged and that special steps must be taken so as to achieve not just *equality of opportunity*, but *equality of experience and results*. Hence, framing equity in education from a social justice perspective also helps us broaden policy instruments beyond the redistribution of resources and opportunities. Social justice is concerned about not only equitable and fair distribution of rights, duties and socio-economic goods (i.e., distributive justice) but also “the *nature and ordering* of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level” (i.e., relational justice) (Gewirtz, 1998, p.471, emphasis in original).

As every form of structural inequality is founded on the privileges of some people and the disadvantages of others (Young, 2000, 2008), gender equity allows differential treatments based on prior disadvantages, and equal treatment and opportunity for those who are situated equally. The underpinning assumption of such policies is that, in order to realize equality between men and women in access to and success in education (including HE), special policy interventions and practices are needed to redress prior inequalities and to set up a level playing field for equal opportunity (Morley, 2006; Subrahmanian, 2005). More specifically,

Subrahmanian outlines the following key assumptions that underpin gender equity policies in education:

- i. Prevailing norms about what women and men do, and how their activities and roles are to be valued determine the opportunities to which they have access;
- ii. Constraints arise out of what women or men do which serve to curtail or restrict their freedom to access opportunities;
- iii. Even when women are able to negotiate their burdens in order to participate in different opportunities on offer, gender inequalities are often institutionalized in the norms, processes and structures of interventions and institutions and present barriers to equitable outcomes; and,
- iv. The pervasiveness of social norms that curtail freedom from women and are based on undervaluation or devaluation of what women do, can lead women themselves to internalize negative self-perceptions and doubt their own abilities (2005, pp.398-99).

In conclusion, the theoretical framework that I have just outlined informs the present study in two key respects:

Firstly, structural inequalities in education are embedded in institutional and social settings. Designing and implementing sound gender equity policy instruments that challenge structural barriers and support equity in HE require strong political and financial commitment of the state. However, in the context of aid-recipient nations, like Ethiopia, national educational policies and practices are highly influenced by key actors of the global education policy field, including the WB which instils educational reform agenda underpinned by its neoliberal assumptions about the limited role of the state vis-à-vis the increased importance of the market forces. These neoliberal policy elements, through accepting the market as a rational means of economic distribution and reducing active involvement of the state, tend to reproduce traditional hierarchies of class and gender (Apple, 2000, 2001, 2006). Hence, in this study, I *investigate key neoliberal policy prescriptions endorsed by the Government of Ethiopia, and explicate if, how and to what extent the role of the government has been constrained in addressing structural inequalities in HE.*

Secondly, equity policies are preferential in nature and they need to capacitate target groups for equal results. As highlighted above, effective equity policy instruments cannot be limited to providing equal access to all. They need to be tailored to the needs and situations of the target groups. The *politics of positional difference* approach and the idea of substantive freedom in the *capability approach* stress the importance of compensatory, differential distribution of opportunity to achieve equality. This, in turn, calls for the importance of

recognizing the diversity of people's needs and goals in relation to what *conflict theorists* show us to be the structural constraints that define their positions in a social space (e.g., HE). These perspectives help us to see equity as what people are actually enabled to do and be, not merely in terms of efforts or resources made available to them. Beyond affirmative action admission policy and assertiveness training, effective equity policy should be concerned with whether the beneficiaries are enabled to successfully participate and complete their studies in fields they treasure. Equity in HE is not only about how many universities are opened in geographically peripheral regions of the country (as is the case in Ethiopia) or how many women are enrolled in the subsystem, but about how the local people are benefited from them and how many of women manage to successfully complete their studies so that they can actively and equitably participate in the socio-economic and political affairs of their communities. Gender equity in education requires putting transformative/enabling strategies in place to deal with structural inequalities and injustices expressed by mal-distribution of resources and opportunities, misrecognition of identities and contributions, and misrepresentation and marginalization in decision-making arenas (Fraser, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to *understand essentials of the equity policies at national and institutional levels, question whether or not the instruments are relevant to capacitate women in HE in Ethiopia, and understand how women themselves experience and view these equity policy arrangements.*

Having outlined the theoretical framework, I turn to the methodological orientation and specific methods of data collection and analysis employed in the study.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Higher education is a complicated field. A single research project can hardly claim to address all components of this field. Malcolm Tight, after reviewing 284 books and 406 journal articles on HE, categorizes HE research based on themes and issues, methodologies and methods, and levels of analysis. In terms of themes and issues, research on HE can focus on teaching and learning, course design, student experience (e.g., access to and success in HE, and learning experience), quality, system policy (e.g., policy context and national policies), institutional management and governance, academic work (e.g., experiences of academic women), and forms of knowledge and the nature of research. Therefore, analysis can be at the level of an individual student or academic; a group of students and academics in courses or other activities; departments or centres; institutions (i.e., university or college); the nation; the system of HE as an ideal field; and the international HE system. Accordingly, the choice of methodology used may range from document analysis (including policy analysis) to phenomenology (Tight, 2003, pp.5-11).

This study is about a global influence and subsequent national policy re-orientation. More specifically, in questioning the relevance of the neoliberal HE agenda to gender equity, the study situates local and national policy discourses in the ‘global policy field’. Understanding policy influences and effects requires a valid research design with ontological, epistemological and methodological consistency. Policy influences exist in context, and effects are mediated by assumptions and positions of policy agents; and the research design needs to be relevant to grasp this dynamic.

3.1 Critical Policy Analysis

Taking these factors into account, the research problem at hand necessitates a constructivist view on reality. That is, it is necessary to assume that reality is relative and situational (Bender, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Sarantakos, 2005). Reality is a social construct formulated through texts, discourses, and practices, and therein mediated and negotiated by

the meanings people make, and their lived experiences. Logically, this leads to an epistemological position that knowledge about a social phenomenon is gained through interpretation of the social world. As Creswell (1998) states, “Knowledge is within the meanings people make of it ... [and] is gained through people talking about their meanings” (p.19). Commitment to this paradigm defines the relationship between the researcher and the researched as interactive. This interactive relationship enables the enquirer to elicit and gain access to subjectively held meaning that may be communicated in the process of interaction, so that he or she might reconstruct it in a more refined and sophisticated style – thereby producing knowledge. Accordingly, an interpretive approach favours flexible and emergent instruments of data gathering; justifies the crucial roles of the researcher both as an instrument of data gathering, interpreter and narrator; and leads to inductive analysis (Bender, 1993; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 2006).

For a policy analyst, this means locating policies in their socio-economic and political contexts, observing (listening to and looking at) participants in their own social settings, maintaining the research procedure as responsive to each varying setting, and being conscious of his /her significant role in the process. Policy meanings are embedded in policy texts, and they speak of the policy actors and policy agents as well as through policy actions and inactions. Policy meaning is held in the assumptions, values and claims of the policy makers and agents, and is reconstructed from this tacitly held body of knowledge. This entails that understanding the interaction of the global with the local, and its consequences on women’s participation and success in HE, requires a critical perspective with an interpretive approach to policy context, text and practice.

Thus, this study falls within the field of qualitative enquiry. In essence, it’s underpinning epistemological and methodological assumptions are that knowledge is subjective and socially constructed; that data for knowledge construction is contained in the texts and participants’ perspectives and meanings; and that dialogic interaction and transactional relation with them gives me access to their beliefs, values, meanings and practices. In line with this, critical policy analysis is used as a research methodology. This critical policy analysis methodology is informed by works from different but related disciplinary fields: generic policy analysis (e.g., Bacchi, 2009a; Yanow, 2000), education policy analysis (e.g., Ball, 2005; Codd, 2007; Gale, 2001; Olssen, Codd, and O’Neill, 2004; Prunty, 1984, 1985),

and gender and policy analysis (e.g., Bacchi, 1999, 2009b; Taylor, 1997, 2004; Marshall, 1997).

Policy-related research may refer to an enquiry conducted in advance of legislative and major policy decisions, to the analysis of enacted policies, or to the evaluation of the implementation process (Codd, 2007; Heck, 2004; Yanow, 2000). A useful classification of policy studies is found in the work of Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004). They sort policy analysis into two categories: analysis *for* policy (policy research with the aim of advocating a certain policy or providing information for policy makers), and analysis *of* policy (policy research to understand or evaluate an existing policy). Further, analysis of policy can be carried out at two levels: a) analysis of policy determination and effects with emphasis on “the inputs and transformational processes operating upon the construction of public policy”, and the effects of such policies on the target groups; b) analysis of policy content, which seeks to advance understanding of the policy process through explicating the values, assumptions and ideologies underpinning it (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p.72).

Proponents of a critical approach to policy analysis (e.g., Ball, 1997, 2005; Gale, 2001; Prunty, 1984, 1985; Marshall, 1997; Taylor, 1997, 2004; Yanow, 2000) maintain that policy as a textual pronouncement is encoded through struggle and compromise among dominant groups in a society. Policy actors struggle over meaning and priorities in the context of unequal power relations. Hence, the discursive aspect of a policy process manifests in the interaction, where values and assumptions are infused in the form of knowledge as a single truth on the given issue from dominant forces, such as the WB in the context of aid-recipient African countries. Those with knowledge, power and other resources can speak and write on what is valid in relation to a given policy concern, and tend to discredit alternative truths while their ‘truth’ prevails. In other words, as an authoritative allocation of values, policy is influenced by forces within and outside the state (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). A critical policy analyst needs to consider not only what is included but also what is excluded as a marginal concern, as well as the way the policy problem is framed and how it affects the target groups.

The ontological relevance of critical policy analysis is that it positions policy reforms in their socio-economic and historical contexts, whereby the analyst can trace “how policy problems are constructed and defined and how particular issues get to be on the policy agenda” (Taylor 1997, p.28). That is, the researcher needs to be conscious of both the power relations in policy making, and the role of the social setting in mediating the meaning of the policy and

its implementation and effects (Codd, 2007). A critical policy analysis recognizes the value-laden nature of policy, seeks to illuminate who is privileged or excluded systematically, and analyses the hidden structure of power in public discourses, including public policy reforms (Denzin & Giardina, 2009b; Marshall, 1997). It aims at an understanding of the *problem represented to be* in a policy, basic assumptions underlying the strategies, and issues left unproblematic in that representation (Bacchi, 1999, 2009a, 2009b).

In this study, analysis of policy is an analysis of policy context, content and effect. For a critical policy analyst, policy context is as important as policy text and policy effects (Ball, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Taylor, 1997). Policy context refers to the interaction of the global policy field with the national realities and priorities. Specifically, it is associated with changes and discourses in the global education policy field and its interaction with the national policy field, and pathways of influences in the interaction between the global forces and local policy agents and realities, as well as the national development plans and programs with which the development of the HE subsystem is linked. In this regard, HE reform in Ethiopia needs to be positioned in relation to its broader socio-economic context – the historic development of the subsystem, macro-level and sector-wide reform priorities of the country, and the global pressures involved (e.g., socio-economic challenges of globalization in general and policy prescriptions of the WB in particular). Locating the reforms in the broad socio-economic context helps us understand whose values are authoritatively allocated and institutionalized as dominant political values, how goals and strategies are aligned across sectors and needs, and what the policy inactions (silences, superficial framing, and gaps) are in a particular reform agenda, such as gender equity in HE.

Policy content is related to the actual actions and inactions embedded in policy texts, as well as the values and ideologies underpinning the specific provisions. It includes the way the policy problems are framed, and the specific instruments put in place to address them. Policy practice and policy effect, on the other hand, focus on the institutional arrangements in implementing gender equity-related reforms and subsequent changes on the reform targets. Stephen Ball (2005) usefully classifies policy effects as first order effects and second order effects. In the present study ‘first order’ reform effects are changes in practice at institution and/or system level in response to system-wide or institutional reforms, while ‘second order’ reform effects refer to the actual impact of reforms on the policy targets, in this case, women in HE in Ethiopia. Hence, the project has endeavoured to understand assumptions

underpinning, and forces shaping HE restructuring in Ethiopia, and the relevance and implications of the changes for promoting gender equity in the subsystem.

This study is a critical analysis in two ways. First, in the context of the increased influence of global policy agents such as the WB on national policy processes, the study recognizes “the *relationality and interconnectivity* of policy developments” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.69, emphasis in the original); and scrutinizes the normative assumptions underpinning the global-national interaction. As an Ethiopian, my understanding of the socio-economic context of the country has been vital to grasp the power relations in the policy process (including the national responses to the global policy pressure). Second, a critical policy analysis as a research strategy combines theoretical tools and the political understanding and values of the researcher. It is “anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality and individual freedom are uncompromised by the avarice of a few” (Prutny, 1985, p.136). As such, my moral standing towards the causes of the disadvantaged and my commitment to social justice in general, coupled with methodological rigor and exacting research standards makes this study a critical scientific endeavour. The purpose of a critical investigation should, in addition to producing new knowledge, be uncovering and constructing “truths that can be used for the pursuit of peace and social justice” (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, p.29).

Through deconstructing taken-for-granted assumptions and explicating inconsistencies and deficiencies within the policy provisions, the present study questions the policy discourses that are constructed to produce consent by masking conflicts of interest. In an original case study of the Ethiopian context, it seeks to show how privilege is maintained and alternative views and needs are systematically silenced in the policy process.

3.2 The Process

3.2.1 The Setting

The setting of this study is defined at two different levels. In terms of the global education policy field, the context is the interaction between a nation state (Ethiopia) and a global neoliberal agent (the WB) in the field of HE policy reform. At another level, the setting can be defined geographically. In this regard, the study is largely situated in Ethiopia. The data were drawn from HE policy documents of the WB, and of the Government of Ethiopia as

well as from interviews conducted at the two public HE institutions: Washeray University (WU) and Odaax University (OU).⁵ These two institutions are deemed to represent the diversified situations of HE institutions in the country. WU is a relatively well-established academic and research institution, while OU is one of the newly established HEIs with limited capacity in services and resources. Both OU and WU are comprehensive public universities with residential services for full-time undergraduate students.

3.2.2 Methods and Levels of Data Collection

The project is divided into three parts or levels of inquiry: reform context, content and process; the equity dimension of the reforms; and the reform effects on gender equity. Accordingly, qualitative data were collected in the three parts or levels of inquiry, using different techniques and instruments. In practice, as the process of analysis of the data progressed, the distinctions between these three parts began to blur.

I. Reform Context, Content and Process

As has been noted above, this study is about a global influence and subsequent national policy re-orientation. It positions HE reforms in Ethiopia in relation to the neoliberal educational agenda of the WB. More specifically, in questioning the relevance of neoliberal HE agenda for achieving gender equity, the study situates local and national policy discourses in the global education policy field. It intends to answer questions such as,

- Are the recent HE reforms of Ethiopia aligned to neoliberal educational agenda of the WB?
- What are the major neoliberal educational ideals of the WB that have been infused into the HE system of Ethiopia?
- How has the WB managed to induce its policy prescriptions into the HE reforms of Ethiopia?

Sources of Data and Sampling – Policy documents were selected purposefully, based on their relevance to the problem and research questions of the study. The selected documents include sector reviews, project appraisals, proclamations, reports and policy working papers. HE reform documents were collected from the homepage of the WB (www.worldbank.org) and from the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, two of whose senior officials were also interviewed. Institutional legislatives and policies related to gender equity

⁵ The names of both these universities are pseudonyms.

(e.g., working papers of the gender offices) were obtained from the universities. In summary, the sources were:

- Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education (World Bank, 2002a)
- Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2009)
- Ethiopia – Post Secondary Education Project (World Bank, 2004a)
- HE Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision (World Bank, 2003b)
- HE System Overhaul (HESO) (Committee of Inquiry [Ethiopian], 2004)
- Education Sector Development Program II, ESDP II (MoE, 2002a)
- HE Proclamation (No.650/2009) (FDRE, 2009)

In addition, valuable data was secured through in-depth interview with two senior government officials in the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia.

Instruments and Techniques of Data Collection – Document review and in-depth interviews were used as the key techniques of data gathering. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two senior government officials in the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia. Moreover, an informal discussion was held with WB personnel in the Bank’s Country Office for Ethiopia and the Sudan (in Addis Ababa). Document review guiding questions, constructed in light of the research questions, were used to collect the relevant data from the selected policy documents. The review guiding questions were constructed in a way that they could help not only to trace forms of reform agenda infused through direct policy prescriptions of the WB but also to map normative assumptions that underpinned major policy changes in the subsystem, and their implications for the framing of the problem of inequality in HE in the nation.

II. Equity Dimension of the Reforms

The policy influence analysis in the first part illuminates national responses to global pressures, and forms of reforms introduced in the subsystem. This second part of the project points out equity dimensions of the reforms as a major theme. Particularly, at this level attempts are made to understand the representation of the problem of inequality in general, and gender inequality in particular, in the reforms and consequently designed strategies to deal with this. It endeavours to answer the following questions,

- What are the major equity provisions in the Ethiopian HE reforms?
- How are gender inequality and underlying factors construed in the policy texts and practices?
- Are the equity policy provisions relevant to addressing the problem of gender inequality in HE in Ethiopia?

Sources of Data and Sampling – The following four national policy documents were the major sources of data:

- Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994)
- Education Sector Development Program II, ESDP II (MoE, 2002)
- HE Proclamation (No.650/2009) (FDRE, 2009)
- Five-Year Strategic Framework to Enhance the Participation of Women in HE (hereafter, the Framework) (MoE, 2004b)

The Education and Training Policy (1994) is a crucial document, not only because it manifests the political commitment of the current government but also because it sets overarching strategic goals for the education system of the nation. It has been implemented through multi-stage sector development programs. A significant reform agenda for the HE subsystem was outlined in the second phase of the education sector development program (i.e., ESDP II). The HE Proclamation, first ratified in 2003 and revised in 2009, is the most important piece of legislation in the history of the HE subsystem in the nation. It provides a legal framework for key restructuring and defines a new direction to the development of the subsystem. The fourth document is the first in its kind. It specifically addresses the issue of gender inequality in HE. It set out strategies to promote the participation of women in public HEIs over a five year period (2004-2008).

Instruments and Techniques of Data Collection – In line with equity-related research questions outlined above, document review guiding questions were prepared to analyse the policies. In addition, the interview questions for the government officials in the Ministry of Education included issues related to the problem of gender inequality in public universities.

III. Reform Effects

Macro-level abstract reform agenda are translated into micro-level practical implementations through specific policy instruments and strategies. And yet, the actual impact of policy pronouncements is mediated by a number of factors – including organizational structure, availability of human and financial resources, and beliefs and values of policy actors in the field – hence, reform intentions are rarely congruent with actual impacts. As such, it is crucial

to further examine equity policies at the level of HEIs and in terms of actual impact on the policy targets, that is, women in the institutions. Consequently, this part of the study aims at elucidating the institutional changes in response to national level gender equity policy initiatives, and women's experience and meaning with gender-related changes and practices in their respective institutions. In this part of the study, the central questions are,

- What are the major legislative provisions and institutional arrangements of public HEIs in response to the national gender equity initiatives?
- How do women in HE understand their position and advantages vis-à-vis gender-related policies and practices in their respective institutions?

Sources of Data and Sampling – The focus group discussions (FGDs) consisted of two groups of academic women and two groups of female students from the two public universities. Each group consisted of five participants. The two groups of academic women were selected based on their positions, level of involvement in decision-making, and participation in gender-related programs in the two universities (WU & OU). In addition, two senate legislation documents were reviewed to assess institutional equity actions and inactions.

Instruments and Techniques of Data Collection – At this level, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were the major techniques of data gathering. The guiding interview and discussion questions covered institutional gender equity policies and practices. The questions for focus group discussions (FGDs) with female academic staff and students concentrated on their experiences and meanings regarding gender-related institutional changes and arrangements. The questions enabled me to situate the data in the natural setting of social interaction where I could map mutual understandings and differences of their experiences in the institutions. The Groups were as diverse as possible, in terms of positions, faculties and seniority of participants, to gain different views and stories. Participants in the student FGDs came from various disciplines, including Law, History, Gender Studies, Sciences, and Education; and the academic women in the FGDs ranged from junior graduate assistants to senior staff with more than 25 years of service. The wide range and purposeful selection of discussants helped me to draw patterns (similarities and/or differences) among different subsets of the FGDs, based on common and different characteristics defined for each group.

In both the in-depth interviews and FGDs, discussions began with questions that sought to set the stage, and continued progressively, eliciting deeper explanations through follow-up

questions. At the end of each session, I asked the participants if there was anything missed and if they could pinpoint the most important concern for them arising from our discussion. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in English (the working language in universities). The six interview sessions lasted for between 31 to 53 minutes, and the four FGD sessions lasted for between 54 to 67 minutes. Regarding data storage, I audio-recorded (with the consent of the participants) all interviews and discussions. Each interview and discussion was labelled with a file name (using the pseudonym assigned to each informant).

The qualitative data from the policy documents, interviews and FGDs have been supplemented by statistical data from the MoE Annual Education Statistics Abstract, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the WB EdStats, the OECD's Query Wizard for International Development Statistics, and statistical data from the Human Resource Management departments of the two public universities.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

The study applied inductive analysis. Semi-structured interviews, FGDs and document review constructs (guiding questions) enabled me to produce qualitative data on the degree of alignment between neoliberal policies of the WB and the HE reform agenda of Ethiopia; forms of reforms and mechanisms of imposition; gender relations and inequality as construed in institutional policies; the relevance of institutional arrangements in tackling structural impediments for gender equity in HE; and women's meaning and experience of the gender policies in their respective institutions. The data analysis process was conducted in two separate groups: policy documents in one group, and interviews and focus group discussions in the other.

My analysis of the qualitative data started with thematic coding that included reading data in context, identifying patterns of commonalities and differences to construct themes, and linking the themes to build broad categories. Seidel and Kelle (1995, cited in Basit, 2003, p.145) identify three roles of coding: "noticing relevant phenomena; collecting examples of those phenomena; and analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures". I thoroughly read texts to identify key categories in line with the research questions and objectives of the study. Then, to code systematically the policy texts under the pre-defined and emerging categories, I imported soft copies of the texts into *Nvivo8*

(a computer based qualitative data analysis tool). This enabled me to map the socio-economic context that framed the reforms, key policy agenda endorsed in the policy process, and pathways of the global-local interactions from the data on context, content and process of HE reform in Ethiopia.

When it comes to institutional policies and the transcribed interview data, I coded the words, statements and rhetoric linked with social equity in general, and gender equity in HE in particular, under the theme of *equity dimension of the reform*. This theme has been crucial to understand the representation of inequality in HE as a policy problem and to grasp the assumptions (socio-economic rationalities, conceptual logics, ‘discursive reception’, sectoral alignment, etc.) underpinning the representation. It was also helpful to identify and explain aspects of the problem which are left unproblematised in the reform process both at systemic and institutional levels. In institutional policies and interviews with university managers and Gender Office directors, attention was also given to issues related to specific gender equity strategies in use, and policy lines of action or inaction to tackle the problem of gender inequality in the institutions. This constituted the category of the first-order reform effect of the equity policies, as manifested by institutional changes and arrangements in response to national level gender equity initiatives.

In analysing the FGD data, I applied intra-group thematic analysis and inter-group comparison (Flick, 2006; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008). The thematic level of analysis enabled me to identify and explain shared experiences and to capture differences across topics of discussions within the groups. The inter-group analysis was imperative to uncover contours of gendered experiences across the terrains of different organizational settings and histories where women work and learn. The central category of this part of the analysis was women’s experience and meanings in relation to the institutional equity policies and practices. This constituted the second-order reform effect.

At the stage of *mapping and interpretation* of the data, I carefully compared and contrasted accounts, searched for patterns and connections, and described and explained convergence and disjuncture across the data. Under each major category (presented as the headings for Chapters 5 to 9), I consolidated emergent themes and established associations across themes and categories. I continuously revised the themes in a way they could accommodate emerging patterns; and the naming and number of themes were in constant revision to increase their explanatory power of the phenomenon they tend to represent. Direct quotations

and indirect statements of the values, assumptions, and stories of ‘communities of meaning’ – including from policymakers (at national, international or institutional level), implementing agency personnel (e.g., HE managers and gender officers), and policy targets (e.g., women in HE) – were used extensively in constructing narrative accounts of the themes.

3.3 Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Findings

To ensure trustworthiness of the findings, the following measures have been taken.

- I. Adhering to rules of document analysis (McCulloch, 2004, pp.42-46; Scott, 2006a, pp.8-11; 2006b, pp.23-40):
 - a. Establishing authenticity and reliability of the documents – As the sources are major policy documents and reports from key government offices, I used the identity of the producers and date of production to authenticate the policy documents and to make sure that the evidence was undistorted, credible and accurate.
 - b. Maintaining representativeness of the documents – The data for analysis were drawn from typical policy documents and official reports that significantly represented policy texts available on the subsystem.
 - c. Ensuring clarity and comprehensibility of the evidence to the researcher – John Scott (2006a, 2006b) refers to this as the literal and interpretative meaning of the document. It refers to the clarity and comprehensibility of the documents in use. It is also related to the desirability of understanding the social and political contexts in which the documents have been produced. For example, without the knowledge that HE policy elements in Ethiopia have been greatly influenced by donors, it is difficult to explain trends of internationality of the policy agenda and underlying principles in the policy texts. As an Ethiopian with reasonable understanding of the socio-economic context in which the documents were produced, I was able to trace the origin of certain policy discourses and grasp what policy problem was understated or overstated, or ignored.
- II. Data and method triangulation – Different sources (policy documents, government officials, university managers, gender officers, academic women, and female students), and methods (document analysis, semi-structured interview and focus group discussion),

and data (qualitative data supplemented by statistical information) were combined to enhance reliability of the data and methodology.

III. Attention to discrepant evidence and ethical considerations were the other strategies applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Part of the data for this study was drawn from research participants, that is, human beings. As such, there were ethical procedures to be followed – including but not limited to consent approval and confidentiality as approved by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC-CF10/1109 – 2010000581) on 01 June 2010. Before undertaking the interviews and FGDs, both written and verbal consent of the participants was secured. Informed consent of each participant was gained through a signed consent agreement form. In the case of OU, the research participants were given contact details of the Proctor's Office, which is responsible for the welfare of students, in the event they were concerned or upset by the process. At WU, my supervisors' details were given to the participants in case they had subsequent concerns. To ensure the privacy of the participants and avoid any perceived vulnerability, confidentiality of each participant was secured through the use of pseudonyms in storing and analysing the data as well as in reporting the findings. The audio tapes and transcribed data have been kept in a safe place where no one other than my supervisors and I can access this material, and it has been used exclusively for this study and publications arising from it alone.

Chapters 8 and 9 are drawn on qualitative data collected through interviews and FGDs with women in HE. Although it may seem difficult for a man to conduct gender research in a patriarchal society such as Ethiopia, two factors helped me to bridge my 'sympathetic externality' and their social world: a) as an Ethiopian who grew in one of the rural communities and studied in the same education system, I understand the socio-cultural and institutional contexts in which the women have been located, and b) as relatively well educated women, the participants were free to openly interact and discuss their gendered experiences in their respective institutions.

Guided by the core research questions and the theoretical frameworks of the study, I have reviewed a large body of relevant literature ranging from globalization to higher education reform and to gender culture. It is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

Review of Relevant Literature

In trying to understand the dynamics of HE policy reform and its social equity implications and consequences in Ethiopia, one needs to be attentive to the multiplicity of forces and agenda involved in shaping the policy process. Bearing this in mind, in this chapter of the thesis, I map, connect and analyse the key themes including globalization, neoliberal educational agenda, HE policy reform, and gender culture and its impact on participation in education. The chapter has seven major sections. The first section of the review briefly introduces the international HE reform pattern, followed by a discussion that locates the phenomenon of HE policy reform in the context of globalization. The third section explains how the WB, as a key global agent, is associated with neoliberal ideals. The role of the Bank in the HE reform process in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and a brief account of its educational development aid to Ethiopia in the last five decades, are presented in sections four and five respectively. The sixth section is a very brief historical overview of the development of HE in Ethiopia. Finally, in the last part of this review, the discussion is directed to the issue of gender culture and the problem of gender inequality in education in Ethiopia.

4.1 Reforming Higher Education: Key Areas of Interest

Social needs are not static. Thus, there is always a need to revisit public policy to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of the society. Planned changes in public policies are meant to be for improvement. HE policy and system reforms are no exception. In fact, agenda for HE reform depend on priorities and challenges within the subsystem, and broader socio-economic contexts and national development plans in which the subsystem operates. Drawing on his case studies from five universities in Europe (England, Finland, Scotland, Sweden, and the Netherlands), Burton Clark (1998) argues that two important developments force modern universities to become profitable enterprises. Those are the increasingly decline in government support, and changing societal demands and expectations with respect to HEIs (Clark, 1998). Writing over a decade ago, Clark captures the dilemma of universities today. With mass demand for HE and declining government funding, “*demands on universities outrun their capacity to respond*” (emphasis in the original) (Clark, 1998, p.129). The

imbalance between societal needs and institutional capacity has become a global phenomenon, and this necessitates planned changes in HE. In his follow up study on continued changes in HE world-wide, Clark (2004, p.5) reaffirms: “sustained transformation depends on a ‘steady state’ infrastructure that pushes for change” at institutional and systemic levels.

In discussing the trend of HE transformation globally, Maassen and Cloete (2006) highlight five major assumptions underlying contemporary HE reforms. Those are that universities and colleges should be:

- externally controlled and their activities should be formally evaluated,
- held accountable for their performance,
- steered by market forces and not by governmental or state mechanisms,
- run by professional leaders and managers instead of by academic *primus-inter-pares* (‘first among equals’), and
- included as service industries in regional and global trade agreements (Maassen & Cloete , 2006, pp.16-17).

Hence major drivers necessitating reforms in the HE system, particularly in the context of developing countries, can be summarised into four categories: mass demand for HE (resulting partly from higher enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels in the last two decades); the centrality of knowledge and skills in the new economic environment; fiscal pressures to meet the growing resource demand of the system; and policy prescriptions associated with development aid by such influential donors as the WB. Therefore, finance, management, curriculum and admission remain the focus of planned changes in HE world-wide, to achieve such objectives as efficiency, excellence, relevance, and equity.

Financially, HE faces two contrasting situations: mass demand and declining public funding. With the increased influence of the neoliberal policy agenda, most of the traditional public goods are becoming subject to market rules, and in the name of efficiency, governments are increasingly reducing public funds to social services, including education (Torres & Rhoades, 2006; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). This has three implications for reforms of HE in both the developed and developing countries. These are the privatization of HE (including cost sharing by students, tuition fees, and private for-profit providers); developing an entrepreneurial relationship with the environment (selling services such as research results and consultancy, and introduction of professional managers); and competitive and funding formula mechanisms by governments (Maassen & Cloete, 2006; World Bank, 2004b). The argument is that “the exposure of universities and colleges to market forces and competition

will result in improved management, programmatic adaptation, maximum flexibility, improved efficiency, and consumer satisfaction” (Maassen & Cloete 2006, p.9). Australian universities have been under pressure since the late 1980s to diversify their sources of income and to be accountable for the efficient use of public resources allocated for them (Meek & Wood, 1997). Tuition fees have been introduced in countries where HE was formerly free or nearly so (Australia in 1986, China in 1997, United Kingdom in 1998, Austria in 2001) (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009; Swail & Heller, 2004).

The impact of globalization on HE is also linked with the extent to which the state is losing its grip on its HE institutions. According to Beerkens (2003, p.142), “governments are not just losing grip, they are also transferring this grip intentionally—upwards, downwards, and sideways”. This has two important implications in terms of HE governance: the changing relationship between the state and HE, and active involvement of international organizations (IOs) in the national HE arena. In line with these financial changes, universities and colleges have also experienced managerial and governance restructuring as adaptive strategies to external pressures. This can be explained by the introduction of a new management style run by academic institution (professional) managers (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007, pp.8-10), and unprecedented attention given to the use of external monitoring instruments, such as quality assurance and national qualification frameworks.

The international reform trend shows that there is a general shift from state control to state supervision in management and governance of HE systems and institutions (Maassen & Cloete 2006; World Bank, 2004b). Increased autonomy with growing accountability characterises the relationship between the state and HEIs. Power allocation and power relations among various hierarchies of the HE subsystem — the government (the MoE), the University Board, the Senate, the Academic Commission and other lower levels positions and other levels and arms of the government — has dramatically changed throughout the last two decades. This devolution of power can be seen as part of the political changes at the national level towards democracy, especially in countries in transition and in Africa in particular.

Knowledge has always been valued as a crucial asset in any society. This historical importance is highlighted in an era of rapid technological advances where knowledge is seen as a commodity. In the developed countries, what is called the *knowledge society* is predicated on the creation and innovative application of knowledge and skills to support productivity in national economies (Jarvis, 2001). In developing countries, human capital

development remains at the centre of efforts towards economic growth and poverty eradication. The WB predicts that knowledge and skills will remain reliable development factors that help build and sustain knowledge societies (World Bank, 2002a). As such, the role of HE to support a political and economic agenda, both in the knowledge society in the global North and the agrarian societies in Africa remains crucial. This has two major implications for HE as a subsystem. First, academic subjects, research results, and the curricula need to be relevant to immediate and long-term societal needs. Moja (2004, p.24) argues that recent endeavours by national governments and IOs (including the WB) aim at supporting HE to “become more responsive to new development needs”. This is reflected in the continuing re-stratification of academic subjects and programs based on their market use-values. Further, the major point of reference for quality assurance has come to be “fitness of purpose”, that is, relevance and responsiveness of teaching and learning and research results, to address socio-economic needs and national priorities (Singh, 2011).

Given national plans of poverty reduction and sustainable economic development are the context in which the reforms are taking place and the optimism attached to education as a development instrument in Africa, it is perhaps inevitable that there is a convergence of interest in the reform agenda advanced by the WB. Maassen and Cloete observe that:

The global context, shaped by globalization, influences national policy makers in such a way that they emphasize in national policy processes and reforms issues that ‘fit’ the global discourse, such as efficiency, effectiveness, and competition (2006, p.18).

The importance of flexible, autonomous management with increased accountability, and the emphasis on the relevance of academic and research programs of HE, fits local concerns in Africa. That is, there is a harmony of mission of restructuring HE polices in response to challenges and opportunities of economic globalization. Again, globalization also means exporting jobs (through off-shoring and out-sourcing) from high-income countries to low-income countries in the global South⁶. In this regard, the premise of neoliberals is that economic liberalization and deregulation offers the opportunity to attract foreign investment, and this, among other things, provides competent workers with employment opportunities.

⁶ While the categorization of global North and global South is used in the context of development discourses and development aid, the terms West (Western) and East (Eastern) are applied in relation to political and philosophical traditions and processes.

This, they argue, is a way for the poor countries to move from their peripheral position to the centre of the global economic system (Jarvis, 2000).

Yet this is only part of the story. It is important to highlight that the economic rhetoric attached to HE is not equally valid across all nations in the world. In regions such as Africa where illiteracy and absolute poverty are living realities, the *knowledge society* discourse may not be prevailing at present. Even so, the economic contribution of HE is still undisputable. Related to this, in the face of mass demand for HE and inequality in access, governments need to restructure admission requirements and expand physical facilities to widen opportunity and access to knowledge and skills for members of the society. The massification of the HE subsystem poses its own challenge to low-income countries (LICs) as their subsistence-based economies can hardly absorb a highly trained labour force. Furthermore, the one-size-fits-all reform orientation of the WB may conflict with such local needs as tackling inequalities and low rates of access to HE. One of the core neoliberal economic principles maintains that competitiveness fosters an enterprising spirit and creativity, and thereby leads to equity and efficiency while public spending is merely an unproductive cost (Harris, 2007). Along with this line of reasoning, agents of neoliberal ideology (including the WB) induce HE reform agenda that encourage reduced public spending on HE, among other things. On the other hand, in developing countries like Ethiopia, the participation in HE of geo-politically peripheral ethnic groups, the rural poor, women and pastoral communities are still lagging behind, and the model of an interventionist state is not optional when it comes to education. Uncritical compliance with global pressures may undermine the potential of education to promote social cohesion and build a democratic society.

To sum up, major globalized changes in the field of HE include massification of access; declining government funding that leads to diversification of sources of income (e.g., privatization of HE, cost recovery and tuition fees by students, involvement of commercial firms in production, sponsorship, dissemination of research); increased importance of information and communications technologies in teaching and learning, research, and publication; corporatization of management (adoption of business models for the organization and administration of universities and colleges); and growing mobility of students and staff, and cross-border cooperation and offshore programs (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009; Altbach & Davis, 1999; Douglass, 2007).

The convergence of HE restructuring in terms of goals and directions across nations can be explained by both policy borrowing and policy imposition. National interests towards economic competitiveness, and external influences through development aid, as well as the global networks of intellectual communities which use research, publication, conferences, and seminars to frame education policy problems, have contributed to the globalization of HE reform (Schugurensky, 2007; Torres & Rhoades, 2006; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002; Hill, 2005). In the following section, I will take this point further and explain how globalization has influenced the agenda and processes of HE reform.

4.2 Globalization as a Reform Context

Notwithstanding the differences in levels and forms of challenges to be addressed, developing and developed countries alike are restructuring their HE institutions and systems (Clark, 1998, 2004). Even though all HE systems and institutions around the world may not have the same agenda, they are, albeit on varying scales, undisputedly influenced by the same global policy discourses and are in the same wave of change. Especially from the late 1990s onwards, developing countries have been energetically restructuring their HE. This section focuses on the interplay between the economic and political contexts of HE reform, global pressures, and local needs in the case of developing countries.

Globalization as a socio-economic phenomenon provides a valuable analytical tool to understand the global HE reform trend. The dynamics of HE reforms in any particular context cannot fully be grasped without relating them to the effects of globalization and globalizing forces (Eggins, 2007; Torres & Rhoades, 2006). First, what is globalization? It is probably one of the most discussed concepts of our time in the social sciences, and yet there is no a single common definition that fully represents the phenomenon/process/concept of globalisation. A relevant definition of globalization is found in the work of David Held and Anthony McGrew. They define globalization as a phenomenon that “denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interactions” (Held & McGrew, 2003, p.4). It is an enduring pattern of worldwide economic and political interconnectedness and interdependence. It transcends national identities as ideas, capital, goods and services (and, to some extent, people) travel across national borders with little or no barriers.

Two strands of globalization are especially relevant in understanding the directions and goals of policy changes in the field of HE. To start with, viewing it from the economic aspect, globalization refers to the diminishing economic borders that allow the fast flow of goods, services, capital, and ideas. It manifests in the growing interdependence of national states and deepening economic integration (Duderstadt, Taggart & Weber, 2008; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Nayyar, 2008). The economic dimension of globalization is well explained by the dominance of the neoliberal economic ideals that stand for economic openness, a facilitative and steering state, and market forces as economic drivers (Harris, 2007). The global economic production, distribution and consumption process, it is argued, requires higher level knowledge and skills. According to David Bloom (2005), globalization favours specialization of productions, and this requires expert knowledge. Hence, the labour force needs to be equipped with updated knowledge, to be competent and to be flexible to fit the changing working situations and needs. This, in turn, requires continuing learning opportunities to help members of the society keep up with workplace needs for innovation, flexibility and specialization, and ever changing technology.

In line with this normative assumption, public policy-makers believe that in the context of the market-led economic order, national comparative advantage is increasingly dependent on effective and efficient HE. They closely integrate the subsystem with plans for poverty reduction and sustainable development. In his study on the link between HE and economic growth in Africa, David Bloom (2005) finds that there is a strong positive correlation between the HE enrolment ratio of a nation or a region, and its global competitive performance. HEIs tailor education and training to fit the demands of the labour market, based on the assumption that workers with continuing learning capacities, flexibility, and skills are the key drivers of the knowledge economy system. Through cooperation with business, HEIs play significant roles in technology transfer and advancing scientific investigations that are practically relevant to producing knowledge-based goods.

In other words, pressures exerted by the global phenomenon of economic competition, and pressing challenges within the system, necessitate adjustment in mission, financial sources, and structures of governance of HE. In order to ensure its responsiveness to national needs and global changes, HE needs to be restructured in order to advance knowledge that can be innovatively applied to produce goods and services for the market, and to produce a competent labour force that meets the changing working needs, and skilled citizens who

respond to national development calls. Global competitiveness can also be effected directly through trading in HE as a service. Changes in management, organization and financing of HE could be part of the arrangement to actively take part in the international HE student market (US, UK, Australia and Canada are good examples here).

Secondly, the political strand of globalization represents the increasing power of IOs and transnational agencies over national policies and concerns (Dale, 1999, 2000). In the context of globalization, political and public decisions are no longer insulated with national forces. The latter, by consent, cede part of their power to IOs and regional agencies, which assume considerable legitimacy and authority to influence national affairs through varying mechanisms ranging from knowledge sharing to loan conditionalities (Barnet & Finnermore, 1999; Dale, 1999, 2000; Moutsios, 2009, 2010). A sociological analysis on the power of IOs and their potential and actual dysfunctional behaviour shows that their power emanates from two sources: the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority, and control over expertise (Barnet & Finnermore, 1999). IOs have bureaucracies defined by stability, legality, technicality and rationality that enable them to deploy “socially recognized relevant knowledge to create rules that determine how goals will be pursued” and function as purposive and impartial agents with substantial degree of power and autonomy (Barnet & Finnermore, 1999, p.707). The organisations exercise their power through discourses – that is, through a particular representation of problems and policy issues. They use knowledge-based policy instruments (most often attached to financial resources, in the case of the WB) to advance their discourses of knowledge economy and global competitiveness.

In the HE policy field, the economic and political strands of globalization are represented in what is referred to as *globalization as a policy process*. According to Maassen and Cloete (2006, p.10), globalization as a policy process refers to national endeavours (which includes change in public policies and laws) to promote competitiveness in the global economy, and the roles of IOs and transnational agencies in facilitating global consensus on common concerns through knowledge sharing and aid. From this policy perspective, contemporary discourses on the interconnectedness and interdependence of the world, the importance of knowledge as a production factor in the competitive market economy, and the optimistic views advanced by IOs on the benefits of the global economy have propelled HE to the centre stage of national and international policy agenda. With the increased flow of ideas and knowledge from the global policy field into the national arenas, policy making has come to be a transnational business (Beck, 2005). Based on his analysis of the state and process of

transnational education policy making by the WB, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Moutsios (2009) concludes that education policy is being made through asymmetric procedures and is dominated by economic interests. He argues:

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are experiencing, at the most official level, not only the transnationalization of education policy making but also the subjugation of education to the mandates of the global economy. [...] The globalization of economy is accompanied by the globalization of policy making (p.479).

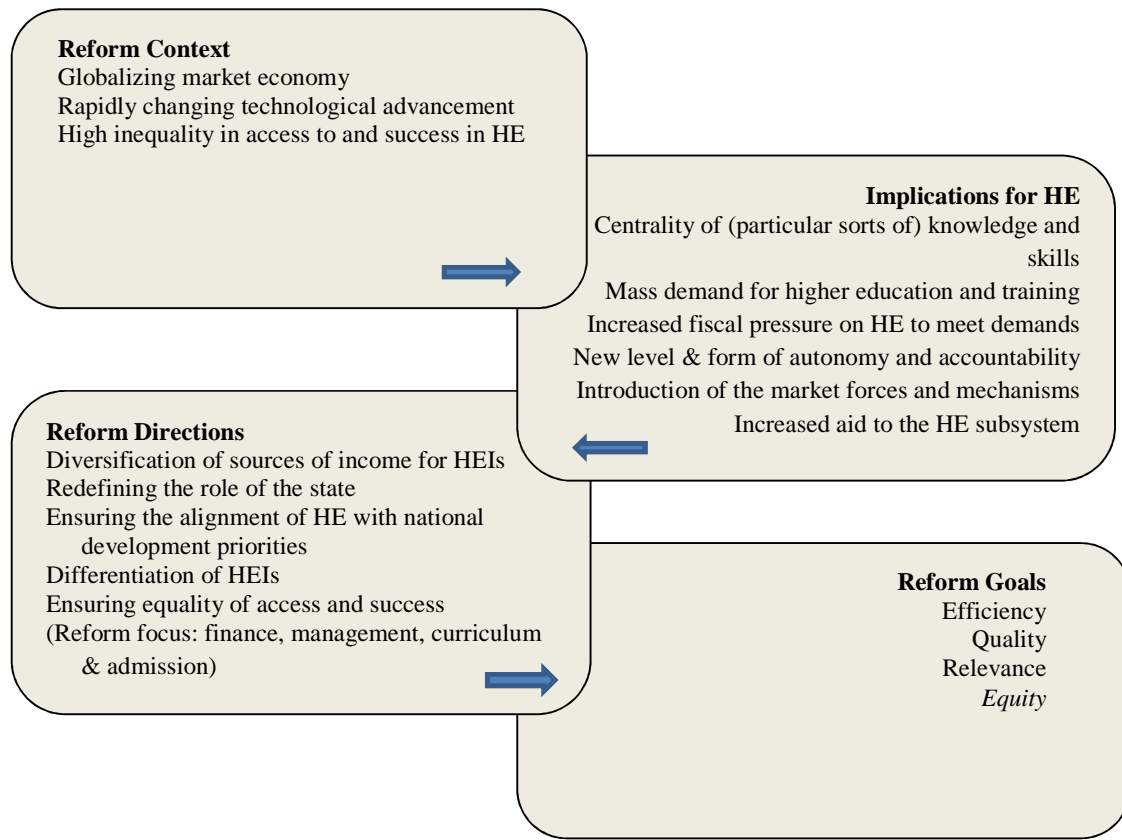
The organizations (e.g., the WB) sell their policy agenda to the developing world through policy discourses and loan conditionalities. As Beerkens (2003) sensibly puts it: “Although nation-states allegedly have the choice to accept these packages (including the requirements), in reality, several countries are not in the position to reject such packages” (p.143). Therefore, their authority based on financial power and expertise enable them to maintain dual roles: as agents of globalization, they facilitate the convergence of HE policies and practices through setting reform agenda, and as agents working in the changing world they introduce strategies to deal with perils and opportunities of globalization. In both instances, they influence national policy directions through harmonization based on knowledge sharing (e.g., the role of OECD on HE subsystems of member countries), and through imposition of globally defined agenda (e.g., the influence of the WB on HE subsystems of educational development aid-recipient poor countries in Africa) (Dale, 2000). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the globalization of HE or some aspects of convergence in direction, content and purposes of HE reform in Africa is mainly the result of external drivers of changes: that is, IOs and donors who impose their agenda in the form of conditionalities and policy advices.

Here, the central argument is that globalization as a reform context provides a valuable perspective to understand the dynamics of the economic motives of nation-states to restructure their HE subsystems, and the political role of IOs in initiating and directing national reform processes. See Figure 4.1 below for my representation of the interplay.

The presence of IOs and regional agencies is felt in low-income and high-income countries alike. However, the actors are different. In the high-income countries, transnational organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the OECD, and international organizations such as WTO are more important than the WB. For example, the convergence

of HE systems in those countries is explained in agreements on labour mobility which leads to mutual understanding on the recognition of credentials and transfer equivalences; and homogenization and standardization of curricula and programs (e.g., the EU's Bologna Process that since 1999 has aimed to create a European Area of HE).

Figure 4.1 The Interplay of the Reform Context and Goals in the HE Policy Field



Examples of the transnational policy process (Schugurensky, 2007; van der Wende, 2003) are found in regional arrangements and agreements on institutional cooperation; joint projects and academic and student exchange programs (e.g., Erasmus Mundus, Socrates, and Mundus programs of the EU); policy-oriented knowledge production and dissemination on shared concerns of member countries (e.g., the OECD and its Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] study); and agreement on making HE a tradable service through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the WTO which recognizes cross-border trade in educational services. This leads to regional standardization of educational curricula and credentials, as has been witnessed in the context of EU member states.

Through various discursive instruments (including policy reviews and statistical reports), I would argue, these organisations construct a particular discourse of globalisation through which they exert power and influence. In this regard, many commentators (e.g., Hill, 2005; McCaffery, 2004; Olaniran & Agnello, 2008; Torres, 2009; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002; Wells, Carnochan, Slayton, Allen & Vasudeva, 1998) believe that, in their active engagements in national education policy processes, there is a policy coherence among IOs as they ultimately strive to establish a global market, unfettered by national government regulations that primarily benefits leading capitalist nations and their transnational companies. As such, they are closely associated with neoliberalism. The following section takes the case of the WB to show the way the organization is linked to the ideals of neoliberalism, and highlights the implications of this for the forms and goals of its educational development aid to African countries, including Ethiopia.

4.3 The WB as a Neoliberal Agent

In this study, by referring to the Bank's education 'policy options' (World Bank, 2002a) as neoliberal educational agenda, I concur with other critical education policy researchers (e.g., Hill, 2005; Klees, 2002, 2010, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Torres, 2009) that the WB is a key agent of neoliberal globalisation. I substantiate this assertion using the WB's close association with leading neoliberal capitalist states, and the strong alignment of its development strategies (for example, the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s and the 1990s, and the poverty reduction strategy since the early 2000s) with essentials of the market economy principles of neoliberalism. But first, a brief introduction to the idea of neoliberalism is in order here.

Liberalism as a political and economic orientation has been in place in Europe since the 18th century, and it spread to North America in the 19th century (Harvey, 2005). Liberals call for individual freedom, the abolition of barriers to free trade, and minimum government involvement for a sound economic growth of a nation (Steger & Roy, 2010). However, following the Great Depression in the 1930s, the optimism associated with liberal economic thinking was challenged. It was argued that sustainable capitalist growth would necessitate strong government that ensures employment and a stable economic system. As a result, the post WWII capitalist economic order was primarily influenced by what is commonly referred to as the Keynesian economics, after John Keynes, the pioneer of the idea of the state-driven

economic system. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, the capitalist system was once again in crisis. Leading capitalist countries (mainly the UK and the US under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan respectively) revived liberal economic principles, institutionalizing neoliberalism (Harris, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Up until that time, neoliberalism had been limited to academic circles and think tanks, noticeably championed by prominent economists in the Mont Pèlerin Society (a movement led by Austrian economist Friedrich August von Hayek and founded at Mont Pèlerin in Switzerland in 1947) (McKenzie, 2012; Peters, 2012). In other words, as Walby (2009) rightly put it: “Neoliberalism emerged as a civic society project, which was taken up and embedded in political projects, becoming a global wave then embedded in institutions and programs of governmental and global bodies” (p.45).

Broadly speaking, neoliberalism can be defined as a set of market-based economic policies; and it serves as “an ideology, a mode of governance, and a policy package emphasizing the pivotal role of free markets and private enterprise” (Steger & Roy, 2010, p.136). The central tenets of neoliberalism are commitment to an “unfettered market” and individualism (Olssen & Peters, 2005, pp.314-315). More specifically, essentials of neoliberal policy packages include deregulation (reducing government regulation of the economic system for greater openness of the national economy to international trade and investment), privatization of publicly owned state enterprises, liberalization (including devaluation of national currency) and public spending reduction (Harvey, 2005). The state’s roles, at least in principle, need to be limited to creating the appropriate conditions, laws, and institutions necessary for markets to operate smoothly. In energetically inducing this reform agenda in aid-recipient countries such as Ethiopia, the normative thinking at work is that ‘free trade’ spurs competition, increases economic efficiency, creates jobs, lowers consumer prices, increases consumer choices, increases economic growth, and is generally beneficial to almost everyone (Steger & Roy, 2010). As an economic project, neoliberal policies aim at economic stabilization and the opening up of domestic economies.

The central question remains: how is the WB linked with this market-based economic and policy orientation? One of the major globalizing processes that have led to the political and economic integration of the world is the formation of intergovernmental agencies and trade blocs. In this regard, the foundation of the United Nations Organization (UN) in 1945 is considered to be a remarkable instance towards global cooperation. As one of the specialized

UN agencies, the foundation of the WB was initiated at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference (1-22 July 1944, at Bretton Woods, in New Hampshire) when delegates of forty-four nations (including Ethiopia) met and agreed on the establishment of an international bank to support post-WWII reconstruction efforts (Castro, 2002). The WB consists of two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) officially founded in 1945, and the International Development Association (IDA) founded in 1960 (Harrison, 2004). While the IBRD provides loans at market rate to middle-income countries and “creditworthy” developing countries, the IDA serves mainly to poorer countries that have gross national income per capita below an annually updated threshold (in fiscal year 2012, US\$1,175); that lack the trustworthiness to borrow from the IBRD at a market rate; and that have sound policies for development (Alexander, 2001; World Bank, 2002a). At present (2012), there are 81 eligible countries (39 of them from SSA) to borrow concessional loans (with an extended period of repayment and no interest except a minimal [0.75%] administrative charge) from the IDA. The IDA’s funds are sourced from grants from forty rich members of the WB (Jones 2007; World Bank, 2007a), and repayments from borrowers.

The dominance of neoliberal ideals in the WB policies cannot be fully appreciated without considering the power dynamics within the institution, that is, the position of leading capitalist countries in terms of decision-making and agenda setting in the Bank. The voting power of a member state is measured by the number of shares it holds in the Bank’s capital stock, and other factors.

In principle, the distribution of votes is based on measurements of national income, foreign reserves, and contributions to international trade. In practice, the process is highly political; the United States deliberately maintains its proportion of more than 15 per cent of the voting power in order to maintain veto power over major decisions, which require an 85 per cent special majority (Stein, 2008, p.7).

For example, in the case of the IBRD arm of the WB, at the beginning of 2012, Ethiopia had a total subscription of 0.06%, which is translated into a voting power of 0.07% while the US holds a total subscription of 16.1% that amounts a voting power of 15.75% (World Bank, Database 6). The same is true in the case of the IDA. Its 171 member states do not have equal voting power. The economically developed neoliberal states are in many ways in control of the institution. The Board consists of the President and 25 elected or appointed executive directors. As of early 2012, while 39 SSA countries are represented by two elected directors

with a total voting power of 9.45%, the five countries which contribute the largest numbers of shares of the IDA are represented by five appointed directors with a total voting power of 34.33%. The top five countries with their respective order of voting power are the US (10.53%), Japan (8.68%), the UK (5.64%), Germany (5.63%), and France (3.85%) (World Bank, Database 6). In other words, one member state (the US) has more voting power than all the SSA countries combined, giving member states unequal advantage in the Bank's operation.

The WB's development programs and strategies are underpinned by the interests of leading capitalist states. Their strong position within the Bank has enabled those nations to use every channel available to infuse their market-oriented economic ideals in the Bank's development agenda (Harvey, 2005; Payne, 2005). For instance, according to Stephen P. Heyneman, a long-serving former Bank employee, in the early 1980s, following a fiscal crisis in Latin America, there was an initiative by the US government for a quick loan linked with macro-economic adjustments in the region. In the process of the initiative, James Baker, then US Secretary of Treasury, was said to have made a comment on the Bank's 'invisibility' in dealing with the problem as it focused on project-based funding. Noticeably, in response to this concern, the WB introduced a policy-based lending mechanism attached to structural adjustments (Heyneman, 2003, 2012). By virtue of their large share in the subscription of the WB, neoliberal states such as the UK and the US are said to have used the 'soft power' of the WB and the IMF to spread their market-economy principles to the rest of the world (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Related to staffing, the president of the WB is traditionally an American citizen and is chosen with US congressional involvement; and due to its historical relationship the leading capitalist nations and geographical location, the Bank tends to be dominated by Western experts (Harvey, 2005). Given their cultural orientation and academic training, Bank staff embrace corporate values of the global North that favour a free-market system, and tend to propagate neoliberal ideals in their policy advice and fieldwork in aid-recipient countries in Africa and elsewhere (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007; Payne, 2005).

At an operational level, the neoliberal agency of the WB has expressed itself in two key policy packages for aid dependent countries in Africa: structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). International financial institutions (IFIs), including the WB and the IMF, have justified their neoliberal policy imposition on borrowing

countries on the basis of their normative assumption that a single global market economy is most effective to support the poverty eradication efforts of national governments in the LICs. In the two policy packages, the institutions extol the virtues of free markets, free trade, private enterprise and consumer choice that necessitate privatization, deregulation and the removal of government interference in the economy (Steger & Roy, 2010; Teeple, 1995). Harvey (2005) summarises what happened in the 1980s and 1990s:

The IMF and the World Bank thereafter became centres for the propagation and enforcement of 'free market fundamentalism' and neoliberal orthodoxy. In return for debt rescheduling, indebted countries were required to implement institutional reforms, such as cuts in welfare expenditures, more flexible labour market laws, and privatization. Thus was 'structural adjustment' invented (p.29).

In the 1980s, Latin American and African countries faced a critical debt crisis. Indebted countries then increased their loan intake from the IMF and WB (Harrison, 2004; Teeple, 1995). On the other hand, according to Thirkell-White, the two institutions "came under the influence of the new neoliberal economic orthodoxy and pushed developing countries to adopt it, in return for unprecedentedly large loans" (2008, p.145). Accordingly, one of the crucial aspects of the SAPs was the requirement by the WB that loan and grant receiving countries should "restructure their economies according to neoliberal principles" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p.98) such as export oriented production, privatization, public spending cuts, deregulation, and devaluation of national currency. In fact, it is important to note that neoliberalism has not been a mere add-on to the policies of the WB. Instead the Bank has made significant changes to accommodate the new mission of championing capitalist economic ideals. In line with the ascendance of neoliberal ideals in its development realm, as Payne (2005) rightly observes:

the WB moved steadily away from the large scale infrastructural loans and projects that were typical of its work during the Keynesian era and embraced instead the promotion of market institutions and the dismantling of public enterprises as part of a series of 'structural adjustment' programmes introduced into countries all around the world (p.77).

In the aftermath of the declaration of the MDG in 2000, the PRSPs came to be a new instrument to induce the same neoliberal principles of deregulation, liberalization and privatization; and to institutionalize good governance necessary for a stable market order in the SSA. Unlike the previous version of the policy package (i.e., SAPs), PRSPs are produced by aid recipient countries under the watchful eyes of the WB and the IMF. Based on this new

approach, some ambitious government officials tend to claim that these papers are locally initiated and owned. In reality, to be eligible for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative that provides debt relief and interest-free loans, the countries need to conform to the conditions of the financial institutions. The assumption is that the relief offered by the HIPC Initiative allows governments to invest the savings in social welfare and thereby remedy negative consequences of the structuring process. Neoliberals insist that global economic integration is the way to escape from poverty in the developing world (World Bank, 2002a). They operate under the assumption that “the elimination of poverty (both domestically and worldwide) can best be secured through free markets and free trade” because eventually wealth will trickle down in the form of employment and tax to benefit the poor, and as such, “a rising tide lifts all boats” (Harvey, 2005, pp.64-5).

Yet the critics insist that the neoliberal policy package primarily aims at benefiting economically advanced nations. They argue that the policy pressure guided by the one-size-fits-all approach of the financial institutions has resulted in the decline of social services and subsequent instability that worsened poverty (Harrison, 2004; Stein, 2008). In addition, they dispute that development strategies of the Bank mask the hidden agenda of opening up investment and trade opportunities for transnational corporations (TNCs) of the developed world⁷. For critics such as Ilon (2002), in the name of poverty reduction, the WB is simply disguising its goal of promoting the interests of transnational corporations. According to Harrison (2004), the close association of the WB with the globalization of market capitalism can be explained by its commitment “to stop all lending to any member state that violates the property rights of a transnational corporation” (p.9). Its focus on development aid also supports this claim. Through financing the development of transportation and telecommunications, pressing borrowing countries to deregulate their economic systems and opposing minimum wage laws, and insisting on production for export which chiefly benefits

⁷ What the WB does in opening up the developing world for transnational companies (TNCs) can be compared with diplomatic efforts of leaders of neoliberal states. On 15 June 2010, in remarks to university students in Nairobi (Kenya), Vice President of the US, Joe Biden, advised: “I promise you, foreign investment depends upon stability, transparency, the rule of law, and the crackdown on corruption. So if you make these changes, I promise you, new foreign private investment will come in like you’ve never seen” (Source: www.whitehouse.gov, accessed on 22 June 2010). This message is at the core of neoliberal market economy principles: “roll back the state and globalize the economy” as an ultimate solution to poverty (Thirkell-White, 2008, p.146). The seemingly wishful thinking is that extreme poverty and global inequality are assumed to be merely transitional conditions to vanish with the success of the free market ideals.

the corporations that control international trade, the WB ensures its commitment to globalizing neoliberalism (Harrison, 2004; Ilon, 2002). For scholars critical of neoliberal educational agenda such as Klees, even the MDGs and other related development initiatives and aid commitments are mostly instruments of “compensatory legitimation” of the free-market ideology. Klees argues:

International crises, shaky and poorly-performing economies, increasing poverty and inequality, widespread conflicts, and the equivalent of structural adjustment policies everywhere, all call into question the legitimacy of the neoliberal social order – this is the bad cop. To compensate for this, actors in the world system of neoliberal globalisation must introduce policies such as aid and the MDGs that are aimed at ameliorating some problematic conditions, and thus restoring the system legitimacy – this is the good cop (2010, p.15).

To summarize, their financial power and dominance within the WB has enabled leading capitalist nations to shape its policy along neoliberal economic lines. Neoliberalism is a matter of “putting faith in the market” (Teepie, 1995, p.35), and, through loans and grants associated with SAPs and PRSPs, the WB has assumed the role of globalizing this faith. That is, the Bank makes its loans and grants conditional on the willingness of national governments to restructure their policies in line with market economy principles. In this way, neoliberal policies spread to the developing world to become formal government policies in many countries.

4.4 The WB’s Renewed Interest in HE in sub-Saharan Africa⁸

In this section, I present a brief account of the historical relationship between the WB and HE in SSA, and discuss how the new development orientation, namely the poverty reduction strategy of the Bank, has brought the subsystem into a new level of importance.

⁸ This is both a regional and economic categorization. In many standards, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a region stands for the poorest region in the world. According to the classification of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2011, p.174), the SSA region consists of 45 African countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, **Ethiopia**, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Most of these countries are listed as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) by the IMF and the WB.

Since 1963, when it commenced operations with a US\$5 million educational loan given to Tunisia, the WB has remained the largest external financier for education in the developing world (World Bank, 2002b). The Bank started its involvement in the education sector through financing school construction and providing educational equipment (Jones, 1997, 2007). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, drawing on ‘manpower forecasting’ methodology, the Bank’s educational lending was confined to vocational training, non-formal education and secondary education (Heyneman, 2003; Samoff & Carrol, 2003). Vocation and technical education was considered instrumental in supporting the Bank’s major area of investment, that is, infrastructure development that ranged from the construction of bridges and highways to the expansion of industry, agriculture and manufacturing (Heyneman, 2003; Ilon, 2003).

However, with the introduction of the rate of return analysis in the early 1980s, the WB shifted its focus into academic and primary education (Heyneman, 1999, 2003, 2012). In the 1980s and the 1990s, at the time when indebtedness of African countries deepened and economic recession undermined social services (including education), the Bank justified its educational lending on the basis of social rate of return to investment in different levels of education. The WB maintained that spending on HE has lower social returns on investment, and called for the redirection of public funding to basic education as it was thought to have higher social returns and benefit a larger section of a society (Heyneman, 2003). As a result, the Bank openly discouraged government spending on HE as a poor investment, intentionally neglected the HE subsystem in the region (Samoff & Carrol, 2003, 2004). According to many commentators, this intentional negligence resulted in the collapse of HE in the region (Alexander, 2001; Banya & Elu, 2001; Mundy, 2002; Teferra, 2007; UNESCO, 1998).

In 1988, the WB published its education policy for sub-Saharan Africa: *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion*, in which it highlighted the major constraints in the HE subsystem. The Bank underlined that HE training in the region was not only of poor quality and less responsive to the socio-economic needs of the society, but also wasteful in that costs per student relative to GDP was higher than any other region. Accordingly, African governments were advised to adjust and revitalize the subsystem in a way they could contain the human power output and develop its research and consultancy capacities (World Bank, 1988, pp.70-73). As an indication of the significance of the shift in policy direction with respect to HE, just two years prior to this policy publication, at a conference with African vice-chancellors in Harare, Zimbabwe, the WB argued that

“higher education in Africa was a luxury and that most of African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas” (quoted in Bayan & Elu, 2001, p.23). The change in focus of the WB from higher to basic education, coupled with a serious economic crisis in 1980s in Africa, led the subsystem to what Samoff and Carrol (2003) call a period of “higher education decay” (p.1).

From the 1990s onwards, the WB’s finance for education has increased partly due to the decline of bilateral development aid to the poor countries in Africa (Mundy, 2007). As the economic importance of knowledge and skills has assumed an unprecedented position, the Bank has been forced to revisit its excessive dependence on the rate of return analysis to justify investment on education. Accordingly, in 1994, the Bank published *Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience* where it hinted at changes in its HE policy direction. The document highlighted four aspects of HE crisis in the developing world: drastic reduction of per student expenditure, high levels of inequality in access to HE (the systems remain elitist in nature), poor quality, and low efficiency (explained by low student-teacher ratios, high student dropouts and repetition rates, and high subsidies for student food and accommodation). Most importantly, it underscored the role of HE in promoting national economic growth:

Higher education investments are important for economic growth. They increase individuals' productivity and incomes, as indicated by rate-of-return analysis, and they also produce significant external benefits not captured by such analysis, such as the long-term returns to basic research and to technology development and transfer. Economic growth is a critical prerequisite for sustained poverty reduction in developing countries, which is the overarching objective of the World Bank (World Bank, 1994, p.12).

Therefore, when it comes to financial and non-financial supports of the WB to the HE subsystem of Africa, the time from the late 1990s to the present (2012) can be referred to as a *period of renewed interest*. This is a period that Teferra (2007) labels as “a new era of higher education in Africa” (p.567). Starting from the late 1990s, HE once again received due attention from international organizations and other funding agencies. Both the seriousness of the deterioration of the subsystem and the increasing importance of universities in the knowledge economy, made educational development donors revise their positions and renew their commitments to support the subsystem. As Robertson (2009) rightly argues, the involvement of the WB in the HE policy-making in the developing world should be understood in relation to three key phenomena:

- the historic collapse of HE subsystems in borrowing countries due to the WB's conditionalities and intentional negligence throughout the 1980s and 1990s for about three decades,
- the globalization of neoliberal educational policy options, and
- the emergence of a new discourse around knowledge as the engine of development.

The third factor is particularly important. The 'knowledge-driven poverty reduction' narrative of the WB recognizes knowledge as a key production factor. With the launch of global development initiatives to alleviate poverty and the prevalence of the knowledge economy discourse, the WB has closely linked its educational lending with poverty reduction. Balancing its traditional mission of *education for all* with the new initiative on *education for knowledge economies*, the Bank has renewed its interest in HE. With the new narrative, the Bank revitalises its human capital theory (see Section 5.1.2 below); and it underscores that innovation and research have become the essence of productivity underpinning success in the highly competitive market economy. In 1997, as part of this growing concern about HE, the WB and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) convened experts from 13 countries and commissioned a Task Force to investigate the prospects for HE in the developing world. In its widely commended report, the Task Force strongly criticised long-held assumptions used to calculate rates of return by donors (including the WB) as "narrow" and "misleading". It argues:

While the benefits of higher education continue to rise, the costs of being left behind are also growing. Higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development (TFHES, 2000, p.14).

In 2002, drawing on its first HE policy paper (1994) and the report of the Task Force (2000), the WB published its new vision for HE in *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education* where it articulates the socio-economic roles of HE in the new economic context, and challenges the developing world may face in making their HE subsystems relevant to the new economic order (World Bank, 2002a). In this document, the Bank emphasised the changing missions of HE in response to socio-economic developments globally. Among the most significant changes identified that necessitated the restructuring of HE systems world-wide are the impacts of globalization; the growing importance of knowledge as a production factor in national economies; the phenomenal progress in information and communications technologies; and recognition of the externalities of HE (e.g., its public benefits through knowledge production and technological innovations as well as training public leaders and professionals). In addition to the traditional human capital

concerns, the new position of the Bank is said to have covered social and economic development contributions of HE. It also acknowledged that its lending for the HE subsystem in the developing world was not sufficient to meet the socio-economic needs of borrowers (World Bank, 2002a, 2002b).

In its recent policy report on HE, *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in sub-Saharan Africa*, the WB envisions the eradication of poverty in the region through knowledge-intensive economic growth (World Bank, 2009). The normative assumption is that HEIs support knowledge-driven economic growth strategies, poverty reduction plans, and social equity purposes through training a qualified labour force, producing new knowledge, building capacity to access to the global knowledge and applying it flexibly and creatively, and narrowing inequalities in income and social status in a society (World Bank, 2002a, 2009). In this report, the Bank echoed the conclusion of the Task Force that the rate of return calculation does not serve the new knowledge economy paradigm which draws on efficient and quality higher level education and training. The central dimension of the Bank's policy shift seems to lie in the recognition to the vitality of social rate of return to investment on HE. That is, it recommends investing in advanced knowledge and skills that can support national economic growth, and align HE with national economic development and poverty reduction plans. In other words, HE project and program loans in the region are bound up with the Bank's new poverty reduction strategy. Even so, it should be noted that educational reforms suggested by the WB are most often situated in the broader neoliberal economic ideals where they intend to "create the right conditions for the most productive and profitable economic behaviour" (Jones, 2006, p.39).

In response to challenges the HE subsystem has faced, and in line with its poverty reduction strategy and its neoliberal economic orientation, the WB has shown its strong interest in becoming involved. The six major areas of involvement identified by the WB are:

- Vision development, strategic planning, and consensus building at both the national and institutional levels,
- Financial reforms (for example allocation of recurrent budget, competitive funding, cost sharing, student loans, and scholarships),
- Governance and management reforms (creation of policy bodies, mergers, adoption of academic credit systems, management information systems),
- Quality improvement (strengthening existing programs, evaluation and accreditation systems, innovations in program content and delivery, innovations in academic organization, information and communication infrastructure),

- Institutional diversification (establishment and strengthening of technical institutes, private HEIs, specialized institutes), and
- Science and technology development (promotion of research in priority areas strategy development, intellectual property right etc.) (Hopper, Samli & Bassett, 2008; World Bank, 1994, 2002a, 2009)

While the level and nature of WB assistance (both in lending and non-lending forms) depends on income level, country size and political stability in a given country, the two key criteria for Bank involvement are, a) the need to reform, and b) willingness of the government to reform (World Bank, 2002a, p.xxviii). Here, it is noteworthy that by ‘willingness to reform’, the Bank refers to the willingness of national governments to accept policy prescriptions and institutional changes required to get the loan. In fact, the conditionalities play dual roles. First, they are a way of assuring the repayment of the principal (Jones, 2007); and second, they are a means to open up markets and borders for foreign investors.

Recent policy reports of the WB (2002a, 2009) and findings and recommendations of the Task Force (2000) converge around addressing pervasive challenges related to financing, relevance and quality, equity, and governance of HE. Accordingly, the Bank’s reform prescription focus on: planned differentiation of HE institutions (e.g., privatizing the subsystem, developing non-university higher level learning institutions); diversifying sources of funds for HEIs (e.g., through cost-sharing); redefining the roles of the state (e.g., from controlling to steering and enabling roles by the state, and increased autonomy for HEIs); and explicitly addressing concerns of equity and quality. Furthermore, in line with its policy of strategic investment on economically relevant fields, in 1997, the WB funded the establishment of the African Virtual University as an e-learning institution specialising in information and communications technology and business areas, with its central base in Nairobi, Kenya (Ilon, 2003).

In the last ten years, many countries in SSA have established quality assurance agencies, and have founded oversight agencies to monitor the development of their HE subsystems; many countries in the region, including Ethiopia, have introduced fees in HE; HEIs are more diversified as private, public, and specialized as agriculture, teacher training, science and technology, women’s studies, etc.; and many countries (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Uganda & Ethiopia) have implemented affirmative action policies to increase participation of female students (Teferra & Altbach, 2003, 2004; World Bank, 2002a). From the perspective of the WB, such developments show the right path of development of HE subsystems in SSA

(World Bank, 2009). Yet one of the persisting challenges the region has faced is inadequate financial resources to meet the ever increasing demand for higher level knowledge and skills (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). As a result, the economic optimism associated with the production and dissemination of economically relevant knowledge seems to be at peril.

It is also noteworthy that despite shifts and biases in targets of investment, overall the WB remained the largest external financial source to education systems of developing countries; and the share of educational development aid steadily increased from 3% in 1960s, to 4.5% in the 1980s, and to 8% in the 1990s and the 2000s (Jones, 2007; Mundy, 2002). In the 2010 fiscal year, as the Bank's database shows, its annual lending commitment to the education sector reached over five billion dollars.

By briefly presenting the history of the WB's educational development aid for Ethiopia, the next section further narrows the focus, and sets the backdrop to the central issue of the study: the forms that the neoliberal HE reform agenda take in Ethiopia, and their implications for gender equity.

4.5 The WB's Educational Aid in Ethiopia

Ethiopia and South Africa were the two countries that represented Africa at the Bretton Woods Monetary Conference (1-22 July 1944), which laid the foundation of the two key international financial institutions, namely the WB and the IMF. Ethiopia became a member of the WB (IBRD) on 27 December 1945, and it received its first loan in 1950.⁹ Ever since, the Bank has been one of the largest external sources of development aid in a wide range of sectors: road, power, agriculture, education, health, etc. Ethiopia signed the IDA Articles of Agreement on 11 April 1961; and received its first educational aid from the new arm of the Bank in 1966 (Kiros, 1990). In this discussion, educational aid of the Bank refers to concessional lending (credits) and grants as well as non-lending supports of the IDA.

⁹ According to the WB's archive, after a six-week Bank mission to Ethiopia in the early 1950, the WB approved the first loan to Ethiopia (in fact, the first loan to Africa) for *Development Bank* project (US\$2 million), and *Highway* project (US\$5 million) in September of the same year. Ethiopia received its first fund (US\$13.5 million) from the newly formed IDA in 1963 for its highway project.

From 1966 to 1998, the WB financed a total of seven education projects in Ethiopia. The projects costed over US\$220 million, and mainly targeted vocational training, secondary education, and basic education. More specifically, they focused on: secondary and technical education, and teacher training (Education I, 1966-1972); secondary and agricultural education, and teacher training (Education II, 1971-1979); science education and agricultural centres (Education III, 1973-1980); non-formal education (Education IV, 1975-1981); basic and secondary education (Education V, 1981-1985); primary and secondary education, and teacher training (Education VI, 1984-1994); and basic and tertiary education (Education VII, 1988-1998) (Kiros, 1990; World Bank, 1973, 1998; World Bank, Database 1).

The 2000s were different from earlier periods, both in terms of the amount of lending and the focus of investment in the education system of Ethiopia. At the beginning of the 2000s, a number of factors converged to boost the development aid flow to the country. On the one hand, working closely with the WB and the IMF, the government of Ethiopia consolidated the required structural adjustments, including the liberalization of prices and markets, removal of subsidies, reduction of tariffs, and privatization of public economic enterprises. In this way, Ethiopia succeeded in replacing the mixed economy of the military regime with a market economy (Abegaz, 1999, 2001); and won the favour of bilateral and multilateral donors.

On the other hand, at the global level, such broad development initiatives as Education for All (EFA) (1990, 2000) and the MDGs (2000) have been launched to universalize basic education, improve health services and eradicate poverty. Again, almost at the same time, the WB and the IMF introduced their new policy package that I referred to earlier (in Section 4.3) – the PRSP – designed for those developing countries overburdened by external debt and leading to the introduction of the debt relief scheme of the HIPC Initiative. The initiative entitles the world's poor countries (most of them are SSA countries) to debt relief and concessional loans from the two financial institutions. The assumption was that this special assistance would enable the countries to channel the money saved from debt repayment to poverty reduction programs that they needed to adapt to benefit from the initiative. The resultant effect of these global development initiatives and the willingness of aid-recipient governments to endorse reform prescriptions is an exponential increase in development aid that has benefited poor countries such as Ethiopia.

For instance, the WB framed its educational lending to Ethiopia in accordance with its new discourse of “knowledge-driven poverty reduction” and placed human resource development as a pillar of its Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) (World Bank, 2003a, 2006, 2008). Accordingly, the government of Ethiopia had to design its poverty reduction plans in line with the Bank’s development strategy, and submit them to the Bank as a partial condition to benefit from the HIPC Initiative and to receive concessional loans and grants. In its major national development plans – Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (2002-2006) and Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (2006-2011) – the government underscored the need for, among other things, the expansion and strengthening of human capacity to lead the transition from an agrarian economy to a service and production oriented one (MoFED, 2002, 2006). By funding education under various programs and projects, the WB envisaged developing the human resources of the country through increased access to quality and equitable education.

In the last ten years, the WB’s association of educational lending with poverty reduction has not only increased the amount of funding available for the sector but also diversified the funding channels as it streamed a large part of its educational aid through broad social development programs. For instance, since the completion of the Education VII project in 1998, the Bank has lent a total of around one billion dollars for the education sector of Ethiopia. The major educational projects financed by the Bank are: the Education Sector Development Project (1998- 2004; US\$ 100 million); the Distance Learning Project (2001-2003/04; US\$ 4.9 million); the Post-Secondary Education Project (2005-2009; US\$ 40 Million); and the General Education Quality Improvement Project I (2009-2013; US\$50 million) (World Bank, 1998, 2001, 2004a, 2005a, 2007b; MoE, 1998, 2002a, 2005a). Moreover, a large part of the WB’s educational support comes in rather broad funding windows. Since the mid-1990s, the Bank has committed over US\$759 million to the education sector through the following projects and programs:¹⁰ the Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund I (1996-2001, US\$ 120 million, 20% for education); the Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund I Supplementary (2002, US\$28.3, 40% for education); the Protection of Basic Services Program I (2006-2009, US\$430 million, 50% for education); the Protection of Basic Services Program II (2009-2013, US\$960 million, 53% for education);

¹⁰ Detailed accounts on the WB’s programs and projects in Ethiopia can be accessed online at <http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?menuPK=295961&pagePK=141155&piPK=141124&theSitePK=295930>

the Rural Capacity Building Project (2006-2012, US\$54 million, 10% for education); and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Credit (2004-2005, US\$130, 10% for education).

As is shown in Chapter 6 below, the involvement of the WB in the education sector has not been limited to financial aid. In earlier stages of its involvement, the Bank played significant roles, both financially and technically, in the process of the Education Sector Review in 1971/72, along with experts from the national university, UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Harvard University Development Advisory Service (Habte, 1999; Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, 1972). It was the country's largest system-wide assessment of education ever that would have introduced significant reforms had its implementation not been disrupted by the popular revolution in 1974 that ended Imperial rule. The "knowledge aid" of the Bank has continued to date (see Section 6.3 below). Furthermore, as the number of bilateral and multilateral agencies that co-financed the government's educational sector development programs show, the stamp of goodwill and approval of projects from the Bank gives a green light to release aid from other donors. That is, the involvement of the Bank to support a country affects the commitment of other bilateral and multilateral donors. The WB's voice is perhaps the loudest amongst the international donors and "its message shapes or becomes the common message" of other development agencies (Samoff & Carrol, 2003, p.38). The WB also plays a role in coordinating donors to channel their voices and money in a consolidated way. For instance, in implementing the ESDP I in Ethiopia, the Bank coordinated more than a dozen donors under the Development Assistance Group (DAG) to channel finance and harmonize the agenda and assistance. The Bank also manages trust funds that other donors entrust it with to fund development policies and projects in LICs (World Bank, 2007a).

As discussed above, much has changed in relation to assumptions and beliefs about the importance of HE in LICs. Currently, the WB holds that investment in HE improves economic productivity and is a key factor for sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation. The Bank's active involvement in the HE reform process in Ethiopia has been part of this shift. Before delving into this issue further, it is necessary to briefly discuss the historical development of the HE subsystem of the country as a background for the analysis presented in the remaining five chapters of the thesis.

4.6 Higher Education Development in Ethiopia: A Brief Historical Account

Even though Western-type modern education in Ethiopia has only slightly more than a hundred-year history, traditional religious (including Judaic, Orthodox Christian, and Islamic) education has been in place for centuries (Habte, 2010; Negash, 1990; Wagaw, 1979). In particular, since the introduction of Christianity in the first half of the 1st century AD and its subsequent official adoption as a state religion in the first half of the 4th century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been providing multi-level education. This traditional education system has four distinctive levels: *Nibab Bet* (the school of reading), *Zema Bet* (the school of hymns), *Qene Bet* (the school of poetry), and *Metsehaft Bet* (the school of books). Few continue the long and demanding learning journey to join the last and highest level of the system, *Metsehaft Bet*. This is equivalent to HE in the structure of the modern education system (Browne, 2007; Lulat, 2004; Wagaw 1990), and has clear parallels with medieval European universities. Students who reach this level would study theology (including the study and interpretation of both the Old Testament and the New Testament), church history and monasticism, the lives and acts of saints, religious philosophy, the religious calendar, canon and civil laws, and arts and crafts (including calligraphy, painting, and manuscript making) (Browne, 2007; Chaillot, 2002). While it is estimated that a third of the total Orthodox Churches (estimated to be between 30,000 and 35,000) in the country still have traditional schools, the contemporary monasteries considered to be centres of excellence for higher level studies and specialized fields are limited in number (Habte, 2010).

In the church education system today, completing all levels and mastering the religious and other fields of knowledge takes more than 25 years of schooling. HE in the church system is provided by monasteries specializing in one or more of the fields of study. Most of these learning centres are located in central, north and north-west part of Ethiopia – in Shewa, Wollo, Gojam, Gonder and Tigray provinces (or Amhara and Tigray regions, to use the present administrative structure). Students move from one centre (monastery) to the other to complete the required level and type of education. Even though the primary objective of the institutions has been to produce priests and cantors (*debteroch*), Ethiopia has long been drawing its civil servants, including judges, governors, scribes and treasurers, from this traditional scholarship (Browne, 2007; Lulat, 2004; Wagaw, 1979). Usually, girls do not continue after the elementary level (school of reading) and thus higher level learning has been largely a male-dominated undertaking.

In the immediate post-World War II period, the concern for founding higher level educational institutions on a Western model was pervasive and real. Neither the church scholars nor the few overseas graduated nationals were sufficient to run the ever expanding modern government machineries. In fact, as most of the overseas educated civil servants and professionals were massacred during the Italian occupation (1936-1941), there was a critical shortage of trained personnel to run the growing administrative structures in the public services (Habte, 2010). The five-year war with and occupation by the Fascist Italian forces left the country, in the words of Wagaw, “bereft of an educated workforce” (1990, p.131). Moreover, even though the annual average number of secondary school graduates was well below 100 per annum till the middle of the 20th century, sending them abroad for higher level education and training was very expensive. On the other hand, there was a need to produce as many highly skilled workers and educated citizens as possible to consolidate the modernization process that commenced in the late 19th century. The following excerpt from the speech of the Emperor in the convocation marking the foundation of the ‘national university’ (on 18 December 1961) underscores the urgent need for modern HE:

Time was when strength and endurance, courage and faith, were sufficient to make leadership equal to the task. But times have changed and these spiritual qualities are no longer enough. Today, knowledge and training, as provided largely in the universities of the world, have become essential, and today leadership and advancement, both national and international, rely heavily upon accelerated agricultural development, upon mineral exploitation and upon industrial expansion. Hence survival depends on these, but they, in turn, depend upon the competence of those who have received and who will receive the essential education and training (Quoted in Wagaw, 1990, p.122).

Ethiopia started far behind compared with other African countries where colonial powers laid the foundation of HE much earlier (e.g., Fourah Bay College, now University of Sierra Leone, in Sierra Leone in 1827; Gordon Memorial College, now University of Khartoum, in Sudan in 1902; and Makerere Government College, now Makerere University, in Uganda in 1922 (Lulat, 2004). Nevertheless, following the establishment of the first college in 1950, it has managed to mobilise its resources to consolidate the post-secondary education subsystem.

4.6.1 Four Stages of Development

To my knowledge, the historical development and current status of Ethiopian HE system is not well researched; and thus the paucity of relevant sources on the issue is critical. Even so,

using the available sources, including Habte (2010), Kebede (2006), Wagaw (1990), Wondimu (2003), and Yizengaw (2007), I have tried systematically to document the six-decade history of HE in Ethiopia. In order to analyse its development, map changes and continuities across time, and understand its present situation, I have divided development of the subsystem into four phases. The categorization is based on the combination of noticeable system-wide changes and national-level political transformations that affected the subsystem.

The Genesis of Modern HE (1950 – 1960)

As Wagaw (1990) documents it, a series of consultations with foreign school directors in the capital was underway in the late 1940s, with a view to founding a post-secondary learning institution. In 1949, a committee on the foundation of a post-secondary education institution was set up by the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts. The committee finally proposed and adopted a two-year academic and vocational training program to prepare competent students. Subsequently, the Emperor asked Dr. Lucien Matte, a Canadian Jesuit working as a director of one of the secondary schools in the capital, to organize a two-year post-secondary education institution. Hence, with the help of Dr Matte, Addis Ababa University College (UCAA) came into existence on 20 March 1950 (Wagaw, 1990; Wondimu, 2003). The first class in a modern HE institution commenced on 11 December 1950 with 21 male students and nine expatriate teachers, in today's Science Faculty of Addis Ababa University (AAU), Arat Killo Campus (Wagaw, 1990). In two years, UCAA became an established college with diverse faculties and four-year degree programs in Arts, Education and Sciences. In addition, the University College took the responsibility of administering the Ethiopian Schools Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) in replacement of the Cambridge Examinations (Wagaw, 1990).

The Haile Selassie I University Committee, established in June 1951 by the Imperial Government to investigate the possibility of establishing a national university in Addis Ababa, continued arranging the foundation of other colleges, and four more colleges were established in the same decade. The Engineering College emerged out of a technical school in the capital and commenced classes in September 1952 with a four-year study program under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts. Based on the recommendation of the committee and a joint agreement between the governments of the United States and Ethiopia, the first College of Agriculture was founded in 1954 and was jointly run by the Ministry of

Agriculture of Ethiopia and the Oklahoma State University (Wagaw, 1990). Another higher learning institution to be founded outside the capital was the College of Public Health in Gonder, in north western Ethiopia. It became operational in October 1954 as a joint venture between the Ministry of Public Health of Ethiopia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). These foreign organizations actively played significant roles in funding and staffing the college. Another bilateral agreement with the Government of Sweden brought about the foundation of the Institute of Building Technology in October 1954. It was largely staffed and funded by Swedish nationals (Wagaw, 1990, pp.69-88).

The results were noteworthy. In that decade, a total of more than 1141 (655 degree and 486 diploma and certificate) students graduated from the five colleges. Out of the total graduates, 235 degrees and 186 diplomas and certificates were from UCAA (Wagaw, 1990, pp.104-105). As indicated, in this early stage of HE development in the country, there was a high degree of foreign involvement. Three out of five colleges were jointly run by foreign agencies: the president of UCAA was a Canadian; the teacher education program of the UCAA was run by the University of Utah and about 75% of the academic staff were expatriates; and in the fifth college, the Dean and most of the staff of the college were expatriates (Wagaw, 1990, pp.109-112). The most striking fact is that the foundation of the modern HE had no links with the traditional education system. As a result, from the outset, the HE subsystem has been alienated from the accumulated knowledge and values of the society. This lack of national roots coupled with over-dependence on expatriate staff resulted in a subsystem that was extremely constrained in its capacity to respond to the local context – its culture, problem, and needs.

Consolidation of the 'National University' (1961 – 1974)

Throughout the first phase of the development of HE in Ethiopia, there was no single national body to coordinate HE institutions. While UCAA remained an independent, chartered institution, other colleges were under different ministries and other foreign agencies. Thus there was a need for merging the existing colleges into a single national institution with a centralized administration. Accordingly, in 1959, the Haile Selassie I University Committee which had been working since June 1951, and a Higher Education Survey Team from the University of Utah finalized their reports and recommendations on the foundation of a

national university in Addis Ababa. With the publication of the charter in February 1961, UCAA officially became Haile Selassie I University (HSIU). The Emperor had played a notable role in the realization of the new university. As chancellor of the new institution, he appointed the first Board of Governors in May 1961. He also presented his residence (palace) as the main campus of the new university, and assigned the American Dr. Harold Benty as acting-president of the University until he was replaced by an Ethiopian national the next year (Wagaw, 1990). In addition to the national university, HSIU, three other higher education and training institutions were opened: Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute (1963), Kotebe College of Teacher Education (1969), and Bahir Dar Teachers College (1972) (Wondimu, 2003).

In the early 1970s, significant progress was made in terms of increasing the number of local staff and widening access to HE. According to Dr. Aklilu Habte, who served as a president of HSIU from 1969 to 1974, on the establishment of the University there were only 30 Ethiopians in the academic staff. After nearly 15 years, they accounted for about 60% of the total (545) staff in the University (Habte, 2010). In 1970, incorporating other colleges founded since the mid-1950s, HSIU became the largest HEI in SSA with 4636 full-time and 2261 part-time students (Lulat, 2004). In terms of enrolment, the foundation of the national university was a remarkable success: student enrolment increased by 664 % (from 974 in 1961 to 6, 474 in 1973). Across the first decade of its existence as the sole HEI in the country, HSIU produced a total of more than 10,000 graduates at different levels. Moreover, between 1958 and late 1960, 1080 foreign students (most of them came from other African countries under the Haile Selassie I Scholarship Scheme) enrolled for different courses and programs (Wagaw, 1990, pp.166-68). The University also designed outreach programs of in-service summer courses and extension programs for civil servants including teachers and other professionals. Another breakthrough for the new institution was that under its National Service Program, it managed to help prospective graduates understand the socio-economic context of their future working environment through one-year compulsory national service before their graduation year (UNESCO, 1988; Habte, 2010; Wagaw, 1990). In fact, an unintended consequence of the program was that it brought the students face-to-face with the unbearable suffering and burden of the peasantry under the pseudo-feudal system. This, coupled with international and regional economic instability and the wave of socialist ideological movements in the rest part of Africa, Asia and Latin America, fomented the

revolutionary movement of the students and led to the popular uprising of 1974 that culminated in the demise of the imperial regime of Haile Selassie I.

Incremental Progress under a State of Hardship (1974 – late 1990s)

The early 1970s was characterised by the international oil crisis (known as ‘the oil shock’) and a general economic downturn in Africa. The crisis had a drastic effect on the Ethiopian political landscape. The 1974 popular revolution, instigated by economic challenges and spearheaded by students who demanded political transformation, led to the demise of the longest Christian monarchy in Africa. As noted in Chapter 1 and will further be developed in Chapter 7, following the rise to power of a military junta called *Derg*, the country was ravaged by catastrophic civil war waged by different secessionist groups for almost two decades. This was also a period when devastating famines hit the country, and when the survival of the country was (and has been since) threatened with the ascendancy to power of pro-secession former ethnic rebels.

It was in this context that the HE subsystem of Ethiopia continued steadily to grow through adapting to the changing needs of the political forces in power. In those two decades, two more universities were established. Founded by an Italian Missionary group in 1958, Asmara University (AU) became a public university in 1979. However, due to its location, with the secession of Eritrea as an independent country in 1993, Ethiopia was again left with two only universities. Alamaya College of Agriculture (established in 1954) became independent of HSIU (renamed as Addis Ababa University, AAU, after the revolution) and was upgraded in to the Alemaya University of Agriculture (AUA) in May 1985 (UNESCO 1988; Wagaw 1990). Other junior colleges and institutes were also founded throughout the country – Awasa College of Agriculture (1976), Wondogenet College of Forestry (1977), Addis Ababa College of Commerce (1979), Ambo College of Agriculture (1979), Jimma College of Agriculture (1979), Jimma Institute of Health Sciences (1982), and Arba Minch Water Technology Institute (1986). Therefore, by the end of the 1980s, Ethiopia had three public universities, about sixteen colleges and six research institutions. Most of those newly established colleges and institutions were administratively under the national university, the AAU. In 1986/87, there were a total of 17, 831 students in the three universities and other colleges and institutes (UNESCO 1988). Another important development of this period was

the establishment of the School of Graduate Studies in AAU in 1978, intended mainly to train academic staff for the HEIs of the country (UNESCO, 1988; Yizengaw, 2003).

Moreover, in 1977, the country's first law on HE, the *Higher Education Institutions Administration Proclamation* (Proclamation No.109/1977), was enacted. The Proclamation established the Commission for Higher Education and underscored the importance of revitalizing HE in a way it could support socio-economic interests of the nation. The Commission replaced the power and duties of the Board of Governors of the University, the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, and the Ministry of Education, and assumed a responsibility for regulating and coordinating activities of HE institutions in the country, as well as selecting and placing qualified students into HE (Wagaw, 1990).

This stage of the development of the subsystem also coincided with the period of HE crisis in Africa highlighted above. As part of the economic and political crises in the continent, HE was in deterioration throughout the 1980s. In Ethiopia, the share of HE in the government expenditure allocation remained unchanged. As a result, per student expenditure declined drastically. For instance, the average annual expenditure on a medicine student declined from US\$4,600 in 1968/69 to US\$1,800 in the mid-1980s (UNESCO, 1988; Wagaw, 1990). Again, even though the number of students admitted to the system increased considerably, the growth within higher level learning institutions was not proportional to the secondary school graduates who sought to enter HEIs. For example, the HE entry rate (that is, transition from secondary education to post-secondary education) dropped from about 89% in 1950/51 to nearly 7% in 1981/82 (Wagaw, 1990; UNESCO, 1988). A UNESCO mission sent in 1987 to study university education in Ethiopia noted that the subsystem was entangled with such critical challenges as low internal and external efficiency and low quality of instruction and research. In its conclusion, the mission warned:

The quality of university education in Ethiopia has deteriorated in terms of staff, physical facilities, and financial resources during the last decades, and unless timely corrective measures are taken, the universities may become more mediocre centers of learning (UNESCO, 1988, p.xix).

Another major feature of this period was the exodus of the Ethiopian intelligentsia due to increased intolerance of politicians towards dissent. Research shows that during and in the wake of the popular revolution, due to the atrocities of the military regime, about 3.5 million Ethiopians fled the country for political and economic reasons (Wagaw, 1990, p.253). This figure includes many academics. In 1993, as a manifestation of its intolerance to opposing

voices, the newly established government of Mr. Meles Zenawi purged 42 high-profile academic staff from AAU for their critical views on the policies and strategies of the government; and to silence critics, it banned university-based publications on current affairs (Yimam, 2008). In a country with only a handful of professors, this act would undoubtedly have negative consequences for the development of the HE subsystem as it continued to be dependent on inexperienced staff and expatriate personnel. This theme will further be explored and explained following the next section.

Extensive Expansion and Restructuring (Late 1990s – 2010)

The late 1990s was a landmark period in terms of initiating higher education reforms in the developing world. It was the time when the WB renewed its commitment to finance HE. UNESCO too organized the first World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) in 1998, through which it sought the commitment of member states to strengthen HE institutions in accordance with the socio-economic transformations required for national competence in the globalized economy (UNESCO, 1998). In Ethiopia, a significant political development coincided with these global development concerns. As part of its subscription to the structural adjustment programs and the poverty reduction strategies of the IMF and the WB, the new government introduced major macroeconomic reforms, during and after its unstable transitional period (Abegaz, 1999). Towards the end of the decade, the government turned its attention to the HE subsystem and redefined its mission and organizations in line with the national poverty reduction strategies.

Through upgrading the existing colleges, merging different institutions, and establishing new institutions, the government increased the number of public universities from two in early 1999 to 22 universities in 2010. At the time of writing this, ten more universities are in the pipeline to commence classes by 2015. The expansion of HE in Ethiopia can be viewed from three perspectives. Firstly, it is a logical consequence of other macroeconomic and social reforms and national development plans of the government. For example, with the liberalization of the economy, privatization has been encouraged in the education sector as well. As a result, the first private HEI emerged in the mid-1990s, and as of 2009/10 academic year, there were about 44 accredited and pre-accredited private HEIs that enrolled about 18% of the total full-time undergraduate enrolment (MoE, 2011). Secondly, as discussed earlier, starting from the late 1990s, the international development community (including the WB)

has associated poverty reduction with knowledge-led economic growth; and has made financial and policy aid available to support the HE subsystem the developing world. In conformity with the offers and expectations of the so called development partners, national governments have generously spent on the expansion of their HE subsystem with the belief that it will support efforts in poverty reduction and economic growth through producing a competent and productive labour force (MoE, 2002a, 2005b; MoFED, 2002). Finally, as evidenced by the physical distribution of HEIs in sparsely populated remote desert regions, the expansion of HE has significant political implications for the government. In line with the political orientation of the government, the expansion along ethno-regional lines seems to have been taken as an expression of the ruling party's commitment to redress ethnic-based oppression and disadvantages. Therefore, commentators rightly observed that the unfettered expansion could be intended to have symbolic roles "to legitimate polity" and "to tighten the grip of state power" (Assefa, 2008, p.31).

For the most part of the history of public university in Ethiopia, the enrolment rate grew steadily. Starting with an intake of 974 students with the establishment of the first national HEI in 1961 (UNESCO, 1988; Wagaw, 1990), the annual enrolment rate remained less than 5000 until the late 1990s (Wondimu, 2003). Following the extensive expansion of public universities since the early 2000s, the pattern has changed significantly. In a space of ten years, full-time enrolment in public post-secondary education increased from 8,746 (including diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate levels) in six universities and 14 non-university institutions in 2000/01 to 202,133 (in full-time undergraduate and postgraduate programs) in 22 universities and four non-university institutions in the 2009/10 academic year (MoE, 2001, 2011). Even so, data from the WB (2006) shows that the tertiary education gross enrolment ratio of Ethiopia (2.4%) was very low even compared to ratios in low-income countries in general (6.3%) and SSA in particular (5.2%) (World Bank, EdStats). On the other hand, the expansion is also accompanied by increased emphasis on diversification of programs in line with the needs of the labour market, and transferral of the burden of cost from the state to the beneficiaries (primarily the students) through different arrangements such as cost-sharing.

4.6.2 Continuing Challenges of the Subsystem

Ethiopia has always been subject to natural and other disasters. It is a drought prone country. Its cultural and social diversity has also complicated the political process as the small elite section of the society tends to polarize differences and threaten the integrity of the nation. The economy is primarily based on subsistence agriculture. The resultant effect is extreme poverty. The country remains one of the world's chronically food insecure countries, and it regularly suffers from famine. It has one of the lowest GDP per capita, ranking 174th in 187 countries, according to the 2011 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2011). About 47% of the people live under the poverty line (UNDP, 2007, p.85). The country has poor health, low access to secondary and higher education, and high adult illiteracy rate. It is in this context that the mission of HE needs to be defined and its successes measured. As witnessed in other parts of the world, socio-economic transformations, and advances in science and technology have been made possible through effective and equitable higher education and training. In this regard, many commentators agree that the HE system of Ethiopia has made very little contribution (Kebede, 2006; Negash, 1990, 2006; Wagaw, 1990). An examination of two pertinent patterns of the historical development and the current status of the HE system of Ethiopia can highlight the reasons why the system fails to meet the national expectations. These are lack of responsiveness and inequitable access.

Lack of Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the relevance of services and outputs of the HE systems (teaching, research, graduates and consultancy) to the needs of the society. It is about the contribution of HE to the socio-economic development of the public at large. In this regard, the current situation begs the following question: Why has the HE subsystem of Ethiopia remained disappointingly unresponsive to the key developmental needs of the Ethiopian people? The answer is that it can be attributed to three major factors.

First, lack of responsiveness can be explained by the poor quality of services of the subsystem. For example, the system is dominated by young, inexperienced and under-qualified staff. The proportion of academic staff with a PhD degree has fallen from 28% in 1995/6 to 17% in 1999/2000, and to less than 6% in the 2009/10 academic years (Amare, 2005; Molla, 2011a). The percentage is even lower for regional universities. Currently, research represents a minimal share of the tasks of academic staff of most of the universities.

The link between the HEIs and the business community is also weak. Its capacity to produce scientific knowledge and promote innovation is limited. There is high academic dissatisfaction due to low salaries, high workloads and political repression (Asgedom, 2005; Assefa, 2008). The low quality of education is also a result of poor secondary school preparation, and insufficient funding made available for public HEIs.

Secondly, the limited relevance of the system can be attributed partly to the lack of national roots in its foundation and development (Kebede, 2006; Negash, 1990). Theoretically, as Ethiopia has had no sustained colonial history, it had to establish a HE that best suits its historical heritage and development needs. Nevertheless, for many reasons, the subsystem has failed to localize itself. To begin with, it has not been founded on the values of Ethiopian society. Rather it was established on “guest models” imported first from North America, then from Europe and the Soviet Russia (Wagaw, 1990). This reliance on foreign models has continued to date with no due attention to accommodating it to the national values and heritage. Furthermore, from its commencement to the present day, the higher learning institutions of Ethiopia are dominated by expatriate academic staff. The positive development in reducing the number of expatriate academic staff from 75% in 1961 to 54% in 1973 in HSIU was disrupted, and the figure grew again into 79% in 1987. Unlike in the pre-revolution periods in which 63% of the academic staff came from the UK and the US (Wagaw, 1990, pp.134-135), throughout the 1970s and 1980s, following Ethiopia’s endorsement of socialist ideology, more than 60% of the expatriate academic staff came from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries (UNESCO, 1988, p.47). By contrast, the current government favours Indians, presumably for the labour market advantage (cheaper cost) that meets donor’s call for an efficient use of resources.

This trend might have negatively affected the possibility of shaping the system with a particular national identity and building an intellectual community that could sense the closer context, and produce, organize and disseminate knowledge applicable to the real problems in the society. Again, as has been witnessed since its early phase of development, the system has been highly influenced by foreign agenda imposed through aid (Gilbert, 1967; Teferra, 2004). Reflecting on the condition of the HE subsystem in Ethiopia over 40 years ago, Gilbert rightly notes, “In spite of Ethiopianization [of the staff] the foreign influence is still so strong that it is impossible to predict the form and shape of Ethiopian education in the future” (1967, p.8). Bilateral and multi-lateral aid constitutes a significant portion of the financial sources of the subsystem. As a result, external agenda and directions have always been unavoidable; and

conflict between local needs and external expectations were inevitable. An effort to fulfil loan conditionalities also could have distanced the mission of HE from local concerns.

Thirdly, political instability contributes to a lack of consistency of HE mission and contextual relevance in the system. Its effects range from disruption of the whole process of learning to reorientation of institutional missions. The Imperial Government maintained that the HE subsystem should be able to produce skilled professionals who were loyal and obedient to the monarchy and their country (Wagaw, 1990). Following the fall of the empire, the military junta declared that HEIs in the country should primarily publicise socialism and produce skilled workers who could support the national development plan with its socialist orientation (Proclamation No.109/1977, in Wagaw, 1990). The current Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government has a national development plan shaped by its "Revolutionary Democracy" political ideology and the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization program (Addis Ra'ey, 2009; MoFED, 2002). Accordingly, HE is expected to support the national development endeavour in the new context. The regimented academic management style, set up by the government to silence critical voices, is another factor that restrains motivation, flexibility and creativity in the universities.

The Problem of Inequality

When it comes to equality, closer analysis of the history of HE in Ethiopia shows that unequal access has been a consistent pattern of the subsystem. Inequality of access to higher level education and training has had social, ethnic and gender dimensions. Wagaw (1990, p.240) highlights the social class dimension of the story as follows:

The better high schools are located in the few large cities. Since most of the people live in rural areas and those who can afford to send their children to the better schools are the politically and financially powerful, and since university admission is primarily based on successful passes on national examinations, college students have usually come from the upper social classes.

Moreover, even though there has never been any discriminatory action among the ethnic groups in terms of getting access to HE, historically some groups were closer to political power and hence controlled the economic assets of the country. Accordingly, they had the privilege of going to university, while other politically minority groups could not even get access to a primary level education.

With regard to gender equity, at the very start of the modern HE subsystem, female participation was almost non-existent. The first students enrolled in UCAA were all males (Wagaw, 1990). In 1959, the University of Utah surveyed the HE subsystem of Ethiopia and noted the gender disparity as a worrisome reality. Another longitudinal study conducted in 1966 at the then HSIU showed that the student body was “primarily male” (Wagaw, 1990, p.154). By the 1986/87 academic year, the enrolment of female students was found to be 8.5%, 7.8% and 4.3% of the total bodies of students in AAU, AU and AUA respectively (UNESCO, 1988, pp.9-11). After a decade, the enrolment rate at the national level increased to 8.8% and in 2004, it was found to have reached 24% (Yizengaw, 2007, pp.21-22). However, compared to the positive development at primary and secondary levels, gender disparity in HE institutions is troubling – data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (stats.uis.unesco.org) shows that in 2008, the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education in Ethiopia (5% for male and 2% for female) was even lower than the SSA average (7% and 5% for male and female respectively). As the data from the annual educational statistics of the government shows, in the 2009/2010 academic year women constitute 26%, 11.8%, and 6% of students enrolled for full-time programs at undergraduate, Masters and PhD levels respectively (MoE, 2011).

Addressing the problems of the lack of relevance and limited access to HE has been placed at the centre of the recent HE reforms in Ethiopia. The government has underscored the urgency of addressing the challenges related to lack of clarity of mission and relevance, poor quality, low enrolment rate, and high inequality of access; and aligning the subsystem with the national economic development needs and plans. At a system level, the government has introduced new education and training policy, education sector development programs, the HE Proclamation (2003/2009), and extensive HE expansion programs. At institutional level, the HE Proclamation provides the institutions with a high degree of autonomy to determine their own internal activities, including academic matters and financial and personnel management, as well as the possibility of income diversification. As will be seen, Chapters 5 to 9 are devoted to understanding key elements of the reforms, their alignment with the neoliberal reform prescriptions of the WB, and their implications for gender equity. Yet, as an attempt to set the background for the remaining chapters, the following and final section of the current chapter discusses the gender culture in Ethiopia and its connection with gender inequality in education.

4.7 Gender Culture and Gender Inequality in Education in Ethiopia

This section covers three areas. The first sub-section introduces gender and gender culture as an essential aspect of social structure in societies. In the second sub-section, the gender culture of Ethiopia is analysed in light of three themes: power relations, division of labour, and cultural beliefs and stereotypes. Finally, the last sub-section connects the gender culture of the society with the problem of gender inequality in education.

4.7.1 What is Gender Culture?

In a social environment, relating oneself to others is done in line with norms and expectations in the form of shared knowledge and values. In this regard, common cultural knowledge of the roles of sex categories and expectations associated with the categories form the gender culture of a society (Connell, 2009). Stromquist (2007, p.152) notes:

Society is based on complementary but hardly symmetric levels of reciprocity in social interaction. Several codes are used to create stable hierarchical social system. Gender is not the only one but is pervasive as the main type of differentiation in all societies.

In essence, gender arrangements and relations in a society constitute the social structure. But first, what is gender?

Sex and gender are related but different concepts. Sex is a classification of persons into male and female based primarily on biological criteria, and the sex category is “established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays (such as dressing style, hair style, voice tone, deportment, etc.) that proclaim one’s membership in one or the other category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.127). Gender, on the other hand, denotes cultural and social expectations, meanings and roles attached to maleness and femaleness. It is a pattern of social relations based on sexual differences (Connell, 2009). Unlike sex, gender is culturally relative as its normative expectations (i.e., the expectation of how men and women should behave in a society) and the actual roles of men and women differ from culture to culture and across time (Miroiu, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 2009). What is defined as manly and womanly accomplishments and roles in one society at one particular time may differ considerably from other contexts.

West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) further extend the meaning of gender as an active construction in the daily interactions of individuals. For them, gender refers to the normative

conceptions about the appropriate roles of female and male persons, as well as the act of being accountable for the socially defined roles of femininity and masculinity (West & Zimmerman, 2009). As such, gender is not merely confined to social roles and expectations defined as appropriate for the sex categories of man and woman. Rather, gender as a process occurs when an individual evaluates his or her actions and behaviour in relation to normative conceptions appropriate for the given sex category, and the likely consequences of this evaluation in daily life. West and her colleagues' concept of "doing gender" refers to this ongoing aspect of social interaction and being accountable for normative values attached to being man and women (West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Ridgeway and Correll note, "knowing that they will be categorized (as men or women), most people carefully construct their appearance according to cultural gender rules and roles to ensure that others reliably categorize them as belonging to the sex category they claim for themselves" (2004, p.515). However, it should be remembered that gender is not solely an individual's venture. Cultural beliefs and norms about the roles of men and women exist as integral parts across the spectrum of institutions in the society, from the family to the university to the state.

The pattern and dynamics of gender relations and arrangements in a society are referred to variously as the gender system (Ridgeway, 2009, 2011; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004); the gender order (Connell, 2009); or the gender culture (Pfau-Effinger, 1998). For Pfau-Effinger (1998) relatively constant, institutionalized norms and values, and assumptions about the desirable and 'correct' form of gender relations and division of labour between women and men in a society are defining elements of a gender culture in that society. Connell's (2009) model of gender order is more complicated and detailed. It has four dimensions: power relations, division of labour, emotional relations, and symbolism and discourse. Patriarchy is the major form of power relationship in society. It manifests in a setting where men dominate over women in daily interaction at household or institutional levels. According to Connell (2009), gendered power relations are also embodied in legal systems of the state and bureaucracies and organizations, as well as in ordinary discourses. The second dimension deals with gendered production, consumption and accumulation. That is, in contemporary society, some work is identified as men's or women's, and there is a pattern in which women are confined to unpaid labour at home while men tend to dominate in the paid labour market. Emotional relations refer to emotional attachments and commitments related to sexuality, love, care, and prejudice defined along sex categories. Finally, gender symbolism denotes symbolic and cultural representations of men and women in society, including beliefs and

stereotypes about women and men. It is about how gender is constructed in language use, dressing style, music, films, sport etc. (Connell, 2009, pp.74-84). Hence, gender structure is not limited to power relations and the division of labour – it pervades many domains of action and representation.

Gender culture is further illuminated in the works of Ridgeway (2009) and Ridgeway and Correll (2004). Their concepts of “hegemonic cultural beliefs” about gender and the “social relational context” are of particular importance for the present discussion. In a society, there are always beliefs and norms that define the distinguishing features of women and men, as well as the roles and expectations for each sex category: these are what Ridgeway and Correll (2004) call ‘hegemonic cultural beliefs’ about gender. The gender beliefs underpin the sex categorization and associated roles but also the daily interactional activities in line with the appropriate behaviour and acts of the respective category. The beliefs and the “social relational contexts” framed by the beliefs constitute the gender system or gender culture (Ridgeway, 2009; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). As such, gender culture refers to both the macro level, hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender, and the micro level social relational contexts in which the beliefs are enacted (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In other words, the social relational contexts could be institutions (e.g., the family), organizations (e.g., the University), or other public settings (e.g. workplaces). West and Fenstermaker (1995, p.20) explain:

While individuals are the ones who do gender, the process of rendering something accountable is both interactional and institutional in character: it is a feature of social relations, and its idiom derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life.

Therefore, as an aspect of the social structure of society, gender cultural beliefs frame relations through defining the association between the sex categories and the shared beliefs about how the members of a given category need to behave and act. As such, the shared knowledge keeps individuals accountable for their actions and behaviours in interactions in daily life. The social relational aspect involves contexts where the gender culture is enacted and manifest in the form of patterns of behaviour and organizational practices of institutions and other public settings.

The brief discussion above indicates that one can understand gender culture in a particular society through an account of power relations, the division of labour and the symbolic representation of men and women both at institutional and interactional levels. I use these

themes as my organizing tools in analysing the gender culture of Ethiopia in the following sub-section.

4.7.2 Gender Culture in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a very diverse society. It is home to more than 70 ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, Christianity (predominantly Orthodox Christianity) and Islam are the two major religions, with Judaism and traditional faiths practiced in pocket areas. The society is predominately agrarian, with about 84% of the population of nearly 85 million living in rural areas (AfDB Group, 2011; FDRE Population Census Commission, 2008). Historically, a few of these ethnic groups have been associated with the formation of the state, and the making of modern Ethiopia; and have relatively sophisticated social structures and organizations. Others (e.g., pastoralist societies along the Omo River valley in the south and in low lands of west and east parts of the country) still live in a peripheral position with rudimentary socio-economic and political structures. Hence, a brief historical account of the intersectional categories of inequality along lines of gender, class and ethnicity provides valuable insights into the changes and continuities of gender culture in Ethiopian society.

The class dimension of historical positions of Ethiopian women was embedded in the layers of the feudal social system of Ethiopia, which included the royal family and the central government, the church, the nobility, and the peasantry (Schwab, 1985). The royal family came from Amharic speakers or the ethnic Tigre in the north; and the nobility were of Tigre, Amhara, and Oromo origins. The peasant class constituted the largest section of the society across all ethnic groups. The privileged groups in the upper section of the social pyramid were followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which maintained considerable power as a state religion until 1974 (Marcus, 2002; Ullendorff, 1965).

Access to resources and opportunities in political and economic spheres depended on one's respective class. In the history of Ethiopia, elite women from the royal family and the nobility, albeit few, have assumed top political positions. The legendary Queen of Sheba (reigned 1005-955 BC) ruled over a vast territory stretching from the historic Cush land in the Nile valley to the heartland of the Ethiopian plateau and the southern Arabian peninsula. According to legend, not only did she establish strong diplomatic relations with the Biblical King Solomon but she also had a son with him; that son, Menelik I, reigned as the first king

of the Solomonic dynasty, which, with few interruptions, was the ruling dynasty of Ethiopia up until the 1974 popular revolution. Again, in the 10th century AD, another powerful woman came onto the political scene. The Falasha (Ethiopian Jewish) Queen Yodit revolted against the Christian Axumite Empire. As a true conqueror, she destroyed the empire, devastated the church, and ruled the country for more than three decades (Finch & Williams, 1984, pp.20-33). Most recently, before the inauguration of a constitution (1955) that limits the Imperial Crown to pass only to a male descendant (Ullendorff, 1965, pp.194-5), the elder daughter of Emperor Menelik II, Empress Zewuditu ruled modern Ethiopia for fifteen years (1916-1930).

There were also strong women who played remarkable diplomatic and administrative roles throughout Ethiopian history as wives, queen mothers, and regents. The list includes Empress Eleni (from the second half of the 15th century to the first half of the 16th century), Empress Mintewab (between 1722 and 1769), and Empress Taitu (from 1880s to 1913). Both Empresses Taitu and Mentewab played significant roles in defending the country and strengthening the internal dynamics of the state, and served as *de facto* rulers of Ethiopia for some time after the death of their husbands. Empress Eleni enjoyed political visibility as a queen, queen-mother, and regent throughout the second half of the 15th and the early 16th centuries. As a skilful diplomat, in the 1540s, she managed to negotiate with the Portuguese on military cooperation against Ottoman-backed Muslim forces in Ethiopia and the Red Sea region (Marcus, 2002).

When it comes to the peasantry, in feudal Ethiopia most of the arable land was controlled by the Church and the nobility. Thus, unless they had a hereditary possession of land (*rest* system, usually common in the northern regions), the peasants remained as *gebar* (cultivators) to the *gultegna* (landlords and the Church to whom the land had been granted). Yet, whenever a peasant household possessed land, it was the male who would control it. Even though, in principle, the peasant women had an equal legal right to possess land and to claim inheritance from ancestors, as they could not plough by themselves, parents tended to favour sons over daughters in making land inheritance grants (FERNYHOUGH & FERNYHOUGH, 2002, p.198). Therefore, compared to men, peasant women had less economic security. Based on his extensive documentary research on the medieval period land rights of women among the Amharic speaking society in Gonder, Crummey (1981) concludes that equal rights to land did not necessarily entitle women an equal right to exercise their property rights nor did it imply equality in other walks of life. The peasant women had subordinated status both at household and community levels. In general, in terms of class, the peasantry had harsher life conditions

compared to the nobility; and the status of peasant women was worse than that of peasant men, while noble women had a relatively respectable and respected position in their class. Unlike the noble women, the peasant women had little or no control over the economics of the agrarian production process, and their lives were framed by “arduous and exacting chores” and lack of access to resources (Crummey, 1981).

Given such historical and political dynamics, and cultural diversity, the pattern of gender arrangements in contemporary Ethiopian society cannot be analysed without a risk of over-generalization or exclusion. Lack of relevant resources further complicates the undertaking. With this challenge, drawing on insights from the works of Connell (2009), Ridgeway (2009), and West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009), three themes are used to analyse gender culture in Ethiopia at a general level. The themes are power relations, division of labour, and cultural beliefs and stereotypes. These are particularly emphasized for their theoretical relevance in relating gender culture to women’s access to and success in education.

I. Power Relations – The meaning and consequences of power depend on the context in which it is exercised. In a social setting involving the interaction between men and women, power refers to and is implied by the forms of relationship between the two social groups. According to Wearing, power manifests when “the dominant group can define the situation, needs, wants and desires of the subordinate group who accept and internalize the definition so that conflict is averted and interests of the dominant group are met” (1996, p.72). This means, practically speaking, power relations are evidenced in the institutionalization of normative roles of men and women.

In the context of Ethiopia, patriarchal power frames gender relations at the levels of family and other institutions in the society. The essential form of gender hierarchy is “the cultural assumption that men have more status and authority than do women” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p.522). Most often, especially in developing countries, the husband is the sole decision-maker on resource allocation, expenditure, and even on sexuality at a household level. In society at large, resources and political power are controlled mainly by men who define what women should do and how they behave. At the discourse level, patriarchal power relations also refers to the absence or marginal representation of women in the socio-political history of the given society (Miroiu, 2003). As a result, patriarchal gender order represents a model of inequality in society. In fact, even though power relations are context-bound, both in terms of time and place, Wearing asserts:

The result of male power, as far as the social relations of gender are concerned, are similar in denying women the right to define their own activities, interests, needs and wants and in designating their present activities as having less value and significance than those activities pursued by males (1996, P.83).

In Ethiopia, as is the case in other developing societies, the highest values are associated with masculinity and resources are disproportionately controlled by men. This gives the men the power to keep women in a subordinate status (Levine, 1999, pp.53-55). The National Ethiopian Women's Policy that was enacted in 1993 also identifies the patriarchal system as a key structural factor that exposes women to political, economic and social discrimination (TGE, 1993). This social subordination of women is sustained by cultural practices and norms embedded in the cultural beliefs of the society. For instance, in rural Ethiopia, women are excluded from participation in public assemblies; it is considered that their interests are represented by their husbands.

In a traditional Ethiopian family (especially in the countryside) every major decision requires the approval of the husband as head of the family. Moreover, although the woman undertakes all the household labours (including cooking and child care) and shares the field work on the farm, it is the husband who controls the agricultural products. The wife needs his approval to sell cereals and buy other things. Women experience a lower socio-economic status in general and hence are marginalized from making decisions at all levels. They are poorly represented in employment and education. They suffer from work stereotypes and the gendered distribution of labour. The majority perform economically invisible but practically essential household work.

Patriarchal power does not limit itself to family level interactions. Rather, it manifests also in institutions in the society. Institutional power is expressed in bureaucracies, and roles and norms in institutions. As a reflection of the general status of women in the society, they assume subordinate roles, occupy lower level tasks, and are treated differently in key institutions such as education (Mama, 2003). For example, when pedagogical, administrative, and procedural arrangements of educational institutions reflect the patriarchal power relationship and biased cultural beliefs, then the institutions are at risk of reproducing the problem of gender disparity and injustice. In this regard, in developing societies, most often women are seen as less competent in comparison to their male counterparts, both as students and staff (Rose & Al-Samarrai, 2001).

II. Division of Labour – The claim “gender is a primary frame for social relations” (Ridgeway, 2009, p.146), is well warranted by gender arrangements in Ethiopia. In every sphere of life, from religious worship to education to work, gender matters. Interactions and activities are gendered. There is women’s work and men’s work both at the household level and in the broader job market. The asymmetric gender-based division of labour prevailing in the society can be explained by the fact that women are left solely responsible for household chores, while the husband is excluded from household work such as cooking and child care. In rural society, the ‘double burden’ of women is not limited to domestic work and child care. They are also expected to take part in the farming activities. Yet, ploughing and most public assemblies are seen as men’s job. In urban areas, the division of labour is not as rigid as in rural areas. Even so, women tend to predominate in lower-paid jobs of typist, nurse, clerk, primary school teacher, etc.; and with very few in top level employment and executive roles in the government (AfDB, 2004). In the context of Ethiopia, men dominate the economic sphere while women are primarily engaged in domestic household work. Therefore, the gender arrangement of labour in Ethiopia closely fits to the first stage of Pfau-Effinger’s (1998) three models of gender-based division of labour: traditional male breadwinner/female carer model, male breadwinner/female part-time carer model, and dual breadwinner/dual carer model.

One of the consequences of women’s single-handed engagement in household work is that it hampers their access to social services, public affairs, and access to and control over property. At this point, it needs to be highlighted that over engagement in domestic labour prevents women and girls from participation in education as well. The result is overall inequality of women in the social, economic and political spheres.

III. Cultural Beliefs and Stereotypes – Gender-related beliefs, usually founded on stereotypes, constitute one aspect of gender culture. They are mechanisms that sustain asymmetric power relations and the division of labour. Patriarchal ideology, which seeks to naturalize gender roles and inequalities, is disseminated in the form of cultural beliefs and stereotypes (Wearing, 1996, p.72). In most of the cultural groups of Ethiopia, masculinity is highly valued. Giving birth to a male child is usually considered a source of pride to the family. Thus stereotypes towards the female child start from festivities at child birth. As Yelfign Worku observes: “If the baby is a girl, people applaud three times, if it is a boy, they

do so seven times” (Worku, 2001, p.98). She adds that right from the beginning, a girl is socialized to remain tidy and less interactive with boys in her cohort. People derogatorily label a man as “woman” to metaphorically tell him that he is inferior, weak, dependent, cowardly, soft, or incompetent.

Notwithstanding the fact that values accorded to women differ from one ethnic group to another, the general pattern is that women are considered inferior, and feminine traits are less appreciated than masculine ones. Like many societies in developing countries, most cultures in Ethiopia are associated with superstitions, and false conceptions of a human beings’ psychic, and sexual life. Myth and stereotypes are instruments to maintain male’s domination over women. For instance, in popular songs, men are symbolized by associations with lions, tigers, bravery and success, while women are depicted as beautiful, kind, soft and seductive. Women in Ethiopia are also victims of overt negative stereotypes. Donald Levine, a renowned sociologist at the University of Chicago and a former professor in HSIU (Ethiopia), summarises various forms of misogyny in four ethnic groups of Ethiopia as follows:

The Gurage consider the woman to be inherently immoral, and a constant source of contamination of men unless she performs cleansing rituals after childbirth, menstruation, and sexual intercourse. Kefa males regard women as weak, sharp-tongued and lazy, and highly dangerous both because they may infect men during their menstrual periods and because of their avid sexual desires which rob men of their strength. Konso males consider women socially unstable, and are particularly fearful that they may rob men of vitality by seducing them into too much sexual activity. The Amhara depreciate women’s activity and talk as inferior, and disparage women’s character as unreliable and treacherous (1999, pp.54-55).

As Levine (1999) further notes, patrilineal descent, polygamy in the Muslim society, the levirate marriage (in which the brother of a deceased man marries his brother’s widow) among the Falasha (Ethiopian Jews) and other sections of the society, and the conception of a supreme male sky god in many of the ethnic groups, show the symbolic representation that magnifies masculinity and keeps women subordinate. For instance, the division of labour and patriarchal power relations are sustained by cultural values: “Though a division of labour is a different thing from a symbolic representation, no division of labour could long be sustained without symbolic categories” (Connell, 2009, p.85). The resultant effect is women’s unequal access to opportunities in society.

A recent report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the gender-related development index and gender empowerment measure of Ethiopia shows that gender

inequality is a pressing challenge. According to the report, Ethiopia ranks 144th out of 155 countries in its gender-related development index – with adult literacy rates of 22.8% for women and 50% for men, and a combined gross enrolment rate in education of 44 % and 54% for women and men respectively (UNDP, 2009, p.183). The country is one of the low ranked countries in gender empowerment measures, which is explained by the number of seats in the national parliament occupied by women (21%); the proportion of female legislators and senior officials (16%); the percentage of women managers, professionals, and technical workers in a country (33%); and the estimated ratio of female to male earned income (0.67). In comparison to other low-income SSA countries such as Burundi (28%), Gambia (28%), Mozambique (26%), and Niger (26%) the proportion of women in the ministerial positions in Ethiopia (10%) is very low (UNDP, 2009). A study of the patterns of changes and continuities of gender culture in three European countries (Finland, the Netherlands and West Germany) shows that education has played a significant role in changing the gender arrangements in these countries (Pfau-Effinger, 1998). If gender equity and social justice are to be appreciated and achieved in Ethiopia, HEIs should be ideal examples and role models as well.

4.7.3 Gender Inequality in Education

In a large scale study on women's participation in selected Commonwealth HEIs (including four African countries), Morley *et al.* (2006) identify constraints impeding women's access and participation in HE to be a) low participation rates in primary and secondary level education and lack of preparedness for HE; b) poverty and disadvantaged social class and ethnic background; and c) marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth and the inflexibility of HE arrangements. The hostile classroom and campus conditions as well as the gendered division of academic labour, whereby academic women most often engage in teaching and student support while their male counterparts tend to focus on research and managerial roles, operates in and is shaped by the broader gender order of the society. Hence, a large part of the problem of inequality is external to the individual. Even though merit-based admission to HE seems to be valid and rational, its foundational assumptions need to be questioned: has each individual in the competition for places had equal opportunity to acquire the required competence? Are the skills demonstrated by women and men accorded the same value? For example, due to their social disadvantage, and subsequent differential school completion rates, women and men find themselves on an unequal academic footing in HE. This leads us to question how

gender culture functions at family, society and institutional levels to deter women's access to and success in education in developing societies such as Ethiopia.

To begin with, at a family level, gender is a factor that affects the preferences of parents on deciding who shall go to school. In a society where patriarchy as an ideology reveals, unlike a girl, a boy enjoys an optimistic social environment towards success and independence in their endeavours in life, and wins the favour of his father, who is the power holder in the family. As their mothers do, girls face unending household work in which they start assisting at an early age. This presents boys and girls with unequal opportunities to pursue schooling. While the boy may get spare time for education and a supportive cultural setting, mothers prefer daughters to remain with them and support them in the household work, including fetching water and collecting firewood in rural Ethiopia – both time-consuming and labour-intensive activities. A survey conducted by the African Development Bank shows that, in Ethiopia women rate the labour of girls at home as a crucial asset for the family (AfDB, 2004). Most women maintained that they need their daughters to be at home and help them with domestic chores. An unequal participation of girls and boys in the early stages of schooling can partly be related to this gender-based household burden. Poor representation of women in higher level learning, both as students and academic staff, is partly a manifestation of the asymmetrical power relations at a household level.

In SSA, even though economic factors are at the centre of gender inequality in education (Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose, & Tembon, 2003), cultural beliefs equally matter. Negative stereotypes of women's capability presents lower expectations for the success of female students in higher level learning. In Ethiopia, as normative conceptions and expectations regarding women's roles and capacities are constructed in ways that support men's dominance and women's subordination, the gender culture of the society has significant implications for gender inequality in education. Lack of confidence in the educational attainment of women, coupled with social values (e.g., broadening kinship) accorded to early arranged marriages, deter the continuation of female students in education. Girls are socialized to become good wives and to conform to the norms of submission rather than becoming educated and self-confident persons. As a result, the number of female students who reach higher level education remains very low. Again, once they get access to HE, restrictive social roles ascribed for women in the society continue to influence their choices of fields of studies and their overall interaction in the new setting (Mama, 2003, 2006).

Finally, at an institutional level, even when women manage to continue their study, they still face the patriarchal power relations and biased cultural beliefs in educational settings (Wearing, 1996). For example, the institutional culture of HEIs presents a unique ‘social relational context’ framed by the broader societal culture. Power relations, beliefs, assumptions, and practices shaping the interaction of men and women in the classroom and at the workplace stem from the broader gender culture of the society (Mama, 2006). University teachers reflect the gendered attitude prevalent in the wider society. As such, male and female teachers favour male students in the classroom through encouraging them to ask and answer questions, calling on them more frequently to comment, using examples that reinforce stereotypes towards women, and using forms of address which assume the entire class is male, hence marginalizing further the female students. By doing so, they are creating a *chilly learning environment* (Miller & Miller, 2002) which contributes to poor academic performance, leading women to desert the science and technology fields, and to high attrition rates of female students. Miller and Miller broadly define the chilly learning and working environment in HEIs as “a collection of behaviours and institutional actions that create an environment where women are treated differently in ways that adversely affect their personal and professional development” (2002, p.105). It is expressed by stereotypes and hostile conditions (including sexual harassment) that female students and staff face within their working and learning environment.

Surveys of gender at primary school level in Ethiopia show that the majority of teachers who participated in the study believe that boys are more intelligent than girls (Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000; Rose & Al-Samarrai, 2001). It is likely that the pedagogical arrangements of those teachers and their lower expectations of female students’ capabilities reinforce these stereotypes that constrain women from full participation in the learning process. As women in Ethiopia are socialized to be reserved and less interactive, female students remain uncomfortable about actively taking part in learning experiences with male students. They continue being less assertive and finish their study with lower academic results, which further affects their position and income in their life after graduation.

In developing countries, the intersection of gender with ethnic and social backgrounds makes women’s participation and success in HE a complicated venture. A recent study into women’s participation in HEIs of Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania shows that gender inequality intersects with other socio-economic factors (Morley & Lugg, 2009). The same study, which aims at mapping the pattern of meritocracy through analysing the

intersection of social variables (gender, socio-economic status, and age) with educational processes (access, retention, and achievement), reveals that opportunity structures available for women in HE reflect “traditional beliefs about meritocracy and reproduce privilege and exclusion” (p.37). The researchers conclude:

[E]ducational aspirations and outcomes are socially constructed according to gendered and socio-economic codes and norms, forms of capital and opportunity structures. [...] When gender is intersected with socio-economic status, participation rates of poorer women are seen to be extremely low (Morley & Lugg, 2009, pp.55-56).

In multi-ethnic and multi-cultural countries such as Ethiopia, ethnicity remains a factor for privilege or exclusion of women in HE. As a result of the ethnic and class stratification, on the opening of the first modern schools in the early 20th century, it was the sons and daughters of the royal family and the nobility who enjoyed access (Wagaw, 1979, 1990). According to Wagaw (1990), in general, participation of females has been very low nationwide for a long period, and it was even lower among less-favoured ethnic groups. Even at present, at a time when ethnicity has gained a new momentum, inequality has persisted in many forms; and opportunities (including HE) made available for women are now partly determined by their ethnic affiliation in the system and the subsystem.

It is indisputable that social class offers differential opportunities for female students. For instance, an educated and economically well-to-do family provides girls and boys with the opportunity to go to better schools, offers professional role models and plays significant roles in breaking stereotypes related to the division of labour and gendered practices and beliefs. Female students from the rural poor section of the society lack this social capital that might otherwise equip them for higher roles. When poverty is combined with adverse cultural beliefs, it has a profound effect on the progression of female students to HE. At a state level, scarce resources for education may implicitly be directed to male students. For instance, when secondary schools are not established close to rural villages and students have to travel long distance to study in urban centres, girls are more likely to drop out of schooling as it would be especially difficult for them to live alone far away from home. The poor quality of education and consequent low academic results of girls in lower level education, when coupled with unfavourable attitudes toward women in the society, impedes the progression of female students to higher level learning where meritocracy is the principal criteria of admission (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Morley & Lugg, 2009). Therefore, by virtue of their

relative advantage in the lower level education, more boys would be qualified for admission in HE than girls.

As a manifestation of the resultant effect of the factors mentioned above, gender inequality has been a feature of the HE subsystem in Ethiopia. Gender inequality in HE ranges from differential treatments of female students and staff to unfavourable learning and working experiences. The quantitative indicators of gender inequality show disparities between women and men in the rates of enrolment, drop-outs, completions and graduations. It also shows the level of achievement of the two groups as measured by test results, and the proportion of academic women in different roles and positions compared with their male counterparts. In 1986/87 the number of females in tertiary level education accounted for only 7% of the total number of students, (UNESCO, 1988); and in the 1998/99 academic year, the proportion of academic women in public HEIs was merely 6% (Wondimu, 2003). At present, even though there are positive developments, as shown in the following section, gender-based disparity in HE is still wide and worrisome. Qualitatively, gender inequality in HE is explained by unfavourable classroom experiences of female students, the exclusion of female students and academic women in critical decision-making processes, the gendered division of labour, gender violence, and harassment are some of the indicators (Mama, 2003, pp.107-114). Hostile learning conditions in HEIs results in high attrition rates of female students, gendered subject distribution, and moral and health-related crises resulting from 'sexual transactions' with male lecturers.

In order meaningfully to deconstruct gender inequality in the system, we need first to understand how it is constructed (Ridgeway, 2009). In this regard, policy reforms informed by 'pipeline thinking' (Allen & Casleman, 2001) hardly grasp inherent factors underpinning the gender imbalance at higher level learning institutions. Pipeline reasoning presupposes that relatively poor low transition rates and poor academic achievements are primary reasons for lower participation and positions of women in HE. As such, proponents of this model assume that participation rates of female students and ranks of academic women can be steadily improved as their performance and participation rates improve (Allen & Castleman, 2001, pp.152-153). This view assumes a level playing field and overlooks the profound effect of the gender culture, and undermines the need for active intervention to deal with intrinsic challenges rooted in the social structure of the society. It underestimates the fact that gender inequality in HE is a result of longstanding and continuing differential structures of opportunities. Adverse cultural attitudes (e.g., early arranged marriage and lower expectations

of women) reinforced by poverty contribute to high dropout rates or non-enrolment of women throughout the education system. Gender equity in HE cannot be achieved without due recognition of multifaceted impediments associated with pre-college education and in-campus experiences.

From the foregoing discussion, it has been highlighted that socio-economic and cultural factors significantly impede women's access to and success in HE. Gender inequality in HE has widely been explicated through quantitative evidence: low rate of women's participation, high attrition rates, segregation of women by discipline, and underrepresentation of women in academic and managerial positions. A key thrust of this thesis is that to fully grasp the problem of gender inequality in the HE subsystem of Ethiopia in relation to the reform process undertaken, it is crucial to equally use qualitative indicators (e.g., invisibility of women's role and representation in the curricula, sexual harassment, lower expectations, gender role stereotypes in the pedagogical arrangements and interactions on campus). These indicators are subtle and less explicit, but nonetheless compelling. As such, they are rarely addressed in policy documents and institutional legislation. This thesis seeks to bring a qualitative dimension into a critical policy analysis of gender inequality in Ethiopian HE. It aims to understand policy efforts that seek to address the problem, and their relevance in tackling structural and other barriers women face in the HE subsystem.

The preceding review and analysis has mapped the relevant literature to set the context of the study. Against this backdrop, the next five chapters take a close-up look into the central concerns of the thesis: HE reform in Ethiopia and neoliberal policy prescriptions of the WB, the Bank's pathways of policy influence, the problem of inequality as a reform agenda, institutional responses of public universities to the national gender equity initiative, and the lived experience of women in relation to the institutional equity policies and arrangements. The next chapter focuses on the changing context of HE reform in Ethiopia and the neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the reform process.

Chapter 5

The WB and Higher Education Policy Reform in Ethiopia

This chapter positions Ethiopian HE policy process in the broad context of the neoliberal reform agenda championed by the WB. The chapter has two major sections. The first section introduces shifts in educational aid priorities and the ‘knowledge-driven poverty reduction’ discourse as a reform context that shapes the interaction between the WB and the Government of Ethiopia. The second section presents the three key neoliberal agenda and related policy elements of the Bank endorsed in the HE reforms of Ethiopia. The key arguments presented in the chapter are: HE reform in Ethiopia has been situated in the ‘knowledge-driven poverty reduction’ discourse; and HE reform agenda in Ethiopia have been informed by the WB’s neoliberal policy prescriptions.

5.1 Reform Context

In low-income countries (LICs) of SSA such as Ethiopia, HE policy reform has been part of the development plans partially initiated and funded by international financial institutions (mainly the WB). In the last two decades, such global development initiatives as EFA (1990, 2000), the MDGs (2000), and the PRSPs (since the early 2000s) have significantly shaped national education policy directions and practices. In this section, two important phenomena that underpinned the HE reform discourses and practices in LICs are discussed. These are centred around shifts in educational aid priorities of donors, and the knowledge-driven poverty reduction discourse of the WB.

5.1.1 Shifts in Educational Aid Priorities

As referred to earlier, two divergent developments have considerably shaped the size and flow of educational aid in SSA. On the one hand, major global development initiatives coupled with the rates of return analysis of educational investment directed the attention of international donors towards basic education. On the other hand, the increased importance of knowledge and skills for economic productivity necessitated greater investment and public

involvement in the HE subsystem in LICs in Africa. However, these seemingly divergent directions have intersected in the mission of poverty reduction advanced by key global policy actors, mainly the international financial institutions – the WB and the IMF. The divergence and convergence of the paths and rationale of educational aid is discussed briefly here.

It is well-documented that not only have donors played significant roles in shaping national education policy directions in aid-recipient countries such as Ethiopia (Molla, 2013a, 2013c, in press a), Kenya (Colclough & Webb, 2010), Ghana (Thompson & Casely-Hayford, 2008), Zimbabwe (Gordon, 1996), Chile (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002), India (Colclough & De, 2010) and Pakistan (Malik, 2007) but also shifted their policy priorities over time. Since the mid-1970s, educational aid of the WB and other multilateral and bilateral agencies was framed by the economic analysis of the rates of return on investment in education. The rate of return analysis maintains that that spending in basic education has higher social returns than investment on HE (Psacharopoulos, 1995, 2009). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002), for instance, aggregate the private returns to primary education at 26.6%, to secondary education at 17.0%, and to HE at 19.0%; and calculated the social return to primary, secondary and HE to be 18.9%, 13.1% and 10.3% respectively. This analysis has served a critical role in explaining the demand for education and making decisions about public spending on education.

As one of the influential experts in the WB, Psacharopoulos's legacy has manifested in the educational aid priorities and policy directions of the Bank (Jones, 1997, 2006; Heyneman, 2003; Klees, 2002). One of the consequences of the interpretation of the rates of return analysis of education was that the Bank and other multilateral agencies held that public expenditure should directly benefit the poor, and spending in primary education is an example of that commitment. Accordingly, the Bank's policy recommendation to aid seeking governments was "to shift public expenditures away from vocational and higher education toward academic and basic education" (Heyneman, 2003, p.325).

In many ways, education policy and practice in LICs of the world are predominantly influenced by the global education policy field (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005), or what Jones (2006) calls the global architecture of education. In Jones' (2006, p.43) words:

national systems of education are embedded in a framework of global power relations. [...] For education, nation states are located within a complex web of ideas, networks of influence, policy frameworks, financial arrangements and organizational structures. These collectively can be

termed the global architecture of education, a system of global power relations that exerts a heavy, indeed determining, influence on how education is constructed around the world.

A large part of this space is occupied by the WB, other UN agencies, the OECD and the EU; and the power relations between the key players in the policy field, donors, and aid recipient governments in LICs, are asymmetrical. Most often, the aid priorities and policy directions are decided by donors. In this regard, the two recent global development initiatives, namely the EFA (1990, 2000) and the MDGs (2000), are exemplary cases. In both, educational aid is skewed in favour of basic education. In fact, the EFA mission was about *basic education for all* (UNESCO, 2003; World Conference on Education for All, 1994). In 2002, multilateral and bilateral development agencies set out the EFA Fast-track Initiative with the aim of building global partnerships between developing countries and donors to accelerate the universal primary school completion by 2015, as targeted in the EFA and the MDGs (World Bank, 2002b). As a result of these initiatives, annual aid flow to basic education increased from US\$44.55 million in 1993 to US\$3,585.99 million in 2009 (this is an increase by more than 8,000%, compared to about 1,400% increase for post-secondary education in the same period). The long-standing assumption was that basic education was more important than HE for economic development, and donors, implicitly or explicitly, encouraged aid recipient African governments to neglect the HE subsystem.

One of the criticisms of the rate of return analysis is that it sees the value of educated people only in terms of increased earning for themselves and higher tax revenue for the society. This misses the contribution of education in the form of economic productivity and social well-being of the society in general (TFHES, 2000). Bloom, Canning and Chan (2006) challenge the analysis by specifically arguing that investment in HE can help economically poor countries promote technological catch-up, which subsequently supports economic growth. Their finding shows that “increasing the stock of tertiary education by one year could maximize the rate of technological catch-up at a rate of 0.63 percentage points a year, or 3.2 percentage points over five years” (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006, p.30). One of the most important aspects of the study is that it allows the convergence of the private and social returns to investment on HE to stimulate economic growth and productivity. While HE appreciably benefits the individual through increasing earning and lowering the likelihood of unemployment, benefits accruing to the society are equally significant – higher tax revenues and enhanced economic productivity and capacity for innovation are engines for economic

growth of a nation. This leads us to the second important factor that drives the shift in educational aid priorities, namely, the knowledge economy discourse.

The emergence of the theorization of the knowledge economy is partly attributed to economic globalization and technological advancement (OECD, 2001a). In such an economy, “information and knowledge are at the centre of economic growth and development” (OECD, 2001a, p.100). It is characterised by a creative and flexible work force which values and is capable of continuous learning. In this regard, through initial education and continuing training, HE provides individual workers with skills and competencies that the knowledge economy requires. In a knowledge society, as knowledge is an essential factor of production, “people must be enabled to deploy their creative or innovative or entrepreneurial capacities in unstable environments amidst rapidly changing and newly emerging knowledge” (OECD, 2001b, p.11). That is, higher level learning and training are key processes in the knowledge economy; and HE is indispensable. The vital role of HE in stimulating national economic growth and maintaining social cohesion has been well underscored in education policies of OECD countries (OECD, 2001a, 2006). In a meeting on HE in Athens in June 2006, Angel Gurría, the then Secretary General of OECD, expressed his optimistic view on the economic value of HE as follows:

The economic significance of higher education is great, and it is growing. Throughout the world, it is now understood that a high-quality system of higher education is central to the ability of nations to participate successfully in the global knowledge economy. This common conviction is well-founded (OECD, 2006, p.13).

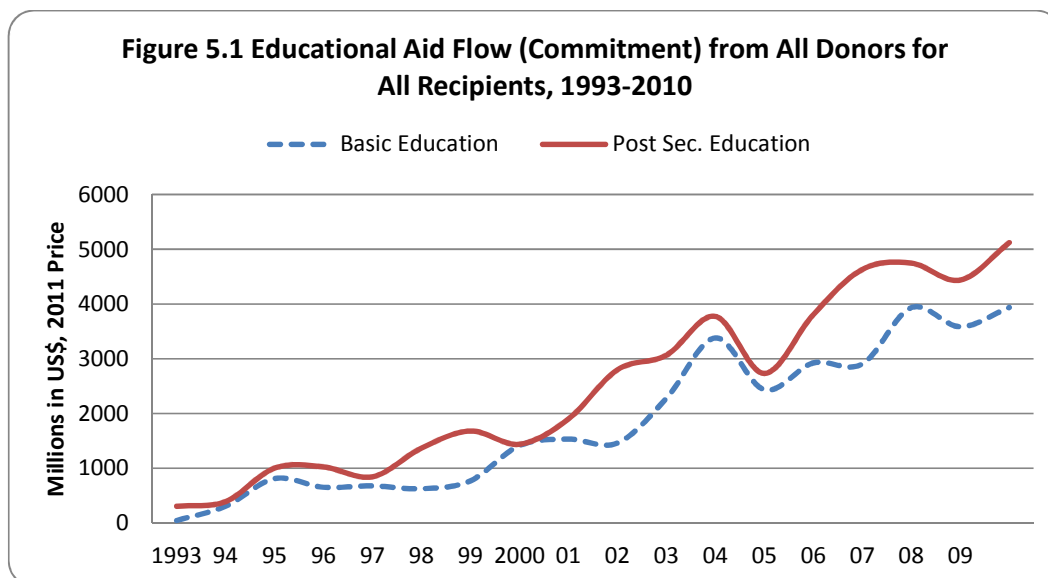
In line with the global policy discourse, the WB has shifted its earlier thinking to embrace the idea that HE is a driving force for economic growth and poverty reduction. In fact, the growing importance of the knowledge economy discourse prompted the WB to update its Education Sector Strategy in 2005. As is stated in the strategy, the Bank’s educational development aid aims to “strengthen education as the basis for a knowledge economy” so that poor countries can build skilled labour force that enable them “to compete in global markets and foster economic growth” (World Bank, 2005b, p.5).

The WB believes that if Africa is to claim its place in the 21st Century, among other things, it needs to invest in its people. In its publication, *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century*, the Bank insists that the economic productivity landscape is changing globally, and knowledge and information have come to be crucial factors of growth (World Bank, 2000). Hence, for its

economic growth, Africa can no longer depend on its natural resources but on its flexible and skilled labour force that can effectively compete in the 'free market' and make use of this global economic openness. The optimistic tone regarding the economic importance of investing in HE is also echoed in other regional bodies, such as the African Development Bank. The latter, in its *Strategy for Higher Education, Science and Technology*, highlights that HE facilitates the transformation of African economies through promoting faster technological catch up and boosting economic productivity (AfDB Group, 2008).

In fact, convincing evidence is available on the strong economic growth impact of HE in LICs. Permani (2009) documents evidence from selected South East Asian countries to show that, through enabling nation states to catch up on the technology frontier, HE has supported economic growth in China, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. An extensive study by Harvard University researchers on economic development effect of HE in Africa reaffirms the claim that Africa needs quality and equitable HE to escape poverty through economic growth (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006). An empirical analysis by Fonkeng and Ntembe (2009) also reveals a positive and significant relationship between HE development and economic growth in Cameroon (a West African nation).

Amidst this basic education vs. HE tension of aid priority, a new unifying development agenda, namely poverty reduction, emerged in the global development aid arena in the early 2000s. The new agenda necessitates investment in both HE and basic education (see the next sub-section for detail). Consequently, as is shown in Figure 5.1 below, aid allocation for basic education and HE has continued to grow. It is also worthwhile noting that despite rhetorical and policy bias to basic education, the funding pattern does not reflect this. Almost always, more aid goes to post-secondary education. Even when the global pro-basic education initiative reached its height and the funding to basic education steeply increased in the early 2000s, the actual aid flow to HE continued to grow steadily. The decrease in commitments to basic education (by 27.5%) and to post-secondary education (by 28%) in 2005 was in fact at odds with the general pattern of aid flow to the sector in the 2000s.



Source: Computed based on data from OECD's *Query Wizard for International Development Statistics*.¹¹

Currently, international educational aid providers aim to support the attainment of key global development initiatives (such as EFA and MDGs), and to maximize the role of education in integrating poor countries into the global knowledge economy. With the knowledge-intensive economy orientation, the social return of HE is emphasized and public financing of the subsystem has been justified as rational. There is a general consensus that HE supports the national economy through production, adaption, and dissemination of knowledge, which in turn expands the technological capabilities of the nation that facilitates participation in the global economy. Hence, starting at the turn of the new millennium, major donors seem to have conceded their misguided belief about the economic growth effect of HE in the sub-Saharan Africa. The new belief holds that if LICs are to effectively participate in the competitive global economy (be it gaining from international trade or attracting foreign investment), they need a well-trained, flexible, creative and competent labour force. In essence, educational aid and policy direction in LICs needs to focus on HE as well as basic education. In other words, if HE helps to sustain the knowledge economy in the global North, it can well work for reducing poverty in SSA. In its knowledge-led development agenda for

¹¹ The data for international official development aid flow can be accessed at <http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>

the region, the WB has advocated the importance of knowledge to reduce poverty. This point deserves further treatment and the next section discusses it in detail.

5.1.2 'Knowledge-driven Poverty Reduction'

Along with the rate of return analysis, human capital formation has served as a key rationale for investment in education by national governments and international development agencies, including the WB (Heyneman, 1999, 2003; Samoff, 2007). Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills and well-being of the individual person, to be attained through quality education and health services (Becker, 1993). Proponents of the theory argue that expenditure on education and training (by the individual or the state) is a form of investment in capital that leads to increased private earnings and national productivity (Becker, 1993). The role of human knowledge and skills for social and economic transformation has wider implications. In the age of the knowledge economy, human capital theory is linked “to the requirements of the global economy and to the competitive advantage of individuals, corporations, and nations within the transnational context” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.18). The global economic order, which is characterised by innovation, complexity and flexibility, requires a labour force with high levels of education and training as well as lifelong learning opportunities. The general assumption is that education and training can make an individual worker more productive, and that in the aggregate, more productive workers will stimulate and bring about economic development.

Hence, regional and international organizations champion human capital formation as a key justification for increased investment in education. They call on education systems of member states:

To create the most ‘competitive knowledge-based economy in the world’ (EU), to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become ‘educational services’ opened up to foreign investments (WTO) (Moutsios, 2010, p.129).

In fact, human capital theory has had an earlier association with the educational policy and funding of the WB. As the Bank’s archive¹² shows, on 17 Oct. 1962, in announcing the

¹² See

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTARCHIVES/0,,contentMDK:20035660~menuPK:56316~pagePK:36726~piPK:437378~theSitePK:29506,00.html>

appointment of Dr. Harvie Branscomb as educational policy consultant, the then president of the Bank, Eugene Black, stated "nothing is more vital to the economic progress of underdeveloped countries than the development of human resources through widespread education." Starting from the late 1990s, with the prevalence of the knowledge economy discourse in the global North, human capital theory regained momentum in the HE policy field in particular. The WB believes that by equipping people with basic life-skills and improving health conditions, education promotes productivity of the poor; that, by giving access to productive assets to disadvantaged groups, education fosters equity and social cohesion; and, that by producing a flexible, competent, and updated labour force, education helps sustain and develop the knowledge economy (World Bank, 2002a, 2009). In other words, the Bank regards aid to education as a form of investment in human capital formation to promote economic growth and eradicate poverty (Ilon, 2003; Jones, 2007; Samoff, 2005, 2007).

When it comes to HE, the long-standing rate of return analysis of the WB that pushed HE primarily as a private interest (due to its allegedly low social rate of return) was strongly criticised as a misleading assumption both from within and without (Heyneman, 2003, 2012; Samoff & Carrol, 2003, 2004; TFHES, 2000). Again, with increased recognition of HE's public benefits, the deterioration of quality and relevance of HE in Africa called for timely support from development agencies. The resultant effect of these conditions has been the renewal of the WB's financial and policy commitment to HE. As a mark of this shift in orientation, the Bank underscored the significance of knowledge and skills in its new development plan, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The convergence of the Bank's poverty reduction strategy and knowledge economy optimism has resulted in what can be referred to as 'knowledge-driven poverty reduction' discourse that guides the Bank's financial and policy involvement in HE policy reform in SSA, including Ethiopia. Therefore, the relevance of the knowledge economy discourse is in connecting HE and poverty reduction, and thereby making the WB revisit its HE policy in Africa. As a result, in its major discursive dissemination instruments (major policy reports discussed below), the Bank underscores that through training qualified professionals and a competent labour force that generates, adapts, and innovatively uses knowledge, HE makes a direct valuable contribution to the goal of poverty reduction.

In the *World Development Report 1998/99*, the WB focused on *Knowledge for Development* and highlighted that in the global competitive economy, knowledge acquisition, adaptation,

production and application have become major production factors (World Bank, 1999). Hence, the Bank not only emphasised the significance of knowledge in the emerging global economic order, but also recommended that the developing world should narrow the knowledge gap through *acquiring*, *absorbing*, and *communicating* knowledge (World Bank, 1999). In stressing the centrality of knowledge in national economic productivity, the report contends:

Poor countries – and poor people – differ from rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they have less knowledge (World Bank, 1999, p.1).

The strong link between the poverty reduction strategies and HE in aid-recipient countries has been articulated in three more major publications of the WB. In 2000, the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (a research team from 13 countries jointly commissioned by the WB and the UNESCO) released its major report entitled: *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*. It was a landmark document in recognizing the economic and social development potential of HE in LICs. It highlighted the urgency of revitalizing HE in those countries. The report recognized that HE in LICs was entangled with such critical challenges as inequality of participation, low access, poor quality education, and lack of socio-economic relevance. The report stressed that unless those countries restructure their HE subsystems and policies, they would face further marginalization from the competitive world economy. The Task Force (TFHES) concludes:

As knowledge becomes more important, so does higher education. [...] The quality of knowledge generated within higher education institutions and its availability to the wider economy is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness.

Without more and better higher education, developing countries will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy (2000, p.9).

Revisiting its policy on tertiary education was a matter of urgency for the WB. In 2002, it published its comprehensive policy report on HE entitled: *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, where it outlined its reform prescriptions and priorities. The Bank argued that the convergence of traditional challenges and new opportunities highlighted the necessity of its involvement in HE development (World Bank, 2002a).

In its 2009 HE policy report entitled, *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*, the WB underlined the pivotal role of HE for knowledge intensive economic growth and poverty reduction. It underscored the necessity of quality human capital formation in the region. This document calls for governments to be committed, through their HE subsystems, to supporting innovation and creativity. In this policy document, the Bank appears determined to sell its normative expectations about the possibility of knowledge-based poverty reduction in the LICs of Africa. In pushing its reform prescriptions to aid-recipient governments in the region, the WB stresses:

A more knowledge-intensive approach to development is emerging as an attractive option for many African countries. In fact, *it is possibly the only route* that could permit sustained, outward-oriented development (World Bank, 2009, p.xxii, emphasis added).

Underpinning assumptions that connect the HE reform agenda of the WB with its knowledge-based poverty reduction discourse are:

- a) HE directly contributes to economic growth through training a flexible, competent and adaptable labour force; generating new knowledge; and expanding and building capacity to access an existing body of global knowledge and adapt it for local use. And, sustainable economic growth is a route to poverty reduction.
- b) HE contributes to poverty reduction through redistribution of opportunities and empowerment. By rewarding higher level knowledge and skills, HE enhances employability and improves income of individuals. As such, particularly for women and other socially disadvantaged groups, HE is a means of social mobility (World Bank, 2002a, 2009).

In other words, it is held that HE supports national economic productivity because higher level skills and knowledge promote efficiency in the use of resources, and make possible a competent and productive labour force. HE widens the country's pool of qualified professionals in the fields of science and technology, business, education, management, health, etc. To achieve international initiatives including the EFA and the MDG initiatives, highly trained professionals and experts are needed in the fields of science and technology, education and medical services, and agriculture and commerce; and HE is instrumental in producing those professionals. Again, HE plays critical roles in supporting the entire education system through quality teacher training, curriculum designing, and research and policy advice (World Bank, 2002a, 2004, 2009). For the poor countries in Africa, even their

capacity to make use of knowledge produced in other countries and adapt to rapidly changing technological advances depend on the quality of their HE subsystem.

With this belief, the WB has financed HE projects in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mauritania, and Mozambique as part of its Poverty Reduction Strategy (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2005). The WB's support for national poverty reduction programs has been streamed mainly through a sectoral approach; and human capital development has been one of the development pillars in the Bank's Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) for Ethiopia. The WB's HE policy research team in Ethiopia concluded that poverty alleviation through economic growth would not be attained without a well-functioning HE subsystem that provides quality human capital. In justifying its investment in the subsystem, the WB argues:

Poverty alleviation in Ethiopia requires sustained economic growth, good governance, and political stability in order to be effective. Growth derives from skilled human resources and national productivity increases leading to greater country competitiveness in the regional and global economy. Productivity gains are generated by national innovation systems in which tertiary education institutions play a fundamental role. [...] Therefore, if poverty is to be reduced, Ethiopia's tertiary institutions will have to improve their performance and expand their service delivery (World Bank, 2003b, p.3).

It has been with this assumption and commitment that the WB financed the *Education Sector Development Project* (1998-2004), with a 16% tertiary education component; the *Post-Secondary Education Project* (2005-2009), with an 88% tertiary education share; and the *General Education Quality Improvement Project* (2008-2013), with a 12% tertiary education component.

Between 2000 and 2010, Ethiopia implemented three poverty reduction policies¹³. As a reflection of the WB's discursive influence, the plans and strategies underscored enhancing

¹³The three poverty reduction strategies were: Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, IPRSP (2000/01-2002/03); Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program, SDPRP (2002/03-2004/05); and a Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty, PASDEP (2005/06-2009/10). Currently, the fourth five-year development plan, Growth and Transformation Plan, GTP (2010/11-2014/15) is underway. Replacing the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that dominated the region throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the strategy papers were introduced in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The papers constitute the WB's development strategic framework. They are usually prepared by national governments in consultation with representatives of the financial institutions. Governments could define their own policy priorities based on the general framework (made available in a form of a Sourcebook by the WB) and in consultation with experts from the institutions. The PRSPs have been used as preconditions to get access to debt reliefs and concessional loans from the Bank and the Fund. In short, the poverty reduction strategy is a development policy devised for the world's poor by the leading neoliberal forces.

the human resources of the nation as one of the key development pillars. Similarly, the education sector development plans of the government, associated investment in education with the national poverty reduction initiatives. In the second phase of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP II), the Government maintains:

To implement the Poverty Reduction Strategy successfully, the economy shall need substantial additional skilled and trained manpower at all levels-top, middle, low levels. Expansion of the road infrastructure, education, agriculture and health services shall demand substantial number of trained manpower. Thus, responsibility for training the required additional skilled manpower shall substantially fall on the tertiary and TVET sub-sectors of education (MoE, 2002a, p.19).

Supposedly, the education and training policy of the government (TGE, 1994) is said to be the foundation of all educational plans and programs in the last two decades. At the centre of the policy is the potential and needs of individual students, and the building of democratic society. However, its implementation (in the form of sector development programs) primarily targets the mission of poverty alleviation. The gap between the original policy pronouncement and policy practice can be seen as an indicator of the responsiveness of the government to policy prescriptions and development initiatives of donors, including the WB.

In the early 2000s, the knowledge-drive poverty reduction discourse of the WB coupled with the urgency of tackling the long-standing problems of the HE subsystem resulted in a new initiative to revitalise HE in Ethiopia. The government identified HE reform as one of the key elements of the National Capacity Building Program (2001) and directions for changes in the subsystem were outlined in the second poverty reduction strategy paper (officially called the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program, 2002/03-2004/05). Most importantly, the government launched the Higher Education Capacity Building Program (2002-2004) with a particular focus on system expansion and policy reform, followed by the ratification of the Higher Education Proclamation (2003) that sets the legal framework for policy-based and institutional restructuring (Yizengaw, 2007).

Given the development discourse that framed the context of HE reform in the country and the active involvement of the WB in the process, it is now important to analyse the neoliberal policy agenda that the Bank prescribed to the reformers. This is the focus of the next section.

5.2 Neoliberal Higher Education Reform Agenda

Neoliberalism assumes its hegemonic position through the process and forces of globalization. Its economic ideals are embedded in policy menus of international financial institutions; and are infused into public policy arenas of nation-states in the form of a call for liberalization, privatization, decentralisation, and social spending reduction. In this regard, unlike in the global North, where neoliberal policies are mostly the result of internal political and economic dynamics, in SSA neoliberal agenda are exogenous and are imposed by donors and lenders. As May et al. (2008, p.64) appropriately note:

Initially with loans, and later debt reduction, dependent upon take-up of a SAP or implementation of a PRS, recipient countries have little choice but to accept the medicine doled out by the IMF and the World Bank.

Consequently, national education policies and practices in aid recipient countries such as Ethiopia have unavoidably been shaped by what Dale (1999, *passim*) calls a “globally structured educational agenda”. There is no better case than HE to show the globalization of the neoliberal policies of privatization, marketization and decentralization. As one of the most important actors of the “global education policy field”, the WB is a prominent global agent for the neoliberalization of education (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005). In association with poverty alleviation efforts, the WB particularly called for restructuring the HE subsystem in the SSA. In the Bank’s assessment, if governments in the region fail to act decisively toward the improvement of their HE subsystems, sooner or later they will pay a high price. This uncomfortable scenario is envisaged in these terms:

a flood of students into increasingly dysfunctional institutions, graduates without viable work skills, an unending demand for funding that throws public budgets into disarray, high levels of graduate unemployment, increasing politicization of education and employment policies, and growing possibilities of political unrest and instability (World Bank, 2009, p. 110).

As part of its engagement in addressing issues of efficiency, relevance and quality in the subsystem, the WB outline reform prescriptions that cover a broad area ranging from finance to management and to curriculum (World Bank, 2002a, 2009).

In this study, neoliberal policy elements refer to specific policy prescriptions of the WB, or what Heyneman refers to as “the short education policy menu” (2003, *passim*), that constitute its broad educational policy agenda. For example, while a commitment to reduce public spending in HE through marketisation can be considered a neoliberal reform agenda, putting

in place the cost-sharing scheme is a neoliberal policy element in support of that agenda. Based on the analysis of selected policy documents from the Bank (World Bank, 2002a, 2003b, 2009) and the Ethiopian Government (FDRE, 2009; MoE, 1998, 2002a, 2004b) – and insights from the work of Klees (2002, 2008, 2012), Olssen & Peters (2005), Peters (2012), and of Torres (2002, 2009) – I have summarised the neoliberal HE reform agenda of the WB in three key categories: introduction of market mechanisms, strong alignment with economic productivity, and decentralised governance. They are discussed in turn as follows.

5.2.1 Introduction of Market Mechanisms

Be it implicitly or explicitly, directly or indirectly, the neoliberal tendencies in education are expressed by the economic imperatives that dominate the mission of a modern university. This signifies the emergence of the *neoliberal university* – a type of university where the “state and market pressures are instituted” effectively to support the economic interests of individuals and/or nations (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p.325). The WB, as a neoliberal agent, believes in the rationality of the market in resource allocation. Further, it seems to be convinced that Africa is poor because it fails to attract private investment due to its restrictive economic policies and because of higher public expenditure. Therefore, the Bank’s policy package for the region is said to have aimed at avoiding structural barriers for free trade and private investment; and reducing financial deficit and external debt through fiscal reforms. For example, it demands that borrowing governments introduce quasi-market elements into their HE subsystems. The three policy elements that the Bank presents as a way of introducing market forces into HE subsystems are cost-sharing, expansion of the private provision, and income generation options for public HEIs.

Privatization is at the centre of what the WB calls “sound economic policy” (World Bank, 2002a). In this scenario the private is preferable to the public to achieve the most desired public policy goal of efficiency. Cost-sharing (user fees) is another dimension of the market forces in HE, and is part of the plan to reduce public spending on HE and maximize resource utilization. It is assumed that higher rates of taxation to support students out of public funds impairs economic efficiency, and hence the alternative is to let individual students pay directly for a service they receive (World Bank, 2002a, 2003b). Income generation is another option for public universities. HEIs are expected to widen their source of income through establishing linkages with the industry and service sectors in the society in the form of

consultancy and research, and by producing capital goods such as technology and agricultural products (World Bank, 2002a, 2002b, 2003b, 2009).

In Ethiopia, in addition to its project funding, the WB put forward the introduction of cost-sharing in public HEIs, the expansion of private HE provision, and the diversification the HE subsystem as viable policy elements to bear fiscal pressure created by mass demand for HE (World Bank, 1998, 2003b). The Bank also stressed that the government needed to balance the share of public and private investment in the HE subsystem. It advised the government to encourage:

the expansion of the private higher education provision and share the burden of the mass demand for higher education and increase the share of the private enrolment to 40% by 2010 (World Bank, 2003b, p.viii).

In line with the WB's policy recommendation, the government opened up the HE subsystem for privatization in the mid-1990s. In less than a decade the number of accredited private HEIs (with undergraduate and above programs) grew from none to 44 (in the 2009/2010 academic year). Currently, about 18% of the total student body in HE is enrolled in the private sector (MoE, 2011).

As a key aspect of the increased marketization of HE, cost-sharing has become an international phenomenon (Barr, 2005; Jonstone, 2004, 2009; Marcucci & Jonstone, 2007; Ziderman, 2003). In Ethiopia, although it was featured as a key policy issue since the early 1990s, the cost-sharing scheme did not take roots until 2003. Starting from the late 1990s, the WB has been working with international experts (e.g., Prof. Bruce Chapman from Australia, see Section 6.3.1 for detail) on the modalities of introducing fees in Ethiopian HE. Finally, cost-sharing was ratified in the Higher Education Proclamation in 2003 (No.351/2003; revised in 2009, No.256/2009), and came into effect in September of the same year. The revised Proclamation (Article 92.1) provides,

Any Ethiopian student studying in a public institution and who is not required to pay in advance tuition fee [*sic*] shall contribute, in cash or in service, to cover the cost of his education in accordance with the regulations of the Council of Ministers on cost-sharing.

Students have the option to pay in advance or after graduation in the form of graduate tax or service. The scheme has positioned students in a consumer-like relationship with the universities. In answering my question regarding the possibility of further pushing the public HE into the market, a senior government official in the MoE commented:

[...] given the extensive expansion which increased public universities from two just a decade ago to 22 at present and additional 10 in the pipeline, the Government can, through time, encourage HEIs to adopt market models. They are of course encouraged to diversify their source of revenue. In the future, I think, there is no other way out. The experience of Haramaya University is a good example here. It has relatively well developed agricultural products to subsidize its budget. But it is not feasible to leave them alone or to totally cut public funding at present time. Nowhere has it happened so far for that matter (Moha, interview, 23 October 2010).

Diversification of the sources of revenue for public universities is thought to be a solution to ever declining public funding. The government, therefore, has demanded that public universities gradually move away from public funding through mobilizing resources for themselves in different ways, for example, marketising their research and advisory services and establishing for-profit enterprises. On income mobilization by public universities, Article 66 of the Proclamation (No.650/2009) (FDRE, 2009) provides,

Without prejudice to the provisions of this Proclamation and other applicable laws, an income generating enterprise may be established by any public institution upon request of the president and approval by the Board.

However, it should be noted that the lion's share of funding for public HEIs comes from the government. What is significantly changed is the instrument of funding. In accordance with the recommendation of the WB HE research team in Ethiopia (World Bank, 2003b), the HE Proclamation is about the budgeting for public universities. It provides that,

Every public institution shall receive a block grant-budget, agreed upon in advance as indicative budget for a five-year period; provided however, that such block-grant budget shall be revised annually (Article 62.2).

In fact, in the case of Ethiopia and SSA in general, given the much needed social benefits of HE and the high level of poverty for the majority of the population, the cost of insufficient public investment in HE is unbearable for any nation and hence leaving the subsystem under the full control of the market forces alone is simply impractical and undesirable.

5.2.2 Strong Alignment with Economic Productivity

An economic agenda has always been part of the mission of HE; what is new is the imagined scale and intensity of the relationship between knowledge and economic productivity. The economic agenda for HE is expressed by intentional restructuring of the subsystem to meet the fast changing demands of the labour market and to boost national productivity. Most

often neoliberals call for equal access to HE from a human capital formation perspective, to support economic competitiveness of nations in the global market economy (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). Producing an entrepreneurial and innovative workforce seems to be a common concern of HE subsystems across the globe (Apple, 2001; Olssen & Peters, 2005). It is assumed that economic competitiveness is contingent on a competent labour force that attains a high level of knowledge and skills through lifelong and life-wide learning (World Bank, 2002a; Torres, 2009). In its regional report on HE in low- and middle-income East Asian countries, the WB reaffirms that the subsystem plays a key role in lifting national economic productivity through preparing a qualified labour force, producing relevant scientific research, and supporting technological transfer and innovation (World Bank, 2012). Ideally, this is the thread that links HE with the macroeconomic and social policies of nation-states. The dominance of economic rationality in the HE policy discourse is partly attributable to the prominence of economists in the Bank's education policy process (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012; Torres, 2009).

Reports of the WB (World Bank, 1999, 2002a, 2009) and findings and recommendations of the Task Force (2000) converge around the need for aligning HE with national economic development initiatives. HE policy of the Bank for SSA in general has long been framed by the human capital theory. According to the Bank:

Improving the quality of human capital and how it is developed offer an alternative route to faster growth in SSA, where physical capital is relatively scarce and likely to remain so for some time (World Bank, 2009, p.20).

The WB further stresses:

The *name of the game now is knowledge-intensive development*. It calls for a new outlook – one that is more strategic and nationally integrated – on the nature of the contribution that education can make to industrialization, to exports, to the building of a more resilient economy, and to confronting the twenty-first century challenges [...] This new outlook, together with the policy interventions it implies, comprise a pathway to the vital skills and increased knowledge that African economies are certain to require if they are to increase their competitiveness and thereby sustain their recent growth. (World Bank, 2009, pp.xxx-xxxi, emphasis added).

Therefore, as a way of aligning HE with poverty reduction strategies of aid-recipient countries in Africa, the Bank particularly highlights two key areas of reform: access; and quality and relevance.

Partly due to demographic changes and success in promoting access at lower levels of education in the last two decades, demand for HE has considerably increased in SSA, including in Ethiopia. In the context of low enrolment rates in HE, and with the increased optimism about the importance of knowledge in the national poverty reduction initiative, governments in the region have no option but to expand access to higher level education and training. However, according to the WB, SSA has fallen short of adapting to “the new rules of play imposed by a global knowledge economy” (World Bank, 2009, p.80). With the increased importance of the knowledge and skills in the economy, governments need to be actively involved in supporting the subsystem. Expanding HE is assumed to be a means to promote capacity building in areas of education, agriculture and health, poverty reduction, and to ensure social equity. In other words, expanding access to HE has been part of development strategies of governments in the region.

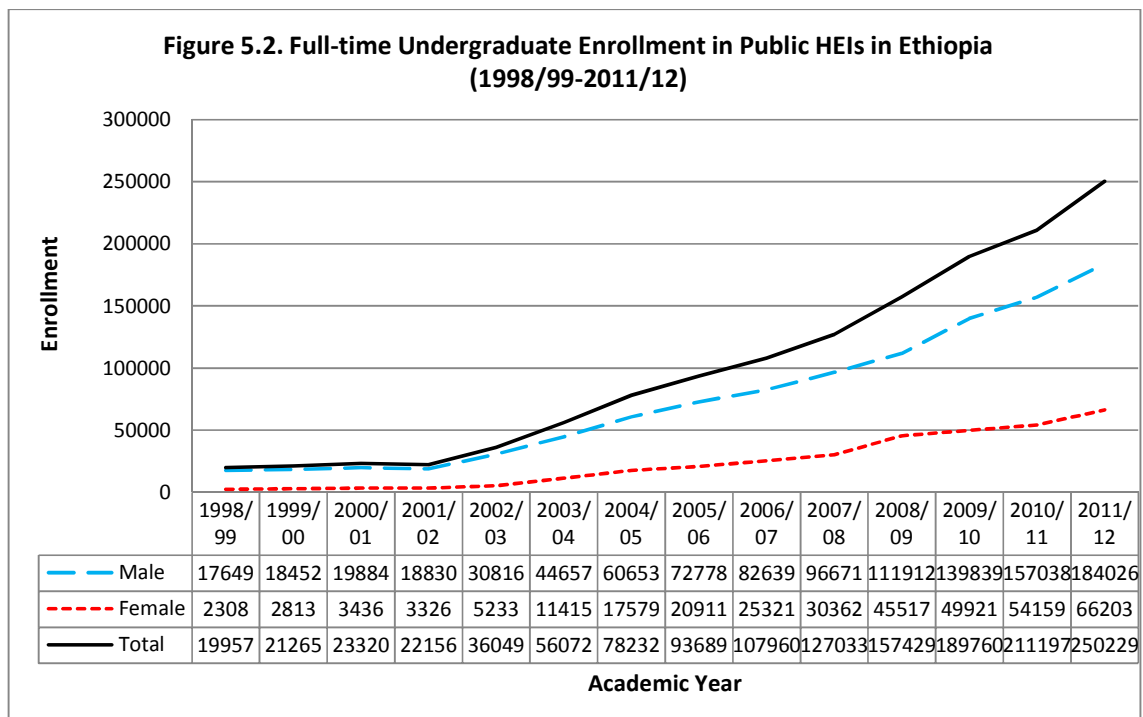
Lack of access to HE has been a major problem in Ethiopia. In 2000, Ethiopia could offer HE opportunities to only 0.8% of the relevant cohort. In the same year, while the SSA average HE gross enrolment rate was 339 students per 100,000 persons, in Ethiopia, there were only 62 higher education students (including those at a diploma level) per 100,000 inhabitants (Saint, 2004). It was against this backdrop that the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP II) of the Ethiopian government declared its commitment to expand the HE subsystem and align it with its poverty reduction plan.

Investment in higher education is important for socio-economic development, which in turn is a critical prerequisite for sustained poverty reduction and the future of Ethiopia (MoE, 2002a, p.33).

According to a former State Minister for HE who headed the reform process, the changes in the subsystem primarily were aimed to “to enhance the capacity of the country in its aspiration to become a middle-income country in 20-30 years time” (Yizengaw, 2007, p.37). In view of that, the government increased the number of public universities through merging the existing colleges and institutions and establishing new ones, expanded the admission capacity of the existing universities, and allowed the private HE provision to expand significantly. The result was impressive. As noted above, the number of public universities grew from two in 1999 to 22 in 2009¹⁴, with an additional four non-university HEIs.

¹⁴ Between 1999 and 2009, in addition to expanding admission capacity of the existing universities (Addis Ababa and Haramaya), through merging and upgrading colleges and institutes, the government has established the following 20 universities: Bahir Dar, Hawassa, Jimma, Mekele, Arbaminch, Adama, Gonder, Axum, Debre

Accordingly, the enrolment rate has grown exponentially. As the graph below shows, full-time undergraduate enrolment in public universities grew from around 20,000 in 1998/9 to nearly 200,000 in 2009/10. That is, in a space of about ten years, the enrolment rate increased by more than 200%. At the same time, the share of private HE has risen considerably. In 2010, about 18% of the HE students were enrolled in private HEIs (MoE, 2010b). However, despite the extensive expansion, Ethiopia has still a very low rate of enrolment in HE. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (stats.uis.unesco.org) shows that in 2008, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the enrolment ratio in tertiary education in Ethiopia (5% for gross male and 2% for female) was even lower than the SSA average (7% and 5% for male and female respectively).



Source: Computed based on data from *Education Statistics Annual Abstract* (MoE, 2000 to 2012).

Birhan, Debre Markos, Wollo, Dilla, Dire Dawa, Jijjiga, Medawolabu, Mizan-Tapi, Semera, Wolayita-Soddo, Wollega, and Ambo [see Figure 7.1 for regional distribution of the universities]. In addition, currently the following universities are under establishment: Addis Ababa Science and Technology, Adigrat, Asosa, Bule Hora, Debre Tabor, Metu, Wachamo, Woldiya, and Welkite. There are also four public HEIs (Civic Service University, Defence University College, Kotebe College of Teacher Education, and Telecommunications and IT College) run by different agencies under the Federal Government (MoE, 2011).

Even though the economic return of the expansion is yet to be seen in the long run, it has widened participation in HE. Notwithstanding the enduring inequalities to be discussed in detail in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis, in terms of access, expansion of the subsystem has benefited historically and socially disadvantaged groups as is reflected by the increase of full-time female undergraduate enrolment rate from 2,300 in 1999 to about 50,000 in 2010.

Reforming HE to ensure its quality and relevance has been the second focus in aligning the subsystem with economic productivity. The WB attributes lack of relevance and poor quality of HE in the SSA in general (World Bank, 2009), and in Ethiopia in particular (World Bank, 2003b), to the lack of qualified staff, out-dated curriculum, and declining spending and subsequent poor physical facilities (including library and laboratory services). Among the options recommended by the WB are updating the curricula, opening new programs at different levels, expanding graduate programs in “strategically critical fields” (such as science and technology), supporting applied and basic research, and diversifying HEIs (World Bank, 2002a, 2003b, 2009).

Relevance in education is about responsiveness to the socio-economic and political needs of society. Lack of responsiveness has multifaceted consequences. The WB warns:

Irrelevant education increases the chances of graduate unemployment and brain drain, and deprives a nation of an important instrument for its development (World Bank, 2009, p.93).

Accordingly, the Bank called for institutional diversification as a way of addressing the problem of lack of relevance of HE programs in Ethiopia. According to van Vught (1996), a diversified HE subsystem is supposed to produce a “higher level of client orientation (both in relation to the needs of students and the labour market), social mobility, effectiveness, flexibility, innovativeness and stability” (p.45). The common trend of diversification of the HE subsystem takes the form of the establishment of new types of non-university institutions, named differently in different countries: as Community Colleges in the US, Polytechnics in the UK, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in Australia, *Folkschool* in Denmark, *Fachhochschulen* in Germany, and *Institus Universitaires de Technologie* in France (Clancy, 2010).

As is the case in Ethiopia and elsewhere in SSA, an underdeveloped non-university system, an absence of strong national research institutions, and a low enrolment rate in the private institutions indicate the lack of institutional diversification. This undermines the responsiveness of the subsystem to socio-economic needs of the society in general and to the labour market demands in particular (World Bank, 2002a, 2009). Hence the WB recommended that policymakers diversify the subsystem, and establish quality assurance agencies that set standards and monitor the relevance of programs and qualifications in the subsystem (World Bank, 2003b, 2004).

Accordingly, in the last few years, the government has been able to review and update university curricula; introduce new programs in areas of computer science, agriculture, engineering and other science fields; expand graduate level programs; improve pedagogical competence of university teachers through professional development programs; and institutionalize a quality assurance agency and a national pedagogical resource centre to ensure the relevance and quality of education and training in HEIs. Moreover, science and technology fields have been prioritised as critical fields for the nation's economic development efforts. Starting from the 2009/2010 academic year, 70% of new HE entrants are to be enrolled in science and technology fields while the remaining 30% are in the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, in line with this 70:30 policy, the government has introduced new technology institutions with a status of university.

However, if the HE subsystem of Ethiopia has to live up to this expectation, a number of issues need critical consideration. The quality of the teaching staff is a serious concern (Semela, 2011). At the end of the 2009/2010 academic year, about 51% of the teaching staff in public universities of Ethiopia had no graduate level training (Molla, 2011a). Furthermore, normatively speaking, HE plays a critical role in enhancing intellectual capacity to produce and apply knowledge and skills; and quality human capital, built on high level knowledge and skills, makes possible entrepreneurship and innovation, which opens new investment and employment opportunities, and enhances export competitiveness (World Bank, 2009). Nonetheless, this kind of optimism should not be taken for granted. Economic productivity is determined by many other significant factors. Productivity of a worker comes not only from his or her education but also from the economic infrastructure in which he or she is working. In other words, political stability, the cultural values of the society and the availability of physical resources are equally important; mere expansion of HE may not be a solution for all problems the nation faces. Again, the knowledge economy is possible through a knowledge

society. Such a society is characterised by, among other things, an economy based on a high level of skills and knowledge – “intellectual enterprises”; innovation, and technological enhancement; and openness to new ideas (Markkula, 2006, pp.2-3). It requires a knowledge society “whose processes and practices are based on the production, distribution, and use of knowledge” (European Commission, 2001, p.33). In this regard, in a country where over 40% of its adult population is illiterate, and where only 5% of the relevant age cohort (that is, the 19-23 years age group of the population) has access to HE (UIS, Database1), aggressive expansion of HE in line with the discourse of knowledge-intensive economic growth may be based on false optimism, at least at this point in time. Despite the extensive expansion of the HE subsystem and the government’s zealous endorsement of the *knowledge-driven poverty reduction* agenda, as the Global Competitiveness Index 2012/13 shows, the alignment between HE and economic productivity in Ethiopia is one of the lowest in the world, standing at the rank of 134th in 144 countries (Schwab, 2012).

5.2.3 Decentralised Governance under a ‘Steering State’

Neoliberals call for limited state intervention, and downsized public spending on social services, including education. Even in economically developed countries in the global North, the issue of “de-coupling of education from direct state control” is one of the most visible features of a neoliberal education reform agenda (Ball, 2005, p.72). As such, traditional roles of the state in the regulation, coordination, funding, control and legitimisation of HE have been challenged. Governments are compelled to devolve power to HEIs. Hence, as a way of redefining their roles, with the decentralization of the governance of the institutions, governments have put in place accountability mechanisms associated with the autonomy they granted to them. In this context, accountability can broadly be understood as a “social relation between two actors in which one (an individual or an institution) answers to another with the right to make judgements, demand change and impose sanctions” (Ozga & Grek, 2012, p. 38). The state employs different accountably instruments to monitor and evaluate the behaviour and performance of public HEIs.

The need for decentralisation of HE governance is at the centre of the WB’s reform menu (World Bank, 2002a, 2003b, 2009). It calls for the state to devolve power to HEIs in the form of increased autonomy and to coordinate the subsystem from outside through various policy instruments (or mechanisms) including funding, legislation, evaluation and planning. In other

words, it recommends the use of financial incentives and regulatory frameworks by the state to ensure effective implementation of reforms and to facilitate innovative changes in HEIs though holding them accountable for their performance and public resource usage. With this, an “evaluative state” (Neave, 1998) emerges in a new position of governance through such instruments as funding formula and quality assurance. As Marginson posits, “Neo-liberal government rests on *self-managing* institutions and individuals, in which free agents are empowered to act on their own behalf but are ‘steered from a distance’ by policy norms and rules of the game” (1997, p.63).

The WB argues that the emerging role of the state as the steering agent of HE is timely and necessary. In the neoliberal reform context, the primary role of the state should be guiding HE subsystems in accordance with the global and local economic realities, including labour market demand. In its policy reform recommendation for the Government of Ethiopia, the WB identifies three essential aspects of the state’s steering role to be:

First, shaping a coherent policy framework to institute proactive, meaningful reforms to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the knowledge economy and the ICT revolution; second, providing an enabling regulatory environment aimed at fostering innovation, stimulating the private provision of education, instituting quality assurance mechanisms, financial accountability for public institutions, and intellectual property rights; and third, offering appropriate financial incentives to steer institutions towards quality, efficiency, and equity goals (2003, p.4).

In accordance with the WB’s call for increased autonomy to public HEIs and the institutionalization of new mechanisms of accountability, the Government of Ethiopia introduced a decentralised governance reform in its Higher Education Proclamation, first ratified in 2003 (FDRE, 2003b). The revised Proclamation (No.650/2009) stipulates self-managing HEIs, as the administrative and financial autonomy of institutions is balanced by the block grant budgeting system. In terms of autonomy, the government granted HEIs the authority to control their personnel decisions and financial expenditures. Article 64.2 of the Proclamation (FDRE, 2009) reads:

A public institution shall be free to use its income as it sees fit, in accordance with its approved business plan, except insofar as the law provides otherwise, and having regard to the purposes of any tied funds.

Furthermore, the WB research team recommended the need for effectively coupling of the autonomy of HEIs with an appropriate set of accountability mechanisms, such as the use of funding formula in allocating block grants for public universities, and institutionalizing

quality assurance both at institutional and national levels (World Bank, 2003b). According to the WB, the two key criteria of accountability in public HEIs are:

the relevance of their activities to the needs of society, and to allow their effectiveness in performing this role to be assessed by external review (World Bank, 2009, p.84).

In March 2004, the government commissioned a Committee of Inquiry into Governance, Leadership and Management of the HE subsystem. In June 2004, the Committee (composed of HE managers and expatriate professionals) finalized its report entitled: *Higher Education Systems Overhaul* (HESO). The report, among other things, reaffirmed the WB's policy direction regarding the need for strengthening the steering role of the state. It stressed that:

[S]teering means focusing on the *input* or *output* indicators, for example, through a financial allocation model and a sound quality assurance system. The *process* of achieving the required outputs and outcomes with the inputs provided will then be mainly a matter for HEIs to deal with (Committee of Inquiry, 2004, p.38; emphasis in the original) .

By way of accountability, the government seeks to monitor such crucial concerns as access, equity, quality and relevance, and efficient use of resources in public HEIs. In this regard, the government steers public HEIs using enabling regulatory frameworks (e.g., the Proclamation, and Strategic Plan Agreement) and system oversight agencies. The Proclamation defines duties and responsibilities of three supervisory bodies, namely the Higher Education Strategic Centre, Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency, and National Pedagogical Resource Centre. The agencies oversee policy development, quality assurance and pedagogical practices in HEIs respectively. For example, under Article 89.5, the Proclamation authorizes the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency to:

[E]nsure that higher education and training offered at any institution are in line with economic, social and other relevant policies of the country.

Another important steering mechanism of the government is the strategic plan agreement. As provided under Articles 62 & 65 of the Proclamation, the government periodically commits to a Strategic Plan Agreement with public HEIs on areas of strategic goals and institutional priorities in research and teaching programs. The block grant allocation for the institutions constitutes the Agreement. It is noteworthy that the funding formula in Ethiopia is an exemplary expression of the Bank's 'performance-based budgeting' in the HE.

However, it should be stated that institutional autonomy in Ethiopia is partial and the steering role of the state has been hampered by organizational weaknesses. For example, public universities have little or no control over student admission at the undergraduate level; and top members of the university governance body are usually members of the ruling party. Their appointment is seen by many observers as an expression direct political control, and hence they can hardly be truly autonomous in their decisions. In addition, a research report shows that the government and its system of oversight agencies are insufficiently prepared to ensure efficiency, including the ability of the allocated funding to produce the required labour force for the economy and other social needs (Committee of Inquiry, 2004).

In conclusion, I would like to bring three points into focus. Firstly, the optimism about the knowledge-based economic growth discourse has fuelled the extensive expansion of the HE subsystem in Ethiopia. The weight of public benefits of HE in terms of externalities (e.g., its effect on economic growth through technological innovation and increased productivity of workers) has synergized efforts of donors and the government towards HE development. This move is crucial because, at least in social services, the neoliberal market rationality principle is insufficient or problematic, and HE could not be fully placed in the market.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that in some aspects, the Government of Ethiopia has been selective in endorsing the WB's prescriptions. The WB has recommended to the government to progressively reduce the rate of enrolment at a financially manageable level with rising per student expenditure (World Bank, 2004a). However, the ongoing unfettered expansion of the HE subsystem makes public spending unsustainable (World Bank, 2005a). Funding has not kept pace with the exponential increase in the rate of enrolment. As we saw in Chapter 4 the per student expenditure dropped steeply (from US\$4600 in 1968/69 to US\$3,300 in 1972 and then drastically declined to US\$1,980 in 1993 and US\$700 in 2004/05) (Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, 1972; Molla, 2010; Wagaw, 1990), and this has significantly undermined quality assurance efforts. In its latest education sector review for the country, the Bank has recommended the government revisit its expansion model (World Bank, 2005a). On their failure to replace the unregulated expansion with "strategically managed expansion", the WB warns that governments of SSA would inevitably face:

further declines in educational quality, an overproduction of graduates in relation to the absorptive capacity of the labor market, consequent high unemployment among graduates, and associated risks of political instability,

which will increase the difficulties of generating economic growth (World Bank, 2009, p.xxviii).

Likewise, politically, the government is sensitive and rigid. Despite its willingness to embrace most of the prescriptions in the reform process, it did not subscribe to the recommendations of the WB policy researchers (World Bank, 2003b) and the task force on governance, leadership and management of the HE subsystem of Ethiopia (Committee of Inquiry, 2004) regarding the need for appointing independent and qualified professionals at the top governance structure of public HEIs. On the contrary, the government tightens its fist by appointing key members of the ruling party as chairpersons of University Board on the pretext that the government has the right to closely monitor the institutions as long as they are dependent on the public purse. Critics argue that placing the universities under party loyalties is one way of ensuring the total subjugation of the institutions and silencing critical voices and potential dissent. This is a typical example of how political tradition and the economic situation of a country define the power relations between the state and HE.

Finally, as the foregoing discussion shows, the WB has (a) influenced the course of HE policy reform in Ethiopia through its discursive instruments and technical assistance, and (b) financed the implementation of the reforms through its project funds. However, there is a strong tendency among government officials to distance themselves from the neoliberal policy prescriptions and to downplay the influence of the Bank. A senior government official in the MoE of Ethiopia tended to limit the Bank's role to financial aid.

The WB's involvement aims at giving impetus to the transformation process. It is more of a budgetary support. The Government could use the support in any way it wants (Moso, interview, 18 August 2010).

Asked to comment on the relationship between the government and the WB on restructuring the HE subsystem, another senior government official in the MoE preferred to emphasise his government's ownership of the reforms:

HE reforms in Ethiopia do have Ethiopian premise. We have our own causes. It is part and parcel of the national development plan. We strongly believe that education in general and HE in particular is a key factor in the country's development and transformation. [...] our reforms are Ethiopian both in form and mission (Moha, interview, 23 October 2011).

It should also be noted that this denial of the influence of the WB is not an isolated incident. It is part of the general effort by the current government to distance itself from neoliberal

establishments (Addis Ra'ey, 2009; Zenawi, 2010). A former State Minister for HE has tried to downplay the role of donors in the policy process (Yizengaw, 2006). In his speech at the World Leaders Forum at Columbia University, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (2010) echoed this stated disbelief in neoliberalism:

The crisis [the 2008/09 global economic recession] has shown that neoliberalism has failed not only in the peripheries, as used to be the case, but also in its heartland. The crisis has also shown that those who have rejected it have continued to prosper even during the crisis. The crisis has also speeded up the changing global economic power and further weakened the dominant position neoliberalism has had for decades. Africans have, for the first time in three decades, real alternatives to the orthodoxy. They now have a choice that they have not had for a long time. The fact that Africans have a choice is in and itself fundamentally liberating. [...] Unlike the neoliberal orthodoxy that was imposed on them from outside, the choices they make now are theirs and theirs alone. Just as African are capable of making the wrong choice and missing the boat, they are also capable of making the right choice and capitalizing on the new opportunity created by the global crisis of neoliberalism (Extract from the speech).

One can hardly take his words seriously. While openly criticising neoliberalism both at home and abroad, in practice, as the data in the following Chapter 6 shows, his government still draws nearly a third of its budget from leading neoliberal agents, mainly the WB. Moreover, the on-going land grabbing by transnational companies, the continuing devaluation of the national currency in relation to US dollar (devalued by about 700% under his government), and the expansion of privatization into public services including HE are unmistakable expressions of the government's commitment to the neoliberal reform prescriptions. His government's (frequently mentioned) refusal to subscribe to pressures of the international financial institutions to privatise other key sectors (land, banking, energy, telecommunications etc.) cannot be taken as a genuine resistance to a neoliberal agenda – it should rather be seen as a way of protecting the lifeline of the ruling party as it draws on these sectors for its political and economic interests. Therefore, the regime's recent proclamation of “illiberalism” (Clapham, 2009) is simply a pretension. The political discourse that utterly rejects the influence of neoliberal agents in the public policy process does not match the reality on the ground. Even though it requires a deeper analysis of its own, given the emerging one-party state under Mr. Zenawi, I argue that this denial discourse can be seen as a way of: (a) claiming ownership of the policy agenda and thereby ensuring political legitimacy; (b) avoiding critics of (Western) international human rights agencies regarding the government's poor record on human rights and freedom, through a rhetoric of

distantiation from the Western powers; and (c) justifying excessive political and economic control by the ruling party in the name of a developmental state, a supposed alternative to the neoliberal state.

The denials of senior government officials about the influence of external forces in the reform process can also be explained, in addition to the above internal political interests, by the changing and subtle pathways of influence of the neoliberal agents such as the WB. The following chapter takes this point to further explore instruments and consequences of the Bank's policy influence.

Chapter 6

Pathways of Influence

In the previous chapter, I discussed key policy prescriptions of the WB and major neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the HE reform process of Ethiopia. In this chapter, I present evidence on how the Bank has managed to induce compliance to its policy prescriptions. The chapter has three major sections. The first section briefly highlights governance instruments of IOs in their interaction with governments of member countries. The second and third sections respectively present financial aid and knowledge aid as the two major categories of pathways of influence of the WB. The third section also highlights dimensions of the knowledge aid project of the Bank and its undesired consequences.

The key findings to emerge from my analysis in this chapter are: (i) the WB has used its financial resources and knowledge power as regulatory instruments to influence the HE policy process in Ethiopia; and (ii) the knowledge aid of the Bank – delivered through policy advice, sector review, policy studies, thematic analysis, and expert meetings – has dysfunctional discursive effects, in the sense that it has made policymakers commit to a false optimism on the possibility of building a knowledge economy in an agrarian Ethiopia, and that it has weakened knowledge production capacity of the nation.

6.1 Regulatory Instruments of International Organizations

In creating IOs such as the WB, nation-states cede a considerable part of their power in order to put agents in charge of certain tasks (Moutsios, 2009). A sociological analysis of the nature and functioning of regional and international organizations shows that these IOs' ability to make nation-states do what they otherwise would not do stems from their rational-legal, delegated, and expert authority (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 2004, 2005). IOs are complicated bureaucracies, a feature which enables them to carry out their tasks effectively. However, the bureaucracies (technocratic characters) are not sufficient; rational and impersonal qualities are equally important.

IOs cannot simply say, ‘we are bureaucracies; do what we say’. To be authoritative, ergo powerful, they must be seen to serve some valued and legitimate social purpose, and, further, they must be seen to serve that purpose in an impartial and technocratic way using their impersonal rules. The authority of IOs, and bureaucracies generally, therefore, lies in their ability to present themselves as impersonal and neutral – as not exercising power but instead serving the others (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p.21).

In essence, IOs are supposed to represent the collective will of their members, and hence embody and protect some widely shared values and norms, and use the delegated power to ensure that these principles are conferred and implemented. The shared principles coupled with their rational-legal standing give them moral authority to act with neutrality, impartiality and objectivity (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). By virtue of their power, IOs have constitutive and regulative functions or effects. Their constitutive effects manifest in their “ability to create, define, and map social reality” (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, pp.30-31). In a policy arena, their constitutive function includes defining a problem to be solved and creating actors to solve the problem – setting and legitimating policy agenda. In this way, IOs produce social relations that require new regulations and thereby constitute global governance. Also, IOs have influential regulative effects in the sense that they make use of their normative capacities (mainly their delegated authority), and their financial resources and expertise to directly or indirectly shape the behaviour and action of governments of member countries. They use different instruments including persuasion and teaching through “best practices,” material support and sanctions, rhetoric and “name and shame” tactics (Barnett & Finnemore, 2005, pp.175-180). In other words, IOs assume the mission of spreading and enforcing rules, and shaping the behaviour of member states and non-state actors in line with their normative views of global values and norms.

Within a policy process, IOs employ a combination of instruments and resources to induce their values and priorities. Leuze, Martens, & Rusconi (2008) and Jakobi (2009), following Jacobson (1979), identify what they call *IO governance instruments* as being constituted of discursive dissemination (establishing ideas on national political agenda), standard setting (prescribing behaviour), financial means, coordinative activities (executive surveillance), and technical assistance (e.g. expert advice). Similarly, Dale (1999) labels the five mechanisms of external effect on national education systems as harmonization, dissemination, standardization, installing interdependence, and imposition. The Bologna Process of the EU and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the OECD are examples of the roles of international and regional organizations in setting a common agenda for the

harmonization of educational systems, and the dissemination of knowledge and good practices in education respectively (Dale, 1999). Without this backdrop, one can hardly grasp, for instance, why PISA has become a vital reference in educational reforms of member countries who cannot ignore evidence-based research (comparison of performance data) provided by such a ‘rational’ transnational organization as the OECD. In other words, IOs make up the world they say they are reflecting; and the influence of PISA as well as the Bologna Process is the expression of the power effect of discourse as applied by regional and international agencies.

These categories and typologies are developed in the context of the European area of education policymaking, and are limited to influences of the EU and the OECD on education policy fields of member states. As such, the categories are insufficient to explain the interaction of the WB with aid-recipient governments in Africa. Therefore, drawing on the work of Dale (1999, 2000), Leuze *et al.* (2008), Jakobi (2009), Samoff (1992, 2007), and Samoff and Carrol (2004), I distinguish two broad instruments of policy influence and imposition: *financial aid* and *knowledge aid*. The two pathways of influence are discussed here in relation to the WB’s critical role in the Ethiopian HE policy reform in the last ten years.

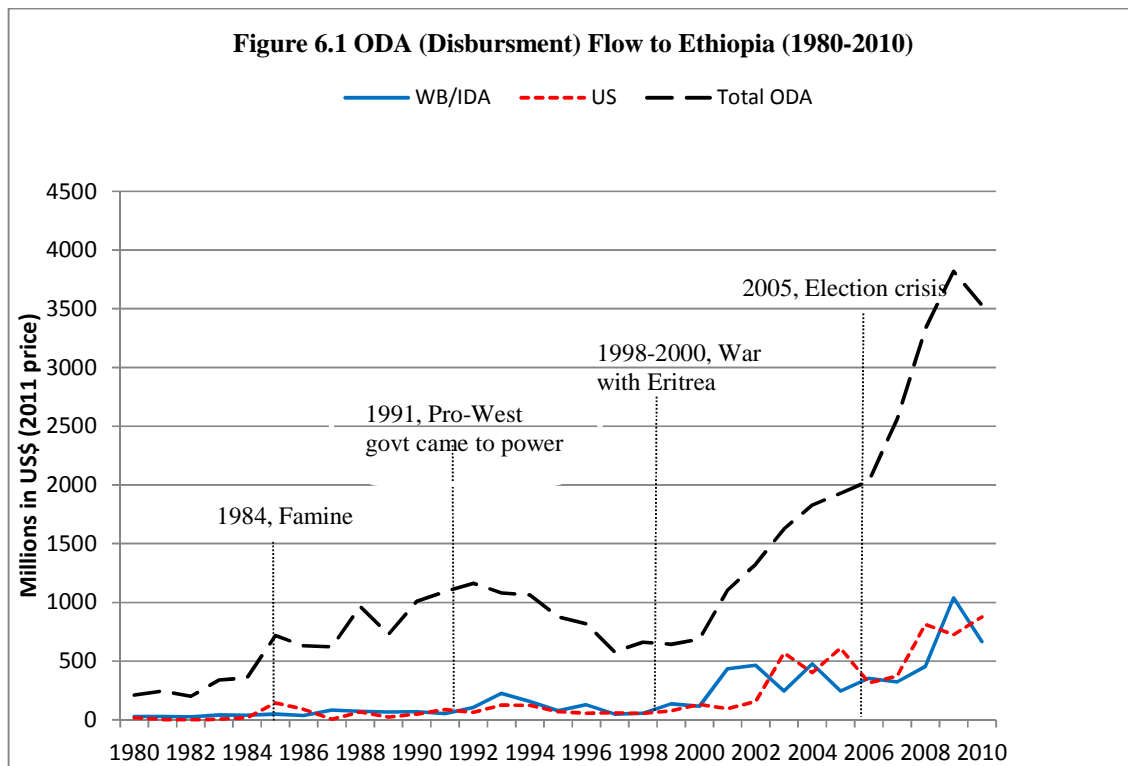
6.2 Financial Aid

Ethiopia is one of the top beneficiaries of aid from Development Assistance Committee (DAC)¹⁵ countries, multilateral agencies (e.g., the WB), and non-DAC donors. Data from the OECD’s international aid statistics shows that in 2008 Ethiopia was the third top development aid recipient in the world, after Iraq and Afghanistan. In terms of the total official development assistance (ODA) flow, there has been a significant increase in the last ten years. From 2001 to 2008, the average annual aid flow was US\$ 1.9 billion per year; and in the 2009 fiscal year, the total development aid flow amounted over US\$ 3.8 billion, which accounted about 63% of the government budget in that year (OECD’s aid database; World

¹⁵ The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) comprises of 23 economically advanced countries of the world: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Among the non-DAC donors are China, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Bank, 2010, p.410) (see Figure 6.1 below). Following the international commitment towards the achievement of the MDGs and the poverty reduction initiatives, official development assistance from DAC member countries and multilateral agencies has been scaled-up significantly. A recent study by Mavrotas and McGillivray (2009) shows that bilateral ODA flow rose from US\$69 billion in 2003 to US\$107 billion in 2005, and it is expected to reach more than US\$160 billion by 2015.

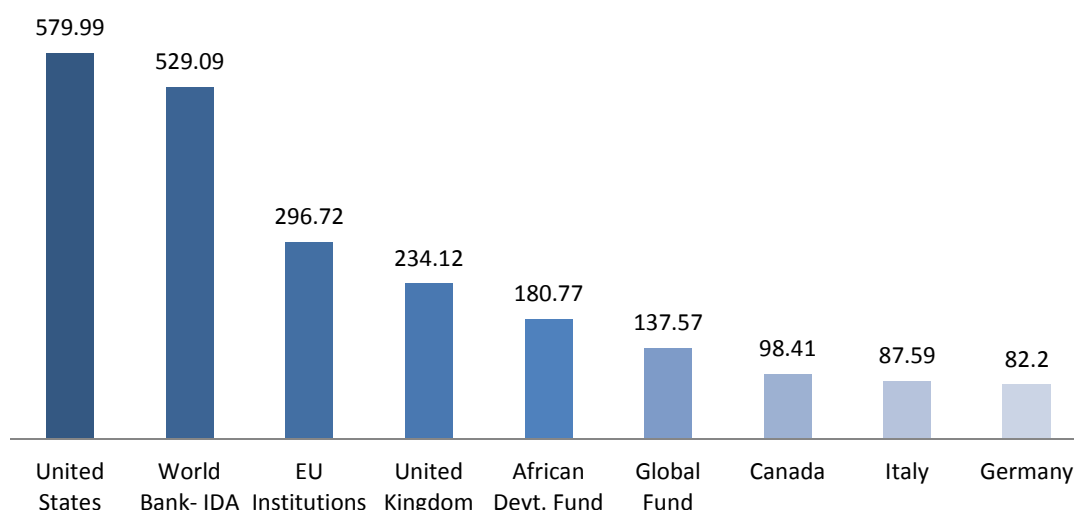
Financial investment by the WB is the most visible and concrete form of influence. As highlighted in Chapter 4, a country's eligibility for IDA's concessional credits and grants depend on "its poverty and its lack of creditworthiness for market-based borrowing, from both commercial sources and from IBRD" (IDA, 2001, p.1); and a country's relative poverty is defined as Gross National Income (GNI) per capita below an established threshold which is updated annually, (in the fiscal year 2012: US\$1175) (IDA, 2012). At present, 39 SSA countries are eligible for regular grants and concessional loans with a maximum of 40 years maturity period, on regular terms (World Bank, 2007a). The Bank uses two key channels of financial aid: investment loans for institutional building and social development programs (75-80% of the total loan), and development policy loans for sector-wide structural reforms (25-20% of the total loan) (World Bank, 2007a). A large part of educational aid of the Bank comes in the form of Investment Loans: Adaptable Program Loan, Financial Intermediary Loan, Emergency Recovery Loan, Sector Investment and Maintenance Loan, Specific Investment Loan, Learning and Innovation Loan, and Technical Assistance Loan. Loan repayment for the WB starts five years after the close of the project on a semi-annual basis (the first day of September and March) with a ten year grace period. The borrower pays 1% of the principal per instalment for the first ten years; and 2% of the principal per instalment in the next twenty years (World Bank, Database 4).



Source: Computed based on data from OECD's *Query Wizard for International Development Statistics*.

With less than US\$400 per capita income, Ethiopia is one of the eligible countries for WB's concessional loans and grants. In the last five years, while more than half of the bilateral aid comes from the US government, the WB is the top multilateral donor to Ethiopia (see Figure 6.2 below). In 2009, about 27% of the total aid came from the Bank. Recently released evidence from the WB (World Bank, Database 3) also reveals that in the 2011 fiscal year, Ethiopia was the top IDA borrower in Africa; and it ranked fifth world-wide after Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Vietnam. Even though Ethiopia, as a beneficiary of the debt reduction of the highly-indebted poor countries (HIPC's) initiative, managed to reduce its debt from US\$3.4 billion in 2005 to US\$0.55 billion in 2006, the debt has been growing fast since then to reach over US\$4.7 billion in August 2012 (World Bank, Database 1).

**Figure 6.2 Top Nine Donors to Ethiopia (5-year Average ODA Disbursement, 2005-2009)
(Millions in US\$, 2011 Price)**



Source: Computed based on data from *OECD StatExtracts* - Creditor Reporting System.¹⁶

It is also important to note that in Ethiopia the pattern and amount of ODA flow has been significantly affected by the socio-political situation of the country (see Figure 6.1). Generally, Ethiopia received very little foreign aid during the military junta, up until the 1984 famine that affected a large part of northern Ethiopia. There was a dramatic increase in development aid with the coming into power of the existing pro-West government in 1991. In the late 1990s, due to the Ethio-Eritrean border war, aid significantly declined, as a way of exerting pressure to stop the war. Then in the wake of 9/11, the government of Mr. Zenawi became a key ally in the global ‘war on terror’; and this, coupled with the poverty alleviation movement and commitment to the MDGs, resulted in a significant increase in the development aid from multilateral and bilateral agencies – the WB and the government of the US being the two key ‘development partners’. With the exception of a slight decrease in reaction to the 2005 election crisis, ODA flow to Ethiopia constantly increased to reach its height of US\$3.8 billion in 2009, then to marginally drop to US\$3.5 billion in 2010.

¹⁶ Up to date data on the international development aid flow database by sector, source and recipient can be accessed at <http://stats.oecd.org/>

When it comes to education, the WB is the largest external financial source for educational expenditure in developing countries in general and in the SSA region in particular (Jones, 2007). As is shown in Table 6.1 below, in the last twenty years (1990-2010), the WB committed a total of nearly US\$42 billion for education; and out of this, the Bank lent about US\$8.48 billion (more than 20% of the total) for education projects with HE components. In 2010, the total WB financial commitment for education reached at US\$5.04 billion; and the share of HE grew in a record amount of US\$835 million. In the last twenty years, the SSA region received about US\$1.22 billion funding for tertiary education development – with an average annual lending of US\$61 million. The Bank’s project database also shows that the region has received more than 16% of the Bank’s commitment to HE in the last ten years.

Table 6.1 WB Lending with the Share of the Education Sector, 1990-2010 (Millions in US\$)

Year	Total lending	Lending for education		Lending for tertiary education	
		Amount	% (of total)	Amount	% (of edu.)
1990	20,702	1,404	6.78	552	39.32
1991	22,686	2,036	8.97	725	35.61
1992	21,706	1,332	6.14	516	38.74
1993	23,696	1,854	7.82	480	25.89
1994	20,863	1,746	8.37	430	24.63
1995	22,374	2,143	9.58	195	9.10
1996	21,263	1,720	8.09	482	28.02
1997	21,157	1,037	4.90	456	43.97
1998	28,589	2,821	9.87	658	23.33
1999	29,144	1,487	5.10	562	37.79
2000	15,276	728	4.77	98	13.46
2001	17,251	1,095	6.35	41	3.74
2002	19,519	1,385	7.10	268	19.35
2003	18,513	2,349	12.69	524	22.31
2004	20,080	1,684	8.39	62	3.68
2005	22,307	1,951	8.75	361	18.50
2006	23,641	1,991	8.42	263	13.21
2007	24,696	2,022	8.19	260	12.86
2008	24,702	1,927	7.80	499	25.90
2009	46,906	3,822	8.15	208	5.44
2010	58,747	5,040	8.58	835	16.57

Source: Computed based on data from WB publications (World Bank, 2007a, 2011b) and website resources¹⁷

¹⁷ Detailed data on WB lending by sector and theme can be accessed at the project database specified above.

In fact, the commitment of the WB to revitalise HE in LICs is not well reflected in its funding pattern. As shown in Table 6.1, while the total share of funding for the education sector grew from around \$1.4 billion (6.8%) in 1990 to \$5 billion (8.6%) in 2010, the share of the HE subsector showed only a marginal increase in the same period (from \$552 million in 1990 to \$835 million in 2010). This partly justifies the importance of understanding the non-financial aspect of the Bank's role in HE reform and expansion.

In Ethiopia, the WB's major areas of involvement include health, education, agriculture, hydro-electric power, and transport. In five years (2007-2010), as the OECD's aid database shows, the WB covered 45.6% (US\$50.87 million) of the total multilateral educational development aid disbursed to Ethiopia, and 90.7% (US\$18.44 million) of the funding specified for HE. In the last ten years, the Bank had financed a general education project with HE component (Education Sector Development Project, 1998-2004), and a HE project (Post-Secondary Education Project, 2005-2009). In the first project the Bank allocated US\$100 million and supported the Government's HE expansion program. For the second project the Bank committed US\$40 million. The key themes of the project were the knowledge economy and human resource development. The Post-Secondary Education Project mainly aimed at implementing the HE reforms and supporting the expansion program. Using the financing window of the project, called an Institutional Development Grant, the WB channelled a large sum of money into the government's block grant allocation to public universities. The window was mainly used to support the government's implementation of a block grant budgeting system and the cost-sharing scheme, and aims at helping the government off-set the financial burden imposed by the exponentially growing enrolment rate of the subsystem. Through the Development and Innovation Fund (DIF) window of the same project, the WB sought to support efforts of the government toward improving the quality and relevance of education through establishing new academic programs, updating the curricula, and strengthening quality assurance. It aimed at improving the nation's human resource capacity.

At this point, it is vital to note that the amount and forms of assistance depend on the political situation and the willingness of governments to accept "the conditions that international lenders imposed in return for their assistance" (Stiglitz, 2002, p.9). In this regard,

conditionalities have been “a permanent part of Bank lending,” and they have been instrumental in imposing policies, including the “faulty” ones (Heyneman, 2003, p.331). As highlighted in Section 4.4, the Bank’s financial and non-financial aid to HE in LICs is determined based on two key criteria: (a) the need to reform, and (b) the willingness to reform (World Bank, 2002a). That is to say, the involvement of the Bank depends on the gravity of the problem that necessitates reform, and the political commitment of a government to accept and implement reform prescriptions (or ‘policy options’, as the Bank prefers to call them). In practice, the need to reform is a result of an intentional construction of a policy problem by the Bank. In its involvements in national education sectors, the WB is proactive, not reactive – it contacts aid-recipient governments with packages of program loans and policy initiatives (Torres, 2009). It commissions sector reviews and produces analytical works to show problems of a particular sector, and outlines strategies to address them. Most often, it also indicates its interest to approve project or program funding if necessary. Against this backdrop, poor governments in Africa have little reason not to show willingness to reform. In other words, the WB uses its knowledge power to initiate interest for reform and uses its financial power to implement the required reform in those countries. This supports what Naomi Klein (2007) underscores in *The Shock Doctrine*: there should be a reasonable ‘shock’ coupled with obedience of the aid-seeker as a necessary condition to instill neoliberal ideals into national public services. According to Klein (2007), neoliberal agents such as the WB take advantage of extraordinary conditions (e.g., deep economic crises, authoritarian regimes and natural disasters) to induce their agenda into aid-recipient governments.

The WB’s strategy of policy imposition has changed over time. Citing poor records of conditionalities in funding HE in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal, the WB claims to have adopted a new instrument called the “competitively accessed funding mechanism” (World Bank, 2004b). Essentially, the practice remains the same: aid-recipient governments should accept policy prescriptions (in the case of Ethiopia, for example, the introduction of cost-sharing, privatization of HE, strategic plan agreement, etc.) to competitively access the financial and non-financial assistance of the Bank. In this regard, it can be argued that the loans and grants are policy instruments by which the Bank ensures that governments behave in the way it wishes them to behave. The Ethiopian case is no exception. The WB used its Post-Secondary Education Project (2005-2009) to encourage the government to implement reforms related to institutional diversification, the funding formula, and quality and relevance

assurance efforts. The government had to accept these reform prescriptions before the Bank approved the much needed funding for the project.

In all its multiple identities – as a bank, a development agency, and a development research institute (Harrison, 2004) – the WB influences education policy processes in different forms: through funding projects and providing knowledge-based services, including policy consultancy and sector reviews. The following section focuses on the non-lending aspect of the Bank’s involvement in the Ethiopian HE subsystem.

6.3 ‘Knowledge Aid’

In order to understand the use of knowledge as an instrument of regulation, it is necessary to define what kind of knowledge is policy knowledge. A sound policy decision requires coherently organized evidence on the problem to be addressed and alternative strategies to be considered. Here, knowledge is broadly defined as a set of justifiable (by logic or evidence) ideas and information about things, events, or phenomena (Torres, 2009). It is possible to argue that a policy process is always informed by some sort of knowledge: research findings, personal experiences of policy actors involved, and information on public attitude (e.g. through media and public discussion). In the present discussion, to be more specific, knowledge for policy refers to *an expert knowledge gained in formal training or acquired through research and experience, and that is applied in policymaking and implementation*. In the HE policy processes, it may mean knowledge and understanding on theories and desirable practices of HE (e.g., a set of particular theoretical paradigms that relate HE to economic development efforts); and/or research findings on challenges HEIs face, possible changes required for improvement, and instruments and actors of change.

In the global education policy field, IOs produce and disseminate a coherent set of policy agenda or “globalized policy discourses” to influence education policy directions of member countries (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). The discursive resource of IOs is derived from their bureaucracies and expert authority that enable them to deploy “socially recognized relevant knowledge to create rules that determine how goals will be pursued” (Barnet & Finnermore, 1999, p.707). Knowledge-based instruments of regulation, including technical assistance and discursive dissemination, are both knowledge-based (drawing on knowledge) and knowledge-oriented (producing knowledge) (van Zanten, 2006, 2008). They may exist in the form of

research findings on policy and practice in HE institutions and subsystems, expert advisory services, documentations of good practices in the field, statistical data and performance indicators on HE institutions and subsystems, and information and data communicated in expert meetings and thematic conferences. A closer analysis of these knowledge-based tools of policy regulation show that they carry a specific world view of policy actors and hence they “can be interpreted as a particular, temporarily limited, and politically oriented set of beliefs concerning the legitimate policy in a given domain” (Pons & van Zanten, 2007, P.123). Through maintaining a particular pattern and continuity in framing policy issues across different time and localities, the organisations establish a discourse that carries their ideological dispositions, and legitimates particular issues and agents over others. Hence, to understand the regulatory role of knowledge through policy tools, it is necessary to comprehend the world views and assumptions of the agents that produce and disseminate knowledge to influence the process.

The process of public policymaking includes defining a problem, setting goals, outlining alternatives, identifying actors, and implementing an agenda and strategies authoritatively chosen from the alternatives. As such, national education policy-making consists of both policy (goals and instruments) and politics (decision-making processes and policy actors) (Leuze *et al.*, 2008). Regulation refers to direct or indirect involvement in one or more of these major activities in a particular policy field, whether national or local; and knowledge can be an instrument of regulation in a sense that it can be used to influence the behavior of policy actors through framing problems and creating ideas. Hence, the influence of IOs is felt both at the level of policy and in the political dimensions of the process, through funding commissioned task forces for policy study and expert meetings, and direct agenda-setting. This is related to what Ozga conceptualises as “governing knowledge” – “the ways in which knowledge production and use is being governed (through steering and funding) and the ways in which that knowledge is increasingly used as a governing resource” (2008, p.261).

According to Foucault (1980), knowledge embodies power, and control of knowledge is instrumental in enacting power. As such, knowledge and governance are interdependent: “Knowledge is (governing) power, and governance steers knowledge” (Ozga, 2008, p.262). In other words, there is a power that comes with possessing knowledge. This power can be used to further monopolise knowledge, and to control and restrict the production and dissemination of knowledge by others, including actors in the national knowledge regimes. On the one hand, knowledge lends authority and legitimacy to a certain form of discourse that

structures relations of power; and on the other, codification of practice and the production of valid knowledge that informs policy is defined by power, be it financial or symbolic (Boswell, 2009). Hence, the relationship between policy and knowledge is an expression of the political use of knowledge. To illustrate, in the policy process, debates over particular strategies and goals are power struggles to decide which knowledge/evidence is the ‘truth’ and hence legitimate to shape decisions. In the case of the Ethiopian HE policy reform, the dialectic of knowledge and power is expressed by the exclusive domination of the WB in the form of sector reviews and expert consultancy.

In the context of the role of IOs in producing social relations, power can be defined as the capacity to make things happen (power to), and make others do things (power over) (Lukes, 2005). As such, policy knowledge as a form of power is a way of getting governments to do what they otherwise might not have done. According to Lukes (2005), power is more effective the less visible it is to the consciousness of actors. The knowledge aid project of the WB seems to fit this principle of power well – it is less visible but highly influential. The WB uses knowledge as an instrument of regulation when it exercises its agenda setting power through what it misleadingly calls “knowledge sharing” and “analytical and advisory activities” (World Bank, 2002a, 2007a). It easily converts its financial capacity and expertise into what Pierre Bourdieu (1989) calls symbolic power. According to Bourdieu (1989, p.23):

Symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. [...] it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition.

The symbolic capital it has acquired in the form of legitimacy (as a special agency of the UN), and of recognition of its financial capacity and expertise (represented by its policy professionals and extensive field experience) has given the WB a symbolic power which enables it to assume a monopoly over the legitimate naming of a reform agenda and goals in HE reforms in aid-recipient nations.

Even though the WB often states that nations are sovereign and it cannot force them to accept its policy prescriptions (Klees, 2002), in practice, governments in need of funds and expert advice can hardly decline to follow the recommendations of the Bank. In the context of aid-recipient countries, the power of knowledge-based policy regulation lies in its apparently objective (‘evidence-based’) nature and its linkage with funding. The act of regulation as a way of advancing a specific policy agenda is not always a consensual practice. As Dale observes, imposition “is the only mechanism able to compel recipient countries to take on

particular policies and it is the only one that does not need to rely on some form of learning, persuasion or cooperation to bring about its desired changes" (1999, p.15). This has been truer in the LICs of Africa than anywhere else. However, with strong critics of the failure of the use of conditionalities during its strategic adjustment programs (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s, the WB has increasingly relied on its knowledge aid to induce compliance to its neoliberal policy prescriptions (Molla, 2013a, in press a, b). In the following section, I further analyse aspects of the knowledge aid project of the WB as applied in Ethiopia's HE policy reform.

6.3.1 Two Strands of the WB's Knowledge Aid

Arguably, in terms of shaping policy directions and discourses, knowledge-related support of the WB is more influential than its financial aid. This has been partly shown by the pattern of its funding for the HE subsector on Table 6.1 above. Starting from the mid-1990s, the Bank has underscored the pivotal role of knowledge for economic growth and poverty reduction. In October 1996, the WB declared that it would become a "knowledge bank". In that year, its former president, James Wolfensohn, launched the concept of a knowledge bank with the argument that "we don't have much money to combat poverty, so don't come to us for money but for the quality of our advice" (Klees, 2002, p.466). Mr. Wolfenson was also reported to have proclaimed: "My goal is to make the World Bank the first port of call when people need knowledge about development" (Samoff, 2007, p.61). Accordingly, in an attempt to portray itself as a "dynamic player" in the world of policy ideas and to shore up its global leadership as a "repository" and "diffuser" of knowledge and experience, and as a promoter of a knowledge economy (Jones, 2006, 2007), the Bank has introduced the following new programs: Knowledge for Development (K4D), Knowledge Assessment Methodology (KAM), and Skills & Innovation Policy (SIP) (World Bank, 2007a).

By redefining itself as a "knowledge bank" that seeks to produce, disseminate and share knowledge as part of its development assistance for the developing world, the WB reintroduces the *knowledge aid* project as part of its broad development strategy. In one of its major HE policy reports, the WB asserts the following agenda.

Under the right circumstances, the Bank may play a catalytic role by encouraging and facilitating the policy dialogue on tertiary education reforms. This can often be accomplished through pre-emptive information

sharing and analytical work in support of national dialogue and goal-setting efforts, as well as through project preparation activities aimed at building stakeholder consensus during the project concept and appraisal phases (World Bank, 2002a, p.xxvi).

In its Education Sector Strategy Update (World Bank, 2005b), the WB clearly states essential elements of its knowledge aid project at a national level as sector-wide analysis, impact evaluation, and the establishment of reliable data on key education indicators. In other words, the WB uses its knowledge power (in the form of commissioned research, data, and experience) to shape national policy directions. It maintains that a sound knowledge base is crucial to informing education policy dialogue at national and regional levels. The Bank employs its expert authority to define problems and policy actors, and coordinate actions; and for this task, it has equipped itself with a cadre of well-trained and experienced professionals.

In the case of Ethiopia, we can identify two dimensions of knowledge aid of the WB: technical assistance and discursive dissemination.

Technical Assistance

International organizations use context-specific instruments of governance to influence the policy direction of member states. In the case of EU and OECD, for example, one dimension of governing through knowledge is the “collection and use of comparative data on performance as a way of controlling and shaping behaviour” (Ozga, 2008, p.266). However, when it comes to aid-dependent countries in SSA, knowledge as an instrument of governance includes the involvement of IOs such as the WB in policy advice and commissioned sector-wide research, which has enabled the Bank to assume a new position of significance in the region. For its extensive experience in the field of education and its highly qualified professional staff, the WB uses knowledge production and diffusion as one of its principal ways of inducing its policy prescriptions (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002).

In Ethiopia, at the centre of WB’s knowledge support is what it refers to as technical assistance, which includes policy consultancy and sector review by experts from the Bank. The WB was actively involved in the formative period of the HE policy reform in Ethiopia. Policy experts from the Bank participated in the process of key policy developments such as the Higher Education Proclamation (No.351/2003) (revised as 650/2009) that sets a legal framework to guide institutional and system-wide changes; and the Education Sector

Development Program (ESDP II, 2002-2005) of the government that outlined the reform directions of the HE subsystem (MoE, 2002a). Furthermore, the WB carries out major sector reviews before approving funds for projects and programs. Prior to its Post-Secondary Education Project (2005-2009), the WB delegated a taskforce led by its own policy experts to investigate the HE subsystem of Ethiopia and inform the ongoing reform process. The result of the study specifies policy elements that the government should endorse (World Bank, 2003b).

The financing aspect of the reform was of particular interest. In addition to its generic policy prescriptions in the above engagements, the WB commissioned expatriate consultants to devise a new HE financing system. First, it assigned Professor Bruce Chapman, the architect of the income-contingent HE charging system first implemented in Australia in 1989, as a leading consultant to investigate the possibilities and modalities of introducing tuition fees in public universities in Ethiopia. In his report, Bruce concludes, “A charge is justified, and the best mechanism is collection depending on a graduate's income” (Bruce, 1999, p.11). Accordingly, the Bank championed the introduction of user fees in HE in Ethiopia, and the issue came to be one of the policy priorities in the reform process in the early 2000s. And, finally, in 2003, following the promulgation of the HE Proclamation (No.351/2003) and the Cost Sharing Regulations (No.91/2003) (FDRE, 2003a) in late 2003, the government introduced a cost-sharing scheme, in which students in public universities enter an obligation to share the cost of their study, to be paid back in the form of service or graduate tax from future earnings. It is a variation of the income-contingent loan system used in Australia, South Africa and other countries.

Second, the WB delegated a Washington-based HE policy organization, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, to “design a workable budgeting formula” for Ethiopia as the government requested “technical guidance from the World Bank” in restructuring the HE subsystem (Merisotis, 2003, p.2). The consultancy report recommended a simplified block grant budgeting system that enables the government to use policy-driven funding priorities to steer public HEIs toward meeting specific goals and requirements. The proposed financing system was also thought to be instrumental in improving the performance of the institutions, and making them more efficient and competitive. The recommendation, that is the block grant budgeting system, has been endorsed by the government and it has now been put into practice in the forms of the Strategic Plan Agreement and Funding Formula.

Discursive Dissemination

In the context of the global education policy field, discursive dissemination refers to the capacity of IOs “to initiate and influence debates on policy issues” (Leuze *et al.*, 2008, p.8). It is about creating and communicating a body of knowledge that informs policy decisions and processes. It is a process of governance through discursive practices that includes setting priorities for policy reform, establishing reference points, and giving examples of best practices from other countries (usually through policy reports and analytical works). Tom Schuller, head of the OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, helpfully summarises major elements of discursive dissemination of policy ideas by IOs as: generating rankings, constructing benchmarks, identifying ‘best practices,’ developing and clarifying concepts, analysing trends, evaluating policy impacts, and setting policy agenda and points of reference for research (Schuller, Jochemes, Moos & van Zanten, 2006, p.58).

The WB uses various discursive devices to impart its neoliberal agenda into policy processes of aid-recipient governments in the region. For example, in relation to HE, the constitutive effect of the WB can be explained in two cases. First, the Bank defines what it assumes to be the problems of HE systems at regional or national levels, and accordingly suggests solutions. Most often, the solutions are informed by its prevailing philosophies, and hardly derive from considerations of local specificities. Ideas disseminated in this way facilitate policy initiatives and changes. In the last ten years, the WB has published a number of analytical works on funding, governance, differentiation, and quality assurance in HE. The Bank uses policy reports and regional conferences and workshops to initiate debates and discussions on key reform issues. To bring about practical changes, the policy reports and thematic discussions and analyses need to be discursively linked to broader socio-economic goals. In essence, in publishing educational performance ranks and comparisons among member countries, regional and international organizations such as the WB, the OECD and the EU assume that poor results in international comparison forces nation-states to improve their education, because poor performance in education is discursively associated with future disadvantages in economic productivity and competitiveness. Therefore, by closely associating education with poverty reduction, the WB has assumed a new level of importance in the education policy field, at least for the SSA countries.

In this regard, since the late 1990s, the WB has participated in a number of significant HE policy processes in Ethiopia. Its role was significant in the preparation of the Education Sector Development Program (MoE, 1998). Most importantly, to prescribe its “policy options” by way of defining the priorities of investment for its Post-Secondary Education Project (2005-2009) in Ethiopia, the Bank studied the HE subsystem and published its report entitled: *Higher Education Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision* (World Bank, 2003b). In all these analytical activities, as shown in Section 5.2 above, the Bank has articulated problems, and outlined its policy prescriptions that significantly shaped the reform process.

Conferences and expert meetings are critical parts of the knowledge aid project of the WB. The Bank uses internationally organized forums as well as regional and national thematic conferences and workshops to disseminate its views on HE policy and practice; and in principle to build consensus on key policy agenda and alternatives among various stakeholders.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that, most often, the terms of reference of thematic conferences and commissioned sector reviews are set by the Bank, and there is little or no space to accommodate emerging, divergent views and perspectives. The following section develops this point further.

6.3.2 Dysfunctional Discursive Effects

In a policy process, particular strategies and interventions are informed by particular narratives (Fairclough, 2003). The WB consistently presents its narratives of what it thinks as important for aid-recipient governments in SSA. It can be argued that the discursive effect of the Bank is in both directly setting the agenda and indirectly shaping guiding principles

¹⁸ In SSA, the list of such events organized in the last nine years include, *Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that work* (23-25 September 2003, Accra, Ghana); *Higher Education for Francophone Africa's Development* (13-15 June 2006, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso); *Cost and Financing of Tertiary Education in Francophone Africa: Training Session* (2-4 July 2007, Cotonou, Benin); *African Union AMCOST (African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology) Meeting* (12 - 16 November 2007, Mombasa, Kenya); *International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa* (15-17 September 2008, Dakar, Senegal); *Capacity Building Workshop on the Licence-Master-Doctorate (LMD) Reform for Francophone Countries* (19-20, Sept 2008, Saint Louis, Senegal); *The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) University Leadership Forum* (23-25 Nov. 2008, Accra, Ghana); *12th General Conference of the Association of African Universities (on Sustainable Development in Africa: The Role of Higher Education)* (May 4-5, 2009, Abuja, Nigeria); *Conference of Ministers of Education in Africa (COMEDAF IV)* (24 – 25 September 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia); *National Conference on World-Class Universities* (27 September 2010, Abuja, Nigeria); and *Workshop on Sustainable Financing and Governance of Regional Initiatives in Higher Education in Africa* (21 March 2011, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso) (see World Bank, Database 5).

through other development arenas. In Ethiopia, the discursive influence of the WB is felt mainly in terms of aligning the guiding principles of education with the meta-narrative of the knowledge-driven development poverty reduction. I argue that these discursive influences of the Bank can be considered constraints in the HE reform process in various ways.

First, the WB's meta-narrative on a knowledge economy has made Ethiopia develop false optimism about the role of HE in national development. The newly publicized development discourse of the Bank – knowledge-intensive development to end poverty – has brought HE into a new level of importance. In the policy documents of the government sampled for this study, it is easy to locate the uptake of Bank's neoliberal discursive constructs about the connection between knowledge and economic development, the role of market forces in the field, and the expected economic returns to investment on education. Among the salient themes and conceptual constructs prevalent in the texts are human capital, knowledge-based economy, knowledge-intensive development, and poverty reduction (FDRE, 2009; MoE, 1998; Committee of Inquiry, 2004). In line with the Bank's long-held ideological disposition, human capital formation is viewed as a panacea for economic problems in Ethiopia. As a result, in a space of ten years (1999-2009) the government has increased the number of public universities from two to 22, with 10 more in the pipeline. A costly public investment has made possible the fastest rate of HE expansion in Africa (Ravishankar, Kello & Tiruneh, 2010). During this period of exponential expansion, the government spent more than 1.5% of its GDP on HE, and this was recorded as one of the eleven top spending in the world, and the highest expenditure in SSA (UIS, 2010).

This is an ambitious move indeed. However, given the HE coverage in Ethiopia, it is crucial not to uncritically endorse the normative knowledge-intensive development rhetoric of the WB. In other words, the knowledge-driven poverty eradication discourse of the WB has misled the government to develop false expectations of the role of higher level knowledge in economic growth, and as a result the public investment has been unfairly skewed to HE at the cost of lower level education. Further, the uncritical endorsement of the knowledge economy discourse assumes that the economic productivity of a worker comes from his or her education. It overlooks such vital factors as political stability, the cultural values of the society and the availability of physical resources.

Secondly, social equity seems to be a trade-off for economic efficiency. The problem of inequality in HE is explained not only in terms of distribution of material resources and

opportunities but also in the form of “disabling constraints”, including domination and oppression that determine patterns of distribution as well as decision-making, division of labour and cultural stereotypes (Young, 1990). Social justice requires a strong notion of equity of opportunity that goes beyond eradicating legal barriers to education and jobs; and it needs active involvement of the government not only in widening access to HE but also addressing structural barriers that constrain successful participation of historically and socially disadvantaged groups of the society. On the other hand, as a neoliberal agent, the WB defines lack of efficiency and poor quality of education as serious challenges of HE subsystems; and it recommends market mechanisms as solutions to the problem. With the emphasis on efficiency through privatization and diversification of sources of income, the problem of social inequality in the subsystem remains a secondary concern. In the context of Ethiopia, this set of circumstances manifests in a repressive gender culture, and an undemocratic political system dominated by selected cultural/ethnic groups, thereby precluding women and geo-politically peripheral ethnic groups from effective participation in HE and other opportunities. Most often inequality is considered to result from a lack of access; and the policies seek to narrow the gaps through preferential admission policies and expansion of the subsystem. As such, it is clear from the policy statements that the efficiency-oriented restructuring and the knowledge-intensive development discourse endorsed by the current government have failed to deeply appreciate the degree of inequality in HE; and to adequately highlight its implications for poverty reduction efforts.

Thirdly, it is equally important to question whose values and accounts are counted as true, valid and desirable in the policy process. For HE policymakers within the WB, its role in the HE reform process of aid-recipient governments is no more than a facilitation of policy changes (Hopper, Samli & Bassett, 2008; Samli & Bassett, 2010). More specifically, it is a facilitation of “the cross-fertilization of relevant regional experiences” (World Bank, 2002a, p. xxvii). However, the control of knowledge and other resources by the WB creates a power hierarchy in itself. When such dialogue is eventually attached to critically needed funding, the dialogue can hardly be truly reciprocal. It is merely a one-way persuasion, if not an imposition. As such, in practice, the Bank plays an agenda setting role. Its policy prescription seldom needs consensus. In pushing its reform alternatives to the Government of Ethiopia, the WB forcefully states its position as follows:

Worldwide experience suggests that the absence of any one of these five essential conditions is likely to jeopardize the entire reform undertaking.

The Ministry of Education and its higher education reform implementation team are therefore urged to do all that is in their power to ensure that these essential policy and regulatory requirements are [diversification of revenue sources, formula funding, decentralised governance, etc.] put in place and effectively implemented (World Bank, 2003b, P.81).

In addition, the WB's idea of cross-fertilization of experiences and increased use of expatriate (external non-Ethiopian) policy experts (who have little or no understanding of the local cultural, political and social dynamics), to study national education systems and policies of aid-recipient countries, assumes the transferability of policy knowledge from one setting to the other, and fails to recognize the pivotal role of national specificities. Even though certain technical skills may transcend locality, I would argue knowledge remains largely contextual, and when the knowledge-based instruments of regulation lack contextual relevance, the interaction between policy communities and the community of practice is dysfunctional. This is evident in the gaps between policy promises (as presented in the policy pronouncements of the Bank and the Government of Ethiopia) and policy implementation outcomes, as has been witnessed in Ethiopia. In commenting on the impact of the knowledge-based aid of donors, Kate Ashcroft – who served as a policy consultant during the formative years of the HE reform process in Ethiopia, as a HE management advisor to the Ministry of Education (since 2003), and as the acting director of the Ethiopian Higher Education Strategy Centre (in 2004/2005) – writes:

We have often observed a disconnect between the knowledge and expertise that development workers bring to the situation and the needs and interests of those working permanently in the country. Very often, the ideas are good, the intentions are good, the methods are good, the values are good. But somehow the *results are disappointing* (2011, para.3, emphasis added).

The disappointing results of foreign knowledge aid that Ashcroft refers to can partly be attributed, I argue, to the lack of contextual roots of the policy ideas. The codification of practice is a value laden engagement, and the knowledge produced in this engagement is subjective. Practices are embedded in the history, and cultural and political orientations of a particular system; and codifying them requires local expertise in order to understand and interpret them as they emerge. Without the involvement of local knowledge institutions, externally imposed knowledge and expertise lack “enough conversant historical analysis of the social context of education, the political dynamics, or issues of power” (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002, p.439).

The WB recommends that LICs promote local knowledge creation (World Bank, 1999), yet, in practice, by “local knowledge,” it seems to refer to local production of foreign knowledge. Even though a large part of the Bank’s policy knowledge for the borrowing countries, such as Ethiopia, is produced within national boundaries, the knowledge is far from being local as it is produced by WB staffers or other expatriate commissioned experts; and rarely incorporates the contributions of the national knowledge regime. The absence of local knowledge about local challenges is a result of intentional negligence because, as Santos rightly puts it, “what does not exist is in fact actively produced as non-existent” (2004, p. 15) through rendering it as invisible, irrelevant and unintelligible.

Fourthly, the discursive instruments of the WB are, often, simply soft means of policy imposition and undermine the possibility of alternative views and options. The sector reviews, policy reports and other analytical works are symbolic instruments to legitimatise its predefined policy choices. Most often, to study education systems and policies in Africa, the Bank commissions expatriate experts who basically share its values and assumptions. Even when local experts are involved in such research projects, the terms of reference, benchmarks and indicators are set by the WB and they tend to simply reaffirm the official views and positions of the WB, and have little effect in presenting alternative views on the question in hand. As Samoff correctly observes, in explicating how the WB regulates knowledge production and use in the SSA:

[T]he research bears the strong imprint of those who have commissioned it. Their assumptions, understandings, and expectations are embedded in the framing questions and the detailed terms of reference. This combination of funding and research constitutes a financial-intellectual complex that is difficult to challenge or deflect (2005, p.20).

As a result, not surprisingly, findings and recommendations of commissioned knowledge production projects, at different levels and localities, conform to the WB’s meta-narratives of market rationality and human capital formation. They remain instruments to justify and legitimise the Bank’s policy prescription. Therefore, I argue that understanding the Bank’s use of knowledge as an instrument of policy regulation necessitates questioning the credibility of evidence and the logical foundations on which the policy narratives rest, paying attention to the beliefs and assumptions constituting the policy menu, and challenging self-contradictions within the narratives.

Finally, at a practical level, knowledge aid of the WB has weakened the ‘knowledge regime’ of the nation. Knowledge regime refers to the “national ways of dealing with knowledge in public policy” (Mangez, 2008, p.111). It can be broadly understood as the multiplicity and diversity of local knowledge actors, and the possibility of their convergence and configuration as well as their pattern of relations (e.g., struggles, partnerships and networks) to influence policy decisions. In developing countries, such as Ethiopia, independent policy think tanks and professional networks are almost non-existent. Therefore, the task of knowledge production through research is primarily the responsibility of universities. Due to the general narrow political space in Ethiopia, and the government’s intolerance towards critics, domestic knowledge institutions (e.g., universities) and independent professional networks have been rarely involved in the process.

According to Boswell, the use of knowledge in policy-making depends on two key factors: “the way in which organizations or policymakers derive legitimacy; and the perceived relevance of knowledge as a means of securing this legitimacy” (2009, p.234). In the case of Ethiopia, there is little or no space for open and free public discussion to inform and challenge policy decisions. With the emerging single-party state under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, political legitimacy seems to be less dependent on knowledge-based public action and accountability to electorates. At first, the government used the WB’s support as a way to escape from potentially ‘disruptive dialogue’ with its vocal critics, mainly in the national university, AAU. It relied on expatriates for consultancy and research to push through whatever policy agenda it sought to adopt, without any significant challenge (or consensus) from interest groups, including opposition political parties. Now, when the government has succeeded in silencing the critics, the intellectual resources of the university has already been drained, and it has no option but to continue receiving the much needed technical assistance from the Bank and other ‘development partners’.

As a result, policy knowledge production has been politically controlled, and it mainly remains outside academia and local professional networks. In the last ten years, crucial studies that inform the HE policy reforms were conducted by either WB staff (e.g., Higher Education for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision, 2003) or other expatriate experts and hand-picked non-expert local political loyalists, who had little or no knowledge and experience about the issue at hand (e.g., Higher Education System Overhaul, 2004). Research knowledge produced in HE institutions is rarely used to inform public actions as there is no significant dialogue between local researchers and policymakers (Wondimu, 2003). Hence, even though

lack of national resources for research and publication is an issue, it is important to note that overdependence of the Ethiopian government on knowledge aid from the WB cannot be explained by financial reasons alone. It has a political dimension as well.

In conclusion, in the HE policy reform process in Ethiopia, the Bank used a combination of financial means and expertise to influence the reform agenda and implement them in its *Post-Secondary Education Project* (2005-2009). The non-lending influence of the WB has been implicit but significant. Technical assistance (including policy studies and advisory activities) and discursive dissemination through its policy reports and thematic conferences are not only soft means of policy prescription but also impediments to the knowledge production capacity of the nation.

The WB's pathways of policy influence lack recognition of national specificities of aid-recipient countries. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of ownership of the reform agenda and processes, the government cannot avoid the presence of WB policy consultants and experts. Nor can it afford cuts in financial aid to the HE subsystem. And yet, the global pressure, be it economic competition or policy directive, is not a given: it should be "actively implemented, reproduced, serviced, and financed" by the national actors who may have their own views and perspectives about the proposed policy issue (Sassen, 2000, p.217). Hence, policy prescriptions of the Bank need to be filtered and localised, based on the diverse interests of actors at different levels in the education system.

Inequality in HE is one of the contextual variables that require specific policy provisions. The following chapter aims at explicating how the problem of inequality has been framed in the HE reforms in Ethiopia.

Chapter 7

Equity as a Reform Agenda

Even though much of the restructuring process focused on financial, curricular, and governance matters, one of the major areas of concern of the HE policy reform process in Ethiopia has been addressing the problem of inequality. In this chapter, I analyse relevant policy documents (FDRE, 2009; MoE, 2004b; TGE, 1994) to understand equity policy instruments and targets in HE, explore their limitations, and relate the equity provisions to key neoliberal policy elements endorsed by the government. The chapter has four major sections. The first deals with key equity policy instruments in the HE policy reform in Ethiopia, followed by an analysis of ethnic-based equity policy provisions in the HE subsystem. The third section focuses on gender equity policy instruments. The fourth and final section locates the gender equity provisions within neoliberal policy elements endorsed in reform.

The key findings to emerge from this analysis are: (i) the equity policies in the HE reforms consist of diverse instruments ranging from positive discrimination, to cost-sharing, to placement; (ii) the policies mainly focus on ethnic and gender dimensions of equity; (iii) the instruments are deficient in the sense that they fall short of addressing structural inequalities; and (iv) neoliberal HE policy elements in Ethiopia have both positive and negative gender equity implications and consequences.

7.1 Equity Policy Instruments

Inequalities in a society can be in terms of basic life and health conditions, material and symbolic resources, and/or recognition and respect (Baker *et al.*, 2009; Therborn, 2006). As a symbolic resource, education is cultural capital associated with material resources – access or lack of access to education directly relates to what Goran Therborn calls *existential inequality* that “allocates freedom and unfreedom in the pursuit of personal life projects, rights, and prohibitions to act, and distributes affirmations and denials of recognition and respect” (2006, p.7). Differentials in knowledge and skills are linked with existential inequality because one’s

level of education determines economic and social capital, which again defines the level of freedom, respect and recognition which individuals may possess in society.

According to Therborn (2006), not only are inequalities socially produced and reproduced, they can be reduced and eliminated through social action with the agency of the state. For example, a categorical inequality between men and women may be a function of a systemic arrangement of opportunities and rewards, and collective distributive actions and inactions of the state. In this regard, the discussion here focuses on key policy instruments put in place by the Government of Ethiopia to promote equitable participation in the HE subsystem.

A public policy refers to plans and strategies that contain statements of problems, sets of goals, instruments, and beneficiaries related to a theme in question – for instance, equity in HE. Haddad defines policy in a helpful way as: “An explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions” (1995, p.18). From this perspective, public policy instruments are specific tools used by governments to achieve a desired effect articulated in a plan of action (Bridgman & Davis, 2000; Yokoyama & Meek, 2010). For example, in the Australian context, Bridgman and Davis (2000) identify advocacy, funding, government action, and law as key public policy instruments. In fact, these are essential elements of any public policy process, albeit under different forms and names. In the case of the Ethiopian HE reform process, five major instruments of equity are identified. These are affirmative action, strategic plan agreement, cost-sharing, expansion, and student placement. They are discussed here in brief.

Preferential admission policy is in place as a key instrument of redressing past injustice and current disadvantages. In the national university entrance examination, the **affirmative action** policy provides a slightly lower cut-off point for females and students from ethnic groups in geo-politically peripheral regions. An advantage point is also given to women in academic staff recruitment. As shown in detail in Sections 7.2 & 7.3 below, the provision has constitutional (1995) support and is reflected in most of the relevant national policy documents, including the Education and Training Policy (1994), and the Higher Education Proclamation (No.650/2009). A detailed account of institutional affirmative action policies in selected public universities is presented in Chapter 8.

The **strategic plan agreement** is another instrument that complements the affirmative action admission and recruitment policy. Block grants for public universities are determined based

on a strategic plan agreement. In the agreement, the institutions demonstrate their needs and missions, and through its policy-driven funding priorities, the government steers the universities toward specific national goals, including promoting equity. In addition to issues of efficiency of performance and relevance of programs, the agreement between public HEIs and the government takes social goals of universities into account. For example, the proportion of female student enrolment and graduation, and senior management positions held by women, in a university are among the key variables in the Funding Formula (FDRE, 2009, Article 65.2e; Aschroft, 2004). The incentive funding is important in illustrating efforts since the mid-2000s to encourage public HEIs to work towards achieving equality. A policy advisory body on the Funding Formula of the government outlines public HEIs' share of the incentive funding (which accounts for 10% of the total funding available for the institutions) as follows:

- The incentive fund for the enrolment of disadvantaged students [students with disability, locals of disadvantaged regions, and women] will be awarded to HEIs pro rata on the basis of numbers of disadvantaged students enrolled. Where a student falls into more than one category e.g. female and disabled, they will count for both.
- The incentive fund for graduation will be awarded to HEIs pro rata (on a per student basis) for better graduation rates than the sector average for the previous year in each price group and for disadvantaged students. Where a student falls into more than one category e.g. female and disabled, they will count for both (Aschroft, 2004, p.19).

On the other hand, the WB has propelled national governments into marketizing social services, including education, partly on the ground of fairness. With the massification of the subsystem, if fees and maintenance for HE come from the public purse, it has been argued, the burden would be unbearable for tax-payers who will not benefit directly from the services (World Bank, 2002a, 2003b). Hence, in the context of reduced public spending, greater expansion of the HE subsystem tends to rely on market forces and private investments. In Ethiopia, the **cost-sharing** scheme (as provided under Article 92.1 of the Proclamation) is considered instrumental in mobilizing private funds for the expansion of the subsystem. Mr. Teshome Yizengaw, former State Minister for HE in Ethiopia whose tenure coincides with the formative period of the HE reforms in Ethiopia (2001-2005), states that cost-sharing has been put in place as an equity policy instrument (Yizengaw, 2007). As much as it is a method for the efficient use of public money, cost-sharing also serves equity demands, at least in principle. It enables the State to mobilize resources for the expansion of the subsystem which,

in turn, widens access to HE for historically and socially disadvantaged groups in the society. However, it is noteworthy that increased dependency on the cost-sharing scheme and subsequent reduction in public spending on the HE subsystem may counteract the equity goals as private resources are very limited and cannot support the subsystem sustainably.

At present, the Ethiopian HE subsystem is largely financed by public funds. The likelihood is that this will continue to be so. In answering my question on whether or not the government had any intention to fully integrate the HE subsystem into the market, a senior government official in the MoE commented:

If we relate the idea of market economy to the commodification of education, it is far from being reality in the Ethiopian context. Considering economic status of our society, it would not be affordable for citizens to cover all costs of higher education. If so, only the rich would get access to higher level education and training, which rewards high quality of life while the poor remains at the disadvantageous side. This, in turn, would result in high level of social inequality and injustice. Therefore, it is unrealistic, to say the least, to place public higher education institutions entirely under the market order (Moha, interview, 23 October 2010).

The **expansion** of the HE subsystem is thought to be instrumental in reducing inequality of access. In Ethiopia, in the last ten years, the HE subsystem has expanded considerably. As shown in Section 5.2, the number of public and private HEIs has increased from a half a dozen a decade ago to 70 (MoE, 2000, 2011). A number of new programs have been opened at different levels in various institutions. With ambitious expansion of the HE subsystem, the enrolment rate has increased exponentially (MoE, 2011); and the participation of women in HE has accordingly grown to a record level (see the data presented in Section 7.4 below).

Indeed, physical distribution of HEIs and increased admission to HE has benefited large sections of the society which were formerly unable to access HE by reason of poverty, gender, rurality or other disadvantages. However, expansion does not necessarily reduce educational inequality (Arum, Gamoran & Shavit, 2007). In Ethiopia, the roots of inequality in HE trace back to experiences at primary and secondary education levels. Academic preparedness and entry to and success in HE are significantly affected, among other things, by the socio-economic background of the student. Students from economically better off families go to relatively high-quality private schools, and they are more likely to succeed in the national university entrance examination, and to secure places in highly competitive fields (e.g., medicine, law, technology, computer science, etc.) which have better wage prospects. Thus, I

argue that optimism about the role of expansion, without complementary measures to support successful participation to address inequality, is questionable.

Finally, the **placement** of students in HEIs is another important equity policy instrument. In Ethiopia, on completing two years at an academic preparatory school (Grades 11 and 12) or three years of technical and vocational training, students sit for a national University Entrance Examination. It is the responsibility of the Federal Government to run public university education, including administering the national examination and deciding the passing mark. The key factors for student placement in public universities are availability of places, merit, choice, and equity considerations. As Article 39.6 of the Higher Education Proclamation (No.650/2009) provides, the Federal Government also decides the cut-off points for affirmative action beneficiaries. Hence, it can be argued that the government's placement policy has significant equity implications, in the sense that it deprives HEIs of the possibility of marginalizing students based on their regional (ethnic) origin, gender, disability or any other criteria.

Then the next important question is: who do these equity instruments benefit? Who are the targets of equity in the HE reforms in Ethiopia? In a public policy context, target groups are social groups who are specifically identified as “deserving of particular attention” (Butler & Ferrier, 2000, p.66). The category of policy targets is contingent on particular points in time and specific national political, economic and social contexts. Most often socio-economic background (class), gender, ethnicity and disability are the variables of equity assessment in HE (Clancy, 2010). In the context of Ethiopia, even though inequalities related to disability and economic status are intermittently mentioned, the commonly legitimised categories of inequalities in HE policy provisions are related to ethnic origin and gender. That is, inequalities between historically disadvantaged and advantaged ethnic groups, and between men and women, are central concerns of the reforms. The next two sections respectively deal with ethnicity and gender as targets of equity policies.

7. 2 Ethnic-based Inequality as a Target

As was outlined at the beginning of this thesis, Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Inter-ethnic interaction has been the essence of Ethiopian history and political dynamics. Population movement, power struggles and conquest among different ethnic and

cultural groups are constitutive of the nation. In its long history of statehood, which can be traced back at least to the 5thC BC, Ethiopia has been characterized by hegemonic power of a few ethnic (cultural) groups, and the subjugation of the others (Clapham, 2004; Marcus, 2002). As such, inequalities and repression of one group by the other were (I believe still are) built into its political and economic structures. Throughout the long political history of Ethiopia, the Semitic peoples of ethnic Tigre and Amharic-speaking cultural groups remained dominant forces. In the wake of his remarkable victory over the Italian colonial invasion in 1896, Emperor Menelik II (r.1889 – 1913) continued his military campaigns to subjugate semi-autonomous peoples south, east and south west of the capital and completed the making of modern Ethiopia (Schwab, 1985). Clapham summarises the political dynamics of Imperial Ethiopia in the following way:

The Ethiopian state was quite adept at absorbing people from different groups. There was, however, a hegemonic national culture, derived from the Amhara and to some extent Tigrayan peoples of the northern plateau, association with which was essential for full acceptance into political life. Orthodox Christianity lay at its core, together with the Amharic language [...] The awareness of social injustice, closely linked to ethnicity, that derived from conquest, land alienation and political inequality, then constituted the central challenge to Ethiopian statehood, to which every Ethiopian government has had to devise some form of response (2004, p.51).

Following the 1974 popular revolution that abolished the imperial rule in the country, the military regime, *Derg*, introduced a widely espoused nationalist ideology called *Ityopya Tiqidem* (Ethiopia First) and brought to an end the concentration of power along the lines of ethnic/cultural groups. However, little was done to redress historic injustice; and the effort to benefit disadvantaged ethnic groups through preferential admission to HE was short-lived and intermittent.

After a catastrophic civil war that raged across the country for over two decades, while the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) eventually seceded the northern part of the nation to form Eritrea as an independent state in 1993, the other secessionist ethnic-based rebel groups (including the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, TPLF) changed their minds and formed what is officially called the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF. The Front has been in power ever since it overthrew *Derg* in May 1991. The new Constitution that came into effect in 1995 set up a federal government (officially called the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) with nine regional states and two autonomous city administrations (see Figure 7.1 below). In an unprecedented way, the Constitution represents

Ethiopia merely as the house for a collection of ethnic groups. The Constitution does not recognize the country as a sovereign nation-state. The “nations, nationalities and peoples” (or simply ethnic and cultural groups) in it are rather the sovereign ones; and they are granted the right of self-determination, up to and including secession (FDRE, 1995, Article 39). In other words, ethnic groups constitute the centre of the political discourse and structure of the existing Government of Ethiopia. The current political arrangement (that, in principle, redistributes political power and resources along ethnic lines) is considered to be a necessary response to a historical injustice resulting from the hegemonic power of one group (usually referring to the Amhara) over the rest.

In HE, the government uses two forms of ethnic-based redistribution. The first one is the affirmative action admission policy. The government believes that ethnic origin has a significant role in access to HE. The HE Proclamation (No.650/2009) provides a special admission procedure for disadvantaged groups, including any student who:

completed high school education in a developing region and who is native of the nationality of such region or student from nationality whose participation in higher education is low (Article 33.1).

The justification for the ethnic-based equity arrangements is explained in a comment by the former State Minister for Higher Education who argues:

Students from these disadvantaged regions [e.g., Somali, Afar, Benshangul-Gumuz, and Gambella] have historically been denied of access to education and other socio-economic development infrastructures (Yizengaw, 2007, p.73).

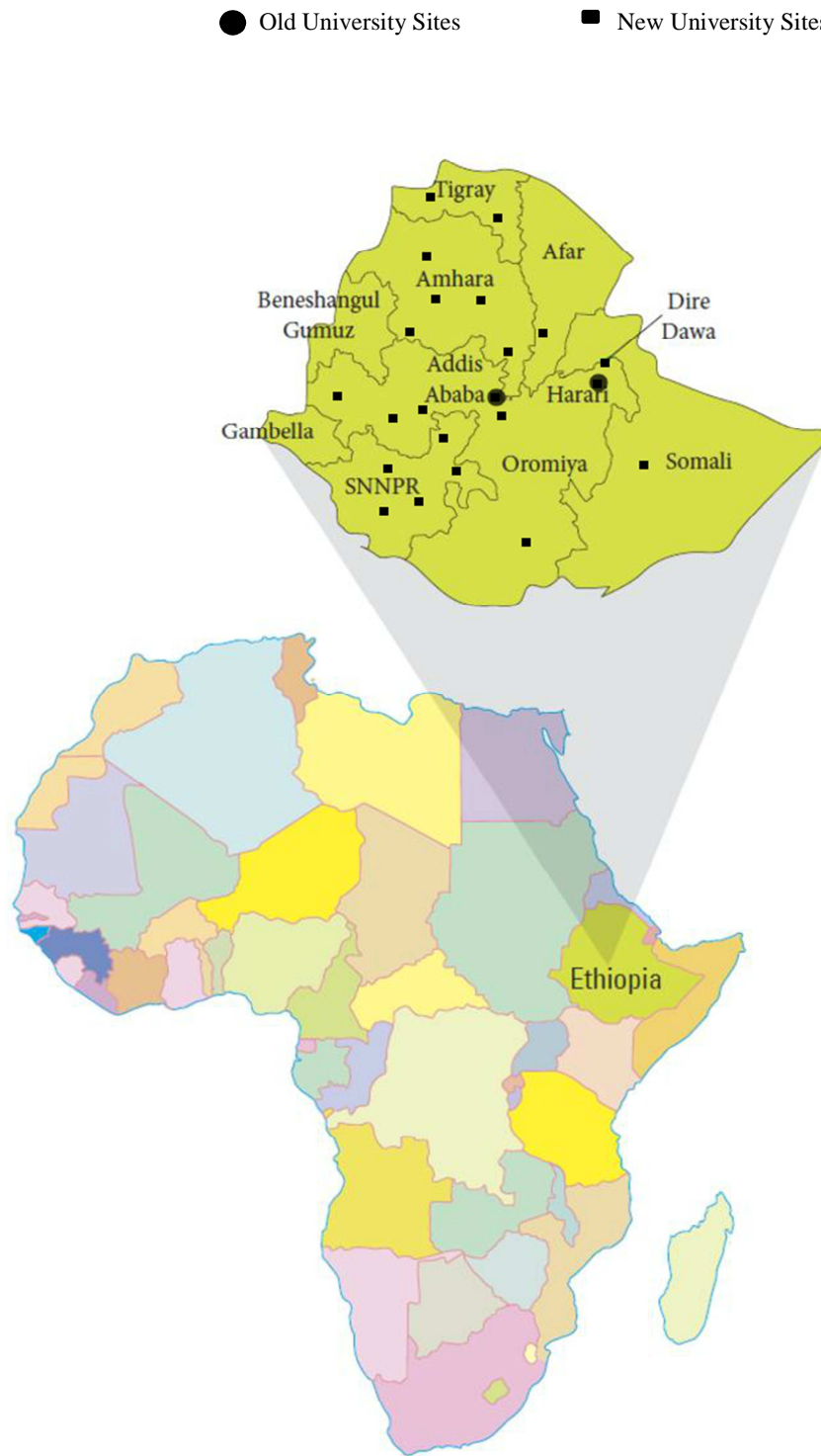
It is noteworthy that with the centrality of group (or collective) rights vis-à-vis individual rights as a guiding principle of its political program, the existing government undermines inequality at an individual level. A simple scenario can be helpful here. As a consequence of prolonged population movements and settlement, mainly before the ethnic-based federation, most of the regional states are constituted of a large number of “non-local communities” from other ethnic groups mainly from the northern and central part of the nation. Hence, there is a possibility that a “non-local student” from a poor farming family may complete primary and secondary education in a public school in the “developing region”. In this case, regardless of his or her ethnic background, the individual student is equally disadvantaged, but is not entitled to the special admission policy.

The second aspect of the ethnic-based redistributive policy has been in the form of equitable distribution of public universities across the regional states that constitute the federal government (Semela, 2011). The political landscape that has prevailed in the country since the early 1990s makes it possible for the government to redistribute resources (both political and economic ones) along ethnic lines in the name of empowering respective ethnic groups and redressing past injustices. Commenting on my question regarding whether an equitable regional distribution of HEIs can serve equity at an individual level, a senior official in the MoE stated:

[...] through achieving equitable regional distribution of higher education institutions, one can at the same time address gender equity or other dimensions of equality concerns (Moso, interview, 18 August 2010).

Nevertheless, in some cases, the establishment of public universities in sparsely populated desert regions might not be a demand-driven commitment; and its equity implications are unclear. For example, opening new universities in the pastoral regions of Afar and Somali, in and of itself, is less likely to reduce inequality of access to HE among the local population. The regions have very low primary and secondary education enrolment and completion rates. As a result, only few students reach university level education. Therefore, the physical presence of the universities in the regions may not have a substantial impact in expanding the opportunity for the local pastoral societies.

Figure 7.1 Political Map of Ethiopia and Regional Distribution of the 22 Public Universities



Source: Marked by the author.

The second major category of inequality in HE is gender. Starting with a brief account of broad gender mainstreaming policies, the next section analyses key gender equity policy provisions and their limitations in addressing structural inequalities in the HE subsystem of Ethiopia.

7.3 Gender as a Key Category of Inequality

As a development issue, gender cuts across all other equity categories in Ethiopia (MoFED, 2002, 2006; MoE, 2002a, 2005a). Hence, policies on gender equity in HE are situated in broad gender mainstreaming commitments and other national gender equity legislative provisions. In the following discussion, to set the context for gender equity related policies analysed in HE, I present key global gender mainstreaming initiatives to which Ethiopia is committed, and other national gender equity arrangements.

7.3.1 Gender Mainstreaming and other Broad National Gender Equity Efforts

It is fair to argue that, in the context of present day Ethiopia, the state is a key source of gender-based support. It provides women with much needed legal and policy instruments, as well as material resources. The major arrangements and steps include commitment to global initiatives on gender mainstreaming, constitutional entitlements, policy and legislative provisions, and establishment of national gender mainstreaming machineries.

In varying degrees, gender inequality is a global reality. As such, it has necessitated global responses. In addition to broad internationally agreed normative instruments and resolutions that benefit women there are specifically gender-oriented global initiatives. It is widely believed that gender-related policies, conventions, forums, and development plans by international organizations have the potential to bring about new arenas of gender relations whereby women can access resources and attain improved positions in society (Connell, 2009; Gordon, 1996; Vickers, 2002).

In this regard, Ethiopia is a signatory of key global initiatives on gender equity, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (1981), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the EFA (1990, 2000), the MDGs (2000), and the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-

first Century (1998). These global initiatives, to different degrees and levels, advocate gender equity in education. In essence, by ratifying the CEDAW Convention on 10 September 1981, the government agreed to promote the principle of equity between men and women, eliminate gender-based prejudicial customaries, and “abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt those that prohibit discrimination against women” in the fields of education, employment and health (ECA, 2009, p.56). Again, the Beijing Declaration underscored the importance of gender mainstreaming at all levels and across all sectors, including education and training (UN, 1996). Both EFA (*Goal 5*) and the MDGs (*Goal 3, Target 4*) seek to eliminate gender disparities in all levels of education no later than 2015 (World Education Forum, 2000; UN, 2000). The World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century (*Article 4*) calls for women’s equal access to high level education, the elimination of stereotypes that hinder women from joining all fields of study in HE, the establishment of Gender Studies to promote gendered knowledge, and the increased participation of women in high level management and decision-making positions within HEIs (UNESCO, 1998). As one of the signatories of the initiatives, Ethiopia is expected to strive to achieve these goals.

As a reflection of its commitment to the global initiatives and political responses to national problems, the government set up legal and policy instruments relevant to gender equity. In this regard, the most significant document is the Constitution (FDRE, 1995). Its provisions on women’s equality are stated under Article 25 (all persons are equal before the law regardless of one’s sex), and Article 35 (women have equal right as men in every aspect, including positive discrimination). The constitutional and legal remedial provisions to which women are entitled are based on the assumption that women have suffered from discrimination for a long period and hence preferential treatment is nothing but ensuring justice, and that such a policy is a critical step to level the playing field for men and women for the future. The Constitution provides:

The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account, women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative action. The purpose of such measure shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions (Article 35.3).

In the wake of the ratification of the Constitution, in her speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (in Beijing), the then Minister of Women’s Affairs Office asserted:

I can proudly say that today we have a sufficient legal framework to assist the protection and promotion of the human rights of Ethiopian women (UN, 1995, para.16).

Within the constitutional framework, other significant developments have been made to support gender equity. In 1993, the government approved the National Policy on Ethiopian Women, with the aim of ensuring women's participation in social services (including education), putting legal instruments in place to protect the rights of women, and eliminating gender related stereotypes and prejudicial perceptions of women (TGE, 1993). Moreover, other relevant policy and legislative instruments – such as the National Population Policy (1993), the Education and Training Policy (1994), the Cultural Policy (1997), and the Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation (No.456/2005), as well as the Federal Family Law and the Criminal Code – have incorporated provisions to ensure the rights of women, to eliminate harmful cultural practices against women, and to redress past disadvantages in terms of access to resources (ECA, 2009). Recently, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has set out a five-year national plan aimed at addressing gender inequality in such key areas as education, reproductive rights, health, poverty, decision-making power, and human rights and violence against women (MoWA, 2006).

To put those legal and policy instruments into effect, the government has established gender mainstreaming national machineries. In this regard, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (previously known as the Women's Affairs Office, 1991-2005) has been the key actor. Gender Mainstreaming is one of the four departments of the Ministry; and the Department is entrusted with ensuring that “government policies, strategies, plans and programs, including government proclamations, address gender issues and follow up their implementations” (ECA, 2009, p.61). Besides this, the Ministry has branches in the form of the Bureau of Women's Affairs in regional states, the Office of Women's Affairs at the local level, and Women's Affairs Departments in various ministries, government agencies, authorities and commissions. At different levels, the offices and departments formulate and implement women-focused projects, and work to address gender issues in government plans and programs. To mention examples, the Women's Affairs Departments in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), and in the MoE respectively have played significant roles in incorporating gender issues in the national development plans and education sector development programs of the government (MoE, 2006; MoFED, 2006). Even so, the Global Gender Gap Report shows that Ethiopia is one of the countries with the

lowest gender parity index (GPI)¹⁹ in education. In 2011, Ethiopia ranked 131st of 135 countries in gender equality in educational attainment (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahid, 2011).

How has the government translated these gender mainstreaming initiatives into policies specific to the HE subsystem? The next discussion tries to answer this question.

7.3.2 Gender Equity Policy Provisions in Higher Education

In Ethiopia, mainly due to repressive gender relations in the society, men and women have an unequal likelihood of participation and successful completion of education. The gender-based norms and power relations in HEIs play significant roles in framing attitudes about abilities and expectations of women and men, and thereby in determining their positions through gender-based distribution of opportunities and roles. The consequence is evidenced through women's underrepresentation and exclusion in the subsystem. With the increased importance of knowledge and skills for better opportunities of individuals and sustainable development of nation-states, inequality in access to and success in HE is politically intolerable. Therefore, in line with the constitutional provision, the government has enacted legislation and ratified policies to promote gender equity in the subsystem.

Particularly in relation to gender equity in HE, the three landmark policy documents are the Education and Training Policy (1994), the revised Higher Education Proclamation (2009), and the Five-Year Strategic Framework for Enhancing Women's Participation in Tertiary Education in Ethiopia (2004).

The Education and Training Policy recognizes that preferential admission should be made available for historically and socially disadvantaged groups of students, including females, learners with disabilities, and ethnic groups of geo-politically peripheral regions of the country. In recognition of past injustice and existing disadvantages, the Education and Training Policy entitles them to a remedial provision, including the affirmative action admission policy that provides slightly lower cut-off points for the target groups.

¹⁹ Gender Parity Index (GPI) refers to the ratio of female to male value of a given indicator. GPI=1 indicates parity between sexes; GPI<1 indicates a disparity in favour of males; GPI>1 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

Special attention will be given to women and to those students who did not get educational opportunities in the preparation, distribution, and use of educational support input (TGE, 1994, Article 3.7.7)

Overall, the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation (No.650/2009) stipulates to:

[P]romote and uphold justice, fairness, and the rule of law (Article 4.7)

The Proclamation (No.650/2009) specifically reaffirms the importance of positive discrimination to redress past injustice:

[...] there shall be special admission procedures for citizens that deserve affirmative action (Article 39.4).

However, the Proclamation does not provide for continuing support to be given to the students admitted on affirmative action. As I demonstrate in Chapter 8, the absence of a national framework on continuing gender equity arrangements in public HEIs has considerably inhibited institutional responses to the cause. Even though the previous version of the Proclamation (No.351/2003, Article 33.1) considered the importance of supporting affirmative action beneficiary students during their stay in HEIs, the revised document (No.650/2009) omits the provision altogether.

Another critical provision of the Proclamation relevant to gender equity in HE relates to the Strategic Plan Agreement. The Proclamation states that all public universities are obliged to conclude a five-year agreement with the government, based on which they will receive their block grant budget to be allocated through the proposed funding formula. The Proclamation states that, among other things, the Agreement is expected to include:

[S]ocial goals such as measures to enhance the nationality composition of its academic staff, increase the proportion of senior positions held by women, and assistance to disadvantaged sections of its students (Article 65.2e).

Therefore, HEIs are required to enhance and document enrolment and graduation rates of female students, and increase the proportion of senior positions held by women. However, the provisions are not accompanied by implementation strategies. Without clear guidance and follow up mechanisms, there is no guarantee that HEIs will implement what they commit to in the Agreement.

- The Five-Year Strategic Framework to Enhance the Participation of Women in Higher Education (hereafter, the Framework) (MoE, 2004b) is a relatively comprehensive policy document on gender equity in HE in Ethiopia. Based on careful situational analysis of factors that hinder successful participation of women in HE, the

Framework outlines strategic goals and actions to enhance gender equity in public universities. The six strategic objectives that the Framework set out to achieve in a five year period (2004-2008) were: Increasing female intake in HE through increasing the proportion of female students at the preparatory school level.

- Reducing attrition rates of female students in HE through improved academic provision and supports such as tutorial programs for academically needy female students
- Establishing Gender Offices “mandated to address the barriers to women’s participation”
- Creating an enabling environment for women in HE through protective legal instruments, assertiveness training, counselling and guidance.
- Increasing the number of academic women and promoting their role in managerial positions
- Establishing Gender and Women’s Studies departments and promoting research on issues related to women. In addition to opening gender and women’s studies departments in public universities, attention has also been given to the concern of “integrating gender into the curricula” of those universities (MoE, 2004b, pp.40-47).

To this end, the Framework identified to support affirmative action, assertiveness training, guidance and counselling services for female students, establishment of a Gender Office in public universities, and tutorial programs for academically needy female students as valuable instruments (MoE, 2004b). One of the important aspects of the Framework is that for the first time the issue of academic women has been raised as a concern. Yet its representation of the problem of gender inequality in the academic staff is somewhat superficial.

As the Theoretical Framework in Chapter 3 implies, tackling structural inequalities requires policy instruments that go far beyond widening access. Putting equity policies in place is not only a matter of giving equal or equitable access. It also includes addressing “disabling constraints” in the given social space. To create an enabling learning and working environment for women, the policies need to start with properly recognizing structural impediments in the social space. In this regard, the gender equity provisions highlighted in the Framework fall short of being substantive. They are characterised by silences on crucial aspects of the problem.

Policy Silences

Gender equality policies and strategies at the national level are characterised by **silences** at least on four key areas: structural factors of inequality, gender-based disciplinary segregation, gender mainstreaming in the curricula, and the representation and position of academic women.

To start with, the way a problem is represented in policy determines both the nature of the policy instruments put in place and the possibility of resolving it (Bacchi, 1999, 2009a). In the Ethiopian HE context, the shortcomings of the policy provisions are associated with the representation of the problem of gender inequality in the subsystem. None of the policy texts fully appreciate the factors underpinning structural gender inequality in HE. Most often, inequality is considered to result from a lack of access; and the policies aim to “*narrow the gender gap in higher education*” (MoE, 2004b, 27, emphasis added).

The superficial discursive representation of the problem of gender inequality is evident in the narratives of the Framework, where gender inequality in public HEIs is understood simply as an issue of disparity in enrolment. It holds:

[...] the Ministry of Education views the *gender disparity* in public universities and colleges as a major concern (MoE, 2004b, p.27, emphasis added).

Consequently, the Framework aims to be,

instrumental in *reducing the gender disparity* in tertiary education (MoE, 2004b, p.36, emphasis added).

Hence, in putting forward assertiveness training and counselling services as major gender equity instruments, the policy makers assume that:

One of the key factors that affect female students’ academic performance is their lack of confidence and self-esteem. Fear of failure and lack of assertiveness debilitates students’ competence, ultimately limiting them from reaching their potential (MoE, 2004b, p.45).

This argument focuses on the manifestations of the problem not on the causes of the problem. Fear and lack of confidence of women in HEIs is deep-seated in such structural constraints as gendered stereotypes, sexual harassment, and low expectations in the classroom that make women in HE systematically subservient and unequal. Instead, the question that needs to be addressed is: have these policy provisions been responsive enough to the structural inequalities between men and women in HE? Understanding inequality as a mere disparity in enrolment, rather than a structurally embedded challenge, would have quite different practical consequences to understanding the problem in another way. Even when a specific mention is made of gender inequality, the framing of the problem does not extend beyond the issue of disparity in enrolment and graduation. Widening access, through expanding public HE and encouraging the private sector, is seen as a viable response to the problem. With a focus on increasing the number of women in HEIs, structurally embedded “disabling constraints” and

sources of repression have not been properly addressed. National level gender equity instruments and arrangements should duly recognise the gender order of HEIs which are expressed in the form of “a complex body of social arrangements, rules, practices, procedures, laws, and policies which are apparently gender-neutral, but which actually lead to treatment that is unfavourable to women” (Miroiu, 2003, p.25). A comprehensive equity policy not only provides differential treatments for socially and historically disadvantaged groups but also underscores recognition and respect as essential elements of the provision.

Secondly, pre-college socialization and preparation of female students where aspirations are shaped by expectations and role models in the society, coupled with proper career orientation and consultancy, significantly influence career choice (Mama, 2003; Miroiu, 2003). Further, female students tend to join ‘soft’ sciences and less competitive fields because high-status majors are competitive, and women who are academically disadvantaged at preparatory level tend to avoid them in their choices in HE. Even when they choose to study science and technology, the fields remain “leaky pipelines” in which, due to high attrition rate, only a few women manage to graduate and pursue careers in science and technology (Blickenstaff, 2005). Gender-based disciplinary segregation resulting from these and other related factors have not been duly recognised in the policies.

In Ethiopia, by concentrating on increasing female enrolment, the gender equality provisions have overlooked the inequality that results from such internal exclusion within HEIs as disciplinary gender segregation (Molla, 2010, 2011b, 2013b). When it comes to Ethiopia, the HE subsystem is highly gender-segregated. The majority of female students are enrolled in humanities and social sciences. In OU, in 2009/10 academic year, female students accounted for 24% and 36% of full-time undergraduate students enrolled in the fields of science and technology and Social Sciences, respectively (MoE, 2011). The policy texts do not consider this horizontal gender inequality (i.e., gendered streaming of academic fields) a serious challenge. In fact, under-representation of women in science and technology fields is not unique to Ethiopia – the problem is common in SSA; and, to widen the pool of qualified female students for those fields, many universities in the region have introduced a range of policy instruments, including affirmative action and outreaching programs that connect universities with secondary schools (Lihamba, Mwaipopo & Shule, 2006; Morley, 2007; Morley, Sorhaindo & Burke, 2005; Odejide, Akanji & Odekunle, 2006; Shackleton, Riordan & Simonis, 2006). In Tanzania, as part of its effort to promote the participation of women in science and technology fields, the University of Dar el Salaam has institutionalised three

forms of gender-based affirmative action initiatives: pre-entry preparation programs to widen access to science fields, preferential admission criteria, and scholarship programs for female students (Lihamba, Mwaipopo & Shule, 2006).

Without a conscious policy intervention to deal with disciplinary segregation in HE, women are likely to be excluded from high-earning jobs, and this reinforces the status quo of a gendered division of labour, and the subordinate socio-economic position of women in the society. A mere entry into the subsystem hardly changes the social position of women, unless they are supported when they get there, and the educational credential they obtain can provide them with tangible opportunities in the form of access to resources and active political and economic participation in the society. HE rewards individuals with varying economic and symbolic values. Educational institutions tend to reproduce inequality through providing individuals with educational aspirations and opportunities tailored to their position in society (Bourdieu, 1974; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Thus, instead of limiting public action to widening access, it is critical to focus on who gets access to what kind of education. Some credentials have higher economic returns than others; and it is crucial to recognize that the value of educational credentials is not absolute and equal; and to ensure that women are not systematically disadvantaged by having credentials that bring lower socio-economic returns.

Thirdly, the issue of mainstreaming gender into the curriculum is another example of policy silence. In HE, gender mainstreaming may mean institutionalizing fair and equitable employment and promotion criteria and processes; gendering the curriculum; integrating gendered knowledge, theory and methodologies through research and publication; and setting up gender research as a discipline (Morley, 2007). Hence, mainstreaming gender in HE is not a mere pedagogical arrangement but a reconstruction of democratic gender roles and fairness. It is also, if effectively applied, instrumental in challenging repressive gender relations embedded in institutional norms and practices. In this regard, the policies are deficient – they do not recognise gender mainstreaming as a key strategy.

As Morley's (2007) case study on selected African HEIs shows, while African governments and institutions may advocate gender mainstreaming, partly to comply with policy impositions of the donors, usually the concept is partially understood and poorly implemented. In the case of Ethiopia, despite improvements in increasing female enrolment rates, and introducing Women's Studies as an academic discipline in many public universities, there is little or no provision in the policies to ensure that learning experiences, and

institutional plans and strategies, equally or equitably benefit women and men. For instance, the Committee of Inquiry on the governance and management of HE (MoE, 2004b) suggested the number of females graduating at each level be used as one of the efficiency indicators in public universities. Although evidence from the two public universities in this study reveals that sexual harassment and gendered pedagogical arrangements continue to negatively affect women in HEIs, the Committee fell short of proposing a process-related gender equity instrument such as protective legislation and mainstreaming gender into the curricula.

Finally, the silence of policy is also evident with respect to academic women. Notwithstanding the gravity of the problem, in no policy document is the issue of women's unequal position in academic employment fully discussed. Although women represent less than 12% of the academic staff of public universities (MoE, 2011), this problem is not addressed in the Proclamation as an important topic. Whenever there is a mention of academic women (e.g., in MoE, 2004b), it is still dealt with in alignment to the value of increasing academic women as role models for female students and thus occludes the needs and interests of academic women themselves, reducing them to mere instruments in the quest for higher enrolment rates of female students. Yet, beyond its effect on the success of female students in HEIs, the absence of many women in teaching and research positions is a serious problem in itself and deserves considerable public attention.

To sum up, the gender equity policy instruments and provisions are characterised by silences. This situation has, as is shown in the next chapter, considerable impact on the actual implementation of the policies. At this point, to put these policy inadequacies in perspective, it is necessary to closely examine the neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the HE reforms in relation to their implications for gender equity.

7.4 Gender Equity and the Neoliberal Policy Factor

Inescapably engulfed by the competitive global economy and coercive international financial institutions, SSA has come to be part of the neoliberal globalization process. The global economic order that is being championed by neoliberal agents such as the WB is a capitalist economic system which primarily aims at profit maximization (Held & McGrew, 2003). As was shown in Chapters 4 and 5, the WB pushes aid-recipient governments in the region and elsewhere to cut public funding to HE so that it can function under the market system like

other industries. This agenda of the Bank is founded on the neoliberal assumption that the market is a rational means of distribution of resources and opportunities in society; that competition among self-interested individuals in the free market is the essence of motivation, innovation and creativity; and that to try to redress inequality outside the market system is to undermine the ‘social energy’ needed for progress in society (Torres, 2009; Zajda, 2010). In line with its “knowledge-driven economic growth to end poverty” agenda, the WB advises governments to transform their HE subsystems through differentiation, strategic expansion and curricular revisions.

Hence, the puzzle is: Can governments in LICs balance economic efficiency and social equity needs in HE? Martin Carnoy (1999) categorizes educational reforms as financial-, competitive- and equity-driven changes. While financial-driven reforms focus on reducing public spending on education, the competitive-driven ones aim at producing higher quality human resources that can support national economic productivity and help successfully compete in the global economy. Both forms of reform seek to realize economic agendas in and for education. Equity-driven educational reforms, on the other hand, intend to redress historical and social disadvantages in terms of access to and opportunities in education. Previous studies on the educational reforms in the 1980s and the 1990s in Latin America (Carnoy, 1999, 2002; Torres, 2002, 2009) show that efficiency oriented reforms have been incompatible with the equity needs of the society.

The gendered effects of globalization and its attendant neoliberal economic policies are multidimensional. Following trade liberalization and the subsequent focus on export manufacturing and cash crops in the developing economies, women have increased access to labour intensive manufacturing and seasonal agricultural jobs. Ethnographic research on the impact of trade liberalization on gender equity among the lower middle class in West Bengal, India, shows that women are better off today with more jobs on offer. They earn their own income, and hence are empowered and experience independence (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). Although access to sources of income coupled with the spread of feminist ideas may make a positive contribution to women’s participation in HE and other opportunities, development economists believe that this gain in expansion of employment for women may not transform gender inequality in the long term, as women still have no access to secure employment with equitable earnings (Seguino & Grown, 2006). Access to better employment and equitable

wage requires, *inter alia*, the state to intervene in support of public spending on social services such as education, so that increased HE attainment of women can be achieved.

In Africa, policy research from political, economic, educational and sociological perspectives show that gender equity in HE has been jeopardized by the neoliberal economic agenda of IOs such as the WB (Assie-Lumumba, 2000, 2006a, 2006b; Okeke-Ihejirika 2006, 2009). In her study on the impact of foreign aid on the participation of female students in higher level learning, Assié-Lumumba (2000) argues that economic variables such as public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP and public expenditure on education as a percentage of the general government expenditure affect women's HE enrolment in Africa.

Gender equity in HE necessitates active state involvement to promote social justice through distributing resources fairly, not necessarily equally. On the other hand, the WB mainly sees inequality as a disadvantage in human capital formation, and focuses on the monetary barriers to equality in access and participation. The introduction of market mechanisms in HE is partly justified in terms of equity concerns, as the private pool of resources is assumed to enable governments to expand access for disadvantaged groups. Thus, HE reforms in Africa, mostly guided by this narrow economic view of the Bank, fall short of transforming system-wide and institutional practices of patriarchy, sexism, nepotism and racism (Aina, 2010). As a result, the WB's commitment to knowledge-intensive development (World Bank, 2002a, 2009) and its vision to engender development "through gender equality in rights, resources, and voice" (World Bank, 2001) remain unlinked.

Recently, in an unusual way, in its global study on *Equity and Access to Tertiary Education* (2009-2011), the WB set a conceptual framework seemingly informed by social justice and economic efficiency concerns (World Bank, Database 2, para.2). Notwithstanding the statement on the importance of a social justice perspective to achieve equity in HE, this conceptual framework still defines equity narrowly as "providing equal opportunities to access and succeed in tertiary education" (World Bank, Database 2, para.1). It primarily focuses on tackling disparities in access to opportunities. Again, the methodology that the study draws on presents a comprehensive list of targets of equity to include individuals from lower income backgrounds, females, individuals with disabilities and students with minority status (on the basis of ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and age characteristics) (d'Hombres, 2009). Even so, its measurement of inequality is limited to statistical quantification. In an attempt to identify the cross-country and country specific inequality

indicators, the design misses qualitative dimensions of the problem, including unequal participation in quality education, gendered experiences of female students, and disciplinary segregation.

Consequently, in terms of promoting social justice in and through education, the new education strategy of the WB, *Education Strategy 2020*, remains unresponsive, to say the least. In a quantitative content analysis that seeks to understand the way the Bank addresses the problem of inequality in the new strategy (World Bank, 2011a), Joshi and Smith document that keywords related to social equality (equality, discrimination, human rights, public good, and social return) appeared 19 times while words related to human capital (human capital, economic development, productivity, efficiency and economic growth), and neoliberalism (private sector, decentralization, market, fee, competition) appeared 44 and 65 respectively (Joshi & Smith, 2012, p.190). This can be seen as an indicative of the continuation of human capital and neoliberal perspectives as central themes of the WB's education policy.

In Ethiopia, given the gravity of the problem of gender inequality in the HE subsystem and the broad gender mainstreaming initiative of the government, it is necessary to ask: What are the gender equity implications and consequences of the neoliberal policy agenda endorsed in the reform process? I shed light on this question through evidence organized around three neoliberal policy elements – privatization and reduced public spending, the steering role of the state, and the strategic expansion of HE.

Privatization and Reduced Public Spending

Michael Apple, one of the leading educational sociologists who questions the compatibility of neoliberal economic interests with equity goals in education, argues that neoliberal policies and practices in an education system may reproduce traditional hierarchies of class and gender as they tend to prioritize economic interests (Apple, 2000, 2006). This is partly attributed to the assumption that markets are neutral and function to benefit all, fairly based on one's effort and merit (Apple, 2006). However, by their very nature market interests are selective – only those who can afford the costs get the service. Hence, there will be groups marginalized, and traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women would be highly affected. As a result, the beneficiaries of privatization are the rich and the powerful – in poor

countries replacing the role of the government by the market tends to reproduce inequalities and jeopardize social justice (Arnove, Franz & Torres, 2007; Joshi & Smith, 2012; Torres, 2009).

In the context of Ethiopia, privatization of HE in the form of the introduction of cost-sharing in public institutions and the expansion of for-profit private colleges and universities has a mixed effect on gender equity. On the positive side, in the cost-sharing scheme, upfront payment is optional; and no student is denied access to public university for financial reasons. The scheme allows students to pay back costs after graduation in the form of service or tax. Nonetheless, given that gender-based disciplinary segregation has come to be a serious challenge and that consequently women might not go to better paying jobs, they may find it difficult to pay back the costs.

There is a general consensus that even though privatization of HE has supported the widening of access to HE, economically disadvantaged groups cannot make use of the opportunity as they cannot afford the increasingly high cost of education in for-profit private HEIs. In the case of SSA, privatization of HE and related economic constraints are said to have affected more female students than their male peers (Assié-Lumumba, 2000, 2006; Gordon, 1996; Mama, 2003; Omwami, 2011). Yet evidence in this study in the Ethiopian context does not support this assertion, where the expansion of the private HEIs has considerably widened female students' access to higher education and training. Overall, private (non-government) HEIs still represent a small proportion of the student body – in the 2009/2010 academic year, 44 private HEIs enrolled 8.3% of the total full-time undergraduate students (MoE, 2011). Despite the small share of the total enrolment, the representation of female students in private HEIs is far better than in public ones. Table 7 below shows the trend of full-time undergraduate female students' enrolment rates in the last eight years in public and private HEIs in Ethiopia.

Even though the representation of female students in private HEIs is relatively high, most often female students enrol in private institutions when they fail to secure admission into public universities, owing to poor performance at the national university entrance examination. This has two important implications. Higher representation of women in private institutions may imply that they represent the higher proportion of failing students at the entrance examination. On the other hand, even though they make use of the lower admission cut-off point in private institutions, most of them enrol in less competitive fields such as

nursing and social sciences while very few get access to the in high-demand science and technology fields. That is, the problem of disciplinary segregation applies in the public HE and private HEIs. Semester I enrolment in selected private HEIs²⁰ in the 2009/2010 academic year shows that while female students dominated already saturated fields, such as nursing (75.8%), they remain a minority in high-demand fields of technology and ICT (15.2%). This makes the potential of economic and social returns from their credentials low.

Table 7.1 Full-time Undergraduate Enrolment in Public and Private HEIs (by Gender)

Sector	Academic Year							
	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Public: Total	36049	56072	78232	93689	107960	127033	157429	190043
% F	14.5	20	22	22	23	24	29	26
Private: Total	1964	2396	4045	7387	7885	8767	13370	17095
% F	43.9	33.8	37.3	42.3	45.7	43	44.7	46.5

Source: Based on data from Education Statistics Annual Abstract (MoE, 2004 to 2011).

Furthermore, related to the neoliberal principle of reduced public spending, lack of funding undermines gender equity-related programs in HEIs. Based on extensive research in Latin American, Carnoy (1999, 2005) observes that governments of developing countries usually tend to trade off equity for the efficiency-driven agenda of donors. The Ethiopian case is no exception. Donors constantly push for reduced public spending. With increased economic optimism related to HE, the government has been engaged in an ambitious physical expansion program that overstretched its funding capacity. Not only has this led to declining

²⁰ Data was drawn from Admas University College (ICT), Addis College and Mekelle Institute of Technology (for Technology); St. Mary's University College and Unity University (for Social Sciences and Business); and Central University College, Medico Bio-Medical College and Sheba University College (for Nursing). Technology as a field of study includes engineering and ICT programs.

per student expenditure and negatively affected the quality²¹ of education but also limited the role of the state in redressing inequalities in participation in HE. An example suffices here. Almost all public universities have set up gender offices as a means to achieve gender equity in HE. However, as my interviews with gender office directors discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis indicates, in the two universities under analysis, the government has provided no annual budget for these offices, and the universities cannot fully finance them from their internal revenues. As a result, in most cases, the offices are under-staffed and are not fully functional in implementing gender equity strategies and policies of the respective institutions. Seen from this perspective, Gyimah-Brempong and Ondiege (2011) are right that the financing system of Ethiopia does not encourage equity; in fact it tends to perpetuate gender inequality.

The Steering Role of the State

In line with the general principle of reducing public spending and empowering market forces to run the economy, neoliberals are committed to limited state involvement in social services, including higher level education and training. The changing role of the state in the field of HE expresses itself in three forms: reduced public spending, increased autonomy and accountability of HEIs, and consequently the emergence of an “evaluative state” (Neave, 1998). In compliance with the idea of economic efficiency and budget deficit reduction, many governments all over the world cut their funds to HEIs and urge the institutions to diversify their sources of income through, among other things, introducing user fees, establishing links with the business community, marketizing products (including research and related services), and even directly engaging in income generating business. Essentially, neoliberal governments tend to rely “on *self-managing* institutions and individuals, in which free agents are empowered to act on their own behalf but are ‘steered from a distance’ by policy norms and rules of the game” (Marginson, 1997, p.63). HEIs are increasingly given considerable autonomy in finance, management and governance. With this, traditional roles of the state in

²¹ The government’s exclusive focus on extensive physical expansion has been one of the key factors that contribute to the HE quality crisis in Ethiopia. Even though the overall budget for the HE subsystem has increased significantly, as shown in Chapter 5, per student expenditure (unit cost) in HE has drastically dropped. Low per student expenditure means poor library and laboratory services which directly affects the quality of the teaching and learning process.

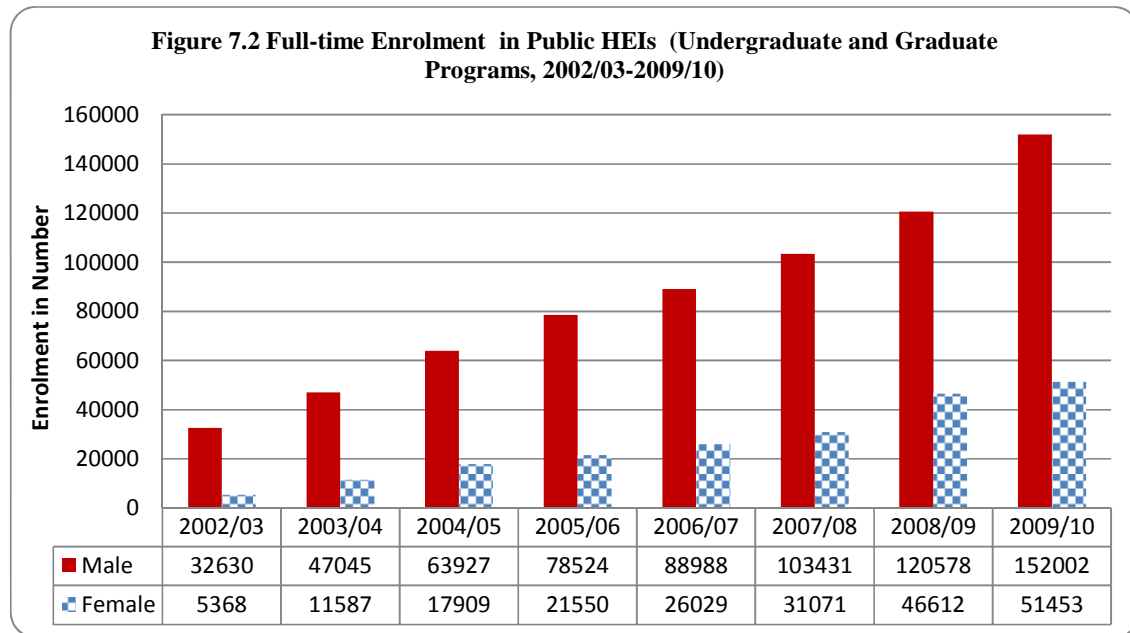
regulating, coordinating, funding, control and legitimisation of HE have taken on a new form and style that embraces such mechanisms as funding formulae and quality assurance mechanisms to make HEIs accountable for their performance and use of public resources (Neave, 1998).

In Ethiopia, on the grounds of maximizing efficiency and in line with the political orientation towards decentralization of governance, public universities have been granted relatively reasonable autonomy in management coupled with new accountability mechanisms such as the Strategic Plan Agreement (FDRE, 2009). As discussed in Section 7.1 above, the instruments can be considered innovations in terms of making HEIs gender sensitive in their planning. The Agreement and the proposed Funding Formula underscore the need to support women to assume higher management positions in HEIs; and set such quantitative indicators as the proportion of women enrolled and graduated in a particular year in a given institution as factors to determine the block grant of the institutions. This approach is problematic at two levels. First, the measurable indicators of rates of enrolment and graduation that the government uses to allocate its incentive funds fall short of engaging the institutions in transformative equity policies and strategies. The institutions focus on merely bringing in more women while the internal structural barriers remain unchallenged. In order to meaningfully support gender equity efforts, universities' strategic plans need to embrace broad institutional gender analysis that includes enrolment, retention and performance of female students; recruitment, retention, and promotion of female staff; and pedagogical, research and administrative practices. Second, as it is witnessed in the implementation of the national strategic framework for gender equality in public HEIs, the government lacks the capacity to coordinate and follow up equity policies and practices of the universities. Without effective follow-up mechanisms from the government, there is no guarantee that the institutions take action to achieve what they have stated in their plans. In fact, when it comes to the question of addressing structural gender inequalities in the HE subsystem, the state should be actively involved instead of limiting its roles to steering from a distance.

Strategic Expansion

The normative assumption about HE expansion is that it plays a critical role in promoting national economic productivity and making nation-states competitive in the global knowledge economy (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006; Maassen & Cloete, 2006; World Bank, 2002a).

This economic optimism and subsequent aggressive HE expansion in Ethiopia has considerable equity implications. As is shown in Figure 7.2 below, the wave of HE expansion in Ethiopia in the last eight years has benefited women in terms of increasing their participation in HEIs. Over the same period (2002/03-2009/10), average annual enrolment growth rate for female students (141.6%) was higher than their male counterparts (125%), and from a much lower base.



Source: Computed based on data from *Education Statistics Annual Abstract* (MoE, 2003 to 2010).

However, the government has been under strong pressure to replace its unfettered HE expansion program by a more efficient strategic expansion plan. Even though the WB agrees that equity cannot be effectively achieved through market forces, and hence advocates active involvement of the state in the subsystem (World Bank, 2002a), the WB's argument lacks internal consistency. In its recent HE policy report on SSA HE, the Bank urges governments in the region to ensure the economic contribution of HE by actively supporting fields of strategic priority (such as science and technology) and leaving the social sciences and the humanities for private investment. The Bank recommends:

A more efficient approach would restrict government sponsorship of students to only those discipline areas deemed most critical for the country's future development, consequently obliging those wishing to study in other areas to finance this from non-public sources (World Bank, 2009, p. 92).

With this orientation of efficient use of public funding to expand economically relevant programs and disciplines, Ethiopia has introduced a new HE enrolment policy, commonly referred to as the 70:30 policy (MoE, 2008a). This graduate mix policy seeks to increase the university intake ratio of Sciences and Technology to Social Sciences and Humanities from 58:42 in 2008/09 to 70:30 in 2014/15 (MoE, 2010a, p.62). The government defends the policy in economic terms:

Achievement of the long-term vision of transforming Ethiopia into a middle-income country demands a transformation of the economy through, among other things, conscious application of science, technology and innovation as the major instruments to create wealth (MoE, 2010a, p.9)

The new approach seems to be a way of ‘hierarchialization’ of the subsystem. The Social Sciences and Humanities are considered less important, and are being pushed to the private sector, which is generally perceived to be of lower quality and reputation. Yet, given that gender-based disciplinary segregation is a serious challenge in the HE subsystem – for example, in 2008, only 14% of graduates in science and technology fields were females (UIS, 2010) – this policy needs to be followed by a substantive gender equity strategy. As increased diversification and privatization of the subsystem tends to systematically concentrate women in low-wage-job fields and in low reputation institutions, the quality of the opportunities should equally be a policy concern. In fact, it is important to be mindful that social inequality consequences of a neoliberal educational agenda are expressed by not only inequality of access to opportunity but also inequality of the opportunities themselves (Marginson, 2004). As Marginson argues:

All else being equal, economic markets are associated with greater social inequalities of access in systems mediated by the private capacity to pay, so that access is more steeply stratified on social lines; and with a steeper hierarchy of institutions, so that what is accessed is also increasingly stratified (2004, p.234).

Given that those fields of study being pushed to the private sector are overcrowded by women, depriving public funding to those fields may mean discriminating against women in terms of access to public resources, thereby reinforcing inequality. The idea of equity in HE refers to both equitable access to and success in HE, and social mobility and empowerment of participants in their life after graduation (OECD, 2008). Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that women’s mere increased access to HE may not result in gender equity.

Again, the neoliberal educational agenda links equity related policy provisions and practices to economic development concerns. In this regard, in Ethiopia, gender equity has been narrowly and instrumentally construed as simply tapping into the potential of women (MoE, 2004b, 2006; MoFED, 2002). Even though women's equal access to HE may widen the pool of human capital that supports national economic development plans, most importantly, gender equity is worth advancing for its own right. Effective equity policy instruments are those that build aspirations, confidence and capabilities of the target groups (Marginson, 2011, p.34). Economic efficiency-oriented policy interventions do not challenge the social processes that produce gender inequalities. Hence, equity policy instruments need to be drawn on broad social justice perspectives.

While a view of education based on the principles of the market and system efficiency demands better utilization of the human resources that women represent, a stronger view of equity seeks a social transformation through which gender relations are reconfigured (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.153).

Higher level education and training and subsequent access to better jobs and income can lead women ultimately towards social and political empowerment, which in turn gives them a stake in their society. Approaching the problem of inequality from the human capital formation perspective, rather than on social justice grounds, limits the involvement of the state to widening access instead of addressing structural barriers that constrain successful participation of historically and socially disadvantaged groups of the society. Social justice requires a strong notion of equity of opportunity that goes beyond eradicating legal barriers to education and jobs.

To conclude, this chapter has focused on the way the problem of inequality has been framed, the type of equity policy instruments put in place, and the relevance of the instruments to achieve gender equity in HE. The findings show that most often the problem of gender inequality is produced as a problem of disparity in enrolment, poor academic performance, and lack of assertiveness of female students while structural barriers remain (for the most part) unaddressed. This superficial representation of the problem of gender inequality profoundly affects the equity instruments introduced at a national level. While affirmative action admission and recruitment policies might have widened the opportunity of individuals to get access to HE, more relevant instruments such as protective legislation, mainstreaming gender in the curricula, and gender awareness for men in HE that might really tackle the problem are rarely used. The equity policy provisions are deficient in that they fail to challenge

institutional and cultural barriers that impede women's effective participation, success and promotion within the HE subsystem. Finally, the chapter located the policy process in a broader context of the neoliberal HE reform prescriptions endorsed by the government in the last ten years. While its positive impact can easily be tracked in the form of extensive expansion of HE that increased representation of women, the neoliberal educational agenda has negatively affected gender equity through constraining the financial commitment of the government and narrowly defining the problem as a human capital concern.

The *capability perspective* enables to align the social equity goals in HE with the economic growth agenda. To be educated is one of the basic capabilities, and education plays a crucial role in enhancing human agency through the formation and expansion of other capabilities (Sen, 1992). National economic and social development plans presuppose capable human actors. For instance, the knowledge-led development discourse centres at human capital that delivers higher level knowledge and skills to translate the discourse into practice. This implies that, to unleash the potential of men and women who can meaningfully contribute to the economic and social transformation of a nation, not only should educational opportunities be fully extended to all, but identities, conditions and contributions of policy targets should be recognised and respected.

The next chapter focuses specifically on how HEIs in the country have translated the national equity initiatives. It problematizes institutional gender equity policies, strategies and practices of two public universities.

Chapter 8

Institutional Gender Equity Policies and Practices

Gender is an important unit of analysis in understanding inequality in HE institutions where institutional arrangements structure the opportunities available to individuals, and mediate individual experiences and aspirations. In this chapter, gender equity policies and strategies of two public universities in Ethiopia are analysed and interpreted in order to understand the nature of the equity instruments, and to highlight the policy inactions (silences and implementation gaps) in institutional responses. In this chapter, I develop the argument that (i) public HEIs in Ethiopia, in response to national policy initiatives, have put institutional gender equity arrangements in place; and (ii) these equity arrangements are constrained by lack of financial resources and policy inactions, linked with gender insensitivity of senior university officials and of the broader neoliberal reform agenda endorsed by the government. Consequently, the persistence of the problem of gender inequality in HE can partly be attributed to the poorly framed equity policy instruments and policy inactions. The discussion is presented in two major sections. The first section presents equity instruments (policies and practices) introduced by the two universities, pseudonymously represented as Odaax University (OU) and Washeray University (WU), and associated constraints in the implementation processes; the second sets out my findings with regard to policy inactions concerning gender inequality in the institutions.

8.1 Gender Equity Instruments and Arrangements

As discussed in Chapter 7, since the mid-1990s, in response to the alarming gender inequality in the HE subsystem, the Ethiopian government has devised policies and strategies to enhance the participation of women. An affirmative action admissions policy has been in place for more than 15 years. In line with the constitutional provisions, the Education and Training Policy (1994) and the Higher Education Proclamation (No.650/2009) support positive discrimination in favour of women. The proportion of female students and staff is one of the variables in the government's funding formula for block grants to public HEIs. Against this back drop, there are two reasons to pursue a critical examination of the gender

equity policies and practices of HEIs of the country. First, even though HEIs have very little control over student admission for full-time undergraduate programs, the decentralization reform has provided them with considerable autonomy to determine course content, recruitment and promotion of staff, and the management of financial matters and other student service activities. Second, despite national initiatives and wide-ranging institutional responses, progress in gender equity remains far from promising. For instance, the government's plan to increase the representation of female students and academic women in public HEIs to 40% and 25% respectively by 2010 was not met – the figure remained at 26% and less than 12% for female students and staff (MoE, 2011). The representation of women is almost non-existent in senior management positions and the attrition rate of female students is far higher than for their male counterparts (Wondimu, 2003).

Drawing on my analysis of data from policy documents and my interviews with policy actors, including members of the universities' senior management bodies and gender office directors, the three major institutional equity policies and arrangements I identify are the affirmative action policy, the establishment of gender offices to manage gender equity arrangements, and supplementary tutorial (remedial) classes for female students in need of additional academic support in each university. These institutional equity instruments are discussed in turn below.

8.1.1 Affirmative Action Policies

Affirmative action is a public response to institutionalized norms and practices that underlie group-based disadvantages and inequalities (Pojman, 1998). Affirmative action policies, although not without resistance from different sections of society, seek to benefit historically and socially disadvantaged groups in society, and are underpinned by principles of fairness and justice in social services, including education and employment. In the US, in the wake of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and after the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1972), affirmative action emerged as an essential element of public policy to compensate the disadvantages of African Americans, women and other social groups in housing, education, health care, employment and social life (West, 1998). As such, many colleges and universities, with intermittent cases of resistance, have been using affirmative action admission policies according to gender and race to compensate historical disadvantages and promote diversity and multiculturalism (Rhoads, Saenz & Carducci, 2005).

Affirmative action as a policy concept has gained momentum world-wide. In South Africa, in response to the systematic restriction of non-white citizens during the Apartheid period, the new democratic government (elected in 1994) has provided affirmative action admission policy for disadvantaged groups, including blacks and women. Following the ratification of the Education Reform Act (1997) and preferential policy provision, a considerable improvement has been recorded in HE enrolment: the participation of women grew from 43% in 1993 to 55% in 2008; and the representation of blacks (who constitute of about 79% of the population) increased from 52% to 63% in the same period (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011). In Australia, the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity) for Women Act 1986, updated as the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (and subject to further very recent amendments in the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012), stipulates employers (including HEIs) must take appropriate actions “to eliminate all forms of discrimination by the relevant employer against women in relation to employment matters” (Australian Government, 1999, p.3). Furthermore, individual States and HEIs devise their own policies and strategies to benefit disadvantaged groups; see for example Monash University’s *Gender Equity Strategy 2011-2015* aimed at increasing the representation of women in senior positions and certain disciplines (e.g., Engineering and Sciences) (Monash University, 2010).

In Ethiopia, as discussed in the previous chapter, affirmative action policies that benefit women have been provided for by the Constitution (1995), the Education and Training Policy (1994) and the Higher Education Proclamation (2009). In the HE subsystem, the federal government directly manages student placement and affirmative action admission cut-off points. Therefore, institutional affirmative action policies of the universities are limited to preferential treatment in the admission of female students to programs of studies, and gender-based advantage points for women applicants for academic staff positions.

As discussed earlier, the proportion of female students in public universities has increased significantly in the last ten years, from less than 12% of the full time undergraduate body in 1999, in public HEIs, to slightly over 26% in a decade (see Figure 5.2). The representation of women in the universities included in this study is higher than the national average. In Odaax University (OU),²² in 2009/2010 academic year, female students accounted for 29.3% and 19.3% at undergraduate and graduate levels respectively. In the same year, at Washeray

²² As noted earlier in Chapter 3, these two university names are pseudonyms.

University (WU), the proportion of female students was 29.7% at undergraduate level and 11.4% at a graduate level. The improvement both at national and institutional levels can be attributed to the expansion of the subsystem, the introduction of affirmative action admission policies at the national level, and the institutionalization of different preferential support mechanisms in HEIs. The institutional arrangements are points of discussion in this chapter.

In relation to gender differentiated paths in the field of study, the Senate Legislation of OU provides,

20% of all places shall be reserved for females in addition to their right to compete in the 80% places (Article 71.8).

Accordingly, one fifth of places in the fields of Engineering and Medicine are reserved for female students. In other fields, the University gives a five point advantage to female students in their choices of fields of studies. In WU, One of the fifteen mission statements of the current Strategic Plan (2008-2013) of the University reads,

Nurture gender equality in and out of the classroom, sustained by a faculty and student body with varied cultural and intellectual perspectives (p.iv).

The Plan ensures that the University is committed to the creation of a hospitable learning and working environment. According to the Plan, the University also strives to mainstream gender awareness in the curricula and research, provide “periodical training in gender assertiveness”, and a commitment to strengthen the Gender Office. To implement gender equity related provisions of the Plan, the University has introduced an *Affirmative Policy for Female Students* with recognition that:

[A]n intervention of comprehensive nature is needed to resolve academic, social, psychological and economic challenges that affect the success of female students in the University (p.5).

The implementation strategies include improved accommodation services, ensuring the safety of female students on campus, training in assertiveness, tutorial classes, specific scholarships and guidance and counselling. For example, as part of its gender equity arrangements, WU provides a scholarship scheme (at graduate level) and financial support (at undergraduate level) for academically competent poor female students. The director of the Gender Office and the senior management member interviewed highlighted that the university works with external governmental and non-governmental organizations to raise the required funds to support the students. However, my informant from the senior management body of WU

defended the commitment of the management towards gender equity, despite constraints in implementing the strategies. She argued:

Gender equity efforts in the University have not been implemented to the required level. But the initiative has been started (Wase, interview, 28 July 2010).

In fact, it is important to note that by the time of this research the institutional initiative that the officer referred to and the national gender equality strategic framework had been in place for more than six years.

When it comes to academic women, in the last ten years considerable progress has been recorded in terms of increasing their representation in public universities. The implementation of positive discrimination strategies has improved the participation of women in academic positions in the HEIs. In 2009/2010, women account for less than 12% of the academic staff in public universities nation-wide. In OU, the number of academic women grew from nil in 1999 to 105 in 2009. At WU, the number of women in the academic staff with a qualification of first degree and above grew from 37 (5.6%) in 1995/96 to 239 (13.8%) in 2009/10 academic year. However, the progress tends to be overshadowed by the fact that most of the women have lower level academic qualifications than their male peers. Markedly, as shown in Table 8.1, in 2010, more than half of the academic women (125 out of 239) in WU had no graduate level qualification.

Table 8.1 Educational Qualifications of Full-time (Ethiopian National) Academic Staff in WU by Gender.

Level of Educational Qualification	Academic Year								
	1995/96			2005/06			2009/10		
	M	F	% F	M	F	% F	M	F	% F
Doctorate Degree	263	13	4.7	380	19	4.8	443	43	8.8
Master's Degree	221	11	4.7	562	66	10.5	641	71	10.0
Undergraduate Degree	135	13	8.8	246	27	9.9	407	125	23.5
Total	619	37	5.6	1188	112	8.6	1491	239	13.8

Source: Computed based on data from Human Resource Management Statistical Report of the University.

The representation of women in higher academic rank is very low. For example, at the 'national university,' in the 2009/2010 academic year, women accounted only for 5% (2) of full professors, 4.6% (6) associate professors, 7.7% (29) assistant professors, and 12.3% (95)

of lecturers and assistant lectures (AAU, 2010).

Under the umbrella of national affirmative action policy, public universities in Ethiopia have introduced various strategies to increase the representation of women staff. In OU, the three criteria in use for academic recruitment are academic grade, experience and affirmative action (a three point advantage for female applicants). For the department of Gender and Development, at least one in five places in the academic staff are required to be occupied by a woman. A senior management member of the university summarises efforts underway as follows:

The national policy or guideline encourages increasing academic women and female university students. Yet it has no specific strategy on how to do that. Thus, we have come up with our own strategy to achieve the national plan. One of the strategies is a 3 point advantage for female academic applicants. This has been at work for the last two years now. This we believe has a positive impact on achieving gender equity in the University (Odam, interview, 18 September 2010).

According Odam, in recognition of the insufficiency of existing provisions (both the 3 point advantage and the policy of ‘on equal merit, pick the woman’), the university is considering another option:

The other thing is that we had also a discussion whether we needed to reduce the GPA required from female applicants in the fields of science and engineering because at present we require male and female applicants of the same minimum GPA of 2.75 in their undergraduate studies. The problem is you will rarely find female graduates with such level of academic score. Having the same cut-off point would not enable us to reach the target of achieving equitable representation of academic women in the University even when there is a three point advantage and quota system (in the future). Yet we haven’t reached a consensus (interview, 18 September 2010).

In the case of WU, in order to promote women’s participation, the Strategic Plan states that the University develops guidelines for academic units so that they will be able to:

[G]ive due consideration to gender, and other diversities to give priority for academic career/recruitment and admission to programs (p.29).

However, this seems to have remained a mere policy statement. Even though the Plan has been in action for the last four years, there is no specific guideline to benefit women in academic recruitment. My informal discussions with a member of the staff recruitment committee and an interview with a senior management member of the university made clear that WU has no specific affirmative action policy or quota system to benefit women

applicants for academic positions. The university applies the general affirmative action policy by which if a woman and a man with equal merit apply for the same position, the woman should be accepted. A senior management member in WU, confirmed:

Affirmative action as understood by the wider public has been taken into consideration. For example, if two candidates – female and male – have been equally weighted, they would definitely pick the female. [...] But there hasn't been any particular procedure or any formal document on implementing affirmative action in staff recruitment. [...] So, the concept of the quota system for female has been endorsed. Actually, it has been seriously debated on, and it has passed to the board for final decision (Wase, interview, 28 July 2010).

According to the official in WU, there has been a debate on the issue and there is a possibility that a quota system will be in place in the revised legislation of the university (which is expected to be ratified in the near future).

In the context where merit means a higher academic record and excellence in research experience, the general affirmative action policy may not be an effective equity instrument. Due to historical disadvantages and gendered educational experiences, in most cases women may not have equal opportunity to achieve the required merit to compete with men, and thereby to benefit from the “on equal merit, pick the woman” policy. Again, merit is not a gender neutral term. The things (experiences, qualifications, qualities, etc.) may be valued more highly in a man than a woman, and the things women bring may be valued less.

Hence, putting a quota system or affirmative recruitment and admission policies in place are not sufficient conditions to ensure gender equity in HE. It is equally important to be attentive to qualitative dimensions of the problem, and to challenge institutional barriers that see the provisions as measures of reverse injustices or as programs for “unqualified” individuals rather than as compensatory equity instruments that lead to a just HE subsystem. That is, without proper work on the gender order of the institutions, the policies alone tend to leave women “vulnerable to claims they are charity cases without merit, undeserving of entry, the agents of a reverse injustice” (Marginson, 2011, p.30). This view results in unintended negative consequences – it creates a stigma of undeservedness, low self-esteem and lack of assertiveness among women in HEIs.

Studies from Tanzania and Nigeria show that, without a cautious handling, affirmative action may have a stigmatisation effect on women (Lihamba, Mwaipopo & Shule, 2006; Odejide, Akanji & Odekunle, 2006). There are evidence in this study that support this claim. For

example, at OU, as the supplementary classes progressed, attendance of female students declined considerably. According to the director of the Gender Office of the University, this was because their male peers negatively construed the classes as programs for “incompetents”, and female students felt ashamed to be labelled as such and dropped out.

In addition, as is shown in Section 7.3.2, affirmative action policies are limited by internal constraints. By defining all women as belonging to a category of ‘disadvantaged group’, the policies assume homogeneity among female students who may not have the same experience and are not equally disadvantaged in the education system and in the society at large. When affirmative action policies do not take into account the intersection of gender with other factors of disadvantage such as poverty, age, rurality, and ethnic-background, as evidence from universities in Ghana and Tanzania shows, they tend to primarily benefit young middle-income women (Morley, 2012; Morley & Crossouard, forthcoming). Hence, national gender equity policies and institutional programs need to recognise that the situation of female students from poor families in rural regions is far different from that of those who come from better resourced families in urban centres.

8.1.2 Supplementary Tutorial Classes

Increased attrition rates in HE are linked to personal and institutional factors. Hence, viewed from a sociological perspective, academic and social integration on campus are key conditions to promote student retention (Tinto, 1975, 1998, 2012). Tinto suggests that supplementary tutorial classes for academically underprepared students, if managed systematically within the right time-frame, are supportive of socialisation and persistence, especially during First-Year courses. A longitudinal study, conducted to understand tutoring as an institutional support strategy in one state university (in the US), shows a positive relationship between tutoring and improved performance and retention of academically high-risk students (Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois & Kusorgbor, 2010).

In Ethiopia, the affirmative action admission policy has in fact improved access for female students. A document from the Department of Women’s Affairs in the MoE shows that in 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years, a total of 5730 female students were admitted on affirmative action to undergraduate programs in the 22 public universities. However, the attrition rate is found to be very high among those groups of students, as a considerable

number of them dropped out due to poor academic results. In this regard, the government (the MoE) has set out to support mechanisms to improve the progress rates of the group. Specifically, in its national strategic framework for gender equality in HE (MoE, 2004b), the government demanded public HEIs develop supplementary tutorial classes to support female students. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan Agreement requires public universities to ensure that all the necessary support is in place (including tutorial classes and assertiveness trainings) to reduce the dropout and academic dismissal rates of female students. Hence, the Strategic Plans, both in WU and in OU, underscore the importance of preferential support for female students. According to the director of the Gender Office at OU, the rationale behind the supplementary tutorial classes run by the Office is that:

Some of the female students come through affirmative action, there should be a special treatment when they come here. Then what we do is giving special tutorial service for two courses [identified as difficult] in each department in every semester during their first year in the University. Then the classes are given for a maximum of 25 hours for a course (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

Research on student persistence (e.g., Arendale, 2010; Tinto, 1998, 2012) shows that institutional support services (e.g., tutorial classes and assertiveness training) that are aligned with First-Year academic programs play a crucial role in improving the performance of new entrants. According to Tinto, the first year in HE is critical, and student retention and attrition during this period are “responsive to institutional intervention” (2012, p.25).

According to a senior management member of OU, the tutorial programs also aim to build the capacity of female students to major in science and technology fields; and to enable them to graduate with good scores in these fields. As part of this broad initiative, during the research of this thesis (2010), the university was working on introducing a bridging course organised in the form of modules with core areas of mathematics, reasoning skills, English language and ICT literacy. The university official consulted stated the rationale of the courses:

We noted that most of our female students have serious deficiencies in English Language, Mathematics, reasoning and ICT. So, the idea is by building their capacity in those basic areas, we may address some of the gaps that should have been addressed at preparatory school level. For this end, [...] we intend to introduce it when the First Year students arrive in this academic year (2010/2011) (Odam, interview, 18 September 2010).

At WU, too, tutorial classes are designed particularly for students admitted under the affirmative action admission policy. Wase (a senior management member of WU) believes

that the university is responsible for ensuring the successful completion of female students admitted with lower grades. Thus, in principle, special tutorial classes are available for academically needy female students in their first-year courses. In practice, it all depends on the willingness of a particular college/faculty to finance the provision of supplementary classes. There is no university-wide organized tutorial program, and hence the provision of the service depends on individual faculty's commitment to allocate funds from its internal budget, as is the case in the Faculty of Science of the university. Unlike practices in OU where tutorial classes are centrally organized by the Gender Office and are available for all interested female students in every college/faculty, in WU, the Gender Office is not actively involved in the provision of supplementary courses and the service is not available for all female students. The director of the Gender Office of the university summarised the key challenges as follows:

We believe academic dismissal of female students needs academic solutions such as tutorial programs. This Office has not done that much but there are other offices [college/faculty level gender offices] that try tutorial services. For example, the Science Faculty provided female students with tutorial services for two semesters during the last academic year [2009/2010], and they were successful in retaining some of the students who were about to be dismissed. But there is no such thing called tutorial budget in the university. They [the colleges/faculties] had to do it from their internal budgets. Our Office for example has no budget for tutorial but only for assertiveness training services. The amorphous structure of the University is another problem. It is not really easy to communicate with deans and faculty level gender offices. I think the limitations related to tutorial services in the University are also associated with this lack of coordination (Wago, interview, 30 July 2010).

These challenges are partly attributable to the absence of institutional legislation that justifies the undertaking and specifies the roles of colleges, faculties and other units of the University. That is, the perceived lack of legitimacy has posed a challenge for gender equity. Without a strong legislative provision that ensures the legitimacy of isolated gender equity instruments, it is difficult to have them accepted and thereby to take root across various institutional units of the universities. To institutionalise effective academic support (e.g., remedial courses, basic-skills, tutoring, bridging courses) and avoid stigmatisation of the target groups, HEIs need to develop regularly scheduled peer-facilitated support programs aligned with classroom learning tasks, to position the programs as a campus-wide responsibility, to allocate stable resources to fund the program, and to adopt a standardised monitoring mechanism (Arendale, 2010; Tinto, 2012).

At this point, it is clear that the responses of these two universities to the national initiatives to promote gender equity in HE through supplementary tutorial courses varies significantly. What is striking in the case of WU is that the senior management member interviewed for this study, although she highlighted improvements in graduate rates of female students in the university as a result of gender-related support mechanisms put in place, did not know that there was no university-wide tutorial program to support female students. Nor did she recognise that supplementary tutorial courses were part of the national initiative for gender equity in public universities. In fact, the consequence of such reluctance to address the alarming inequality between men and women in the institution (as quantitatively depicted in Figure 9.1 below) is recognizable. For example, in the 2009/2010 academic year, the university admitted a total of 140 female students on affirmative action. Among them, more than 40% were reported to have scored below a passing mark and dropped out in the same year (internal document from Department of Women's Affairs, MoE).

It is noteworthy that low grade performance of female students cannot full be explained by academic underpreparedness. However, it can be attributed to hostile learning environments and repressive gender relations on campus. According to Tinto (1975), dropout rates of students have a direct relationship with institutional characteristics of the university. He argues:

It is the characteristics of the institution – its resources, facilities, structural arrangements, and composition of its members – that place limits upon the development and integration of individuals within the institution and that lead to the development of academic and social climates, or "presses," with which the individual must come to grips (Tinto, 1975, p.111).

Related to this, in an empirical study on the relationship between institutional habitus and student retention in HE, Thomas (2002) underscores the importance of academic experience as a key aspect of institutional habitus or characteristics that affect student performance and success. According to Thomas (2002, p.431), institutional habitus – defined as “the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation” – is an expression of organizational factors affecting student performance. In other words, academic experiences of students (as reflected in the curricula, instructional processes, flexibility and modes of assessment, and relationships with staff) provide a condition for changing or reproducing disadvantages and inequalities.

In fact, beyond supporting persistence, the supplementary classes for academically less prepared female students can also be seen as a means of tackling the risk of low quality graduates, as a result of lowering entry standards to accommodate the affirmative action policy of the government. The supplementary classes can help balance the quest of excellence and the commitment to fairness through complementing preferential admission policies at entry points with continued tailored support.

Bearing this in mind, it is time now to closely examine the third aspect of the institutional gender equity strategies: that is, assertiveness training and the role of the university gender offices.

8.1.3 The Gender Office and Assertiveness Training

Women-focused institutional establishments are recent phenomena in HEIs in Ethiopia. The first Women's Studies program was opened in 1995 in Addis Ababa University, and since then a number similar programs have been established at other institutions. The Gender Office at OU was established in 2000 as the Female Students Educational Centre. In WU, the Women's Affairs Office (now renamed the Gender Office) was opened in 2007. With the introduction of the Five Year Strategic Framework for enhancing the participation of women in HE (MoE, 2004b), most of the public universities have set up gender offices. In WU, the Office is run by a director and a deputy director, with eight coordinators at college/faculty level gender offices. In OU, the Office has a director at the main campus, and one focal person at the Technology Campus. The directors and deputy coordinators of the offices are graduates of Gender Studies, Sociology or Psychology.

The two offices seem to differ in the scope of their duties and responsibilities. According to the director of the Gender Office at WU, the mission of the Office is:

To achieve gender mainstreaming, and to create an enabling learning environment for female students (Wago, interview, 30 July 2010).

At OU, the director of the Office narrowly defined its responsibility as:

[S]upporting female students to strengthen their academic achievements (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

However, in practice, the two gender offices are doing the same thing – providing basic 'survival training' on assertiveness, study skills and other (health) issues for female students. Their practices draw on the assumption that female students joining the universities lack

assertiveness and confidence that impedes their active participation in the teaching-learning process, which, in turn, results in poor academic performance and eventual dismissal or dropout. The director of the Gender Office in OU explained the premise underpinning the activities of the Office as follows:

Females are not equally treated with males even at a family level. Then they are treated in a different way all the way through their primary and high school education. When they come here even they have that kind of problems. They are not assertive. Sometimes they start to cry. They are not decision-makers. [...] They always fear and become unsuccessful. They see the university as a horrible environment; [...] they come to us and said 'I would like to go out of this campus... I know that I am not capable' But the reasons are clearly lack of assertiveness and confidence (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

The assumption that assertiveness of female students has a direct link with their academic performance is well supported by empirical evidence. As Tinto's study on retention in HE shows, students are more likely to succeed if they are confident enough to socially and academically engage with faculty and peers, and thereby have greater involvement (both in terms of time and effort) in the learning experiences and other extra-curricular activities (Tinto, 1998, 2012). In other words, enhanced self-efficacy may mean an increased sense of belonging, interaction, aspirations and better academic performance. On the other hand, when students feel that they are undervalued and/or do not fit in the social setting, they put limited time and effort into the learning process, and that leads to poor academic performance and dismissal.

In the two universities included in this study, the gender offices focus on 'survival training' to reduce the attrition rate of female students. They provide periodical training on assertiveness, HIV/AIDS, reproductive issues, and study skills. The content of the assertiveness training includes interpersonal and communication skills. Under the study skills, female students are trained in how to take lecture notes, access and read reference books in the library, and ask questions and interact in the classroom. In OU, depending upon the availability of funding, the Office organizes five to eight training sessions annually on assertiveness, health and study skills. The Gender Office at WU intermittently organizes panel discussions and workshops on women's issues. It also works with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), to support financially needy female students. At the time of this study (2010/2011 academic year), there were 100 female students

at WU who were receiving monthly ‘pocket money’, amounting to 100 Ethiopian birr (around US\$7) from the YWCA.

Even though assertiveness training for women, if implemented effectively, is instrumental in enabling them to stand up for their rights, to learn to be heard, and to resist manipulation and mistreatment (Wisker, 1996), it is not a sufficient strategy. It is equally important to create gender awareness among men, to put protective laws in place, and to mainstream gender into the institutional activities of the universities. In this regard, the role of the gender offices in the two universities has been very little. Their activities have been seriously undermined by structural impediments such as lack of funding, and resistance from middle level university officials in their respective institutions.

To begin with, policy statements to guarantee gender equity among students and staff are not supported by the required amount of funding. Gender offices have no government budget. They are supposed to be financed from internal revenues of the university. As most of the universities have very low internal revenues, activities of the offices are highly undermined by lack of funding. In WU, in the 2009/2010 academic year, the annual budget for the gender office was 132,000 Ethiopian Birr (around US\$8,000), which was not enough even to cover assertiveness training throughout the year and other important expenses. Therefore, most of their functions are dependent on the availability of other funds, mainly from NGOs outside the universities. In explaining the extent to which the lack of financial commitment from the government has hindered the activities of the Gender Office, the director in WU remarked:

The Ministry of Finance [the government] has no budget for tutorials [...] Even if they have a budget it is just for office materials, for paper and everything. Some of them [college/faculty level gender officers] do not have offices at all. For example, in the College of Social Sciences, she (the gender office coordinator) sits in the library (interview, 30 July 2010).

Similarly, because of the small annual budget, in OU, the Office is selective in financing tutorial programs. It could not afford to organize supplementary classes for all courses. In addition, the Office has to find sponsoring NGOs and other organizations to run the health care and social skills trainings for female students.

Resistance to and insensitivity around women’s affairs is another barrier that the offices are facing. Regardless of the political commitment of top management members of the universities to promote gender equity in their respective universities (for example, in WU, the Gender Office answers directly to the President’s Office), actual implementation of the equity

strategies seems to have been seriously impeded by lack of gender sensitivity among the middle level university officials. In answering my question regarding whether or not there is gender sensitivity in the University, one member of the senior management body of WU, commented:

If we are talking about the leadership, at a strategic level and the strategic thinking [...], I say yes. If we are referring to system or institutional level, I say we are trying, we have started, or we are on the way. But, if we are referring to individual level, student or staff, I say we haven't been there. Because I know of individuals whenever you mentioned the issue, I mean 90 or 80% of the individual students or whatever part of the community reacts negatively (Wase, interview, 28 July 2010).

There are a number of cases of resistance to the gender equity arrangements of the universities. In WU, the central Gender Office is trying to decentralize the operation by organizing college/faculty level gender offices run by coordinators and deputy coordinators. Hence, currently, eight out of the seventeen colleges/faculties/schools of the university have gender offices. However, respective deans and directors remain reluctant to incorporate the offices into their systems, and to allocate a reasonable budget to run tutorial classes and training. The major point of resistance in WU is on the grounds that there is no a provision in the Senate Legislation on the institutionalization of gender offices at college/faculty/school level. As the director of the WU Gender Office noted:

Even administrators are the ones saying 'you are not in the legislation. You are not needed'. They have not yet understood that gender office is important under their structure. Many officials hesitate to accept college/faculty level gender offices. [...] For example, the President himself wrote a letter for each faculty and asked them to accept and support the gender offices [...] some of them accepted his requests, but still others rejected saying 'it is not supported by the legislation of the university' (interview, 30 July 2010).

The situation is no better at OU. The director of the Gender Office faced strong resistance from authorities when she tried to convince them that female students should receive continuing support so that they would be able to complete their studies. The director in OU explained the resistance and lack of commitment from the officials of the university as follows:

When it comes to the deans, they are very challenging. I was discussing for a long period of time with them about giving academically dismissed female students a second chance, but, you know, they never want to accept [my idea] (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

In order for gender-related institutional interventions to function properly, it is necessary to ensure their legitimacy through clear legal provisions. For instance, the Gender Mainstreaming Division of Makerere University (in Uganda) has successfully run well-organised gender mainstreaming programs partly because it has been legally recognised and widely supported by the university community (Kwesiga & Ssendiwala, 2006).

The resistance from the officials, inadequate funding for the gender offices and the narrowly framed ‘assertiveness solution’ are expressions of institutionally deep-seated, repressive gender order that necessitates much stronger policy provisions. Beyond a lack of assertiveness, factors contributing to low academic performance and subsequent high attrition rates among female students are deeply seated in institutional conditions that inhibit their academic and social involvement on campus. A relevant case study of female students’ dropout rates in Jimma University (Ethiopia) shows that sexual harassment and lack of appropriate guidance and counselling are among the major factors contributing to the problem (Melese & Fenta, 2009). Again, in a gendered classroom, male and female students are not equally positioned to get the best out of the learning process. Odala, one of the female students’ focus group discussants at OU, explained the situation:

I do not feel free and comfortable to ask and answer questions in the class. Even the male lecturers are not free to discuss with female students as everybody else would interpret it in different ways, that is, in sexual relations (FGD, 02 October 2010).

To address persisting gender inequalities in HE, other strategies are equally crucial. These could include, gender awareness training, protective legislation against sexual harassment and systematic marginalization of women; regulations on pedagogical practices and social relations that silence and objectify female students and staff; and financial commitments to support gender-related strategies and programs (including activities of gender offices).

Injustice is not all about unfair distribution of resources. It is also encompasses such disabling constraints as oppression and domination (Young, 1990). As such, institutional policies and practices for social equity should be relevant in order to challenge repressive gender relations that position women in a subordinate status in the institutions; and to create an enabling learning condition where women’s participation and contribution is recognised and respected as equal to that of their male peers. Yet, policy actors in Africa, by focusing on indicators of quantitative inequalities, overlook institutionally embedded disabling constraints that (re)produce the problem of gender inequality (Mama & Barnes, 2007).

Categorical inequalities are most often associated with what is in inequality studies referred to as cumulative disadvantage. Viewed from a social structure perspective, a cumulative disadvantage is a condition in which a less favourable relative position between social groups (e.g., men/women, privileged class/underprivileged class, ethnic minority/ethnic majority, etc.) becomes a limitation that produces further relative setbacks (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). In Ethiopia, being a woman can be a cumulative disadvantage because gender as a social relation has direct and indirect effects on what she can and cannot achieve relative to her male counterpart, which, in turn, affects her position in other spheres of life.

Moreover, as highlighted in Section 4.7, structural inequalities are intersectional. As we all function within “multiple and overlapping identities, there is no person whose status, and correlatively whose experience of injustice, takes a singular form” (Lynch, Cantillon & Baker, 2001, p.52). Intersectionality is a valuable policy concept to understand intertwining factors of disadvantage that women face in their ways to higher level education. For example, given the multidimensional social identity of women, on some occasions, it may be their gender which is the principal generator of their disadvantage. The condition of misrecognition, exploitation and marginalisation women experience may not be comparable with the experience of men in the same socio-economic status or ethnic background. In other cases, it may be the intersection of their gender, ethnic background, social class, and rurality that determines their relative position in educational settings and in society at large. Hence, without a proper appreciation to mutually reinforcing factors of disadvantage that interact and overlap to inhibit women from unleashing their potential and exercising their agency, it is difficult to devise sound gender equity policy instruments. In this regard, in many African universities, as the institutional gender order remains untransformed and policy instruments fail to grasp the intersectionality of structures of inequality in HE, women linger in a subordinate position (Mama, 2003).

The following section further problematizes the gender equity policies and strategies in terms of their responsiveness to structural gender inequality in HE.

8.2 Policy Inactions

As shown in the foregoing discussion, the urgency of gender equity as a HE policy issue has gained momentum in recent years, both at the national level and in public universities.

However, little attention has been given to the relevance of the instruments required to address structural challenges women face in HEIs.

One of the reasons why gender equity policies in education do not achieve their goals is because they rush to “problematize the male norms against which women were being assessed” and they construct women as “the problem” (Eveline, 1998, p.180). Other serious flaws of equity policies include:

Making institutional arrangements that cause or perpetuate patterns of inequitable relations; failing to challenge existing institutionalized practice, and so focusing on the product to be distributed rather than the deeply embedded institutional processes that enable distribution to occur in such a way that particular social groups are systematically disadvantaged; and incorrectly equating relational qualities such as opportunities with the distribution of material resources (Butler & Ferrier, 2000, p.61).

I refer to flaws in the institutional gender equity arrangements and strategies of the two universities as *policy inactions*. In this study, policy inaction is understood in three ways: as insensitivity to or exclusion of crucial problems that affect women (that is, *superficial framing*), problematic categorization of policy targets and viewing the problem as a personal rather than structural concern (that is, a *lack of conceptual clarity*), and not addressing a problem even once it is recognized in the policy (that is, the *implementation gap*). The silences in policy pronouncements can be in the form of insensitivity to and exclusion of a particular social issue from a public action, or in a partial/superficial framing of a problem. Policy inaction as an implementation gap is linked to the mismatch between policy pronouncements and the actual policy practices.

Superficial Framing

The problem of gender inequality in HE is deep-seated in the gender culture of institutions and the society at large (Molla, 2011b, 2013b; Morley, 2006; Morley & Crossouard, forthcoming; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2009). In a repressive gender culture, female students are, by reason of gendered cultural norms, frequently constrained by shyness and the reluctance to speak up, which then further impedes their active participation in the learning process. As such, substantive gender equality instruments and arrangements in HE need to take into account such factors as differential power relations, gendered labour divisions, and beliefs about the gender difference in the working and learning environments of the institution. And

yet, the equity policy instruments in the two universities favour quantitative gender equality achievement indicators such as admission rates of female students and the proportion of academic women. The instruments lack responsiveness to qualitative aspects of the problem of gender inequality in the subsystem.

The way a problem is represented in a policy determines the likelihood of its transformation (Bacchi, 1999, 2009a). In this regard, although a number of factors continue to inhibit effective participation of women within the HEIs, the institutional policies and arrangements superficially frame the problem of gender inequality as lack of assertiveness and other personal attributes. As a reflection of the policy silences at national level (discussed in Section 7.3.2), gender equity related strategies and programs in the two public universities are characterised by exclusion of, or insensitivity to, crucial aspects of women's problems. For instance, even though sexual harassment by male students and teachers has been reported to be a serious problem, gender related offences are not identified and included in the Code of Conduct of Students in the Senate Legislation of OU. While dishonesty, theft, dissemination of defamatory material, and disorderly conducts in general are mentioned as prohibited acts, the Legislation fails to recognize explicitly the seriousness of gender related offences in the university. The prohibited acts that constitute grounds for disciplinary actions are specified to be:

[D]isorderly conduct, assault, the threat of such conduct, or incitement of students for various unlawful acts based on race, ethnicity, religion, or other factors thereto (Article 166.1.2).

Understandably, the director of the Gender Office at OU believes that the absence of an enforceable university regulation against sexual harassment is an institutional failure to protect women. She argues:

There is the issue of harassment of female students by their male teachers. But they never come and complain. [...] she prefers to remain silent. That really hurts in many ways. This may be due to the absence of anti-harassment and misconduct policy by the university. This is an institutional weakness as it failed to come up with a working Code of Conduct for both the staff and the students (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

This tendency to overlook the structural causes of women's problems (and to persist in seeing many of the problems as lying with the women themselves) was reflected in an official's remarks regarding possible institutional constraints that hinder women from succeeding in the

University. For the official at OU, if there is any constraint in the empowerment of women in the University, it is mainly the culture of the society and the women themselves.

As part of the general Ethiopian culture and the society characterized by role specification for women and men, I don't see many of our female staff aspiring to be leaders, managers, department heads at different levels. For example, we have about 14 directors and deans, and we don't have even a single woman. [...] We may not see that much assertiveness from our female staff to claim those positions. Yet the institutional intention of the University is to encourage women to take up those positions. There was interest by the University for those who may want to assume managerial positions to list their names and indicate their aspirations. And if a female teaching staff does not do that, then the University would not give the position for her (Odam, interview, 18 September 2010).

What is overlooked in Odam's argument is that, where repressive power relations and negative stereotypes are entrenched in an institution and where there is no level playing field for men and women, policies limited to formal equality are inadequate. Contrary to his argument, there is enough evidence suggesting that the reason why women are not competing for managerial positions mainly has to do with the prevalence of negative stereotypes (prejudice) against them within the institution. In other words, the marginalization and inferior position of women is a result of sexism that systematically operates in the University. For example, by making disparaging comments, male colleagues discourage women from taking higher offices. The Gender Office director at OU contended:

They [women] fear being mistreated and undermined by male colleagues. Even if you are in a position of doing a mistake no one blames you as a man. They may say 'Oh! It is minor!' but if I do a mistake, they would say 'Oh! Because she is female!' (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

If women have to aspire for higher positions, universities should put well-planned professional development programs in place, support women to overcome their socialisation into gendered roles and expectations, and build their leadership aspirations. Based on their study on gender equity policies and practices in a South African university, Shackleton, Riordan and Simonis (2006) conclude that even if "policies mention gender, language is gender-sensitive, numbers are counted, and women are welcomed at the institution," in the absence of well-planned career development support, very few academic women rise to leadership positions (p.578).

In fact, senior officials' lack of empathy and understanding of women's situation in the institutions is striking. As shown in the following Chapter 9, most often female students do

not benefit much from learning experiences in the classroom, and they have to study hard outside classes to catch up with their male peers. However, the way to and from the library (at night) and the library itself is not safe for them. They face sexual harassment and bullying. Therefore, they are forced to study in their dormitories. Yet, the dormitories are usually overcrowded (during this study, up to 60 female students lived in a single room in the case of WU) and hence a suitable reading environment has always been a major concern. At OU, some of the female students report climbing up onto the roof of their dormitory to find a quiet reading space. According to the director, it was against this backdrop that, in his speech at a Coffee Ceremony event organized by the Female Students Club, the Dean of Students of the university was said to have advised female students:

Students, those of you who are studying at the roof of the dormitories, please do not do that again (Odago, interview, 17 September 2010).

In making this remark, the Dean could only see a problem related to health and safety. He did not closely examine the situation that forced the students to go up to the roof of the building in search of a reading space. As a result, he failed to realize the double burden that female students face: fear of harassment and bullying on their way to and from the library at night, and the overcrowded dormitory where they are unable to concentrate to read.

Lack of Conceptual Clarity

In the gender equity provisions and strategies of the two universities covered in this study, lack of conceptual clarity is expressed by a *problematic categorisation* and a *mislocation of the problem*. To begin with, neither the Proclamation (FDRE, 2009) and the Framework for gender equality in HE (MoE, 2004b) explicitly recognises the specific nature of gender-related inequalities in the subsystem, and this undermines the effectiveness of the equity instruments and programs put in place in public HEIs. The policy texts refer to all women as a “disadvantaged group”. This category not only conceals differences within the group but overlooks critical equity targets that, significantly, need specially tailored support.

In the case of WU, gender is considered to be more of a diversity issue than a typical social marker that defines inequality and disadvantage in the university. In the current Strategic Plan of the university, equity related concerns are stated as commitments to promoting “gender and other diversities,” “diversity along gender, ethnic and cultural perspectives,” and “gender and multiculturalism”. The categorization of women as a “disadvantaged group”, together

with people with a disability and geo-politically peripheral ethnic groups, is problematic because women and other groups do not have the same level and form of disadvantage in HE, and equity policies need to mark visible boundaries among the target groups. The problems of sexual harassment and gender based stereotypes women face in their working and learning environment are different from problems that people with a disability or from minority ethnic groups encounter in the same setting. In other words, the category not only conceals differences within the group but overlooks critical equity targets that significantly need specially tailored support (Butler & Ferrier, 2000). Besides, not framing gender as a major social marker in its own right may also undermine its place as a policy priority.

It is important to note that not all women fit into a unitary category, for they may have varying degrees of access to resources and differ in the respect and recognition they entertain in society (Butler & Ferrier, 2000). Gender equity in HE has a complicated pattern, and is intertwined with class, ethnicity and rurality as women differ in their access to and success in HE based on their ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well as geographic locations. A case study in Jordan shows that the expansion of private HE has significantly increased the participation of female students in universities. However, the participation has a class dimension. Poor women are still less represented, and therefore, inequality persists (Jansen, 2006). Again, in South Africa, although women's representation in universities was very poor in general, white women were relatively more privileged than their black counterparts who suffered "double oppression" during the Apartheid period (Mathabe, 2006). Therefore, in public policy, as Eveline argues:

[A]n understanding of the politics of categorizing would mean recognizing that direct comparisons of 'disadvantage' or 'advantage' cannot be made on the basis of gender or ethnic origin unless the prior structuring which orders 'men' and 'women', or [different ethnic groups] hierarchically is taken into account (1998, p.185).

Recognition of the specificities of gender inequality enables policy makers to understand different relations of power among the categories, and to design strategies that can compensate for the differences in structural advantages and disadvantages in the HE subsystem. In other words, a sound equity policy instrument needs to focus on the asymmetrical locations and allocations of advantage along the lines of and within the categories of gender, ethnicity, rurality, and class.

When it comes to the *mislocation of the problem* of gender inequality, by focusing on preferential admission and supplementary tutorial classes, the national gender equality strategic framework and institutional gender equity instruments of the two universities seem to assume that the underrepresentation of women in HE is attributable to their inability to compete with their male counterparts. By mislocating the problem of gender inequality as women's problem, policy actors have failed to address the disabling constraints that make women in HE systematically subservient and unequal. As Morley et al. rightly put it: "Attributing women's gendered differential participation to agency overlooks the degree to which women are able to develop their capacity for agency in contexts where power differentials influence their lives" (2006, p.6). Gender is a social system that defines differences between men and women, and produces patterns of inequality on the basis of those differences. Hence, gender-based inequalities are produced through social relations and interactions. For example, in the context of HE, gender affects what counts as knowledge, the representation of women in the student body and academic staff, their career choice and development, and their upward mobility in the managerial structure of the institution (Morley, 2006; Morley et al., 2006).

This misconception has resulted in a lack of genuine institutional effort to devise and enforce pertinent instruments to address qualitative indicators of gender inequality in HE, including sexual harassment, gendered streaming, subtle stereotypical labelling, invisibility of women's roles in the curricula, lower expectation of women's capacities and performance, and repressive power relations. The emphasis on assertiveness training and tutorial classes for female students assumes that underrepresentation of women in HE is attributable to their inability to compete with their male counterparts, and that they need special support. That is, the strategies problematize the women, rather than the institutional context, and practices that position them as unequal. The equity policy instruments do not address the deep-rooted factors in the institutional context and practices that position women as unequal. Instead of challenging patriarchal norms and practices in the subsystem, and creating an enabling learning environment (underpinned by respect, recognition and equal power relations) (Baker *et al.*, 2009), the policy instruments tend to attribute gender inequality to lack of confidence and the ill-preparedness of women.

A mere effort to increase the number of women in HE through affirmative action policies may not result in gender equity, as the learning and working environments persist to hinder their progress and success. An empirical study by Mersha, Bishaw, Asrat and Nigussie (2009)

shows that in the 2007/08 academic year, attrition rates of female students in five Ethiopian public universities (in faculties of education) was found to be much higher than their male peers: 43% female and 24% male in Mekele University; 38% female and 15% male in Jimma University; 36% female and 11% male in Haramaya University; 35% female and 8% male in Hawasa University; and 29% female and 7% male in Bahir Dar University. Another case study on attrition rates of female students in Debu University (now Hawassa University) shows that in 2003/04 academic year, more than 22% of female full-time undergraduate students enrolled dropped out due to lower academic achievement, while the rate of dismissal for male students was relatively low (6.3%) (Semela, 2007). Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data on the experiences of female students in the university, these studies (Mersha et al, 2009; Semela, 2007) confirm that socio-psychological factors related to unfavourable classroom situations and hostile campus environment significantly contributed to the higher attrition rate of female students. The problem of attrition could not fully be grasped and addressed without a proper understanding, in light of the gender culture of the society, of the institutional gender arrangement and the subsequent hostile learning environment.

Indeed, this high attrition rate among female students also has more damaging social consequences. For instance, in a FGD with students in WU it was highlighted that, out of lack of other possibilities and fear of shame, academically dismissed female students tend to move into sex-work in the capital and other major cities.

Implementation Gap

Finally, there is also inaction even when there is a policy pronouncement to address a particular problem. This is explained by the *wide gap* between the national policy provisions and the actual implementation in the institutions. Following Argyris and Schön's (1974) theories of action – theory espoused and theory-in-use – we can see the gender equity policies of the government in terms of policy espoused and policy-in-use. According to Argyris and Schön:

When someone is asked how he [sic] would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not

be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories (1974, pp. 6-7).

Similarly, in the public policy arena, a government may form a policy to address a social problem in a way that it satisfies a range of needs of the target population and electorates (in the case of democratic societies). This makes it policy espoused. It represents what the government would like to do, or what it would like others to think it does. Nevertheless, in practice, the form of the policy instruments and its implementation depends on other internal and external factors such as political and financial commitments, and the administrative structure of the government. This constitutes the policy-in-use. It is the actual policy put into effect.

In the case of gender equity policies in Ethiopia, more often than not the policies remain mere normative statements of authorities. They state how HEIs should act to enhance the participation of women. For example, the Strategic Framework identified major constraints of gender equity, including poor academic preparation, unfavourable learning environment, economic factors, underrepresentation of academic women, and limited research and courses on women's issues (MoE, 2004b, pp.3-26). Accordingly, it outlined a wide range of strategic objectives. In practice, there was no clear implementation guidance or follow up mechanism; and HEIs tend to limit their activities to tutorial classes to decrease female attrition rates. This lack of direction results in inactions and irregularities in the implementation of the policies and strategies. In stressing the importance of clear national guidance towards promoting gender equity in public HEIs, one of the senior management members of Odaax University comments:

We rarely have clear strategies. We have merely goals. Unless the Ministry of Education comes with a working, feasible document or policy that would show us as to how we can reach the target, general statements in national plans would remain much in the paper (Odam, interview, 18 September 2010).

Taking another specific case is in order here. With the goal of increasing the representation of academic women and thereby promoting the participation of female students in HE, the strategies outlined by the Strategic Framework include:

- Review current recruitment policy and if needed revise them to ensure gender-sensitive processes and procedures are in place
- Ensure selection criteria are not gender biased

- Develop mentoring programs to support junior female staff (MoE, 2004b, p.40).

At a statement level, these strategies appear to be sound. They are what the government would like HEIs to do, or what it wants others to think it does. However, empirical data from the two public universities included in the present study show that none of these were put into effect during the implementation period of the plan. For instance, while OU has managed to develop an academic staff employment policy with a three-point advantage for female applicants, WU had no clear institutional provision that benefits women in particular. The focus group discussions with academic women (including junior ones) in the two universities, elaborated on in Chapter 9, also confirmed that there was no program tailored to support junior academic women.

Again, while most public universities have established gender offices and opened Women's Studies programs, there is no practical arrangement to finance and staff the offices and to revise the curricula to mainstream gender within it. Even though the Strategic Framework sought to create enabling learning environment in HEIs, in practice, my interviews with staff with responsibility for gender equity reveals little has been done. The policy statements that set equity targets lack incentives and/or they are not supported by appropriate enforcement mechanisms. An enabling learning environment is made possible, among other things, through ensuring women's safety and mainstreaming gender into the curriculum. However, according to the gender office directors, in practice, the learning environment remains hostile for female students. During this study, the universities had no anti-harassment policy, the gender offices were not actively working on sexual harassment cases, and even though the two universities have established Gender Studies as disciplinary programs, there was very little effort to mainstream gendered knowledge, theory and methodology into academic disciplines. Nor were there gender awareness programs to bring about attitudinal changes in the university communities.

A national forum held in Adama (on 06-07 September 2010) to discuss gender-related problems in HEIs and mechanisms of academic support for female students, and a study on factors affecting female students' academic success in HEIs of Ethiopia (Mersha et al, 2009), highlighted the importance of challenging gendered relations and ensuring the safety and security of women in HEIs in Ethiopia. However, it is noteworthy that the absence of relevant gender policies to ensure the safety and security of women in HE is not necessarily due to

lack of evidence on the problem. What is missing is a serious engagement with the problem. For example, an exploratory study conducted in 1996 to investigate major challenges that female students faced in Addis Ababa University found that sexual harassment in the campus was a serious problem, that there were incidences of rape that exposed female students to unwanted pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, and that 'sexual transactions' between male teachers and female students were a problem in the university (CERTWID, 1996). A decade later, little had changed in relation to the problem. About 13% of the participants of a study on sexual harassment and violence in the same university had actually been raped, while 27.5% of them had suffered attempted rape and 58% of them had faced sexual harassment at some time in the past (IGS, 2005).

8.3 The Neoliberal Policy Connection

At this point, it is necessary to ask: how may these institutional policy inactions and the continued gender inequality in HEIs in Ethiopia be related to the *neoliberal policy factor* discussed in Section 7.4? I argue that, beyond the impediments posed by the gender order of the institutions, the neoliberal policy elements endorsed by the government provide the contextual and discursive dynamics that have shaped institutional responses and arrangements of the HEIs. They not only result in a superficial framing of the problem of inequality in HE but also constrain financial commitment and active involvement of the government to ensure gender equity in the subsystem. Financially, even though the government clearly states its commitment to allocate the necessary budget in support of gender equity in education (TGE, 1994), the cutting-back of spending and the increase in privatization, key aspects of the neoliberal agenda, undermine the implementation of gender-equity related policies and strategies. To illustrate, as I discussed earlier, there is no annual budget for the gender offices which are established as primary agents for gender equality in the universities. As a result, supplementary tutorial programs are only partially implemented, and the offices are not fully functional. As such, the existence of the policies is rendered nominal.

Also, as shown in Chapter 5, one of the neoliberal reform elements that the government has endorsed is the Strategic Plan Agreement. These agreements are a new form of accountability arrangement, in which the government expects public universities to meet some demands in order to receive public funding. As stipulated under Article 65.2e of the Proclamation (FDRE,

2009), in the name of institutional autonomy and power decentralisation, the government has transferred to the universities the responsibility of protecting the rights and benefits of historically and socially disadvantaged groups. Promoting gender equity is a key performance indicator in the Agreement. However, as the Agreement includes only quantitative indicators of participation of disadvantaged groups, the institutions focus on merely bringing in more members of equity target groups, and providing supplementary tutorial classes and assertiveness training to increase their completion rates. Therefore, institutional structural barriers (e.g., repressive gender power relations and insecurity) that require strong political and financial commitment of the government are ignored in the policy statements, and when they are included in the policies, they are left out in the implementation. Related to this, the government lacks the capacity to coordinate and follow up the implementation of the policies. For example, even though an affirmative action admission policy has been in place for the last fifteen years, until 2010, the government had no record on the number of beneficiaries of this policy, whether they finished their degree or not, and hence the overall effectiveness of the policy.

In the context of a highly patriarchal society where women are deprived of many opportunities, and there is deep-rooted poverty and historical ethnic stratification, the neoliberal educational agenda of privatization risks becoming an instrument of inequality reproduction in HE. The economic efficiency agenda overlooks the social equity dimension of the mission of HE, while reduced public spending curtails expansion for equitable participation in the subsystem. It is argued that the drive for greater efficiency and reduced costs in educational provision that is embedded in the adjustment and poverty reduction packages (the 'hard' economics-driven agenda), are inconsistent with a commitment to gender equity in education, society and the labour market (the 'soft' social development agenda) (Leach, 2000, p.345). The privatization trend slowly shifts the responsibility from the state to the individual, and this leaves the poor (majority of the women) at the risk of exclusion from higher level education and training as they may not be able to afford tuition fees and other costs of higher level education and training. In Ethiopia, social values conferred on men and women shape their social roles and opportunities differently (Levine, 1999). When these gendered social values are reinforced in administrative and pedagogical arrangements in HEIs, they become systemic factors of gender inequality. As Okeke-Ihejirika concludes:

The overriding emphasis on expanding opportunities for women merely in terms of numbers does not adequately address the problem of gender inequity in Africa's higher education. [...] Any attempts at tackling the problem of gender inequity in higher education should begin *with critical assessments of both the conditions under which African women receive this training and the utility of the credentials received – for women and for society* [emphasis in the original] (2009, p.211).

In already highly unequal societies, equal access to HE tends to reproduce inequality in different ways. Gender-based institutional oppression may continue in the form of material deprivation. It constrains women's full participation in decision-making, and entrenches the sexual division of labour, violence, and sexual harassment. In other words, equity policy provisions should be comprehensive enough to address qualitative dimensions of the problem of inequality through enabling instruments and arrangements. Walker (2007, pp.189-190) identifies key educational capabilities for gender equality, including: being able to have intrinsically and instrumentally useful analytical and scientific knowledge: recognition and respect to and from others: aspiration to succeed and learn: and a voice for participation in learning and for challenging mistreatment. As such, to tackle women's powerlessness and subordination and to support their capability to active participation, HEIs should enact legislation and policies that protect women from being silenced through hostile power relations and curricular and pedagogical misrepresentations and exclusions.

In conclusion, in response to the national initiatives towards gender equity, HEIs have introduced policies and strategies to increase the participation of women. However, the equity policies put in place by the institutions are not comprehensive and their implementation has been hampered by the superficial representation of the problems, as well as by financial constraints and patriarchal resistance from the university officials. As a result, there is no significant policy or strategy for mainstreaming gender, enhancing women's participation in managerial positions, establishing a flexible and favourable working environment for women, and protecting female students from sexual harassment and abuse.

Given the scope and breadth the institutional gender equity policy provisions and arrangements, it is imperative to explicate the experiences and meaning of women regarding gender-related changes and challenges in their institutions. The next chapter takes up this point in a considerable detail.

Chapter 9

The Lived Experiences of Women in HE

While non-discriminatory (equal) access to HE can be considered a good starting point for a policy, given the structural impediments (including the intersection of the gender order, poverty and disadvantaged ethnic background), the educational and working experience of women within the HEIs equally deserves considerable policy attention. Gendered power relations, that operate at micro- and macro-levels, are pivotal in the position and progress of women. In this chapter, I focus specifically on inequalities in educational experiences and social relations of women in HE, from the perspective of female students and academics. The gender order of HEIs – as expressed in power relations, division of labour, and cultural beliefs and stereotypes (Connell, 2009; Ridgeway, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009) – shapes the experience of men and women differently.

Most often, international and national gender equity initiatives use indicators related to the number of female staff and students rather than women's gendered experiences in the educational setting (Arnot & Fennell, 2008). Put in a public action context, the lived experiences of women in HE embodies policy actions and inactions; and explicating the experiences can highlight the relevance of equity policy instruments put in place in the institutions. It is believed that human beings have a natural inclination to understand and make meaning out of their lives and experiences; and as such, lived experience is a privileged site of knowledge production (Croswell, 1998). Through interpretive analysis of qualitative data drawn from focus group discussions (FGDs) with women in HE, I endeavour to understand and co-construct meanings in relation to gendered relations, and equity arrangements and instruments, in their respective institutions. Through explicating gender inequality as experienced by female students and academics, the chapter seeks to question the relevance of broad national and institutional equity policy provisions and arrangements.

Even though the phenomenon of gender inequality in HE may be prevalent anywhere, the meaning attributed to the respective experience would not be the same and consistent (Luke, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to construct context-specific knowledge on gender equity in higher education. In light of the foregoing analysis chapters — that discuss the HE reform

context and content, the representation of the problem of inequality in the reform, and gender equity-related institutional changes and arrangements in the two public universities — in this chapter I present an account of the lived experiences of women in HEIs in Ethiopia. Discussions with women in HE were mainly aimed at mapping their experience in relation to those gender equity-related institutional changes and arrangements. The FGDs were conducted in a way that the participants could describe and reflect on their experiences in relation to the policy provisions in their respective institutions. Drawing on the lived experiences of women in the two public universities, I explore individual and shared meanings and experiences in relation to national and institutional gender equity provisions, which are in turn located in the broad neoliberal reform agenda. The analysis focuses on second order reform effects – impacts of institutional practices and structural changes on the policy targets (Ball, 2005). It presents evidence of changes that have benefited women as well as stories that show the gap between the macro-level policy aspirations (as presented in the previous two chapters) and the micro-level experiences of the policy targets: that is, women. The discussion is presented under the headings of three major themes: limited changes that benefit women (Section 9.1), conformity to structures of disadvantage (Section 9.2), and persisting inequalities (Section 9.3). The first theme recounts three key equity policy provisions that benefit women. The second theme explicates how and why women fail to identify and problematize subtle factors of inequality embedded in their institutions. The third theme covers structural impediments that constrain women in HE, expressed in the form of prejudice and lower expectations, hostile learning environments, and experiences of powerlessness amongst women.

9.1 Limited Changes that Benefit Women

As shown in Chapters 7 and 8 above, the national gender equity initiatives, albeit superficial in orientation, have positive consequences in making public universities put some form of equity instruments in place. The instruments range from supplementary tutorial classes for female students (e.g., in Odaax University, OU) to scholarships for female applicants for graduate studies (e.g., in Washeray University, WU). The discussants in this research believe that some of the institutional arrangements have availed women. The following three arrangements have been particularly underscored – preferential academic recruitment for

women, the establishment of Women's Studies units as centres of knowledge production, and supplementary tutorial classes for academically underprepared female students.

First, even if on a limited scale, affirmative action policies in the universities have advantaged women. Two examples stand out as particularly significant. In WU, there is a scholarship for women who wish to pursue their postgraduate studies in the university. In the last few years, the University provided 100 fully funded scholarships for women annually. In 2010/2011 academic year, the university awarded a partial scholarship (waived tuition fees) for 107 more female candidates. Wahi²³, one of the focus group discussant academic women in WU, appreciated what her university has done as follows:

As women are not most of the time attracted to masters' and doctoral programs due to financial reasons and family responsibilities, the scholarship is a practical response to help them advance in their studies. I think we should acknowledge the accomplishment of this university. Many women are now back to their studies after long time. This is a big deal, I think. Other universities should learn from us (FGD, 25 October 2010).

The YWCA in association with University's Female Students' Association, provides financial supports for female students. As a story of one student in the FGD at WU shows, this financial support has a positive impact on the beneficiaries. She reflected:

I come from a poor family. While doing my undergraduate study, sometimes I even had no money for basic utilities. I mean, basics for girls. I was worried and could not concentrate on my study. Later, an organization [YWCA] provided me with a scholarship of 100 ETB per month and it was a relief. I studied hard and I concentrated on my courses and became a competent student. I graduated with a higher grade and that helped me to continue my graduate study in WU (Wastu, FGD, 12 September 2010).

In OU, there is a well-defined preferential female staff recruitment policy. Women applicants get a three-point advantage over their male counterparts. Most of the discussants agreed that preferential recruitment for female staff has made a significant contribution to increasing the number of women in HEIs. For example, in the case of OU, mainly as a result of the affirmative action recruitment policy, the number of female academic staff has increased from nil in 1999 to 105 in 2009 (see Section 8.1.1 above). As the discussants noted, with the increase in the number of female staff in the university, women are now represented in mid-level decision-making forums, including academic commissions.

²³ The names I use in reporting views and accounts of the specific participants are pseudonyms.

Second, notwithstanding the financial and human resource constraints, gender offices of the universities try to promote women's issues at different levels and forums. At WU, the Gender Office has Women's Units in each college, faculty and institute. These Units are responsible for the learning and progress of female students in their respective college/faculty/institute. The discussants agreed that if well financed and staffed, the units have the potential to support women. At OU, at the centre of the Gender Office's activities is managing supplementary tutorial classes for female students. Unlike at WU, supplementary tutorial classes for female students at OU are well-organized under the central management of the Gender Office of the University.

Finally, the universities included in this study have Gender Studies as an academic discipline. Academic women in the FGDs believe that Women's Studies can play a critical role in producing knowledge, promoting women-oriented research, and sensitizing gender issues and programs. By doing so, they maintain, it can bring women into the forefront and empower them to assume positions in different decision-making roles in the government and outside the government.

9.2 Conformity to Structures of Disadvantage

Beyond the recognition of the changes that availed women in the institutions, there is also a tendency among some of the discussants (academic women) to see gender-based inequalities in the institutions as legitimate – reasonable and hence acceptable. They did not see gender inequality as a critical problem in the institutions. For them, so long as the universities have no discriminatory rules, the problem of gender inequality is not a big concern. For instance, Walu, from WU, believes that since there is no intentional discrimination in the rules of the University and women are given equal access to courses, it is fair to say that gender equality is well served in the institution. In commenting on my question regarding the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions, she argued:

[...] I think, that [the absence of women in senior management positions] has to do with the number of female instructors. [...] it is not because that women are less competitive but because they are very few in number (Walu, FGD, 25 October 2010).

Gender-based structural constraints are evident in the marginal position of women in the universities. For example, there was not a single woman professor in the country until 2009

and, during this study, all the 22 public universities were run by men. Despite the broader and subtle structural barriers they face, lack of merit is the ideology that justifies women's underrepresentation in senior- and middle-level management positions, and in career development opportunities. This tendency of not viewing oneself as deprived, regardless of membership in a disadvantage group, as noticed among some of the academic women in the two institutions, not only reinforces the inequality but also weakens resistance against systemic repression. The tendency not to question deeply-seated structures of repression and injustice can be attributed to ideologies/discourses consciously constructed by dominant groups in society, and women's subsequent self-perception and pessimism. In a patriarchal ideology, categories and relations of domination are constructed as neutral, so that objects of domination (usually women) would take the condition as being normal and acceptable. Bourdieu (2001) frames this situation as "symbolic violence". He explains:

Symbolic violence is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination) when, to shape her thought of him, and herself, or, rather, her thought of her relation with him, she has only cognitive instruments that she shares with him and which, being no more than the embodied form of the relation of domination, cause that relation to appear as natural (Bourdieu, 2001, p.35).

Related to this, nominal institutional arrangements towards gender equity, coupled with women's socialization in the repressive gender culture of the society, have positioned them in conformity with the existing gender order of the institutions. Women have been socialized to be polite and compliant in the family and in the society at large, and the social relations in HEIs only reinforce their lack of assertiveness and confidence about themselves. As a result they have internalized the stereotypes. In a context of structural inequality, partly due to the subtlety of the process, disadvantaged individuals tend to view their experience as an isolated incident rather than as a part of a categorical deprivation. This is what Rudman & Glick refer to as "denial of personal discrimination" (2008, p.193). Odage, an academic woman at OU, observes that women's self-perception conforms to and is shaped by gender-biased attitudes and low expectations towards women. She reflected:

We do not believe that we can do things as efficiently as men can do. I can explain my experience here. The Dean asked me to take some responsibilities (tasks), and I was not confident enough to accept at that time. Rather I told him that I would like to do the task with somebody, and that somebody was my male colleague in the department. This was due to my own lack of confidence in me (FGD, 23 September 2010).

A similar explanation was echoed by the senior university management member of WU I interviewed for this study:

The challenges are not only men by the way. Even women have real difficulties to accept that they are capable. I can't say that the woman is oppressed because she stays home and raises the kids only. She may choose that way of life. She may be comfortable with it. This is a self-imposed oppression that requires a lot if we have to achieve gender equity at any level in the society (Wase, interview, 28 July 2010).

The predisposition of women to conform to the gender norms and expectations of the institutions can partly be explained by the intricacy of the problem that makes them unable to recognize the disadvantages they experience in the social space where they work and learn. Institutionalised social inequalities, as they are embedded in the structures and practices of institutions and persist without conscious efforts of the participants, tend to reproduce themselves with invisible and 'depersonalized' forms in which dominant group members not only may fail to acknowledge that inequality exists, but are also unlikely to feel personally responsible or guilty. Subordinate group members may also experience institutionalized inequalities as 'just the way things are'. As Wharton rightly puts it: "The dominant group's vested interest in perpetuating inequality, together with the subordinate group's lack of alternatives, shape the ways both groups make sense of their relationship" (2005, p.221). When it comes to the problem of gender inequality, Morley argues that institutional 'micropolitics', that is, the way power is relayed "through seemingly trivial incidents and transactions", makes repressive gender relations in HE indefinable; and this elusiveness and subtlety occasionally "leaves recipients of discriminatory behaviour unsure about the accuracy of their interpretations" of the situation they are in (2006, p.544).

Furthermore, as the evidence in this study shows, women's conformity to gender norms, and socialization into inequality seems to have stemmed from their sense of pessimism about changes underway in the institutions. A group of discussants at OU stressed that mere assertiveness may have deterrent effects, as going out alone in the evening or freely interacting with male students and teachers can be at times be seen as a voluntary exposure to sexual assault and harassment. Hence, in the absence of strong legal protection for the rights of women on campus, being less assertive and quiet appears to be a survival strategy in use by many women, in order not to bring attention to themselves.

9.3 Persisting Inequalities

In most cases, the benefits we enjoy and the burdens we suffer are located in or defined by the social system we live in. As members of a human community, we act within a particular social structure – social norms, rules, expectations and resources (Tilly, 1998). Social structures, as patterns of relations and constraints, determine our opportunities and freedom in society. Young (2000) uses Marilyn Frye’s birdcage metaphor to explain how social structure functions to inhibit individuals. She writes:

The cage makes the bird entirely unfree to fly. If one studies the causes of this imprisonment by looking at one wire at a time, however, it appears puzzling. How does a wire only a couple of centimetres wide prevent a bird’s flight? One wire at a time, we can neither describe nor explain the inhibition of the bird’s flight. Only a large number of wires arranged in a specific way and connected to one another to enclose the bird and reinforce one another’s rigidity can explain why the bird is unable to fly freely (Young, 2000, pp.92-93).

Social structures, like the cage, limit opportunities and shape actions of individuals in the given institution or society to produce structural, durable inequalities. Hence, in Connell’s words: “To describe structure is to specify what it is in the situation that constrains the play of practice” (1987, p.95).

As has been shown in the theoretical framework I outline above, durable inequalities are fundamentally deep-rooted in the organization and functioning of the society; and operate on the basis of such key social categories as gender, class, ethnicity, and rurality. Nevertheless, gender is the focus here. Gender inequality in HE can be at individual, interactional and institutional levels, and may manifest in different forms: access to institutions and programs, campus climate, interaction with teachers, instructional processes, and employment and promotion (Miller & Miller, 2002). In Ethiopia, at one level, as women are socialised to remain quiet, less assertive and dependent, they lack the social and cultural capital required to succeed in the new context of HEIs. Again, in a patriarchal society like Ethiopia, HEIs are male-dominated, hierarchical and hostile. Consequently, beyond measurable material distribution, gender inequality manifests in the deprivation of respect and recognition to women, the sexual division of labour, sexual harassment, differential power relations, and other qualitative disabling constraints that affect women in their learning and working environments.

It is with this backdrop that the relevance and effects of equity policy initiatives and provisions in the two institutions need to be analysed. Addressing structural inequalities in education requires challenging existing institutionalized practices and tackling relational dimensions of the problem (Butler & Ferrier, 2000). This in turn requires a closer look at gendered experiences and power relations within educational institutions. Without substantive/enabling equity instruments that address structural barriers women face in HE and promote their agency, gender inequality tends to persist, despite nominal gains in statistical terms. This is the situation that Bourdieu refers to as “permanence in and through change” (2007, p.95).

The remaining part of this chapter, based on FGDs with female staff and students from OU and WU, focuses on what might be categorised as key features of persisting gender inequalities in Ethiopian HE. Three themes are developed to explicate discussants’ experience of hostility, prejudice, oppression, and marginalization in their respective institutions. Even though female staff and students share a great deal of gendered experiences (Section 9.3.2), they also emphasise different issues. Female students specially highlight the hostile learning environment (mainly bullying and sexual harassment) as a key concern (Section 9.3.1) while academic women tend to underscore their powerlessness in their working environment (Section 9.3.3).

9.3.1 Hostile Learning Environment

As we saw in Chapter 8, an affirmative action policy limited to increasing the number of female students assumes a level playing field within the HEIs. However, as the evidence discussed shows, HEIs are not gender neutral, and women and men are not similarly situated. Empirical evidence from the experience of women in HEIs in Ethiopia shows, in the context of a repressive gender order, simply bringing in more women into HE does very little in terms of achieving gender equity.

As the lived experiences of female students show, the universities are found to be hostile learning environments. Here ‘learning environment’ refers to relations and interactions inside and outside the classroom. It specifically indicates female students’ relationship with their male peers and teachers. The FGDs with female students revealed that the hostility of the HE environment to women is mainly (but not exclusively) related to sexual harassment within the institutions.

Sexual harassment is an imposition of unwanted sexual requirements, and is intrinsically linked with unequal power relations – it is “a gendered expression of power” (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004, p.64). Michael Kimmel identifies two broad categories of sexual harassment:

In the most obvious, quid pro quo form, a trade of sexual contact is offered for a reward or the avoidance of punishment. This is the sex-for-grades model of teacher-student interaction [...]

The second is far murkier and is understood as the creation of a ‘hostile environment,’ one in which women feel compromised, threatened, or unsafe (2008, pp.225-226).

Discussions with women in the two universities disclose that both these forms of sexual harassment exist in public universities in Ethiopia. Female students are asked for sex in exchange for good grades from male teachers, and face sexual assault and bullying from their male peers in lecture halls and in libraries. There are reported cases of sexual abuse by male teachers and students against female students in the two universities. Odafi is a graduate student at OU. She shared her story about her experience when she was doing her undergraduate degree:

When I was a third year student, one of the male teachers in the Department asked me for love affairs and I declined to accept because I was not interested to have a boyfriend or get married. I had other priorities. Yet he insisted asking me the same question. One day he called on me to his office and brought my exam papers and warned me: “here are your answers for the essay questions and the result is in my hand. If you accept my request, you will get ‘A’ and if you are still not willing to accept you will get ‘F’ (failing)”. I was worried. What can I do with it. If I took the case to the Dean Office, I knew they would not take any measure to help me. I lost hope. My dream to graduate and get a job was frustrated. I could not read well. I could not tell to other friends as my life would be endangered if the rumour reached him. I had to share the issue only to one of my closest friends. [...] she advised me to go to his office and tell him that I would do all what he needed after the result was released. I did as I was advised. But he was not convinced and gave me a low grade. I suffered a lot for being a woman and for not accepting his request. I never forget this experience (Odafi, FGD, 02 October 2010).

The same kind of offensive behaviour also comes from their male peers. Odlá’s experience at OU shows the magnitude of the hostility that female students face. Her story was revealing:

I have sad experience in the library. On one evening I had to prepare for an exam [...] I was reading in the University library at night. At around 2am this male student came to me and asked what time it was. I told him. He

came closer and seated next to me. Then he sent his leg and touched my feet. After a while, he tried to physically abuse me. I escaped and went to my dormitory crying. I did not expect this kind of aggressive behaviour in a library. Library was supposed to be a safe place. Sadly, male students do not take this action seriously. [They] try to simplify it just an expression of a natural and harmless feeling. This is not true for me. It is a cruel offense one may encounter (Odlá, FGD, 02 October 2010).

This can be linked with the irrational hidden curriculum that furnishes the mind-set of male students on campus (Morley, 2006). That is, sexual harassment of female students by their male peers may be considered an expression of manhood and hence perceived as legitimate. Clearly, addressing this requires working on promoting stronger gender awareness among male staff and students.

The trouble female students are undergoing is known to academic women in the universities. In one of the FGDs, Wahi from WU reminded the group:

In such male-dominated institutional culture, harassment is a big problem. Female students are harassed by their male friends and male teachers. As a result, they come to be subjects of socio-psychological problems which is mainly manifested by poor academic performance and higher attrition rate compared to their male counterparts. For your surprise, even though harassment is a visible problem, there is no harassment policy in place. I know the existence of policy would never guarantee meaningful implementation, but still, to have a policy is a starting point to deal with the challenge we encounter in our day to day activities (21 September 2010).

Poverty as a key factor contributes to the hostile learning environment of female students. As revealed in the FGDs, many female students could not even fulfil their personal hygiene necessities; and in some cases this has forced them to get involved in sex work outside the universities to provide for basic supplies. One of the student discussants at WU commented:

Economic problem is very serious in fact for female students. When they face such situations, they tend to go outside the campus and start sex life to earn money. That is, they would have what is called “sugar daddies”. This places their lives at risk as they may catch HIV/AIDS and other diseases. This makes the situation with female students rather harsher (Wase, FGD, 21 September 2010).

The activity costs them their health, moral and social relations, and it points to the need for well-organized counselling services as well as financial support for the neediest female students. The problem is so pressing that, in early 2011, OU set up a special committee that works on tackling the increased female students’ involvement in sex-work in cooperation with hotels and members of the community outside the university. Instead of characterising

the issue as an immoral behaviour of a few female students, it is imperative to question the underlying reasons that force female students to take part in the activity.

A hostile learning environment as expressed by sexual harassment has critical repercussions on the progress and success of female students in HE. Most of the female students who took part in the discussions stressed that the library services and dormitory conditions are not favourable to study. As discussed earlier, in WU, 50 to 60 female students live in a single dormitory, making private study almost impossible. On the other hand, assignments for major courses require extensive reading, which places the onus on individual students to ensure their own progress. Male students can go to the library anytime they like and do their assignments while their female counterparts face various obstacles to doing so. The day time is occupied by classes and they have not much time to read in the library. At night, there is fear of male students' bullying them on their way to and inside the library. This makes the issue of quiet and safe places for private study all the more important for female students. Without such conditions, the success of female students remains questionable.

What is even more worrisome is that most of the victims of sexual harassment do not report incidents to the university authorities. As learned from the FGDs, this is mainly attributable to their sense of helplessness as there is no viable institutional body to respond to such issues. Louise Morley's study, which reports the phenomenon of sexual harassment in selected universities in Ghana and Tanzania, shows that female students who have been subjects of sexual harassment of different forms, including "transactional sex", fail to report either "for fear of victimization and stigmatization" or for not labelling "these culturally pervasive behaviours as sexual harassment" (2011, p.112). Discussants in my study made clear that, especially when the case involves male teachers, fear of revenge by the offender and his colleagues is a key reason for silence of victims of sexual harassment in their institutions. Odabe, one of the discussants in the FGD at OU, underscored:

The challenge is that whenever a female student is harassed by her male teacher and complains to the department head, no action is taken. Rather all his friends would take it as an offense against their dignity and seek to avenge the complaint. [...] To be honest, if I were the victim I would prefer to stay silent (02 October 2010).

It is clear from the stories of the discussants that there is a lack of protection and pertinent legal action against hostile encounters they face in campus. Wame, one of the participants of the female students' FGD in WU and a member of the leadership of University's Female

Students Association, affirmed that there were a number of harassment cases reported by female students in the 2009/2010 academic year. As she noted, the University is particularly reluctant to take action against male academic staff who are allegedly involved in “sexual corruption” with female students. She continued:

I would like to tell you a case that I know of because of my status as a member of the University’s Female Students Association. The case was that a teacher asked his graduating female student for sex. She rejected the request even though she knew that she would suffer from the bad consequence from him and his friends in the department. As a result she got 3 Fs [failing grades]. So, she reported to the department, and later to the ministry of Women’s Affairs. All her efforts were with no tangible result. She had to spend another year to take the three courses again. She was morally damaged as well (FGD, 21 September 2010).

She also mentioned that the campus hostility has more damaging effects on female students from rural areas than on their peers from urban centres. According to Wame, the university setting presents female students from rural areas with a unique and challenging experience, far removed from their cultural values and norms. Their shyness and lack of assertiveness ill-equips them to deal with sexual harassment in the new environment of the university. A high rate of attrition among this group of students (Andualem & Gebre-Egziabher, 2009) can partly be ascribed to excessive fear and stress, which eventually puts their academic survival in question.

The hostile learning environment coupled with poor physical facilities of the universities results in increased dropout and dismissal rates among female students. This in turn makes the pool of academic women for recruitment very low and this reinforces the underrepresentation of women in higher learning institutions and positions. A hostile learning environment and inequitable educational experience means unequal learning outcomes, and hence social inequality at large. Most importantly, sexual harassment in HEIs should be seen as an attack on women’s rights to education; and HEIs need to take serious actions to ensure the safety of their female students and staff. The universities not only should enact codes of ethics that define principles, norms and behaviours expected of the university community, but also, accordingly, formulate codes of conduct that outline rules and guidelines on actions applicable to members of the community in relation to the ethical issues. The absence of appropriate guidance and counselling support within the institutions exacerbates the problem. Psychological stress and socio-economic troubles of female students necessitate viable support mechanisms, possibly run by the gender offices of the universities. However, the

offices are undermined by serious financial constraints and lack of coordination. As a result, their critical role to raising gender consciousness and thereby enhancing women's confidence in the universities has been seriously hampered. Without relevant policies and arrangements to improve the educational experience of female students and protect women from sexual abuses, the gains from equitable access are undermined by high dropout rate and low progress rate that result from enduring hostility and marginalization.

Without a favourable learning environment, female students' increased formal (physical) access through equitable admission policies may not guarantee effective participation in learning experiences. It may not assure what Morrow refers to as "epistemological access," which includes "learning how to become a participant in academic practice" (1994, p.40) and thereby accessing the knowledge and skills that the institutions accrue. In assessing the enabling and constraining effects of institutional norms, values, policies and practices (including instructional arrangements), HEIs should take into account the specific learning needs and socio-cultural resources of their students. For example, in a patriarchal society such as Ethiopia, in order to promote successful learning of female students, universities should, among other things, restructure their curricula in a way that women's roles and contributions are properly recognised and respected, and the learning processes are freed from stereotypes and misrepresentations.

9.3.2 Prejudice

From a categorical/structural inequality perspective (discussed in Chapter 2), prejudice about a social group is one of the key instruments of marginalization and subordination, and is enacted in social interactions and communications. As an ideology of oppression that universalises experiences, norms and expectations of men, patriarchy involves what Young refers to as cultural imperialism, by which the culturally dominated "are both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible" (1990, p.59). A negative stereotype is an expression of cultural domination and underlies durable inequality – it confines the dominated "to a nature which is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which thus cannot easily be denied" (Young, 1990, p.59).

Stereotyping mainly involves attributing specific negative or positive characteristics to individuals only because of their membership in a group. As a negative stereotype, prejudice is broadly defined as "the process of categorization (generalization) and subsequent

indiscriminate dislike or animosity toward the relevant category and its members” (Bodenhausen & Richeson, 2010, p.342). According to social psychologists Robert A. Baron and Donn Byrne, people hold irrational negative views (prejudice) toward a social group because it allows them to bolster their own self-image (to feel superior) in a real or imagined competition among the groups over valued opportunities (e.g., high status and power); and/or because they are socialised to view a particular group unfavourably (Baron & Byrne, 2003). The result may range from mistreatment and discrimination to dehumanization of members of the group.

In a patriarchal society, prejudice towards women constitutes the gender culture; and HEIs as part of the society present a “social relational context” (Ridgeway, 2009; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) framed by norms and values that position women in a particular way. Power relations, beliefs, assumptions, and practices shaping the interaction of men and women in the classroom and at the workplace are closely linked to the broader gender culture of the society. We become gendered when we believe that “men and women are different and unequal, that the inequality comes from those differences, and that, therefore, such inequality is justified” (Kimmel, 2008, P.176); and this has a lot to do with our prejudicial socialization.

In this regard, discourse is instrumental in communicating stereotypes. Discursive repression in a society functions when a dominant group has the communicative control of knowledge and beliefs over a dominated social group, and when the regime of truth (that is the imposed or accepted discourse) marginalises or constrains certain groups (Foucault, 1980). In patriarchal societies, such as Ethiopia, truth is discursively constructed and reconstructed to reinforce the ideology of masculinity, and the unequal relationship between men and women. Such repressive ideology is expressed in gender-related proverbs in Ethiopian society. Women’s potential and position in the public sphere is discursively constructed as subservient in proverbs such as “Women can grow tall but without wisdom”, “Women in the kitchen, man in the court”, etc. (Hussein, 2009, p.103).

In a subtle way, this patriarchal ideology continues to operate in the Ethiopian education system. The learning experiences – the subject/course content (curriculum) to be taught and the pedagogical arrangements that students engage in – are crucial sites of cultural reproduction and transformation. They reflect teachers’ expectations and assumptions about gender roles. The curricula play roles in maintaining or challenging the gender status-quo in society. Drawing on Bernstein’s idea of visible and invisible pedagogies, Arnot (2002) shows

that cultural practices and structures in a society affect pedagogical arrangements and relations in the classroom. How does the formal curriculum depict women and their roles: independent, brilliant scientist and problem solving; or dependent, loving and care-giving to their family; or both? In the actual learning process, the gendered aspect of the pedagogical arrangements can be expressed by male students' domination of the classroom discussion, differential visibility of students (usually male students seating at the front) and the teachers' tendency to interact more with male students than their female peers, and the use of sexist language and gender biased contents in the classroom (Blickenstaff, 2005). In their guide to gender-sensitive classrooms, Sandler, Silverberg, and Hall (1996, pp.10-17) have identified a number of categories of differential behaviours that constitute gender-based "micro-inequalities" in a classroom: communicating low expectations for women students, making disparaging remarks on women's issues, giving them less attention and intellectual encouragement, and discouraging them subtly through politeness and sexualised remarks. Hence, patterns of classroom interactions among men and women students and teachers can be used to trace patterns and forms of gender inequality in education. As Morley puts it, "The gendering of time, space and content influences the learning environment and provides potent verbal and non-verbal signals about inclusion and exclusion or margins and mainstreams" (2006, p.548).

The lived experiences of academic women and female students in Ethiopia show how gendered expectations operate in learning and working contexts. Even though there is no discriminatory law at work to marginalize women in public life, narratives of women in the two public universities reflect the depth of mistreatment and subtle marginalization they face in their daily activities and interactions. A graduating-class female student at OU, Oded, recollected her experience of prejudice and low expectations at the hands of her teachers with deep and distressing feeling:

I remember sadly my own experience in my first year. It was the end of the semester, and we were collecting our grades. [...] I was shocked and devastated to see a worst grade in a course. I went to the lecturer's office and asked him to let me see my paper. Then another teacher came in and interrupted our discussion. He soon started joking on me. They did not consider me one of their students who came to see a paper but rather as a female, possibly lazy student, who sought a favour in an exchange for a sexual offer. [...] He asked me: 'do you think you can score better than you already have?' and continued laughing. They continued making mockery out of me, a female not accepting a low grade. I was by far devastated by the way they treated me and left their office to cry. I hate myself. [They] made me a

victim over there. It has been a terrible experience. From that moment onwards, I never visit my teachers in their offices (FGD, 02 October 2010).

This gendered expectation and devaluation results in female students' inequitable access to their teachers, which in turn, deeply affects their success in the learning process and future career choices and prospect. In the words of Miller and Miller:

The faculty transmit values and beliefs about the world and expectations about students' potential places in that world. Beneficial out-of-class interactions have the potential to acculturate students in the values and norms of academic and professional communities. Poor or absent interactions can leave the student 'out in the cold' (2002, p.106).

The repressive gender order in HEIs disempowers women as it deprives them of the confidence and power needed to succeed. Prejudicial attitudes including lower expectations of women's potential and competence may lead teachers to mark (grade) open-ended examination items and papers unfairly, which eventually leaves female students with a low score that will not qualify them for academic employment or other well paid-jobs. As discussants at OU highlighted, when female students perform well in grades, their male peers resist accepting it as a genuine achievement. They tend to attribute it to some sort of gain from sexual favour with male teachers. This supports the conclusion that Morley draws from her study on the experience of female students in selected universities in Ghana and Tanzania: "The *doxa* of sexualized pedagogical relations means that if women fail, this is evidence of lack of academic abilities and preparedness for higher education. If they achieve, this is attributed to women's 'favoured' position in gendered academic markets" (2011, p.113).

Social relations and interactions in the workplaces of academic women is another manifestation of gendered attitudes and experiences. Prejudice and low expectations in HEIs are expressed through often unspoken but nevertheless important messages about the role and responsibility of women. The gender dynamics (that is, the relations and interaction between males and females in HEIs), by representing women as less capable and weak, socializes them to accept inequalities as a normal condition. In explaining the continuing underrepresentation of women in senior management positions in HE, Singh identifies three perspectives:

'person-centred' in which the paucity of women is attributed to the psycho-social attributes, including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioural skills of women themselves; the 'structure-centred' paradigm which advances the view that it is the disadvantageous position of women in the organizational structure which shapes and defines the behaviour of women; and the 'culture-centred' approach which argues that gender-based

social roles, irrelevant to the workplace, are carried into the workplace (2002, pp. 9-10).

The accounts of the lived experiences of academic women in the two universities reveal that, while structural and cultural factors have continued to constrain women's participation in higher level decision-making positions, policies and practices on gender equity tend to focus on personal attributes. Therefore, in the absence of viable policies to address the problem, the structural factors of inequality in HEIs underlie personal attributes of lack of confidence and self-esteem that erode women's career aspirations. As a result they "confirm patriarchy's self-fulfilling prophecy that women don't have what it takes to stay the course for the long haul" and become "unreliable candidates" for highly sought-after positions (Singh, 2002, p.34). Left unaddressed, this chain of disadvantage develops into and subtly underlies disadvantages in distributions of resources and opportunities. Wahi, one of the focus group discussants, cited a recently enacted housing policy of WU as an example:

Let me tell you another systematic injustice when it comes to gender equity [in this University]. When we discuss on the housing policy, we agreed to give a 5 point advantage for women. On the other hand, there is a 20 point advantage for Office holders. It is a common knowledge that most of the Offices in the University are held by men, and hence they still maintain a dominant advantage as a fair share (FGD, 25 October 2010).

Academic women face prejudice in their daily interactions. Odhi from OU observed that male colleagues can ask for assistance, and it is construed as nothing other than a request for help. However, if a woman asks for a helping hand, a quite different construction is placed on the request. As she reports, male colleagues would shout: "if she can't do it why does she accept the responsibility in the first place? It should be taken by someone else who is capable of doing it" (FGD, 23 September 2010). She added:

Gender-biased actions of men colleagues may speak louder than their words. For example, I observe them hesitating to give me certain works to do or to accept what I accomplished as a fruit of my own efforts. Another aspect of our problem is that male students do not show respect to us. They respect male teachers. They mistreat us for merely being women teachers. They do not expect anything worthy from us I think (FGD, 23 September 2010).

I further asked the academic women discussants: Do you think that you have an equitable share of power and resources in your respective departments and institutes? Most of them replied that they felt powerless at different levels. At OU, an academic woman, Odawo, shared her scepticism about gender equity-related changes in her university:

Even though I have a short experience as an academic staff here, I have a frustration. We have problems in assuming positions. The male colleagues still have no confidence on what I do and say. Once, the department head told my colleague that she was a lazy teacher. She asked him: 'why?' His reply was even more annoying. He replied, 'when I think of you, I feel like that'. Given this kind of stereotypes, I do not think that they would give us a chance to assume a position. I am so pessimist about being equally treated in this university (FGD, 23 September 2010).

The repressive social relations and curricular experiences have multifaceted consequences. To begin with, gender-based prejudicial attitudes obscure the needs of women and limit their choices and opportunities. For instance, fields such as science, technology and agriculture are considered to be males' domains. Women are not encouraged and hence are less interested in joining these fields. That is, socialization of women is critical in their disciplinary streaming and occupational preference. As Rudman & Glick note, "cultural notions of what women are 'best suited for' permeate deeply into women's identities, despite their explicit goals" (2008, p.298). Hence, seen from a social structural perspective, educational and occupational choices:

have the power to reinforce or to challenge the gendered division of labor and status hierarchy. For example, if women generally choose not to pursue traditionally masculine high-status work roles because they are "gender inappropriate," conceptions of these roles as masculine are perpetuated (Rudman & Glick, 2008, p.133).

As a result, academic streaming that results in concentrations of women in humanities and social sciences in HE narrows well-paid job opportunities and thereby impedes their social mobility. Inequality in returns on investment in education is related to the impact of education on the empowerment and social mobility of women in their post-graduation destination, that is, jobs and earnings. Socio-economic returns of investment on HE determines equitable employment opportunities, and fair and active participation of women in economic, political and civic spheres of the society. This, in turn, has wider implications for gender equity in society as it influences families' decisions to invest in higher level education for their daughters. Related to this, the discussants believe that gendered expectations and attitudes have undermined their opportunities – the possibility of getting their work published, assuming higher level positions and working in cooperation with their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the gender order of HEIs in Ethiopia is counterproductive to the extent that even equity measures such as affirmative action policies are considered to be confirmation of the inferiority of women. As a result, beneficiaries of the policy suffer from abusive words and

belittling comments from male students and teachers, and due to consequent socio-psychological stress many of them fail to succeed.

In order to transform the existing gender order that subordinates women, in addition to enacting protective legal instruments, it is crucial to challenge curriculum materials that portray men and women in traditional gender roles and reinforce their unequal positions in society. In this regard, mainstreaming gender into the curriculum is one of the enablers of gender equity in HE (Morley, 2007). It is instrumental in challenging gender-based prejudice embedded in the formal learning experience and hidden curriculum of educational institutions. Moreover, political and financial support for research on women's issues not only equips women with the intellectual tools to produce knowledge but also sensitises the university community and the society at large to gender issues. Without the required knowledge and symbolic power (e.g., recognition in the form of higher level credentials and achievements), women will remain powerless to challenge the system that perpetuates prejudice and gender-based injustice.

9.3.3 Powerlessness

The effect of the hostile learning environment and gender-based prejudice and stereotypes is a sense of powerlessness amongst women in HEIs. According to Young, powerlessness is expressed by "inhibition in the development of one's capacities, lack of decision-making power in one's working life, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the status one occupies" (1990, p.58). Connell further relates power and masculinity as: "If authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say that the main axis of power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity" (1987, p.109). Hence, power relations between men and women manifest as a pattern of constraint to possibilities and actions. In other words, the powerlessness of the academic women is expressed by socially constructed constraints on their agency, their capacity to make choices and to take actions accordingly. The phenomenon of women's powerlessness in the two HEIs is captured by two themes: lack of recognition and protection, and limited career development and promotion opportunities.

Women's lack of recognition from their male peers as being equals has deprived them of respectful treatment. Wahi, a senior academic woman at WU, maintained that the

powerlessness of women in the university is strongly associated with the sexist mind-set of their male peers. She argued:

In the case of academic women, there would be no meaningful change unless the mind-set of men is changed. They need to accept the very fact that women are not inferior, in any aspect, to men. They should be convinced that women are capable and equal. [...] They have to appreciate what we have to say. They have to respect the body of knowledge we produce. They have to have confidence to give positions to us. They need to believe in what we can think and do. However, I am so pessimist that this University would change soon. That is what I have witnessed in the last 31 years as an academic woman in the institution (FGD, 25 October 2010).

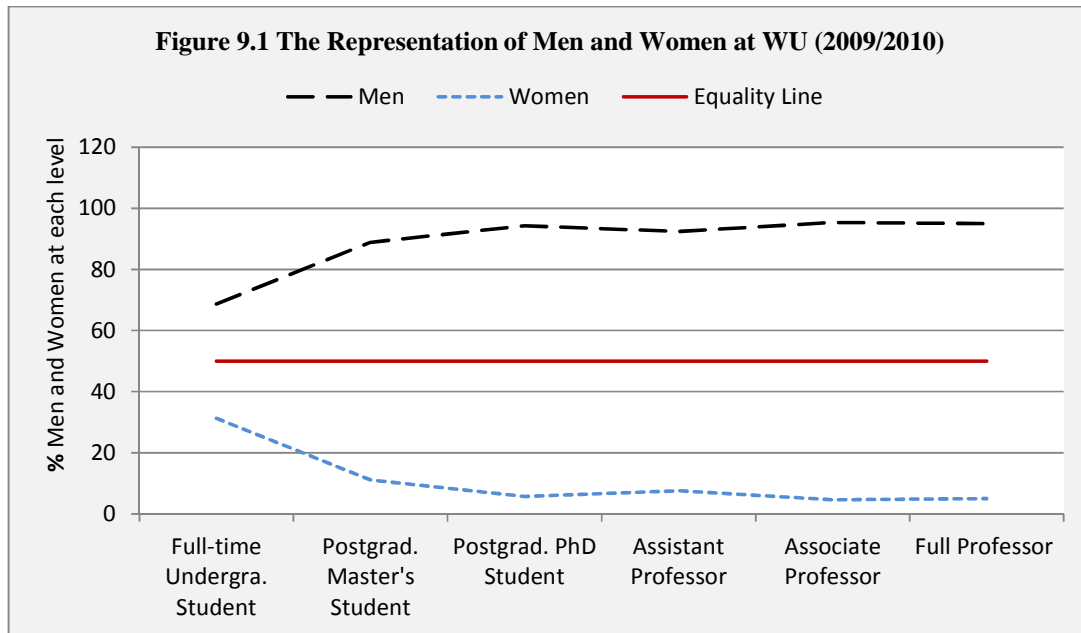
A study by Andualem and Gebre-Egziabher (2009) shows the degree of frustration and powerlessness that one academic woman in one of the public universities experienced. Her report to security officials of the university about a rape attempt made on her, by a male student in one of her evening classes, failed to activate a response. The security office in the University was said to have trivialized her report of rape by telling her that they could not assign police in each hall to protect an individual woman.

Again, there is powerlessness in relation to their career development and access to decision-making positions. Unlike their male peers, women staff have additional demanding roles to accomplish. In most cases, family responsibilities are roles exclusively left for the woman in the society. At WU, Wahi noted:

An academic woman to stay effective in her professional life, she needs to get the support of others from the home side, particularly her partner. In this regard, very few men care about the progress of their wives in the academia or in any other field for that matter. On the other hand, men in my department have enough time to invest on their work and share ideas during the after-office time (FGD, 25 October 2010).

While men academics benefit from the freedom from household burdens to widen their professional networks within and outside the university, and get their work published, most women face extreme challenges to advance in their professional development in the face of the impediments within and without their workplace. Promotion in the academy requires extended studies in adult life and absence from work and family. Childrearing and parental leave, coupled with disadvantages in their educational attainments, make it difficult for women in Ethiopia to fulfil such requirements as doctoral degrees and scientific publications to assume senior positions and earn professorship. At WU, as shown in Figure 9.1, the

representation of women drastically declines as the level moves from undergraduate study to full professorship.



Source: Computed based on data from Human Resource Management Statistical Report of the university; and Education Statistics Annual Abstract (MoE, 2010).

Women have limited opportunities for promotion and career development, and as a result, they are almost non-existent in senior management positions. With the exception of a brief female presidency in 2009/2010 in one of the public universities, all presidents in the 22 public universities are male. At the time of this study, at OU, none of the 14 directors were women. In 2010, as shown in Table 8.1 above, at WU, out of 239 female staff (13.8% of the total academic staff of the university), only 43 (8.8%) had a doctoral degree while the majority of them (23.5%) had only undergraduate degrees. This has limited their participation in key institutional activities, including research and consultancy. For example, at WU, women constituted only 3% of the researchers who participated in the University's major commissioned studies between 2008 and 2010. This unequal position is also reflected in their incomes. Most of the female staff have no PhDs and they dominate lower academic ranks, and they have lower incomes than their male counterparts who have higher positions and better qualifications to attract research funds and other rewards. This reinforces the prejudice about men's intellectual superiority and places women in a subordinate position.

The unequal relations of power in HEIs suggests that gender equity instruments that aim at promoting the participation of women in decision-making in the institutions need to include specially tailored compensatory career development programs until a level playing field is established. It is important to recognize that female staff, “face the twin barriers of the ‘glass ceiling’ and the ‘sticky floor,’ which combine to keep them stuck at the bottom and unable to reach the top” (Kimmel, 2008, p.218). In this regard, in showing how little the policies have done to transform women’s position in HEIs, Wahi cited a concrete example:

[In] more than 60-year existence of the public university system, the country has only two female professors. This tells you a lot by itself about the position and participation of women (interview, 23 September 2010).

Mainly due to a heavy teaching work-load, family responsibilities, and lack of institutional support, women have very little opportunity to get their work published, collaborate with others and benefit from professional networks. This disadvantage is used as a systematic filter to career development and promotion by qualifying men to higher positions and keeping women in lower status, and consequently making them powerless to influence decision-making in their institutions, schools, centres and departments.

There is a tendency among the policy actors in HE (including government officials and university managers) to explain the absence of many women in higher decision-making positions in terms of the ‘pipeline problem’ metaphor. The pipeline argument holds that the problem of gender inequality in HEIs in general and the absence of women in high level academic and management positions is due to a lack of sufficiently qualified women which, in turn, is linked to the poor progress rate of female students in the lower level education, low cumulative grade point average and underrepresentation in the academic staff (Allen & Castleman, 2001; Kulis, Sicotte & Collins, 2002 ; Mason, Goulden & Wolfinger, 2006; Monroe & Chiu, 2010). The officials assumed that gender inequality in professorial and senior management positions can only be improved with the passage of time, as more women come into the subsystem and the number of women in the admission and hiring pool increases. This is a weak assessment indeed. By attributing the problem to a past legacy, the pipeline thinking obscures and delays appropriate policy intervention, including: transformative equity instruments that improve the pool of female school leavers eligible for HE; efforts to promote the participation and success of women across all fields of study (especially in science and technology disciplines); and a career development program that prioritises women. In other words, the pipeline has “valves and holding bays” and it is

necessary to make sure that it does not selectively leak women (Allen & Castleman, 2001, p.156).

To conclude the discussion, at the centre of this chapter are the experiences of women, and the meanings they draw in relation to gender equity-related reforms in public universities in Ethiopia. Individual stories and shared experiences of women in the FGDs revealed that despite the limited changes that benefitted some women, inequalities persist in various forms. Women still face sexual harassment, prejudicial treatment, lack of recognition and marginalization. I argue that this gap between the policy statement and the experience of women results from the superficial framing of the problem of gender inequality, and policy inactions (as discussed in Sections 7.3.2 and 8.2 above respectively). The discussion of the lived experiences of women in HE shows that, given the gender repression being perpetuated implicitly or explicitly in the form of prejudice and unfavourable working and learning environments, women's conformity to the structures of disadvantage can be an indicator of how HEIs can reproduce and legitimize gender relations in society rather than transform them.

The lived experiences of women in HE in Ethiopia affirm that neither a strict adherence to the meritocratic principle of admission policy nor a ratification of the right to non-discrimination in access to education and a nominal advantage at entry point can help rectify socially constructed inequalities on the basis of gender, class, ethnic background or rurality. A mere focus on quantitative dimensions of gender equity (mainly on increasing admission rates and recruiting more women for teaching staff) is a superficial approach to the multi-dimensional problem of inequality. Beyond numerical increases, social justice in HE requires paying attention to the existing curricula representations, pedagogical practices and power relations within the institutions.

The next and last chapter of the thesis draws key conclusions from the study; and as a way forward, it recommends important issues to be considered in gender equity policy preparation and implementation in HE in Ethiopia and other similar contexts.

Chapter 10

Conclusions and the Way Forward

This final chapter of the thesis briefly presents the conclusions of the study and a set of related policy recommendations.

In this study, I have presented empirical evidence and theoretical arguments to show the problematic relationship between neoliberal policies and social equity goals in education. By locating the problem of gender inequality in HE in relation to the WB's neoliberal policy agenda in Ethiopia, the study provides new insights on the dynamics and consequences of external policy pressures and local responses in SSA. On the basis of both its approach and findings, the study contributes to the fields of education policy studies, higher education policy analysis, and gender research in HE in the context of aid-recipient countries in the region.

10.1 Conclusions

The theoretical explanations and qualitative data interpretations in this study warrant four key conclusions. First, the neoliberal educational agenda of the WB has influenced Ethiopia's recent HE reform process and content. Second, the Bank uses both money and knowledge to induce its policy prescriptions into the national HE reform process. Third, the neoliberal policy elements that have been endorsed in the reforms have directly and indirectly structured women's access to and success in HE. Finally, notwithstanding limited institutional changes that have benefited women, the lived experiences of women in HE show that structural gender inequalities persist in their working and learning environments. The key conclusions are briefly discussed in turn as follows.

I. The influence of the neoliberal agenda of the WB in the Ethiopian HE reform has been prominent. The introduction of market mechanisms, the strong alignment between HE and economic productivity that places the subsystem at the centre of the national poverty reduction plans, and the decentralization of HE governance, along with the introduction of new instruments of accountability, match key neoliberal reform prescriptions of the WB. The

major neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the HE reforms of Ethiopia are the introduction of privatization in the form of the expansion of for-profit private HE and the cost-sharing scheme in public HEIs. In response to the increased economic optimism associated with HE, the government has diversified and expanded the subsystem with a focus on science and technology fields. Again, in line with the prescription of the WB, the decentralisation of HE governance has brought considerable autonomy to HEIs, while the government has put in place such new accountability instruments as quality assurance, funding formula and strategic plan agreements to steer from a distance, in line with its development priorities.

II. The WB uses both funding (grants and loans) and knowledge (policy advice and sector reviews) as key instruments to infuse its neoliberal policy prescriptions in Ethiopia. In addition to funding projects and programs in the HE subsystem of the country, the Bank finances research, publishes analytical works on public sectors and policies, and documents field experiences on program and project implementations; and it thereby reorients academic and political discourses that shape policy processes. Therefore, conditionality attached to funding is not the only instrument to induce policy prescriptions – the Bank increasingly uses sector reviews, policy advice, and thematic conferences and workshops as well. It should be once again noted that the WB’s financial and non-financial aid for the education system of Ethiopia is critical. Yet, for the better effect of such aid, the WB and the government need to be aware that the policy process should be participatory. As such, the national knowledge regime should be strengthened and Ethiopian intellectuals should play roles in producing knowledge that informs policy changes and strategy planning. This makes the development aid responsive to the context – that is, the needs and situation of the society.

III. Substantive gender equality goals and strategies are lacking in the HE reforms of Ethiopia; and this is partly attributable to the neoliberal policy agenda endorsed in the reform process. For neoliberals, sound education policies should focus on market-oriented financial and managerial reforms, be relevant to economic productivity, and aim at building a market-responsive HE subsystems. The WB claims that in the context of rapidly changing technology and a competitive global market economy, higher level knowledge and skills are essential variables of poverty reduction strategies and national development plans. In agreement with the neoliberal disposition towards economic productivity and efficiency, the government justifies equal access to HE in terms of increasing the human resource capacity needed to implement its development plans, including the poverty reduction strategies and

other sector-specific programs. Even though the increase of the capacity of the private sector, as well as the economic optimism and consequent extensive expansion of the public HE subsystem, have widened access and increased the participation of women in the subsystem, gender-based structural inequalities in HE persist.

The restraining effect of the neoliberal agenda on gender equity is two-dimensional. At a discursive level, the problem of inequality in general has been construed in the policy documents as a concern of economic growth. The problem of inequality in general and gender inequality in HE in particular in Ethiopia is superficially represented as a lack of access, and a drawback to the implementation of the poverty reduction strategies of the government. Thus, dealing with the problem of unequal access to HE is considered primarily an issue of tapping the human resources of the nation rather than a social justice concern.

At practical level, the economic efficiency-orientation expressed in the commitment to reduced public spending has limited the role of the government in supporting gender equity strategies and programs of HEIs. With privatization and a focus on responsiveness of education to economic needs, efforts to improve equity through redressing past and present unfairness seem to be limited, if not neglected. The absence of a public budget for gender offices in public universities is an instructive case to show the marginal place of social equity goals. Related to this, with the decentralised HE governance, the government appears to be poorly prepared to effectively implement the accountability instruments and follow up the implementation of national and institutional policy initiatives. It suffices to mention two cases. At WU, even though the Senate Legislation declares the establishment of an office that aims at promoting diversity and multiculturalism to benefit ethnic and cultural minorities, four years after the ratification of the document, such an office did not exist during my visit to the University in late 2010. Again, the Strategic Framework of the government clearly states the need for a preferential academic staff recruitment policy for female applicants. Yet one of the universities included in this study had no such provision after more than six years since the enactment of the policy.

IV. The meanings and experiences of women in HE shows that gender equity-related changes in their institutions are inadequate to address structural impediments they encounter in their learning and working environments. In line with the superficial representation of the problem of gender inequality at the national level, institutional gender equity-related changes focus on quantitative indicators of the problem. Consequently, qualitative dimensions of the

problem remain unaddressed and women still face structural inequalities in the institutions. Gender-related stereotypes and low expectations are prevalent; and as a result, women are disadvantaged in career development, promotion and positions in the universities. The learning environment is hostile for female students. There are no protective laws and regulations to prevent and punish offences related to sexual harassment and violence in the universities. Gender-based prejudicial attitudes and beliefs operate unchallenged in the institutions. Gender is not yet mainstreamed in the curricula, female students remain shy and less outspoken, and pedagogical arrangements are not convenient for their active participation in the learning process. In other words, although quantitatively the representation of women in HE is improving, the problem of gender inequality persists in various forms: widening achievement gaps; lower success rates of female students; lower representation in academic and managerial positions; gendered streaming in traditionally low-status, low-wage fields and therefore producing a very minimal effect on the social mobility of women; and disabling gendered experiences and violence (including prejudicial attitudes and sexual harassment) that sustain women's repression and disadvantage. Institutional equity policy provisions largely overlook deep-seated structural barriers underpinning the qualitative dimensions of the problem of gender inequality.

10.2 The Way Forward

Drawing on these concluding points and key challenges highlighted throughout the thesis, I would like to underscore three key policy directions for HE policy actors in Ethiopia.

First, even if they may not afford to ignore the policy strings attached to the much needed development aid, national policy actors should at least make a conscious effort to localize global pressures and prescriptions. In this regard, it is important for aid-recipient governments in SSA such as Ethiopia not to be over zealous about the efficiency of a privatised HE subsystem, and the knowledge-intensive development agenda of the Bank. The impact of such an agenda varies depending on the need of a particular socio-economic context. The optimism regarding the role of HE in the globalizing world has made it necessary to ensure that the subsystem remains responsive to the changing socio-economic realities. For example, in high-income countries of the world, building a competent and creative labour force that meets the work requirements in the context of rapidly changing technology and a competitive market economy is a reality. On the other hand, in Ethiopia (also in SSA in general), where the urgent

need to improve literacy rates and reduce poverty are priorities, one needs to avoid ‘false expectations’ in uncritically endorsing the idea of privatizing HE and the normative knowledge-intensive development rhetoric of the WB. It does not fit the context of the predominantly poor and illiterate agrarian society of Ethiopia. While it is important to recognise the externalities of HE (e.g., its public benefits through knowledge production and technological innovations as well as training public leaders and professionals) and continue investing in the subsystem, it is equally pivotal to note that lack of access to basic education is a serious challenge in the country and it calls for a strong public action. Furthermore, if the Government of Ethiopia has to facilitate fast technology transfer and integration into the global market economy, it not only should carefully define bodies of knowledge and skills that could make the national economy competitive by supporting specialized productivity for the global market, but also address the problems of inequality in access to knowledge as well.

Second, building contextually relevant policy ideas requires, among other things, strengthening local knowledge production capabilities that play critical roles in informing policy discourses and directions. It follows that, in order to maximize the benefit from foreign expertise, Ethiopia needs to have its own strong base for knowledge production and utilization. Local think-tanks and networks of well-trained professionals, with high quality technical capabilities, are needed in order to contextualize external analytical models and produce alternative strategies. Such a functional knowledge regime necessitates a substantial budget for research and publication; and most importantly, it needs a free political space that allows intellectuals, knowledge institutions, networks of professionals, policy actors, and external experts to engage in dialogue and produce knowledge that informs public actions, including policies and strategies in the education system.

In this regard, in the process of this study I have learned that the link between the WB’s neoliberal policy agenda (attached to financial and non-financial educational development aid) and social inequality in HE in SSA is under-researched, and the limited studies by African researchers on the issue tend to be too narrow in scope to provide a fuller account. As a way forward in this direction, I suggest, it is crucial for education policy researchers in the region to use an overarching conceptual framework that problematizes: a) the impact of aid-related neoliberal policy prescriptions on national socio-economic development policies and plans; b) how the national plans affect the education system in general and the HE subsystem in particular; c) the way HEIs respond to changes at national and system levels and how that

benefits (or fails to benefit) equity targets, for example, women; and d) how socio-economic structures and cultural values outside the education system interact with the neoliberal policy elements endorsed by governments to (re)produce structural inequalities in HE.

Finally, the problem of gender inequality in HE should broadly be seen as a challenge of social justice that requires a substantive policy provision. As the policies analysed in this study show, economic efficiency-oriented reforms tend to represent the problem of inequality in HE as a mere lack of access, not as a social justice concern. Furthermore, viewed from the perspective of social equity in HE, the human capital thinking that has dominated education policy discourse to date in Ethiopia is a double-edge sword. On the one hand, it misleads policymakers to see gender inequality in HE (both in terms of access and outcomes) as a result of inadequate investment on the part of women themselves. It detaches the responsibility of the state by attributing the problem to the individual. With increased marketization of the subsystem, the role of the state in promoting social equity in and through HE seems to have been significantly constrained. On the other hand, human capital thinking can be instrumental in supporting the social mobility of women. Given the value of knowledge in enhancing the productivity of the individual and then the society at large (i.e., in line with the knowledge-driven economic growth discourse), women's inequality in access to and success in HE necessitates increased public investment.

Most importantly, gender equity policies in HE need to be substantive and enabling, in the sense that the policy instruments should be instrumental in concretely addressing structural factors of inequalities deep-seated in the institutions, and in creating enabling conditions to promote women's freedom to exercise their agency. The call for substantive and enabling equity policy is based on a belief that when it comes to the experience of women in HE, what appears to be a result of personal decisions or preferences, when carefully looked at and connected (as the birdcage metaphor in Section 9.2 implies), is indeed related to the repressive social relations of gender that preclude women from access to opportunities. Therefore, policy responses to gender inequality in HE need to acknowledge the socio-economic constraints, deal with deep-rooted scepticism within the society towards the benefits of female education, revisit institutional culture in relation to its relevance to the empowerment of women, and transform the curricula and pedagogical arrangements in a way they can represent the learning styles and needs of female students. Policy must also address the social and cultural climate that tolerates violence against women on university campuses.

In other words, in devising an enabling/substantive gender equity policy that aims at transforming the conditions of women in HE, it is necessary for policymakers to consider the following four conditions.

I. *Broader understanding of the problem of gender inequality in HE* – Representing the problem of gender inequality as mere disparity in enrollment and the hostile climate for learning, living and working on campus undermines improvements at the point of entry. Equitable access does not address structural inequalities related to differential power relations, sexual violence and harassment, and lack of recognition and respect for women's potential and contributions. HE policymakers need to broadly outline the problem of inequality in terms of access, experience and results. Inequality in access is expressed by unequal enrolment rates and underrepresentation of women in HE. It may result from unfair selection procedures and/or availability of limited places. Inequality in experience mainly refers to women's interaction and relations in the learning and working environment. Inequality in experiences in HE is related to women's rights within education, and includes their misrecognition, stereotypical representation in the curricula, differential treatments in classrooms and workplaces, and experiences of sexual violence on campus. It affects women's self-esteem and motivation, which in turn negatively affects their educational attainment and professional development.

Inequality in results is related to differences in attainment and progression rates of female students, and inequalities in economic and social returns of credentials mainly results from differences in the number of years of education attained and gendered academic streaming (that is, post-graduation destination in terms of jobs and earnings), and the position and promotion of academic women. While the progress of female students can easily be measured by attrition (or transition) rates, the socio-economic returns of their credentials can only be estimated by an analysis of their majors or fields of study. Educational credentials do not have equal economic return, and hence the disciplinary segregation of women (horizontal gender inequality) may result in unequal distribution of opportunities, including income and position. Women's earning of degrees in already overcrowded fields tends to reinforce their conformity to the traditional gendered division of labour and holds back their social mobility. In other words, horizontal gender inequality is closely linked with existing inequality because one's symbolic resources determine one's economic and social capital. This in turn defines the level of freedom, respect and recognition they are accorded in society.

A broader perspective on the problem of gender inequality in HE should include both quantitative indicators, such as female students' rates of enrolment, drop out, progression and graduation; the representation of women in academic positions, and the number of women in senior management positions; and qualitative indicators, including disciplinary segregation, sexual harassment, prejudicial treatment, curricular misrecognition or misrepresentation, peripheral positions in decision-making roles, and deprivation of career development opportunities.

II. *Conceptual clarity and depth in framing the problem of inequality in education* – It is critical to differentiate what parity, equity and equality mean in the context of access to and success in HE. Gender parity is a quantitative measurement that indicates the proportion of men and women relative to their cohort. Equality assumes similarity in different attributes: status, capacity or opportunity; and presumes similarity of treatment. As such, gender equality primarily focuses on the absence of discrimination on the basis on one's gender. Gender equity is about fairness in the distribution of responsibilities and benefits between men and women. It does not mean absolute equality. Rather, it is about fairness expressed by addressing unjust inequalities that systematically disadvantage women. It is compensatory in nature. While gender equality assumes a level playing field for men and women, gender equity seeks to establish such a field through differential treatments. The moral and political justification for equity policies is that a shift in social position for disadvantaged groups requires unequal but equivalent treatment to redress past injustice and existing disadvantages; and that a progressive society should not tolerate injustice based on gender, ethnicity or economic status.

Therefore, gender equity is better served through enabling policies and instruments that draw on social justice as a guiding principle. A social justice perspective helps us understand the importance of structural impediments and positional differences among equity target groups, and the need for focusing on the actual opportunities rather than the resources available for redistribution to the disadvantaged (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2009). Eliminating legal barriers or providing equal access for all is not sufficient for equity in education because personal differences and social environment position individuals differently in relation to opportunities on offer. Equity policies as instruments of building capabilities of disadvantaged groups begins with the recognition of the personal, social and historical conditions that constrain an individual's capacity to be well-educated and attain freedom. They should provide individuals with effective opportunities that reflect their differences so that they are able to

convert resources they have into their benefits, and into their actual freedom to function (Sen, 2009). Enabling gender equity provisions should be instrumental in supporting women to fully participate in the learning process, assume higher positions of decision-making, and aspire to better socio-economic positions in society.

III. *Recognising the intersectionality of gender inequality with other categories of inequality along lines of ethnicity, class and rurality* – As is shown in Section 7.3.2 above, women differ in their access to and success in HE based on their ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well as geographic locations. Gender intersects with social categories to produce unequal patterns of power relations expressed in gendered divisions of labour, and differential material and symbolic power arrangements. This perspective assists in analysing phenomena such as why some female students in HEIs get involved in sex work to support their education.

The relevance of a policy instrument predicates on a properly framed problem. Most often, gender inequality is framed by a common (but often subtle) assumption that the underrepresentation of female students and academic women is due to their inability to compete with their male counterparts. This deficit explanation holds that women lack the personal attributes to succeed. This misconception overlooks the structures of inequality such as unequal power relations, unfavourable societal attitudes and low expectations of the roles of women, hostile learning and working environment in HEIs, and unfair recruitment and promotion criteria and processes. Hence, due recognition to the intersectionality of structural impediments related to gender culture, poverty, ethnicity and rurality is a key aspect of substantive and enabling policy instruments.

IV. *Use of a combination of equity instruments depending on the nature of the problem identified in a particular context* – It is not possible to devise a single best-gender-equity instrument package. Instead, it is necessary to outline a range of strategies and selectively combine them, depending upon the nature and level of the problem at hand. Table 10.1 below is an attempt to show an example of how this might be done. The horizontal axis comprises five broadly defined gender equity instruments; and the vertical axis comprises three key dimensions of the problem of gender inequality in HE. A choice of a combination of instruments is highly dependent on the particular context (the nature and gravity of the problem as well as the political and financial resources available). The tick marks (√) at the

intersection of the two axes represent examples of policy instruments worth considering in the context of Ethiopia to address the corresponding form of gender inequality.

Affirmative action policies are necessary until a level playing field is established in the HE subsystem. Based on the context, preferential treatment can be applied at the entry level (e.g., student admission and staff recruitment); it can be an on-going practice in the form of supplementary support programs for female students (including incentives for those who enrol in traditionally male-dominated fields); and special career development opportunities for academic women. There is also a need for a consistent impact assessment of the policies both at system and institutional levels.

Addressing inequality in educational experience requires establishing enabling conditions where women can learn, interact and work in a safe and gender sensitive environment.

Enabling legislation and protective laws can range from anti-discrimination laws and provisions of fair treatment, to codes of conduct which outline proper actions expected of members of a university community, and rules and procedures that penalize misconduct, including sexual harassment, violence, bullying and abuse. At the centre of meaningful institutional protective law and practice should be a zero tolerance of sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination and violence by male teachers and students.

Gender mainstreaming refers to ensuring gender implications and consequences of institutional plans, strategies, budgeting, programs, and practices. In the context of HE, it also includes mainstreaming gendered knowledge, methodologies and theories in university curricula, setting up Gender Research and Women's Studies as a disciplinary program, and incorporating women's issues across different academic disciplines. It is about positively representing women by highlighting their contribution in history, scientific innovation, political resistance and participation, and actual and potential roles of women in socio-economic life of the society. The values operating in the classroom and images and roles presented in the curriculum play significant roles in challenging or perpetuating repressive gender relations in HE. Therefore, gender mainstreaming in HE needs to be grasped broadly to include efforts to reorient policies and practices in such a way that they can bring gender equity into the forefront, rather than simply reintroducing gender without challenging the existing institutional and social dispositions. For instance, a gender-sensitive classroom is one

that ensures equal access to resources, and eliminates sexist language and imagery in the learning experiences.

Table 10.1 Gender Equity Matrix in HE

Dimensions of Gender Inequality in HE	Gender Equity Policy Instruments				
	Affirmative action	Protective laws	Gender sensitization, outreach services & career guidance	Mainstreaming gender (into institution, research, curriculum)	Sufficient financial commitment and follow-up
<i>Inequality in access to</i> a. HEIs b. Programs c. Senior management and academic positions	√ √ √		√ √ √		√ √ √
<i>Inequality in experiences</i> a. Campus environment & Learning experiences b. Workplace relations & opportunities	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √	√ √
<i>Inequality in results</i> a. Progress rates & Socio-economic returns of credentials b. Promotion & Position			√ √		√ √

Source: Author's construction

Gender sensitisation, outreach services and career guidance by universities can help tackle gendered attitudes and increase female students' transition rates from preparatory school to HE. HEIs can use their Gender Offices and Women's Studies centers for gender sensitization and advocacy. Through outreach programs and school based interventions, HEIs can have a positive impact on encouraging female students to aspire to higher level learning by sending women role models to talk to groups, and promoting assertiveness and academic achievement. Sensitisation programs may focus on raising gender awareness of university and preparatory school communities. It can also be used to challenge gender biases in learning experiences

and workplace relations, and to widen the discursive space for gender equity and social justice in general, within and outside the universities. A supportive institutional environment is crucial to ensure equity of opportunity and results in HE. Institutionalizing career guidance for women as part of the support system helps to address problems related to disciplinary segregation, and women's lack of motivation or assertiveness to take senior positions in the universities' management structures.

Finally, the translation of these instruments into practice requires strong and *sustainable financial commitment*. The government and HEIs should allocate a sufficient budget to support gender equity-related institutional arrangements and programs, such as in-campus assertiveness and awareness training, gender sensitisation outreach services, supplementary tutorial classes, career development of women, and research on women's issues. In addition to preferential employment and anti-discrimination laws, to attract female staff and achieve gender equity (and gender equality, in the long run), HEIs should provide other incentives in the areas of housing, child care service, and maternity leave.

To close the discussion by way of reiterating a few final points, this study has shown that neoliberal policy elements endorsed in the Ethiopian HE reform have a constraining effect on social equity. Nominal equity provisions, both at system and institution levels, are deficient in the sense that they superficially frame the problem and are highly inhibited by a lack of political and financial commitment.

If HEIs are to be role models for social justice, they should, among other things, provide fair opportunities for all sections of the society, including women in general and poor women from geo-politically peripheral ethnic groups and rural areas in particular. They must also take action against repressive gender relations and violence within themselves; and be gender sensitive in their academic and research endeavours.

Higher level educational attainment is thought to be instrumental in promoting democratic participation, making possible open debates and dialogue, and establishing trust and tolerance for diversity and difference. As such, in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society like Ethiopia, active public engagement in HE should be seen, beyond motives for economic productivity and efficiency, as a way of ensuring democracy, political stability and social cohesion.

Sources of Primary Data

1. Interviewees

- Two senior government officials in the MoE (pseudonymously represented as Moha and Moso);
- One senior university management member at OU (Odam);
- One senior university management member at WU (Wase);
- Director of Gender Office at OU (Odago); and
- Director of Gender Office at WU (Wago).

2. Focus Group Discussants

- Two groups of academic women in the two universities; and
- Two groups of female students in the two universities.

3. Policy Documents and Related Materials

3.1 From the World Bank (External)

- Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education (World Bank, 2002a);
- Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2009);
- Ethiopia – Education Sector Development Project. (Project Appraisal Report No., 17739-ET) (World Bank, 1998);
- Higher Education Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision (World Bank, 2003b); and
- Ethiopia – Post Secondary Education Project. (Project Appraisal Report No., 28169-ET) (World Bank, 2004a).

3.2 From the Government of Ethiopia (National)

- Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994);
- Education Sector Development Program II, ESDP II (MoE, 2002a);

- Higher Education Proclamation (No. 650/2009) (FDRE, 2009);
- Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO): Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Governance, Leadership and Management in Ethiopia's Higher Education System (Committee of Inquiry, 2004);
- Five-year Strategic Framework for Enhancing Women's Participation in Tertiary Education in Ethiopia (MoE, 2004b); and
- Affirmative Action Beneficiaries Follow up Report (internal document, Department of Women's Affairs, MoE).

3.3 From the two universities (Institutional)

- Senate Legislation (2005) (OU);
- Strategic Plan (2008) (WU); and
- Affirmative Policy for Female Students (n.d.) (WU).

Sources of Statistical Data

OECD

- OECD StatExtracts - Creditor Reporting System (an international development aid flow database by sector, source and recipient)
<http://stats.oecd.org/>
- Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (QWIDS)
<http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>

The World Bank

- The World Bank EdStats Data Query
<http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?queryId=189>
- Statistical database on credits, grants and projects of Ethiopia
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,countrycode:ET~menuPK:64820000~pagePK:64392398~piPK:64392037~subTitle:Lending+Summary~theSitePK:40941,00.html>

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Odaax University

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