



Research Article

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULA OF THE ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore the major prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian public higher education institutions. To this effect, mixed-methods research approach with embedded mixed research methods was employed. Legal, policy and strategic documents, university teachers, educational leaders, experts and students were among the sources of data consulted. Questionnaires, document analysis and interviews were used to collect the data. Data were analysed quantitatively through mean scores, standard deviations, one way ANOVA and independent t-test; qualitatively through narrations/ descriptions of the issues theme by theme. Hence, the findings revealed that availabilities of good awareness of policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners (staff) and students about the importance of addressing issues of diversity in curricula, the good knowledge and skills of policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners on how to address diversity, the commitments and dedications they have, the availabilities of the necessary resources and availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds at higher education institutions were among the prospects while absence of these issues were considered as challenges that encounter in addressing diversity in Ethiopian higher education curricula. Moreover, the Ethiopian legal, policy and strategic frameworks analysed here showed that they give some concerns to diversity though they did not specifically show any clue about the extent to which, how, what aspects of diversity and to what extent they can be addressed in education in general and higher education curricula in particular. Hence, it was suggested that important revisions has to be made on these legal, policy and strategic documents to make the efforts fruitful which will bring further improvements on students learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies disclose that the rise of diversity as an integral part of the students learning experiences in higher education has become a critical component in global higher education contexts. On the other hand, demands for the workforces expected to interact within a global society and the changing demographics of the world also brought a need for an increase in diversity efforts (Chun & Evans, 2008; Denson & Chang, 2009). In a similar manner, Alger (1997) also states that, if diversity is not embedded into the educational mission of the institution, its value can be neglected as an integral part of the educational mission. This scholar further stipulates that diversity must be a catalyst embedded in all facets of the institution and must be funded well to achieve the results expected.

Furthermore, Reichert (2009) also states that diversity is becoming more central to higher education as higher education institutions are moving to the centre stage of political and public attention, with the expectation that they should fulfil a wide range of demands linked to the emergence of knowledge societies.

As a result of this, recently there are tremendous efforts observed from the higher education institutions found in the western and other world countries to accommodate issues of diversity in their overall educational, research and consultancy endeavours. Accordingly, the higher education institutions are providing due considerations for this cross-cutting issue and take measures they considered relevant to accommodate/include diversity in their education system and gear towards producing qualified professionals that can effectively and efficiently working in the diversified working contexts (Chun & Evans, 2008; Denson & Chang, 2009; Meier, 2012).

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In doing so, it is palpable that higher education institutions encounter some of the prospects and challenges that may promote/hinder these efforts of addressing issues of diversity in education in general and curricula in particular. Moreover, higher education institutions are working in the environments not free from prospects and challenges that are affecting addressing issues of diversity in the curricula. Supporting this, Meier (2012) and Reichert (2009) reveal that there are factors promoting and hindering the institutionalization of diversities in higher education. They further stipulated that, it is necessary to critically examine and identify those factors that are encountering in embedding issues of diversity in curricular and other related higher education activities. Therefore, in dealing with these issues, it is better to clearly understand what diversity, prospects and challenges mean in this particular study and the forthcoming paragraphs will devote for that.

Researchers in the field of education and social sciences try to conceptualize diversity in various ways. For instance, O'Reilly *et.al* (1998) defines diversity as a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar. Other studies also define diversity as "differences between individuals on any attribute that may lead to the perception that another person is different from the self" (Van Knippenberg *et.al*, 2004, p. 1008), or as a variation that exists within and across groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and social status (Banks *et al.*, 2005). For Loden & Rosner (1991) diversity is anything which differentiates one group of people from another along *primary, secondary* and *tertiary dimensions* and manifested through these three dimensions. These dimensions of diversity themselves are also manifested through different identity indicators mentioned by Banks *et.al* (2005) and the rest others. Diversity in this research is understood as any form of differences that exist among individuals and groups and be manifested in terms of many of indicators which influences one's own identity.

On the other hand, prospects are those opportunities that promote/create fertile grounds for the efforts made to address diversity in higher education in general and curricula in particular. In this regard, Meier (2012), Reichert (2009) and UNESCO (2009) conceptualize prospects as those things/situations/scenarios that are promotive conditions which are serving as means stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitudes and improving educational and social frameworks facilitating the efforts to address diversity in educational curricula, structures and governance. These efforts involve improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner in his/her learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experiences. Prospects in this study are those good opportunities/ scenarios to be considered important in addressing issues of diversity in higher education curricula and if considered, will have positive impacts on the overall status of the curricula in addressing issues of diversity.

As far as challenges concerned, scholars in the field describe the challenges of addressing diversity in various ways in which some state it as aspects that include all the things/situations which defy the efforts to address diversity in the curriculum while some other also state that they are obstacles that confront/dare/dispute the process of addressing issues of diversity in education in general and curricula in particular

(Meier, 2012; Reichert, 2009; UNESCO, 2009). Hence, challenges in this research, are understood as those hindrances that negatively affect the endeavours of addressing issues of diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian higher education institutions and cannot be solved by the capacity of the practitioners themselves without the external interventions.

Studies on diversity and related concerns reveal that addressing issues of diversity in the curricula requires intensive and extensive scholarly researches that can pave the mechanisms through which the efforts made to entertain diversity in education is fruitful since it plays great role in students learning success and future career (Chun & Evans, 2008; Denson & Chang, 2009; Meier, 2012). Moreover, even though Ethiopia is a country having populations with diversified ethnic, religious, cultural, social and other backgrounds; studies focusing on addressing these diversified backgrounds in the areas of education are rare and there are huge gaps observed in this regards. As a result, the present researchers have decided to undertake research on the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian public higher education institutions.

Findings of the researches conducted so far in this regard reveal that availability of legal, policy and strategic frameworks that are responsive to diversity (example for Ainscow *et.al*, 2003; European Union [EU], 2014; Farrell & Ainscow, 2002, Hailemariam, 2016; UNESCO, 1994, 2005, 2009, 2017), good awareness of the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners [i.e. teachers and other educational experts and students about the importance and on the how of addressing diversity in the curricula] (for Brady & Kennedy, 2010; Smith & Lovat, 2003), availability of committed and dedicated policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners who have positive attitudes and are strived to address diversity in the curricula (for Kitano, 1997; Nelson Liard, 2014), availability of the necessary resources as well as availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds in the universities (for Brady & Kennedy, 2010; Smith & Lovat, 2003) and the rest others are among the major prospects/opportunities that can be taken as good and encouraging situations in addressing diversity in higher education institutions in general and curricula in particular. On the other hand, absence of these and other related issues are considered as the major challenges that one face in addressing issues of diversity.

So far in Ethiopian context, there seem little efforts made in this regards though the country is known for its heterogeneous and multicultural society (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE], 1995). It has to be noticed that Ethiopian is an Eastern African country with more than 80 nations, nationalities and peoples having their own diversified backgrounds and more than 86 different languages spoken in the country by these nations, nationalities and peoples (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2015; Ministry of Culture and Tourism [MoCT], 2016). Hence, the present study was designed to examine whether these and the rest other prospects and challenges that one can encounter in addressing issues of diversity are prevailing or not and paving the way forward in a scholarly manner. Therefore, the study was generally aimed at exploring the major prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian

public higher education institutions. Specifically the study was targeted to:

- Scrutinize the major prospects that Ethiopian public higher education institutions encounter in addressing issues of diversity in their curricula
- Explore the major challenges negatively affect/harm the efforts of addressing issues of diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian higher education institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is obvious that any research endeavour requires appropriate research methodology on which the research activities are based. The researchers have employed *mixed-methods research approach* with *embedded mixed research methods* as the nature of this study requires both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). As sources of data, legal, policy and strategic documents under implementation in Ethiopia and having implications to higher education and their curricula, university teachers, educational leaders (deans, quality assurance directors and academic affairs vice presidents of the universities selected), experts (working in educational institutions and having close relations with higher education curricula) and students (graduating class undergraduate students) were considered and consulted.

The researchers determined the sample size of teachers and students based the proportional sampling mechanism described by Yamane (1967) as: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ where, n = sample size, N = total population and e = 0.5 sampling error at 95% confidence level (p. 886). Accordingly, 300 university teachers and 425 graduating class students were selected from all the six bands/program categories and six universities included in the study. These six universities (Jimma, Haramaya, Misaz-Tepi, Mada Walabu, Mettu and Wolkitie Universities) were also selected proportionally from three major university generations (categories) in which two universities were selected from each of the three university generations (first generation [Jimma & Haramaya], second generation [Mizan-Tepi & Mada Walabu] and third generation [Mettu & Wolkitie] universities). In Ethiopia, all the undergraduate academic programs found in all the public universities (total 33 public universities under function in Ethiopia during the data collection period, i.e. 2017) are categorized in to six program categories or bands (Band One: Engineering and Technology, Band Two: Natural and Computational Sciences, Band Three: Medicine and other Health Sciences), Band Four: Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Band Five: Business and Economics and Band Six: Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and others) (MoE, 2017).

As far as the sampling techniques are concerned, the researchers employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. From probability sampling techniques, stratified sampling technique followed by simple random sampling technique was used to select the six universities, the teachers and students from the selected universities by considering the heterogeneity of their characteristics. From non-probability sampling techniques, availability sampling technique was used to select the available and relevant legal, policy and strategic documents and purposive sampling technique was used to select the appropriate educational leaders and experts for interview purposes.

The instruments of data collection used were questionnaires developed by considering the literatures and research objectives (for both the teachers and students), document analysis (for the legal, policy and strategic documents) and interviews (for educational leaders and experts serving at university and ministry of education). Moreover, likert scale with five scales (1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Undecided*, 4=*Agree* and 5=*Strongly Agree*) was used in the questionnaires which provides options for the respondents to indicate their levels of agreement/ disagreement to the issue raised. These instruments were pilot tested and Cronbach Alpha was calculated to each of the items included in the questionnaires in which the minimum result obtained was 0.937 which could be considered as excellent.

The collected data were analysed quantitatively through mean scores and standard deviations to describe the major prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in the curricula based on the teachers and students responses. In addition, one way ANOVA (to check whether significant differences observed among the responses of the respondents as examined on certain demographic variables) and independent t-test (to check whether significant differences observed among the male and female respondents on the issue under discussion) were used. Moreover, the data were analyzed qualitatively through narration/ descriptions of the issues (qualitatively collected data from the legal, policy and strategic documents as well as through interview from educational leaders and experts on the matters pertaining to the study) theme by theme and finally merged and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents and discusses the results obtained through the questionnaires, document analysis and interviews from teachers, students, documents and educational leaders and experts included in the study. Accordingly, the first section will demonstrate the findings focusing on both prospects and challenges while the second section focuses on discussing the matter to make meaning out of it by making analysis in relation to earlier studies and the implication they have to the Ethiopian contexts.

Presentation of the results

This section devotes to present the prospects and challenges one encounter in addressing issues of diversity in the higher education in general and curricula in particular. As already mentioned under introduction, prospects are those good/fertile scenarios/situations/conditions that can be considered as positive reinforcements in addressing issues of diversity at any levels and any contexts. On the contrary, challenges are those serious hindrances/obstacles harming negatively the efforts of addressing issues of diversity in one way or another. Therefore, exploring those prospects and challenges encountering in addressing issues of diversity in the Ethiopian higher education curricula is among the focus of this study. Hence, the researchers have tried to solicit some of the major prospects and challenges that must be taken in to attention in addressing issue of diversity in the curricula by reviewing several literatures and including the views of teachers and students towards these issues.

Accordingly, table 1 below indicates the teachers' and graduating class undergraduate students' views towards some of the major prospects and challenges encounter in addressing

issues of diversity in the Ethiopian higher education curricula. In the table, the availabilities of awareness among policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners and students on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in the curricula, the awareness they have on how to address it, the attitudes they have towards addressing diversity in the curricula, the commitment and dedications the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners have to address diversity in the curricula and the existences of teachers and students with diverse backgrounds were among the issues got attention. Moreover, likert scale with five scales (1=*Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3=*Undecided*, 4=*Agree* and 5=*Strongly Agree*) was used in the instruments which provides options for the respondents to indicate their levels of agreement/ disagreement to the issue raised.

theme considered in assessing the views of the teachers and the students since the how of addressing diversity could also be among the prospects and challenges that needs attention in dealing with the issues under discussion. Hence, items number 4, 5 and 6 were devoted for this and the mean scores calculated for each of the items are ranging from 1.63 to 1.67 for teachers and 1.49 to 1.53 for students. These mean scores are found within the ranges of disagreement with the points stated under each items.

The other important theme considered in examining the views of the respondents toward the prospects and challenges encountering in addressing diversity in the curriculum was the attitudes the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners as well as students have on the issue under

Table 1 Teachers and students view about the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity in curricula

S. N	Items used to explore respondents' view on some of the prospects and challenges in addressing issues of diversity in higher education curricula	Teachers/Instructors				Graduating Class Students			
		N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Good awareness among education policy makers on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in education	300	1307	4.36	0.962	425	1857	4.37	0.977
2	Good awareness among educational leaders on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1308	4.36	0.952	425	1858	4.37	0.958
3	Good awareness among educational practitioners (teachers and other supportive staff) on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1306	4.35	0.979	425	1864	4.39	0.989
4	Good awareness among education policy makers on how to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	489	1.63	0.789	425	635	1.49	0.807
5	Good awareness among educational leaders on how to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	500	1.67	0.786	425	649	1.53	0.847
6	Good awareness among educational practitioners (teachers and other supportive staff) on how to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	496	1.65	0.793	425	636	1.50	0.819
7	Good awareness among students on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1263	4.21	0.903	425	1794	4.22	1.089
8	Positive attitudes among education policy makers towards addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1306	4.35	0.882	425	1863	4.38	0.845
9	Positive attitudes among educational leaders towards addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1310	4.37	0.865	425	1874	4.41	0.845
10	Positive attitudes among educational practitioners (teachers and other supportive staff) towards addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1321	4.40	0.885	425	1823	4.29	0.820
11	Positive attitudes among students towards addressing issues of diversity in curricula	300	1295	4.32	0.836	425	1842	4.33	0.808
12	Committed and dedicated education policy makers to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	487	1.62	0.723	425	674	1.59	0.884
13	Committed and dedicated educational leaders to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	496	1.65	0.727	425	693	1.63	0.902
14	Committed and dedicated educational practitioners to address issues of diversity in curricula	300	485	1.62	0.738	425	683	1.61	0.916
15	Availabilities of staff with diverse backgrounds in all Ethiopian higher education institutions	300	1271	4.24	0.806	425	1788	4.21	0.931
16	Availabilities of students with diverse backgrounds in all Ethiopian higher education institutions	300	1263	4.21	0.877	425	1791	4.21	0.931
	Valid N (list wise)	300				425			

Sources of Information = Teachers/Instructors and Graduating Class Undergraduate Students

As can be seen from the table 1 above, items number 1, 2, 3 and 7 are focusing on the views the respondents (teachers and students) have towards the availabilities of awareness among educational policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners and students on the importance of addressing diversity in the curricula. Mean scores were calculated for each of the items under this theme for both types of respondents and the result revealed that all the mean values are found within the category of 4.21 to 4.36 for teachers and 4.22 to 4.39 for students. Thus, the mean scores for both respondents are found within the category of agreement with the ideas presented.

On the other hand, the awareness these stakeholders have on how to address issues of diversity in the curricula was another

discussion. Accordingly items number 8, 9, 10 and 11 listed in the above table focuses on these issues. Hence, the mean scores calculated for these cases are found within the ranges of 4.32 to 4.40 for teachers and 4.29 to 4.41 for students. These mean scores are within the categories of agreement as per the likert scale labelling described earlier.

The commitments and dedications that educational policy makers, leaders and practitioners have to address diversity in higher education curricula was among the issues considered under prospects and challenges. Thus, the mean scores of the items number 12, 13 and 14 presented under this theme were found within the ranges of 1.62 and 1.65 for teachers and 1.59

and 1.63 for students. These mean scores are found within the ranges of disagreement with the ideas presented.

The last point considered to examine the views of the respondents under prospects and challenges was availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds in the Ethiopian higher education institutions. Under this theme, two items listed under number 15 and 16 were presented with mean scores 4.24 and 4.21 for teachers and 4.21 for students in both items. The ranges of the mean scores are found within the category of agreement with the points in focus.

In addition, the researchers have made efforts to examine whether significant difference is observed among the views of the teachers and students with various backgrounds towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in the modularized and nationally harmonized undergraduate curricula as investigated in terms of:

- gender
- ethnicity
- religious views
- universities
- University's generations the respondents belong to.

The results were calculated by using independent t-test for the first (i.e. gender) and one way ANOVA for the rest others. Accordingly, effort was made to check whether significant difference was observed among the views of teachers with different gender towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in Ethiopian higher education curricula. Hence, the results revealed that (*N* for Male teachers=256, *M*=3.32, *SD*=0.45; *N* for Female teachers=44, *M*=3.29, *SD*=3.32; and *Sig*= 0.112, *df*= 298, *P* =0.05 and *Sig* (2-tailed) =0.65). Hence, the *F* value is not significant as *p*=0.112. In the same vein, similar statistical test was used to check whether significant difference was observed among students with varying gender backgrounds on their views towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in higher education curricula and the result show that ((*N* for Male students= 332, *M*=3.29, *SD*=0.41; *N* for Female students=93, *M*=3.26, *SD*=0.41; and *Sig*= 0.598, *df*= 423, *P*=0.05 and *Sig* (2-tailed) =0.57). Thus, the *F* value is not significant as *p*=0.598. Next, ANOVA results will be presented.

Table 2 Test of significance on the views of teachers and students with various ethnic backgrounds towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity

Prospects & Challenges	ANOVA ^{ab}									
	Teachers					Students				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.359	11	0.214	1.135	0.334	3.560	20	0.178	1.077	0.371
Within Groups	54.441	288	0.189			66.760	404	0.165		
Total	56.801	299				70.320	424			

Sources of Information = Teachers/Instructors and Graduating Class Undergraduate Students

In the study, teachers and students with different ethnic backgrounds were included and efforts were made to examine whether significant difference observed in their views towards the prospects and challenges in addressing issue of diversity in the curricula based on their ethnic backgrounds. Hence, as depicted in table 2 above, one way ANOVA was calculated to

check this and the result revealed that there is no significant difference observed (i.e. 0.334 for teachers and 0.371 for students and both are greater than 0.05 value) among the views of respondents with different ethnic backgrounds towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issue of diversity in the curriculum.

Table 3 Test of significance on the views of teachers and students with diversified religious backgrounds towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity

Prospects & Challenges	ANOVA ^{ab}									
	Teachers					Students				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.835	5	0.367	1.964	0.084	0.793	6	0.132	0.795	0.574
Within Groups	54.965	294	0.187			69.527	418	0.166		
Total	56.801	299				70.320	424			

Sources of Information = Teachers/Instructors and Graduating Class Undergraduate Students

Both teachers and students with various religious views were included in the study and table 3 clearly indicates the ANOVA results calculated for both teachers and students with diversified religious backgrounds to examine the significant difference that may/not be observed on their views towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity in Ethiopian higher education curricula. Hence, the result indicated that there is no significant difference observed in both cases (teachers and students cases) on the issue under discussion as far as the respondents religious backgrounds concerned (i.e. 0.084 for teachers and 0.574 for students in which both are greater than 0.05).

Table 4 Test of significance on the views of teachers and students from different universities towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity

Prospects & Challenges	ANOVA ^{ab}									
	Teachers					Students				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.405	5	1.881	11.668	0.000	1.350	5	0.270	1.640	0.148
Within Groups	47.396	294	0.161			68.970	419	0.165		
Total	56.801	299				70.320	424			

Sources of Information = Teachers/Instructors & Graduating Class Undergraduate Students

Teachers and students from six different universities in Ethiopia were included in the study. Accordingly, table 4 presents the test of significance made to express the significant differences observed among the teachers and students from different universities on their views towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in Ethiopian higher education curricula.

Therefore, the result indicated that there is significant difference among teachers from different universities on their views towards the prospects and challenges (i.e. 0.000 for teachers at 0.05 confidence level) but no significant differences observed among students from different universities on their views towards the same issue (i.e. 0.148 for students at 0.05 confidence levels).

Table 5 Test of significance on the views of teachers and students from different university generations towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity

Prospects & Challenges	ANOVA ^{ab}									
	Teachers					Students				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.326	2	1.163	6.340	0.002	0.502	2	0.251	1.517	0.221
Within Groups	54.475	297	0.183			69.818	422	0.165		
Total	56.801	299				70.320	424			

Sources of Information = Teachers/Instructors and Graduating Class Undergraduate Students

Teachers and students from three university generations (first, second and third generation universities) were included in this study. Hence, the researchers have made efforts to see whether significant difference is observed among these teachers and students from different university generations on their views towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing issue of diversity in the curricula. Accordingly, the results (0.002 for teachers and 0.221 for students at 0.05 significance levels) revealed that there is a significant difference observed among teachers from different universities' generations on the issued under discussion; but no significant difference observed among students in this regards.

In addition to this, the researchers have reviewed the legal, policy and strategic documents found under implementation in Ethiopia contexts for their responsiveness in addressing issues of diversity in the higher education curricula and came up with various findings discussed in details in another article under publication process by the present researchers. However, here the researchers wants to share some of the major issues from that article which are assumed have implications for this particular study.

Under legal frameworks, efforts were made by the present researchers to overview the 1995 FDRE Constitution, the Proclamation No 650/2009 Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation and the 2012 Nationally Harmonized Academic Rules and Regulations of the Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions. Accordingly, the findings revealed that these documents to some extent can be considered as diversity sensitive though they are not clearly speculating to what extent, what aspects of diversity, how, where and by whom are expected to be addressed. To mention examples, the 1995 FDRE constitution in the preamble (for instance starts with 'we nations nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia') and some of its articles try to discuss about some of the issues related to diversity and suggests that diversity should be accommodated in every aspects be it legal, economic, political, social and cultural affairs in an equal and fair bases without compromising the human and democratic righted bestowed in the constitutions to all citizens of the country. In a similar manner, the 2009 higher education proclamation (Proclamation No 650/2009) and the 2012 Nationally Harmonized Academic Rules and Regulations also acknowledge the existences of diversity in higher education and suggest working towards their realization and equally benefiting of diverse population of the country from higher education. However, all these documents did not indicate clearly to what extent, what aspects of diversity, how, where and who are expected to address them.

In the same vein, the 1994 Ethiopian education and training policy and the 2016 Ethiopian cultural and tourism policies were also seen to get some insights about the extent to which they give due emphasis to diversity and related issues. Accordingly, it was evaluated that the education and training policy say that education should be multicultural-oriented, the methods of teaching and learning as well as assessment at all levels of education must be student-centred/active learning and continuous assessment respectively. Apart from this, the education policy did not indicate whether higher education curricula are expected to be diversity responsive or not. It says education should be secular and free from any religious and political influences. However, the cultural policy of Ethiopia on the other hand suggests inculcating diversified cultural values of the society in education is a must and it enforces that educational institutions should integrate the societal cultural and indigenous values in to their educational systems.

The other documents reviewed by the researchers were strategic documents that include the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) and the Fifth Education Sector Development Program (ESDP V). Hence, the responsiveness of these documents in addressing diversity was also examined and generally judged as not responsive as expected and they were even less responsive as compared to the legal and policy frameworks.

In addition, the researchers also interviewed educational leaders (deans, quality assurance directors and academic vice presidents of the universities included in the study) and the educational experts working on the areas of higher education curricula or similar matters and their views are presented as follows. The deans, of the different colleges, quality assurance directors as well as academic vice presidents from different universities and educational experts from educational institutions (example ministry of education [MoE) and education strategy center [ESC]) were asked to express the things/situations/scenarios they considered as prospects and challenges in addressing issues of diversity in the higher education curricula and their responses are generally focussing on the availabilities of:

- Diversity responsive legal, policy and strategic documents that support and enforce addressing diversity in higher education
- good awareness among the stakeholders on the importance of addressing diversity in education and its curricula
- Availabilities of positive attitudes that the stakeholders have towards addressing diversity in education and curricula
- Availabilities of the necessary resources are among the prospects they consider.

However, absence of these qualities mentioned above, lack of know how/how to address issue of diversity in the curriculum, absence of committed and dedicated stakeholders who can address diversity in education and curricula were among the major challenges they mentioned. In addition, the difficulties that one encounter in trying to entertain both international standards and local needs of education as another major challenge in addressing diversity.

DISCUSSIONS ON THE RESULTS

As presented in the result section above, the views of the teachers and students towards the ideas focusing on the awareness of policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners and students (see items number 1, 2, 3 and 7) were rated with mean scores inclined to positive views/agreement levels (Mean scores ranging from 4.21 to 4.36 for teachers and 4.22 to 4.39 for students). This implies that the respondents have positive views that support the idea “There are educational policy makers, leaders, practitioners and students having good awareness about the importance of addressing diversity in the Ethiopian higher education curricula.” Hence, the availabilities of awareness among educational policy makers, leaders, practitioners and students about the importance of addressing diversity in higher education curricula could be considered as the prospects that encourage addressing diversity in the Ethiopian higher education curricula. Findings obtained from interview made with educational leaders of universities and educational experts from the ministry and education strategy center also support this. Furthermore, studies conducted by Brady & Kennedy (2010) and Smith & Lovat (2003) reveal that good awareness of the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners i.e. teachers and other educational experts and students about the importance and on the how of addressing diversity in the curricula are among the opportunities that can be considered in addressing diversity in higher education in general and curricula in particular.

On the other hand, the awareness these stakeholders have on how to address issues of diversity in the curricula was examined through items number 4, 5 and 6 and the result depicted the mean scores ranging from 1.63 to 1.67 for teachers and 1.49 to 1.53 for students. Hence, the mean scores are inclined to negative which represent their disagreement with the issues. This implies that the educational policy makers, educational leaders and educational practitioners lack awareness on how to address issues of diversity in the higher education curricula though they have good awareness on the importance of addressing it as far as the respondents’ views concerned. The policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners do not have adequate technical knowledge, skills and value systems that are necessary to address issues of diversity in the higher education curricula. Therefore, these scenarios are among the challenges faced in addressing diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian public higher education institutions. The interview results also corroborate these findings in which all the participants interviewed replied that they lack the know how to entertain diversity in higher education and its curricula. Hence, this situation can be considered as the challenges that one encounter in the Ethiopian context.

The other important theme considered in examining the views of the respondents toward the prospects and challenges encountering in addressing diversity in the curriculum was the attitudes the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners as well as students have and presented through items number 8, 9, 10 and 11 with mean scores found within the ranges of 4.32 to 4.40 for teachers and 4.29 to 4.41 for students. This shows agreement with the ideas presented and implies that “Availabilities of policy makers, educational leaders, practitioners and students having positive attitudes towards addressing issues of diversity in higher education curricula is considered as prospects”. Thus, the availabilities of

stakeholders having positive attitudes towards addressing diversity in higher education curricula can be taken as one of the major prospects that one encounters while dealing with issues of diversity in the Ethiopian higher education institutions. In the interviews conducted in this regards, the respondents also stipulated that most of the stakeholders working in the areas of education be it at higher or lower levels of education have positive attitudes towards entertaining issues of diversity in education. Hence, this also supports the findings discussed above. Literatures also indicate that availability of policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners who have positive attitudes and are strived to address diversity in the curricula can be among the major prospects/ good opportunities to be taken positively (Kitano, 1997; Nelson Liard, 2014).

The commitments and dedications that educational policy makers, leaders and practitioners have to address diversity in higher education curricula was among the issues considered under prospects and challenges. Thus, the mean scores of the items number 12, 13 and 14 presented under this theme were found within the ranges of 1.62 and 1.65 for teachers and 1.59 and 1.63 for students and indicated disagreement with the ideas presented. This implies that the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners lack commitments and dedications to address issues of diversity in the higher education curricula as far as the teachers’ and students’ views are concerned. Thus, absence or lack of such important qualities could be considered as one of the challenges encounter in addressing diversity in the Ethiopian higher education curricula. The interview results also supported this idea in that, the participants interviewed revealed that there are problems commonly observed from policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners in working on addressing issues of diversity in a committed and dedicated manner which may be due to lack of know how to deal with it. Therefore, lack of commitment and dedication was identified as the challenges one encounter in addressing diversity in higher education curricula of Ethiopia. Regarding this, Kitano (1997) and Nelson Liard (2014) state that availability of committed and dedicated policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners who are strived to address diversity in the curricula can be taken as opportunities while their absence is considered as challenges.

The other important point considered to examine the views of the respondents under prospects and challenges was availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds in the Ethiopian higher education institutions through items number 15 and 16 and the mean scores calculated were 4.24 and 4.21 for teachers and 4.21 for students in both items. These mean scores are representing the agreement level which implies that the respondents’ views are positive which means that they are agreeing on the availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Thus, availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds are among the prospects one encounters in addressing diversity in higher education curricula in Ethiopian context. Studies conducted by Brady & Kennedy (2010) and Smith & Lovat (2003) also show that availability of the necessary resources as well as availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds in the universities and the rest others are among the major prospects/opportunities

that can be taken as good and encouraging situations in addressing diversity in higher education institutions in general and curricula in particular.

In addition the present researchers also conducted analysis on the legal, policy and strategic frameworks found under implementation in Ethiopia for their responsiveness to diversity and came up with the findings that “The responsiveness of the legal, policy and strategic frameworks available in Ethiopia were rated as good in supporting addressing issues of diversity in the curricula of the Ethiopian higher education though they did not clearly articulate and enforce the what, to what extent, how and by whom issues of diversity can be addressed.” It was revealed that these documents in one way or another talks about different manifestations of diversity and the necessity to deal with them but could not indicate mechanisms through which they can be entertained, what aspects of diversity in which aspect of social, political, economic or other aspects must be entertained, how and by whom they are expected to be considered were not indicated. Findings of the researches conducted so far in this regard, reveal that availability of legal, policy and strategic frameworks that are responsive to diversity are considered as prospects in addressing issues of diversity (Ainscow *et al*, 2003; European Union [EU], 2014; Farrell & Ainscow, 2002, Hailemariam, 2016; UNESCO, 1994, 2005, 2009, 2017). Hence, the efforts entrusted by these documents can be considered as opportunities but the required ingredients expected of them but not addressed could be considered as challenges and that area needs further improvements.

Finally, the researchers have made efforts to examine whether significant difference is observed among respondents’ (teachers and students) views towards the prospects and challenges encounter in addressing diversity in the curricula and the findings on most of the variables used for comparison shows no significant differences except for teachers on universities and generations of universities they belongs to. Hence, absence of significance differences on the issues under discussion among the respondents implies that the findings can be generalized to all higher education institutions found in Ethiopia and their respective curricula.

CONCLUSIONS

From the major findings discussed above, it is possible to conclude that availabilities of policymakers, educational leaders, practitioners and students having good awareness on the importance of addressing issues of diversity in higher education curricula, positive attitudes of these stakeholders towards the issue under discussions, availabilities of teachers and students with diversified backgrounds as well as the capabilities of the available legal, policy and strategic frameworks that give due considerations to issues of diversity were among the prospects identified in Ethiopian higher education contexts. However, lack of knowledge and skills on how to address issues of diversity from the policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners though they think positively on its importance, lack of commitment and dedications from these stakeholders to entertain the issues as per the expected levels and lack of enough and clear support from the legal, policy and strategic documents on what aspects of diversity, how, where, in what scenarios/contexts and by whom to be addressed and difficulties one can face in trying to address the global and local needs together were among the

major challenges encounter in addressing issues of diversity in Ethiopian public higher education institutions and its curricula. Hence, attentions must be given to the prospects and challenges discussed above and the related others in making efforts to address issues of diversity in Ethiopian higher education and curricula, if it is meant to make the higher education relevant, effective and efficient enough that in turn resulted in producing qualified and competent graduates that can effectively and efficiently function in a diversified working environment.

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