



AUC International Conference on Research in African Challenges (ICRAC)

Track G: Combating Poverty through education

SUB-TRACK G3: AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND POVERTY ELIMINATION

Chair: Dr. Teklu Abate Bekele

Co-Chair: Prof. Damtew Teferra

Historically, studies on rate of return were used to allocate funding to education. According to a series of World Bank studies, the rate of return of higher education was purported to be lower than basic education. These studies were mainly used as a rationale for the limited public funding of higher education in the developing world.

In 2015, the World Bank, in reversal to its long-held position, declared that the rate of return for African higher education “is not only high, but that at 21 percent, it is among the highest in the world” (Teferra, 2016, 11). More recent findings also indicated that the “economic returns for higher education graduates are the highest in the entire educational system — an estimated 17 percent increase in earnings as compared with 10 percent for primary and 7 percent for secondary education” (World Bank, 2017, n.p.).

Currently, multilateral organizations and governments firmly acknowledge the importance of higher education for socio-economic development. The role of higher education in building technical and professional capacity and bolstering pre-higher education is stressed. The World Bank and other organizations also call for a greater role of states in advancing higher education; countries are advised not to focus only on rate of return analysis but also take account of the sub-sector’s major external benefits, which are more holistic in directly combating poverty.

African higher education (public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools) is beset with insufficient capacity to promoting African culture; little consideration of emerging needs (e.g. the environment, terrorism, peace and conflict resolution); limited capacity in improving quality of life in rural communities; limited contribution to ease youth/graduate unemployment; negligence of human rights abuses in society; and limited willingness to introduce



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meaningful autonomy and good governance at the institutional level. More than ever before, these call for, a significant reconceptualization of research on African higher education.

The American University in Cairo organizes an international multidisciplinary conference with a comprehensive theme on poverty elimination. The higher education sub-track of the conference aims to significantly improve our understanding of the role of higher education in directly promoting socio-economic development and eliminating poverty. This is intended to be achieved through 1) a robust understanding of the plethora of challenges higher education is currently facing; 2) reconceptualizing higher education governance, management, research, teaching, and learning models; and 3) communicating the findings to African higher education institutions, development partners, governments, and ministries of education for bigger impact. The conference could also create opportunities for academics and professionals interested in African higher education to create a forum for further networking and cooperation.

Interested individuals are invited to submit abstracts not more than 300 words on areas of their scholarly works related to higher education governance, management, research, teaching, learning, funding, among others, all within the context of socio-economic development and poverty elimination. Within these topics, contributors could consider cross-cutting issues of quality, relevance, and equity. The abstracts should have theoretical, conceptual, and/or empirical depth, clearly reflecting on recent developments in higher education and society. Submissions are encouraged to challenge or reconceptualize existing models, approaches, cultures, or frameworks. Post-modern, post-colonial, critical perspectives, and multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches are also encouraged. Policy-oriented abstracts, which are supported by relevant theory and practice, are also relevant. Contributors are advised to avoid using anecdotal evidence; case experiences need to be put together in a coherent way so that they can provide useful policy or theory options.

Submissions will be peer reviewed and only successful applicants will be contacted for further communication.



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Biographies

Dr. Teklu Abate Bekele is Associate Professor of International and Comparative Education (ICE) at the Graduate School of Education, the American University in Cairo (AUC). Prior to joining the AUC, Bekele worked as Research Fellow, Research Associate, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer of ICE at the Department of Education, the University of Oslo, Norway. Bekele taught graduate research methodology and ICE courses in the ICE, Higher Education, and Education Policies for Global Development programs at the University of Oslo. For nearly a decade, Bekele has been studying the fields of teaching and learning, technology in education, quality of education, education reform, workplace learning and emerging knowledge production cultures in higher education, employing qualitative and quantitative methodologies. His recent research focuses on emerging knowledge production cultures in higher education and society and their implications for quality and social relevance of higher education. Bekele participated in international and interdisciplinary projects involving scholars from America, Europe, Asia and Africa. He is currently Board Member of the Nordic Comparative and International Education Society and Co-Editor of the Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education. Bekele was twice awarded the University of Oslo's Quota Scholarship in relation to his graduate and doctoral studies in higher education.

Damtew Teferra is Professor of higher education and has been the leader of Higher Education Training and Development at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, since August 2012. He is the founder and director of the International Network for Higher Education in Africa, earlier at the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE), Boston College, now at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, for 10 years now. Teferra was the former director for Africa and the Middle East of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program in New York. He was the (former) founding Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of African Higher Education* (former) and the *International Journal of African Higher Education* and the *Chronicle of African Higher Education*. He is the author of *Scientific Communication in African Universities: External Assistance and National Needs* (Routledge Falmer, 2003) and lead (and sole) editor of the award-winning books *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook* (Indiana University Press, 2003) and *Funding Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). His other edited books include: *African Higher Education: The International Dimension* (CIHE, Boston College and Association of African Universities, 2008), *Higher Education and Globalization: Challenges, Threats and Opportunities for Africa* (University of Maastricht and INHEA (CIHE) 2010),



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and *Flagship Universities in Africa* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). Recognized “as one of Africa’s preeminent higher education scholar”, by the African Union Commission, he was recently appointed by the organization to lead the Higher Education Cluster of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-25).