

# Competency and constraints of higher education and research institutions for rural transformation in the Amhara region, Ethiopia

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## ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is an agrarian country and agriculture is the backbone of its economy. Consequently, the government of Ethiopia has devised Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) as the country's overall economic development policy. For the last 15 years, public investment towards the expansion of higher education, research and extension in agriculture has been so enormous. In reality, however, these higher education and research institutions were not sufficiently responsive to rural transformation. Thus, to evaluate the role of higher education and research institutions in stimulating rural transformation and to identify main training constraints accountable for their poor performances in institutional learning and rural transformation is of paramount importance. To this effect focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted. Stratified and purposive sampling technique was dominantly employed during the survey studies. The result of the study has shown that higher education and research institutions were less responsive to address the actual problems of small-scale farmers and they were limited by a number of constraints/challenges to address the actual problems of farmers. The major constraints were, to list some, limited involvement in research and extension works by the university staff, students limited practical attachments of the training programmes with farming communities, limited infrastructures and facilities and limited availability of contextualized learning resources. In addressing the aforesaid constraints/challenges, the uni-

versity staff should proportionally allocate time in the research and extension activities on top of practical teaching supported by local research results and experience; involving students on practical attachments both in their academic and vacation time; giving emphasis on basic training preparation like fulfilling libraries, laboratories, demonstration fields and transportation facilities; and lastly to revise the existing curriculum in to the direction of solving the real problems of the Amhara region then the country Ethiopia.

**Keywords:** Rural Transformation; Higher Education; Training Constraints; Competency

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is an agrarian country and agriculture is the backbone of its economy. Agriculture is thus believed to be the major source of the country's economic growth and its development is expected to adequately drive the process of industrialization. Because of this fact, the government of Ethiopia has devised Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) as the country's overall economic development policy and the country has been investing appreciably towards agricultural growth. Particularly for the last 15 years, public investment towards the expansion of higher education, research and extension in agriculture and natural resource management has been so enormous. These higher education and research institutions are expected in turn to play a great role in stimulating rural transformation. In reality, however, they are not sufficiently responsive to rural transformation especially addressing problems and priorities