

# Relating mechanisms of higher education and research closely to the reality in the society for rural transformation in the *Amhara* region, Ethiopia

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## ABSTRACT

Higher education and research in Ethiopia is going through a decisive phase of reform and expansion. As a system it is increasingly required to respond and gear adequately to the development needs of the society and the country. This change is taking place through a government-led radical review of the system's status and challenges, and by devising mechanisms of consensus building, as well as ownership and overcoming the resistance to change. Higher education and research institutions of *Bahir Dar* and *Gondar* Universities and ARARI, in Ethiopia are not satisfactorily responsive to rural transformation in addressing problems of small-scale farmers. This calls for responsive education and research that addresses farmers' constraints. Thus, to survey the suitability/appropriateness of the current training programmes of higher education and research institutions to address the actual problems of farmers is of paramount importance. To this effect, tools such as interview guide, check-list and questionnaires were put to use for data collection. Primary data was collected from observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Descriptive statistics for quantitative data and triangulation for qualitative data were the prime techniques for data analysis. The result of the study shows that university heads, instructors, students, research heads, researchers and employees rated the suggested mechanisms, namely "inviting speakers from industries and farming community", "visiting

guest lecturers" and "special entrepreneurial project", as the top most important for ensuring training and research closely to the reality in the society of *Amhara* region in facilitating agricultural growth and rural transformation. Besides, employers and farmers responded that fresh graduates are deficient with relevant technical skills because of less emphasis on experiential learning on higher education. Therefore, the curriculum for the training should give much weight to incorporate these suggested mechanisms and the higher institutions curriculum should be arranged in such a way that the trainees could obtain appropriate technical know-how.

**Keywords:** Relating Mechanism; Rural Transformation; Education; Research

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education and research is of paramount importance for economic and social development. Inculcating relevant knowledge and advanced skills, higher education provides the human resources required for leadership, management, business and professional positions. The institutions also serve as the major research establishments that generate, adopt and disseminate knowledge. By giving people access to knowledge and the tools for increasing and diversifying their knowledge, higher education and research expands people's productivity, as well as national capacity and competitiveness. Today, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, more interdependent and increasingly a globalized village, higher education and research is critical for the