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Campus Westend, Seminarhaus 2.106

Einladung zum Vortrag

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Decolonizing Higher Education and unleashing the Ethiopia's indigenous knowledge

Ethiopian Higher Education needs to decolonize its curricula for relevance and quality. Enormous expansions has been witnessed over the last decades in the Ethiopian Higher Education system. However, modelled after the ideals of Western universities, Higher Education in Ethiopia demonstrates no indigenous nature. Ethiopia is a country with an ancient civilization, rich indigenous knowledge, vast written heritage and its own traditional knowledge creation system. The country had no colonial past, and able to develop traditional system of education matching to the level of higher education. However, Higher Education in Ethiopia is not much different from that of other colonized African countries. Moreover, in order to speed up the turnover of graduates, basic knowledge and skill courses were annulled out of the curricula. Coupled with the use of English as a medium of instruction, in which most of both students as well as teachers lack adequate competency, the quality as well as relevance of education have been compromised. Likewise, research outputs of both the faculty as well as students have been criticized for demonstrating poor quality and plagiarism. Ethiopian education had wafted far away from being appropriately matched to the socio-economic demands of the country. Ethiopia needs to control the process of formulating curricula and the knowledge created through them. Teaching what is useful to the country while at the same time preparing students for what the 21 century global world calls for should go hand in hand. Ethiopian universities should place themselves as owners, producers and users of indigenous knowledge in a way to be significant nationally as well as globally. This research presents the journey Ethiopia has started to reform its Higher Education system to reset it. This research is grounded on qualitative research methodology, and is largely grounded on critical theory of education, dependency theory, and Afrikology epistemology.

A brief biography

Hirut Woldemariam is a professor of linguistics at Addis Ababa University. She did her PhD study at the University of Cologne, Institute of African Studies, in a Sandwich program with Addis Ababa University. Her prolific academic record demonstrates leading international research projects, publishing two books and over three dozen of peer reviewed articles in international journals. She has also served as a member of editorial boards for international academic journals, and as a member of selection committee for international research grants including for Volkswagen foundation.

She had a unique experience in taking up various leadership positions ranging from academic institution to high level ministerial posts. At Addis Ababa University, she has been progressively taking up range of leadership positions from Department Head to Associate-Vice-President, then to Vice-President posts. She was the first female Vice-President in the history of Addis Ababa University, and has served the university for about seven years at the top management level. Then, she has been appointed to take up four Ministerial positions in the Federal Republic of Ethiopia consecutively for over five years. These Ministerial positions held ordered from the recent to earlier time are: Minister-Social Sector Advisor of the Prime Minister; Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs; Minister of Culture & Tourism.

She has received different awards including Doctor Philosophiae causa for 2022 from University of Oslo; Research Award for Senior Scientists from Alexander Humboldt; Solidarity Award from the Association International de Linguistique Appliqueé (AILA), USA; and OSSREA, the 17th Social Science Research competition for young scholars. Moreover, she has been member in various national and international research networks and projects. She was also a member of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy.