

## **Strengthening Partnerships to Enhance Ethiopia's Educational Quality**

**Kotebe University of Education**

### **Executive Summary**

The National Symposium on Strengthening Partnerships to Enhance the Quality of Education in Ethiopia, held on February 28, 2025, at Haile Grand Hotel, Addis Ababa facilitated by Kotebe University of Education (KUE), brought together key stakeholders from government, academia, the private sector, and development partners. The event aimed to foster dialogue on the role of partnerships in improving Ethiopia's education system, with a focus on teacher education, curriculum relevance, infrastructure, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. A critical issue raised during the symposium was the persistent problem of low educational quality, which has hindered the effective delivery of education and failed to meet the needs of Ethiopia's rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Participants discussed how outdated curricula, insufficiently trained teachers, and lack of resources and infrastructure contribute to the widening gap between educational outcomes and labor market demands. The need to align education with national development goals, particularly in light of global educational standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was also highlighted as a central challenge. The key issues included expert discussions on aligning teacher professional development with national and global educational standards, the importance of curriculum innovation to meet the demands of the labor market, and the need for enhanced infrastructure and research-driven policy-making. The symposium also underscored the importance of partnerships between universities, Regional Education Bureaus (REBs), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the private sector to address these critical challenges in Ethiopia's education sector. This policy brief, therefore, outlines the main findings from the symposium and presents a series of actionable policy recommendations aimed at strengthening partnerships, improving teacher quality, aligning curricula with societal needs, and fostering sustainable development within the Ethiopian education system.

### **1. Introduction**

Ethiopia has made strong progress in improving educational access, especially at primary level since 1991 (Rolleston et al., 2024). Higher education has also seen rapid growth, with the number of institutions increasing to 177 (49 governments and 128 non-governments) (Tareke, et al., 2024). This expansion has improved access to post-secondary education for many Ethiopian students (Kedir, 2009). However, despite these advances, the quality of education remains a critical issue. Factors such as a mismatch between the curriculum and market demands, poor learning environments, limited focus on skills development, and a lack of industry-skilled staff continue to hamper educational outcomes (Rolleston et al., 2024).

One way of addressing these problems is by creating an efficient partnership system among the various stakeholders of the education sector, such as industries, local communities, enterprises,

donors, media, schools, colleges and universities, etc. In his study, Oliso (2023), for instance, recommended the Ethiopian government, universities, Ministry of Education, quality assurance agencies, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve the country's higher education. In addition, the urgency of a coordinated effort among governmental and non-governmental actors has been emphasized by a panel of experts in a symposium organized recently by Kotebe University of Education. Hence, the purpose of this brief is to present relevant policy options and suggest actionable insights which will help to create a consistent and effective partnership system, which contributes to the efforts undertaken to mitigate the quality of education problem in Ethiopia.

## **2. Policy problem**

Ethiopia has shown remarkable progress in increasing access to education to its citizens after the launching of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (Ministry of Education, 2019; Hinchliffe, & Tan, 2006). Though access to education showed such significant progress, the quality of education has been severely challenged. Observing this bewildering problem in the education system, the Ethiopian government has recently introduced reforms, namely the 2023 revised Education and Training Policy, the Ethiopian Education Transformation Program (EETP), and other similar initiatives to alleviate the problem. In these reforms and initiatives, partnership among stakeholders, which is one of the indicators of quality education, has been overlooked. As Kendall (2006) indicates, regular and effective collaboration among donors, governments, non-governmental organizations, and communities can strengthen education quality improvement efforts. Several local and international organizations invest plenty of time, mobilize massive resources, and personnel to fix the educational crisis that Ethiopia has faced. These efforts and activities, however, are fragmented, isolated, and hence are largely ineffective. The purpose of this brief, therefore, is to call for a policy frame which provides principles, rules, and procedures which can be of use in defining the goals, purposes, criteria of selection for potential partners, setting out support system, and governing the entire partnership processes. We believe that such a policy framework yields effective, efficient, and sustainable collaboration among key government and non-government stakeholders in the education system. Indeed, this will contribute enormously to the ongoing efforts to ensure quality of education in Ethiopia.

## **3. Opportunities of partnership for quality education**

Table 1 indicates the opportunities that can support collaboration for systemic improvements in teacher training, institutional efficiency, and the overall educational quality and relevance.

Table 1: Opportunities of stakeholder collaboration for quality and relevance of education

Opportunity	Description
Government interest in reform	The Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus and regulatory bodies are showing commitment to reforms, creating policy options for structured partnerships and quality enhancement.
Institutional momentum and commitment	Growing recognition by policymakers, universities, and experts about the need for educational quality improvement provides a strong foundation for action.
Adoption of global and regional best practices	International models can be contextualized to improve teacher education, accreditation, and curriculum relevance in Ethiopia.
Stakeholder willingness to collaborate	Symposium insights show increased interest among institutions to co-develop solutions, which enhance partnership potential.
Shared resource utilization potential	Institutional collaboration allows for cost-effective sharing of staff, infrastructure, and learning materials, reducing duplication and inefficiency.
Policy alignment with SDGs and national agenda	The push for SDG 4 and Ethiopia's national education roadmap incentivizes reforms focused on inclusion, equity, and quality.
Regional teacher education centers	The presence of regional teacher training colleges provides decentralized platforms for capacity building and localized partnerships.
Technological and digital transformation opportunities	Investment in digital infrastructure, teacher digital skills, and e-learning tools can improve teacher training and address access gaps.
Growing donor interest and investment	International partners and donors are increasingly interested in supporting teacher education reforms, providing technical and financial support.
Increased demand based training and internship programs	Enhanced internships and practical training programs, will create conducive environment for collaboration and partnership

#### 4. Challenges for Quality of Education and Partnership

Quality of education and partnership in Ethiopia's education sector faces challenges like limited resources, frequent leadership turnover, and cultural barriers. These issues hinder effective partnerships and slow progress in educational reforms as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Challenges in strengthening partnership, and quality of education

Challenge	Description
Lack of institutional coordination	There is a challenge in aligning efforts between various institutions, such as universities, the Ministry of Education (MoE), and regional educational bureaus.
Human resource (HR) turnover and instability	High turnover of resources at educational institutions and within key policy-making bodies hinders long-term commitment and effective implementation of inclusive education strategies, leading to a lack of continuity in reforms.
Resource constraints and unequal distribution	Insufficient resources and unequal distribution across regions create challenges in implementing educational reforms. Some areas, especially rural areas, lack access to basic educational infrastructure and technology.
Limited capacity of stakeholders	While partnerships involve multiple sectors, some stakeholders, such as private institutions or development organizations, may lack the capacity to contribute meaningfully or collaborate effectively due to insufficient skills, resources, or

	expertise.
Cultural and social barriers to inclusivity	Cultural attitudes towards disability and education in certain communities can present significant barriers to inclusive education.
Resistance to change in educational practices	Resistance to adopting new pedagogical methods or technologies, particularly among teachers and educators, creates obstacles to transforming education systems. This resistance may stem from a lack of awareness, training, or belief in the efficacy of new approaches.
Teacher status and respect in society	Teachers in Ethiopia often face challenges in gaining respect and recognition from the society. This affects their morale, job satisfaction, and willingness to stay in the profession, ultimately impacting the quality of education.

### 5. Policy Recommendations

Acknowledging the potential advantages and challenges of partnership, quality and inclusive education, the symposium results in valuable insights for policy development, highlighting key policy recommendations outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Policy recommendations to improve partnership, education quality and relevance

Policy Options	Key Actions	Pros	Cons	Stakeholders
Institutionalize partnerships between teachers training institutions, governing bodies, and developmental agents	Establish formal collaboration frameworks, collaborative research and innovation, share resources and infrastructure	Improve teacher quality and preparedness, resource sharing and cost efficiency, innovation in pedagogy, enhance professional development.	Administrative and logistical hurdles, sustainability issues, resistance to change, quality control challenges, cultural and language barriers	MoE, Education Bureaus, KUE, Regional Teacher Training Colleges
A comprehensive quality and inclusive framework for education reform	Define clear standards and benchmarks, strengthen teacher training and professional development, enhance curriculum relevance and flexibility, foster equity and inclusion, leverage technology, ensure sustainable funding and governance and adapt to global best practices	Ensure consistent standards and equity, improve teacher quality and accountability, promote systemic coherence, enhances global competitiveness, improve stakeholder participation	Complex to implement, rigidity and reduced local flexibility, demand high costs and resource, resistance to change, equity gaps in enforcement	MoE, Education Bureaus
Accredit and supervise the teacher training practices	Establish clear accreditation standards, implement rigorous program review processes, enforce accountability through data, promote transparency and public reporting, conduct tracer study, support continuous improvement, invest in inspectorate capacity, and integrate stakeholder feedback	Ensure quality and standardization, enhance accountability, boosts credibility and employability, promote evidence-based practices	Resource-intensive and bureaucratic, rigidity and innovation barriers, equity gaps, subjectivity in evaluations	MoE, ETA, KUE, Regional teacher education Colleges
Develop a multi-faceted, and multi-stakeholder approach to make teaching a more attractive and rewarding profession	Competitive compensation and benefits, career development pathways, improve working conditions, enhance respect and recognition, strategic recruitment and training initiatives, national dialogue initiatives, stakeholder engagement and support system and wellbeing	Higher retention, better student outcomes, enhance prestige, equity improvements and professional growth	Significant costs, complex implementation, political resistance, sustainability challenges	MoE, MoF, Civil Service Commission
Strengthen strategic investment in infrastructure and digital transformation	Generate income, enhance physical infrastructure, expand reliable internet access, equip schools with digital tools, train teachers in digital pedagogy, develop digital learning content, ensure data privacy, prioritize equity in access	Better learning outcomes, closes equity gaps, future-ready skills, saves long-term costs and data driven decisions	High initial costs, digital divide risks, teacher resistance, cyber security threats, maintenance challenges	MoE, Education Bureaus, KUE, Teacher training Colleges

## 6. Conclusion

The symposium served as a crucial platform for addressing the pressing issues in Ethiopia's education sector, particularly around teacher quality, inclusive education, partnership, and the integration of technology. The discussions highlighted both opportunities and challenges of partnership for quality education, offering a clear understanding of the reforms needed to improve the sector. There is a potential for significant progress in enhancing educational outcomes through fostering collaboration and implementing targeted policy recommendations. Continued engagement among stakeholders, alongside strategic actions on the identified areas, is essential for building a more inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education system in Ethiopia.

## 7. References

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