

## **Incorporating part-time lecturers from practice in the teaching and learning process and up skilling existing academic staff of Ethiopian Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs)**

Mistire Yifru Feleke, Gemechu Misso, Tamrat Tadesse<sup>2</sup>, Nigist Abebe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kotebe University of Education, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>2</sup>Wolaita Sodo University, Sodo, Ethiopia

### **Executive Summary**

Globally, there is a growing agreement on the need to bridge the gap between higher education and industry demands, especially in universities of applied sciences. Although countries have made progress in fostering university-industry linkages, significant gaps remain ineffectively integrating real-world experience into teaching and learning processes. In Ethiopia, these challenges are exacerbated by limited industry involvement in curriculum design, a shortage of practical skill-building opportunities, and underdeveloped frameworks for leveraging part-time industry experts in academia. As a result, graduates often lack the hands-on experience and market-aligned competencies required for the workforce. This policy brief draws on practical experiences from FAITH two pilot projects at Kotebe University of Education (KUE) and Wolaita Sodo University (WSU), which explored innovative approaches to integrating part-time lecturers from industry and up-skilling academic staff. The initiatives aimed to enhance the relevance and quality of education in Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) through team teaching, co-supervision, and practical exposure. These pilots revealed both the potential of such collaborations and the systemic challenges faced, such as lack of formal partnerships, logistical barriers, limited pedagogical training for part-time lecturers, and institutional capacity constraints. To address these gaps, this policy brief presents a set of evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at formalizing and scaling the integration of part-time industry professionals and structured upskilling of academic staff in Ethiopian UASs. It advocates for the development of clear institutional frameworks, formal industry-university agreements, pedagogical training for part-time lecturers, and mechanisms for sustainable funding and monitoring. These measures are essential to creating a practice-oriented, responsive, and high-quality education system that aligns with Ethiopia's industrialization and job creation goals.

### **1. Introduction**

Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) are established to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application by equipping students with skills that are directly aligned with labor market demands (OECD, 2021). Globally, they serve as engines of innovation and employability through close partnerships with industries. However, in the Ethiopian context, there is a notable lack of collaboration between UASs and industry. For decades, both sectors maintained a closed-door approach, limiting opportunities for cooperation and mutual gain (Hailu, 2021). This disconnect has contributed to a persistent mismatch between the competencies acquired by graduates and the skills required by employers, ultimately affecting

job readiness and productivity (World Bank, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). The joint instruction by academic staff and industry practitioners has emerged as a potential strategy to strengthen university-industry collaboration and ensure more effective course design, delivery, and evaluation (Moges, 2020).

In response to these systemic issues, the Ethiopian government introduced a new policy framework, the Higher Education Technical and Vocational Training and Research Institutions and Industry Linkage (HETRIIL) Proclamation No. 1298/2023, aimed at institutionalizing university-industry cooperation (MoE, 2023). This proclamation sets out clear responsibilities for both academic and industrial partners to engage in sustained collaboration. Nevertheless, its implementation has been uneven, with limited operational guidance and weak enforcement mechanisms. Without active facilitation and incentives, industries remain uncertain to participate meaningfully in educational processes (Teshome, 2022). To address these gaps, initiatives such as those piloted at Kotebe University of Education and Wolaita Sodo University demonstrate the potential of structured part-time industry teaching and academic staff upskilling. These models highlight practical pathways for strengthening applied education, fostering mutual value creation, and ultimately enhancing the relevance and quality of higher education in Ethiopia.

## **2. Policy Problem**

Despite the Ethiopian government's recognition of the need for stronger university-industry collaboration as evident in the HETRIIL Proclamation No. 1298/2023, UASs continue to face significant challenges in operationalizing this mandate. A major barrier lies in the absence of clear institutional guidelines for integrating part-time lecturers from industry into teaching and learning processes. This gap is compounded by the limited pedagogical capacity of industry professionals, insufficient financial and administrative frameworks for recruitment, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Consequently, academic programs remain predominantly theoretical, disconnected from real-world industry practices, and poorly aligned with labor market needs. Without targeted efforts to formalize part-time industry teaching and enhance the capacity of academic staff, Ethiopian UASs will remain unable to fulfill their fundamental goal of preparing graduates who are equipped with the practical skills demanded by the workforce.

### 3. Opportunity

The integration of part-time industry lecturers and collaborative teaching models presents a timely and strategic opportunity for Ethiopian UASs to enhance the relevance, coherence, and quality of their academic programs.

Table 1: Opportunities of integrating UASs with part-time industry lecturers

| Opportunity                                        | Description                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HETRIIL Proclamation (No. 1298/2023)               | Provides a strong legal foundation to institutionalize collaboration between UASs and industry, including team teaching, joint training, and co-designed curricula.  |
| Growing industry demand for skilled graduates      | Increasing need for practically trained professionals creates incentives for industries to invest in university partnerships and capacity building.                  |
| Availability of experienced industry professionals | Ethiopia hosts a wide pool of skilled professionals in various sectors who can contribute to teaching and mentorship if given formal roles and guidance.             |
| Government focus on employability and relevance    | National priorities emphasize linking education with employment, creating momentum for policies that bridge academic-industry divides.                               |
| International models and partnerships              | Global practices and existing partnerships (e.g., with German UASs or other vocational systems) offer replicable, contextualized frameworks for team teaching.       |
| ICT and blended learning opportunities             | Digital tools make it easier to involve industry experts remotely, provide modular training for staff, and record knowledge exchanges for wider institutional use.   |
| Socializing students into professional practice    | Involving industry professionals in teaching helps students gain real-world exposure, understand workplace expectations, and prepare for smooth transitions to jobs. |
| Building collegial relationships                   | Encourages professional relationships between university instructors and industry experts, fostering mutual growth and trust.                                        |

### 4. Challenges

Several challenges may hinder the implementation of part-time industry teaching at the (UAS). Table 2 indicates key challenges that should be considered during implementation.

Table 2: Challenges that hinder the implementation of part-time industry teaching

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Loose link between UAS and the industry</b>            | The University-industry linkage in our case is almost at its infantile stage. Much is expected to create and strengthen the partnership between the two.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Institutional culture</b>                              | Hand-in-hand to the wider gap between UAS and the world of work is the fact that our institutional culture is not as such well developed to invite the part-time lecturers, except a few cases, to co-work with the university professors in integrating the theoretical knowledge to the practices in the world of work. |
| <b>Absence of well-equipped laboratory in university.</b> | Institutional setting for team teaching is not suitable to implement it easily.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Lack of teaching</b>                                   | Industry personnel lack pedagogical skills that hinders their efforts to                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>experience of industry professional</b> | facilitate students learning                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Financial and logistic constraints</b>  | Inadequate logistics to incorporate teaching learning process between university lecturer and industry expert.                                                                                                 |
| <b>Schedule</b>                            | University program implementation schedule may not be suitable for industry experts.                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Lack of proper incentives</b>           | Expectation from industry about better payment from university but the low payment for industry professionals).                                                                                                |
| <b>Curriculum rigidity</b>                 | The existing curriculum by itself is not suitable to implement team teaching or it is rigid curriculum where and when industry experts to take part in teaching learning process of UAS is not clearly stated. |

### 5. Policy Recommendations

To effectively enhance the quality and relevance of education in Ethiopia's UASs, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, implement a national framework that supports the structured involvement of part-time industry lecturers and up-skilling of academic staff (Table 3).

Table 3: Industry part-time teaching policy options

| Policy Options                                     | Key Actions                                                                                        | Pros                                                                            | Cons                                                                   | Stakeholders                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Develop national implementation guideline          | Develop clear guidelines incorporating part-time industry lecturers into academic programs         | Provides standardization; supports consistent application across UASs           | Requires strong coordination and policy coherence                      | Ministry of Education, UASs, Industries        |
| Strengthen partnership between UASs and industries | Universities-Industry Linkage (UIL) offices shall coordinate joint teaching and practical exposure | Enhances relevance and quality of education; bridges theory-practice gap        | May face resistance from industries; sustainability may be a challenge | UASs, Industries, UIL Offices                  |
| Develop database system                            | Create a centralized contact platform linking industries with specific teaching specialties        | Improves communication and mobilization; streamlines recruitment                | Requires technical capacity and regular updates                        | UASs                                           |
| Develop incentive mechanism for industry personnel | Set payment standards, offer scholarships or benefits for industry professionals and families      | Attracts qualified professionals from industry; encourages long-term engagement | Financially demanding; may require special budget allocations          | MoE, MoF, UASs, Industries                     |
| Develop flexible curricula                         | Create or revise curricula jointly with industry; integrate industry needs and workplace skills    | Encourages adaptability and alignment with labor market trends                  | Time-consuming process; may disrupt existing academic structures       | UASs, Curriculum Development Teams, Industries |
| Develop pedagogical                                | Develop a curriculum to offer short-term training                                                  | Enhances teaching effectiveness and                                             | Requires continuous                                                    | MoE, UASs, Teacher                             |

|          |                                                    |                    |                                    |                     |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| training | in teaching methodology for industry professionals | student engagement | funding and scheduling flexibility | Training Institutes |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|

## 6. Conclusion

Ethiopia faces a critical skills gap, with higher education institutions failing to align their educational offerings with industry needs, leading to declining graduate quality. While the Higher Education Technical and Vocational Training and Research Institutions and Industry Linkage (HETRIIL) Proclamation (No. 1298/2023) provides a strong legislative framework to foster academia-industry collaboration, its implementation has been hindered by unclear guidelines and weak enforcement. For meaningful progress, both universities and industries must fully recognize the mutual benefits of partnership: enhancing education quality, workforce readiness, and innovation. Stakeholders should take decisive action by clarifying HETRIIL's operational guidelines, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and fostering a culture of sustained collaboration to bridge the gap between education and employment.

## 7. References

- Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2023). *HETRIIL Proclamation No. 1298/2023*.
- Hailu, A. (2021). *University-Industry Linkage in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects*. Ethiopian Journal of Education.
- Moges, D. (2020). *Team Teaching and University-Industry Collaboration in Ethiopian Higher Education*. Addis Ababa University.
- OECD (2021). *Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Africa*. OECD Publishing.
- UNESCO (2020). *Bridging the Skills Gap in Africa: The Role of Higher Education Institutions*.
- Teshome, S. (2022). *Implementation Challenges of Industry Linkage Policies in Ethiopian UAS*. Journal of Policy and Development Research.
- World Bank (2019). *Education Strategy for Ethiopia: Pathways to Quality and Relevance*.