

THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GRADUATES'  
EMPLOYABILITY AND CHALLENGES THE CASE OF KAFFA ZONE



JIMMA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

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OCTOBER, 2021  
JIMMA, ETHIOPIA

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## Declaration

Here I undersigned and declare that the thesis report entitled “The Ethiopian Higher Education Institution Graduates’ Employability and Challenges the case of Kaffa Zone” is my original work and has not been presented for degree in other university.

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## **Acknowledgment**

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty God who offers me health, longevity, endurance and wisdom to complete this study and other works.

Next to God, I would like to extend my deep gratitude thanks to my advisors: Mitiku Bekele (PhD) and Abunu Arega (PhD). Their enthusiasm and professional expertise have provided tremendous guidance throughout carrying out my research. Their amazing support has been a blessing to me. Their encouragement and professional insight have inspired both my personal and professional development.

Next to my advisors, I would like to thank my dear participants for their amazing cooperation to give reliable data on questionnaire and interview.

Finally, I would next like to express my gratefulness to Jimma University for its financial support for the successes of my work.

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### **Abstract**

*The main objective of this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduate, employability and challenges the case of Kafa zone. This study explores the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduates' employability and challenges. Quantitative data for this study was obtained through close-ended questionnaires and qualitative data was collected through interview and open-ended questionnaires. The total population of this study holds 474 graduates in kaffa zone. To distribute questionnaire and conduct interview, the researcher sampled 130 graduates out of 474 because it is difficult to cover more than 30% out of the total population of the study. Hence, the researcher purposively sampled 130 respondents and conducted questionnaire with 125 participant's interview with 5 informants. This study revealed that graduates under the study area have the skills to make consistently meeting or exceeding my expected levels of work performance. Ethiopian higher education institution graduates have the skills to create schedules for own daily tasks and maintaining them and skills to acknowledging own mistakes and making a conscious effort to avoid them in the future and have the skills to perform integrity or to do the right thing to gain the trust of those around he/she and skills of respecting others. More, specifically, the study confirmed that graduates' transition from higher education to work is a multidimensional phenomenon which is affected by several parameters including age, cumulative grade point average, and other generic skills (interpersonal skills, communication skills, time management skills, teamwork ability, and internship engagement). In addition, from all stakeholder should be expected to properly implement the enacted policies, strategies and guidelines, establish functional coordination, collaboration and teamwork among stakeholders, increase the participation and support of parents, put in place strong monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning programs to manage the effectiveness and efficiency revolving fund and address the employability of the Ethiopian higher education institution graduates.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The higher education institutions have gradually moved their focus on enhancing graduate employability. Modules have been developed, practices have been implemented, all with the same aim: to equip students with knowledge and skills desired by the prospective employers. In today's world, making university relevant to the workplace or in other words, providing skilled workers for industrialization and modernization of the country have been long the central mission of the higher education system. Nonetheless, due to the loose connection between the higher education system and the industry, the knowledge and skills equipped for students in universities have increasingly been considered irrelevant to the needs of the contemporary labor market. The higher education system is still struggling to find ways to address the problem (Holmes, 2013).

Higher education is increasingly regarded as a core component of national policies to capture global market shares, and universities are a pool for productive human resources to facilitate national growth. Employability is one of the ultimate results in education. Because employability is important for the development of any country, employability means that institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Knight and Yorke, 2004). In the world context, the graduate employability level is at a considerable level. However, according to research, there is a gap between the number of graduates and employed graduates. Mismatch with graduate skills and employer expectation has affected for this gap. Even though graduate employability is the most helpful factor for the development of the economy, there is a huge gap between several graduates and employed graduates in the world (Hinchiffe & Jolly, 2011).

Herpeet (2000) indicated that there is a problem where current university students will not deliver learners with lifetime learning abilities and technical knowledge to excel in their professions. The financial recession and economic downturns in the recent few years have exacerbated the increase in job layoffs, but supply-causes also often led to the growing number of unemployed students.

According to Devarajan (2017), students spend a minimum of three years completing their undergraduate studies and graduate with high expectations. Unemployment affects their morale,

social status, the standard of living and career opportunities, and increases the risk of depression. Education is an investment, and when graduates are unemployed, they are not able to obtain a return on their investment. In turn, this affects a nation's productivity and renders the government's investment in higher education redundant.

According to Holmgren and Sundtröm (2004) entrepreneurship education, besides being evident in promoting business start-ups, has also a wider market potential for the people possessing it. Indeed, entrepreneurial attitudes are not only required for an entrepreneurial career, but they are also highly demanded in other employment relationships (Frank, Korunka, Lueger, and Mugler, 2007). The literature further shows that many attempts have been made by higher education institutions to address graduate employability, ranging from integrating the needed skills and attributes in the curriculum during course design (Yorke and Knight, 2004) to using appropriate teaching methods and integrated learning (Huq and Gilbert, 2013). ESDP activities covering such things as career management skills, voluntary activities and engagement in professional clubs have also been recognized as enhancing graduate employability (Bridgstock, 2009). Through these activities' graduates acquire work experience that enhances their employability skills and employability prospects (Mason, Willian and Cranmer, 2009).

Nowadays, in Ethiopia, enrollment bounced from around 34,000 in 2000 to more than 309,000 in 2010 on which its' establishments principally have the point of delivering skillful and profoundly quailed graduates employable here and abroad. However, the market can only absorb to a limited number of graduates and thousands of young higher learning graduates remaining unemployed. The significance of higher education is assessed on its ability to open ways to the graduates for future business and the foundation of their reasonable vocation way. The national and international agencies effort to promote sustainable development, but the prevalence of unemployment university graduates remains extremely high. Mainly in developing nations, the problem of unemployment graduates due a consideration for several reasons.

A tracer study is a technique which is essentially envisioned to follow alumni of an academic institution, with a specific end goal to give feedback mechanism of the graduates and their place

of graduation. Graduate tracer studies can be used to track the whereabouts and performance of previous graduates and the helps to infer higher education's status of performance.

Moreover, graduate tracer studies provide the opportunity to assess labor market signals to assist in the development of strategic plans for higher education (Haile Mekonnen and Aregaw Mulu, 2019). However, it is a recognized fact that linking labor market surveys to higher education planning is rarely effective. It is vital to assess what kinds of graduates are required in the near and mid-term future as well as what factors are contributing to the employability of graduates. The prevalence of unemployment in Ethiopia is not well identified and most of the graduates from higher learning are left hanging before they secured jobs. Therefore, the major objective of this study is to explore Prevalence of Higher Education Graduates, Employability Skills and Challenges the case of Kaffa zone.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

The expansion of higher education in Ethiopia has attracted considerable research interest. However, studies have focused on education quality rather than graduate unemployment. At the beginning of the expansionary period (around 2003), Ashcroft (2004) predicted that on-going growth was likely to result in challenges relating to funding, academic governance and the quality of teaching and learning. Several studies supported Ashcroft's predictions. For example, Tessema (2009) noted that the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia significantly increased teaching loads. Similarly, Akalu (2017) observed that the basification process has increased the work burden of faculty members which in turn led to a loss of academic autonomy. While studies have been conducted on youth unemployment (ages 15-29) in Ethiopia, few have focused on graduate joblessness.

Those that examine youth unemployment do not disaggregate this segment of the population into graduates and non-graduates (see, for example, Broussar and Tsegay, 2012; Muhdin, 2016; Nayak, 2014). Other studies examine graduates' employment status by focusing on a few disciplines. For example, Tamiru (2017) examined employment status and education-job match among graduates from 2009 to 2013

According to Mohammad Sattar (2009), a skill of ‘employability’ is the ability of non-technical and occupational skills that are just as important as technical skills. According to Ramlee (2011), employers in the industry said that technical graduates in Malaysia have adequate technical skills but employers are still not satisfied with the communication skills, interpersonal, critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurial skills possessed by those graduates.

There is some of the related studies. For example; the study was conducted in Bahir Dar University in 2015 and 2016 regular, first-degree graduates and stratified multistage random sampling was used to select respondents. Out of 4208 graduates, 867 graduates with a response rate of 82.5% were selected to participate in the study. To determine the prevalence, the duration and the potential factors of employability graduates in the labor market, both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. Their findings show that 75% percent of surveyed graduates were gainfully employed, of which majority (93%) was landing with degree-relevant jobs.

Enhancing graduate employability through curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities are concerned, much has not been done in all cases. In nutshell, the agenda of graduate employability has not been given adequate attention at all levels: policy, strategy, curriculum & instruction, research and development. In addition to the researcher reading different local research on area concerned, there are a lot of researches but all the researchers are around the bush of the concerned area. As my reading of different local journals and other documents there is no research has been conducted on prevalence of higher education institution graduate, employability skills and challenges they face in local level. Therefore, this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduates’ employability and challenges the case of Kaffa zone.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the job searching skills of higher education institution graduates in Kaffa zone?
2. What are the effects of higher education institution graduates in Kaffa zone?
3. What are the employability of higher education institution graduates in Kaffa zone?
4. What are the challenges that higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

## **1.4 Objective of the Study**

### **1.4.1 General Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduate, employability and challenges the case of Kafa zone.

### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study**

- To assess the job searching skills of higher education institution graduates in Kaffa zone
- To assess the effects of higher education institution graduates in Kaffa zone
- To identify the employability of Ethiopian higher education institution graduates
- To identify the challenges that higher education institution graduates are facing in kaffa zone

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The main of higher education institution is to create skilled human power in order to end poverty. This study will be helpful both for higher education institution graduates and other stakeholders to promote and practice effective employability skills. It will help the graduates to share their needs with and make communication to get job. Today, in our country Ethiopia their huge number of university graduates in the home without any job. The study will contribute towards improving policy decision making of governments and other stakeholders on standard of living of graduate unemployment and economic progress of community. Moreover, it will help the people of Kaffa and others to appreciate the reason the economy of Ethiopia is experiencing medium economic growth in current times but yet there is a lot of educated unemployment situation available in the country. Last but not least, this study might contribute to the future potential researchers who are interested to undertake their research on the issue in the case of Ethiopia. Therefore, this study will recommend both government and educational intuitions to practice and promote the culture of employability abilities for university graduates.



## 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was subjected to explore the prevalence of higher education institution graduates' employability skills and challenges they face in Kafa zone. This was delimited to 2012 E.C higher education institution graduates but due to the expansion of COVID-19 their graduation program was postponed to 2013 E.C. Therefore, this study was confined to those graduates from different Government University in Ethiopia. This study excludes private University and college graduates in Kafa zone. There are 474 higher education institution graduates in Kafa zone. Hence, this study was subjected to those higher education institution graduates.

## 1.7 Definitions of the Key Terms

**Ethiopian Higher education Institution:** is tertiary education organization leading to award of an academic degree or diploma (MoE, 2002).

**Employability:** refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment and it depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, the way they present those assets to employers, and the context within which they seek work (York 2003).

**Graduate:** is defined as a person who has completed a course of study or training, especially a person who has been awarded an undergraduate or first academic degree (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017).

**Challenge:** is something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination that graduate face.

## 1.8 Limitation of the Study

Some of the limitations were shortage of time and difficult of summer seasons to access transport service. But all limitations were solved by the researcher and were not hindered the researcher from conducting his study.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study was organized in five different chapters with different contents in the same context. Chapter one provides a general background of the study, statements of the problem, and objectives of the study, research questions and scope of the study. Chapter two provide reviews previous works of literature done by different scholars on area concerned. Chapter three presents the research design, population of the study, data sources, data collection tools and method of data analysis. Chapter four presents' data analysis and presentation and possible discussion. The last chapter deals with summary of the major findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Graduate employability in the international context**

It has been argued that the connection between the knowledge and skills students acquired from universities and those required by employers has been traditionally flexible, loose and open-ended (Tomlinson, 2012). This has also not presented problems for either graduates or employers when higher education remained elite (Little & Arthur, 2010). However, overtime, this traditional relationship has been reshaped.

The expansion of higher education with a more heterogeneous mix of graduates (Scott, 2005) coupled with an increasing intensification in the labor market in a globalized competition for skilled labor force, and the pressure from neoliberal government to maximize the output of universities (Brown & Lauder, 2009) have created a strong impact on the role of higher education in meeting the new needs of employers, graduates and the governments. The call for the higher education sciences to make explicit the task of developing students with skills and knowledge required by the contemporary employers has been clear and loud. The key structural changes both to higher education and the labor market has shifted their inter-relationship (Tomlinson, 2012).

The most obvious change higher education has experienced over the past few decades is its basification. This is resulting in a wider body of graduates in a crowded graduate labor market (Tomlinson, 2012). Mass higher education also raises the concern around the traditional mission of higher education as to ‘prepare the elite to govern the nation’, to ‘provide an institutional basis for research into all forms of knowledge’ (Jarvis, 2002) and to facilitate access to desired forms of employment (Scott, 2005).

In early 20 century, when higher education remained elite, Clark (1930) had already argued that educated people could earn more with better employment positions, not because they were educated but because they were scarce. Now the oversupply of graduates caused by mass higher education will result in earnings capacities falling.

Higher education credentials do not seem to be sufficient condition for obtaining employment, let alone a desired form of employment. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) seem to be right when argue that employability, ultimately, is about the state of demand for labor in the market and the amount of competition of other applications.

Together with the basification, universities have also moved towards greater autonomy and accountability. In most countries, the state commitment to public financing of higher education has decreasing. Students increasingly have to pay tuition fees for their study and have somehow become 'customers' of the services provided by universities. Evidence state that employability is increasingly important in student choice of institution (Artess et al., 2011). This is not only because of the increasingly competitive graduate labor market, but also because students realized the change required by employers when recruiting skilled labor.

On the one hand, students and graduates increasingly see themselves as the ones in charge of their own employability - Being a graduate and possessing graduate-level credentials no longer warrants access to a desired form of employment, also many others share similar educational and pre-work profiles (Tomlinson, 2012). In other words, graduates see a disrupted link between higher education participation and their future returns caused by mass higher education (Little & Arthur, 2010).

On the other hand, graduates also experience the increasingly demanding recruiting requirements from employers. Under the impact of globalization and neoliberal policies, economies have become more competitive and flexible, which are now characterized by more intensive competition, deregulation and lower employment tenure (Tomlinson, 2012). Market rules have dominated the market; and employers, in competitive market conditions, and allowed by a crowded pool of graduates, become more selective in their choices. They are no longer willing or no longer have to seek and train their workers and are able to recruit work-ready graduates, many even can recruit graduates to positions previously been filled by school leavers (Brown et al., 2003). This gives them a significant cost saving, but places challenges for new graduates and, in turn, challenges for universities to provide work-ready graduates.

Taking on-board employability has become universities' 'pragmatic response' (Clarke, 2008) to the competition among universities and to the requirements of both students and employers. In many universities, employability has now become 'a standard mode of discourse not only for the media and government ministries, but also academics marketing their institution on parent-centered University Open Days' (Taylor, 2013). Apart from students and employers, universities are also under the state pressure to be more responsive to the needs of the economy and to be able to provide graduates who can be able to adapt to their working environment and are adaptable within it (Cable, 2010).

In many countries, the state continues to exert pressures on the HES to enhance outputs, quality and the overall market responsiveness (Tomusk, 2004). Governances have different ways to make sure universities taking on board the employability agenda, e.g., through public funding, program measurement and audit. In most HESs now, universities' performance in terms of employability has been linked to quality assurance (Knight, 2001). In short, all related stakeholders, include policy makers, employers and students, have created a strong influence on the higher education agenda in order to ensure that graduates leaving the system are fit for purpose (Harvey, 2000 and Teichler, 2007).

## **2.2 Employability**

Employability is a concept that has discussed widely, even though many authors have different definitions of what it may be, common ground can find as to what it is and what it is not. Poropat (2011) describes employability as a major educational goal, even though employability programmers emphasized skill development when employers were said to value the performance instead. There is no doubt that employability has been a major topic among advanced economies for decades. According to McQuaid & Lindsay (2005) employability is a much more complex phenomenon that reflects individual characteristics, personal circumstances, and external factors, each of which may affect access to jobs. Employability can be described as an enhanced capacity to secure employment, to be familiar with theories on development (Glover, law, & Youngman, 2002).

The word employability implies that you can attain a work and conduct tasks successfully for self-satisfaction and profit, the employer and community as a whole (Perera, 2009). Employability for students ensures that higher learning participants are willing to obtain and/or build jobs. Furthermore, employability means that institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Hinchiffe & Jolly, 2011).

Conceptions of employability have broadened in recent years, from a focus on mostly technical skills and attributes thought to be required by graduates in order for them to be considered work-ready, to a wider notion encompassing non-technical areas such as networking (Bridgstock, 2017) and professional identity (Campbell and Pretti, 2017). Both these conceptualizations focus on an individual's potential to acquire desired employment (through the development of appropriate human capital) which differs from 'realized employability' the actual acquisition of desired employment (Wilton, 2014).

### **2.3 Graduate Employability and Higher Education Curriculum**

Although employability is high in higher education agenda, there is no common definition of it in the literature. Harvey (2001) suggests that employability definitions can be grouped into two broad groups: The first relates to the ability of the student to get and retain work after graduation (Hillage & Pollard, 2008). Nonetheless, from employers' perspective, employability is often placed in relation to the requirements and contribution to the workplace. However, we agree with Boden and Nedeva (2010) that it seems impossible to define precisely the content of employability as that is where different employers' needs and graduates' attributes meet, and this varies in different places and over time.

However, there is a need to differentiate between employability and employment. Harvey (2001) emphasizes that employability is the 'propensity of the individual student to get employment', or in other words, it is equipped for a job, rather than is actually getting a job. Being employed means having a job, but being employable means having the qualities necessary for one to gain and

maintain employment and progress in the workplace (Weligamage, 2009). Employability is often regarded as the fitness for graduates to join the labor market.

It may increase opportunities for graduates to obtain desired jobs, but does not assure them (Cabellero, 2010; Clarke, 2007 and Yorke, 2006). This is because gaining employment does not only depend on the knowledge and skills one possesses, it also depends on the general economic conditions and the context of the current labor market, as well as on one's personal circumstances and characteristics (Clarke, 2007 and McQuaid, 2006).

## **2.4 Graduate Employability Enhancement Policies and Strategies**

The employability enhancement policies and strategies can be designed and implemented at different levels such as macro-levels, meso-level, and micro levels. Macro levels policies and strategies refer system-wide planning and steering policies, such as skills forecasting, graduate tracking and regulation of study places. Meso-level policies and strategies are designed and implemented at the institution level and examples of such mesolevel policies and strategies are developing new types of programs and/or change programs to prepare students better for working life. Micro-level policies and strategies are designed and implemented at an individual level to develop the employability of graduates and workers (Christina & Tine, 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

The current trend is to develop a list of skills desired by employers and create initiatives or activities to enhance those skills. The list of skills claimed to be desired by contemporary employers have been expanded with different umbrella terms such as generic skills, soft skills, transferable skills, cross disciplinary skills, graduate attributes, core skills, key skills, basic skills, cross-curricular skills, common skills, essential skills and enterprise skills (Caballero, 2011).

These types of skills are claimed to be important for any individual in the changing context of life, and especially essential for graduates in the employment context, as these skills are important to make them prepared and ready for success in rapidly changing work environment" (Cabellero & Walker, 2010). Moreover, these skills are also claimed to be important for the competitiveness of the national economy: National competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on the skill base

of the workforce, and more specifically, on the ability of both firms and individuals to engage in innovative activity and in new economic activity.

Another set of strategies to boost the employability of students and staff in universities is recommended by Christina & Tine (2017) named as educational framework for entrepreneurship, internationalization, and innovation. According to them, European universities face the challenge of meeting the increased demand for skills of globalized work environments. Therefore, universities need to adapt their educational concepts which involve promoting internationalization, entrepreneurial and innovation skills. Furthermore, they identify relevant sets of skills for internationalization, entrepreneurship, and innovation to meet labor market demand. Overall, Christina & Tine (2017) argued that including the educational concept of innovation pedagogy with a better attention on entrepreneurship education and internationalization into the curricula of university is an important step towards becoming more entrepreneurial.

This has created an imperative for both general skills, as these, it is suggested, are related to innovation, and for specific enterprise skills, which are related to new venture creation (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004). Universities worldwide have gradually taken up the employability agenda. Strategies have been developed and employed with the aim to enhance graduate work-readiness. Students and academic staff are required to share responsibility for developing employability skills.

Initiatives such as engaging prospective students to determine the role employability plays in decisions over course of study, making use of alumni network, applying credit to employability activities, highly evaluating the value of extra-curricular activities or the engagement with employment have been reported rather popular across higher education sciences around the world. These initiatives have started quite early in developed countries such as the UK, US, Australia or Europe. Nonetheless, the effort of universities has not been paid off yet. There still exists a skill perception gap between universities and employers.

To achieve this purpose, they proposed the educational framework that contributes to the debate on how universities can respond to the growing demand for skills induced by globalization in general, and on enhancing the employability of university students and staff, in particular.



Moreover, entrepreneurship skills development is one strategy to enhance graduates' employability. Different studies (Jermittiparsert, 2019; Fulgence, 2015; Pardo-Garcia & Barac, 2020) showed that graduates should be encouraged to become more entrepreneurial because institutions can produce enterprising graduates whose benefit skills apply to any employment situation or occupational sector. However, entrepreneurial graduates should be identified and supported because the number of entrepreneurial graduates is very few and all or the majority of graduates cannot be entrepreneurial.

For example, Bisoux (2015) finds that while 96 percent of university presidents in the USA believed that their graduates were adequately prepared for the workforce, only 33 percent of senior executives had the same view. Similarly, a global study finds that 72 percent of interviewed education providers responded that they were adequately preparing their students for the labor market; in contrast only 42 percent of employers shared this opinion (Mourshed, Farrell, & Barton, 2012). A study in the Middle East and North America also reveals a similar gap when almost all the interviewed education providers believed that their graduates had the necessary skills for the employment market, only 20-35 percent of employers agreed with this view (Elsadig, 2011).

A study about graduate employability in Asia also suggests that the perspectives of universities and employers differ when it comes to the issue of skills students acquired before entering the labor market. While, in most cases, universities considered their students to be well prepared for employment, employers often complained about the lack of vital skills graduates possess before negotiating their transition to employment (UNESCO, 2012).

The literature also suggests a broad mismatch between the skills universities equip for their students and those required by the industry. Various studies, such as Handel (2003); Sala (2011) and Paun (2009), Dewey, Montrosse, Schröter, Sullins and Mattox (2008) have reported different perspectives and different expectations students, employers and universities hold, in terms of work-oriented-skills and abilities developed through higher education.

Interestingly, some skills such as interpersonal, presentation skills or project management skills, are often claimed to be developed during university time, nonetheless, these skills somehow differ

from the interpersonal, presentation skills or project management skills desired by employers (Dewey et al., 2008). Some reasons have also been suggested in the literature. First, universities have not shifted the focus to applied learning and functional skills, and remained their focus rightly on academically orientated provision and pedagogy (Tomlinson, 2012). Secondly, the notions of graduate ‘skill’, ‘competencies’ and ‘attributes’ often convey different things to different stakeholders, such as students, universities and employers (Barrie, 2006; Handel, 2003; Knight & Yorke, 2004).

The perception gap is often reported to be wide, research reported by McKinsey and The Conference Board (2012) even provides a negative conclusion that ‘there is an issue with education systems that fail to produce future workers with the kinds of skills required by today’s organizations let alone those of tomorrow’. Stakeholder collaboration is also suggested in the literature as an important area that needs to be tackled in order to improve the situation and bridge the perception gaps among stakeholders. There is a need to increase communication and mutual understanding among universities, graduates, employers and policy makers, and university-enterprise collaboration (UEC) is considered an important way to improve the authenticity of the process of enhancing graduate employability (Gibbs, Steel, & Kuiper, 2011).

Pre-graduate work experience in the forms of internships, work placement, co-ops, and other related activities enable students, on the one hand, to develop their skills by experiencing real world challenges and applications (Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2011), and on the other hand, to have opportunities to understand the real needs of the employment market and gradually develop the right skills that desired in that market (Gebel, 2011).

It is not surprising when different forms of UEC have been focused in the literature on graduate employability and work-based learning/work integrated learning are viewed as particularly effective approaches to promote the employability of graduates (World Bank, 2012).

Moreover, Abelha et al. (2020) Ma’dan et al. (2020), and Mgaiwa (2021) also identified strategies like improving teaching methods and programs offered, developing university–industry, aligning university education with a country’s development plans, consistent university curriculum reviews, strong sense of innovation and collaboration, and strengthening quality assurance

systems. In Ethiopia though higher education graduate unemployment and low productivity at work becomes a series problem, the agenda of graduate employability has not been given adequate attention at all levels (Hailemlkot, 2013). Besides, even though graduates employability enhancement is the top issue in various higher education and labor market system.

## **2.5 Measuring the Impact of Work Integrated learning on Employability**

The term work integrated learning encapsulates a range of experiential and practice-based learning models (e.g., service learning, cooperative education, work-based learning) and activities (e.g., internships, fieldwork, volunteering, project-based work, simulations, clinical placements, practicums) (for more comprehensive details, see Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010; Groenewald, Drysdale, Chiupka, & Johnston, 2011).

Work integrated learning programs are considered a key strategy for developing employability capabilities in students (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron 2011; Helyer & Lee, 2014; Jackson, 2013, 2015; Smith et al., 2014) and boosting employment outcomes for graduates, particularly for those areas not traditionally linked with employment outcomes. This is reflected by more universities extending work integrated learning beyond disciplines steeped in a tradition of practice-based education (e.g., education, medicine, nursing, engineering) to other areas such as the arts/humanities. In response to these moves, the work integrated learning Strategy (2015) was developed by Universities Australia and interested parties promote the role of work integrated learning in assisting students in the transition from university to work and improve productivity outputs for employers and the wider economy.

Specifically, work integrated learning is thought to improve employability outcomes for students in a number of ways; firstly, through opportunities to build student's confidence in professional practice (Billett, 2011).

Students to gain a greater appreciation of the importance of employability skills (Crebert, 2004); and secondly, through the development of skills such as teamwork, professional judgement, communication, and problem solving (Coll et al., 2009 and Jackson, 2013).

However, inconsistencies in findings have been reported (Wilton, 2012) and the extent to which work integrated learning contributes to enhanced employability outcomes across disciplines is still debated (Sattler and Kelland, 2014). A limitation of work integrated learning employability studies is that many are based on student and/or industry self-reported perceptions (Gault et al., 2010) but not unemployment data per se.

There are some exceptions; however, for example, Silva et al. (2016) who investigated graduate unemployment rates in Portugal before and after the introduction of internships found that study programs that include internships can significantly enhance graduate employment, particularly when students undertake multiple shorter internships throughout their degree. This supports earlier findings by Gardner (2013) who reported preference by employers for graduates to have completed two or more work integrated learning experiences and have at least 6-12 months of full-time work experience before completion of their degree. These expectations are mirrored by recent graduate's reflections that they wished they had known of the employers' expectations, and that they had participated in more than one work placement before graduating (Perry, 2011).

## **2.6 Promoting Employability through Curriculum Design**

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting work integrated learning as a useful strategy for promoting employability, the work integrated learning experience alone is not a guarantee of success. As Clarke (2017) and others have noted if it is to be effective then work integrated learning activities must be meaningful, relevant, and intentionally integrated and aligned with university curriculum (Johnston, 2011).

Indeed, recent scholarship suggests the relationship between work integrated learning and improved employability may be less direct than once thought. Oliver (2015), for example, conceptualizes work integrated learning as a “means to an end (employability) rather than an end in itself.”

Clarke (2017) similarly contends that employability promotes a higher level of self-exploration, guidance seeking and other associated proactive career behaviors which in turn may bring improvement employability, rather than impacting directly on employability per se (e.g., guaranteeing career success). Okay-Somerville and Scholarios (2017) found that the process of

engaging in career self-management developed employability through the promotion of self-exploration, guidance seeking, and other associated proactive career behaviors.

Another consideration is the role of work integrated learning stakeholders in improving employability much existing scholarship emphasizes the role and responsibility of higher education institutions, but there are other stakeholders such as industry, community partners, government, and employers, whose input into curriculum is vital to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of employment markets (Tran, 2015). Outside of formal academic programs (e.g., co-curricular work integrated learning), or more effectively using holistic approaches which embed employability within academic curriculum. There has been a move towards favoring the latter recent years (Helyer & Lee, 2014).

For example, Billett's work (2015) established that effective pedagogical interventions before, during, and after a work integrated learning activity (including reflective practice, debriefing and assessment) are key to maximizing students' learning from the experience (Lee, 2014). Further including work integrated learning early on in a student's program of study and sequencing experiences throughout their study is thought to be particularly beneficial for assisting students to determine what study specialization they prefer and/or are best suited to (Billett, 2015).

Despite such developments, Cooker (2013) observes that "tensions over the relationship of employability to the academic curriculum" remain and "employability as bolt-on serves those who need it least. There clearly is no one size fits all approach, and not surprisingly various models of developing employability are proposed in the literature.

As Knight and Yorke (2004, p2) note, "the complexity of employability and the variety that exists in curricula mean that no conceptions employability as capability, that is "the combination of skills knowledge and personal qualities that engender flexibility or adaptability" may offer a middle ground (Speight et al. 2013).

In this Special Issue, Bates and Hayes (2017) present a case study for how employability can be embedded throughout a university degree program, in this case criminology. The authors draw attention to the importance of scaffolding employability before, during, and after a student's time at university in order to build their awareness of career options from an early stage. An

employability framework is offered for how this can be achieved in practice through career development learning, industry connections and student actions at four key transition points within a student's career: transition towards in through and up.

## **2.7 Employability and the Immerging of the Skills Agenda**

Although employability has become a familiar term in higher education context, there seems to be no common definition for it. Nonetheless, the dominant approach to enhance graduate employability in universities is mostly based on the assumption that employability is defined as having skills and abilities to find and retain employment and to obtain new employment if required (Yorke, 2006 and 2010).

For example, Yorke (2006) suggests: Employability is a set of achievements skills understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation. Employability is understood as fitness or suitability for graduate employment. It cannot assure employment outcome. Since gaining an appropriate employment highly depends on the context of the labor market (Clarke, 2007) and personal circumstances and attributes (McQuaid, 2006), employability may increase graduates' chances of obtaining graduate-level jobs, but does not assure them (Cabellero & Walker, 2010).

Since employability is regarded as fitness or suitability for graduate employment, it is rather subjective and thus, the primary responsibility for employability rests with individual students and graduates (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). University students are expected to be proactive and to actively improve their knowledge and skills to meet the demand of the workplace in the changing context (Bridgstock, 2009).

Then, when they finish university and start searching for jobs in the labor market, the responsibility is also on them as potential employees to" acquire knowledge, skills and abilities, and other characteristics valued by current and prospective employers (Fugate, 2004). Nonetheless, dominant in the graduate employability literature is still the research with suggestions about what universities should do to enhance work-readiness for their students. Although it is claimed widely both in the government policy papers and in the general literature that in the changing labor

markets with such characteristics as economic crisis and employment uncertainty, employability is held within individual's responsibility (Sin & Neave, 2016).

Despite suspicious and criticism, the skills agenda has immersed in the higher education context worldwide for the last two decades. The skills agenda is largely developed based on the assumption that there is a 'skill gap' between what students could acquire in universities and what is needed in the labor market, and thus university curriculum and practices need to be adjusted in order to bridge "the disparity between industry needs and higher education provision" (Jackson, 2013). Accordingly, different projects have been designed to explore employers' needs, different lists of skills have been developed, and university curriculum and practices have been adjusted to accommodate the needs of the industry. There seem to be a popular belief that the tasks in the universities (the learning setting) should be created as much similarly as possible to the task in the real workplace (the application setting), and that the closer the learning setting and the application setting are aligned, the better the development and transfer of such skill (Analoui, 2003).

The skills agenda or the shifting focus in higher education on providing students with knowledge, skills and competencies their need for their future career prospects has its own merit. First, it creates the basic for highly trained labor force (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015), thus may help reduce the learning curve for students in the transition from university to employment (Mason, William, & Cranmer, 2009).

In other words, when the new employees are work-ready and highly adaptable, it not only saves employers' time and money for in-house training for these new staff members, but also promises a higher productivity level contributing to the national economic growth and competitiveness in the global market (Harvey, 2000; Watson, 2003). Second, it provides rich information about the requirements of the knowledge economy, and helps individuals to come up with informed decisions to enhance their knowledge and skills to be not excluded from the labor market, or to re-entry into employment (Pont & Werquin, 2001). Thus, it is unsurprising when the skills agenda informed by human capital theory with a heavy emphasis on the acquisition of generic/ transferable skills desired by employers (such as communication skills, problem solving, teamwork or

interpersonal skills) has become one of the most significant developments in higher education over the last few decades (Clarke, 2017).

Indeed, many educational researchers have criticized the instrumental approach of this agenda where skills are either embedded into degree programs or expected to be developed through internships, work placements and international mobility in different programs. This approach fails to take into account other critical factors. First, Gallagher (2001) questions the underlying assumption of this approach whether what to be taught is also open to negotiation with employers. Jarvis (2000) complain that the skilled approach is informed by a naïve interpretation of employability when it bases on the assumption that all related stakeholders, employers and employees included, share a common point of view about the necessary skills and skills performance.

Many academics and researchers also express their worry over the vocational focus of the skills agenda which may lead to the devaluing of teaching and learning. They also criticize the simplistic view of employability popular in many universities which sees the skills agenda as “narrowly conceived, relatively mechanical, and inimical to the purposes of higher education” (Yorke & Knight, 2006) claim that the skill-led approaches all aim to equip students with transferable employability skills, narrowing down teaching practices and that this education policy “reduces learning to discursive ideological apparatus that encourages student conformity to the market economy”.

## **2.8 Employability Skills and Attributes**

Assessment of student learning and skill acquisition in work integrated learning is a complex endeavor. As Ferns (2014) note in work integrated learning “the challenges of rigorous and effective assessment methods are more pronounced” and there is widespread recognition that the methods used in traditional classroom-based teaching (i.e., measurement-based approaches) may not necessarily be the most appropriate. Rather, a broader range of assessments is needed to capture the holistic nature of learning (Rowe, 2017). This whole-person-learning can include a number of generic and professional skills and attributes that are perceived by many to be “either



immeasurable or difficult to measure” (Higgs, 2014), such as the capacity for professional judgment and collaboration, the ability to self-reflect and demonstrating citizenship attributes (e.g., ethical conduct, respect for others).

Linn’s (2015) work highlights the value of learning that occurs outside the hours of the work (integrated learning activity) learning that is not necessarily captured or encouraged in the assessments students complete as part of their course. Despite debates around the extent to which capabilities can be validly and reliably measured (including those related to employability), there is some agreement that assessments such as portfolios, oral presentations, reports, and reflective pieces are all useful approaches in work integrated learning (Jackson, 2015 and Yorke, 2011).

Kaider(2017) offer an authentic assessment framework and typology developed through an examination of a large number of assessments across a range of disciplines at an Australian university. The resources are framed within concepts of proximity (the extent to which assessment tasks occur within the workplace and with practitioners) and authenticity (the extent to which assessment tasks resemble professional practice), and include examples of assessment types and learning activities that can be used across diverse modes of work integrated learning.

They point out that authentic work-related assessments, when used to prepare students for employment by gathering evidence of their employability skill development, could serve as an important learner engagement strategy. Given the importance of quality assessment, equal consideration must be given to the resourcing required to support it.

As Rowe (2017) note “it takes time and courage for academics to work out the most effective assessment practices and approaches” in work integrated learning. While experimentation and evaluation of different methods is desirable, there can be workload implications for university staff, particularly for large cohorts. Bilgin et al. (2017) in this Special Issue, report findings from a larger mixed methods study on academic workload considerations in work integrated learning. Assessment of student learning was found to be the biggest single contributor to academic workload in work integrated learning courses at one Australian university. Specifically, courses with individual work integrated learning activities (as opposed to group activities) that were

sourced by university staff and located off-campus resulted in the highest workload related to assessment.

## **2.9 Employability Development models**

Several alternative models have been developed by researchers to obtain an understanding of the parties involved in higher education intuitions and their role in enhancing the employability of graduates (Harvey and Yorke, 2004). The models show that employability can be realized through the interaction of different factors; for example, education and employability development opportunities, such as extra-curricular activities (Harvey and Morey, (2002), socio-demographic factors (Little and Shah, 2002) and external economic factors, such as the availability of job opportunities in the labor market (Kahn, 2010).

Other models such as those by Harvey and Morey (2002) and Lees (2002) depict the many facets of employability development and demonstrate that employability is clearly a process rather than a product of education. These models are relevant since they form the basis on which to build the study variables and the way in which they are used in this thesis is discussed. The simplest model of employability (the magic bullet model), advocated by Harvey (2002), assumes that students are given employability and the related skills during the studying process which led them to become employable. The model, however, does not reflect other important personal characteristics of students, such as socio-demographic factors (age, gender, ethnicity and personality traits), all of which are known to influence employability (Blasko et al. 2002).

Knight and Yorke (2004) developed a four-stage model abbreviated (USEM), comprising Understanding (of appropriate subject knowledge, apprehension and applicability); Skills (subject-specific and generic abilities); Efficacy beliefs (awareness and understanding of oneself and one's abilities) and Meta-cognition (the ability to reflect on and regulate one's own learning and behavior). The model defines graduate employability as the possession of understanding, skills and the personal attributes needed to perform adequately at the graduate level (Knight, 2004). Lorraine and Sewell (2007) developed a model that illustrates the essential components of employability as well as the direction of the interaction between the various elements in enhancing employability skills and attributes.

According to them, employability consists of 3 higher-level components; self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem; and 5 lower-level components; career development and learning, experience (Work and Life), degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills and emotional intelligence. The model suggests that providing students with opportunities to access and develop everything on the lower tier and essentially reflecting on and evaluating these experiences will result in the development of higher-level components, which are the crucial link to employability.

## **2.10 Employability and Entrepreneurship Education**

The role of entrepreneurship education in enhancing employability and developing the skills and attributes of graduates is well established (Gibb, 2002 and Gilbert, 2013). Indeed, and worldwide, the numbers of introduced entrepreneurship education courses in different fields of study have increased significantly (Katz, 2003 and Okpara, 2010) in realization of its impact on entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and intentions (Matlay, 2008).

The literature further shows that entrepreneurial values, attitudes, knowledge and skills enable students to cope with the current turbulent changes in the labor market as they provide an enriching educational experience that ensures graduates' success in the labor market (Charney, 2000).

Entrepreneurship has different meanings in different settings, with the result that the conception of entrepreneurship differs between individuals, sectors, countries and systems, which in turn influences the different learning trajectories of entrepreneurship education and training (Kirby, 2004). Entrepreneurship is about getting things done or changing how they are done. Robbins and Coulter (2009) define entrepreneurship as a process by which people through innovation, identify and realize new opportunities that meet their needs regardless of the resources they possessed at the moment. While some scholars equate entrepreneurship with business creation, Surlemont (2007) defines entrepreneurship as a set of attitudes, skills,

capabilities and competencies that can be applied to any area of life and work and not just to business.

## **2.11 Employability skills and the Employability of New Graduates**

As well as imparting academic knowledge through university courses, the higher education system increases the quality of human capital by improving employability of its graduates (Knight and Yorke, 2004) including the related skills.

Knight and Yorke (2004) define employability and the related skills as a synergistic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds and subject understanding. The skills are also categorized as hard skills (subject understanding) and soft skills (skills transferable across occupations and working environment) and have been summarized differently by several researchers (Elias and Purcell, 2004). Research further indicates that employability skills and particularly soft skills cultivated informally are an important predictor of employability (Nickson et al. 2012), the driver of socio-political thinking (Moreau, 2006) and a determinant of an individual's personality (Ahmed, 2009).

Other specific skills that affect employability are core skills (technical knowledge and academic skills of graduates) (Gardner et al. 2005 and Gray, 2010), personal qualities (fixed self-belief attributes that do not change over time and are incremental), initiative and enterprise manage information, work and people) (Hager, 2009 and Wellman, 2010).

In relation to higher education institution new graduate employability, studies show that employers focus on employability skills as they indicate individuals' long-term productivity. Since employer's recruit for organizational performance (Richardson, 2009), a study by Costin (2002) indicates a positive relationship between individuals' soft skills and future performance. Hence new graduates who can demonstrate the possession of employability skills during the recruitment process are not only employable but they also significantly contribute to organizational performance.

Studies also indicate that when recruiting new graduates' employers tend to focus more on soft skills and behavioral attitudes and less on qualifications (Johnson and Burden, 2003). This is because new graduates are less likely to have work experience and as such the soft skills signal individual's work performance. Studies on employability also indicate the influence of different employability skills and attributes on employability.

For instance, a positive attitude underpins all employability attributes (CBI, 2012). It also enables a person to effectively interact with the environment (Ahmed, 2009). As regards unemployed graduates, studies by Shukran et al. (2004) assert that they are less likely to be employable if they lack the required competencies, such as self-confidence, soft skills, proficiency in English and a positive attitude to work, which employable graduates tend to possess. Although employers focus on soft skills as a proxy for employability, qualifications are still important in the recruitment process (Fuller et al. 2005) and accordingly they are often used to inform the recruitment stages, especially the screening process (Bunt et al. 2005; Jenkins and Wolf, 2005).

## **2.12 The Effect of Employability Development Skills**

Employability development program refers to the effort to equip individuals with work-related competencies, knowledge and skills as well as to develop attitudes that support participants' future development and employment (Janon and Shuib, 2012). Several ESDP initiatives have been developed by HEIs to enhance employability and the related skills among graduates (Precision, 2007). The initiatives include activities such as embedding the skills in the curriculum (Knight and Yorke, 2004).

Unemployment participation in curriculum and course design (and Marshall, 2009), career guidance for students (Bridgstock, 2009) and the introduction of entrepreneurship education courses.

Developing graduates' employability skills is also successful when appropriate teaching methods are used (Precision, 2007) and when students engage in ESDP initiatives, including extra-curricular activities (Lawson, 2003). Developing graduates' employability also relates to

experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom environment such as practical fields and internships (Callanan and Benzing, 2004). ESDP activities are important since employers appreciate it when prospective employees have been intensely involved in them (Kuh, 2007). Additionally, employers prefer certain extra-curricular activities such as those indicating a sense of responsibility, reliability and maturity since they provide evidence of leadership, commitment, and articulation of original activities.

Studies by Lau et al. (2013) and Tchibozo (2005), for example, demonstrate that students who have been involved in extra-curricular activities were more likely to develop communication, leadership, and creativity and self-promotion skills. For instance, engagement in sports clubs facilitates the development of leadership skills while music clubs enhance creativity skills. Additionally, engagement in extra-curricular activities at the leadership level increases employment prospects and facilitate access to large firms.

Communication and self-promotion skills increased moderately from all extra-curricular activities. Unlike other employability skills, extra-curricular activities do not provide students with time-management skills. The development of employability skills is also influenced by both the frequency and the number of programs activities a person engages in (Eccles, 2009).

### **2.13 The Moderating role of Employability skills**

Besides establishing the relevance of employability skills for graduates, the study also analyzed ESDP activities that graduates need to engage in during their studies, since they contribute to the development of employability skills (Lorraine and Sewell, 2007). In line with the moderating hypotheses, the results indicate that the relationship between employability skills and the employability of graduates is significantly moderated by individuals' engagement in ESDP activities. In particular, these results underline our reasoning that in terms of employability graduates' benefit from engaging in ESDP activities. The results show that graduates who engage in various ESDP activities, irrespective of their study institutions and fields of study, have significantly better employability skills than their counterparts and are more employable than graduates who engage in fewer activities.

In relation to other studies in the field, the results are similar to those of Stuart et. al (2011)

and Shukran et al. (2004), which show that engagement in ESDP activities positively influences the development of employability skills. The findings are also aligned to those of Cranmer (2006), which found that when graduates engage in ESDP activities they are certain of securing a job.

The study also found that employability is significantly and positively influenced by the field of study of employed graduates and negatively and significantly influenced by the field of study of unemployed ones in non-vocational fields of study. The findings concur with those of Blasko et al. (2002), which indicate that non-vocational fields of study have worse labor market outcomes than vocational fields. There is however a growing trend towards non-graduate occupations where posts and occupations previously held by non-graduates are now managed by graduates (Elias and Purcell, 2004).

## **2.14 Measuring of employability**

Universities are now under pressure from the governments and other external stakeholders to provide measurable outcomes of employability, and most often to meet the learning outcome standards required by different accrediting bodies (Jackson, 2012). In many countries, surveys collecting information on employment of recent graduates are conducted four/six months or one year after graduation. It is easy to find such statement as ‘XXX percentage of AAA university graduates can find jobs four months or six months after graduation’ on the websites or the advertising boards of different universities.

Nonetheless, after decades of effort, these employability indicators do not show any significantly positive signals when both the number and the proportion of graduates unemployed or underemployed after four months, six months or a year after graduation are still on upward trend.

This is also one of the findings in Mason, Williams and Crammer’s (2009) study of the effects employability skills initiatives on graduate labor market outcomes at an institutional level. They could not see any evidence of the correspondent relationship between the focus on the teaching, learning and assessment of employability skills and the labor market outcomes, i.e.,

whether graduated had found jobs within six months of graduation or whether graduates had secured graduate level jobs.

Mason, Williams and Crammer's research findings are supported by other studies in the area, which all point to a common conclusion that employment outcomes show that possessing employability skills does not guarantee employment, not to say graduate-level employment (Clarke, 2017; Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Many employers keep the perception that academic achievement is an insufficient indicator of a graduate's employability as they often do not see "a tight fit between higher education studies and specific employment niches" (Sin & Neave, 2016). It seems naive to think that the skills developed in the learning setting will be directly transferred to the application setting.

Nonetheless, using labor market outcomes as a popular way to measure graduate employability also seems to be problematic. Firstly, these measurable outcomes, as Clarke (2017) points out, largely refer to institutional outcomes rather than graduate outcomes. Harvey (2007) also criticized the tendency to see employability as an institutional achievement rather than "the propensity of the individual student to get employment". Since graduates are now required to be in charge of their own employability, these general labor market indicators do not seem to make much sense for them and many still cannot see their responsibility in the process of enhancing and managing their own career prospects.

Secondly and more profoundly, most graduate surveys measure current employment status, not employability compared to the way employability is generally defined (Clarke, 2017; Harvey, 2001). Employability, as discussed earlier, refers to the graduates' potential to obtain a job, while employment is actual job acquisition, or in other words, employability does not assure employment (Yorke, 2006).

Gaining employment does not only depend on graduate knowledge, skills or the level of suitability for employment, it also depends on many other personal attributes and external factors. The popular way of using graduate employment outcomes as an employability indicator challenges the normal way of defining employability. And if that is the case, how



far university can do to enhance their student employability and how much their can claim the success of their graduates in the university-to-work transition is also their achievement?

And then, the validity of the assumptions underpinning employability as individual responsibility is also questionable as students may not possess the will and/or the capacity to manage their own careers in a labor market with full of uncertainties (Sin & Neave, 2016). The employability approach with a general focus on skills and the perception that graduates being employed is the outcome of the match between graduate possessed skills and employers' needs downplays the important demand-side factors, such as the scarcity of jobs in the market, economic crisis, labor shortage or the distance from economically dynamic areas (Lindsay, 2009; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Graduate unemployment is often explained as personal and institutional failure rather than the outcome of the lack of market opportunities (Lindsay & Pascual, 2009). This explanation fails to address the labor market problems or unfavorable economic conditions, which both individual students and their universities have no means to control or interfere.

### **2.15 Role of Higher Education Institutions on Graduate Employability**

Many educational researchers have recognized the limitations of the skill-led agenda in higher education and proposed alternative frameworks to overcome such limitations. Kalfa and Taksa (2015) and Clarke (2013), for example, criticize the underlying assumption of the skill-led approach that skills can be transferred across contexts, thus ignores the situated nature of learning; decontextualizes, generalizes and isolates skills from the learner's world. Kalfa and Taksa (2015), then based on Bourdieu's cultural theory, develop an alternative conceptual framework which consists three main components: Field and Doxa, Habitus and Cultural Capital. With this framework, employability is placed within each specific field of study (Field) where not only skills or knowledge are important, but the network or the way agents see themselves with others in the Field also matters. Fields are differentiated from one another by the fundamental principles, beliefs and rules of behavior (Doxa). Doxa is not always explicit and is often taken for granted and viewed as inherently true by agents in the

same Field. Thus, challenges will arise when “one Field is increasingly influenced by the Doxa of other Fields” (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015).

Employability also depends on the way people think, feel and act subconsciously rather than consciously and in an instrumental manner. Kalfa and Taksa’s (2015) framework, stated that widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials). Thus, cultural capital is used for “social and cultural exclusion, the formers referring to exclusion from jobs and the latter to exclusion from high status groups” (Lamont & Lareau, 2008). Exclusion is a critical issue that is often overlooked when assessing employability. Nonetheless, investment in higher education study is also considered as a process of cultural accumulation, and it offers a route for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop cosmopolitan identities for social inclusion (Beck, 2004).

Clarke (2017), develops another employability framework where skills, competencies and work experience together are only one component of graduate employability, called Human Capital. Human Capital, Social Capital (network, social class and university ranking), Individual behaviors and attributes are four main components forming perceived employability. The perceived employability is the employees own perception of their chance of success in the labor market and how they approach job search. Nonetheless, perceived employability is also affected by the labor market factors, especially in mass higher education when graduates are often over supplied.

Based on Len Holmes’s (2001) argument emphasizing on the need to examine the condition of performance, and the employer perceptions of graduates in respect of their employability, develop the concept of graduate identity and claim that it is a way to deepen the understanding of graduate employability. Their four stranded concept of identity includes Values (personal ethics, social values and contextual, organizational values, including the value of entrepreneurship), Intellect (graduate’s ability to think critically, analyses and communicate information, reflect on all aspects of their work and bring challenge and ideas to an organization).

Performance is the ability to learn quickly and effectively and to develop skills appropriate to the role), and Engagement (willingness to meet personal, employment and social challenges and to be ‘outward looking’). They claim that Performance one of the four elements in their concept is most closely aligned to the employability skills matrix popular in the employability literature now. When assessing the potential of graduates, Performance is only part of the criteria that employers take into account, instead, the four elements of identity interpenetrate, and different employers often emphasis different facets of this identity.

Although supporting the ‘graduate identity’ perspective on graduate employability, Leonard Holmes’s (2013) argument does not share the common ground with Hinchliffe and Jolly’s (2011) argument. Leonard Holmes (2013) argues that graduate identity is socially negotiated and constructed and names it as ‘procession perspective on graduate employability’, he compares this perspective with the other two perspectives, namely possessive (the skills agenda) and positioning perspectives (considering cultural capitals, personal capitals and habitus are those decide societal positioning of graduates) on graduate employability and points out the limitations of the two latter perspectives. Similar like other researchers, he criticizes the possessive approach and names numerous limitations associated with the names of different skills, how to measure and assess such skills, how different parties make sense of the lists of skills, and most importantly.

The above discussed employability frameworks vary; however, they were all developed with the aim to overcome the limitations of the instrumental, simplistic skilled employability approach popularly deployed in the contemporary higher education context. Their conceptualizing frameworks also point out clearly that higher education is only one factor alongside many others that make for employability, and thus, at best, higher education can play only an enabling role (Yorke, 2006). Hence, based on the above literature discussion, higher education institutions should also help students understand the importance of career self-management and personal responsibility in managing, maintaining and enhancing graduate employability.

This is especially important in a market with over-supply of graduates. Students need to be clear that their future prospects depend much on their individual attributes (flexibility, adaptability, openness to challenges and new experience), and that the university-to-work transition is most often not straight forward, and often depends on students' decisions and acts or the extent they enhance their perceived employability and persuade employers that they are graduates worthy of being employed.

## **2.16 Factors that Affect Higher Education Institutions Graduate**

There are numerous factors contributing to unemployment among the fresh graduates in the world. Hanapi and Nordin (2013) states that, the lack of excellence is one of the factors that leads to the unemployment problem among the graduates. A notable number of employers have a negative perception towards the graduates and have stated that the graduates lack the suitable skills and qualifications which require by the industry. Moreover, the graduates fail to demonstrate a good working performance and they are poor in the aspect of employability skills. In addition, Hanapi and Nordin (2013) stated in 2002 Central Bank of Malaysia conducted a study and concluded that the international graduates have higher employability compared to the Malaysian graduates in terms of the skills which include but not limited to technical skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, particularly in the English language.

The previous research has discovered that fresh graduates are lack of employability skills, poor understanding of the English language and communication skill and also there are too choosy about the job and at the same time they are demanding for a higher salary is the major cause of unemployment among fresh graduates (Zahid, 2015). The Graduate Tracer Study is maintained by the Ministry of Education. It keeps track the standing of the students of higher educational bodies six months after graduation to determine if they are working or continuing their studies, or still looking for employment. Remarks are pulled together from public and private universities and other institutions. In 2015, among 273,373 graduates, Bachelor's Degree and Diploma, 45% and 43% of all graduates, correspondingly. Among them, 53% were reported employed, 18% decided to pursue higher studies, and 24% of graduates were still unemployed. Amongst graduates of all qualifications, Bachelor's degree-holders are the most without a job (at 27.9%). Studies show

evidence pointing to a multitude of reasons, including the keenness of graduates for the world of work, insufficient job creation for some fields, and the lasting implications of socioeconomic backgrounds on learning and social progression.

An investigation directed by the World Bank and Talent Corporation found that, 90% organizations agree that university graduates should have received lot more industrial training by the time they finish their study, and 81% others surveyed graded a major insufficiency among graduates is communication skills. Main reason of graduate unemployment is mismatches of skills between recent graduates and employers' demands. Soft skills are titanic factors in acquisition of entry-level graduates, and from universities and college students seem to lack in those areas. Even at the early stages of recruitment, companies and educational institutes do not always match graduating students with entry level prospects. Service centers for career are underutilized and mostly do not recognize companies' requirements. According to the Talent Corp-World Bank assessment, only half of the companies that replied to the form bargains structured internship programs, which could help expose university students to a variety of career paths and help them develop requisite soft skills for any position.

### **2.16.1 Market Condition**

Higher education institution graduates are influenced by external market changes, as well as their own personal characteristics. Uncertainty contributes to the capacity of the opportunity of employment, and the job searching expenses work as a cost-side variable in the progression. Market conditions play a different role in affecting the employment opportunity as well. The graduates are delicate to the oscillation of estimated return after graduation, and flexible market environments affect the anticipated outcomes as a vital element. The risk of an economic decline and policy changes also raise the level of uncertainty. Searching costs cover various indirect interactions related to job placement, as well as direct costs such as application fees. With oscillation of the economic condition of the country, workforces face switches among employment, unemployment, and non-participation (Krof et al., 2016). Today in the world, the fluctuating of the economic structure and the landscape is a likely the reason for the increases of the unemployment rate.

### **2.16.2 Mismatch of Education Qualification and Market Demand**

In some developing and emerging countries, where volatile economic growth is accompanied by a poorly educated workforce, skills shortages and an under skilled workforce tend to compromise economic development. In contrast, for many advanced economies and some developing countries, significant investments in education that are not accompanied by job growth foster high rates of graduate unemployment and mismatches in qualifications. According to McKinsey Global Institute, 2012; as cited in World Economic Forum,2014 qualification mismatch is pervasive in modern job markets and affects one-third to one-half of the employed population (World Economic Forum,2014).

Some individuals may be hired in jobs with qualification requirements that are different from the ones that individuals actually possess, breeding over or under qualification. The education qualifications of employees may be insufficiently matched to those needed either to be hired for the job or to be able to perform the job to a satisfactory level. An increasingly highly educated workforce is generally expected to elevate the level of demand for qualifications by employers, who will adjust their recruitment practices and skill demands over time, but also raise the overall level of labour productivity in the economy. Qualification mismatches occur when the formal qualifications that individuals hold deviate from the qualifications that are required to be able to be hired for and to perform the job (Quintini, 2011, as cited in Cedefop, 2015).

Earlier economic researches have put more emphasis on formal unemployment, which derives from regular mismatching between existing jobs and workers based on job mobility and wage bargaining cost (Herz & Van Rens, 2011).The market requires different sizes of labor forces to meet social needs and internal requirements. Graduates who have different majors want to get a job at same time; their job searching can have different outcomes depending on the demands of the market. Graduates completing education on the departments of Sciences, Literature and Social Sciences have a tendency to show higher degrees of joblessness.

Securing a job depends not only on their academic performances, but also on personal background. There is also a certain role of race, gender and socioeconomic condition in hiring an applicant (Morley, 2001). Graduates from lower-income families also show higher unemployment rates (by household income brackets). This observation holds true across qualifications.

Likewise, in Ethiopia poor economic performance is a major problem to absorb the labour force adequately. Low economic growth, which is manifested in low economic activity and low investment, entails low overall job creation. This makes it especially difficult for youth since, even in an economic upturn, youth are at a disadvantage as they lack work experience (Nebiletal., 2010).

### **2.16.3 Low Educational Achievement and Skills Mismatch**

Education and skills open pathways into productive employment. The education that young people receive and the skills they acquire can expand the spectrum of employment opportunities they can access and the earnings they are likely to command. Skills strongly influence where people work and how much they earn. Low educational achievement and limited skills contribute to difficult transitions into work and limited employment mobility among African youth (World Bank, 2014). Skills development is an important response to urban employment problems, but urban economies are dynamic market places driven by socio-political factors as well as economic ones. Enhanced skills reward young people with increased confidence and self-worth, but wider dimensions that fuel labor market discrimination and long-term disadvantage cannot be ignored (Ursula, 2012).

In Ethiopia, the study finding indicated that education is a very important weapon for innovation, job creation and poverty alleviation and the study result revealed that youths who have certificate, diploma and above have a good opportunity in obtaining jobs (Muhdin, 2016). Skills mismatch affects individuals at different stages of their working lives.

In increasingly dynamic job markets, people are affected not only when first leaving school and entering the workforce, but also every time they change jobs or re-enter the labor market after long spells of unemployment or inactivity. Skills mismatch is also a dynamic phenomenon affecting employees within their jobs and across their entire working careers (World Economic Forum, 2014). African Development Bank Report showed that lack of skilled workers, large proportions

of graduates go unemployed for long periods of time or are forced to work in the informal sector (African Development Bank, 2011).

#### **2.16.4 Social Networks and Job Information Accessibility**

Unemployed urban youth also face the challenge of gaining sufficient and systematic information during job searching. There is a high cost in terms of movement, time, money and other resources associated with job searching and matching. Most vacancy advertisements are not easily available and require travelling to central places to visit advertisement boards or to find newspapers (IDS, 2017).

In case of Africa, lack of effective labor market information system (LMIS) in most African countries can partly be blamed for unemployment challenges and poor-quality jobs of graduate in Africa (William Baah, 2014). Obviously, lack of information about available jobs and skill requirement to jobseekers on one hand, and information asymmetry on the part of employers regarding skills of prospective jobseekers on the other tends to cause high rate of frictional unemployment.

The same in Ethiopia research confirmed that graduates who have more social networks for the purpose of job searching are less unemployed (Aynalemet, 2016). Increasing social capital through networking is a relevant coping strategy that helps the individual to benefit from the goodwill inherent in their social networks. Social support from relevant others can improve the probabilities of being reemployed (Rosalind, 2014).

#### **2.17 Effects of Higher Education Institutions Graduates**

Global concerns regarding the high levels of graduate unemployment are longstanding. High graduate is not just a loss to the individuals involved, but also bears a broader social cost. Studies show that an episode of unemployment when young, or transitioning to work during a recession, has large and persistent effects on lifetime potential wages, raises the probability of being unemployed in later years, and puts youth at risk of long-term social exclusion (Bell, David, and David G. Blanch flower 2011).



Graduate unemployment is one of the major challenges that affect the life of youths across the globe and the concern of governments in the developing world. As a result, youth unemployment is a hot issue in the political agenda of both developed and developing countries. Failure to address youth employment issues will have serious consequences for the economy and society. Without opportunities for young people to earn a living, intergenerational cycles of poverty will persist, further affecting societies already made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, food insecurity, and violence (Lorenzo et al, 2007).

The experiences and consequences of youth graduates' unemployment/effects on the jobless and others include: poverty and unable to get the basic needs, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination, destroys moral and breaks social relationships, mobility/migration, and feelings of inferiority and hopelessness (Yohannes Asmare and Missaye Mulatie, 2014). The finding of another study also revealed that graduate unemployed youth suffered psychologically, socially and in economic condition because of the status of unemployment.

Moreover, the study confirmed that the youth are exposed to engage in social ills such as crime, addiction and perception of illegal migration. These social ills lead the society to be in social turmoil (Temesgen, 2017).

Graduate unemployment results in a waste of economic resources such as the productive labor force and thereby affect the long run growth potential of the economy. It gives rise to increased crimes, suicides, poverty rates, alcoholism and prostitution (Rafik, 2010 and Eita et al, 2010). Graduate unemployment is a major life event. It can have a devastating impact on people's lives. It affects not just the unemployed person but also family members and the wider community. The impact of unemployment can be long-lasting. As graduate unemployment becomes more long-term, its impact becomes more far reaching, often affecting living standards in retirement. The loss of income by the parents can damage the prospects of the next generation (Shadare, 20120).

Elegbede (2012) have opined that graduates' unemployment as it is, in many developing countries, for instance, in Nigeria poses a problem to the labor market and the overall economy of the countries concerned.

Madoui (2015) has asserted that apart from the fact that the unemployed graduate is deprived of earning salary, he is equally deprived of socialization effect of work and removed from social ties

and relationship. This is why in Nigeria and other third world countries, the unemployed graduate appears to experience shame, hardship and frustration. Madoui stated that the unemployed graduate is put in a situation of wordlessness, a person that is dispossessed and having no income value in the society.

Adawo, Essien and Ekpo (2012) stated that the unemployed graduate is unhappy with himself in the world of material consideration. Asmara and Mulate (2014) maintained that the unemployed is not socially recognized and this makes some friends and relatives to look- down on them as liabilities in the society. This makes the unemployed graduates to exhibit a kind of non-conforming and negative social vices that are found in Nigeria today, for example, kidnappers.

Salami (2013), is of the opinion that Nigeria spiraling youth unemployment can be said to have significantly contributed to the dramatic rise in social unrest and crime such as Nigeria Delta militancy, Boko haram and Jos crisis.

Aihie and Alike (2014) have observed that unemployment has negative effects on the unemployed, such as low self-esteem, frustration and depression. Unemployment may lead to anti-social behavior such as prostitution in the females and arm robbery or kidnapping in males. Okiokio (2012), observed that graduate in Nigeria constitute the bulk of unemployed searching for jobs where there is none.

### **2.17.1 Effects of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions on Individuals**

Graduate unemployment always hits individuals the hardest. Most unemployed educated youths are highly suffered from lack of income. They economically depended on their family's friends and on their relatives to cover their different expenses. Graduate with unemployment, ashamed themselves because, they depended on their families while they expected to support them.

And they believed that they don't equally participate in the families and community affairs, and they are not important as long as they have nothing to contribute to their families and communities. Unemployed graduate from poor families did not have more options in which they can engage to pass their free time. Because many places and options where graduate can spend their free time such as watching cinema and theater, playing games, passing time in the cafeteria with their friends

and using social media such as internet usually incur costs which is unaffordable for most of them. Consequently, they are more likely suffered from depression, loneliness and mental stresses. As Kielbach and Traiser (2002) in their analysis of the relationship between unemployment and ill-health found out that, unemployed youth suffer from feelings of vulnerability, inferiority, worthlessness, uselessness and depression. Moreover, they could also be socially stigmatized for being unemployed. Altogether, these affect their self-esteem that leads to social exclusion. Similarly Paul and Moser (2009) revealed unemployment have stronger negative psychological and mental effects on people of lower social status.

### **2.17.2 Effects of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions on the Community**

Graduate has significant effects on society and the economy as a whole. The main effect of graduates on the economy is withholding of the productive power who could be contributes for economic growth of their country. In terms of social implications arising from wide scale unemployment, consideration initially should be given to the fact that the hardest hit will be those unemployed families that are in poor livelihood welfare (Gilles, 2000). According to the study made by Namke et al. (2008), with high level of graduate unemployment there is significant upward pressure on acquisitive crime (theft, robbery and burglary).

The author stated that, over the last year many police forces have measured an increase in those crimes, indicating that higher levels of youth unemployment have already had a detrimental effect on crime in society. Since, unemployed population is dependent on the employed population; it has direct cost to the government in the form of any unemployment benefits paid to the unemployed and in lost tax earnings. Covering these unemployed benefits through increased taxes or borrowing creates a serious problem on the economy of the country.

The increased taxes suppress consumption, which in turn may lead to increased unemployment (people spending less, less revenues for companies, companies forced to lay people off). Increased borrowing by the government can have similar effects as the government takes more money than normally out of the financial markets, thus having an upwards pressure on interest rates, which results in higher cost for companies, less profits and more layoffs (Effie, 2010). Graduates

unemployment is basically always bad for the economy; however, it can never be zero. This is because at any one point in time there will be individuals who are truly between jobs, even for as little as a week or a month. The 'normal' graduate unemployment figure will vary from country to country, but is generally considered to be around 2-3 percent of the workforce (MOE, 2010). The author stated that when unemployment reaches two digits (10% or more) and large number of unemployed enjoy long term unemployment, it is very dangerous and we all suffer from unemployment whether employed or not .

## **2.18 Empirical studies on University Graduate Employability**

Empirical studies on employability and the related skills focus mostly on the gap between graduates' skills and the demands of the labor market. Weligamage and Siengthai (2003) conducted a study to identify factors that affect Sri Lankan graduates' job expectations and employers' needs. The findings reveal that graduates lack knowledge about labor market realities, especially the key skills sought by employers. The study proposed that higher education institution stakeholders should collaborate to address the skills gap. Another study by Shukran, Wok, Majid and Noor, (2004) indicates that higher education institution students lack relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and other desirable work characteristics. The study proposed that strategies were needed to develop and enhance the soft skills and work-related competencies of higher education institution students, either by embedding them in university curricula, or introducing a special employment program (Shukran and Munir, 2011).

A study by Aliaz (2007) in the Malaysian context reveals that unemployed graduates lack many of the soft skills, such as communication skills, including the poor command of English, and work experience. Other factors that influence the employability of graduates as enlisted in the same study include academic achievement, self-confidence and field of study. Another study by Shukran et al. (2004) assessing the lack of skills by higher education graduate graduates found that the quality of graduates is low if it is characterized by inadequacy of the required competencies such as self-confidence, soft skills, proficiency in English and a positive attitude to work.

A study by Little (2003) presented employability from an international perspective by assessing competencies possessed by European and Japanese graduates. In this study, the ability to learn ranked first in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom. Other studies on employability focused on the importance of employability skills as ranked by employers.

Archer and Davison (2008), for example, found that 86 percent of the study's respondents (United Kingdom employers) regarded communication skills as the most important, followed by soft skills (70 percent) and overseas experience (65 percent).

CBI (2012) found that almost a third of United Kingdom employers (30 percent) have problems with graduates' generic employability skills, such as teamwork, communication and problem solving. Employers are also disappointed by graduates' attitude to work (25 percent), self-management (33%), business awareness (44 percent) and foreign language skills (49 percent). Kolawole and Arikpo (2008) examining predictors of employment efforts among unemployed Nigerian graduates found that the inappropriate curriculum was the major factor. The curriculum does not change with changes in the labor market. As a result, graduates are claimed not to possess adequate competencies needed by employers or the skill to employ themselves.

In the Tanzanian context, limited studies have focused on the role of HEIs in enhancing the employability of graduates. A tracer study by Kaijage (2017) however determined the extent to which the university programs positively prepare graduates for the job market.

In particular, the study established the level and type of technical knowledge and skills required of graduates in the job market and whether they are reflected on the faculty of commerce and management curriculum. The findings show that the university programs and the skills imparted were relevant to the labor market. It was however important to include courses aimed at addressing the private sector emerging needs.

There is little scientific knowledge on what constitutes an effective employability skills development program (Little, 2004) and how entrepreneurship education can facilitate the development of employability and the related skills and or attributes. The empirical studies (as highlighted) focus more on the skills gap between higher education institutions' graduates'

output and the demands of the labor market. As far from the above discussed empirical studies, specifically, this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduates' employability and challenges the case of Kaffa zone.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive research design that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method and data analysis was used for a statistical recording and measuring of participants' responses. On the other hand, the qualitative component will provide different types of data; investigating participants' perceptions in-depth that help to enrich and to explain the statistical results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

In other words, the quantitative method allows the researcher to establish a relationship between variables, but it is often weak when it comes to exploring the reasons for those relationships among variables. So, the qualitative method was used to explain the factors underlying the broad relationships that is be established (Punch, 2005) or qualitative procedures provide means of accessing non-numeric facts about the actual people the researcher observes and talks; qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (Creswell, 1998).

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

Research methodology is a theory of how an inquiry should proceed (Schwardt, 2007). It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. According to Schwardt and Creswell (2007), research methodology explicates and defines the kinds of problems that are worth investigating; what constitutes a researchable problem; how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using particular designs and procedures; and how to select and develop appropriate means of collecting and analyzing data.

Hence, research methodology is the development of theories and understanding, determining facts, demonstrating relationships between variables, collecting and analyzing data and predicting outcomes.

### **3.3 Research Method**

The researcher use mixed method. Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

Qualitative method is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswel. 2011).

The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Plano-Clark, 2011)

Qualitative procedures provide means of accessing non-numeric facts about the actual people the researcher will make interview and talks; qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (Creswell, 1998).

The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion. Like qualitative researchers, those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings. The quantitative method and data analysis will be used for a statistical recording and measuring of participants' responses (Creswell, 1998). The rational to use mixed research methods help to triangulate data to be collected through open-ended questionnaires and interview with close-ended questionnaire.



### 3.4 Population of the Study

The target population of the study was graduates in Kaffa zone. There are 474 graduates in kaffa zone.

### 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of this study is 474 graduates in kaffa zone. To distribute questionnaire and conduct interview, out of 474 Ethiopian higher education institutions graduate, the researcher sampled 137 participants through the following scientific sampling technique:

$$n = \frac{1.95^2 \partial^2}{E^2} \text{ whereas } n = \text{population to be sampled}$$

E: constant value 4

$$\partial = \text{constant value } 24$$

$$n = \frac{1.95^2 \partial^2}{E^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.95^2 24^2}{4^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8025(576)}{16}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8025 \times 576}{16}$$

$$n = \frac{2190.24}{16} \quad n = 137$$

### 3.6 Source of Data

While conducting this study, the researcher used both primary and secondary data source.

#### 3.6.1 Primary Data Source

To accomplish this study, the researchers used only primary source of data to undertake the study. The primary source consisting information gathered through structured questionnaires and interview from the sample chosen.

### **3.6.2 Secondary Data Source**

The secondary data sources articles, books, journals and other previous studies related to area concerned on the current study.

## **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

Researcher employed a variety of techniques or tools depending on the research topic, theoretical approaches and the type of data they wish to work with. The choice of data collection instruments is also contingent on the research questions and aspects of the research which are of interest to the researcher. To collect reliable data for this study, questionnaires and interviews was used as data collection tools.

### **3.7.1 Questionnaires**

The researcher used questionnaires as a data-gathering tool to explore Ethiopian higher education institution graduates' employability and challenges. To this end, both close and open-ended questions were prepared. The close-ended questionnaires were preferred by the researcher as they are relatively objective, time-saving, and easy to respond, tabulate and analyze (Yalew, 2004). The questionnaire was five Likert scales (for example; strongly agree, agree undecided, disagree and strongly disagree). Likert scale was preferred because it enables the respondents to choose one opinion from the given scales that best aligns with their views (Koul, 1984). Hence, the researcher administered questionnaire with 130 respondents,

### **3.7.2 Interview**

Interviews are useful to get in-depth information that may not be easily secured by the questionnaire (Yalew, 2004). In this study, a semi-structured interview was prepared and used to triangulate the data that was gained from the other instruments.

The interview was prepared first in English then orally translated to participants' L1 (mother tongue) to make it simple for discussion and get enough information on the issues. It was employed in a systematic and consistent order. A semi-structured interview is preferred by the researcher as they permit greater flexibility and much freedom to talk about the problem under investigation (Yalew, 2004). The researcher conducted interview with 7 informants.

### **3.8 Procedures of Data Collection**

For this study, the researcher followed series of data gathering procedures to collect data. The researcher prepared a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guideline. Next, comments and suggestions were collected from advisors. Finally, the edited instruments were used to collect the main data.

### **3.9 Reliability and Validity Checks**

Pilot test of the instruments were done before launching into the actual investigation. The purpose of the pilot test was to check whether the responses fulfilled the objectives of the study; to determine the extent to which the questionnaire promote an appropriate relationship with respondents; and to check whether or not the respondents understood the instruments (Yalew,2004). The researcher conducted pilot test with 35 the Ethiopian higher education institution.

Validity explains how well the collected data covers the actual area of investigation (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). Validity basically means “measure what is intended to be measured” (Field, 2005). To assure the face validity of the instruments, the researcher was secure feedbacks from teachers. The content validity of the instruments was confirmed by preparing a sufficient number of questions, which include all objectives of the study.

Besides, the return rate of the questionnaire was checked. Testing for reliability is important as it refers to the consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument (Huck, 2007). A scale is said to have high internal consistency reliability if the items of a scale “hang together” and measure the same construct (Huck, 2007, Robinson, 2009). The most commonly used internal consistency measure is the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. It is viewed as the most appropriate measure of reliability when making use of Likert scales (Whitley, 2002, Robinson, 2009). No absolute rules exist for internal consistencies, however most agree on a minimum internal consistency coefficient of .70 (Whitley, 2002, Robinson, 2009).

Hence, the questionnaire was adapted and its reliability was calculated in Crombach alpha in order to check the appropriateness of the instrument in the current research by applying SPSS V20.The

reliability indicated .698 and .678 for graduate's job searching skills and reasons graduates not to find employment and not to start businesses respectively. The reliability with Cronbach alpha was ranged based on (Hinton et al, 2004). Hinton et al have suggested four cut-off points for reliability, which includes excellent reliability (0.90 and above), high reliability (0.70-0.90), moderate reliability (0.50-0.70) and low reliability (0.50 and below), finally, the instruments were modified based on the feedback of the pilot test. Triangulation of the data gathering tools was executed by using questionnaires and interviews.

### **3.10 Method of Data Analysis**

The researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data from sample respondents. The quantitative data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire. While analyzing data, quantitative data was statistically organized and imported into SPSS V.20.0 to obtain frequency and percentages. The mean scores were used to interpret data to be gathered through a questionnaire.

In addition, percentages were also used to interpret the background information of the respondents and data gathered through a close-ended questionnaire. The researcher used mean and standard deviation to show the existing problems under the study area. Finally, the data to be gathered through interview and open-ended questions in the questionnaire and was presented and analyzed qualitatively based on themes to supplement the data gathered through close-ended questions in a questionnaire, and triangulation of the data was made side by side.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Concentration was made to make the research process professional and ethical. To this end, the researcher tried to clearly inform to the respondents about the purpose of the study which is purely academic; introduced its purpose in introduction parts of questionnaires and interview guide. The participants confirmed that subject's confidentiality protected. The researcher should tell subjects the full detail of the purpose of the study based on the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduates' employability and challenges.

As a result of the genuine information, they provide for the accomplishment of the study. In addition, informed to the subjects that they have the right to remain anonymous for providing any

information. The researcher was behaved ethically and morally in a way that the subjects trusted him as result of which he expected to get genuine information. General the researcher should use and bounded to the ethical consideration and let them informed consent signed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institutions graduates' employability and challenges the case Kaffa zone. To this end, three specific objectives were addressed: To explore the current statuses of higher education institution graduate in Kaffa zone; to identify the employability of higher education institution graduates and to examine the challenges that higher education institution graduates face.

There were 474 higher Ethiopian education institution graduates in kaffa zone. Out of 474, the researcher sampled 137 participants to conduct questionnaire and interview, from sampled 137 respondents 130 were filled questionnaire and 7 were participated in interview sessions. Different items raised different employability skills. Some of the employability skills raised in this study were communications skills, team, work skills, problem solving skills, organizing and self-management skills. This study used descriptive research design with quantitative and qualitative approach.

#### 4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Characteristics of the participants

No	Items	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Gender	Male	88	70.4
		Female	42	29.6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
2	Graduated year	2012 E. C	57	41.6
		2013 E.C	73	58.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
	Higher education institutions they graduated	University	86	68.8
		College	44	31.2
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

As indicated in table 1, regard to background information of the respondents, gender, years of graduation, university or College you graduated from and department. Out of 130 participants, 88(70.4%) of the respondents were male and 44(29.6%) of were female. Along with years of graduation, 52(41.6%) of the respondents were graduated in 2012 and 73(58.4%) of the respondents were graduated in 2013 E.C. Concerning with Ethiopian higher education institution they graduated from, 86(68.8%) of the respondents were graduated from University and 39(31.2%) of the respondents were graduated from different colleges.

One can infer that, majority of Ethiopian higher education institution were male and majority of them were graduated in 2013 E.C.

## 4.2 Job Searching Methods used by the Graduates

**Table 2: Job Searching methods used by the graduates**

N	items	N	mean	str. Deviation
1	Public advertisement	130	3.2	.345
2	Contacting companies directly	130	2.88	.453
3	I checked through the internet	130	3.33	.432
4	I was contacted by the company	130	3.21	.234
5	I contacted a commercial working agency	130	2.99	.232
6	I established my own business	130	2.98	.298
7	Relations (e.g. parents, relatives, friends)	130	3.22	.432
8	Competition with CGPA	130	3.24	.465
9	Competition with oral examination	130	3.66	.455
10	Competition with written examination	130	3.56	.344
11	Competition with practical test	130	3.46	.345

Around one third of graduates were females and almost half (48.8%) of the Ethiopian Higher Education Institution Graduates where in Kaffa zone. Most of the graduates (57.3%) were contacted at most three graduates to secure their first job and the majority of the sample graduates (59%) had an internship and, further, this internship was mostly used for personal development,

followed by the development of entrepreneurial skills. With regard to the educational status of the graduates' parents, the majority of the parents were not educated, although the educational level of their fathers was better than that of their mothers.

The result also shows that males and females have an almost similar employment skill and, relatively speaking, graduates belonging to Kaffa zone southern western people regions have better opportunities for securing their jobs.

The Ethiopian Higher Education Institution Graduates who were enrolled at Kaffa zone their preferred fields of study and with good time management skills have better opportunities to secure their jobs. Almost 88% of the respondents were working in the place where they preferred. Any variable, whose test (chi-square test of association) with a p-value  $< 0.25$  should be considered as a candidate for inclusion in the multivariable logistic regression analysis to identify the potential factors responsible for the employment status of graduates (Mickey & Greenland, 2009).

### 4.3 Reasons Graduate Not to Start Businesses

**Table 3: Responses on Reasons Graduate Not to Start Businesses**

No	items	N	Mean	str. Deviation
1	Shortage of finance	130	3.65	1.234
2	Lack of training	130	3.56	1.432
3	Problems of working place/land	130	3.58	1.345
4	Lack of financial support from the government and training	130	3.78	1.452
5	Lack/absence of License	130	3.62	1.224
6	Shortage/absence of equipment	130	3.87	1.456
7	lack of support from local government	125	3.79	1.456

The respondents' business engagement data collected and analyzed depicts that majority of the sample respondents reported that their reason not to engage in business is shortage of finance reported that their reason not to start businesses are lack of work places and finance with (mean=3.65, str. Deviation=1.234) in line with Earle et al (2000) states that financial constraints are more important determinant of self-employment.



The remaining respondents told that they had problem of training, lack of land/place of work, lack of licenses, shortage of equipment, lack of information and lack of support from local government and family with (mean=3.78, str. Deviation=1.452, mean=3.62, str. Deviation=1.224 and mean=3.87, str. Deviation=1.456) respectively. This demonstrates that the motivation of graduates to start businesses is to some extent good if the preconditions are available. It seems that absence of finance and work place constrained them and expose them to suffer from problems of joblessness. As regard to constraints to self-employment, shortage of finance and lack of work place are the major challenges in this regard (Muhdin, 2016).

They also lack information and business skill as well as support from their local government and families. In this regard, graduates, who work cooperatively from relatively rich families that can afford all necessary preconditions, are more likely engage in business or self-employment. On the other hand, the graduates that lacked the above privileges used to pursue wandering. Intervention should be taken to check the fairness of markets in order to make sure that disadvantaged graduates become beneficiaries (Debele, 2019).

In addition to John et al (2006) reports; that poverty can cause's graduate's unemployment rate. Poverty can cause graduates unemployment but within poverty unfair resource distribution can aggravate graduate's unemployment. This in turn can provoke community social evils and lead to social crisis.

#### 4.4 Reasons Graduates Not to Find Employment

**Table 4: Responses on reasons graduates not to find employment**

No	items	N	Mean	str. Deviation
1	No work was found related to in my profession	130	4	2.302
2	Lack of job opportunity	130	3.99	1.992
3	Lack of vacancy advertisement	130	3.76	1.469
4	In search for better job opportunity	130	3.98	1.897
5	Not to work at distant place	130	3.77	1.467
6	Introduction of modern system of work	130	3.45	1.203
7	Prevalence of corruption	130	3.94	1.764
8	lack of good governance	130	3.82	1.678

Data can be seen from table 4 illustrates that around more than 75% of the sample graduate reported that their reasons not to find employment was lack of job opportunity with (mean=3.99, str. Deviation=1.992) and the remaining respondents responded that they had no training, absence of professions related to work with (mean=4, str. Deviation=2.302, prevalence of corruption with (mean=3.94, str. Deviation=1.764), absence of vacancies (mean=3.76, str. Deviation=1.469), new systems of work, searching better work (mean=3.98, str. Deviation=1.897), dislike distance working place, dislike low payments, inconvenience of time and the like. This illustrates that the absence of job opportunity was main reasons not to employments. The job opportunity does not become available as state growth increases as imagined (Debele, 2017).

The community development by itself expected to bring new opportunities but in contrast the rural area becomes centers of social evils such as graduate unemployment, homelessness and poor quality social services. In line with this (Poschke, 2018) mentioned that reasons for graduate unemployment are high and job finding is low in Ethiopia. This confirms that most of graduates are job seekers but insignificant number of job seekers may find job. This creates curses in the society particularly in developing countries like Ethiopia the problem is very demanding.

#### **4.5 Graduate's Experiences of Job Searching**

In this case respondent of the study mentioned that their job search experiences' including their personal commitment is one of the causes to be unemployed. Few respondents also reflected that due to financial constraint they were unable to search jobs outside the study area. In line with the majority of respondents used for notice board and their friends as source of information to admittance job advertisements. A few of them explore vacancies through browsing internet including social media. For instance, interviewer told that:

One of my experiences in searching vacancies is looking notice board in the wall of different sector offices compound. Especially, Monday and Wednesday, I have experience of checking latest jobs that advertised in the notice board, because as a trend most of the time government jobs advertised on these dates (interviewer 1).

My source of information in relation with job search is depending on contacts of my friends. However, due to loosen of my contacts with my friends, now, I am looking jobs here only in Kaffa zone (Interviewer 2).

Those persons in my social contacts and who have information regarding advertised vacancies are most of my primary source of information to job searching. Sometimes, I looked job advertisements on notice board but most of the time aired jobs discarded by someone else and this makes difficult to properly apply on time. Now since utmost of my time spent in the home, I don't have vacancy information through my social contacts and internet. As a result, my job searching experiences also affected me to access chances of employment (interviewer 3).

Due to financial constraint, I am not able to search jobs in another place. Also, I am not looking vacancies in social Media as I observed that fake jobs advertised in social media frequently. Hence, notice board and my friends are my reliable means of job information.

I have not experience job search via internet except gather the information from my friends. I spent the time at home, as result losses my social contacts; I am discriminated from the information and makes difficulty to acquire job opportunity.

Here in the town notice board is the means to search job information but since there is recruitment fraud the post is hired a head of time for those who have relatives. Financial constraint even to copy and print credential documents to apply for posts is one of the challenges and makes additional burden to family economy (Interviewer 4).

Also, participants conclude that:

In order to search job advertisements, we used for social media and notice board. Off course the jobs advertise in the notice board not avail in friendly manner and we spent our time walking on foot to look the jobs advertised in different corners of the town. Surprisingly there is no availability of magazine, journals at least to get information of jobs in one spot.

Firstly, most of job creation opportunities in micro and small-scale enterprise give due attention for graduates of natural science graduates especially to Engineering department. Even though,

graduate engineers engaged to work a cobble stone but how it could be fit with the level of graduates, as to me no need of attending such courses in university because our mothers can do this type of business with minimal investment.

Also, there is lack of good governance to engage in micro scale enterprises programs. Sometimes such institutions are ideal and run for their political consumption.

In addition, respondents of key informant interview recognized that lack of financial support even through loan modality is one of the factors affecting graduate youth employment status.

Challenges regard to job opportunity, participants of the study confirmed that lack of information and transparency in its procedure, misuse of the fund, delay of its repayment from prior lenders, delay of the initial capital due to the nature of bureaucratic working system in the implementing sector offices, fulfilling requirements of selection criteria's, and corruption in its implementation were the challenges to access revolving fund addition, respondents of the study stated told that the interest rate and limited amount challenges graduate youth to access the revolving loan fund.

Lack of amendment of the educational curriculum contributing pay to unnecessary resources of the country, family economy and then lead graduates to have terrible life after graduation. Over the years, curriculum of higher institutions has not been amended to meet the challenges of the new generation leading to the inability of the graduates to meet with the needs of the present dispensation. Political bias by public and private employers upon recruitment cannot be underestimated for the unemployment of graduate youth (Wube, 2012).

Moreover, in this study graduates' means of job searching were assessed and the results indicated that the majority of graduate means of information to job searching is looking notice board. A few of them accessed job searching information from their friends and browsing internet. To support this, other findings also confirmed that lack of information about available jobs and skill requirement to job seekers on one hand, and information asymmetry on the part of employers regarding skills of prospective jobseekers on the other tends to cause high rate of frictional unemployment (William, 2014).

## **4.6 Working Place and Training for Graduates**

In this finding a few respondents reported that provision of working place and capacity building training as one of the opportunities in the study area delivered to university and college graduates. Recently, in the Kaffa zone administration there is provision of working places including shades and it is a good step to partially support youths to engage in their own business (Interviewer 1).

Whereas in this aspect, key informants reported that: There is no new support and opportunity for graduate youths. Off course, as usual there is a provision of short-term skill trainings and awareness rising to change the minds of youth and then enable them to engage on self and group business.

Support like working places, advice and counseling and entrepreneurship training including business development schemes are the opportunities being provided to youth aiming to engage on feasible income generating activities after forming working team.

The government also outsourced sector-based refreshment corners like cafeteria which is serving for government employee to create business opportunity for graduates (Interviewer, 2). Regarding this the government made efforts to link graduates with private sectors to access employment, awareness creation and training together with TVET college, identify and link graduates with existing of NGO projects to create employment after acquired skill trainings.

## **4.7 Problems Associate with Higher Education Institutions Graduates**

### **4.7.1 Poor Socio-Economic Status**

As the university under study was in a rural area, most of the students who participated in the research cited coming from a low socio-economic background. Subsequently, most of the participants highlighted that their background played a major role in choices around their education and career paths. Participants cited the experience of a family expectation that after graduation they would take care of their families.

This expectation created pressure on the individual and their lived experience, including the prospect of securing employment. However, participants in the study were also honest, stating that

most of their parents or guardians were not aware of the labor market realities. Hence, it became difficult for them to explain to their families.

One of the participants noted: ‘I am feeling pressure to find a job early, the pressure that I am getting from my family and friends that studied at TVET Colleges who engaged in practical work and I am stuck with theory.’ (Participant 4)

As the participants were from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, most of them were exposed to a poor education system, especially those who grew up in the rural areas, which were most of the participants.

#### **4.7.2 Poor Education System**

Most of the participants faced difficulties in trying to adapt to higher education learning, as the moderating language in higher institutions was English. For example, one of the participants explained that most schools conducted their classes in the local language. Hence, it became a major challenge for the participants to start using English: ‘

The other challenge is when you are moving from rural schools then you come here at university; the language becomes a problem because you are used to being taught in rural school.. So you find it becomes a challenge for us, as we have to learn how to write in English.’ (Participant 7)

This transition resulted in participants struggling to cope with higher education studies because of a limited understanding of the English language. A limited understanding meant that the participants took longer to understand various concepts in lectures. This resulted in participants having to repeat modules, which in turn extended their study periods. The language had a negative effect on the employability of the graduates.

A great challenge for the participants was the whole education system. Despite several policy changes in the education system, a division between privileged and under-privileged universities still exists (CHE, 2016; Kirstein, 2016; van Broekhuizen, 2016).

As was reported in other studies (Mlatsheni, 2014), most of the participants in this study were exposed to poor education quality as they hailed from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The research participants cited that because of the history of the institution, as well as the perception

of the outside world, they were at a disadvantage in the labor market (CHEC, 2016; Kirstein, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016).

Given such negative perceptions, participants struggled to secure employment. Because of the poor education system, the participants were unprepared to compete in the open labor market.

Not only does the language affect employability, but also the participants cited the lack of career counseling services in the high schools they attended. Coming from rural areas, the participants were not exposed to career counseling and guidance to assist them in making decisions about their careers. Participants ended up registering for qualifications without receiving adequate guidance and knowledge about the qualifications. The participants not only ‘lack knowledge about the qualifications’ but of the ‘labor market realities’.

#### **4.7.3 The Curriculum Issues**

The way the curriculum was designed was perceived as not allowing the students to gain the relevant skills to compete in the labor market. Participants felt that curriculum mainly focused on the theoretical component of the qualification, neglecting the practical aspect. Participants expressed that they were unprepared for the world of work. One of the participants narrated it as follows: ‘We have degrees in which students are going for placement, but when it comes to us, as commerce students, you find that it’s difficult because there is no practical to practice the knowledge we have acquired here (Participant 15).

Most of the participants expressed that social connections had become a major role player in the labor market. However, the participants did not have those networks to assist them with employability. Participants consequently expressed that they were not experiencing the labor market the same way as the other students. This was expressed by one of the participants as follows:

‘I feel like resources and opportunities are there, but they are hard to get because of the connections that you need to have in Kaffa zone. Also, because of an ‘inferiority complex’ and ‘society backlash’, participants did not receive proper guidance from lecturers or relevant people in the job market.

Most of the participants did not perceive higher education as a way to enhance their employability. Because of various factors discussed above, participants felt discouraged about their future careers. Many of the participants enrolled in tertiary studies aiming to secure employment as soon as they obtained their qualifications.

In general, the findings of the studies under analysis point out the need for higher education institutions to meet the needs of the labor market, generally acknowledging the existence of a mismatch between the competences developed in higher education and those that are favored by employers. Nevertheless, efforts towards aligning the needs and expectations of potential employers and the curricula of the programs under analysis are also recognized. The study also point out a critical concern about the roles that the market should assume in the definition of higher education curricula.

If it is undeniable that concerns about employability are pressing and meeting the demands of employers is a necessary route toward promoting the ready insertion of graduates in the labor market, one cannot forget that academia is more than a promoter of employability. Moreover, market demands are rapidly shifting, and intending to meet market requirements rather than acting proactively and preparing adaptable and critical professionals may have detrimental results. Stressing the importance of developing higher-order skills, even if not immediately sought for by employers, remains relevant. An open and continued dialogue between academia and employers, with two-way contributions, may prove a worthy undertaking.

#### **4.7.4 Challenges of Graduates to Access Revolving Loan Fund**

Regarding the challenges of graduate graduates to access revolving loan fund participants of the study confirmed that lack of information and transparent working system, misuse of the fund, delay of its repayment from prior lenders, delay of the initial capital due to the nature of bureaucratic working system in the implementing sector offices, requirements of selection criteria ‘sand corruption in its implementation were the major challenges. In addition, respondents of the study stated that the interest rate and limited amount of provision against to the market situation challenges graduate to access the revolving loan fund.



**Lack of Information and Transparency:** In this challenge a few respondents of the study mentioned that in the process of revolving loan provision there is lack of transparent working system and clear information in its implementation process. For instance, interviewer 4, 5 and 6 revealed that; I heard the information from media but not seen its practical implementation in the woreda level. There is no clear means of information and transparency regarding youth revolving loan fund administration. I heard only the name of support called youth loan fund.

There is gap in dissemination of information regarding the provision of loan fund and this makes youths not able to benefit from the program in transparent ways. We only disseminate the information during the meeting dates (Interviewer 4).

On top of this challenge majority of respondents of the interview and graduates participated in interview questions explained that in the administration of revolving loan fund there is corruption to access the loan opportunity and in relation with observed that misuse of the fund rather to use the revolving fund as per its intended purpose. In addition, key informants of the study noted that delay of loan disbursement from the source origin as well as delay of lenders to repaid the loan makes great difficult to collect the money from the beneficiaries of the loan and to transfer the cash for next round beneficiaries of the fund. In this regard respondents of the study reflected that:

The challenge is the loan which was transferred for borrowers not yet recollecting timely and disbursed to another graduate on time. There is also gap in addressing close monitoring on the feasibility and effectiveness of the business types which is run by beneficiaries of the loan fund (Interviewer, 5).

After long process fulfillment of the requirement there is delay of disbursement of the loan and it great challenge to start the business tasks as it expected. The other bad experience is the loan services is not used for the intended purpose because there is screening problem and as result graduate not the beneficiary of the program (Interviewer, 6).

The opportunity is given for selected persons or the family members of working in the respective sector. The provision of the revolving loan fund is family centered. For example, if you have families and relatives working there he/she give you the detail information regarding the loan steps

and then you are expected to call up on again your family members like your sons of ant, ankle. Then, the business runs by only by a few members of the family because the rest will engage in their own business like in the government sector offices. In short, the support of the fund enclosed by a family member rather the program could engross many of unemployed graduates in the Kaffa zone (interviewer, 6).

#### **4.7 Discussion**

This study showed that graduates' status was 79% and the average length of job searching was 7 months. The model implies that graduate employability is a function of cumulative GPA, preferred field of study, father's education, number of companies he/she had contacted and his/her time management skills in the workplace.

Graduates placed the least amount of importance on the political implications of the decisions they make. This could be because graduates have not yet experienced the ramification of ill-advised decisions in the workplace that may have political consequences. At a minimum, graduates perceived themselves to possess at least minor competence in performing employability. Graduates perceived that they were most competent at working independently, relating to their supervisors, and working with their colleagues, listening, and setting priorities. Graduates also perceived that they were least competent at identifying political implications of the decisions to be made. This finding was similar to the importance scale, as graduates perceived the political implications of their decisions to be the least important skill needed for success in the workplace. When comparing importance and competence, graduates ranked ability to work independently second on the importance scale and first on the competence scale.

The findings of the study are almost similar to the reports by (Aquino et al., 2015; Guarcello & Rosati, 2007; Lim, 2011) who specifically investigated the labour market outcomes of young people, key factors influencing employment as well as the length of job search.

However, the result of employment status in this study was remarkably different from that of other studies (Bewket, 2013 & Yirgashewa, 2013), though this difference might result from the differences in the study areas and years of graduation.

Although graduates rated solving problems as the most important skill needed in the workplace, they rated it 16th on the competence scale. It could be implied that graduates need more experience at solving problems. Though the ability to work independently was rated high on the importance scale, it was rated even higher on the competence scale, which may indicate the curriculum is adequately addressing graduates' needs in this area.

In this study, there is status of graduates and employability and hence this study is in line with a study carried out in China (Kong & Jiang, 2011), but it contradicted a study done in Norway which showed that female graduates are more likely to enter the labor market ahead of males (Kong, 2013), while in Tanzania more likely to be employed first (Nikusekela & Pallangyo, 2016). The result of the study indicated that graduates are predominantly using public advertisement as job-searching method, followed by interpersonal relationship (the help of friends and family) as a major way to search for jobs. This is in line with the results of the study conducted by (Bankole, & Brown, 2011) where university graduates have eventually succeeded, in the family or personal connections and in announcements published in newspapers, coming mainly from the private sector.

The results also revealed that the majority of graduates were professionally employed, while only a small number of them were self-employed. Concerning the length of time in getting transitional employment, the results showed that only a small number of graduates secure their first jobs within one year, while it takes between 1-3 years for the majority of graduates.

Taking into account that different countries and higher education systems attribute differing levels of importance to publishing in these specific databases, this choice may have led to the underrepresentation of some areas of the globe. We suggest that future research may include other databases to find more sources of heterogeneity. Results identify Europe as the continent where most of the research on these subjects has originated, over the past decade, with mainly quantitative studies.

The debate about gaps between the employability competences developed in higher education and employers' needs, and specificities associated with competence development represent the

majority of the studies in the corpus of analysis. Our results suggest that higher education institutions are concerned with how to enhance the development of competences for graduate employability.

Graduate employability and competence development around the world call for strong sense of innovation and collaboration practices implemented in higher education. However, our results show there is a long way to go towards the implementation of sustainable policies on this topic by Higher Education Institutions. We have not found any papers debating the relevance of developing governmental and institutional policies than promote a broad implementation of measures directed at promoting competences for employability in higher education.

As per the findings of this study, mismatch of number of graduates with the existing labor demand is the economic factor that affects graduate to access employment opportunities. To support this, in Ethiopia poor economic performance is a major problem to absorb the labor force adequately (Nebiletal, 2010). In this regard other findings also confirmed that lack of effective economic and employment policies and insufficient job creation has left many young people with no option but to accept part-time, temporary or informal work (UN, 2016).

In this study, skills mismatch with the existing MSEs programs are the other economic factors that affects graduate to engage in different income generating activities. Another study finding conducted by McKinsey Global Institute, 2012; as sited in World Economic Forum in 2014 also confirmed that qualification mismatch is pervasive in modern job markets (World Economic Forum, 2014). In addition, qualification mismatches occur when the formal qualifications that individual hold deviates from the qualifications those are required to be able to be hired for and to perform the job (Quintini, 2011).

Skills mismatch affects individuals at different stages of their working lives. Skills mismatch is also a dynamic phenomenon affecting employees within their jobs and across their entire working careers (World Economic Forum, 2014). Lack of skilled workers, large proportions of graduates go unemployed for long periods of time or are forced to work in the informal sector (African Development Bank,2011). In this regard, also under the MSE development strategy indicated that

the reason for focusing on skill basis of the TVET system is that usually the education and training systems have no relationship with production and service activities rather they were theory based. Such education and training system and institution have little or no value in the effort of equipping trainers (Federal MSE, 2011).

In another way, lack of industries, working places, adequate trainings and poor infrastructure like road, electricity, water affects graduate youth to acquire employment opportunity as well as to initiate their own business. Inadequate training and skill obsolescence translate into limited job prospects for graduates even when the economy improves (UN, 2016).

In line with the findings of the study indicated that graduate attitudes to participate in the MSE program also contributed graduate youth to be unemployed. In contrast to this finding, the study conducted by Temesgen (2017) confirmed that youth has positive attitude towards MSE programs. Support to this study, the study conducted by Belete (2016) indicated that positive images towards MSEs are mostly hindered by a lack of institutional support, lack of training and mentoring, lack of infrastructure, lack of recognizable role models and lack of inspiration from the society

In addition, the findings of this study noted that lack of good governance, corruption and bureaucratic nature of the MSE's program contributed to unemployment of graduate. This finding is consistent with other researcher findings confirmed that the working environment in MSEs is not supportive to start a business in short process; bureaucracy, corruption and political affiliation with the current ruling party are identified as major problems to get engaged in MSE (Daniel 2016; Belete, 2016).

Moreover, shortage of credit accessibility is one of the factors affecting graduate to engage on their self-business or group business. Another study finding also on firm that the problem of credit access to youth run enterprises seems to be more pronounced in developing countries (Chinguta, 2001). A study finds also confirmed that access to credit has a positive and significant effect on youth employment (Anywanu, 2013). The recent study findings also revealed that poor access to credit and labor regulations can disproportionately affect young people (Khan, 2015).

Regarding the existing opportunities, the findings of the study showed that there are no adequate opportunities which are significantly absorbing the number of graduates in the study area. Off

course, in this study existing of job creation opportunities in the MSE program such as provision of working places, credit accessibility, trainings are the opportunities offered by the government.

Even though, those services and opportunities in MSE are limited, saturated and the available resources are not fairly allotted to graduate youth because of poor good governance, prevailing corruption and the persistent political instability of the country narrowing the opportunities so far.

The other findings also showed that the political instability of the country including the recurrent trend of political disputes in the study are has locked the opportunities of employment schemes. The widespread nepotism and corruption have paved the way for unemployment of graduated youth. This has a lot to do with almost all issues ranging from accessing rural land to getting employed in public institutions (Wube, 2012).

As per the findings of this study lack of information and transparent working system, delay of transfer of the fund, delay of repayment of the transferred loan due to weak follow-up and misuse of the fund are the challenges in the administration of revolving loan fund which in turn affects graduate youth at least to start their own self business and/or group business. Ineffective and inefficient services in delivering and collecting loan, failures in creating awareness that help to identify competent clients before supplying credit and capacity limitation to provide training, produce business plan, and facilitate production and sales sites (Federal MSE, 2011).

Also, the recent reports from media reported that as result of lack of awareness creation works and absence of strong follow up tasks so as to outreach youths, inefficiency of implementing organs at different levels and lack of deep understanding of policy and the growing size of youth funds nonreturnable to revolve for others youths the revolving youth fund has faced a knotty issue in achieving the set target (The Ethiopian Herald March 17, 2019). In addition, the results of this study showed that fulfilling the requirements of loan selection criteria's including its long bureaucratic process, corruption and as well as its interest rate demotivated graduate youth to access loan. The low amount of loan against to the market is one of the challenges indicated in this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Summary of the Major findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institution graduate, employability and challenges the case of Kaffa zone. The study revealed the following findings. With each specific objective of the study, the current statuses of higher education institution graduate in Kaffa zone, the employability from the perspective of higher education institution graduates and the challenges that higher education institution graduates are facing in kaffa zone.

Most of the graduates (57.3%) were contacted at most three graduates to secure their first job and the majority of the sample graduates (59%) had an internship and, further, this internship was mostly used for personal development, followed by the development of entrepreneurial skills. With regard to the educational status of the graduates' parents, the majority of the parents were not educated, although the educational level of their fathers was better than that of their mothers.

The result also shows that males and females have an almost similar employment skill and, relatively speaking, graduates belonging to Kaffa zone southern western people regions have better opportunities for securing their jobs.

This shows graduates under the study area have the skills to make consistently meeting or exceeding my expected levels of work performance. Ethiopian higher education institution graduates have the skills to create schedules for own daily tasks and maintaining them and skills to acknowledging own mistakes and making a conscious effort to avoid them in the future and have the skills to perform integrity or to do the right thing to gain the trust of those around me and skills of respecting others, practicing proper communication skills and empathy to understand how to interact best with each.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The objective of this study was to explore the Ethiopian higher education institution graduate, employability and challenges the case Kaffa zone. This study provides an important policy implication for higher education institutions graduates. More, specifically, the study confirmed that graduates' transition from higher education to work is a multidimensional phenomenon which is affected by several parameters including age, cumulative grade point average, and other generic skills (interpersonal skills, communication skills, time management skills, teamwork ability, and internship engagement). The study found a statistically significant correlation between all the challenges and employability of graduates.

This study revealed that graduates under the study area have the skills to make consistently meeting or exceeding my expected levels of work performance. Ethiopian higher education institution graduates have the skills to create schedules for own daily tasks and maintaining them and skills to acknowledging own mistakes and making a conscious effort to avoid them in the future and have the skills to perform integrity or to do the right thing to gain the trust of those around he/she and skills of respecting others.

The findings indicate that Ethiopian higher education graduates in Kaffa zone have the ability of critical thinking skills allow me to understand and address situations based on all available facts and information and the ability to apply critical thinking at work involves processing and organizing facts, data and other information to define a problem and develop effective solutions.

The finding shows that Ethiopian higher education institution in graduates Kaffa zone have the ability to approaches organizations to inquire about job opportunities, the ability to setting up a local club or fundraiser and have a strong desire to achieve success by meeting to goal.

The study revealed some of the challenges that graduate face, lack of support from local government to develop one's own employability, lack of financial resources to create own work/jobs, lack of entrepreneurship trainings and poor/weak entrepreneurship trainings given in the university or college for a short period of time.



## 5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were forwarded to concerned bodies:

- Graduates should give adequate attention in the upgrading of skills for fulfilling the contextual dimension of job searching. In this way, it becomes a two-way traffic where both of them value employability skills and contextual behaviors especially those that are not highly practiced in their employability.
- Higher education institutions should be talent engines that foster innovation and competence development, without being hostages of organizations, however, a fruitful collaboration may be co-constructed and fostered.
- MoE with other education institution should enhance the employability skills of the students either through the professional development of lecturers, curriculum and co curriculum.
- In addition, from all stakeholder should be expected to properly implement the enacted policies, strategies and guidelines, establish functional coordination, collaboration and teamwork among stakeholders, increase the participation and support of parents, put in place strong monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning programs to manage the effectiveness and efficiency revolving fund and address the employability of the Ethiopian higher education institution graduates.

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**Appendix A**  
Jimma University

College of Education and Behavioral Science

Department of Educational Planning and Management

Questionnaire filled by Ethiopian Higher Education institution graduates in Kaffa zone

Dear Respondents:

This questionnaire is designed to collect data on the Ethiopian higher education institution graduate, employability and challenges: Kafa zone. It is one of the data collections tools that the researcher uses to collect the necessary data for his MA thesis in educational planning and management. The researcher believes that your responses are vital in determining the success of this study. Hence, you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire completely and honestly. The researcher would like to assure you that the responses that you give will be kept confidential and used for specific objectives.

**Part One: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Please read the following statement then fill the blank space with your personal profiles

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Years you graduated: \_\_\_\_\_
3. University/College you graduated from: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part two: Main questions on Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions graduates

Please reading the statement below and circle one from the given alternatives

Read the following items carefully and put tick mark (✓) in the appropriate box

1 =strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neutral 4=agree 5 = strongly agree

NB: Use the same value for each tables listed below such as 1 =strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neutral 4=agree 5 = strongly agree

### 2.1 Job Searching Methods used by the Graduates

N	items	five likert scale value				
		SA	DA	N	A	SA
1	Public advertisement					
2	Contacting companies directly					
3	I checked through the internet					
4	I was contacted by the company					
5	I contacted a commercial working agency					
6	I established my own business					
7	Relations (e.g. parents, relatives, friends)					
8	Competition with CGPA					
9	Competition with oral examination					
10	Competition with written examination					
11	Competition with practical test					

## 2.2 Reasons Graduates' Not to Start Businesses

Read the following items carefully and put tick mark (√) in the appropriate box

SDA =strongly disagree DA= disagree N= neutral A=agree SA= strongly agree

No	items	Five Likert Scales				
		SDA	DA	N	A	SA
1	Shortage of finance					
2	Lack of training					
3	Problems of working place/land					
4	Lack of finance and training					
5	Lack/absence of License					
6	Shortage/absence of equipment					
7	lack of support from local government					

## Reasons Graduates' Not to Find Employment

Read the following items carefully and put tick mark (√) in the appropriate box

1 =strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neutral 4=agree 5 = strongly agree

No	items	Five Likert Scales				
		SDA	DA	N	A	SA
1	No work was found related to in my profession					
2	Lack of job opportunity					
3	Lack of vacancy advertisement					
4	In search for better job opportunity					
5	Not to work at distant place					
6	Introduction of modern system of work					
7	prevalence of corruption					
8	lack of good governance					



**Open-ended Questions on challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone**

1. What are the personal related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

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2. What are the local government related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

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3. What are the field study related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

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4. What is the education curriculum related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

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5. What are the environment related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

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What are the socio-economic related challenges that Ethiopian higher education institution graduates are facing in Kaffa zone?

**Appendix B**  
Jimma University

College of Education and Behavioral Science

Department of Educational Planning and Management

Interview Question responded by Ethiopian Higher Education institution graduates in Kaffa zone

Dear Interviewer's:

This interview questions are designed to collect data on the Ethiopian higher education institution graduate, employability and challenges: Kafa zone. It is one of the data collections tools that the researcher uses to collect the necessary data for his MA thesis in educational planning and management. The researcher believes that your responses are vital in determining the success of this study. Hence, you are kindly requested to respond the questions completely and honestly. The researcher would like to assure you that the responses that you give will be kept confidential and used for specific objectives.

1. How do you see your job searching experiences?
2. How do see training for higher education institutions graduates?
3. What are the problems associated with Higher Education Institutions Graduates?
4. What are the challenges that graduates face to access revolving loan fund?
5. What are the effects of Ethiopian higher education institution graduate in the society?
6. How do you see the magnitude of Ethiopian higher education institution graduate in this area?
7. What is the responsibility of families and societies in reducing the magnitude of Ethiopian higher education institution graduates?
8. Please describe the affects you faced due to being unemployment after your graduation?
9. How do you describe availability of social services to cope up unemployed graduate?
10. What are the challenges in the support of revolving loan fund by government for Ethiopian higher education institutions graduate?
11. How do you describe actions taken by local government and private to Ethiopian higher education institution reduce graduate rate?