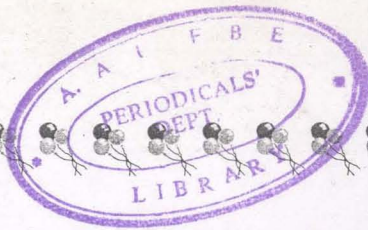


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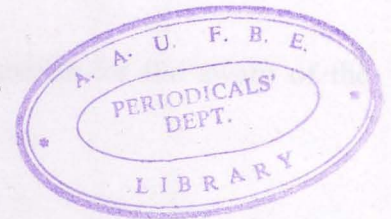


**THE CURRENT STATUS OF RESEARCH
IN COLLEGE OF COMMERCE**

A project Presented by

Tilahun Yigletu

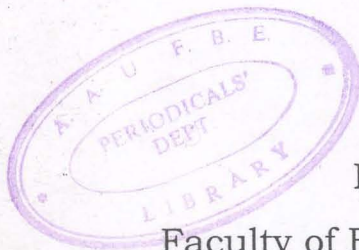
To



The Faculty of Business and Economics
in the partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for the degree of

Masters of Business Administration (MBA)

Project Supervisor: Dr: A. D. Madhavi



MBA Program

Faculty of Business and Economics

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa

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MBA

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Letter of Certification

This is to certify that Ato Tilahun Yigletu has carried out his research work on the topic
“The Current Status of Research in College of Commerce”

This work is original in nature and it is suitable for submission for the award of the
degree of Masters of Business Administration.




Dr. A. D. Madhavi

Letter of Certification

This is to certify that Ato Tilahun Yigletu has carried out his research work on the topic
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Dr. A. D. Madhavi

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ABSTRACT

Research is recognized as the foundation – stone upon which successful educational programs are built, evaluated, and improved to meet the current and future needs and standards of the society it serves. For higher education institutions research is considered as an inherent function because it is regarded as one of the major reasons for their establishment and existence. Institutions and instructors of higher learning's should assume research as one of their basic duties and responsibilities. In this regard, this study attempted to assess the current status of research in College of Commerce, the current research involvement of the teachers of the college, and to identify the major factors influencing their involvement. Accordingly, the current research involvement of the College of Commerce teachers and the current status of research in the College is found to be minimal. The most influential factors affecting the teachers' research involvement are identified as lack of research reward/incentive, research culture in the college, interest, enthusiasm and commitment of teachers research competency and confidence, and conducive research facilities. Therefore, to promote research activities in the college, attention must be given to: improving research reward, developing a positive attitude and commitment towards research; inculcating and maintaining a motivating research culture; improving the research knowledge and experience of the staff, and creating a conducive research condition. Moreover, a strong initiative must be taken to make research undertaking the basic part of the college's and instructors' duty and responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Today's society demands relevant and quality education. This demands an educational system that assumes change as a key note of education and that keeps its pace with the changing demands of the society, especially the particular society which it must serve. This in turn demands academic institutions and professionals: (a) who must not only be alert to change but who must create change themselves; (b) that are innovative, imaginative, resourceful, and flexible; (c) that are able to lead, direct, insist, on quality and standards; and (d) that are willing to test their standards and methods with open forums with those who place their trust and confidence to depend upon them to provide them with meaningful and significant education. For such circle of education to prevail and/or to sustain, research becomes a most significant.

Research is long regarded as the foundation-stone upon which successful educational programs are built, evaluated, and improved to promote future changes and/or growth. The effectiveness of tomorrow's personnel is determined by today's education. The relevance of today's curriculum in meeting tomorrow's needs and standards should be determined. The business curriculum must keep pace with the inevitable changes that are experienced in the environment. The status and progress of the curriculum should be continuously evaluated and adopted to promote future growth. The extent to which these demands are examined critically and met objectively presupposes research.

Increasingly, the strength of education programs will be determined more by the quality and strength of the support provided by research.

Thus, with such assumptions, this paper attempts to provide a brief description of the current state of research in College of Commerce and then to assess the factors influencing the instructors to carry out research.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Wiersma (1995) states that advances in many fields of endeavor are attributed to research, and for much of this research activity there is the inherent assumption that research fosters improvement. This clearly implies that many changes or developments mainly are attributed to research activity results. Likewise, research is believed to be the key to realize the improvements of the main elements of educational process, namely lives of learners, quality of teachers, content, methods, and fulfillment of societal needs. Educational process becomes effective in meeting the demands of a society if it is supported by research. Research plays a significant role in pointing out strong and weak points and in searching for enrichment and improvement of educational policy making and implementation, curriculum development and improvement, educational organizations, structures and administrations, and in evaluating the attainment of educational objectives.

Even though any interested organization and/or individual can involve in research practices, by virtue of their important position in the

educational system, higher education teachers are more appropriate and responsible to engage in it. Garnnet and Holmes (1995) state that research and teaching have long been recognized as twin broad functions of higher education. Taye (1993:3) also stated that one of the major reasons for the existence of a higher institution is to get involved in

research activities. Neuman and Lindsay (1988) also support this idea by stating that the basic functions of most universities or higher institutions any where in the world are teaching and research in combination.

In the Ethiopian educational system, research has been regarded as one of the major responsibilities of higher institutions. For instance, the Geez maxim, ኩሉ አመክሩ፣ ወዘሠናየ አፅንኡ (ሁሉን መርምሩ የሚበጀውንም ያዙ) , used to appear as a motto on the seal of the former Haile Selasie I University, the now Addis Ababa University (Seyoum,1998:1). Roughly it means “inquire into everything possible, retain all that is good” (Ibid). This Geez maxim capitalized that one of the main objective to establish the first University in the country was to carryout research activities.

The Commission for Higher Education (1978) also emphasized that scientific research should be one of the major tasks of universities. The current education policy of the country also gives emphasis for research. According to the New Education and Training Policy, the schooling system in general and higher learning in particular should gear their training towards research and development. It further states that higher education should be research oriented to enable the students to become professional leaders who are capable of solving problems in their area of specialization and in overall societal needs. Moreover, the policy states

that to promote a higher education of good quality and relevance, focusing on research and development is the strategy (TGE, 1994: 9-15).

While the responsibility of higher institutions to engage in research activities is briefly (partially) demonstrated above, this project is therefore, designed to assess to what extent that the College of

Commerce teachers are involved in research and to identify the factors that influence the teachers' participation in research activities. In

relatively more specific terms, this study attempts to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What is the current status of research in College of Commerce?
2. To what extent are College of Commerce teachers involved in research work?
3. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder teachers' involvement in research?
4. What possible steps can be initiated to promote research in the College and improve the teachers' involvement in research undertaking?

1.3 RELATED LETERATVRE REVIEW

Research has been recognized as a most significant and powerful word in higher education institution. In view of this, research is described in the works of most authors and researchers as: one of the major reasons for

the existence of higher education institutions (Taye, 1993), one of the basic functions of most higher institutions any where in the world (Neuman and Lindsay, 1988), one of the prominent elements in the profile of higher education institutions and their teachers (Adane, 2001), one of the primary responsibilities of higher learning institutions (Abdinasir, 2000; Adane, 2000; Derebssa, 2000; Taye, 1993; Tsegay, 2000); what distinguishes higher education from secondary education (Marew, 1993). Hence, teachers of higher learning instructions are responsible to do research.

Many relevant works of scholars agree that as far as research is one of the prominent tasks of higher education institutions, the teachers of these institutions need to be more involved in research. They have to conduct research to enhance the quality of instruction, to supervise research by their students more effectively, and for their own academic promotion (Derebssa, 2004). Higher education teachers should conduct research for implementing research-based teaching to improve the quality of education (Altrichter, 1993; ward, 1973). The current Vice Minister for Higher Education, Ministry of Education, argues that:

Research in higher education institutions shall be undertaken not only for reasons of scholarly prestige or for economic considerations but also as part of the overall renewal and development of learning, teaching and public service activities including, the dissemination of knowledge. Researchers should also look at how their findings can be included in the curricula and retraining programs (Teshome, 2004: 17).

Thus instructors of higher learning should strongly support their teaching by research. The current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia emphasizes that higher education should be research oriented (TGE, 1994). Garnet and Holmes (1995) support this idea arguing that research and teaching are twin board functions of higher education. Derebssa (2004) also wrote that "... institutions of higher learning should be concerned with reproduction of knowledge, generating and disseminating new ideas. Instructors of higher institutions need to integrate teaching and research"

Despite the benefits and significance of research in higher education institutions and the responsibility of their instructions to assume research as one of their major duties, the status of research undertaking

in the Ethiopian Higher Institutions is not satisfactory because of different impediments.

Amera (2004) in the findings of his MA thesis reported that there is a gap between the statements in policies and legislations about the importance of research and the actual practice in higher institutions. Teshome (2004) writing about the research in higher education institutions said that many of the higher education institutions in Ethiopia are not actively involved in research activities. Derebssa (2004, 89) also reported that "... though all the universities are vested with full powers under their charters to undertake research, very little research is actually carried out in our universities compared to their potentials."

Other relevant research works (Adane, 2000; Derebssa, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000) also agree with the incompatibility between what is expected from the institutions and instructors of higher education and the actual involvement in research. They reported in a similar fashion that teachers' involvement in research is weak.

Almost all researchers' reports of weak or unsatisfactory research involvement of the institutions and instructors is followed by identifying a number of personal and institutional factors that facilitate or hinder research undertaking. Marew (1993) summarized the possible factors as limited resources, poor research training of many academic staff, excessive view of people towards practicality, the infrequent presence of lively intellectual atmosphere and the work load of the academic staff. According to Teshome (2004: 7), the problems are the following.

Institutional ownership of research undertakings, fund utilization and disbursements and dissemination of results is weak. There are even problems in involving graduate and undergraduate students in the study and in many cases these also depend on the good will of the principal researchers rather than having institutional arrangements. Many staff members are not involved in research and studies as part of their assignments. One important problem associated with the low level of research undertakings in many institutions is the lack of earmarked research budget.

In addressing the "problems hindering research production and utilization in Addis Ababa University", Derebssa (2004) identified that "the most significant are institutional, cultural and logistic in nature" (p.95) and mentioned lack of research culture, under funding of research activities, personnel capacity to conduct research, heavy teachers load,

and lack of appropriate physical environment with infrastructures and equipment.

Thus, based upon the above related literature review this research project assesses the current status of research in Aides Ababa University College of Commerce and the factors that influence the involvement of the instructors of the College in research activities.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The involvement of the academic staff of higher education institutions in doing research can be taken as an important indicator of the performance and effectiveness of the educational system. If there is no satisfactory attempt in this regard, it would mean there is something wrong.

There are some indicators of low performance of practicing research in the College of Commerce. Therefore, this research project is expected to have significant importance for the following reasons:

1. It creates awareness among teachers, College officers, and other concerned parties about the present status of research in College of Commerce. This will serve as a basis for necessary measures required to improve the situation.
2. It shows the main factors that facilitate or hinder research activities in the College. This will help to upgrade the factors that could facilitate and to avoid the factors that hinder research.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The importance of research at any level of education is paramount and deserves wider coverage at various levels of the education system. Even at the higher education level there are indicators showing that the quantity and quality of research outputs differ from one institution, faculty, or department to another. From this point view, as well, it would have been reasonable to conduct research having a wider scope. However, the scope of this study is delimited only to the assessment of the current status of research in College of Commerce and the factors influencing the involvement of the teachers of the College in research activities.

One reason for delimiting the study as such is to make it manageable in terms of the time and resource factors available for the project. Another reason for choosing the College is because of the fact that the researcher is working there and this helped him to see the case is currently an issue in the College.

1.6 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this research project are:

1. To assess the current status of research in College of Commerce.
2. To identify the factors that hinder/facilitate the College of Commerce teachers' involvement in research activities.

3. To suggest possible steps that can be initiated to promote research in the College and improve the teachers' involvement in research activities.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

1.7.1 The Research Design

The study takes many informants and many variables to assess the status of research and the factors affecting involvement in research. Therefore, the descriptive survey was employed. This method was selected for the reason that it helps to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status and to identify the factors.

On the basis of this general approach, the study was carried in four stages. The first phase engaged an extensive review of literature and preparation of proposal. This was necessary to develop a conceptual framework and data collection instruments. In the second phase, the preliminary assessment of secondary data (pertinent documents) and interview with the college officials took place. In the third phase, based on the general information obtained, the data sources were identified and the appropriate data collection instrument was developed, and the main data was collected. In the fourth phase, the collected data has been studied, organized, categorized and reported.

1.7.2 Data Sources and Instruments

The subjects of this study were mainly the academic staff of the College. The number of the staff members was manageable to conduct the study. Hence, the researcher took all the teachers as the subjects of the study. In addition to this, three of the College officials (the Dean of the College, the Vice Dean for Academic and Research Affairs, and the Coordinator for Research and Publication Office) were also separately interviewed to get additional information.

Both primary and secondary sources were used to collect relevant data. Questionnaire was the main source of primarily data. The questionnaire consisted both close-ended and open-ended items regarding teachers' general background, their attitude towards research, their training in research, time adequacy to undertake research, material and moral support provided for teacher researcher, and the factors that influence their involvement in research.

The instrument used for the College Officials was unstructured interview designed to obtain pertinent information regarding the kind of support provided for teacher researchers, the budget for research, teachers' interest and initiative to conduct research, the factors hindering teachers' research involvement, and the colleges' and/or teachers' overall research status.

Apart from the primary data captured through the questionnaire and interview, secondary data from several documents, journals, books, and the internet have been collected and used in conducting the study.

1.7.3 Methods of Data Analysis

To investigate issues in a human endeavor, using a qualitative approach seems justifiable. Therefore, this study utilized the qualitative way of researching an issue. The responses of the respondents were collected, organized, and categorized. There after, analysis and interpretation was made with the help of percentage analysis.

1.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to handle the problem by using or assuming the number of research outputs by the instructors or the college as measure or criterion. It did not consider research contents/issues, research methods, conceptualization, data collection instruments, sampling procedures, types of recommendations, and researcher characteristics that might have been significant for assessing a research status.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This research report has five parts. The first part deals with the problem and its approach. The second treats the conceptual framework of the study. The third is a brief consideration of the background of the institution (the college). The fourth part presents and analyzes the data. The conclusion and recommendations are presented in the fifth part.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

This part presents a basic conceptual clarification reviewed from different scholars' works and different research findings that are related with the problem under investigation. It briefly treats the meaning of research, characteristics of research and the significance of research in Higher Education, status of research undertaking in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions.

2.1 THE MEANING OF RESEARCH

The term research was derived from the French word "recherché" which means to "travel through" or "survey". It gives the equivalent English meaning as "careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, conducted to find facts or principles" (Charles, 1988:2)

Some authors have defined research in simple ways. According to Fernstermacher (1986), research is the act of producing and using knowledge. Masson and Bramble (1997:3) stated that research may be defined simply as "the research for answers to questions." Many others, however, define the term research in broader ways.

Gal et. al. (1996: 432) defined research as "the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data and it is a process of identifying something unknown and then collecting data to make it

known.” Best and Kahn (1993: 20) also defined the term as “systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observation that may lead to development of generalization, principles, or theories resulting prediction and ultimate control of events.” For Verma and Beard (1981:18), research is “an organized effort to gather new information or to utilize existing information for a specific and new purpose and it is directed towards seeking answers worthwhile, fairly important and basic questions through the application of sound and justifiable methods.” Fred Kerlinger (in Emory, 1980:17) offered the definition for scientific research as “systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.”

The many different definitions of “research” supplied by writers have many characteristics in common. All emphasize that research should be systematic gathering and analysis of data to make the right judgment and decisions about the course of action to follow. Identification and definition of the problem, designing an appropriate methodology to tackle the problem, identifying a clear step for the research are some of the common features of all research practices implied in most definitions. All scientific researches have a common scientific method and a common purpose of increasing knowledge and organize things in the surrounding (Masson and Bramble, 1997:7-8); whereas the detail techniques that researchers use, the origin of the research activity and a focal point for the research may be different across disciplines (Neuman, 1994).

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH

Best and Kahn (1993:20) summarized the main characteristics of research as follows:

- (1) Research is directed towards the solution of a problem. It may attempt to answer a question or to determine the relation between two or more variables.
- (2) Research emphasizes the development of generalizations, principles, or theories that will be helpful in predicting future occurrences. Research usually goes beyond the specific objects, groups or a situation investigated and infers characteristics of a target population from the sample observed. Research is more than information retrieval, the simple gathering of information.
- (3) Research is based upon observable experience or empirical evidence. Certain interesting questions do not lend themselves to research procedures because they cannot be observed. Research rejects revaluation and dogma as methods of establishing knowledge and accepts only what can be verified by observation.
- (4) Research demands accurate observation and description. It requires the use of quantitative, numerical measuring devices, the most precise means of description; the selection or devising and employing of valid data gathering instruments or procedures.

- (5) Research involves gathering new data from primary or first hand sources or using existing data for a new purpose.
- (6) Research requires expertise. The researcher knows what is already known about the problem and how others have investigated it. He/She has searched the related literature carefully. He/She is
- (7) also thoroughly grounded in the terminology, the concepts, and the technical skill necessary to understand and analyze the data that he/she gathers.
- (8) Research strives to be objective and logical, applying every possible test to validate the procedures employed, the data collected, and the conclusions reached. The researcher attempts to eliminate bias.
- (9) Research is characterized by patient and unhurried activity. It is rarely spectacular and the researcher must accept disappointment and discouragement as he/she pursues the answers to difficult questions.
- (10) Research involves the quest for answers to unsolved problems. Pushing back the frontiers of ignorance is its goal and originality is frequently the quality of a good research project.

- (11) Research is carefully recorded and reported. Each important term is defined, limiting factors are recognized, procedures are described in detail, references are carefully documented, results are objectively recorded and conclusions are presented with scholarly cautions and restraint.

From the above characteristics, it is evident that the knowledge gained through research is of higher order because it is not based on assumptions, beliefs, and untested generalization. To search such knowledge, a researcher must develop scholarship, accurate observation, and integrity, willingness to spend long hour to collect and study all forms of evidence before arriving at conclusions, ability to recognize causal relationships, and originality and objectivity in thinking (Koul, 1984:12).

2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It is clear that educational process becomes effective in meeting the demands of a society if it is supported by research. As Seyoum (1998) stated, research activities in schools enhance the teaching-learning process and there by contribute to the improvement of the quality of education. Altrichter and et. al. (1993) also agreed up on the need for implementing research-based teaching by saying research broadens teacher's knowledge and their professional competency and they pass on this knowledge to colleagues, students, and in written or other convenient forms to the wider public. Ward (1973) supported this idea by writing that research activities improve the qualities and quantities of education.

Today, with the fast changing environment, research has become a most significant and powerful word in higher learning institutions. The society expects the higher institutions as an active changing agent towards development and improvements. According to Clark (1983), higher education institutions are composed by knowledge bearing groups which are able to search, develop and disseminate knowledge. Deutsch (1959) also said that Universities are uniting people professionally dedicated to the quest and transmission of truth in scientific terms. He farther stated that to get an intellectual maturity of learners in the university, instruction and research must aim for more than the transmittion of bare facts and skills. He also argued that teaching itself in the University is often, even most of the time, stimulating research; therefore, it may be concluded that the combination of research and teaching is the lofty and inalienable basic principles of the University.

Many writers describe the place and significance of research in higher education in terms of its aims. The needs for research are the improvement of educational practices and discovery of effective procedures to improve curriculum quality, school quality, instructional quality, and the quality of outcomes (Gichuru, 1993). Research will powerfully and rapidly develop the technique of teaching; vitalize and dignify the work of individual teacher; develop professional expertness, open-eyed, open-minded scientific spirit of inquiry; and, create new interest and new confidence in ones own abilities (Bakingham in Sukia and et. al, 1994). Decisions made based on research in education would surely save time, money, energy and prevent a lot of failure and frustration, and show the path of progress. Thus, research is the major way for keeping educational process dynamic and up-to-date and it helps

to develop new knowledge about teaching, learning, and educational administration (Gal and et. al., 1996).

It is also possible to look the significance of research in higher education from the view point of the importance of conducting research for instructors of higher institutions. In relation to this, Hopkins (1993) argued that to enhance the quality and relevance of education, teachers need to be more involved in research. Changala, Cited in A. P. Sharma

(1984), substantiated this by saying "no education system can thrive with out the help of competent teachers." This assumes that research competency is one of the qualities that a competent teacher should

posses (Yalew, 2000; Amera, 2004). Such competency enables the instructors of higher learnings to engage in research and become agents of inquiry. Derebssa (2004) also argued that educators in higher institutions are decision makers; they are faced with the task of making decisions about various matters related with the academic process. He added then that, it is the scientific knowledge about the teaching-learning process that makes the most valuable contribution to decision-making and practice in higher institutions. Mwapachu (1995) as cited in Derebssa also argued that research is the fulcrum of academia and shown that research is the major ingredient that distinguishes universities from other institutions. Marew (1993) also discussed that people believe that what distinguishes higher education from secondary education is that its academic staff and students play a part in the advancement of knowledge itself by under taking research of different kinds.

Derebssa (2000) identified three major ways in which research becomes important to the staff of higher education institutions:

- (1) Research enhances the quality of instruction by resulting newness in updating content of lectures and practical work.
- (2) Engagement in research provides the instructors of a practical experience ensuring that the teachers are able to initiate and
- (3) supervise research by their undergraduate and/or postgraduate students as a partial fulfillment of their courses and their degrees;
- (4) Research is also the basis for promotion of higher education teachers from one academic rank to the next.

Above all, one of the principal objectives of establishing higher institutions is to improve the quality and quantity of research. From this point of view, currently; there is an agreement on the need for participation of teachers in research. Adane (2001) stated that one of the prominent elements in the profile of higher education teachers is that they should be researchers. He further noted that "Teachers in higher education are expected to generate and extend frontiers of knowledge through research and experimentation." (P. 9). It is also similarly shown in (Adane, 2000) Abdinasir (2000), Derebssa (2000), Taye (1993), and Tsegay (2000) that higher learning institutions/Universities are primarily responsible for research activities, and hence, the teachers who teach in these institutions are expected to do research.

Therefore, higher education teachers should engage themselves in research activities to advance their understanding of the real world in which they live, to solve the problems they encounter in the execution of their tasks, and to get promoted. Thus, teacher's participation in doing research can be taken as an important indicator of effectiveness in the education system.

2.4 STATUS OF RESEARCH IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

It has been well recognized that research is one of the primary functions of higher learning institutions. Currently, there is a growing need for integrating teaching and research in these institutions. Teshome (2004) stated that the society expects the higher education to play an active and significant role to economic growth, poverty reduction, developing democratic culture and good governance, improving national productivity, in addition to ensuring success in human development by producing competent and responsible citizens.

In describing the status of research in the pre-revolutionary period, that is before 1974, Yusuf (1986, 2-3) reported the following;

The number of qualified competent teachers was insignificant; there was a serious deficiency in the training of researchers (no more than one elementary course on research methodology was offered by few departments in Addis Ababa University). The Topics for research were arbitrarily chosen and were divorced from resolving problems in our objective reality. The very nature of research was unknown among the masses. Research activities were limited to the few institutions of higher education and to the few intellectuals who