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Interethnic relations among students of Jimma University, Oromiya, Ethiopia

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This study examines the nature of interethnic relations among students of Jimma University, Oromiya state, Ethiopia. It finds that the interethnic relation portrays both tension and agreement. More or less the relationships among students take ethnic lines. That is the relations are guided by nationalism and ‘Ethiopian Identity’. These two notions are a detour between students who strongly believe in a system that practically celebrates diversity based on equality and those who firmly advocate a centripetal identity, like one lingua franca, that unites all nations in Ethiopia. Similarly, interethnic relations among students are a reflection of the existing political system. It is where students of a certain ethnic group who are thought as not outspoken supporter of current political regime encounter negative relations from their counterparts. The negative relation often leads to dispute and corresponds with the university’s administrative allegation starting from academic dismissal, imprisonment and parole. Because the administrative measures are neither lawful nor explicit, the disagreement between plaintiffs and defendants would encourage retaliation. Furthermore, the university’s weakness for giving equal opportunities to all ethnic groups to promote their socio-cultural and political capitals is the source of contest. To this end, the study ostensibly concluded that, in the current students’ relations, it is hardly possible to dictate who relates to whom. Apparently, mistrust, tension and disagreement is a common feature of ethnic group relations. Thus, it begs for a sincere and audacious policy measures that promote harmonious relations between students of different ethnic groups based on freedom and equality. This makes the university an organization where specific goals are attained based on its own rules and regulations.

Key words: Interethnic relation, student, university.

INTRODUCTION

Given the enormous diversity found today in universities in Ethiopia, ethnic relations are much more complicated than they were just before. The situation of interethnic relation has been characterized by persistent turbulence, at least, in one of the higher learning institutions in any year. There were cases in which minor disputes between individuals escalate into a big fight involving students

aligned along ethnic lines. Ethnic based conflicts, if not worsened, have not changed for the better for some groups. Apparently, studies about ethnic relations in Ethiopian universities on ethnic relations have been overlooked compared to dozens of studies on ethnic relation at the main stream society. As a result, systematic and comprehensive knowledge is a dismal for

these groups. On the other hand, those previous studies have even relegated the role of the present day students of higher learning institutions to individual self-centeredness and are severely criticized for their total failure in promoting public cause. Driven by some kind of prejudice, the students waste their time and energy in trivial matters including but not limited to amplifying language and ethnic differences (Alemayehu, 2008; Abera, 2010).

The above argument, however, does not exult the existence of diversity of interests along ethnic lines and not make a clue for recommending solutions to foster relationships among students of different ethnic backgrounds. Thus, more studies are opted for substantiating the seemingly existing knowledge gap to explain the nature of social relations among ethnic groups and justify promoting system of tolerance rather than perching for façade-integration or Mekonen's (1969)¹ concept of 'fake nationalism'. To change it, he says,

we must build a genuine national state in which all nationalities participate equally in state affairs, [...] where every nationality is given equal opportunity to preserve and develop its language, its music, its history. [...] a state where no nation dominates another nation be it economically or culturally (Mekonen, 1969).

Accordingly, the very question one should ponder over and over again is if one does not look into the box how is diversity entertained? If not, how can centralization become ingested into the students? Undeniably, the university context for Ethiopia youths is increasingly multicultural and conflicts will be defined along ethnic lines (Abera, 2010). Thus, this study adds the knowledge about the coexistence of different ethnic groups even in general conflict settings. To this end, the study aimed primarily at exploring the nature of interethnic relation among Jimma University students, College of Social Sciences and Law. In a nutshell, the research has tried to answer the following questions: are there major barriers to interethnic relations among university students, how does the nature of interethnic interactions look like, are there mechanisms for promoting tolerance for cultural diversity?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study area, Jimma University is located in Jimma Zone of Oromiya National Regional state, 352 km Southwest of Finfine

¹He was an Arts undergraduate from Amhara Saiynt in Wello and one of the activists of student movement in 1960s in Addis Ababa University. He contrasted the 'true picture' of Ethiopia he describes, with the 'fake nationalism' of the ruling class, based on Amhara/Amhara-Tigray supremacy which, since 'culture is nothing more than the super-structure of an economic basis', reflects the economic exploitation of the south by the Amhara/Amhara-Tigray neftegn system. Neither the impoverishment of Amhara and Tigre peasants, nor, he argues, the elevation of individual assimilated southerners to positions of influence does anything to undermine the facts of this situation, albeit the result of 'historical accident'

(Addis Ababa). Jimma was the seat of the King of the Five Oromo Gibe States during the 19th century. Noted for its coffee production, the area contributes the largest share to national export. Jimma University adopted the city's name, Jimma. Among the six colleges of the university, the study delineated itself to students at the College of Social Sciences and Law with the belief that these are more sensitive to the topic than any other college students. The data were collected between January and June in 2010.

Before commencing the data collection the major activities were presenting our support letter from the Jimma University Senior Director for Research and Publication office to office of the Director for Student Affairs, briefing them about the purpose of our research and getting their approval to contact students. The students were selected using purposive sampling technique with the help of the student's union council. Accordingly, two groups (female and male) were considered from each ethnic group. Each group comprised 8-12 participants. An attempt has been made to maintain numerical equivalence among departments of Sociology and Social Work, History, and Heritage Management, Amharic, English languages, Afan Oromo, Oromo Folklore, Governance and Development and Geography and Environmental Studies.

Qualitative data collection methods namely focused group discussion and key informant interview were employed. While focus group discussions were conducted with students, key informant interviews were conducted with director of student affairs. Afan Oromo for Oromo students, Amharic for students from Amhara, Tigray and Wolayita and English for Somali had been used as a medium of communication based on the consent of the informants. After explaining the importance of the study, verbal consent was obtained from each individual participant. Verbatim transcriptions were made for all tape recorded FGDS and key informant interviews, and finally used for analysis. Some quotes that best explain the context of the study were identified, translated into the nearest English version and presented to give more insights into the perceptions and practices of intercultural communications. Added with primary data gathered from participants, secondary data were compiled from sources such as books, journals and articles. This study was purposefully delimited to those students coming from five federal states such as Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya, Somale, and Southern Nations Nationalities and People (Wolayita). The researchers believe that students from these regional states are expected to have similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds relatively for this study.

Theoretical grounds

Social science inquiry on ethnic and intergroup relations has been dominated by tenets of Gordon Allport's research. Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) has served as the basis for the study of intergroup relations since the mid-1950s. Allport cited evidence that asserts that when students of diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to work and get to know one another on equal footing, they become friends and find it more difficult to hold prejudices against one another (Slavin, 1991).

Although Allport's contact theory has been updated and expanded over the years (Cook, 1978; Hewstone and Brown, 1986), positive cross-ethnic relationships among students are an anomaly rather than the norm on many desegregated school campuses above the elementary school level. It was assumed after the Brown's decision that desegregation would improve relations between students of different ethnic backgrounds. Despite the efforts of educators, policy makers and researchers, however, youths from different backgrounds still have limited interactions in school settings (Romo and Falbo, 1996; Schofield, 1995).

The limited contact between students of diverse backgrounds fosters harsh stereotypes, and racial tensions persist (Crain et al., 1982; Oakes and Wells, 1995). Negative stereotyping is often used

to justify maintaining hostility, contempt, and resentment toward others (Lilli and Rehm, 1990). Unfortunately, research shows that children, rather than being taught how to value and celebrate diversity, are more apt to be taught that intolerance is an acceptable reaction to diversity (Schwartz, 1996), which can lay a foundation for racism in adulthood.

Ethnic relations can be defined as interactions among diverse ethnic groups (inter-ethnic) or within the same ethnic group (intra-ethnic). In this article, the focus is on inter-ethnic relations in higher education institutions. Polarisation or ethnic tension in a pluralistic society is becoming a political issue. Each ethnic group is protective of its own turf and privileges and therefore creates a "social border". This "social border" could lead to ethnic tension and conflicts. Past events in the former Ethiopia are a prime example of how centralization project of ethno-political supremacy could lead to perpetuated oppression and marginalization of many ethnic groups.

In the context of multiethnic Ethiopia, the wide spread armed struggle of 28 May, 1991 has had long lasting effects. Immediately after the event, the government took drastic measures to fortify ethnic identity and unity in diversity as a prominent and underlying principle in the newly entrenched federal system. Many scholars in the field argue that one of the characteristics of federalism is its aspiration and purpose to generate and maintain both unity and diversity simultaneously (Berhanu, 2007).

The measures taken include the introduction of new language and educational policies, such as recognising one's working language and establishing languages for regional school system. The government intends to use education as one of its tools not only for fostering the identity among diverse ethnic groups, but also creating tolerance. But almost two decades after the incident, ethnic relations among the main ethnic groups in Ethiopia still remain polarised at almost all levels and sectors.

This situation is admitted by scholars who state the strategy employed to solve ethnic polarisation have not yet succeeded in fostering the level of unity to which we aspire. It follows that ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is likely to remain a fragile experiment for some time to come "(Kymlicka, 2006). Asefa seems to share Kymlicka's concern when he describes, 'The Ethiopian Federal system stands at a crossroads. It has been able to contain one of the most devastating wars in Africa, but it has also added new dimensions to existing conflicts' (Assefa, 2006).

There was even a claim that ethnic polarisation is becoming more serious in Ethiopia society, especially among the new generation of university students (Tilahun, 2007; Aberra, 2010). In general, improving intergroup relations among diverse groups of students should be a high priority among educators. As universities become more diverse and destructive conflict and violence become more common in campuses, there is an increasing concern that universities should not become the battlegrounds for the next wave of ethnic unrest in this country. Thus, based upon the preceding theoretical background, this paper will present a critical analysis of ethnic relations among university students derived from an empirical study conducted at Jimma University.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Perspectives on cultural diversity: pluralism vs. unification

The heyday for promulgating the existence of cultural diversity in Ethiopian among students was the best known Ibsa Gutema²'s poetry 'Ityopyawi Man New?'

(Who is an Ethiopian?), in 1966. Following this, after continuous argument with Ibsa Gutema, Mekonen conferred that:

Ethiopia is not really one nation. It is made up of a dozen of nationalities, with their own languages, ways of dressing, history, social organization and territorial entity. And what else is a nation? Is it not made of a people with a particular tongue, particular ways of dressing, particular history, particular social and economic organizations? Then may I conclude that in Ethiopia there is the Oromo Nation, the Tigray Nation, the Amhara Nation, the Gurage Nation, the Sidama Nation, the Wolayita (italic our usage) Nation, the Adere Nation, and however much you may not like it the Somali Nation (Mekonen 1969 quoted in Vaughan, 2003).

This instance could take us to the views of Jimma University students towards cultural diversity which is the main concern of this section, and examining activities promoting diversity, which will be discussed later.

Ethiopia is ethnically diverse country. According to the 2007 population and housing census, there were about 80 ethnic groups, of which Oromo, Amahra, Somali, Tigreay, Sidama, and Wolayita constitute 34.5, 26.9, 6.2, 6.1 4 and 2.3%, respectively. Above all, the country's ethnic diversity is manifested in Jimma University; in fact, with varying degree. This diversity and/or its non-compliance create misunderstanding among students which can hamper the smooth relationship, teaching and learning processes on campus. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission (FDRE-PSC) (2008, December). Summary and statistical report of population and housing census: Population size by age and sex. UNFPA, Addis Ababa.

Insight into the diversity among Jimma University students would result in momentous and much needed changes in interethnic relations. All students theoretically viewed diversity as functional requirement. For the reason that the relation brings with them incredibly rich and different backgrounds and experiences that shape their interactions with others inside and outside the classroom. That was to say to learn effectively in such an environment, you will want to understand backgrounds and experiences your fellow students bring into campus and classroom and explore ways to foster an open and safe environment for all students.

On the contrary, there are situations in which diversity was not so practically implicated in university life. In fact, the present students' view towards cultural diversity is a reflection of the existed and existing systems. Our study found that in the faces of existed Ethiopian, ethnic stereotypes remained strong among some groups. Each of the groups had disparaging stories and sayings about the others that were discussed openly within members of a single ethnic group. These types of stereotypes were used for non-Amhara populations as instrument of disfavouring once identity and assimilated to Amhara

² He is an Oromo, who took key positions in students nationalist movement 1960. Later become the Ministry of Education during Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

culture and religion throughout the twentieth century. May be such prejudices die slowly; Oromo students feared and experienced that it has still occupied the minds of some students (from North Ethiopia).

Similarly, Somali students' narration has elaborated to what extent such prejudice is deepened and widened in their day to day life. They said the Amhara students do not consider Somali students as Ethiopian. Above all, Somalis have different dietary culture, communication style and clothing style. In terms of food habit they rarely dwell on 'Injera'³, but often their choices are Spaghetti, pasta... etc. In the eyes of Amhara, however, not eating 'Injera' defames being Ethiopian. A Somali student goes on to say that, *"I remember Amhara students who said to me; if you do not eat 'Injera' how come we accept you as Ethiopian"*. This is one of the few cases left unanswered since 1960s quest of Ibsa Gutama's poem concerning "who is an Ethiopian?" and this shackles the relation between students at large.

Guests and hosts: fear and reality

Before directly moving into analysis of this section, it is magnificent to scrutinize meaning of host and guest. Host and guest, in this study, are not a dichotomy, are not based on conventional meaning. It is either absence or presence of prior interaction or the quality and intensity of information that an ethnic group members have about others. Hosts refer to Jimma University and its surrounding Oromo population, whereas guests refer to those students coming from all regions but Oromiya and the Oromos in other regions.

Ethnic fear is the key cause for aloof interethnic relations. The sources of that fear, according to the students, must be found in the myth-symbol complex of the ethnic group—the members' beliefs and feelings about the other group. The guests (Amhara and Tigrean) argue that they have a retrospective fear about Jimma University in general and that of Oromo students on campus in particular. The students argue that "we" were inclined to dislike "them" because we had thought "them" aggressive and the more "we" disliked "them," the more aggressive "we" think "they" were.

This perspective naturally leads to an investigation of where prejudice originates. Students eventually said family, some senior students and written materials were the sources of information for holding prejudice. Perhaps, it is useful to address this issue with further research endeavor. According to the students the old days interethnic relations were often mistrustful, or discriminatory, and sometimes violent. In a daily discourse, the then stereotypes, mistrust, discrimination, and prejudice have still experienced students in one way or the other. Tilahun also stated that stereotypes have a role to play in exacerbating group tensions. He further noted, as a rule

"most stereotypes end up as negative labels placed on individuals simply because they are members of particular group. These stereotypes, especially the negative ones, do have a negative consequence in the communication environment of diverse groups" (2007).

More importantly, limited contact had existed among Oromo and Somali, on one hand, and Amhara and Tigre, on the other hand. In these groups, negative stereotyping is often used to justify maintaining hostility, contempt, and resentment toward each other. This shows that the limited contact between students of diverse backgrounds fosters harsh stereotypes, and racial tensions persist (Crain et al., 1982; Oakes and Wells, 1995). Needless to say, children, rather than being taught how to value and celebrate diversity, are more apt to be taught that intolerance is an acceptable reaction to diversity (Schwartz, 1996), which can lay a foundation for racism in adulthood. This is true for the Tigrean and Amhara whose parents have inculcated negative image into about Jimma (Oromo), before they joined the university.

In fact, according to them, their live experiences sometimes transgress their lived preconceived assumptions. For instance, in a focus group discussion, a Tigrean female student corroborates that:-

It is good to express what is in one's heart (inside). What we thought about Jimma is totally different from what we have got here. When we came here, we thought that something would happen.

At least, there was fear. There is difference in language. You could not communicate. There are students that came from different nations, nationalities and regions. To tell you the truth, I was told the Oromo do not like the Tigreans. I was afraid. But what is very interesting is, it has never been the same with what I was told before I came here.

Moreover, university life has created encouraging interethnic relations. Life teaches them how to manage their impression by putting their prior conception at back side. Somehow, this would pave the way for sharing experiences and avoiding ethnocentrism. A student has argued that:

I have observed many things that I did not know before, like where they live in a social harmony. People can live in the same position and share the same ideas although they have different cultural practices. So you know really when I was there, I could see the same Somali people that have the same language, same religion, same tradition which creates no diversification in everywhere you go. But when you come to Jimma you can see those people who are from far position, those who are speaking different languages and who are practicing different religions. So you know really these have changed many things that I used to believe (Somali, Male FGD).

The present study also reveals that students were more ethnocentric in their university stay than they were before. The contact hypothesis also implies that greater direct contact leads to smaller differences in attitudes between groups (Schalk-Soekar et al., 2004). The

³ traditional Ethiopian pancake made of teff

seemingly equivocal assumption of contact that promotes integration or leads to smaller difference was substantiated with discussion among Wolayita groups. A student made it clear that:

No one was ethnocentric before coming to this place. However, after coming here ethnocentrism has relatively been aggravated. Everyone remembers past history and is influenced by it. Some ethnic groups are at peace with others. But students from Oromo ethnic group only agree with those students from SNNP, Somali and few others. They blamed past history, which was submerged with ethnocentric ideology. They also influenced us to remember about the then history.

Conversely, competition for control over power, resistance to, or the creation and maintenance of, exploitative relations and other factors are the most cited reasons given by Oromo and Somali students that blurred positive ethnic contact. Nevertheless, many concur that certain conditions should characterize the contact in order to achieve positive effects (Antonio, 2001; Allport's, 1954). These include the equality of status of all participants, cooperation and the pursuit of common goals, and institutional support. It is also assumed that the effects of contact on attitude vary depending on the nature, quantity and quality of interethnic contact. The Somali student makes certain that:

Especially for the first time we suffer so much with language and communications. We Somali students consider ourselves out of information because most of the notices that are announced in a university are written in Amharic language. We cannot read Amharic even if we understand. So sometimes, we consider ourselves out of information. Therefore, our main problem is language problem. Sometimes in the classroom, we cannot understand what the teachers are explaining in Amharic language. We cannot understand; so I may point out that there is language problem.

Supposedly, discussions with Oromo students also allude to the above idea that:

For instance, most of us who speak Afan Oromo are from Oromiya region and we hardly speak Amharigna. Even in Oromiya, those who are from rural areas are less fluent in using Amharic. When speaking in Amharic with other students is a necessity, we attempt to use it. For instance, we may speak Amharic in dealings like conflict between students. Since we are not fluent, there are some sorts of criticism. If you are not fluent in Amharic you are considered as weak, or they say; are you a rural child? Or they say you would rather correct your Amharic. This behaviour is special with students coming from the Amhara.

Fields of ethnic relations and its pattern

There are many milieus in which students interact with

one another. Since it is not possible to capture the whole fields of relation, for curiosity relations at dormitory and classroom are considered. In dormitory, relationship in a relatively ethnically heterogeneous student is stuffed with suspicion, anxiety, frustration, misunderstandings, tension, and conflict. Communication barrier and the pre-conceived negative attitude have drastically traumatized relationship among students. As a result, students tend to be together with those who make them feel comfortable and who support or share their languages, values and norms. Thus, in terms of dormitory ethnic composition, homogeneity is not a rule but a preference. Sharing her observations one of the interviewees further said:

In our dorm, there is a lady who speaks Afan Oromo frequently. She cannot understand Amharic except in some cases. What you have said is good. So as you have said she interprets what is said in the wrong way in some occasion because of the language barrier or communication barrier. I and one of my dorm mates are Tigrean. We communicate in Tigrigna because we cannot communicate with Amharic easily. Other Tigrean friends also came to our dorm. This time, something not good is created inside them (Oromo). Are they insulting us? Are they saying something bad about us? When we speak good things, they have no good perception towards us. What I meant is even when, you speak good even with the language (Tigrigna), it is not thought (taken) as good. In case a problem happens, you cannot support each other (FGD, Female Tigre).

Similarly, a female participant from the Oromo focus group discussion put forward that:

If you share dormitory with students who only speak Amharic or Tigirgna and when you (Oromo) communicate with Afan Oromo to each other or play together, they suspect you. They think that you are discussing something wrong about them. In fact, this did not bring major conflict. However, it has led to sporadic conflict. Since there is suspicion and also think that something is discussed not in favour of them, conflict would be inevitable.

Conflict and tension apparently also crop up around dormitories where students are homogenous. It largely stems from identity contention in the form of culture as well as superiority complex. Such situations were more pronounced during freshman year; when a dormitory or a given building is occupied by a certain ethnic groups, it becomes more conducive for malevolence thinking to sprout. In such homogenous settings, group boundary is less open and members were viable to group think. Group think, in fact, occurs in a group where its members are preoccupied with an illusion of invulnerability. Thus, space, sharing of a dorm, is a proximate factor for fostering hostility.

Very recently, the list of students for dorm placement

had been completed before they joined university. This happened in the year 2010. Eventually, those who travelled with a given bus and from the same place could be assigned to the same dorm. By chance during this year most of freshman students were from Tigray. There were 28 dormitory rooms. Each room accommodated 32-33 students. So since these students were all together, there was an opportunity for cohesive group formation. And such condition has facilitated the isolation of those students from the rest ethnic groups who were living in other buildings. Consequently, there were disputes between the former one and other students who rove around their specific building to collect water or for other reasons.

It is often considered by teachers and dean of students that ethnic contact or heterogeneity was recognized for promoting tolerance. The most frequently used tool to do so was assigning students in their alphabetical order regardless of their preference for ethnic lines or place of origin. This strategy alone was not a good measure for increasing tolerance and reducing hostility. It is important to look into political cross cut for understanding interethnic relations in Ethiopia in historic context.

According to Oromo students, in the current political structure, the Tigreans behave and act politically superior. Political superiority and consequently feeling of being protected makes them tenaciously react to Oromo students in places (buildings or dorms) where they are relatively large in number. In most cases, the latter were subjected to intimidation and political allegation. An assertion from a Focus Group Discussion with Oromo students portrays that;

Here what I want to say is that; being homogenous in dormitory is not the sole cause for conflict. The fact is that during freshman in 2009, the building mentioned above was by chance occupied by students from the same region (Oromiya): Bale and Arsi. We were living together with students from West Oromiya. There was no single problem during that year. However, in 2010, the same building was totally occupied by students from the North (Tigreay). There were also few Oromo students around. During this year (2010), there existed regular conflicts or disagreements between Tigre and Oromo students around the building. Do you know, what a student said, 'if you cause anything to us, we will go soon to Mekelle University and we will do the same thing to your students there'.

Accordingly, one should bear in mind that the relation among all ethnic groups was not as worse as the relations among Oromo, Amhara and Tigre. This was one of the questions that all students pondered on again and again during the discussion. Why does conflict happens only between Oromo and Amhara or Oromo and Tigre? It is difficult to answer for all ethnic groups 'who associate with whom?'; as relations today are typically politics ceteris paribus, all participants unanimously confirmed that ethnic relations among other ethnic groups

were based on mutual and expressive consent. A student from Wolayita said that:-

There were historical agendas. Most of the time there existed problems between Amhara and Oromo or Oromo and Tigre. Personally, I approached the Oromo students to know the issue behind the conflict. They narrated to me about the past. They said to me that the Amhara (Naftegna (italic, my emphasis) humbled both you (Wolayita) and us. They (Oromo) actually left something in my mind. They told us about the mutilation of Oromo women's breast by 'Naftagna' (literally mean Amhara warriors) in the past. They also told me how they (neftegna) changed the name of Oromo.

Of course in order to explain the present state of relations between two or more social groups; it is useful to keep in mind the past history of their relations (Taylor and Moghandam, 1994). It is therefore, versatile to look briefly at its history to understand interethnic relations in Ethiopia in general and Jimma University students in particular. As such, this section tries to describe the historical and socio-political background of relations between ethnic groups, which is an integral part of the relations between students from different ethnic backgrounds at present scenario of higher education.

The empire-building process launched by the Abyssinian Kingdom in late 19th century against the autonomous states of southern, south western and south eastern parts of today's Ethiopia through relentless campaigns of conquest enables one to draw the nature of ethnic relations (Tibebu, 1995). The conquest led to the birth of an empire under Amhara ethnic hegemony, land appropriation from the indigenous peoples, political domination, cultural marginalization and economic exploitation of the subjected groups. Thus, the root of ethnic questions and nature of ethnic relation (author's emphasis) in the country is based on the creation of the empire and the subsequent dynamics of its evolution (Merera, 2003).

In coping with the politics of historic dominations, multiethnic society, ethnic and/or region-based government system was instituted after 1991. Though it was believed that harmonious interethnic relations were made possible through the sharing of political power, students argue that the emergence of ethnic-based government systems arguably sustains if not aggravates the existing ethnic tensions.

I believe that, even if the others do accept Oromo way of life and start to develop relationship, the Oromo never trust them. Because, there was injustice made to our people and no effort has been made to create closeness. Lack of trust has been developed because of historically deep-rooted hatred. It grew from there and hardly possible to forget it. The problem is a matter of fact produced at present. You question yourself about the existing situation of Oromo, Amhara and Tigre. If you pose this question for yourself, you remember past

events (Oromo FDG, Male).

Attempts were also made to explore the nature of students' relation and group formation for the purpose of carrying out assignment or term paper at class room level. Studies found that diversity found in classrooms is managed and built upon by using cooperative learning techniques (Slavin, 1995a). The use of such techniques improves not only academic achievement but also intergroup relations (Lopez-Reyna, 1997; Slavin, 1995a). Our study found that, in most classes where different ethnic groups are apparent and the ethnic mix in a given class is proportional, interethnic relation is rigid and group formation largely takes ethnic pattern. Proximity and language barrier are often used to justify differential preferences and contempt towards others.

Let me tell you about our own tribalistic attitude. When there is group assignment, we prefer members of the same ethnicity. Most of the time a Tigrean chooses a Tigrean and an Oromo prefers an Oromo. Specially, when we are told to form the groups by ourselves, most of the time we are in the same group. Let me speak (tell you the truth), we prefer members of our own ethnicity. There is tendency of inclination. As I have told you, we have no positive attitudes towards them too. We cannot say they are the only ones that are stereotyped towards us. We cannot also say that we are the only ones, because they do not approach us. We cannot say it is due to the fact that we do not approach them. Do you understand? We (Tigreans) have problem on our side (FGD, Tigre).

The facts that belongingness to an ethnic is often a basis for group formation, students whose ethnic groups are numerically minor or unable to create friendship relation are marginalized. Thus, minority students are assigned inferior status in the class room structure (that is, they are tracked into any groups). They may also experience social segregation that excludes them from meaningful interactions with members of the dominant group or minority groups different from their own.

With regard to group formation for assignment purpose, last year there was a time when I sobbed. In my class the majority of students were Oromo. But the Tigrean students were only two. We were told by teachers to form a group for doing assignment. When we wanted to join any group, it became occupied. Then we did not find any group to join. Though, I have attempted to inform teachers to assign a group themselves, their replies were "impossible". Actually, the more chance we have to join a group if it would be formed by the teachers themselves. We faced the problem I am telling you because we are small in number. If our number (Tigreans) was large we had not also given chance for others to join our group.

Language barrier, speaking others' language becomes

an impediment for students to actively interact with out-group members. Or else, students like any other human beings have innate drive of exercising their own languages.

During group assignment they (Oromo) only speak their own language. Since we (Tigrean) cannot understand their language, we hardly contribute. Normally, if we have interest to work with them, they do leave us aside. They (Oromo) prefer to work with their intimate friends, since they had little knowledge of speaking Amharic. This problem also exists among us. So the concept is that lack of understanding each other is the major problem (Tigrean Female, FDG).

You know really, I actually like to make friends with those who are from my region because you know; I really like to contact them because I am not good at speaking in Amharic language. So what I need always is to go with them and talk to them. But really, I have in the heart to go with those who are from different cultures because you can experience many things. You can learn many things that you didn't know before (Somali Group).

Though ethnicity and place of birth take predominance, competence and attitude of students sometimes play a role for formation of group to carry out assignment or term paper. The discussion with Tigrean female and Oromo male celebrated the preference of competence to ethnic affiliation. So long as the academic track record of a student is remarkable, they never mind their ethnic origin, but join them. A study also supported that increasing the academic achievement of students improves intergroup relations among students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Deering, 1989). One discussant elucidated the reason why he prefers competence to ethnic affiliation, when he says:

If we take assignment, it is not the person's ethnicity, religion and region that were emphasized. It is only the potential of a student or how he/she could make contribution. It is about how much this person can make us successful. He/she thinks that the evaluation result of a given assignment has a value, the value which is directly related to the student's course of life (Oromo, Male).

The experimental evidence on cooperative learning has generally supported the main tenets of contact theory (Allport, 1954). With only a few exceptions, this research has demonstrated that, when the conditions outlined by Allport are met in the classroom, students are more likely to have friends outside their own racial groups than they would in traditional classrooms, as measured by responses to such sociometric items as "Who are your best friends in this class?"

Relationships among ethnic groups in classroom are also affected by teachers and school structure. For

example, students explored teachers' practice in intentionally or unintentionally not assigning group during assignment. Thus, the system sustains negative images of particular groups and maintains their subordinate status.

Formation of friendship

The concept of friendship is complex and varies from culture to culture. Research showed that friendship involves mutual openness, trust, honesty, self-disclosure, caring and respect (Levy-Tossman et al., 2007; Prager, 1995; Paul and White, 1990). Friendship in this study was also similarly operationalized. It is to say that, students perceived friendship as the sincere involvement of an individual in the other person and a notion of without supremacy, long lasting care and affection. In fact, the aim of this section is not to test the degree of intimacy and duration of friendship. It rather deals with not only criteria for friendship formation but also role of mudguards in cross-ethnic group friendship formation.

Generally, there exists a constant basis for organizing ethnically related friendship. Factors that promote the formation of homogeneous friendship in Jimma University include region, language, and a preference for particular activities. Given the many forces operating against the formation of cross-ethnic friendships, it would seem that there was still interethnic friendship. Relatively, good relationships rather than strong ones have been created among various ethnic groups but among Oromo, Amhara and Tigre.

Except that we greet each other, there is no room to express our internal feeling. Even if we can develop positive feelings towards each other, we never discuss with each other about our idea in transparent way. Friendship is founded on ethnicity and proximity. This is normal for us and other ethnic groups. The reason is all people want to identify themselves with their own language. Moreover, concerning culture and religion, you want to share them with a person who has more experiences about them (Oromo, Female).

It would seem unlikely that contact would establish the trust and respect needed to build strong interethnic friendships. Otherwise, the limited contact between students of diverse backgrounds fosters harsh stereotypes, and racial tensions persist (Crain et al., 1982; Oakes and Wells, 1995).

Sometimes, interethnic friendship is also viable among some ethnic groups. Oromo students appear to suggest that opportunities to engage in relations with all ethnic groups are far more frequent than those with Amhara and Tigre students. Discussion with Wolayita students also made certain that, students from SNNP and smaller regions have good relationship with all ethnic groups. But, they claim that Oromo students would like to limit

their interaction with Amhara and Tigre. In fact, the study portrays that formation of friendship is not rigid among ethnic groups whose numbers are small. A student goes on to say that;

Most of the time there is problem between Amhara and Oromo or Oromo and Tigre. Personally, I approached the Oromo students to know the issue behind the conflict. They questioned me what Amhara people did to you (Wolayita) and us. They (Oromo) actually left something in my mind. They told us about the mutilation of the breast of Oromo women. They told me that the Amhara used to control political power. At those times holding superior power, they had tried to ban our culture and language. They also tried to assimilate us. They (Oromo) are also not happy with existing politics since they feel that the Tigreans are holding the upper hand in politics.

Oromo students complained of their disassociation from other ethnic groups and Vice versa. It was argued several times, however, that the Oromo do not open their group boundary. Closest friendship was possible only among Oromo students. Given this as reality, however, discussion with Oromo students revealed their emphasis is in individual behaviour as a criterion for friendship formation. One of the participants emphasised that:

Concerning friendship formation, keeping religion, ethnicity and regionalism constant, it still depends on the character that a person has. Let say if I met a fellow from Somali or SNNP, if he/she is rational there is no single reason that he would not be my friend. I do not care about his ethnic or religious back ground or any criterion that clusters people together. The question is, is the person rational? Is he/she open -minded? Does he/she think broadly or is his/her conduct attracting? Is he/she a person with whom you share your concern? Does he/she care for you? These are the issues we mostly consider (Oromo, Male).

Our study found there exists efforts for maintaining one's own identity either through in group identification or mutual out group relationships. Identity development for some ethnic groups extends beyond the personal examination of "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" It includes "Where do I belong as distinct ethnic groups?" Study shows that the identity development of people in ethnic groups follows in questioning and exploring both interpersonal questions and the ecological questioning of belonging (Anyon, 1980). Oromo students and Somali students confirmed friendship language has taken eternal place in their identity. An Oromo female said that;

In this Campus, I give much emphasis on how to develop my culture and language. Thus, I should build strong linkage with Oromo students. How can I dare speak others' language by giving up my own language? My language concerns me most both at present and in the

future. So there are few students who were interested to learn others' language. The rest ask themselves, 'Why do I need to learn others' language?' My own language is good in its own terms.

Ethnic group membership may also exclude members of certain groups from friendship. Clearly one of the difficulties of making friends among students is their differences. Many students indicated that students of other ethnic groups were closed-off and remained remote and distant and tended to stay together rather than engage with other students. One of the reasons for this is that often new students start university with their own cliques of friends and out group students may find it difficult to infiltrate these cliques and may feel that they are unwelcome. Another crucial difficulty that was highlighted was communication. Earlier it was mentioned that one of the benefits of making friends from your own cultural background is that there is an ease of communication, whereas it is difficult with other students, particularly those who speak Amharic as a second language.

Given the above mentioned general terms of friendship, the study also examined what interethnic friendship looked like in arena of opposite sexes which focused on a range of romantic relationships, and not just on marriage. More specifically, it examines dating and cohabiting unions. The study found that individuals who have an interethnic friendship for dating and cohabitation experience larger social distance to in-group members. Homogeneous networks may exert social pressure not to enter interethnic unions, and this pressure may be stronger as one progresses along the relationship continuum (from dating to cohabitation to marriage).

Partner choice and involvement in interethnic unions are two of the aspects. While the minority groups have preferred dating and cohabitation (Wolayita), the majority groups like Oromo did not favor it. A student in Wolayita said that *'I have started love affairs with an Oromo lady, but effectually I quitted since there was pressure by Oromo students'*. If an Oromo lady dates or cohabits with males of other ethnic groups, she would be ostracized in her group. She could not also sustain long lasting relation with other ethnic group. According to Oromo students mimic love affair is neither socially accepted nor long lasting.

In fact studies by Schoen and Weinick (1993), for example, showed that the pattern of partner choice among cohabiters differed from married individuals. In line with a so-called "looser bond"-perspective, results showed that cohabiters focus more on short-term and achieved characteristics and less on long-term and ascribed characteristics. These results are in line with the findings of Joyner and Kao (2005) who studied the prevalence of interracial unions among dating, cohabiting, and married couples. The study found that interethnic unions are more common among persons who date or cohabit than among married persons. In fact it

begs for research that would explain why making the transition to marriage is less likely for interethnic union, and why the increase in the formation of interethnic unions among young couples mainly concerns dating unions.

FACTORS INHIBITING STUDENTS' RELATIONS

Factors inhabiting interethnic relations could be enormous. Given that, the discourse of Nationalism, Political Identity and 'Ethiopian Identity'; language, public place and system of university administrative are a plane fact.

The discourse of nationalism and Ethiopia identity

Before getting into detail discussion of this section, let us operationalize what Nationalism and 'Ethiopian Identity' are meant according to this study and how these aspects are used by students in their daily discourse. Nationalism is about how a nation fulfills its need to be good, right and just. Ethiopian identity is about nullifying national or ethnic identity and championing a state with one language and holding one spirit.

With this two basic categorization, the study found that Oromo and Somali students strongly claim to maintain their ethnic identity. These groups are just about identified as 'narrow nationalist' in the views of those who exercise 'Ethiopian Identity'. More importantly, the Oromo students' attachment to nationalism, or 'narrow nationalist' would be ostensibly seen later in this section, as this issue has been harnessing literatures.

Literature on ethnic identity has visualized that individuals with a stronger identification with their own group are usually assumed to have a weaker identification with other group. Identifications with own and other cultures are treated as mutually exclusive. This tendency has created nationalism and the notion of nation. This has usually been studied in societies where a majority and a minority culture coexists. As said before, strong sense of ethnic identity is shared by Oromo and Somali. An Oromo student emphasized that;

Having good attitude is a criterion for creating interethnic relations. Does he/she have good attitude? Is he/she participatory? These are the criteria we used to form relationship on campus or for doing assignment. But there are still bad things and attitude that prohibit you to make relations. There are students (from Amhara region) who have been saying the then slogan of "Uniform language, uniform religion, and uniform nation." The existence of this idea has still hindered our interactions.

The study found that most Amhara students are not supportive of ethnic identity rather than 'Ethiopian Identity'. In fact, as cited in Debelo (2007), there are many scholars who argue that "Amhara" is not a defined

ethnic entity; rather it is an elusive concept, which sometimes refers to all speakers of Amharic language (Aseffa 1996; Woldesellasiye, 2001; Teka, 1998). And also, Clapham (1988) writing about the ethnic identity of the Amhara suggested that 'being Amhara is much more a matter of how one behaves than who one's parents were...'. A study conducted at Bahirdar University in Ethiopia found that,

"It is widely observable that extremist Amhara students tend to uphold the belief that national oppressions were non-existent in Ethiopian history. There is also a deliberate attempt to paint a rosy picture, that there has been absolute unity in Ethiopia, that nationalities have been living together in love, with no grudge" (Anteneh, 2012).

Moreover, a focus group discussion with Wolayita students conferred that being Ethiopia is transcending ethnic and other identities. One of the participants for instance commented that speaking Amharic is a rule. And he denounced the Oromo students for not using Amharic in their daily life. In fact, literatures of Marti and Zenou (2009) consider that ethnic minorities (see census data of 2007 indicated in this article) either remain persistent and loyal to their inherited ethnicity or assimilate the ethnic environment of the majority group (here majority entails being in political status). The discussion showed that self-identification has been promoted after their exposure to Oromo students:

After the Oromo students told me that they preferred their own distinct identity, I also come to forget about being Ethiopia. They have influenced me to hate the sense of being Ethiopia. There is such kind of dilemma.

The most important tools for the development of culture identity is undoubtedly language. It can be taken either as a devise for interethnic relations or a barrier. The latter is explained by two reasons. First lack of readiness to use others' language prevents someone from earnest relations with others. Second, since language is a source of ethnic identity, a strong sense of developing one's own language has also curtailed the relations. In simply terms, interethnic relations could be inhibited due to students' difficulty of understanding another languages, on one hand, and lack of motivation to learn and speak as well as disdaining others' languages, on the other hand. When language is taken as a barrier for ethnic relation the assertion is that:

If I want tell her what I need to tell her, she cannot speak (communicate) with Tigrigna. If she speaks in Afan Oromo, I don't listen to her. If I speak in Tigrigna, she does not listen to me. Due to language barrier, it is difficult to communicate. Generally, I am happy that I came and see Jimma (Tigire Female, FDG).

On the one hand, the existence of discriminating others language but promoting only one's own language and identity have a lethal issue for some students to prop up ethnic relations. Particularly, the relation between Oromo and Amhara students characterises domination and counter domination. The former still believe that Amharic is the dominant and hegemonic language and speaking the language is being a criterion to be an Ethiopian. Whereas, the latter defended that Afan Oromo is their cradle of identity and would have been prompted more than Amharic. On the other hand, study shows that "especially, due to the inculcation of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Oromo nationalist students consider speaking any language other than Afan Oromo as a betrayal of their cause" (Anteneh, 2012).

However, according to our study, Oromo students are not only those labelled "Nationalist"; Anteneh (2012) argues that had it not been the historical assemblage that banned Afan Oromo and the current petite support for its development, taking the numbers of Afan Oromo speakers, it should have been one of the national languages of Ethiopia. The continued use of Amharic language as language of federal government does not advance ethnic harmony in Ethiopia. In line with the view, an Oromo female bitterly contested that;

there exists disdaining one another very much. for instance, if i cannot speak amharic, they say that 'how such a beautifully lady fail to speak amharic? oh she cannot speak amharic! how could it be? they ridicule that a beautiful lady does not speak afan oromo. they think that people who speak afan oromo are inferior. they leave behind deep rooted feeling of disdain. so the oromo students have been wounded by this issue and they have no motivation to use others' language (oromo female, fgd).

The study shows that the presence of many Afan Oromo speaking students and their sense of identity as Oromo reduced their perceived need to speak Amharic. And to reverse the problem some participants from Amhara, and many Tigreans suggested the incorporation of Afan Oromo course in all schools starting from primary school. But, quite few of them hesitated that introducing Afan Oromo in schools other than Oromiya region creates a loop hole for other ethnic groups who similarly want to do so. The latter categories were viewed as hatred of diversity as:

As known, do you think that the criticisms we (Oromo) are regionalists from the Tigire and Amhara perspective made us to associate with them? No, never! As it was said, when the Qubee⁴ started to develop in 1992, there was a saying ' Black frenji'. This attitude has extended to the present. In such condition how is it possible to make relation? The reason is that let alone being a regional

⁴ Oromo adopted Latin Alphabets ABCD

language, Afan Oromo is greater than the rank of Amharic taking the 3rd or 4th rank of spoken languages in Africa as historical evidences confirmed. This is one thing that hinders our close relation (Oromo Male, FDG). Most Somalis do not speak Amharic. Even if they try they speak the broken Amharic language. Due to this reason, most other students did not respect or consider Somali students as normal Ethiopian citizens. If we say we are Ethiopian citizens, they do not trust us as Ethiopian citizens because we do not speak Amharic perfectly. They do not consider us as good citizen; this is one of the most problems I have observed when I came to Jimma University (FGD, Somali Male).

As we look and reiterate from the above discussion, among Oromo students there exists continuing vitality of national identification along ethnic line. For them the endpoint of Ethiopian integration has always remained ambiguous. They realised that the Ethiopian project during 1991 was not on the radar screens of Oromo people's expectation for those who wield 'political Identity'. Apparently, like in 1960s there is the continuing vigour of national interest and aspiration. The most important question here is not what Oromo nationalism is but how it came into being. And who owns the Ethiopia nation-state.

The literature on national identities tends to distinguish two ideal types of nationalism, civic and ethnic (Brubaker, 1992; Eisentstadt and Geisen, 1995; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010). The former is based on willingness to accept particular legal, political and social system. While, ethnic nationalism requires that membership in a dominant ethnic or racial groups is the basis for national membership.

The Oromo students questioned that the present view of Oromo nationalism should not be seen as a timely creation. And neither overwhelmingly relegated to separatism nor as problems and limits to a decreasing political stability in Ethiopia. Rather, it is a historical process for maintaining the existed state. Moreover, the basic enquiry of nationalism, according to them, is protecting the destiny of Oromo social being or society. Their opinion is that, in rhetoric concession of 'separatism', Oromo nationalism should not be considered as a shackle for Ethiopian stability. But a due course of homework is urged for reconciliation of the former thinking and the latter reality.

Public place

Association is the most frequently mentioned reasons for temporary disputes which sometimes escalated into violent conflict along ethnic lines. TVs room, dormitory and entertainment places are the proximate causes of student's disagreement.

TV room dispute is connected to interest maximization. Students prefer one channel to the other. For instance,

Oromo students to a larger extent favour Oromiya Television channel. And other students prefer Ethiopian Television and quite others, soccer. Given that a single TV was made to broadcast different but overlapping languages, competition over channels among students is inevitable. It is this variation in interest that facilitates disagreement amongst these groups of students. Though conflict over TV channel choice is perennial at Jimma University, the administration has not taken sound preventive measure. Instead of finding out alternative solutions, like arranging different programs in different rooms, dismissal of students who would fight each other over their choice was more apparent. Particularly, Oromo students regrettably contested that the right to use Oromiya Television channel has not been respected. Anyone, who claims this and other similar rights, would be labelled as 'OLF' and 'separationists'.

Studies also substantiated Oromo students' claim that in many schools, cross-ethnic interaction between students is superficial and competitive (Slavin, 1995a). Outside the classroom, students compete for limited positions on athletic teams, newspaper staffs, and student governments-organizations that are oftentimes politically identifiable and fail to provide opportunities for positive cross-ethnic interactions. Specifically, Oromo students worried about the right to respect their culture. Attempt of this kind would lead to imprisonment and academic dismissal. To this effect, they pondered again and again why claim of Oromo's right has been translated into political consumption.

Another space where disagreement crop up is mini stadium. It is a place for non-academic relations between students enrolled in the main campus. Working together with students' dean office and students, the students' union is uniquely positioned to create a vision of diversity that fosters educational excellence. It organises a variety of activities and events, ranging from sports tournaments and festival celebrations aim at (in principle) promoting and preserving the cultural values and historical heritages of diverse nations.

The study, however, found the Cultural, History and Language Development through the students' club underrepresented diversity. The club does not support the needs of historically underrepresented students, especially students of Oromo, ethnic groups from south, Somali and Tigre. One of Oromo students goes on to say that, 'the students' club does not contribute a crucial role in discovering and teaching the culture, history and language of the Oromo to other nations, nationalities and peoples'. And the underrepresentation of Oromo culture during students' event is, in fact, one of the factors that leads to dispute. In line with this a student has argued that:

During any program or entrainment there are tendency to display more songs in Amharic or Tigrigna. But this does mean that there are no songs in Afan Oromo. Rather, it is often underrepresented. After long waiting, when they

(Oromo students) recognised that organizers would not include more or hold back Oromo songs from the program, they start to sing 'Hayyesse'⁵. This is normally revenge/ copying mechanism to let the organizers that they would invite Oromo songs".

Thus, it was blamed that, the club failed to create opportunities for the entire campus community to engage with interethnic and intersectional discourses on diversity and develop critical thinking skills that are crucial for the educational experience of all students.

University administration

One critical function of the higher education learning environment is to introduce students to complex and diverse perspectives and relationships (Gurin et al., 2002). Langer's (1978) concept of a conscious mode of thought has been widely used as the theoretical ground where active thinking will develop new ideas and ways of processing information. Evidently, when conscious modes of thought are encouraged through complex social structures, individuals interact with unfamiliar people, encounter people who hold different expectations and beliefs, and therefore begin to think and behave in new ways. As a result, the disequilibrium created through uncomfortable, new, or uncertain social environments may generate students' intellectual engagement and cognitive growth. Thus, the benefits of conscious modes of thought and complex social structures are enhanced when ethnic diversity exists and universities create opportunities for diverse students to interact and learn from each other in and out of the classroom.

The main point here is to recapitulate the university's administration role in creating these opportunities. The university structure in this paper refers to the administrative system that governs what students do or should not do. The system could prevent and control conflict among students. Or else it takes corrective measures for "wrong doers".

Nonetheless, students argued that the existing structure is not amicable for preventing a social space that causes conflict between ethnic groups. Among other, loyalty to the existing ruling party and its legacy has tempted the administrative bodies to favour a given ethnic group at the expense of others. Perhaps, this situation has tested the determination of decision makers to take precautionary and post conflict measures towards those parties involved in conflict. Needless to say, Oromo students are always in red corridor. A female Oromo student goes on to say that "Our (Oromo) voice for our right is often substituted for political agenda".

In the abhorrent interethnic relations, students contested that disciplinary measures were taken for unrealistic reasons. In such situations, innocent students are

allegedly detained and academically dismissed. Notwithstanding this, the measures taken against the so called 'wrong doers' is often disguised. It, thus, is neither lawful nor educative for the rest of students. Consequently, suspicion and vengeance between the ethnic groups had led to quarrel that became viscous.

Conclusion

With the Ethiopian reformation after 1991, the Old imperial and military order to a federal is a step towards promoting ethnic nations; their relation is still bounded with tension. Interethnic group relations are considered among students as an important indicator of the erosion of social barriers in Jimma University. However, prompting diversity in real terms has not been celebrated among most of the major ethnic groups like Oromo and Somali, on the one hand and Amhara and Tigire, on the other hand. The quest for nationalism and lack of cultural understanding for a shared glorious past is a detour line for the nationalist and those who appreciate "Ethiopian Identity". For example, students enjoy more mutual understanding with their respective ethnic groups than with other students in a dorm, class and outside campus. In all these settings, all students never share similar taste for music, food and or literature. The attitude of students do not coincide with services (such as TV channel, Mass media, dorm, music and corrective mechanisms) provided by university.

There exists tacit understanding about the existence of national oppression in the past. But the need for a change in the ideological foundation is lagging behind. This has an implication for those students who are subjected to the past ethnic domination and eventually would like to pursue the real representation in Ethiopia. Real representation here entails equality of all students to opportunities and before the law. Those students who do not affiliate with the university administration and by extension to the government in power have also been subjected to intimidation and penalty for any tension or conflict happening between ethnic groups. This implicit and unlawful corrective mechanism makes conflict more vicious.

In general, a lot still remains to be done to improve interethnic relations among university students in Ethiopia. There is an urgent need for cherishing the notion multiculturalism among students coming from different ethnic backgrounds; there should be a continuous orientation that ensures the diversity of students. This includes not only the incorporation of multicultural course in curriculum but also prompting services that encapsulate the interest of all ethnic groups.

Regarding allocations of dormitories, for instance, the findings of this study found the allocation is being completed before students join the university. Students of the same department or college whose names appear in alphabetical order are assigned to a given dorm. The

⁵ A popular Song among the Oromo

project was to increase diversity in a dorm. The project failed when the Ministry of Education placed students from all regions on disproportional basis. On the contrary, the most dormitories were inhabited by students coming from the same region during the study period than ever before.

In addition, the study also exposed the failure to include Afan Oromo as common course in primary schools (in Amhara and Tigray regions). It was affirmed that learning the language not only fosters interethnic communication but also widens the chance to get jobs in different working language.

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