

EDITORIAL

**LINKING RESEARCH WITH COMMUNITY SERVICES.
WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES?**

Yigzaw Kebede Gete

In addition to teaching and doing other things, higher education institutions in Ethiopia have the responsibility of undertaking research and providing community services in national and local priority areas (1). With these responsibilities the number of higher education institutions in Ethiopia has significantly increased in the past two decades. Since conducting and publishing research is one of the criteria for promotions of academic staff (2, 3), instructors are conducting research of different types and publish them in reputable journals. The question here is can we go beyond publishing?

Instructors in higher education institutions have the opportunity to link teaching, research and community services in an organized manner. In the field of health, for instance, there is evidence that the research teachers conduct not only helps them to teach effectively but also to solve community health problems at the same time (4). Ideally, the local communities need to be involved in research from the inception through to the different stages, but I am not sure what percentages of researchers are involving the local people.

Publishing research work in international journals is a common practice. On top of that, researchers present their findings at big scientific conferences. This helps to communicate findings mainly to the scientific community, but whether the local people have access to such international journals and big conferences is again questionable in developing countries like Ethiopia. For research output to solve the health problems of the local community, other mechanisms of disseminating findings need to be considered. Such mechanisms may include presenting the findings at meetings or conferences where the local people have the opportunity to participate. The role of local journals as means of disseminating research findings need not be underemphasized. The hard copies of the local journals can be made available to local people in sufficient copies which is not usually the case with international journals. The ultimate aim of conducting health research is to solve health problems of especially the local people. Hence, targeting only the international journals may not be always right. In addition, researchers can prepare a simple report in local languages which can be distributed to the local people.

Beyond disseminating findings, university instructors can involve themselves in translating their research findings into action during community service activities (4). We hear some government officials saying in public that some of the researches conducted by local researchers are not important to solve the problems of the society. One of their reasons for saying this could be that they haven't seen research findings applied to solve the problems of the community from which the data was collected. Linking research with community service I think significantly improves the bond between researchers and the community. All of the above reflections are my personal observations as a researcher and teacher which may be supported by evidence in the future.

REFERENCES

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