

Part I

Context

History and Political Economy of Ethiopian Higher Education

A clear understanding of the evolution of higher education (HE) equity policy necessitates an account of the history and political economy of the system. An overview of historical development of the system aims to put present challenges and prospects of Ethiopian HE in perspective. Against the background of the traditional education system, the history of HE in Ethiopia is presented in four stages. The political in the ‘political economy of HE development’ underscores policy issue origins. It is about who sets the reform agenda, how the power relations in the policy space shape the framing of the policy problem, and how the agents influence the implementation of the changes in question. In particular, a political perspective in the analysis of HE development in Ethiopia highlights the role of donors as policy actors and the relative importance of national political will in translating global agenda into local realities. The focus is on the framers and implementers of the reform agenda. Finally, the economic dimension of the recent trend of HE development in Ethiopia is expressed in the prominence of the knowledge-driven development agenda. The chapters in this first part of the book set the context for the analysis that follows in the remaining parts. The two chapters respectively cover historical development, and reform of HE in Ethiopia. Chapter 2 presents a brief history of the development of Ethiopian HE and summarizes some of the enduring challenges the system has faced since its inception. Chapter 3 deals with the political economy of HE reform in Ethiopia. Specifically, it highlights the role of the World Bank as a key actor in the national policy space and maps key agenda imposed and endorsed in the process.