

Education in Ethiopia: Past, Present and Future Prospects

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Abstract

As Ethiopians embark on a massive effort to bolster its educational system, great opportunities and significant challenges will shape the course of policy and planning for the future. To understand modern Ethiopia's needs and the context of educational reform, one must understand the history of education in the country. This article reviews the past one hundred years of education in Ethiopia with emphasis on its historical trends and patterns. It concludes with recommendations for current efforts to improve education in the country.

Introduction

Located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is a country of over 91 million people. Forty four percent of the population is under the age of fifteen years (CIA World Factbook, 2012). Unlike most other African countries, Ethiopia did not experience significant colonization (except for a brief Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941). According to a World Bank report, Ethiopia's stability and peace following the border wars with Eritrea have yielded "a greater potential . . .to channel more of the country's resources, both material and intellectual, into basic services that directly affect the welfare of the population" (World Bank, 2005, 1). Among the services which the Ethiopian government has dedicated its resources is education.

Following the establishment of the new government in 1994 after rebel forces overthrew the socialist Derg regime in 1991, Ethiopians witnessed a dramatic increase in school enrollment. For example, in 1990/91, approximately 2.8 million children were enrolled in primary school (grades 1-8), and by 2003-2004, that number had increased to over 9.3 million students (World Bank, 2005). However, the road to progress has been uneven, as the country faces several challenges in her efforts to improve the educational system.

The Beginning of Modern Education

Attempting to bring change from traditional models of education to the modern and secular forms was not a simple task for previous secular rulers, as there were significant obstacles (Birhanu and Demeke, 1995). This was due in part to the conservative attitude of church leaders (Popes from the Egyptian Coptic Church) and the noblemen. A modest attempt was made by Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) to open the first school in his palace (Teshome, 1979: 28; Pankhrust, 1968: 676). It was primarily for the sons of the nobility, and the fundamental principle that dictated the development of its curriculum was political interest. The education policy makers (the Emperor, aristocracy and foreign advisors) were interested in the prevailing international order, modernizing Ethiopia and the training of interpreters for international

communication (Zewdie, 2000: 105). In this respect, the aims of education were to contribute to maintaining Ethiopia's sovereignty.

Emperor Menelik II strongly believed that the building of Ethiopia as a modern state, as well as the strengthening of existing political power, necessitated the introduction of modern education. It was believed that the country's independence could be linked to an educated populace that was fluent in foreign languages. Consequently, the curriculum included such languages as French, Italian, English, Arabic and Amharic (Birhanu and Demeke, 1995).

Observing the shortcomings of traditional schools to meet the demands of the international political atmosphere, and feeling a need to advance the nation, Menelik II opened the first modern school at Addis Ababa in 1908 (Teshome, 1979: 28; Pankhurst, 1968: 676). It was opened with the objective of educating the young to ensure peace in the country, reconstructing the country, and enabling Ethiopia to exist as a great nation among the comity of nations (Pankhurst, 1976). It was also aimed at producing administrators, interpreters and technicians.

Shortly after establishing the school, the Emperor became aware of its inadequacies and decided to import teachers from abroad. However, this idea was strongly resisted by the church, particularly by Abune Matewos, a church leader who was recruited from the Egyptian Coptic church. The reasons for the opposition of the church to recruiting foreign teachers remain unclear till date. Perhaps, it was based on fears that foreigners might corrupt the church's traditions.

To overcome this opposition from Matewos, the Emperor adopted the policy of recruiting teachers from Egypt. In 1906, ten Egyptian teachers were appointed to the newly established schools in different parts of the country (Seyoum, 1996). Following the establishment of that first school in the capital, attempts were made by the government, foreign communities and missionaries to establish modern schools across the country. For instance, a French community school was opened in the capital in 1908 and another one by Alliance Francaise in 1912. This period was also known for the expansion of non-governmental schools in the country. Between 1906 and 1935, one hundred private schools were opened (Bender, 1976).

Female education, however, was in a very poor state. Many assumed that "an educated woman would not look after the house; and the husband of the educated woman cannot live long" (Bender, 1976: 103). With such beliefs, it was difficult for the community at large to send their daughters to school. It could thus be inferred that during the reign of Menelik II, the role of females was relegated to child-rearing and household chores. As a result, women were disadvantaged as regards equal opportunity in education.

Between 1908 and 1935, the aim of education was to master different languages. As a result, the curriculum was mostly composed of such language courses as French, Italian, Geez, Arabic and Amharic. Additionally, some courses in religion, mathematics, law and calligraphy were offered (Adane, 1993). Although Menelik II valued vocational curricula and promoted the growth and development of science and technology, a stronger emphasis was placed on languages (Pankhurst, 1974).

The Ethiopian education system and its curricular components (objectives of education, contents or courses to be taught, organization of a school and its management, and the method of

evaluation) were primarily influenced by the French education system. The selection and organization of content were determined by the headmasters and teachers from France, and French was used in Ethiopia as medium of instruction up to 1935.

The application of French methods to Ethiopian students presented some challenges. For instance, the assessment methods used during this period were alien to the Ethiopians. The monarchy had depended on a non-native-Ethiopian curriculum which did not consider local peculiarities. For example, students in most schools were required to sit for the French Government Examination of Competence (Zewdie, 2000: 114). Consequently, the involvement of foreigners (particularly the significant numbers of French and Egyptian advisors) largely affected the selection and organization of the curriculum, which did not necessarily address the needs and interests of the Ethiopian people.

Though criticized for being conservative and devoting much of her time to religious purposes, Empress Zewditu Menelik (the daughter and immediate successor of Emperor Menelik II) is credited for launching universal education to all school-age children (identified by the Empress as ages 7-21) in the Amharic language. Her education proclamation in 1929 stated:

All those who do not send their sons and daughters to school so that they can learn writing and reading skills which are necessary to identify the good and evils and develop fear of God and the king, will be punished 50 Birr. The money solicited from punishment will be given to the church for the feeding and clothing of the poor. . . All God fathers should advice their religious followersto send their children to school and if they refuse to do so they have to report to local authorities as they have violated the proclamation. . .All church leaders in the rural areas apart from their religious preaching should teach reading and writing (Ayalew, 2000; 159)

Empress Zewditu also understood the relevance of vocational education, which enabled youngsters to secure money for livelihood. To this point the proclamation stated, "...after learning writing and reading to secure money for his life, the child has to learn one of the handicrafts available in our country" (Ayalew, 2000; 159). This idea was radical at the time, as leatherwork, smithing and clay making were considered low caste jobs.

Though the Empress promoted her vision to address equity in education through universal primary education to all children in the country, there were many obstacles. There were not enough schools throughout the country to accommodate all school-age children. Moreover, the implementation of universal primary education required availability of educational materials and trained professionals both in quantity and quality as teachers, school administrators, supervisors, curriculum planners, etc. Because of these pressing problems, it has, until recently, been difficult to realize universal primary education for all school age children in the country.

Another important event in the expansion of modern education was the advent of the late Emperor Haile Selassie I, as Regent and Heir to the throne in 1916. He was a graduate of the first school established in Menelik II's palace. He was credited for establishing the first printing press which greatly helped the expansion of modern education through well-organized textbooks, newspapers and other educational materials and works. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's educational

system experienced some challenges, as the high cost of printing caused shortage of books, references, textbooks and other educational materials.

Emperor Haile Selassie opened a new school in his name and empowered the different land lords (the notable owners of lands) to do the same in various provinces of the country. Consequently, the aristocracy expanded modern schools in different parts of the country. The schools were typically named after those who established them to show their political influences. Teferi Mekonen School focused on the teaching of religion, mathematics, law and calligraphy as a continuation of Menelik II School. It was also during this period that the first school for girls was established by Empress Menen in 1931. This seems to be the first attempt to practice gender equity in education by giving the girls an equal educational opportunity. The education system from its inception until the occupation by Italian Fascists (1935) was criticized for being “too European” and unable to respond to the actual needs of Ethiopian society. Plagued by a dearth of materials, alien curriculum and educational content, and untrained and inefficient teachers, the educational system was not expected to succeed (Yigzaw, 2005).

The Ethiopian curriculum was also criticized for the lack of emphasis on vocational education. Not until the 1930s, few schools prepared pupils for technical and professional works through courses related to production. One of such schools was Lycee Haile Selassie, which offered courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry, civil engineering, veterinary science, and modern languages. Another modern school was Menen Girls’ School, which offered courses in dressmaking, drawing, home management and physical training. After colonization, many African leaders and authorities perceived a need for competent wives skilled in modern house management needed to welcome their European visitors at home. Similarly, at the outset, Menen School focused on providing courses that train girls to be good wives. Later, this school included courses in science and mathematics.

The schools also have a leadership challenge. While policy makers were made up of the aristocrats, emperor and foreign advisors, there were no supervisors and coordinators at the district level who were responsible for looking after the schools and maintaining channels of communication between the schools and decision makers. Middle-tier academic management individuals had to be brought in from elsewhere, most of whom were Egyptians and French. For example, Egyptians headed Menelik II School, whereas Teferi Mekonen School (1925) and the Menen School (1931) had a French headmaster and a French headmistress respectively. In general, this period (1908-1935) is characterized by French dominance, as teachers and headmasters were not only French, examinations were also conducted in French. Therefore, it is referred to as the French Period.

The efforts of the two successive governments to expand modern education in Ethiopia, hoped by many to be the basis for the country’s development, were disrupted by the Italian Occupation. According to Seyoum, “the occupation was short lived; however, it did a lot of harm” (1996:3). Indeed, a pronounced bottleneck for the growth of education was created by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia from 1935 to 1941. The devastating war of aggression and its consequences resulted in a significant and lasting negative effect on the growth and development of education.

During the Italian occupation, schools were either closed or used for military camps and the educated few were either eliminated or joined the guerrilla fighters of the country (Tekeste,

1990). The only school that was opened in the country was that of the Catholic Mission, which emphasized religion, the Italian language and subservience to the Mussolini regime. Notable improvement of the education system was lacking in this period. The major aim of education was to create citizens that would be loyal to Italy. The content of education focused on reading, writing and simple arithmetic, semi-vocational skill training and internalizing fascist values to promote loyalty to the regime. Moreover, they suggested that local administration languages (Amharic, Oromipha, and Tigrigna) replace the unified national languages of Ethiopia, which were used for classroom instruction. This decision was not based on the pedagogical principle that instruction in one's mother tongue can help children understand and learn faster and relate what is taught in schools with their immediate environment, but rather, with the intention to create disunity among the various ethnic groups in the country (Adane, 1993).

During the occupation, Ethiopian teachers who knew the local languages were employed under the supervision of priests and nuns, with an emphasis on the socialization of the Italian ideology. However, in practice, all instructions in government-operated schools were primarily in Italian. Textbooks were written in Italian and focused on Italian history. Policies opposed equal opportunity for schooling and implemented rigid discrimination in the schools, with different schools used for Italians and Ethiopians. Education for Ethiopian nationals was restricted up to grade 4, while Italians were provided schooling similar to students of their home country. During this period, there was neither uniform and standardized curriculum nor a standardized assessment method in the schools.

Reconstruction, (1941-1955)

The liberation of the country in 1941 was accompanied by a period of reconstruction that lasted to the mid-fifties. Like that of the previous governments, the government of this period also believed that the country's independence could be assured through its educated citizens. As a result, the government encouraged the development of education. In doing so, the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts was established in 1942, and the effort to modernize education started all over the country again. Consequently, schools started blossoming in some of the urban centres of the country (Seyoum, 1996).

Great Britain, which assisted Ethiopia in becoming liberated from Italian aggression, was interested in the education system of Ethiopia. Accordingly, Mr. E.R.J. Hussey, who had wide experience in Africa, was appointed as an Advisor in the Ministry of Education in 1942. From 1942 to 1954 the Ethiopian education system was highly influenced by the British advisors. These advisors greatly influenced the structure of Ethiopian education, the medium of instruction, and the evaluation system (Zewdie, 2000).

Once again, this education system did not reflect the cultural, social and economic situation of the country, because it was dominated by the British education system. Therefore, this was known as the period of British domination. An expatriate educator at that time observed that, "there was nothing Ethiopian in the classroom except the children" (Seyoum, 1996:4). Consequently, it was difficult for the education system to respond to the needs and problems of the society.

As indicated previously, the fundamental principle which directed the development and implementation of school curriculum until 1952 was the political agenda of the aristocracy and

their foreign advisors (Zewdie, 2000). After 1953, reforms regarding the involvement and participation of educated Ethiopians were put in place. Human resource development was given due attention in this period, which led to the involvement of Ethiopians in areas ranging from policymaking to classroom practice.

The educational expansion was primarily aimed at producing a workforce that could serve in government, eventually replacing expatriates with native personnel (Tekeste, 1990). It was important to produce educated people who could fill the modern administration system alongside those who were already there and who had survived the Italian war of aggression. Moreover, training of technicians for service sectors like transport and commerce, and officers for police and the armed forces was emphasized. To meet these needs, academic secondary schools and technical and vocational schools were opened.

Furthermore, during this time, a gradual advancement in curriculum development occurred. The first formal written curriculum was published in 1947/48. It was developed by committees consisting of Ethiopians and foreigners of varying nationalities. Later on, the structure of the education system was changed on the basis of the perceived interests of the ruling class. After the development of the first curriculum, a total of seven revisions were made between 1948 and 1968.

In 1953, a Long Term Planning Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice Minister of Education and Fine Arts had recommended that the fundamental principle for developing and implementing school curriculum was a careful assessment of the need and purposes of the people of Ethiopia, with a particular focus on the cultural, social and economic characteristics of the country. The period was marked by the development of various curriculum materials.

Initially the structure of the education system was designed to be a three-tier 4-4-4 system (four years of primary, intermediate, and secondary education) by the Long Term Planning Committee. (Bekele, 1966). In 1947, the first 10 Year Education Plan was drafted, and a 6-6-4 system (six years of primary school, six years of junior secondary education, four years of senior secondary education) was introduced. It was in 1947 that the first official elementary school curriculum for grades 1-6, which covered a wide range of subjects, was published. It was later improved in 1949, and was extended to include grades 7 and 8. The secondary school curriculum was issued in the same year (Tesfaye and Taylor, 1976).

The subjects offered at this level were Amharic, English, science, art, geography, history, arithmetic, music, handicraft, and physical education. Amharic was the medium of instruction in grades one and two. In grades three and four, English was used as a medium of instruction for teaching of art, science, physical training, handicraft, music, geography, history, and arithmetic. In grade five and six, all subjects with the exception of Amharic were taught in English. (Ayalew, 1964).

Generally, the curriculum was not based on the economic, social and cultural realities of Ethiopia; rather, its components were copied from other countries. Textbooks for primary education were translated from other languages without reflecting the Ethiopian situation. The secondary school syllabus was based on the London School Leaving Certificate Examination. Moreover, the methods and materials used for classroom instruction were inadequate as there

was a shortage of textbooks and other teaching aids. The Bible served as an Amharic textbook from grade one to four. As a result, non-Christian peoples were obliged to follow the Bible (Ayalew, 1964).

The revised version of the first curriculum, otherwise known as the second curriculum, became operational from 1949 to 1963. The pattern of school organization was an 8-4 structure (eight years of primary education and four years of secondary education). The major reason for the change of curriculum was the need to expand education and alleviate English language deficiencies (Ayalew: 1964). As a result, the language of instruction became English starting at Grade 4. Generally, the curriculum continued to be detached from the cultural context of Ethiopia. It was replicated from Great Britain and African countries like Kenya and Sudan.

From the mid-1940s and throughout 1950s, students were expected to sit for the General School Leaving Certificate Examination of Great Britain. The practice began to decline with the successive growth of the University College at Addis Ababa in 1951. By the mid-1960s, the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination had become the only valid diploma (Tekeste, 1990).

With the introduction of 6-6-4 school structure in 1963, a national examination was set for evaluating the achievements of students in grades 6 and 8. The national grade 12 test, which was introduced in 1954, became the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE). At this time, the ESLCE became a test prepared by subject matter experts at the Haile Selassie I University (Zewdie: 2000).

Modern Education from 1955 to 1972

Between 1950 and 1955, there was a gradual reduction of British influence as Americans began working in the Ministry of Education. In 1955, the government set up what was known as the Long Term Planning Committee. The committee focused on the speedy promotion of universal fundamental education, as well as the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the society. The American influence on Ethiopian education was reflected in new grade structure (6+2+4) that was introduced. This combination meant that a student had to go through six years of primary, two years of junior and four years of senior high school education. Another significant change made during the time of American influence was the promotion of Amharic the medium of instruction at primary school level. According to Tekeste, this change was "the most significant reform of the decade", (1990, 8) and was the first significant attempt made to implement multicultural education in the country's formal education system. This was strengthened by the general agreement for technical cooperation between the governments of Ethiopia and United States that marked the dominance of the American education system in Ethiopia from 1965 onward.

As Americans began to increase their influence on Ethiopia's educational system, they began to assume headmasterships and teaching positions in schools and started to participate in the process of policy making through the Education Advisory Group (Zewdie 2000:107). This group was involved in the operations of the Long Term Planning Committee and in the 1971 Education Sector Review. Because many perceived foreign involvement in Ethiopia's educational system to be excessive, the government gradually began to "Ethiopianize" the education system. Initially, the government was interested in appointing mostly qualified and experienced Ethiopians in the

process of policy making along with the Education Advisory Group. The government also focused on the training of teachers, supervisors and school administrators for various Community Teacher Training Centres, Teacher Training Institutes and the Faculty of Education (HSIU). Using interviews with a sample of Ethiopians in various occupations, the Education Commission conducted a study on the education system in the country in 1962. The results of the study identified the following problems (Girma *et al*, 1974):

- (a) The Ethiopian Education system lacked a philosophy and its aims and objectives are not properly articulated.
- (b) Curriculum materials, teaching methodologies and approaches were based on foreign countries, and instructional materials had to be adapted for Ethiopians.
- (c) Ethiopian needs, in particular with respect to culture and language, were not well treated by the education system.
- (d) The social needs of Ethiopian students were not clearly reflected in the curriculum, and the goals of education system had been equally hazy.
- (e) The inequalities in education opportunities in the past had to be evaluated.

In response to such problems, the study generated recommended objectives in the Education Sector Review (MOE, 1972: .II16 -111-6):

- To foster a rational and scientific outlook on life; to cultivate objectivity, intellectual curiosity, tolerance and broad mindedness;
- To replace the traditional negative attitude towards manual work by a positive one;
- To increase the earning capacity of the individual by providing the relevant skills and knowledge; to make people economically self-reliant;
- To cultivate the desire for life-long education; when formal schooling has been completed;
- To provide scientific, technical and vocational education, particularly at secondary level, in keeping with the needs of the Ethiopian society and economy;
- To Ethiopianize the content of education; to make Amharic the medium of instruction at the higher level, and to give practical orientation to instruction at all levels;
- To create an integrated society by drawing upon the diverse cultural and linguistic elements and creating the condition for the formation of a truly national culture;
- To reduce the generation gap between the educated young and the traditionally-oriented old; to bridge the gap between school and society;
- To prepare the nation's youth to live in a world community;
- To equalize access to education among all parts of the country;
- To provide universal access to education as rapidly as possible.

To meet these objectives, a 4-4-4 system with the proposal for basic formation education (i.e., 4+2 years) was approved with the following structure:

- a) Four years of (1-4) of minimum formation education to be made available to all children as rapidly as permitted by financial constraint.
- b) Two years of basic formation for youth who have been unable to attend the minimum formation education (MFE) programs.

- c) A four years middle school (5-8) and four years senior secondary school (9-12) program for a limited number of graduates of MFE and basic formation program.
- d) An extensive system of non-formal educational program for youth and adults which would be closely related to the formal system.

As can be seen from the proposed objectives, the Education Sector Review was an innovative approach to make education more relevant to actual Ethiopian culture and needs. It was a program designed primarily to integrate education with vocational and environmental education. Significantly, the educational objectives were designed to be free from any form of domination of emperor loyalty and church morals. Nevertheless, strong opposition came out of this proposal from the teachers, students and parents because the review suggested a four-year education for most children and reduced the salaries of certain teachers.

Although the Education Sector Review had its strong as well as weak points, one can conclude that it was an important event during this period. The study tried to link education with the actual societal activities. The study emphasized the importance of universal primary education before the year 2000. The restructuring of the educational system that was recommended was never fully implemented due to strong opposition from various corners of the society. Some of the oppositions may have been a reaction to the decision to keep the policy document secret from the educated citizens and the public at large. The secrecy caused rumours and misinformation, which fueled resistance from the society. Consequently, significant measures were not taken to change the fundamental educational principle.

The "Third Curriculum"(Experimental Curriculum)

This curriculum, which was highly influenced by the Americans, became operational from 1952 to 1974, it was essentially instigated by a Long Term Planning Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice Minister of Education and Fine Arts. American Advisors were also members of this committee. This committee recommended that the fundamental principles for developing and implementing a national school curriculum must be based on a careful assessment of the needs of the people with respect to cultural, social and environmental characteristics. In 1957, Amharic was chosen to serve as the medium of instruction in the schools. The Department of Research and Curriculum Development conducted a pilot study on Amharic as a medium of instruction prior to nationwide implementation. At the end of the pilot program, it was concluded that the teaching-learning process had been significantly improved with Amharic instruction (Habtemariam, 1970).

The "Fourth Curriculum"

The Fourth Curriculum was initiated as a result of a pilot project and then implemented after 1963. The school structure was six years of primary education, two years of junior secondary education, and four years of senior secondary education. In this new structure, Amharic continued as language of instruction at the primary level, which was divided into academic and non-academic components. Amharic, English, arithmetic, social studies, natural science and health and safety subjects were included in academic syllabus. The non-academic subjects were morals, agriculture, arts and crafts, home makings, physical training and games and music.

Subjects offered in junior secondary schools were history, geography, mathematics, science, Amharic, English and physical education.

Despite the efforts made by the Emperor to make education relevant for nation-building and modernization, the educational reforms of the Fourth Curriculum did not go far enough to address the educational deficiencies of the country. The education system was criticized for being elitist, academic-oriented, and irrelevant to the world of work and for being alien. More importantly, it was criticized for being urban- and male-biased. Most of the schools were located in a small number of locales, such as Addis Ababa, Shoa province, and Asmara. In 1974, the enrollment rate of girls in primary and secondary was 32 and 29 percent respectively.

In 1961, with only 3.3 percent of the primary-school-age population and 0.5 percent of secondary-level-school-age population enrolled in school, Ethiopia had one of the lowest enrollment rates in Africa (Tekeste, 1990). That year, at the UNESCO-sponsored Addis Ababa Conference of African States, a goal was set to provide universal primary education by 1980. Ethiopia's prospect of achieving this target by 1980 seemed unlikely at the time.

The problem of trained manpower in the teaching profession in all levels was presumed to be one of the major causes of poor education quality. Among the challenges was the fact that more than half of the secondary school teachers were foreigners and the training for primary school teachers was conducted in English while the language of instruction in primary schools was Amharic. In October 1971, government initiated a comprehensive study of the education sector. This study, which came to be known as The Education Sector Review (ESR), was indeed one of the boldest attempts at educational reform taken by the old regime (Seyoum, 1996). The aims of Education Sector Review were to analyze the education and training system of Ethiopia and its capability of promoting economic, social and cultural development. It also aimed to make education relevant to the society, national integration and development, and to prioritize studies and investments in education and training.

The ESR's comprehensive review concluded that the education system was too elitist, and that it emphasized rote learning and passing of the rigidly set examination, and did not provide employable and relevant skills to raise the earning capacity of graduates from these schools. Moreover, the ESR concluded that the education system was designed to produce a few intellectuals, as only six percent of the total primary school enrollment reached a higher level of education after 12 years. Its advantages were seen as being limited to those living in urban and industrial areas (Birhanu and Demeke, 1995).

The ESR Report presented proposals to be included in the national goals and objectives of education. The national goals became the following: to speed up economic development of the country so that the living standards of the people would improve, to create a society that appreciates its own cultural heritage and would be able to innovate with a strong feeling for modern civilization, and to build a generation that was self-reliant and who would be globally competitive (Tekeste, 1990). The objectives of education were to popularize the dignity of work and get rid of the traditional dislike of manual work, to produce trained manpower for economic development by teaching science and technology, and to make individuals self-reliant by raising their learning capacities.

To realize these objectives, certain policy-related considerations were raised. The education system should be developed in such a way that it would be useful and related to lifelong learning. Therefore, education would be linked to agriculture, small-scale industry, cottage industry, commercial enterprises, etc. Education would therefore be integrated with daily living and not remain only theoretical and academic. Furthermore, the report recommended an integrated economic development program as well as the establishment of community skill training centers in various parts of the country.

In 1972, the Council of Ministers discussed the policy-related issues raised by the ESR Report and accepted them unanimously. However, certain proposals from the Review drew criticisms from teachers and other educators on the grounds that they were allegedly designed to turn the majority of the students into tenants for the landlords under the feudal land tenure system by introducing a four-year education (MoE, 1984). Yusuf, (cited in Birhanu and Demeke, 1995) pointed out that the major reasons why the ESR report was unacceptable was that it failed to consider adequately the socio-economic and psychological condition of the country. It was also noted that the method of study was inappropriate and elitist. Consequently, teachers and students protested against the implementation of the ESR recommendations. This opposition was presumed to be one of the factors that contributed to the overthrow of the feudal government.

Modern Education from 1974-1991 (Derg Regime)

The Derg Regime came to power in 1974, chanting socialism as the fundamental political philosophy of the government. Marxist-Leninist philosophy was the central theme that guided the political, economic and social life of the country. There had been no other time in the Ethiopian history that education was conceptualized as an important means to secure political power. As a result, the curriculum during this period was highly politicized that students were required to take courses in political education (Tekeste, 1990).

The education system of the Derg regime was influenced by several factors. These factors included the strong determination and commitment of the Derg government for expanding the communist ideology and the development of curriculum based on the philosophy of Eastern European education system. Consequently, the overall education system was aimed towards the attainment of communist ideology. This view was articulated through National Democratic Revolution in 1976, General Directives of Ethiopian Education in 1980, and the guidelines of the Working Party of Ethiopia in 1984.

Under the Derg, Eastern European governments (East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc) served the Ethiopian government as policy advisors. The central theme of the Eastern European Socialist ideology was "serving better the interests of the masses and enhance its contribution towards the establishment of a socialist society" (Zewdie: 2000, 79). As a result, the education system of the country strongly followed the Eastern European educational system and the aims, content, and materials of education were designed in alignment with socialist principles. The fundamental aim of education was to "cultivate Marxist-Leninist ideology in the young generation, to develop knowledge in science and technology, in the new culture and arts, and to integrate and coordinate research with production to enable the revolution to move forward and to secure a productive citizenry" (Tekeste, 1990; 20). These broad objectives were later summarized into three slogans, namely, "Education for production, for scientific research, and for political consciousness."

Some specific aims of this educational system were:

- Eradicating illiteracy through the provision of universal education to the public masses.
- Providing schooling to help citizens develop their consciousness, participating in class struggle, and using the principles of Marxism and Leninism.
- Enabling students to acquire and own progressive cultures so that they abide by the principles of socialist morality and discipline.
- Providing education that would enhance scientific research and practice so that students would be able to integrate theory with practice, know their environment, and the society in which they live.
- Providing education that liberates the society from primitive systems of production by producing manpower trained in various professional disciplines.

It was believed that a student developed by these educational objectives would not have a narrow academic education, nor be a producer alone. He would be provided with academic and a productive education. He would be a humane and productive worker. He would not be living on the produce of others, nor would he be dependent on others for his livelihood (Tekeste 1990; 20). This statement implies that the schools were supposed to consider the relevance of the curriculum to producing a workforce in the attempt to create a modernized Ethiopia.

To implement these new socialist ideas, a task force was set up with the aim of revising the curriculum to align with the new educational goals. The new curriculum was referred to as the Transitional Curriculum. General polytechnic education, with the aim of producing middle-level trained manpower, was proposed to ameliorate the problem of unemployment of graduates of secondary education.

However, a lack of sufficient financial investment and the downfall of the communist ideology led to the collapse of the programme in the late 1980s (Birhanu and Demeke, 1995). The reasons for the failure of polytechnic education were not well documented. Aside from the government's announcement that the programme was discontinued due to budgetary problems, the pros and cons of the programme were not studied. Even the schools which were serving as experimental sites did not have the necessary data.

This period, during the times of both the Emperor and the Derg, brought a dramatic increase in enrollment at primary and secondary schools. One of the immediate measures taken by the revolutionary regime was to address the issue of primary education. Accordingly, in a policy directive issued on December 20th, 1974, it was proclaimed that "under the banner of education for all" citizens shall have the right to free fundamental education (PMAC cited in Seyoum, 1996). On the basis of this declaration, the Ministry of Education took a step to reconcile its educational priorities so as to advance universal primary education within the shortest period of time using the available resources (MoE, 1977; 1).

To accomplish this educational reform, the Ministry of Education designed a new curriculum, developed new textbooks, teachers' guides, and other materials for nearly all subjects and grades of the regular schools. The instructional materials were produced in consonance with government guidelines, the National Democratic Revolution Programme, and later on the Workers Party of Ethiopia's Programme, the 10-years Economic and Social Development

Prospective Plan, and other economic, political, social and cultural proclamations (Tekeste, 1990).

Proclamation No. 103 of 1976 ensured the public ownership of schools to reconcile the management of schools with the socialist system of ownership. However, some schools for the children of the politicians and wealthy families remained free from government control. Consequently, there was a difference in the quality of education for upper class and lower class children, reflecting the idea that in any society, education serves the dominant class (Ballentine, 1997).

One of the significant contributions of the Derg regime was its launching of a vigorous national campaign against illiteracy in 1979. By July 1990, which marked the Eleventh Anniversary of the Literacy Campaign, a 75.3 percent national literacy rate was reported. The reduction in illiteracy rate from 95 percent at the start of the Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign (ENLC) to 24.7 is certainly an outstanding achievement (Seyoum, 1996). In terms of expansion, the number of primary schools increased at a high rate in all parts of the country. The national enrollment rate reached 34.1 percent (Ayalew, 1989). The slogan of the Ethiopian government was to spread education as much as possible and the nation's economic and social development problems would take care of themselves.

Though a quantifiable expansion of the educational system on face value appears to be quite impressive, significant problems lie behind the figures. Firstly, it was not possible to make education equitably accessible to all regions. In this respect, a study by Ayalew (1989; 41) on regional disparities in primary school participation on Ethiopia was quite revealing. The southern part of the country received greater educational resources than the northern part. Secondly, the quality of education had gradually started to deteriorate, due to a number of factors. For example, the meagre educational resources had to be thinly spread because of the uncontrolled expansion of schools (Seyoum, 1996; Tekeste, 1990). Most of the literature indicates that educational quality was decreasing as compared with the previous periods (Seyoum, 1996; Tekeste, 1990). These problems were identified by the Derg government, including a review of the country's economic and educational needs. The review was primarily aimed at solving the problems created in the employment sector due to rapid expansion of secondary schools. To address this concern, the government passed a resolution to expand technical and vocational education to meet the employment demands of the country (Birhanu and Demeke, 1995 and Tekeste, 1990). Soon after the resolution, the MOE initiated a project known as The Evaluation Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE). The evaluation of the education sector was carried out by four committees organized from MOE and Addis Ababa University.

The study focused on curriculum development and teaching, learning process, educational administration, structure and planning, educational logistics, supportive services, and manpower training and educational evaluation and research (Tekeste, 1990; Seyoum, 1996). The major findings of the study were:

- Though the syllabus of secondary school subjects reflected the national objectives; textbooks do not reflect national educational objectives and they focus on the instruction itself rather than learning dimensions.

- The subjects suffer either from lack of clarity, coherence, and consistency of content, or from poor style of presentation.
- Amharic as a medium of instruction in the primary school (grade 1-6) has created difficulties for students whose mother tongue is not Amharic.
- Using English as medium of instruction from grades seven to twelve created difficulties for both teachers and students.
- The educational structures, namely primary (grade 1-6), junior secondary (7-8) and senior Secondary (9-12), are not satisfactorily integrated and coordinated.
- The expansion of the education system is not in accordance with the economic resources and capability of the state.
- The problem of Ethiopian education is a result of poor textbooks, lack of instruments and widespread incompetence among teaching staff.

Most of the recommendations forwarded by the ERGESE were already considered by the Ten Year National Perspective Plan (1984-1994) in 1984 (Tekeste, 1990). Consequently, the recommendations were not implemented

The Derg's education system was somewhat inhibited by problems such as budget shortfalls, which in turn affected the supply of basic educational materials including textbooks and a shortage of qualified teachers both at primary and secondary schools. To resolve the problem of the shortage of qualified teachers the government took an aggressive measure by recruiting 5,500 untrained teachers, recruited immediately after the completion of 12 grade. It is not difficult to imagine how the huge recruitment of untrained teachers affected the quality of education. But, this measure has to be seen from its contribution to the expansion of education to the rural part of the country and equal educational opportunity for all. To resolve the problem of teachers' qualification at elementary level, the government designed a summer program, lasting over three years, to certify teachers. This strategy continues to be employed as one of the mechanisms to train teachers at the primary and secondary levels today.

Recommendations for the Future

Paradoxically, Ethiopia's economic development is largely dependent on an educated workforce, yet one of the greatest limitations to educational progress is a disadvantaged economy (Hoot, Szente & Tadesse, 2006). Fortunately, the Ethiopian government understands the value of education and currently dedicates a significant amount of resources towards its development at all levels. Recognizing the need for 21st century workers who are skilled in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM), Ethiopian universities are steering students towards these STEM-related degrees. The following recommendations are thus offered to help Ethiopia develop its most precious resource, the Ethiopian people, in a sustainable way to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity for all.

First, it is understood that the history of foreign involvement in Ethiopia's history, particularly in the area of education - where curricular decisions, selection of instructional languages, and cultural considerations - have shaped the evolution of education in Ethiopia. Consequently, while foreign investment and aids will likely play an important role in Ethiopian education, those who are developing the educational system are strongly encouraged to focus primarily on meeting the needs of the Ethiopian people, with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful, not only in the cultural and political context of East Africa, but also to prepare Ethiopians to be world

citizens, skilled at operating in a global marketplace of commerce and ideas. Consequently, the educational system of Ethiopia must simultaneously be culturally relevant and flexible/responsive. This may be accomplished when International Non-governmental Organizations (INGO) partners effectively with Local Non-governmental Organization (LNGO) (O'Sullivan, 2006).

Second, Ethiopia must invest heavily in teacher training and development. An educational system is only as good as its teachers. One of the consequences of a rapidly expanding educational mission is the inability to build and maintain instructional capacity. Ethiopia has a deficit in quality teacher training and continuing education (Hoot, Szente, and Tadesse, 2006). It is therefore recommended that the training of teachers should be made a priority. There is also a need to increase the use of technology to aid the medium of exchange and communication.

Third, gender equity must also be reflected in Ethiopia's educational system. The concept of inclusive education is broad and encompassing not just physical inclusion, but also the active participation of all learners (Hussein, 2008). Thus, the mere presence of girls in schools is necessary but insufficient. For gender equality, the curriculum and instruction in Ethiopia must engage all learners, as the system should prepare boys and girls to meet the country's economic and social needs. Erulkar and Ferede (2009) emphasize the importance of building girls' social capital to enhance social outcomes, and Ethiopian schools would be wise to adopt this approach.

Finally, greater effort must be made to provide educational opportunities to students in rural areas. Naturally, this goal is tied to economic and political factors, particularly the provision of communication and transportation to connect rural areas and improve accessibility. As telecommunication and internet usage increases its reach across the country, schools in rural Ethiopia will have greater connectivity not only to urban Ethiopian schools, but also to educational institutions worldwide. To address this pressing problem of education, there must be an effort to minimize the cost of photocopies, computer printing, and publishing of textbooks and books.

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