An Overview of Curriculum Development in Ethiopia: 1908-2005

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Abstract

The history of Education including curriculum development in Ethiopia is a vast area that has not been studied thoroughly. The objective of this article is to overview the practices of elementary and secondary schools curriculum development in the different periods. The main sources for this study are literature as well as personal experiences of the author. Qualitative method, particularly historical research, is employed. The understanding and practice of curriculum development i.e. curriculum planning, tryout, implementation and evaluation or quality control has varied throughout the history of Ethiopian education. Curriculum employed in each period was essentially foreign dominated. Utilizing evaluation and research findings was minimal. Public and professional engagement in curriculum development is little or non-existent. As an overview of these problems, this article has a corrective purpose.

1. Introduction

Education is unthinkable without curriculum. Curriculum is the central element or the main means to achieve the purposes of education. It is difficult to understand the conception and practices of curriculum of a certain country without discussing the education itself. That is why Montero-Sieburth (1992) states that "curriculum is not viewed as a separate entity that operates in isolation, but rather as one feature of an educational process that works in conjunction with the whole series of factors." Similarly as one of the principles of O.E.C.D, curriculum development was seen as an integral and continuing part of educational development policies and of educational planning (Richmond 1971: 12).

The meaning of curriculum is very illusive. To most educators curriculum is more explained than defined. According to Schubert (1986), curriculum can be defined in terms of: "(a) content or subject matter, (b) a program of planned activities, (c) intended learning outcomes, (d) cultural reproduction, (e) discrete tasks and concepts, (f) an agenda for social reconstruction, and (g) 'currere' (interpretation of lived experience)."

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Ornstein and Hunkins (1988) believe that curriculum is defined in terms of curriculum approaches (behavioural-rational approach, systems-managerial approach, intellectual-academic approach, humanistic-aesthetic approach, and reconceptual approach). Determining an appropriate curriculum approach is usually taken as one of the useful mechanisms for translating the general objective of education. The approach chosen influences various educational activities such as instructional strategies, roles of teachers and learners, curriculum materials, evaluation strategies, etc. Each approach emanates from a different assumption, having its own merits and demerits. Selecting the necessary approach is a highly professional task that demands competency in understanding the various approaches and the values embedded in them. Depending on the political preference, economic development, technological advancement, educational development, etc., each country determines its own curriculum approach that fits the system either systematically or haphazardly.

Most curriculum experts believe that curriculum planning is based on objectives, curriculum (educational) experiences which consist of content and methods, organization and evaluation. The planning is reflected in syllabuses or in subject guidelines, teacher's guide, student's text, and supplementary materials. According to Marsh (1991: 14) in many systems subject-guidelines or syllabuses are centrally developed for all schools. Some say that curriculum development does not only entail the planning aspect but also tryout (pilot testing of the curriculum in few classes and modifying material), implementation at national level, and quality control. The time required to complete the whole processes varies. According to the International Institute for Educational Planning (1977: 15), the experience of most countries indicates that the time devoted to the development of a curriculum (as a program) generally varies from two years to five years.

The history of Education including curriculum development in Ethiopia has not been studied thoroughly. The purpose of this article is to overview the curriculum development in the different periods of Ethiopia and makes viable recommendations in terms of curriculum planning, tryout, implementation, and quality control (evaluation and research). The basic questions raised in this study are: 'What are the experiences of Ethiopia regarding the primary and secondary schooling curriculum development?' 'What do we learn from past curriculum development experiences in order to improve the existing or future curriculum development in Ethiopia?'

A method preferred for this study is historical research. Historical research is considered of particular type of qualitative research because of the similarities existing between historical investigation and other qualitative methodologies (Edson 1986 in Borg *et al* 1996). Historical research contributes to "educators understand the present condition of education by shading light on the past" as well as to generate alternative scenarios in education and judge the likelihood (Borg *et al* 1996: 643). The major steps followed in this method include: a) identifying the problem, b) categorizing the practices in the different periods, c) searching for sources of historical data and d) analyzing and synthesizing the data into meaningful and authentic patterns. Categorizing the different periods into major events was developed to overview the practices. Hence the categories are as follows: traditional education period (4th century -1908) and modern education periods (1908 - post 1991). I have again subdivided the latter into 'first chapter of modern education (1908 -1935), the Italian occupation period (1935 – 1941) (a period of, so to speak, 'no education period'), the second chapter of modern education (1941 -1974), the third chapter of modern education (1974 – 1991) and the fifth chapter which is the post 1991 period.

2. Traditional Education (4th century-1908): Church & Quranic Education

It is very difficult to trace when indigenous education has started in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia. The church education system was originated in Axumite kingdom with the introduction of Christianity about the 4th century. However, its evolvement in a very organized way started on the 13th century when the literature of the church had reached its peak (Hailegebriel Dagne 1970: 82). At the beginning of the fourth century A.D., the church became a formal indigenous institution i.e. the only schools in the country that constituted traditional culture and provided education. *Yeha* and *Debra Damo* in *Tigrai* became great church schools of learning (Ministry of Information, 1973: 6). *Quranic* schools appeared probably in the 11th century in Ethiopia where its center of learning was *Ifat* and later

moved to *Harrar* (Ministry of Information (1973: 7). Wallo was also considered as centre of learning (Hussein Ahmend, 1988).

The primary aim of traditional education is to provide moral and religious education (Assefa Bequele 1967: 49). The major function of church education, for instance, is to prepare young men for the service of the church as deacons, priests, scribes etc. According to Hussein Ahmed (1988) the three principal aims of traditional Islamic education have been a) the teachings and dissemination of Islamic dogma and practice, b) the training of the clerical class, and c) the spread of literacy.

Church education has its own stages of learning. The stages of learning in the church education could be divided into five: a) Nibab-*bet* ("school of reading"), b) *Kidassie bet* which focuses on the training of the altar priests, c) Zema-*bet* ("school of music") which includes *Diggwa* (church music composed by St. Yared), *Zimmare* (songs sung at the end of Eucharist) and *Mewasit* (songs related to commemorative services and funerals respectively), *Aquaquam* (religious dance and movements, in which drums and sistra are used, d) Quene-*bet* ("school of poetry"). In this school the subtle arts of versification is studied, e) *Metshaf-bet* ("school of commentary"). The study of *Mestahif-bet* include: Old and New Testaments, *Likawent* (the study of church fathers and their writings), *Metshafe-Menekosat* (monastic writings, guideline that define the monastic life of monks), *Mera- ewir* (computation of the church calendar), and arts and crafts. *Mestaf-bet* is the final stage of church education. The whole program of church education takes longer time - - usually more than twenty-five years.

The study made on both traditional church and Quran education is little. Hussein Ahmed's (1988: 100-101) research on traditional Muslim education of Wallo could be taken as exemplary. Hussein specified the subjects that are taught in traditional Muslim education as follows. *Nahw* consists of Arabic grammar and syntax. It has specialized branches of learning like *Sarf* (morphology), Arud or Maani (prosody), Bayan (eloquence), *Badi* (the science of metaphors) and Balaghah (Rhetoric). *Fiqh* is a lesson in Islamic Law or Islamic jurisprudence. The books for studying *Fiqh* vary according to the schools of law. *Tawhid* is Islamic theology, which is offered simultaneously, or following the completion of *Fiqh*. Hussein (1988) underlined that *Tawhid* in Wallo is usually taught intensively during the Islamic month of Ramadan (the main fasting season).

Mantiq, which means logic, is also widely offered in Wallo. *Salwat* intercessory prayers, is the additional and recommended subjects, pursued by the majority of advanced students. The specialization varies form place to place.

Khoder (1988: 96-99) states that Islamic learning is not limited to religious studies but includes the study of all (natural sciences, botany, anatomy, and geology etc.) that may lead to betterment of life and for the learned people who fear God. By and large it "encourages every aspect of knowledge and culture which does not contradict the teachings of God, destroy virtues or call to corrupt movements, creeds and deviant philosophies."

The objective of Church and Quranic education was basically religious, where the curriculum is largely unchanged and uncontested i.e. the contents are considered true, everlasting and worthwhile (Adane 1991). The medium of instruction in church education is mainly *Geez,* while that of the Quranic schools is Arabic. According to Teklehaimanot Haileselassie (1999) in both Church and Quranic traditions; neither the central government nor the local authority were involved in designing curriculum. The tasks have always been carried out by a few centres of excellence.

Elleni Tedla (1995) also states that 'there are no serious efforts to study, promote and incorporate indigenous education, the attention of international organizations, donors and scholars has been devoted to Africa's modern education'. Similarly Setargew Kenaw (2004) states that traditional education does not seem to attract much attention from academia; most of them superficially attempt to examine the field that seems to concentrate on the explication of the drawbacks of the system. According to Hailu Fullas (1974) the virtual absence of argumentation and criticisms in traditional education severely restricted the field in which methodological and substantive innovations could be introduced. The provision of traditional education for more than a millennium is a testimony to the continuation of traditional education in Ethiopia. Although modern education is considered as a turning point in this discontinuity, still both Church and *Quranic* schools are providing education for a large number of students (Woube Kassaye 2001).

3. First Chapter of Modern Education – 1908-1935

Modern education was introduced in Africa (except Ethiopia, Egypt and Liberia) in the late 1800s by European missionaries and colonial governments (Elleni Tedla 1995). Until the opening of Menelik II School in Addis Ababa in 1908, there was no government (public) education system. There was an attempt to provide modern education through missionaries (Catholic Jesuits) during the 16th century (Bowen 1976). However, it was discontinued when the Jesuits were expelled after Emperor Susinyos was deposed. (EHRC 2001).

Several factors such as the post-Adowa situation (the strong relations created with Europe), the expansion of state apparatus, and the eloquent expression of the educated Ethiopians to the problem of backwardness necessitated introducing modern education in the country (Bahiru Zawdie 2002: 103-104). Other factors behind the introduction of modern education include the establishment of a central state authority and permanent urban seat of power, the development of the modern sector of the economy, the arrival of foreign embassies because of the recognition gained after the battle of *Adwa*, military contact, the need for maintaining the sovereignty of the country, and readiness to accept innovation, particularly in the scientific and technological fields (Girma Amare 1982; MOE 1984). According to Ministry of Information (1973: 9) "the arrival of foreign craftsmen can be described as the first systematic attempt to provide a range of modern industrial skills for Ethiopia, underlined the need to develop new forms of education in Ethiopia." The other reasons could be Emperor Menilik's attitude towards eagerness for innovations, attempts to break down some of the detrimental social customs and sending Ethiopians abroad for study (Bairu Tafla, 1973:26). In 1906, Hakim Workneh Eshete (alias Dr. Charles Martin) was approaching both Menilik and Abuna Mathewos to open up schools (Bahiru Zewdie 2002: 23). These cumulative effects made emperor Menilik to open modern public schools in 1908.

The introduction of modern education was not however accepted enthusiastically. The clergy and aristocracy were especially hostile towards the new education scheme. They believed that modern education would be instrumental for introducing new or alien religious denominations to the country and destabilize the status quo (Seyoum Tefera 1996; Wagaw 1979).

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However, Emperor Menilik wisely overcame the insurmountable oppositions by adopting a reconciliatory policy which are (Girma Amare, 1982): a) hiring expatriate teachers who are Coptic Christians from Egypt and Middle Eastern countries to teach in modern schools, b) making such expatriates not to interfere in the Church's traditional educational activities, c) attracting students by providing financial rewards.

In 1907 the Ministry of Religion was entrusted with the authority to run the modern education system, and the Abun (head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church) was supposed to serve as its custodian. However, despite this measure, there was no government department charged with giving the educational process central direction (Bahiru Zewdie, 2002). Little attention was given for education during Lij Iyasus's era. Empress Zewditu did in fact take certain measures. She was able to promulgate laws on what role parents and church leaders ought to play as far as education of children was concerned.

Nonetheless, there was no standard policy regarding curricula, textbooks and language of instruction (Bairu Zewde, 2002: 33). Furthermore, the Ethiopian experience (culture) in education was not well developed. Rather it was dominated by foreign experience. Curriculum developers and researchers were not available. No evaluation and researches were made to improve the curriculum.

Although Menilik was considered as a pioneer of change, the progressives such as Emperor Hailesellasie and Haile Baikedagn had strong aspiration to transform Ethiopian through education (Caulk, 1975:3). The development of education in Ethiopia was further enhanced after Emperor Haile Sellassie's coronation in 1930 (Pankhurst 1974). The decade prior to the Italian invasion was characterized by significant advances in literacy as well as education (Pankhurst, 1974). According to Vergin (quoted in Pankhurst in Pankhurst 1974), the Emperor immediately after his coronation gave orders that soldiers should learn to read and write, and that the priests should busy themselves by instructing the youth.

Hailesellassie recruited an American foreign adviser known as Professor F. Ernest Work even before his coronation – November 1930. The major task of Work was "to study the situation and to make recommendations for an educational system" (Caulk 1975). Work's

innovative ideas and suggestions include the adoption of self-sufficient and authentic educational system, the Ethiopianization of curricula and textbooks (Bahiru Zewdie 2002). Work proposed a new structure, six years of primary, six years of secondary, and four years of university education, with special emphasis on teachers' training and agriculture (Caulk 1975: 8). Work's plan was to raise the absorption capacity of schools to 75 or 80%. This plan was not of course realized because the educational reform was beyond the government's economic capacity. Consequently, the plan was considered as ambitious and hence it did not get an approval (Caulk 1975). According to Bahiru Zewdie (2002:33-34), "even secondary education, let alone college and university education, was to be a phenomenon only of the period after 1941." Although the suggestion made by Work emphasized the rejection of foreign education system, however, Caulk (1975: 8) indicated that his plan (structure) was eventually similar to that of the educational system of Ohio or any other American state or European country.

4. No Education Period: Period of Italian Occupation – 1935-1941

The modest attempt that was made by Emperor Menilik, further enhanced by Emperor Haileselassie, to modernize the country through Western education was disrupted by Italian occupation (Seyoum Tefera, 1996). As Markakis (1974) notes the Italian occupation (May 1936 – May 1941) was to "nip the novel process of modern education in the bud," According to Seyoum Tefera (1996), though the occupation was short lived, it had resulted in a lot of damage both in education and other sectors: a) the schools were closed down and the educated Ethiopians were liquidated; b) Fascist Italy's educational policy was adopted where it aimed at making Ethiopians merely loyal servants of their Fascist Italian masters. The educational policy of Italy was based on racism, fascism and militaristic educational philosophy of Italy (Pankhurst 1972). Colonial educational policy of Italy was "designed to Italianize the African as much as possible, to produce soldiers for Italy, and to create a reserve of menial labourers" (Teshome Wagaw 1979: 49).

According to Pankhurst (1974), the invasion brought Ethiopia's prewar education largely to a halt where the government schools were closed

down, and in many cases converted for the schooling of Italian children, but, the traditional church schools seem to have been virtually unaffected. It can be concluded that the curriculum during this time was totally Italian, developed and controlled by the Italians. In this curriculum racism, fascism and militaristic educational philosophy of Italy were reflected.

5. Second Chapter of Modern Education – 1941-1974

The destruction made by the Italians was devastating. This was not only reflected in the education sector but also in other sectors too. After the expulsion of the Italians, in 1941 tne task of reorganizing the education system started from scratch. Markakis (1974: 147) indicated that the period between 1944 and 1950 was characterized by sluggish growth, although efforts were made to organize the education system. Severe shortage of resources and manpower were the main bottlenecks. To overcome the problems the main concentration in the first phase (1940s-1950s) of development was on the production of teachers and various personnel for the state machinery (MOE, 1996: 90). This task was mainly done with British assistance.

A change of objectives of the Ethiopian education was inevitable. Although the teaching of foreign languages was essentially the objective of Ethiopian education during the pre-war period, the post-liberation period proved to be that the teaching of languages was not adequate. The introduction of modern system of government and administration required people trained (qualified civil servants, trained professionals and technocrats) in the art and science of government (Assefa Bequele 1967; Tadesse Terefe 1964). Assefa Bequele (1967) states that 'the provision of basic elementary education was the result of the need for clerical personnel in the Civil Service just after the liberation'. According to Tadesse Terefe (1964) immediately after the liberation the need for personnel to work in the Civil Service made it necessary for all schools to offer courses (short and did not strictly adhere to regular grade by grade promotion) in basic education. In other words, the curriculum during this time was developed to meet immediate manpower needs of the country (Teshome Wagaw 1979: 69). The curricula and textbooks used in these schools were not

standardized (Tadesse Terefe 1964) and not oriented toward "the Ethiopian world" in view of the fact that the teaching staff was overwhelmingly foreign (Assefa Bequele 1967)". According to Teshome Wagaw (1979: 69) "the curriculum during this time was not well thought out, nor was it tailored to the fundamental wishes of the people or to the characteristics of Ethiopian children." The structure of education during Hailesellassie period can be classified into four: a) The First Curriculum (6-6 Structure), b) The Second curriculum (8-4 Structure), c) The Third curriculum (Experimental curriculum), and d) The Fourth curriculum (6-2-4 structure).

5.1 The First Curriculum (6-6 Structure)

The duration of elementary education was six years in 1941-47. During this time foreign advisors and teachers were instrumental in the formulation of directives given to the nation's schools (MoEFA 1950: 30-32). The headmaster of each school submitted to the Ministry the schedule and curricula that, if accepted, became the guide for instruction. This practice became an obstacle in maintaining uniformity and inculcating Ethiopianization. It created difficulty for some students of the same grade to transfer from one school to another (MOEFA 1950).

Attempting to overcome the problems mentioned above, in 1948, the Boards of education through a committee formulated a uniform curriculum for elementary school (grades 1-6) for the whole Empire was approved (MoEFA 1950). The committee consisted of largely foreign staff (Maaza Bekele 1966). It was reported that this measure contributed to schools to become unified and facilitated the transfer of students to other schools without difficulty. According to MoEFA (1950) "Awaiting Board of Education approval is an extended curriculum to cover the seventh and eighth grades of elementary education, while a committee is charged with formulating a Secondary School Curriculum." The intention of this structure was that the elementary program would eventually expand to include Grades 7 and 8, while the secondary program would then be reduced to Grades 9 through 12 (Ayalew Gabre Sellassie 1964).

According to Ayalew Gebresellassie (1964), the language goals and the number of textbooks, teaching aids, and other classroom materials were unsatisfactory. Furthermore, books in some instances were translated from other languages and printed in Amharic, which hardly reflected the

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Ethiopian reality. Learning in Amharic for non-Amharic speakers had created difficulty that made them at disadvantage (MoEFA 1950). For the reason that an inability to find other text material of Amharic, the option to use the Bible for teaching Amharic posed a challenge for non-Christian students (Ayalew Gebresellassie 1964). English as medium of instruction above grade three posed a problems (Teshome Wagaw 1979), "decreased pupils power of absorption" (MoEFA, 1950: 34). Ayalew Gebresellassie (1964) pointed out that not gaining sufficient fluency in English during their elementary school resulted in a backwash effect for their secondary education. Since 1947 success in London Matriculation Examination was the requirement for secondary graduates (MoEFA, 1950: 34), the Secondary school syllabus was based entirely upon this without regard to its relevance to Ethiopia (Ayalew Gebre Sellassie, 1964).

5.2 The Second Curriculum (8-4 Structure)

At the beginning of the 1950s, grades seven and eight became part of elementary schooling (Teshome 1979: 120). This structure change i.e. from 6-6 to 8-4 was made in 1949 (Ayalew 1964; Maaza 1966). The reasons for extending primary level are (Ayalew 1964): First, in order to overcome learning difficulties created by English it was necessary that students should have good background of English before joining secondary schooling. Second, in almost all countries after World War II there was a desire to extend and expand the period of elementary education.

5.3 The Third Curriculum (The Experimental curriculum)

In 1955 the Ministry of Education had started to change curriculum (Ayalew 1964). Assuming that the school program and imported textbooks were not adapted to national needs and the use of English in the early guides was absolutely unsound, a drafting committee was established to prepare curriculum guides in 1958 to Ethiopianize the entire curriculum (Teshome 1979). However, it was decided by the Board of Education that the curriculum guidelines should be first tried out at five selected schools

before specific changes were introduced in other schools (Teshome Wagaw, 1979).

In fact the Americans had greatly made influence on the Ethiopian education from 1952 until 1974 (Tekeste 1995). As of 1954 they began to shape the Ethiopian Education policy through Education Advisory Group – assimilated into the Long-Term Planning Committee (Tekeste 1990: 6). Some of the recommendations made by the committee particularly on basic education include (Tekeste 1990; Teshome 1979): a) the introduction of community schools for basic education; b) the curriculum should be designed to fit the student for better life in his community; c) the educational objectives should be geared to the quickest possible spread of universal fundamental education; d) students should display effective command of communication in Amharic. With the assumption that further improvement would be made, five schools were provided with an experimental curriculum (assuming that after the study and revision, this curriculum would then serve as the basis for any future change) (MOEFA, 1951 EC; MOEFA, 1953).

Almost all reports were favourable and so the changes were effected in most of the government primary schools (Teshome 1979): 125). According to Habtemariam Markos (1970), the result of pilot study reveals the following. First, both teaching and learning were improved when Amharic became the medium of instruction. Second, lack of suitable books and teaching materials were reported. In order to alleviate this problem, a Textbook Production Unit was established in 1956 within the Ministry of Education. The major aim was to produce all the basic textbooks necessary for Ethiopian elementary education in Amharic.

According to MOEFA (1951), experimental curriculum was developed to study and revise the curriculum that was thought that this curriculum would serve as the basis for any future change. Although some claim that this curriculum is radically different, it still reflected that it was highly influenced by the experience of other countries. Ayalew (1964: 23) commented that the curriculum was dominantly theoretical in content and was rather unrealistic for immature pupils. There was also lack of textbooks written in Amharic.

5.4 The Fourth Curriculum (6-2-4 structure)

Various reasons necessitated the change of 8-4 curriculum where some of them are (Ayalew Gebresellassie 1964: 24-27) as follows: First the quality of textbook preparation was questionable (inadequacy of texts to reflect the curriculum; the inclusion of too much irrelevant contents in the texts; a failure to consider research findings for writing texts; insufficient explanation; lack of organization; the use of too much technical or scientific terminology in the text (no qualified linguists were not involved in this task.) Second, since the various advisors and experts who had worked in the education sector had largely been unfamiliar with Ethiopia and its specific problems the value of their recommendation decreased. Third valid evaluation of student achievements was inexistence. Fourth there was lack of access in teaching sufficient English to make it the medium of instruction during the final years of the six year elementary period.

The structure of curriculum was six years of elementary period, two years of junior secondary cycle, and four years of senior secondary cycle. Elementary education was terminal. The curriculum at the primary level consisted of syllabi, which were classified as academic and non-academic. Amharic became the medium of instruction throughout the elementary level. The change of this structure as well as the introduction of the new curriculum was the result of a pilot project initiated in 1958 (Maaza 1966). The new grade structure (6-2-4) came into full operation in 1963-64 (Teshome 1964). With the new structure, Amharic became the medium of instruction at the primary level. Tekeste Negash (1990: 8) considered this measure as 'the most significant reform of the decade'.

Changes effected on the secondary level 2-4 as follows. The objectives for junior secondary school, the senior secondary school and Comprehensive secondary school were redefined (Teshome Wagaw, 1979: 156 – 157). Similarly Ayalew Gebresellassie (1964) enumerated the changes as follows. First, in Junior secondary school English became the medium of instruction. Second, a four year course in the senior secondary school offers a choice of specialization between purely academic courses, agricultural courses, commercial courses and industrial arts courses leads to Ethiopian school Leaving in Certificate Examination. Third, specialized

and vocational education were offered after grade ten which took two to four years.

The basis for change on the secondary level was 'Tananarive Conference', which was held in July 1962 (Ayalew 1964). According to Ayalew (1964), this conference, which was organized by the UNESCO, was appreciated for defining the importance of secondary school curriculum to developing nations, enumerating its objectives and discussing its areas of necessary adaptation. However, challenges in implementing the 1963 curriculum include (Ayalew Gebresellassie, 1964) the following. First, this curriculum incorporates a much wider programme of activities from the old school curriculum. The inclusion of agricultural, commercial and industrial arts studies presupposes the sampling adequate apparatus, equipment, and materials for effective practice work. Second, the efficiency of the programme depended upon the ability of students to utilize the medium of instruction. Third, qualified teachers of English were required in both elementary and secondary schools.

Although efforts were made to improve education in the country, the Ethiopian education system was faced with plethora of problems. According to Teshome Wagaw (1979: 183), the objectives and experiences of education were not connected with the Ethiopian realities. Some of the constraints include lack of appreciating cultural heritage, unequal equal opportunity of education among the regions, the system was highly centralized, and the school system was too elitist, rigid and unresponsive to the needs of the society. The problems according to Seyoum Teferra (1996) and Tekeste Negash (1990) are: a) displaying extremely very low performance in achieving universal literacy by the year 1980; b) students of modern school were disrespectful of their society and its institutions; c) the inclusion of very little Ethiopian content in the curriculum; and d) the existence of unemployment opportunity facing secondary school graduates.

In response to the pressures of the society in 1969, the Government established the National Commission on Education, which is charged with the responsibility of formulating an overall prospectus for Ethiopian Education (Teshome 1979: 183). The commission conducted hearings with students, parents, government officials, teachers, school directors and private individuals, however, no tangible results were made(ibid).

Soon, it was felt that there was the need to make an adequate and complete review of the sector (the whole educational and training

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procedure) through a study known as *Education Sector Review (ESR)*. Consultations, symposium, and conferences were held by the review committee in order to draw the terms of reference, assess and evaluate progress and finalize the whole task (Teshome Wagaw 1979: 184). In this Committee there were eighty-one members (fifty-one were Ethiopians drawn primarily from Haile Sellssaie I University and different Government organizations while the others were non Ethiopians drawn from UNESCO, ILO, the Ford Foundation, and Harvard University development Advisory Service (ibid). Then, one of the proposed changes was to introduce a 4-4-4 structure. Although this study could be taken as one of the commendable studies, however, the participation of the public was little. This in turn led for the failure of its implementation. For instance, the urban population (parents, students and teachers) perceived the decrease in secondary enrolment and the emphasis given to the rural population as a detrimental to their interests (Tekeste 1990). By and large, the recommendation of the Education Sector Review was aborted; it rather became one of the factors for the collapse of the imperial system in 1974.

6. The Third Chapter of Modern Education – 1974-1991

The events of 1974 led to the demise of the Hailesellasie regime and its replacement a radical military group known as Derg. For Clapham (1988: 1-2), this has led the country into unquestionably revolutionary situation. The major changes include: the overthrow of an ancient and well-established monarchy; the nationalization of all major means of production, urban and rural; the nationalization of urban land and rented housing; the creation of the new constitutional system on Marxist-Leninist lines, and a reversal of diplomatic and military alliances from the USA to USSR.

Derg considered education as a key to development, particularly reflecting the socialist ideology. This view was reflected in the programme then known as National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which was adopted in April 1976 (MOE 1977: iv). This framework was further elaborated in the five volume policy documents – General Directives of Ethiopian Education produced in 1980 (Tekeste 1990). Some of the statements are read as follows (MOE, 1977: iv):

> There will be an educational programme that will provide free education,
> step by step, to the broad masses. Such a programme will aim at
> intensifying the struggle against feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic
> capitalism. All necessary measures to eliminate illiteracy will be
> undertaken. All necessary encouragement will be given for the
> development of science, technology, the arts and literature. All necessary
> effort will be made to free the diversified cultures of Ethiopia from
> imperialist cultural domination and from their own reactionary
> characteristic.

The ordinary (transitional) curriculum was prepared immediately after the 1974 revolution in an effort to comply with the new ideology i.e. socialism. It consisted of academic, vocational and technical subjects. Elementary and Secondary school teachers as well as university and college instructors took part in the preparation of this curriculum. The curriculum during this period was centralized. All curricular materials used in all primary and secondary schools of the country were developed in the Curriculum Department (this department was established in 1975) of the Ministry of Education (Curriculum Evaluation and Educational Research Division, 1987: 3).

Feleke Desta (1990: 75) underlined that the process of the development of this curriculum followed neither an established set of procedures nor was founded on the basis of the evaluation results of the old curriculum. It was rather patchwork, and piecemeal in its approach, characterized by more inclusion and exclusion of content in the same old curriculum of the day. The goals of education in this period were vague, too general and broad to provide necessary direction to education universally throughout the country (Feleke 1990).

Although efforts were made to align the ordinary (transitional) curriculum with the new outlook of socialism, there was a need to make a complete change in this respect. Meanwhile a directive regarding objectives, content and structure of the new education of Ethiopia was adopted in 1980 in the New Educational Objectives and Directives for Ethiopia specified in this document (MOE, 1980):

a) The general objectives of education should focus on education for
    production, education for scientific consciousness and education for
    socialist consciousness.

b) The content of education should be connected with polytechnic education that emphasises practice, production, the objective reality of the society.

c) The structure of education 6-2-4 has to be changed to 8-2-2. The profile of students at each level should be worked out, to this end a curriculum package should be prepared and implemented.

Although the New Educational Objectives and Directives for Ethiopia was adopted in 1980, it was not implemented immediately. It was felt that the country did not have the capacity to carry out this program. Rather there was a need to experiment this program prior to nationwide implementation. The General Polytechnic Education programme was based on Marxist Leninist pedagogy. Creating Marxist-Leninist and all round-developed personalities became the leading catchword (Curriculum Evaluation and Educational Research Division 1987:6). The ultimate objective of the experimental curriculum was to produce citizens who possess: solid fundamental knowledge of all areas of social life, socialist attitudes and convictions and are fully prepared for the building of socialism. Developing creative, scientific and technical abilities and skills that can play their role in the construction of a socialist society was the other target in view (MOE 1984). To this end it was suggested that the design of the programme should focus on science and technology, ideology, progressive culture, aesthetics, sport and other basic knowledge that are integrated in process and connecting learning and work. By and large these were taken as the philosophical bases for planning the curriculum. According to the same source, this program was tried out for about 11 years as of 1981 in few primary schools (1-8). The number of the sample schools varied at different times (70 schools, 100 schools and lately 125 schools).

Various studies were made to assess the efficacy of this program. First, the experimental program was not an experiment in scientific terms in which variables were controlled. Second, field trials were normally conducted in 30-50 classes; however, in this program hundreds of classes were used making the program hardly manageable as a field trial and did not allow to improve the quality of the materials. Third, no hypothesis was prescribed. Most objectives were not stated in terms of measurable behaviour that made the evaluation of the programme difficult. Fourth,

there was the involvement of curriculum experts in developing syllabus, textbooks and kits.

In this experimental program, the model followed was that of the German Democratic Republic. Prior to beginning this program an intensive preliminary studies and participation of public and academic did not take place. From my experience as a former member of ICDR, this program was not taken as the responsibility of the whole Ministry; it was rather considered as a program of ICDR. This indicates that there was no clear understanding among the different departments of the Ministry. The support given to this program by other departments was little that had a repercussion on the whole process of the program.

While the new educational directive was adapted in 1980 and an experimental program was started following this directive, a decision was made to conduct an evaluative research in 1983. Some of the reasons for conducting this evaluative research were: the expansion of secondary education beyond the capacity of the economy (particularly creating unemployable graduates), the deterioration of quality of education, the existence of meagre educational resources, shortage of qualified teachers, etc. (Seyoum 1996: 10). Thus, in 1983, the Ministry of Education launched a project known as the *Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE)*, which was completed in 1986. This study came up with various useful findings that could contribute to the reform; however, it was shelved (Tekeste 1990; Seyoum 1996). Some of the findings of this study regarding curriculum development and teaching learning process reveal the following (MOE, 1986): First, textbooks do not reflect national educational objectives and most of them pay attention to the teaching rather than learning dimensions. Second, Amharic as a medium of instruction in primary school (grades 1-6) has created difficulties for students whose mother tongue is not Amharic. Third, using English as medium of instruction from grade seven up to grade twelve created difficulties both for teachers and as well as students. Fourth, the stages of the education ladder i.e. primary (1-6), junior secondary (7-8) and senior secondary (9-12) were not satisfactorily integrated and co-ordinated. Fifth, the textbooks then used were poor in quality; there was lack laboratory equipment, and above all, there was incompetence among the teaching staff

In order to overcome these problems the Ten Year Plan was taken as a preferred alternative. This plan was intended to promote polytechnic

education; to make the curriculum relevant; to intensify the eradication of illiteracy; to strengthen Amharic as the medium of instruction at primary level; to improve teacher education, to upgrade the teaching profession, and to provide education to the physically and mentally handicapped (PMGSE's analysis in Seyoum 1996).

During this period there were two structures of education, viz. the Transitional and Polytechnic experimental programs. The structure of the transitional programme consisted of a 'Three-tier' system (6-2-4) that was not changed after the Revolution (McNab 1989). The other structure was connected with the anticipated education. There was an intention to replace this structure with polytechnic education that was thought to consist of 8-2-2 structure. Though there had been an attempt to implement some of the new changes by 1991 with the collapse of the regime, the Ten Year Plan had not come into effect. The period from early 1990 to the end of the Derg regime (May 1991) was characterized by liberalization of economic reform, i.e. a 'mixed' planned and market economy (Pausewang, 1994: 217). An attempt to revise the curriculum in view of this change was made, however, without result. The general polytechnic that was on experimental stage was supposed to replace the Transitional curriculum. Although considerable professional efforts were made to implement the polytechnic education program at the national scale, and the overall objective was to obtain a middle-level trained manpower, it was not then found feasible in terms of in-puts and other situational factors to achieve its goals. Particularly, both lack of sufficient financial investment and its coincidence with the apparent downfall of the communist ideology in its country of origins (Soviet Union) left everything in vain except its slim memories (ICDR 1996).

7. The Fourth Chapter of Modern Education – Post 1991

When a change of government had taken place in May 1991, a reform has automatically begun. Peace, stability, democratization, and liberalization of the economy were some of the changes considered by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (EHRC 2003: 11). Education was one of the areas that the reform focussed on. Two major policy guidelines were in place: a) a policy guideline produced based on the Charter adopted by the 'Conference

for Peace and Democracy' in 1991, and b) The Education and Training Policy which was adopted in 1994.

Before the adoption and implementation of the new Education and Training Policy, major provisions of the policy guidelines were produced based on the charter adopted by the 'Conference for Peace and Democracy' in 1991(EHRCO: 2003: 27):

i)   Amharic as a medium of instruction would continue in the areas where it is the mother tongue.

ii)   Oromigna, Sidamigna, Wolayitigna and Tigrigna would be used as media of instruction as of 1991/92. [Latin script was chosen for Oromigna, Somalgna and Wolaitigna while the Geez script was retained for Amharic and Tigrigna]

iii)   Studies would be carried [out] on the use of other nationality languages as media of instruction as soon as possible, while, in the meantime, education would be offered as in the past.

iv)   English would continue serving as the medium of instruction for junior and secondary school, and that it would be taught as a subject as of grade one.

Based on this guideline the translation of the Amharic textbooks used in the elementary schools into the above specified languages was made through the coordination of ICDR. Two major criticisms were forwarded by EHRCO (2003: 27-8) on this task. First, the decision made on choosing the Latin script "has totally deprived a large number of people in all regions of the benefits of literacy gained in the campaigns carried out during the previous, military government." Second, although curriculum development and textbook writing require skill and experience, the translation work was carried out without any prior investigation of the constraints that were to be encountered during implementation.

Although minor modification or adjustment of curriculum development was necessary, it was felt by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) to make a paradigm shift on objectives, contents, mode of delivery, structure, evaluation, etc. of education. To this end the Education and Training Policy was adopted in 1994. The policy was aimed at to address the abject problems reflected in the education sector of the country which are: the irrelevance of the curriculum with clearly defined objectives, ii) the high emphasis given for theoretical knowledge with little connection to day-to-day life, iii) the domination of rote learning, iv) de-emphasizing problem

solving, v) overcrowding of schools, vi) the scarcity of instructional materials, vii) insufficient training materials, viii) the high emphasis given to centralization of education, ix) ignoring the issue of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity. (TGE, 1994): i) A few writers identified other problems. Teklehaimanot noted thus: "The schooling system in Ethiopia undermined many Ethiopian cultures and imposed cultural values of a single dominating 'national culture' upon the others" (Teklehaimanot 1999: 6).

With the intent of overcoming such problems the Transitional Government of Ethiopia made the following major changes: a) decentralization of the education system, b) the use of nationality languages as media of instruction, and c) adopting a new structure of education. The Education and Training Policy consists of objectives of education and training, overall strategy and education areas of special attention and action priority (TGE, 1994).

General objectives and specific objectives are indicated in the Education and Training Policy. The General Objectives of education and training (TGE, 1994: 13) are to:

1) Develop the physical and mental potential and problem capacity of the individual
2) Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely
3) Bring up citizens who are endowed with democratic culture and discipline and who respect human rights, stand for the well being people, as well as for equality, justice and peace
4) Bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetic and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination science and technology in society.
5) Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environmental and social needs.

The structure of education indicated in the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia is 8-2-2 (MOE 1996: 95). The primary education consists of grades 1-8 and again this is subdivided into two cycles of Basic Education (1-4) and General Education (5-8). The cycles following primary education

are the general secondary education grades 9-10 and the preparatory/ senior secondary grades 11-12.

The medium of instruction is indicated in Language and Education Section of the Education and Training Policy (TGE, April 1994: 23-24):

a) Cognisant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.[†]

b) Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own languages or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.

c) The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area.

d) Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication.

e) English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education.

f) Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language for cultural and international relations.

g) English will be taught as a subject starting from grade one.

Based on this policy, a new curriculum was developed and implemented in different languages where over 20 languages have been employed as medium of instructions depending on the objective reality of each region (MOE, 2002: 39).

The responsibility of developing the flowchart and the syllabus was given to the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR). Based on the approved syllabus the preparation of textbooks for primary schools (grades 1-8) is the responsibility of the regions. While the preparation of textbooks and teacher guides for grades 9-12 (with the exception of the different nationality languages) is the responsibility ICDR.

The objectives of the new education were not implemented at once. A trial program was made. After the trial of the new curriculum,

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[†] According to FDRE (1995: 97) a "Nation, nationality or People" for the purpose of this constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory."

implementation took place at two grade levels every year since 1996. The new curriculum for secondary education was planned to be implemented as of 1999/2000 at grade 9 and continue to be implemented every year at every grade level up to 2003. On the bases of this schedule syllabus and teaching and learning materials were developed. Follow up studies and evaluation schemes were made while the new curriculum was on trial in the experimental schools. Formative and summative evaluations on the implementation of curriculum for the primary school (1-8), the first cycle secondary school (9-10) and the second cycle secondary school (11-12) were made (See the Executive Summary Reports of ICDR, May 2002, March 2004 and June 2005). The findings regarding primary school indicate the following: although most schools tried to make the society to take part in the education process, their participation is little. Contents were found to be beyond the maturity level and the learning capacity of pupils in most cases; pupils' performance was found to be below average. Some of the evaluation findings on First Cycle (9-10) Secondary Education Curriculum reveal the following: first students scored far below average (35.8%) on profile attainment tests, which is below the expectation; second weaknesses observed regarding the quality of curricular materials (some of the objectives stated were not realizable; lack of clear instructions for exercises; language difficulty; lack of variety of assessment techniques and activities; inadequacy of the allotted periods to cover contents, lack of clarity of pictures, charts and diagrams etc.)

The findings of the 2nd Cycle of the Secondary School (Preparatory Programme) curriculum indicate (ICDR, 2005): The overall profile attainment of the students is below 50 %. The quality of the curriculum materials has major limitations: lack of stating objectives clearly, sequencing contents logically, using simple and clear language in the textbooks, applying appropriate methods in relation to active learning etc. Community participation in school affairs is effective.

In the findings that concern the first cycle and second cycle of secondary education, students overall profile attainment was below 50%, which is indeed worrisome and hence requires due attention.

The other study made by Flores, the external reviewer of the 2004 Ethiopian primary school curriculum reveals the following (ICDR 2004: 49-

50): a) incompatibility of the contents with students development (age level), b) integration of curriculum is superficial, c) lack of considering the views of teachers in the curriculum, d) the inclusion of obsolete issues/views in grades 5-8 curriculum materials.

Some of the recommendation made in the same study include (ICDR, February 2004: 49-50): i) a users conference held annually organized separately for each subject at different times is one way to include the participation of stakeholders in the development of the curriculum; ii) a continuous review of the decentralization of the curriculum should be conducted in order to identify the strengths and weakness of the policy, and to suggest solutions for its improvement; ii) there is a need for supplementary material in order to enrich the curriculum; iii) a research on textbook writing in accordance with the developmental level and maturity of students should be conducted; iv) teaming up experienced teachers and writers for writing textbooks; and finally v) the need for thematic units that will help teachers develop integrated unit plans.

Although localizing of the curriculum is appreciated, the weaknesses that affect the curriculum development and implementation were reported (EHRC 2003: 69). These are lack of human resources in the curriculum development (deficient in the regions), the time given for preparing the curriculum materials was too short, the cumulative result is that materials produced are less than the desired quality, the duration to conduct tryouts in most cases was less than a semester, formative evaluations carried out were not up to the usual standard. Contents that used to be covered at higher grades have been pushed down to lower ones, rendering the content of the subjects taught to go beyond a reasonable level of difficulty for the average student.

Although efforts have been made to realize the intent of the Training and Education Policy, the consideration of cultural factors in curriculum development and its implementation is equivocal. In light of this Amare Asgedom (1998) indicated that the implementation of " The Education and Training Policy (1994) – which aims at making curriculum relevant by considering cultural factors – will not, however, be easy as the inherited curriculum was developed on the model of modernization which requires a completely radical approach to make operational the intent of cultural synthesis in curriculum development and implementation." Similarly Woube Kassaye (2002, 2004) indicated that despite some attempts made to

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include culture in the curriculum there is no systematic way of considering culture in the curriculum development.

Public participation in curriculum development is vital. Referring to the experience of countries such as Japan, Canada and New Zealand would be useful. Skilbeck (1989: 23) writes:

> In Saskatchewan [a province in Canada], the 1984 review of curriculum and instruction attracted some 40,000 written items in the form of completed questions, briefs and letters. Likewise, in New Zealand quite remarkable levels of participation were achieved in ... the completed Review of Curriculum for schools: 21,500 submissions in response to the committee's invitation to members of the public to make their views known and 10,000 responses to the draft report.

When it comes to the Ethiopian experience, an attempt was made to revise the curriculum since January 2004, where the following steps were considered (ICDR, 2004): i) Discussing formative and summative evaluations of the curriculum as well as the findings which were gathered form teachers, students, parents, and others by the help of focus group discussion; ii) gathering opinion and comments made by prominent people, representatives of Civic Society and pertinent organizations; and iii) gathering comments and suggestions made by professionals aiming at using comments so that they can improve the syllabus.

Some authors claim that there was no little or no national debate in the country's education endeavour. Contrary to this, the MOE underlined that experts from different institutions have been actively involved in drafting the policy (MOE 2002). Furthermore discussions were made on the draft policy at different involving teachers where many useful ideas came in order to enrich the draft policy document. According to Nardos Abebe (1988), such a policy should be viewed as dynamic and evolving instrument that could be improved through periodic evaluation and review by all stakeholders.

8. Summary and Concluding Remarks

As has been shown above, in the Ethiopian context traditional education mainly refers to Church and Quranic teachings. And these institutions have been offering various lessons for centuries. However, this traditional education has never got the attention it deserves from scholars. When it comes to "modern" or Western education system, Ethiopia's experience is only a century old. Nonetheless, this modern education system has passed through different chapters or phases, each of which has its own characteristic feature. It can be concluded that modern education in Ethiopia started in a vacuum, meaning that except the experiences of traditional education the country had no experience in education. The major problems of education in the first chapter include: there was no standard policy, the curricula, textbooks and the medium of instruction were foreign dominated, there was a department charged with providing direction for the education sector. By and large, despite these problems, the initiative taken to introduce modern education in the country is commendable. Above all the reconciliatory mechanisms exercised to mitigate or overcome the abject challenges of the clergy and the aristocracy was exemplary.

No modern education was given in Ethiopia during the Italian occupation because the Italians destroyed the system and killed many educated Ethiopians. The impact of the Italian occupation had taken several years to recuperate. This created a huge gap in the country's educational Endeavour.

As compared with the previous achievements, an outstanding progress was made during the second chapter of modern education. Many schools were built throughout the country. About four curriculum reforms were made. Furthermore, attempts were made to experiment the curriculum and to change the education system through the Education Sector Review. However, there were still serious shortcomings. The curriculum was highly dominated by contents borrowed from the experience of other countries. Besides, students suffered from language difficulty, there was shortage of qualified teachers and curriculum experts, and there was no attempt to revise the curriculum.

The third chapter of modern education was dominated by socialist ideology. A program known as the New Educational Objectives and Directives was launched. This was a program that emphasized polytechnic education. Then

it was believed that it must be experimented before it is adopted as an educational policy. The experiment was then immediately in place and practiced for about eleven years. However, it was learnt later on that this experiment was a failure.

The fourth phase, which refers to the post-1991 period, brought about drastic changes on the curriculum. Decentralization of education and change of medium of instruction were some of the changes. Textbooks were translated to fit the new needs. New curriculum was prepared for different levels of education. However, most of the things were made hastily. As a result, teachers were not sufficiently oriented. There were shortages of textbooks.

Generally speaking, the understanding and practice of curriculum development in Ethiopia at different periods varied greatly. Although there were few good practices of curriculum development, by and large it has encountered several problems. There emphasis given to Ethiopianize the curriculum has been little. The curriculum usually subsumes things alien uncritically. Public and professional engagement in curriculum development is little or totally missed in most phases of modern education. Although extensive studies were made, there was no much attempt to use the findings of these studies. People learn from history, however. There seems to be the urgency that we should have the tradition of acknowledging good experiences and efforts from the past. This tradition is indispensable to be competitive in the current global order. One of the major factors to enhance utilization of knowledge is to have strong foundation and practice in curriculum development.

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