5. Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis

Chapter Five states the findings and analyse them in light of observations made during school visits and the general Education Sector Development Program. The individual scores are available in appendices 6 and 7. At first, the students' results in the EPER placement test will be examined. The general reading levels of the students will be commented upon, followed by statistical descriptions and inferential analysis. Then the questionnaires and observations will be discussed. Finally implications for the ESDP will be discussed in relation to the findings from the two.

5.1 Reading Levels

The reading levels given in the EPER score guide have already been explained in Chapter Four. Tabulating the results of the 454 students provides us with a very grim picture of the students' reading ability in all groups. Tekeste (1990:32) warns of an imminent educational crisis due to the fact that both "teachers and students concentrate on the exam rather than on the acquisition and retention of knowledge." This statement was made during the previous government, which believed in a planned economy. Therefore, any graduate was guaranteed a job and salary under the socialist system. As a result, students were more interested in getting a degree or a diploma by any means rather than ensuring that they had marketable skills.

Furthermore, Tekeste (1990:87) states that the system during the last government was only involved in "the creation of a pool of unemployable citizens with expectations that could not be met by that society … ." This is slightly harsh in that the previous

government was trying to produce all-rounded socialist citizens and was experimenting in polytechnic education. However, the results are indisputable in that many graduates lacked the skills which their diploma or degree certified that they had.

Unfortunately, this legacy appears to have continued with the present government. The reading levels indicate that the Grade Eight students lack the reading skills that students at this level require.

Table 7: **Reading Levels of Students on EPER Placement Test**

Group	% at S	% at G	% at F	% at E
Treated	90.4	5.97	1.59	1.99
Untreated	81.28	10.83	6.89	0.98
Combined	86.34	8.14	3.96	1.54

Table 7 tells us that the majority of Grade Eight students in government schools cannot read with sufficient proficiency in English to cope with their studies. 86% or 392 of all the students tested are at the kindergarten level of only being able to distinguish the alphabet and read word cards. The figure is almost the same for both groups at 90% and 81%, implying that the students will not have benefited or suffered from the presence or absence of readers as most of them cannot read in English in the first place. Levels G and F are both outside the accepted reading levels of a Grade Eight student and these two levels make up for 12% of the students. The lowest acceptable level for a Grade Eight student of E barely accounts for 2% of all the students. It is to be remembered that the lowest grade of the private school (Sandford) Grade Eight students was a level D.

With 86% or 392 of all the students able only to distinguish the alphabet and read word cards, deductions can be made as to what kind of readers the majority of the students are. Alderson (2000:19) states that less proficient readers are basically "word-bound" and lack the skills of rapidly and accurately recognising the words. As a result, this slow pace of lexical identification impacts negatively on short-term memory and other aspects that enable the reader to make meaning out of a text. It is highly unlikely that word-bound readers would be able to read between or beyond the lines, as they find simply stringing the words together into sentences a particularly laborious task. Word recognition, knowledge of syntax and structure and some background knowledge about the content of the subject being read, all have to interact simultaneously. The aim of extensive reading is partially to develop automaticity in these areas and a word-bound reader cannot read fast enough to enable these factors to interact meaningfully.

Alderson (2000:18) says that good readers are both rapid and precise in their word recognition. They take in the letter features simultaneously and recognise all the letters in the words. He states that this ability is a key indicator of general reading ability. Proficient readers after initial word recognition are able to move on to prediction and monitoring, as they use less capacity to analyse visual stimulus. It is self-evident that these word-bound readers cannot develop these skills.

The majority of the students either lack the simplest reading skills that the supplementary readers are meant to develop or have not acquired the threshold level that is necessary for reading. Urquhart and Weir (1998:72) comment that "The notion of a threshold level

seems commonsensical: no matter how good are reading skills are in the L1, or how expert we are in the content area, we are not likely to make much of a text in a language, which is totally unknown to us". Therefore, there is the possibility that these students have some reading skills in Amharic but are unable to transfer them to English because they lack a fundamental grasp of English.

There is also the possibility that what the students encounter on the page is in no way related to their experiences of life and their way of thinking. Urquhart and Weir (1998:69) state that there is ample research to prove that background knowledge plays a crucial part in reading. What a student knows about reading and literacy, as well as what he knows about the subject matter, affects both his comprehension and his system of comprehending.

The Ethiopian students who were used to validate the test come from middle class and upper class backgrounds and could possibly have a significantly different orientation to literacy and to background knowledge. Moreover, they learn in smaller sized groups and the teachers are better motivated owing to better salaries and more efficient administration systems. The students in government schools tend to be mainly from lower-middle class and lower class families and could conceivably lack sufficient awareness and sensitivity to literacy and reading texts. Teachers tend to be demotivated and the whole learning atmosphere could be improved. Individual students who are high achievers tend to be good, owing to individual efforts. However, what is more frightening is that starting from Grade Nine, regardless of socio-economic background, the medium

of instruction switches completely into English, leading to "frustrations connected with their inability to follow the teaching–learning process" (Tekeste,1990:26).

If these scores are accepted as valid and reliable, then we can conclude that the 'Null Hypothesis', which states that there is no significant relationship between the reading skills of the students and the provision of supplementary readers, will hold true. However, to avoid making any hasty generalisations, it is advisable to look at more of the results before ascertaining the Null hypothesis.

5.2 Statistical Description of Results

The raw scores were all entered into a computer and a statistical software package (excel) was used to compute the central tendencies. The measures of central tendencies were the following:

Table 8: **Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Treated Group**

MEAN	10.480159
MEDIAN	8
MODE	3
VARIANCE	85.035321
STANDARD DEVIATION	9.2214598

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Table 9: **Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Untreated Group**

MEAN	15.10294118
MEDIAN	12
MODE	9
VARIANCE	109.6511678
STANDARD DEVIATION	10.47144535

The statistical measures are ironic in that they appear to portray that the untreated group did slightly better than the treated group in the placement test.

5.2.1 The Mean

The mean of the treated group was 10.5. Medhanealem scored 14.7 and Entoto 6.5, so the average of these two is 10.5. On the other hand, the untreated group had a higher mean score of 15.1, with Kokebetsibah and Kebena scoring 17.9 and 10.6 respectively. On the whole, the untreated group's mean of 15.1 was greater than the treated group's of 10.5. At the school level, the schools were intermixed with the treated school scoring second and fourth and the untreated school scoring first and third. It is of interest to note that the mean of the first school was more than double that of the lowest scoring school. Therefore, this would suggest that there are factors that do enhance the learning of students. This intermixing of treated and untreated schools also points in the direction that the donating of readers to certain schools has produced no marked effect on the reading skills of the students. It is discouraging to note that the means of both groups barely reach 10% of the entire 141 questions, once again reconfirming that the students in Grade Eight are hardly literate in English. In light of the fact that Ethiopia had now

moved on to a free-market economy and people are not guaranteed jobs, these students face the danger of finding themselves without jobs in the future.

5.2.2   The Median

The median was 8 and 12 for the schools involved in the project and those not involved respectively. Once again, this would indicate that the median of the untreated group is higher than that of the treated group owing to a better performance by the group as a whole, rather than by a few high scoring students. The fact that the means differed could have been because of exceptionally high scores by a few students. But the median difference shows that the scores differed because of the performance of the group as a whole.

The median of the individual schools was 6, 9, 13 and 15 for Entoto, Kebena, Medhanealem and Kokebetsibah, respectively. Once again, the school with the highest median is more than double that of the lowest, indicating that though the scores as a whole are unimpressive, some are much worse than others.

5.2.3. The Mode

The mode for the treated group was 3, and for the untreated group 9. At school level, this broke down into the modes of 5, 7, 3 and 9 for Entoto, Kebena, Medhanealem and Kokebetsibah respectively. It is interesting to note that Medhanealem had the lowest mode while both its mean and median are the second highest. This is why it is necessary

to go into all the measures of central tendency as only looking at one could give a partial picture.

5.2.4   The Variance

The variance of the treated group at <u>85.035321</u> was less than that of the untreated at <u>109.6511678.</u> This probably indicates that the scores of the untreated group were more greatly distributed around the mean than that of the treated group.

5.2.5   The Standard Deviation

The standard deviation is more commonly used as an indicator of the dispersion of the scores in a distribution. The standard deviations of both groups were very similar at <u>9.2214598</u> and <u>10.47144535</u> for the treated and untreated groups, respectively. This is as expected in that both groups were basically selected from a similar body and should be fairly close to the mean.

5.3 Inferential Analysis of the Results (t-tests)

The above five measures basically give one a general idea of the common characteristics of the groups and descriptively provide a relatively exact picture. However, to discover general principles and relationships between variables, one is forced to generalise and make predictions not only about the sample taken, but of the entire population as a whole. Therefore, inferential data analysis, in this case the t-test, is used to come up with generalisations about the entire population.

Although it has been ascertained that there are differences between the means, medians and modes of the treated and untreated group, it has to be ascertained whether or not these differences have come about through mere chance. They may have occurred owing to individual difference or to one group being exposed to conditions that have brought about a meaningful or significant change. As it was the untreated group that scored relatively higher, common sense would tell us that that the differences are not significant. However, this remains an opinion rather than a fact until so proved by the parametric t-test.

If the distribution of the scores of the untreated group vary more than 2.5% at either end of the distribution curve, then one can safely state that there is a significant difference between the two groups. The result of the significance level of the distribution, otherwise known as the t critical value, is obtained from a t-table which for this study of over 120 students sets the t critical value at 1.96 at .05. This means taking into consideration factors that normally vary in the social sciences, if the difference between the two groups is greater than 1.96, then one can safely conclude that the variance is not caused by coincidence, but rather by an interfering factor. The result of the t-test on the two groups came up with the value of t at 1.19 stating unequivocally that there is no significant difference between those schools involved in the Primary Readers Project and those that did not receive the donation of readers.

In research terms, one could say that there has been a rejection of Hypothesis One and an acceptance of the Null Hypothesis. Hypothesis One proposes that the provision of

supplementary readers to primary schools has produced a statistically significant improvement in the reading skills of the students. The Null Hypothesis maintains that there is no significant relationship between the reading skills of the students and the provision of supplementary readers.

In short, the question of "What effect has the provision of primary readers had on the reading skills of students?" has been answered with the blunt reply of "no effect whatsoever." This is staggering when one considers the time and money used to actually obtain and distribute these readers to the schools. It also has serious implications about the efficiency of the teaching-learning process as the vast majority of students in government schools have spent eight years of their life learning English and can hardly read in the language. There are several possible explanations that could be forwarded to elaborate on this apparently bizarre result.

The first one is the minimum threshold of linguistic knowledge. Anderson (2000:38) states that students will not be able to transfer any of their reading skills from their mother tongue to the second language, if they have not obtained this minimal threshold. He explains Clarke's "Short-Circuit" hypothesis that posits that successful first language readers cannot compensate for reading deficiencies in the second language because inadequate linguistic knowledge of the second language short-circuits any possible transfer.

Another possible explanation is that the students have not actually used the readers. In elaborating in the advantages of mixed-methodology research design (Creswell, 1994:183) actually gives an illustration of a study that found that there was no significant difference in the occurrence of infantile diarrhoea between children coming from homes with refrigerators and those from homes without refrigerators. The qualitative part of the study came up with the findings that the infant formula bottles were not kept in the refrigerators, which were used for making and storing ice for the family to sell and get money.

Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:1) refer to a study that developing countries may not actually benefit as much from extensive reading schemes due to a combination of factors including a lack of materials, overloaded and demotivated teachers and the like.

Consequently, a further investigation of the other results may shed some light on the matter as the questionnaire and observations deal with the kind of utilisation capacity government owned primary schools in Addis Ababa have for effectively utilising the readers.

Nevertheless, these results clearly portray the fundamental need for closely monitoring and evaluating projects, and then using the feedback to modify future projects. A vast project entitled "Support for English Language Teaching", which changed the entire set of English language textbooks and trained curriculum developers, teacher trainers and English teachers was not evaluated in the past. The Ministry of Education's stand was

that it was obvious that this project would have brought about positive changes. Therefore, the whole evaluation project was seen as a donor's effort to give itself a pat on the back. The Ministry said that it would rather spend the money that was to be used for the evaluation exercise for funding another project. These results clearly show that such a complacent attitude is misplaced in that projects and interventions proved beneficial abroad may be hampered by specific local conditions in Ethiopia. Therefore, all projects must be proven to function properly and produce results in the Ethiopian context. Small funds saved by not carrying out evaluation exercises might lead to the wasting of huge funds owing to improperly executed or unfruitful projects.

5.4 Staff Questionnaire and Observations

Librarians and teachers of Grade Eight completed the staff questionnaire. The questionnaires have been divided into those filled out by the teaching staff and those filled out by the librarians. The analysis of the answers to the questionnaires is slightly unorthodox in that questionnaires are usually used to gather quantitative data, whereas in this study the responses are looked at qualitatively. Anderson (2000:91) reminds us that complex research designs could reveal greater complexity among variables and the analysis of the questionnaires through the researcher's observations and insights are meant to complement and add flesh to the quantitative findings about the students' reading abilities.

5.4.1 The Librarians

All four librarians appeared uncertain about their ability to read and understand the questionnaire and chose to complete it with the researcher or go over it again with him after

completing some of the questions. This provided good opportunities for insights into how and why the librarians answered certain questions. Noticeably, one of them was literally terrified of doing the 'wrong' thing and went out in the middle of filling the questionnaire to check that the officials had given permission for her to complete the questionnaire. The same librarian wanted to see the questionnaires filled out by other librarians to ensure that she was not saying anything radically different or possibly offensive to the administration. On being denied this request, she repeatedly sought reassurance from the researcher that her answers were acceptable and seemed terrified that this was some hidden evaluation of her with unspecified consequences for her employment and promotion. Sadly, the same attitude was reflected in a deputy-director who was co-operative and friendly on the first visit, when the director happened to be absent, but then became unsure and evasive on further visits, when the director was present. Fortunately, the director turned out to be co-operative, giving the green light to conduct the research. Nevertheless, an unhealthy suspicion of the unknown and fear of doing the slightest thing without approval of superiors was evident in the schools, as it is in other government institutions. The researcher's prior contact with most of the schools and some of the staff members helped them to open up and frankly discuss the questionnaires and their difficulties to some extent.

5.4.1.1 Bio-data

Three of the four librarians chose to fill in their names on the questionnaire, which was optional and they could have remained anonymous. This probably reflected that they trusted the researcher to use the information ethically.

None of the four had formal training as librarians: two were trained as teachers, one as a secretary and the other as an accountant. Two of them had been assigned to the library when their pervious posts had been cancelled in a restructuring exercise. The third felt that she had been "down-graded" from being a library assistant in a secondary school to librarian in the primary school in the same restructuring exercise. The last one had been assigned to the library owing to health reasons exacerbated by classroom chalk. This use of the library as a "hold-all" or "miscellaneous" department of the schools was further exemplified in one of the schools where the library was not even swept regularly as the cleaners had "too much work elsewhere on the school compound." The librarian did her own sweeping when the dust reached intolerable levels.

Regarding experience, the librarians had 10, 7, 4 and 3 years of experience working in a library. Some of them had up to 30 years work experience, but this was in the respective professions for which they had originally been trained. Obviously, the duties of a librarian were considered as so commonplace that anyone could perform them.

5.4.1.2 Variety of Readers

The two librarians in Entoto Amba and Medhanealem schools felt that the English supplementary readers in their libraries were 'sufficiently varied'. Considering the fact that they had 124 titles from the Primary Reader Scheme and another dozen or so from the Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English project and other donations, their

answer is acceptable. One of the other librarians also felt that her library had "sufficiently varied" readers, but seeing that the library hardly had a dozen fiction books, her response should be taken with a grain of salt. The last librarian stated that the readers were "not varied" and seeing her stock, her answer is acceptable. However, she pointed out that Plan International was about to donate 2,305 books worth 32,000 Birr and these included English supplementary readers.

5.4.1.3 Quantity of Readers

Regarding the quantity of the readers, three of the librarians stated that the quantity was "insufficient". Considering the number of students in each school, this was certainly the best answer to choose from the alternatives. A fourth stated that the library had "only single copies", but was later embarrassed to find out that around six titles of readers donated through the British Council's Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English project had over 40 copies each. This was a clear indicator of how unfamiliar this particular librarian was with the books in her library.

5.4.1.4 Reading Relevance to Language Mastery

In responding to what extent they felt supplementary reading contributes to mastery of English, three of them chose the answer "A lot". The fourth chose "Not much", then went on to explain orally that as the children rarely did any supplementary reading, she felt that it did not contribute much to their English proficiency, or lack of it. She explained that students usually went to the library as a quiet place to do their homework, rather than as a resource centre for books. In a number of visits to the libraries in these schools, students

were indeed observed almost always doing their homework and only using textbooks, dictionaries and grammars from the shelves. Here lay the key issue. The donation of the books alone is considered sufficient to ensure that the students do reading. But in actual fact, the "treated" group were not treated. The conscientious use of the readers by the students could have improved the students reading skills, as has been proved all over the world. However, as owing to a variety of reasons the students did not use the books their reading skills were no different from those of schools that did not have supplementary readers.

5.4.1.5 Reading for Pleasure

Three of the librarians said that they thought that hardly any of the students read for pleasure and that at most they opened the books to admire the coloured pictures inside. So they opted for the "0-35%" answer and the results of the EPER reading levels confirmed their observations. The fourth hesitatingly selected "36-70%", but this seemed to be more as a justification for her continued employment in the library.

5.4.1.6 English Reading Proficiency

Asked to estimate what percentage of Grade Eight students are able to read well in English, two of the librarians preferred the non-committal option of "insufficient opportunity to observe". One defensively stated that she could only say that they sat down with the books. Another said that knowing about the students' reading skills was the teacher's responsibility. This compartmentalisation of duties and responsibilities was observed in several areas and will be commented upon later in this paper. The fourth librarian said that

"36-70%" of the Grade Eight students read well in English; however, reviewing the results in the test, this figure appears an optimistic hope.

5.4.1.7 Librarian Assistance

In response to the question if librarians assist the students in selecting appropriate readers, three automatically chose "Always". The fourth wavered between "Often" and "Sometimes" and decided upon the former. She then truthfully explained that since the students hardly ever ask for assistance, this answer reflected how she would be willing to assist them. Seeing the lack of knowledge of most of them about the readers in their libraries, it is very doubtful as to whether they could offer assistance and guidance if the occasion arose. Moreover, as the present government has introduced various evaluation means, the librarians felt that they were facing enough criticism without self-criticism being added to it.

5.4.1.8 Teacher Assistance

Ironically, this fear of criticism did not extend to criticising others. Two of the librarians selected "Never" to the question whether teachers assisted the students in selecting appropriate readers. To be on the safe-side, the third first chose "Insufficient opportunity to observe", but then realising that this was not an option as she was in the library changed her response to "Sometimes". The fourth defensively chose "Always" to cover for her colleagues. However, this was in vain, as the English teacher said that she was not familiar with any of the supplementary readers in the library.

5.4.1.9 Supplementing the Textbook

Three of the librarians forthrightly said that none of the teachers used the supplementary readers to supplement the textbook, so opted for "0-35%". The fourth modestly said that she had "Insufficient opportunity to observe".

5.4.1.10 Appropriacy of Titles

When asked about the most and least appropriate titles for Grade Eight students, only one of the librarians showed obvious signs of having read them. She stated that *Girl Against Jungle* and *Little Women* were quite enjoyable and she thought them appropriate whereas, *Things Fall Apart* and *Stories from Many Lands* were difficult to follow and so probably least appropriate. Although her choices were based on her own tastes, she, at least, had something to say about the readers.

The other three could not even come up with the titles of the readers and had to physically go to the shelves. They simply picked out any book, which readily came to hand. Under the most appropriate titles came *The Boy and The Donkey*, *The Flying Spy*, *The Good Wife and Other Stories from Afar*, *The First Gift and Other Stories from Gambella*, *The River Line* and *The Company of my Shadow*. Interestingly, the third and fourth were produced in the Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English and were earlier described by one of the librarians as never even being looked at because their pictures were not in colour. The last two were simply the two biggest books on the shelf and are probably too difficult for senior secondary students. However, having chosen them as the most appropriate, this librarian said that none of the books were inappropriate. The other two librarians randomly picked

out *At the Farm*, *Helicopter*, *Another Love* and *Love Changes Everything* and claimed that they were either too easy or too difficult for Grade Eight.

5.4.1.11 Library Opening Hours

All four libraries had opening hours that basically corresponded to the school timetable. They opened at 08:30 and closed at around 16:30 with the librarians taking an hour or so off for their lunch-break. As the students have classes consecutively during their shift, they have to come back to the school in the other shift, if they want to use the library. One school had a library period during the week. Of the four schools, only one was regularly open whenever the researcher went to the schools. The others were often closed with excuses such as the librarian was sick, or that she had not returned after the lunch-break, or that students had exams on that day. One of the libraries was even closed for a whole month for a paint job in the middle of the semester. Moreover, none of the libraries was ever observed with more than 40 or so students in them during visits by the researcher. Nevertheless, three of the librarians said they felt the opening hours were "Excellent". The fourth said they were "Unsatisfactory" as the students had no free time in the school compound when the library was open. The three probably selected "Excellent" as they might have feared that suggestions for improvement would negatively impact on their working hours as they might be expected to work inconvenient hours.

5.4.1.12 Relevant Materials

Three of the four librarians felt that the amount of relevant material was "Unsatisfactory", while the fourth felt that it was "Good". Unsurprisingly, the fourth was from one of the

schools that had benefited from the Primary Reader Scheme, Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English, and donations from an NGO called Emmanuel Home and the Kennedy Library of Addis Ababa University. Despite all these donations, many of the books were not written for primary level, but the relatively greater number of books probably influenced her reply.

5.4.1.13 Number of Tables and Chairs

One of the schools had four small tables and fifteen chairs for teachers, and fourteen students' desks (i.e. a bench for three attached to a table). The second had eighteen fairly big tables with six chairs around each, adding up to one hundred and eight chairs. The third had only seven students' desks. The fourth had thirty-two students' desks, and two small tables with eight chairs for teachers. Ironically, the librarian of the third and smallest library felt the number of tables and chairs was "Satisfactory". The librarians of the first and fourth schools said they were "Unsatisfactory", while the librarian of the third school said the number was "Excellent". When comparing the number of students in each school with the number of tables and chairs, all the libraries could be said to have inadequate furniture. However, comparatively speaking, the number in the second school is indeed "Excellent". Much more worrying is that the chairs were never fully occupied on even one of the researcher's visits to the schools. At most three fourths of the chairs were full.

5.4.1.14 Size and Ambience

The four librarians selected the four choices of "Excellent", "Good", "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory" to describe the size of the libraries. The sizes of the libraries were

approximately $72m^2$, $64m^2$, $40m^2$ and $12m^2$. Ironically again, the library with a floor space of $12m^2$ was rated as "Good". Once again the size is incomparable with the number of students the libraries are supposed to serve.

Regarding ambience, three of the libraries were in secluded corners of each school, while the fourth was in a corner not far from the main gate. Two of the librarians said that the ambience was "Excellent", while the third felt it was "Good". Seeing how empty and quiet the libraries were, these were valid answers. The fourth said her library ambience was "Unsatisfactory". As her library was the one to which a cleaner had not been assigned and had a fine layer of dust over everything, her answer was also justified.

5.4.1.15   Access to Books and Borrowing Facilities

All four libraries did not allow students to borrow books to take home officially. One of the librarians said she sometimes let a few good students take books home over the weekend, while another said special students belonging to the "library club" could take books home. In three of the schools, students in Grades One to Four were not even allowed into the libraries, while in the fourth this prohibition was extended to students in Grades Five and Six as well. This decision seemed to have been made with the opinion that the students in higher grades were more mature and could take better care of the books as well as exploit them more effectively. To make matters worse, even the existing books could not be handled by the students given access to the libraries, unless the librarians gave them specific permission to do so. The usual procedure was that the librarian would take the books off the shelves and give them to the students.

Despite all this, only two of the librarians felt that access to books was "Unsatisfactory". The other two felt that access was "Good" and "Excellent". Even the almost non-existent borrowing facilities were labelled as "Excellent" and "Satisfactory" by two of the librarians and as "Unsatisfactory" by the other two. It is these types of answers that cause a great disparity between the situation on the ground and what is planned on paper, further confounding educational planning.

5.4.1.16 Promotion of Books

Three of the librarians felt that the promotion of books was "Unsatisfactory" as there was no means for the students to know about the books that existed in the libraries. Apparently, however, they did not appear to feel that the promotion of the books was their duty, as there was no evidence of their trying to make promotional posters or other means of promoting the books, whatsoever. The fourth said that the promotion of books was "Excellent" and justified her answer by saying that the members of the library club told others about the books in the library.

5.4.1.17 Situation and Access to Library

Two of the librarians stated that the situation and access to the library was "Excellent", the third said it was "Good" and the fourth that it was "Satisfactory". As the libraries were physically on the school compounds and fairly close to the classrooms, these answers appear acceptable. A long flight of steps to one of the libraries would obviously not make it so accessible to physically handicapped students. However, in light of the small number of

students using the libraries, one must ponder over the fact if they are psychologically inaccessible.

5.4.1.18 Other Information

The "terrified" librarian did not volunteer any additional information, but seemed rather relieved that she had got through the given questions without incurring any wrath from an invisible presence.

The librarian who had obviously read the readers was very enthusiastic and forthcoming with information. She stated that the library actually had a budget to buy books with but that this was used for other purposes by the school officials. She explained that she had managed to get staff to pay for books they had lost, but even this income was used elsewhere. She complained that the major problem with the library was that the books were not available on the local market, so once they were lost, they were gone forever. She candidly admitted her lack of training and library management know-how and requested the researcher to draft her letters to submit to various organisations for short-term training. She stated that if allowed to use the library budget, she would buy local newspapers and journals to attract the staff into the library. At present, she felt the library was being used more as a quiet room for reading textbooks as it had nothing new and relevant to entice potential readers. She appeared very conscious of the shortcomings of the library and eager to overcome them. Unfortunately, it appeared there was no one to support and encourage her endeavours.

The third librarian was very defensive and said that her library had a good stock of books acquired by various donations. In addition, the library had a budget of 900 Ethiopian Birr with which she could purchase books from the local market. She said that the library club was very active and that "student agitators" promoted and publicised the books adequately. She stated that the students were good readers and that any shortcoming in their skills were attributable to problems in the first cycle of education (Grades One to Four and obviously out of her perceived range of duties and responsibilities.)

The fourth librarian was an interesting mixture of stoicism and realism. When informed that another librarian had pointed out the possibility of the existence of training programmes, she stated that she was not interested in training as she had only two years to go to retirement. She obviously felt that she had been put to pasture in the library and said as much. She stated that librarians were not really librarians in the true sense of the word, but rather storekeepers or guardians of books. This was because the stock of books was expected to remain intact with no safety margin for wear, tear, losses or weeding. Consequently, a librarian who took over a library with 1000 books was expected to hand over 1000 books in perfect condition when she left the library, even if it was two decades later. If she did not, theoretically she could be fined for negligence of government property. To make matters worse, even if she knew staff members who lost books, they could not be replaced, as they were not available on the local market. Therefore, librarians were more concerned with keeping books out of the possible way of any possible damage and the resulting bickering. She stated that this was the major reason that lending arrangements were not made and that younger students in grades 1- 4 were not allowed to use the

libraries. This was in spite of the fact that the optimum reading age for young students was probably being neglected by prohibiting first cycle primary students from using the library. Body searches were conducted on all students leaving the libraries to ensure that no books were stolen. This was not considered to be humiliating for the students nor as a repellent from the library. Books are seen as fragile irreplaceable resources that must be kept out of the damaging hands of students.

Here basically lies the crux of the matter. The EPER placement test objectively showed the surprising fact that there was no significant improvement in the reading skills of the students in the schools that had received the readers in the Primary Reader Scheme project. The questionnaire and discussion with the librarians came up with the reason for this. The students had been unable to use the readers, as they had basically remained inaccessible to them. Rather than being used for reading, the readers were simply being used as shelf decorations. This obviously has implications for the whole ESDP, which will be discussed after an examination of the questionnaires completed by the teachers.

5.4.2 **The Teachers**

 Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and seven of them were completed and returned. One teacher disappeared at the end of the term and did not return his questionnaire. Interestingly, another one of the teachers completed his information on two copies of the questionnaire. It was not clear if he was trying to gain "an extra vote" for his opinions or whether he was trying to please the researcher by filling out all the questionnaires that came in his reach. The second copy was disregarded. Discussed below

are six questionnaires completed by six English teachers teaching in Grade Eight. However, one teacher did not complete questions 11 to 20 regarding the library, so the teachers' feedback on the situation of the library is based only on the responses of five teachers.

5.4.2.1 Bio-data

Three of the six teachers chose to fill in their name on the questionnaire, while the other three preferred to remain anonymous. Nevertheless, they were willing to discuss some of the questions they were unsure about with the researcher. This probably reflected that though they trusted the researcher, who had incidentally taught three of them in a teacher training college, they still preferred the option of remaining anonymous to any wider audience that might be involved in the research.

Five of the six teachers were trained as teachers, while the sixth was still training in an in-service programme. It is interesting to note that the sixth has a diploma in library sciences while none of the librarians do. In an informal interview he explained that as the promotion structure and salary scale of librarians was restricted, he had turned to teaching.

Their years of experience ranged from 6 to 30. Some of them lamented the lack of opportunities to change their profession. This is consistent with previous findings stated by Tekeste (1990:27) that said that as many as 50% of secondary teachers would rather be in other professions. The teachers had 6,11,18, 27, 29 and 30 years of experience in teaching at elementary schools. Far from the teaching profession being a stepping stone to other

fields, it would appear that irrespective of their desires, teaching was a life-long career for these teachers. Disturbingly, there did not seem to be planned staff development and promotion, leading to some of them being highly demoralised. Some complained that promotions were based on political loyalties rather than professional merits, though they conceded that there were greater opportunities to innovate in their schools under this government than under the last one.

5.4.2.2 Variety of Readers

Although some of the teachers admitted to their ignorance of the presence of readers in the library when they had to select appropriate and least appropriate titles, all of them responded as to the variety of readers. Again, three of them stated that the English supplementary readers in their libraries were "Sufficiently varied", while the other three felt that the readers were "Insufficiently varied".

5.4.2.3 Quantity of Readers

As for the quantity of the readers, two of the teachers declared that the quantity was "Sufficient". The other four said the quantities were "Insufficient". As those teachers in the schools that had received a donation through the British Council's Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English project with over 40 copies each, had not actually used the readers, the usefulness of their responses was doubtful. The two who said the quantity was "Sufficient" were from one of the pilot schools; however, they later said that they hardly knew that the books existed. This could be because they hoped that complaining about the quantity of readers would miraculously lead to some sort of donation of books. In fact, the researcher

was approached on several occasions with requests for possible sources of donations. This indicated that the existence of a hidden agenda might well have influenced the responses.

5.4.2.4 Reading Relevance to Language Mastery

The teachers were asked whether they thought using supplementary readers assisted the students in mastering English. They responded with two answers of "Extremely" and with four of "A lot". One must ask if they were truly convinced of this, or if they were responding with what they felt were the expected or "right" answers. This is more so, because none of the teachers had actually done anything to motivate the students to use the readers on their own, let alone incorporate them into classroom activities.

5.4.2.5 Reading for Pleasure

Five of the six teachers stated that "0-35%" of the students read for pleasure. The sixth said that he had "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe". This clearly indicates that the teachers knew that their students were hardly reading any English for pleasure outside the classroom. Yet, surprisingly, it would seem that they perceived their own responsibility as covering the English textbook rather than giving the students reading skills that could be further developed outside the classroom. One of the teachers whose school had not received any donations said that there was nothing for the students to read for pleasure outside the classroom. Although such statements probably lead to requests for schemes such as the PRS and donations from NGOs, this study has proved that this is more an excuse than a reason.

5.4.2.6 English Reading Proficiency

When asked what percentage of their Grade Eight students were able to read well in English, two of the teachers said that "36-70%" of the Grade Eight students read well in English, while four said "0-35%". Viewing the results in the test, it would appear that these four had a realistic idea of the students' reading skills. But when asked why they were not doing something about it, they used the well-worn excuse of blaming the teachers below them in the first cycle.

5.4.2.7 Librarian Assistance

In response to the question if librarians assisted the students in selecting appropriate readers, it would appear that the teachers were less harsh on the librarians than the librarians were on the teachers. Three said "Sometimes", the fourth chose "Often", while the fifth truthfully selected "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe". Only the sixth said "Never". However, it is doubtful if the teachers have truly observed this in the library as none of them seemed to use the libraries regularly.

5.4.2.8 Teacher Assistance

Asked if teachers assisted the students in selecting appropriate readers, five of the teachers said that they "Sometimes" assisted students. This is in direct contradiction of what the librarians said. Moreover, in selecting appropriate titles, it was quite obvious that most of them were not at all familiar with the readers, let alone being able to assist others in choosing them. One of the teachers truthfully responded that he "Never" assisted students.

5.4.2.9 Supplementing the Textbook

When asked if they used the supplementary readers to supplement the textbook, two of the teachers chose "0-35%" without actually saying they never used them. Three chose "36-70%" but then said they sometimes used them to extract reading passages for tests and exams. Although this was an extended understanding of 'supplementing the textbook', it did allow them to defend their response. The last said "71 – 100%" in direct contradiction of her saying that she did not know of any readers in the library and could not select appropriate titles.

5.4.2.10 Most and Least Appropriate Titles

Similar to the librarians, the questions about the most and least appropriate titles for Grade Eight students proved to be the acid test of whether they knew the readers. Unlike the librarians, they could not go to the shelves and pick up some reader at random. Therefore, two of the teachers left this section blank, as they could not even come up with the titles of the readers. Another two simply wrote the titles of reading passages in the textbook probably hoping that the researcher would mistake them for titles of readers. When the researcher asked them for clarification, they at first said they had thought the question referred to the textbook. The researcher explained that he was asking about the supplementary readers and told them they could fill in the titles again. Only then did they admit that they were not familiar with the readers.

Of the last two teachers, one (the trained librarian) obviously enjoyed reading and had read all the readers in the library. The second had no idea of the readers, but instead of "losing

face" asked her colleague for titles and filled them in. The first teacher chose *Jane Eyre* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as the most appropriate and *The King of the Forest and Other Stories from Afar* and *The Rat King's Son and Other Stories from Oromiya* as the least appropriate. He justified his choice by saying the first two were exciting and the second two were not. This obviously reflected his taste. The second teacher chose *King Solomon's Wives* [sic] and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as the most appropriate and *The King of the Forest and Other Stories from Afar* and *Inspector Host* as the least appropriate stories. When the researcher said that he had not heard of a reader entitled *King Solomon's Wives*, she shot a glance for assistance in the direction of her colleague. He tactfully came to her assistance suggesting that perhaps she meant *King Solomon's Mines*. She agreed, but when asked what the story was about, covered up her lack of knowledge by saying that she had forgotten it. Although the teachers had been given the questionnaires and been asked to complete them at their own leisure, it was obvious that they had done them together.

This appears to be a clear example of teachers being aware of what they should know but preferring to hide their ignorance through various evasive tactics including copying from others to avoid losing face. It is little wonder that students resort to copying from each other if the teachers set such examples. The concept of losing face will be discussed later on.

5.4.2.11 Opening Hours

Two of the teachers appeared to agree with the librarians and said the opening hours were "Excellent". A second said they were "Good", while two said they were "Unsatisfactory". The last two pointed out that the whole purpose of the library should be for the students to

use it, therefore, the library had to be opened at times when the students were not in class. They agreed that this would cause administrative inconveniences but said that solutions could be found.

5.4.2.12 Relevant Materials

All five of the teachers stated that the amount of relevant material was "Unsatisfactory". Seeing that two of the schools had benefited from the Primary Reader Scheme, Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English, and donations from other sources, it would appear that a lack of relevant materials was being used as a scapegoat for much more serious and deep-rooted maladies in the whole teaching-learning process. This is especially so as no apparent efforts were made either to use the existing materials or produce materials of their own.

5.4.2. 13 Number of Tables and Chairs

Two of the teachers selected "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe", when asked about the number of tables and chairs. This could be because of the format of the questionnaire, which probably made them think the lowest letter was equivalent to the least satisfactory situation. It is unlikely that these teachers were actually saying that they had never or hardly ever been to the library. Two of the other teachers said the number of chairs and tables was "Unsatisfactory", while the fifth said the number of tables was "Satisfactory" and the number of chairs was "Unsatisfactory".

5.4.2.14 Size and Ambience

Four of the teachers said that the size of the libraries was "Unsatisfactory", while the fifth chose "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe". These descriptions were used to describe all four libraries of approximately $72m^2$, $64m^2$, $40m^2$ and $12m^2$, so probably the teachers' point of reference were the big libraries they had used in their teachers training colleges and universities. The ambience was described as "Satisfactory" by three of the teachers, while one chose "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe" and the last simply left this question unanswered.

5.4.2.15 Access to Books and Borrowing Facilities

Four of the teachers said that the access to books was "Unsatisfactory" and the fifth selected "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe". The same held true for the question on borrowing facilities, except that different teachers chose "Insufficient Opportunity to Observe" for each of the items. All the stock is open to teachers and teachers can borrow books as much as they want. They might have given their responses from a student's perspective or else they were simply condemning the whole library system.

5.4.2.16 Promotion of Books

Three of the teachers stated that the promotion of books was "Unsatisfactory". The fourth left this question unanswered. The fifth opted for the choice "Satisfactory". It is worth noting that this teacher is from a different school to that of the librarian, who said that the books were adequately promoted by members of the "library club". Therefore, instead of

assuming that books were promoted satisfactorily in one of the schools, it would appear that both teachers and librarians were attempting to gloss over the fact that the books were not being promoted. Again the teachers did not seem to perceive that promoting the books was as much the responsibility of the teachers themselves as that of the librarians.

5.4.2.17 Situation and Access to Library

One of the teachers said that the situation and access to the library was "Good" and another said that it was "Satisfactory". Three said that it was "Unsatisfactory". It would appear that these three teachers were negatively biased to the library as a whole, as the libraries were observed to be in relatively accessible places. On the other hand, it could be that owing to a general fatigued and demoralised state of the teachers, they could no longer perceive the positive points of their profession and schools.

5.4.2.18 Other Information

Only one of the teachers did not write anything in the place provided on the questionnaire for additional information. The rest wrote down some interesting comments.

The first stated that the library basically only had different textbooks for the students. Nevertheless, because of the silence and the good lighting, it provided a good study area. It is surprising to note that this teacher belonged to the school that had a relatively better stock of books, having received donations and being involved in the British Council projects.

A second stated his frustration with the existing English textbooks. He stated that textbooks had to be prepared by concerned groups of people and not by individuals.

The third explained that the books could not be promoted as desired when untrained librarians were put in the libraries. In addition, he said that it was individuals who had problems who were put in the libraries, as a result, these people had no incentive to do their job and therefore "do not function well". He argued that because teachers were better paid than librarians, qualified librarians were not attracted to work in the library. It is worth observing that this teacher was himself trained as a librarian. Moreover, he expected incentives, training and other things to come from the outside, rather than taking the initiative and conducting some in-house training for the librarian himself. This attitude of dependency is reflected by the other teachers and librarians too.

The fourth blamed English teachers in the first cycles for not developing the students' reading skills. She called for a cross-curriculum approach to reading, with all subject teachers encouraging students to do supplementary reading. She said that each school should prepare awards for students who were active readers and that English teachers should prepare workbooks and reading schemes to improve the students reading.

The last teacher started by saying the present textbooks were well above the students' reading abilities and the reading passages were too long and boring. Then he called for the textbooks to be rewritten by concerned professionals according to the ability and class level of the students. He condemned free promotion in the first cycle, saying: "The free

promotion policy in the lower classes contributes limitless disadvantages for reading purposes in and outside the classes." Finally, he called for well-qualified English teachers who should teach the language and give special attention to reading. As he had both a certificate and diploma in teaching and was undertaking summer courses for his degree, the last statement was obviously directed at other teachers in the school.

It would appear that the teachers were willing to blame poor educational policies, poor librarians and libraries, poor textbooks, poor students and teachers for the general state of education. Nevertheless, they do not seem to be doing anything individually or in groups to improve the situation. On the contrary, all they seemed to be doing is complaining and expecting some omnipotent external power to come and rectify things. Although it would be easy to blame the teachers, one should note that this attitude is typical of disempowered groups that do not feel that they can make a difference.

5.5 Utilisation Capacity of Government-Owned Primary Schools in Addis Ababa

It is obvious from the above discussions that government schools do not have much utilisation capacity for supplementary English readers. The reason for this cannot be ascribed to any single factor. It is more than a mechanical formula whereby one factor leads to the presence or absence of utilisation capacity. It would be pretentious to claim that if certain measures were to be taken, the students' reading abilities would improve. This would be equivalent to changing the fuel filter of a car with many faults and expecting it to run smoothly. The whole education system, in addition to several socio-economic factors, in the country would also have to be modified. Numerous issues can be

raised and discussed, based upon the findings as well as observations and information gathered at the primary schools. A few of the possible solutions can be touched upon by mentioning the need for a systems approach, the need to empower teachers, the need for sustained staff development, the need for setting up a meritology within schools, ways to improve the human resource capacity through means such as volunteerism and the need to deal urgently with the problem of overcrowding.

5.5.1 A Systems Approach

Heneveld and Craig (1996: xvi) say:

> Finally, and most disappointingly, none of the twenty-six projects deals explicitly with issues related to *school climate* (high expectations of students, positive teacher attitudes, order and discipline, clear learning objectives, and rewards and incentives for students) or to *teaching/learning processes* (high learning time, variety in teaching strategies, frequent homework, and frequent student assessment and feedback).

Similarly, in the schools observed, a striking feature of the way things are done in the primary schools is the carrying out of one's duties in what can be called a "linear approach". This is where each individual sees his duty as simply doing "his bit" and not worrying about the entire picture. In a factory, this can be compared to a worker on a conveyor belt being concerned about his fitting tyres to a car body and not bothering if his colleague up the line has mounted the motor. It is very discouraging to see the libraries being used simply as quiet areas and the librarians not being seen as part of the learning environment. Unless the whole library is integrated into the school system and teachers see to it that they are familiar with the readers and encourage the students to read

for pleasure, nothing can improve. The simple donation of readers is a waste of precious resources.

Unfortunately, the linear approach appears to be the dominant approach to education in the schools visited. Instances of such an approach were reflected in various aspects of the work. In one school, for example, the administrator was only concerned about the maintenance and repair of the buildings. Therefore, the library was closed to be painted for over a month in the middle of the semester. His concern was probably to finish the allocated school budget before the end of the fiscal year in June, irrespective of the fact that the closing of the library would disrupt the learning-teaching process. The problem was that though schools are closed in July and August, the new funds are not released early enough in the next fiscal year to do repair work before classes commence. Both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education are only concerned about performing their duties and are not interested in being flexible and accommodating in order to improve general efficiency. In another school, the director said that her most pressing need was funds to build a higher stone wall to prevent the students from jumping over it and escaping from the school compound. If the director cannot see that this is an indication that the whole teaching-learning process must be improved to keep the students interested, then even building the great wall of China will not keep the students in.

At the individual level, some teachers were observed using the 'radio period' as time off to relax. They had done their bit of covering a section in the textbook and it was up to the

people at the Department of Educational Mass Media to cover their syllabus on the radio. Admittedly, there are committed and devoted teachers, as one was observed marking her students' tests during her tea-break so that the students could get back their results on the same day. But they tend not to be actively supported and encouraged. This leads to teachers seeing their sole duty as merely to cover the textbooks and not to go beyond that and provide the students with life skills. They do not supplement the textbook with the readers, yet, at the same time, complain that the reading passages in the textbooks are boring and the textbooks poorly are written. Unless, the teachers see it as their responsibility to write and use supplementary materials and encourage the students to read extensively, then the few passages in the textbook cannot provide enough texts for the students to improve their reading skills.

There is the serious problem that the overall effectiveness of the educational system is not being taken seriously as everybody's collective responsibility. The coefficient of efficiency calculated by the Ministry of Education is simply a quantitative measure counting 'bums on seats'. If a qualitative measure of how much is actually being learnt were measured, then the measurement would show catastrophic results, as the test indicated. Actually, this was rumoured to have been suggested by one of the Annual Review Missions of the ESDP, which are not made available to the general public.

The supervisors are only interested in how the teachers teach. The teachers are only interested in covering the textbook. The students are only interested in being promoted. The parents see their sole responsibility as sending their children to school. Educational

researchers are only interested in getting their bits of 'significant data' and publishing their findings or writing their thesis. But nobody appears to be interested in making a sustained effort at making the system work. A few who have tried probably ended up in frustration at the immensity of the task.

The opposite approach would be a systems approach. Here everybody would be concerned with the outcome of the system. That is, in this case, the production of an educated person, with skills and knowledge that would make him employable. Although people would still have their respective jobs to do, they would be chiefly concerned with the output of the whole system. The teacher would see it as his duty to stop the school guard turning back a small boy from the school because he had not put on the bottom half of his school uniform that was wet from the previous day's rain. The Ministry of Education would engage in talks with the Ministry of Finance because their fiscal year did not facilitate the optimum utilisation of the educational budget. Together, solutions would be found, like finding the schoolboy funds to buy a second uniform, or making special arrangements to enable the school to roll over the funds to paint the library during the summer break.

If things are to change, then a systems approach will have to be adopted and this will demand both top down and bottom up initiatives to break the traditional vice of the linear approach.

Lynch (1994:68-69) goes further than looking at the schools system and calls for a review of the whole context with a holistic and developmental approach. He calls for intersectoral initiatives, interdisciplinary interventions and interprofessional cooperation to address the problem of the fragmentation of the child's needs. He stresses that the integration of health and nutritional support with educational services will contribute to a developmental continuum. He states that the basis for a holistic and developmental approach is that there are several factors of a child's early development that will affect the extent the child can benefit from primary education. Thus, teachers not only have the responsibility to teach but should also scan the children for emerging health and nutritional problems and refer them to other professionals. Although such an approach may sound too sophisticated, there is evidently a need for investigating it further.

5.5.2 Empowering Teachers

The empowerment of teachers is a complex and delicate process in itself. It does not only involve giving them more money, though this is an obvious need, but also embraces facilitating several other factors. Obanya (1999:183) says:

> …empowerment involves developing and liberating the potentials of every
> individual to be fully aware of the major issues at stake in one's own life
> and in the wider society and to mobilise individual potentials for service to
> the collective good of society. (1999183)

He states the major ways of empowering teachers is by giving them access to general as well as specialised knowledge, offering them opportunities for life-long self-improvement, as well as making them aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges. Finally, he says that they must be organised in unions and associations (Obanya, 1999:183-184).

In the Ethiopian case, the first factor in empowering teachers could be to give them good access to information of what is going on in the educational sphere. Several of them complained that they did not have any idea of what was going on and why. They are simply told to fill out forms and do a lot of paperwork, without their being informed of the purpose or the eventual outcome. It would be easy enough for the Ministry of Education to send each school a copy of its annual statistics report. Although this does not require any significant financial costs, effective communication needs an environment of openness and transparency, which appears lacking. Consequently, teachers simply feel like unappreciated pawns and this damages their self-esteem as well as their motivation to take the initiative and do things. Teachers should be made to realise that they are independent from both government and party politics. Their voice could at times be highly political, while lobbying policy-makers for change in educational policies or campaigning for the rights of their students, who are least able to help themselves and require assistance from their schools. However, they are important stakeholders in the whole education process and it is actually people at their level who know what is ailing the education system the most. As a result, their empowerment is a crucial factor in making the education system work.

The second factor would be to involve them in materials preparation, both for the main textbook and in supplementary materials. It is evident that teachers are actively complaining about the new textbooks, but are not making any attempts to improve or supplement them. A sustained effort to involve the teachers in the materials preparation process would not only increase their skills in materials development, but also enable

them to appreciate the work that has gone into the present textbooks. In a search for new materials, they would turn to the readers and then encourage their students to read them. Provided that similar readers existed in many of the schools in Addis Ababa, the Regional Education Bureau could assist teachers in making worksheets for individual readers and then exchange them with other schools. Macmillan are now engaging in producing new primary English textbooks and are involving teacher trainers and teacher trainees for Debre Berhan Teacher Training Institute. Although there is hardly any financial motivation for the trainees, a marked difference in attitude in the institution as a whole was observed by the researcher with an interest in the final product, which they felt they had a stake in. From a more entrepreneurial angle, such worksheets could even be duplicated and sold, thereby giving the demotivated teachers some financial incentive to involve in doing additional work.

5.5.3 Staff Development

At present there appear to be serious flaws in the structure of staff development. Staff development can be divided into ways of improving teachers' formal qualifications, and into other ways of improving their knowledge.

With regard to formal qualifications, in one school the English Department Head was told that she could not continue her studies and obtain a first degree. This was because she would not serve for many years after graduating as she was close to retirement. Obviously, she felt insecure, as other staff members would be studying for their degrees and she felt that her subordinates were leaving her behind. Others could not improve their

qualifications because the costs of evening classes were high and they could not afford to pay them. No funds exist for teachers seeking to study on their own.

With regard to non-formal staff development, there appears to be no system that actively encourages staff to improve their knowledge. There are skills and knowledge within the school that is not being exploited. A good example is the teacher who had switched to teaching after he had graduated from library sciences, as the promotional structure and pay scale for librarians was less than that of teachers. Ironically, the school had a qualified librarian teaching and a qualified teacher acting as the librarian. However, no steps had been taken to encourage the trained librarian to train the untrained one. The price of books is very prohibitive for teachers. In countries such as Germany, publishers have been encouraged to give teachers buying books a special discount. Such measures simply require the government's approval. Workshops and in-house training are usually conducted without consideration of the needs of the staff. A system whereby staff are asked what sort of training they want is not in place. Moreover, teachers hate attending workshops because they regard them as irrelevant and an additional load to their work. When opportunities exist for staff to improve their capacity, as in the case of The Educational Journal, which pays an honorarium for staff publishing research articles, teachers remain unaware of these opportunities.

5.5.4 A Meritology

At present, as in the past, promotions and assignments are seen as being rewards for political correctness rather than an evaluation system based on merits. As a result, teachers

who are better qualified or more effective in carrying out their duties are greatly demoralised when they see others being assigned to posts as Principal or Vice-Principal. The Ministry of Education should have a public list of criteria that should be fulfilled for promotion. All promotions should be on merit and an appeals procedure should be around for disgruntled staff members. The present situation makes it impossible to differentiate between those who have genuine cause for being disgruntled and those who are simply ill-natured.

Even with major issues such as staff promotion at tertiary institutions, the Ministry of Education has a policy that staff should be promoted if they publish an article in a reputable journal. However, they do not even have a list of reputable journals, which makes the whole process of getting promotions unnecessarily bureaucratic. Even journals published by Oxford and Cambridge presses have to be checked, causing needless delays in promotion.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education would have to draw up a democratic and unbiased procedure of reviewing staff and promoting them. Then it would have to implement an effective monitoring and evaluating procedure to ensure that the promotion system was in fact being implemented appropriately. In fact, the Ministry has a lot of reflection and action to do towards creating a democratic culture within the educational sector. In recent months, it has been creating many discussion forms with government and public institutions. This is a positive step that will have to be followed up by tangible actions.

5.5.5. Increasing Human Resource Capacity Through Volunteerism

A World Bank study states that one of the shortcomings of its projects is "Little explicit attention is given to bringing the school staff and the community closer together, to involving community members as learning resource people …" (Heneveld and Craig, 1996: xv).   An obvious alternative for increasing financial resources to education is to reduce the recurrent budget by involving volunteers. The common complaint for the absence of staff is the lack of a sufficient budget. Teacher-assistants are needed to handle large classes, but the school cannot afford them. The library could be opened for longer hours and over weekends, but there is no money to hire another librarian. Reading cards and tasks could be produced for the few readers that do exist, but there is nobody who has the time to produce them. However, these shortages in human capacity can be overcome through asking for volunteers.

Volunteerism is a possibility to amplify the knowledge of a few professionals, without significant extra cost. Volunteers usually work efficiently owing to their commitment and devotion. In fact, voluntary action is an integral part of education in many countries. Many professional Ethiopians are willing and able to do voluntary work. However, there is no formal structure through which schools can contact them. For instance, the Education Sector Development Program could be better explained to the teachers at large by educationists. Many Ethiopians are willing to facilitate teaching and they can contribute local skills and knowledge, which is unavailable in the schools. Unfortunately, there is a lack of systematised information on people willing to do this. Another untapped resource of professional potential are the spouses of foreigners working in diplomatic

missions and international bodies, who do not work but could provide educational voluntary services, if they are so inclined and qualified.

Just as the professionals, there are many non-professional people willing to give voluntary services. Once again, there is no formal structure through which schools can contact them. Here also are the spouses of foreigners working in diplomatic missions and international bodies, who do not work but could provide general voluntary services.

Admittedly, such measures would not be effective in rural areas, but with the current trend of decentralisation, many more educated people are now working in rural areas and could be asked to volunteer.

In the case of English, some might be mother-tongue speakers who can bring in new accents and some cultural knowledge, too. If schools could effectively exploit the existing human resources in their areas, they could find different role models for reading and volunteers could help in setting up reading clubs and donating books to the schools.

5.5.6 Dealing with Overcrowding

Although overcrowding might appear to be only one out of several problems preventing teachers from effectively using the readers or teaching in general, researchers have stated that this is the single most disruptive factor to the educational system as a whole. Tekeste (1990:51) stresses: " In a country where most of the teaching takes place in the classroom, overcrowding ... is self-defeating."

The teachers' abilities to deal with large classes can be improved with in-service training courses such as "working in difficult circumstances". Unfortunately, many of these teachers have not had any sort of methodological training on how to deal with large classes, although such courses are now becoming commonplace in the international educational arena. Hoffman is quoted in Urqhuart and Weir (1998:231) as having identified 12 features of effective schools. Some of these features include high expectations for students, individualisation and careful evaluation of students progress. All three of these features cannot realistically be attained with the present class size in Ethiopia.

Another indirect way of dealing with large classes in Addis Ababa is to give the private sector free rein in setting up schools. Although several private schools have opened under the present government, many people have been complaining through the mass media, that the circumstances for opening private schools are not encouraging.

A third way would be to divide classes in two for skills courses such as languages and maths. This would necessarily entail administrative juggling due to a lack of classes, teachers and the like. Innovative solutions to the challenges are already appearing in the private schools, where the fear of losing fee-paying students is spurring the teachers and administration to find solutions rather than excuses to complain. Even in government schools, both Medhanealem and Kokebetsibah have new buildings under construction and these might reduce the problem of classrooms. If volunteers can be drawn upon, then

the dividing of classes may not necessarily mean the doubling of the workload for the teachers, as the volunteers could handle some of the classes.

All of these ways of reducing class sizes will enable teachers to pay more attention to individual students and assist them in areas such as reading that require special attention.

5.6   Implications for the ESDP

Although the findings of this study are discouraging, it has some serious implications for the ESDP. One should bear in mind that these are still early days in the sector development programme. Insights gained globally and from hands-on experience must be considered and, where valid, incorporated to ensure goals are achieved. It has been noted in other projects that the major defect is the treating of inputs like supplementary readers as discrete quantifiable instruments with insufficient consideration of how they will interact with other inputs and processes, especially at the school level (Heneveld and Craig, 1996: xv). Several issues that arise from this are quality assurance, culture, decentralisation, capacity-building and better communication systems.

5.6.1 Quality Assurance

Ethiopia should learn not only from other African countries, but from the former socialist countries, with whom we share a common past. The first thing that the ESDP has to remedy is the lop-sided concentration on quantitative achievements rather than qualitative ones. After appraising 26 World Bank supported primary education projects, Heneveld and Craig (1996: xiii) concluded that these projects were not achieving the standards of quality

that they were aspiring after. Admittedly they are right in saying, " … quality is itself a complex concept comprising both changes in the environment in which education takes place and detectable gains in learners' knowledge, skills and values" (Heneveld and Craig, 1996: xiii). Nevertheless, sustained efforts must be made at measuring this complex concept. In Bulgaria, the basis for judging quality in the school system is unequivocally set as student achievement, (Fiszbein, 2001:35). Having more students going to school and being able to give them individual copies of textbooks is all well and good, but the most important thing about students going to school is that they actually learn something. Consequently, tangible quality assurances must be put in place here and now, not in the second or third phases of the ESDP, as some officials defensively say when confronted with this shortcoming. A review of the Hungarian education system clearly states:

> The significance of quality and the uncertainties involved in resolving the problem require an independent government strategy for a comprehensive quality assurance system. This means having an overview of research and development in the area and applicable international experience. It means identifying other institutions and actors, establishing a public consensus about the concept of quality in public education, analysing problems such as content regulation or teacher employment, and improving the relation between quality assurance and legal or financial regulations. (Fiszbein, 2001:68-69)

This is not to imply that the MoE has not tried to include measures for quality assurance, for instance, teachers are evaluated by students, parents and staff. They have to go to the library and do research to get promotions. Despite this, one has to first acknowledge that these mechanisms are not working. Perhaps it is because of a lack of public consensus, as has been shown in some comments in the feedback from the questionnaires about free promotion in the first cycle of primary education. Perhaps it is owing to the mechanisms being too mechanical, as in the case where a teacher might go into a library to get his

promotion and simply daydream instead of reading or doing research. Or there could

simply be a need for the passage of time for people to be able to shake off the passive

culture inherited from the socialist era and become active participants in the educational

arena.

5.6.2 Cultural Conflict

At present, it would appear that many of the stakeholders in Ethiopian education are too

passive. Such a culture of passivity is not restricted to Ethiopia, as can be seen from a

review of the Romanian education system:

> A Culture Resistant to Change? The decentralisation of educational services
> is based on a system of shared responsibilities, a participatory decision-
> making process, and very intense vertical and lateral communication within
> the educational administration or with actors outside the administration.
> Decentralisation has been highly debated for about eight years, but here is
> little progress to show for it. A very strong paternalist tradition reflected in
> social and organisational habits discourages the public from becoming
> involved in public service governance. Can the devolution of power to local
> communities go forward without a change in this cultural legacy? (Fiszbein,
> 2001:102)

Such a description of the Romanian educational situation could just as easily have been

written for Ethiopia. People are very discontented with the present approach to having

multiple media of instruction and several other aspects of the ESDP, yet they have not

developed the culture of participating in the decision-making process. To be fair, the MoE

also has not yet developed the organisational habits of listening to the public, as was

demonstrated in 2001 by the request of university students to have the military university

guards replaced by civilian guards, which ended in civil disturbances. In July 2002, the

MoE ran a three-week capacity building course, in which teachers nation-wide were

involved in discussing the education policy. Although this is seven years too late, it is a right step in setting up a participatory culture.

The problems of culture can be seen in many aspects of the education system. The fact that students have developed a culture of cheating in exams could probably be related to the fact that the country as a whole is suffering from diploma disease. Therefore, the qualification that one holds, rather than the knowledge that one has, tends to be the key factor in securing a government job. Consequently, students are more interested in getting the certificate, diploma or degree, rather than actually acquiring knowledge (Gizaw, 2001:25). Moreover the whole skill of reading can be related to culture. Perez (1998:4) reminds us:

> All literacy users are members of a defined culture with a cultural identity, and the degree to which they engage in learning or using literacy is a function of this cultural identity. Literacy cannot be considered to be content-free or context-free, for it is always used in service of or filtered through the culture and culture identity. Literacy is always socially and culturally situated.

The fact that the information from the questionnaires was so contradictory to the facts on the ground also reflects a culture where being "politically correct" or "saving face" is more important than telling the truth. Therefore, there is obviously the need for a change in attitudes, values and culture as a whole.

5.6.3 Decentralisation

There are many who think that the education system is decentralised. But this assumption must be scrutinised further. Making Ethiopia's education system a viable one is not a preferred option, but rather a necessity for survival. The World Bank (1999:1) warns:

> The stakes are high. Choices that countries make today about education could lead to sharply divergent outcomes in the decades ahead. Countries that respond astutely should experience extraordinary progress in education, with major social and economic benefits, including "catch-up" gains for the poor and marginalized. Countries that fail to recognize and respond risk stagnating or even slipping backwards, widening social and economic gaps and sowing seeds of unrest.

In the process of drafting the ESDP, various regions submitted identical suggestions with only a change of figures and the names of regions. Mistakes were even made in the changing of names in a few instances, indicating that the drafts had been drawn p centrally rather than in the regions. It might have been natural at a time when regions lacked the capacity of developing their own plans and programmes that they should imitate a central blueprint, especially when the completion of a draft was a prerequisite to the release of funds. Such a situation is not unique to Ethiopia, as can be seem from a review of the Czech Republic:

> It is true that schools make decisions about planning and organising teaching and learning; using central pedagogical documentation; managing student admissions and personnel; and using funds. At the same time, the Bacik study showed that most decisions of primary schools are made and taken within a ministerial framework according to centrally approved guidelines, after consultation with school offices. (Fiszbein, 2001:50)

Therefore in Ethiopia, further decentralisation has to be made. Schools, Woreda Educational Offices and Zonal Educational Bureaux should be able to make their own locally appropriate decisions without waiting for the green light from the Regional Educational Bureau or the Ministry of Education. A World Bank publication on effective primary school education unambiguously stresses that only when schools have greater autonomy can academic results improve (Heneveld and Craig, 1996:xv). However, they found that although fourteen projects talked about increasing local autonomy and

flexibility, most only devolved decision-making power to local authorities and not to schools. This devolution is not good enough, as it is the schools and not the local educational authorities that are at the cutting edge of education, and they have to be mandated to make changes and adaptations within the general policy framework to adjust to realities on the ground.

5.6.4. Capacity Building

The lack of capacity of the schools is not a problem that is going to disappear overnight. They need long term and innovative solutions that involve all stakeholders. Nevertheless, some immediate issues for consideration include the need for a systems approach, the need to empower teachers, the need for sustained staff development, the need for a meritology, the need to improve the human resource capacity and the need to deal quickly with the problem of overcrowding.

Students cannot simply be expected to become good readers in a learning environment that is not conducive to learning and reading. Unless the libraries are well run, teachers encourage reading and librarians are supportive, then the students will not be attracted to reading.

According to Heneveld and Craig (1996:107), in Swaziland, factors contributing to making the school have an enabling environment are:

- An adequately qualified head of school
- Regular supervision to enhance effective management
- Adequately qualified teachers
- Regular in-service training for teachers
- A positive, cooperative attitude in the community towards the development of the school

5.6.5 Better Communications

For educational reform to be successful, all stakeholders have to participate and make themselves heard. Moreover, there has to be awareness at all levels as to what is going on. Furthermore, efficient mechanisms for getting feedback have to be in place. The key for all of this to happen is an efficient communication system. Good communication is the basic requirement for accountability, transparency and monitoring. Out of Hoffman's (Urqhuart and Weir, 1998:231) 12 features of effective schools, one is the communication of ideas across teachers. Unless synergy is created through the sharing of information and ideas, it is highly improbable that one department or individual, no matter how qualified and committed, can bring a substantial change to the system.

Unfortunately, such a system is not in place in the Ethiopian education system. Instead, word of mouth appears to be the main method by which information is carried. Educational newsletters and the like are only published erratically and their distribution is poor. Authorities do not feel obliged to transmit information they are aware of, a good example being a building with classrooms being constructed in Medhanealem school and the teachers not knowing who was constructing it and from where the funds had come. Periodic workshops and seminars are not adequately publicised, and even when participants from schools are involved they usually fail to pass on what they have learnt. Although public media such as television and radio do have wide coverage, they tend to focus more on sensational issues like politics and only pay attention to educational matters when disruptions occur. The lack of synergy between all these aspects fails to build the momentum that is required for producing an appropriate learning environment. It is

encouraging to see the Debre Birhan Teacher Training Institute has managed to build some momentum of its own and has recently been up-graded to preparing teachers for second-cycle primary education as well.

If the ESDP is to be successful, greater emphasis must be given to the transmitting of information both vertically and horizontally, not only within the administrative structure, but also within the society on the whole.

The Education Discussion Group of Ethiopia (EDGE) was set up by NGOs, donors and government to meet monthly and discuss relevant educational issues. Unfortunately, due to hypersensitivity of the government to what was perceived as criticism, as well as the lack of the culture of transparency, government officials were reluctant to attend and participate regularly. The EDGE meetings have gradually fizzled out, due to a lack of persons willing to organise the meetings. At the beginning FINNIDA had taken the responsibility, then when the director left, the deputy director of the British Council had taken over. When he left the country, nobody took over. Such initiatives could easily be supported actively by the Ministry and expanded to a larger audience. Several of the EDGE meetings had revolved around what various donors and NGOs have been doing to improve the production and supply of supplementary readers. This work has to be taken a step further and work by various stakeholders should be synchronised.

Chapter Five has looked at the students' results, the teachers and librarians questionnaires and the general utilisation of the schools along with the implications for the ESDP.

Consequently, especially as related to the ESDP, the discussion has been forced to consider wider issues than those directly and simply related to supplementary readers and reading. The next chapter will discuss the limitations of the study and general recommendations. However, it will then become more specific in that it will deal directly with the recommendations on how to build upon and expand the Primary Reader Scheme of the British Council.