6. Chapter Six: Summary and Recommendations

Chapter Six will state the limitations of the study, followed by a general conclusion summarising the whole study. Then some recommendations for future studies and action will be given. Finally some general implications will be stated.

6.1 Limitations

Due to the unfavourable examination conditions and the students' liability to cheat, it is possible that all the results are not accurate measures of the students' reading abilities. Moreover, the fact that most of the students had not been exposed to cloze tests as they are used to answers being provided in multiple-choice formats, could have distorted the results. Nevertheless, the fact that 450 students were involved would have hopefully lowered the

margin for error.

In addition to this, it would appear the teachers had other concerns such as questions of prestige and school image or ulterior motives like getting additional readers or leverage for further opportunities of networking and staff development. As a result, some of their answers in the questionnaires and focus-group discussions, may not be as forthright as they might have been. Finally, the fact that the schools were all urban schools might have skewed the results.

6.2 **Summary**

This study set out to measure the effect of the Primary Reader Scheme that had provided supplementary readers to five primary schools with the intent of improving the students 'reading skills in English. It began by looking at the readers given to the schools and coming to the conclusion that supplementary readers should be selected on the observed preferences of students using them. Theoretical and philosophical rationalisations did not correspond to the actual preferences of the students. The students chose as favourites some readers that could be considered "politically incorrect" as to the attitudes reflected about Africans and Africa. It then reviewed the existing research on extensive reading and noted that there is a firm foundation both in theory and practice on the benefits of conducting extensive reading schemes. It scrutinised the two hypotheses of whether the provision of supplementary readers to primary schools has produced a statistically significant improvement in the reading skills of the students or whether there is no significant relationship between the reading skills of the students and the provision of the supplementary readers.

The study took four primary schools in Addis Ababa, two that had benefited from the donation of supplementary readers and two that had not received books. From these schools, approximately 125 Grade Eight students were taken from each and made to sit for an international reading placement test prepared by the Institute for Applied Language Studies of Edinburgh University.

In direct contradiction to almost all international research, at first glance this study proved the Null Hypothesis that the readers had had no statistically significant effect on the reading skills of the students. It was established that due to a variety of administrative factors, including accessibility of readers, teacher and librarian training and others, the supplementary readers had hardly been used by any of the students. To answer the question of what sort of utilisation capacity government schools have to use supplementary reading materials, the qualitative study proved that most schools had very little or no capacity to use the readers. Basically, teachers lacked support, motivation and training to use the readers. Librarians also lack both support and motivation. None of the librarians were trained as librarians. Finally, the schools lack effective administration both in running the schools in general and the libraries in particular. Consequently, it is not surprising that the readers have not influenced the students' reading abilities.

Regarding the third objective of looking into possible implications for the effective implementation of the Education Sector Development Program, it would appear that the students at the end of the second cycle of primary education can hardly read in English. Nevertheless, they are expected to continue their studies in English as English changes from a class subject to the medium of instruction in secondary school. This highlights the World Bank (2001:38) observation that "The main weakness identified in the preparation of sector-wide programs was the lack of systematic analysis of implementation capacity". A decade ago, Tekeste Negash (1990:23) commented that the gap between school realities and educational objectives was very wide. Despite a new government and the

ESDP, this gap does not seem to be decreasing in terms of the quality of education being delivered.

Consequently, all recommendations from Annual Review Missions, studies like the Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment and graduate research have to be seriously considered and quickly accommodated into the ESDP. If not, then the Ethiopian Education Crisis, which is consuming the country's financial resources yet implementing a highly irrelevant curriculum and creating a pool of unemployable citizens (Tekeste, 1990:83-87), will continue to occur.

Finally, the British Council may want to revisit its PRS project and take steps to improve it. The British Council should explore ways to improve training, access, participation, promotion and other aspects of the project.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations on Measures to be Taken

It is obvious that a series of serious measures have to be taken as the Ethiopian Educational system is indeed in severe crisis, as Tekeste Negash (1990) had warned. How to come out of this crisis is a controversial issue.

6.3.1.1. Realistic Timeframes

To begin with, timeframes set seem to be totally blind to differences in historical background, cultural values and existing infrastructure. Simply looking at the global map

of gross enrolment ratios of primary education (World Bank, 1999:55), shows one how unrealistic the goal of Education For All by the year 2000 was. Even though setting one's standards high could be seen as having a vision, on the ground it could lead to many educational administrators becoming disillusioned and writing off whole programmes as wishful thinking. On being challenged on the attainability of the targets set for one of the backward regions in the ESDP, the regional bureau head responded that such targets were what donors requested before releasing funds!

Regarding the historical background, many Africans are still either the first or second generation to attend formal schools. The idea of sending all children to schools may be a well-established tradition in Europe and America, but it is still catching on in Africa. Consequently, setting targets for achieving universal basic education in twenty years' time is not feasible. It will take at least two or three generations for all parents to be willing and able to send their children to school.

As for cultural values, attitudes that do not favour co-education, secularism or the spending of children's time and labour away from the house, farm and animals can only be changed gradually. For instance, the researcher was informed by an elder in Benshangul region, that during the reign of Emperor Haile-Selassie, they used to pay taxes for education, but deliberately kept their children away from school, out of fear that they could be converted to Christianity. A decade or two cannot change such deep-rooted beliefs and attitudes.

Regaring infrastructure, some regions of Gambella are cut off from any contact with the outside due to rivers without bridges during rainy seasons. Schools have generators, which do not function due to a lack of spare parts. Even with plentiful financial resources, such problems cannot be solved overnight.

Heneveld and Craig (1996:51) raise the same issue while calling for more flexible timetables in World Bank projects. They say that the usual pattern is to set as tight a deadline as possible and then frequently roll forward due dates. They recommend: " … mechanisms should exist for Task Managers to lay out slower timetables in the beginning and justify any, and presumably less frequent, delays by showing how they will enhance participation and ownership."

6.3.1.2. Realistic Expectations

Statements like, "Education will determine who has the keys to the treasures the world can furnish" (World Bank, 1999:1) and "Education – more than any other single initiative – has the capacity to foster development, awaken talents, empower people and protect their rights" (UNICEF,2000:47) make education seem to be the panacea of all the ills of society.

Educationists must be careful not to perpetuate this myth, as it can only lead to frustration, if education alone is focussed upon. Although an educated Ethiopian is far better off than an uneducated one, he will still be disadvantaged due to his socio-economic surroundings, colour and social contacts in the international arena. A cart-

driver in Southern Nations and Nationalities People Region once told the researcher that he was better off than his educated peers, because they were begging on the streets, but he was earning an honest income. Related factors like a viable economy providing jobs, a stable society ensuring personal security and fair employment procedures protecting against discrimination, are all as equally important as education to improve the life of a person. Lynch (1994:69) warns that there is a whole range of related areas that directly affect educational achievement. Some of the major ones include; health status, employment opportunities, family dislocation and migration, environmental conditions and political unrest and conflict. Unfortunately, Ethiopian students come from a country that has had several major famines, terrible wars and is one of the poorest of even Sub-Saharan African countries.

Tekeste (1990:83) challenges the vaunting of education as the panacea for developing countries. He points out that economic development is dependent on several variables and if these are disregarded or quality education is not delivered, then results could be undesirable. He warns:

> In a desperate search for the means to overcome backwardness, the Ethiopian government saw education as the magic formula … the expansion of the education sector far beyond the country's financial resources and the implementation of a highly irrelevant curriculum led to the serious decline of the sector with far reaching implications.

6.3.1.3 Support School Level Initiatives

In the final analysis, it is the schools that are at the delivering front of quality education. Therefore, schools should be given autonomy and authority to modify, adjust and initiate sound pedagogical practices. In the case of the teaching of reading, these would include

allowing for silent reading in the classroom, encouraging the students to read extensively outside the classroom, allowing the students to take readers home and moving away from tests that encourage simple recall. Although reservations about the schools' capacity to do this are well taken, capacity can only be developed through doing. Therefore schools should be encouraged to run in-house training and provide incentives to staff that perform well.

At present, the ESDP is trying to support 106 pedagogical centres to provide school supervision, in-service teacher training, assistance in curriculum modification and development, research and other operational services to schools (Heneveld and Craig, 1996:39). However, this does not go far enough. Heneveld and Craig (1996:43) comment, " even those countries that planned to increase autonomy and flexibility only planned to extend it as far as regional and local education authorities. No projects presented plans for a significant increase in the individual schools' autonomy, just as none planned to give meaningful authority to communities."

In a country and world, where top-down decision-making has been the practice for centuries, it is difficult to conceive that "lower" level schools could have the foresight and capacity to manage themselves better than the "upper" authorities. Nevertheless, if the schools are given control over and made accountable for their individual budgets, they will be able decide their own priorities and needs. In fact, they may decide to mandate the higher bodies to conduct certain functions for them, as in the case of Regional Education Bureaux mandating ICDR to produce primary English textbooks.

There is no doubt that some activities are better done from central/higher organs to ensure economies of scale. However, at present the central/higher authorities seem to consider that they are doing the schools a favour, and do not deliver most of the services on time. But even in such cases, the power relations will have be reversed, so that the schools could demand the services from the higher authorities, rather than waiting dependently like beggars for alms. As they will also be handing over certain funds with the request for services, hopefully they will also follow through the actions and ensure the purchase of items and rendering of services are done on a timely basis.

6.3.1.4 Mobilising and Utilising ELT Experts

As the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa has the lion's share of ELT experts in the country. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of Addis Ababa University alone has a dozen PhD holders in ELT. Other colleges like Kotebe College of Teacher Education, Addis Ababa Commercial College, Unity College/University and St. Mary's College all have well-qualified ELT experts.

Unfortunately, there is no formal mechanism by which these experts can channel their expertise into primary and secondary schools. Most of them have spare time, which they spend doing extra teaching and other language related jobs to supplement their incomes. However, a lot of these jobs do not require expertise in ELT and could as easily be done by English teachers with their first degrees. If these experts could be paid a reasonable sum of money proportionate to what they could get teaching part-time classes elsewhere,

they would definitely prefer to provide support to the teaching in primary and secondary schools.

They could spend a day in the schools every week providing technical support, as well as conducting research on and monitoring the ESDP. The existence of such experts in school would overcome the dilemma teachers have over supervisors, who are there to evaluate and support them. Despite the fact that supervisor visits are rare, they usually lack both credibility and expertise to give the teachers tangible support. Moreover, it is not practical to expect the teachers to discuss their own weaknesses with a supervisor who ultimately will be evaluating them.

Therefore, having one expert supporting one or two schools could provide the teachers with recent knowledge and support, develop strong relationships between schools and higher institutions of learning, and even increase the experts' opportunities to ground their research firmly in the reality of the schools.

6.3.1.5 Promoting Literacy

In many Western countries, literacy is a part of the students' every day lives. This is more so for students from the middle class, whose day starts with their fathers reading the morning papers. Then if they go by bus they have to read the bus timetable at the bus-stop and probably see someone reading a book on the ride to school. The announcements on the notice-boards at school, are yet another example of the benefits of literacy apparent through out the day.

In African countries, however, the exchange of information in social life tends to revolve around oracy. The village crier starts the day by announcing deaths and funerals and the walk to school is done talking with a friend. Even at the schools, the diagrammes and maps painted on the classroom walls, tend to invite their meaningless memorisation rather than active reading and understanding as they usually do not change for the twelve years the student is at school. This is more so in rural areas, where the basic materials for preparing reading materials like poster paper and pens are both scarce and expensive.

Countries like Zimbabwe are actively trying to promote literacy and not only have reading weeks in the country, but actually have mobile libraries with books taken on donkey drawn carts into remote villages. Other countries have reading weeks and other similar occasions to promote literacy. Following the massive literacy campaigns conducted under the last Ethiopian government, not much is being done to promote literacy in Ethiopia nowadays. Individual efforts like Alliance Francaises' "Lire Fete" are only drops of water on a desert and much more has to be done in this respect.

6.3.2 Recommendations for Further Studies on Reading

The call for more research and analysis of most theses has probably become a well-known feature of the landscape. Nevertheless, it is a necessary request. The World Bank (1999:26) has stressed that there is a strong and consistent link between good analytic work and high quality projects. It states that as staff are over-worked, analytic work tends to get ignored. It says that clear thinking about how best to improve educational

outcomes is what is necessary, rather than lengthy reports. Despite this, there has been a decline in the World Bank's role in research. Therefore, there is great potential for encouraging the academic community to undertake relevant research.

In Ethiopia, on the whole, as discussed in the review of Ethiopian literature, there are hardly any significant studies of students' ability in English at primary level, except for the Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment. In order to ground all practices firmly in empirical research and findings, numerous studies have to be carried out in reading. Simply duplicating studies conducted abroad and seeing if they hold true to the Ethiopian situation, is probably one of the easiest steps that could be taken by researchers. Other areas include minimal threshold levels necessary to read, the effect of Ethiopian stories in English on the students' reading comprehension, ways to modify attitudes towards reading, and differences in reading and reading habits between students at government and private schools.

The Centre for Women in Development (Certwid) at Addis Ababa University is amassing a significant number of studies in gender issues, simply by offering a token grant for undergraduate students and a reasonable grant for post-graduate students to carry out their dissertation research on gender. There is a good case for both the Institute for Educational Research and the Institute for Language Studies at Addis Ababa University to follow Certwid's example and offer grants for areas of interest, such as reading.

From this thesis alone, several interesting topics could be derived for further investigation. The first could be a comparative assessment of English reading skills in government and private schools. If, as the validation of the EPER reading test has suggested, there is such a difference, then studies could be conducted to see what aspects and features differ in government and private schools that lead to this difference in English. Such studies could focus on the threshold levels necessary for activating students' reading abilities in English. The second major area for further research is an intensive study of what reading skills and strategies primary students use to read. If the students are literate in their mother tongue, then an interactive compensatory approach would prove indispensable in studying their reading habits. Thirdly, the relation between reading methodology courses in teacher training institutions and their effects on the actual teacher's behaviour is yet another fertile ground for exploration.

In fact, it is possible to say that the whole area of reading in English at the primary level is a goldmine waiting to be discovered. Three fields that could be looked into are the areas of cultural familiarity and reading, difficulties of language or reading, and minimal English threshold levels.

While some researchers dismiss the idea that cultural unfamiliarity can pose an insurmountable obstacle to reading (Duff and Maley, 1991:7), others call for culturally familiar stories to enhance the reading circle. Ethiopian researchers have also questioned the cultural appropriateness of using foreign readers in the past (Gebeyehu, Getachew and Tesfaye, 1992:16).

Nevertheless, some projects are coming up with stories that are familiar to Ethiopian students. Investigating if these books do in fact enhance the students' understanding is a worthwhile area. Other research done into students' schema and their effect on their reading comprehension, provide the necessary starting point. In fact, the researcher is currently trying to study this aspect with a teacher training institute by providing Ethiopian stories in English to fourteen schools. However, the funds for purchasing and providing the books to the schools is proving to be the main stumbling block.

It is also necessary to investigate whether Ethiopian students actually have the necessary reading skills in their mother tongue or other local media of instruction. If they do not have the necessary reading skills in any language, then it is pointless to try to teach them to read in English. Instead, serious studies will have to be conducted focussing on how to help them transfer from an oral approach to education to one based on literacy.

Provided that the students are sufficiently literate in another language, then investigations should be conducted into what minimum thresholds in English are required for students to start reading in it. For an extensive reading programme to be successful, students have to be familiar with most of the words being used in the stories. Therefore, what levels of English are necessary could well be investigated. Along with this, the readability of the existing English language textbooks and their correspondence with the students' reading skills need to be researched into.

On the whole, there is no shortage of areas to be researched, but rather the need to conduct intensive research and then to ensure that the findings are acted upon.

6.4 **Revisiting the Primary Reader Scheme**

Actually implementing real-life projects is much more difficult than conducting pilot studies and experiments in a controlled setting, where the variables are manipulated. What has transpired in the previous chapter, does in no way detract from the praiseworthy effort of the British Council to inculcate and enhance reading skills in primary students. Having reviewed various studies, Elley (1996:53) states:

> … the difference in school literacy levels between developed and developing nations is substantial … much of this difference is attributable to a dearth of reading resources and literacy traditions in developing countries. … education systems could do much more by supplying large quantities of suitable library books to schools and by developing programs that encourage students to read often and enjoy them.

So the PRS is definitely an appropriate project in the right direction. However, it would be wrong to pretend the project is a complete success and neglect the opportunity of developing and learning from it. This section suggests specific actions on how to build upon and expand the Primary Reader Scheme. It begins with the selection and production of appropriate primary readers, moves on to the training of teachers, librarians and school administrators, and concludes by examining possibilities for synchronising various projects within the British Council and the education arena at large. It will review the PRS in light of the necessary factors in running reading schemes that were described in the review of literature in Chapter Three.

6.4.1. Provision

As has been discussed, the actual provision of supplementary readers is the first step in any reading scheme. Greaney (1996:25) states that "supplementary reading materials that meet students' interests are rarely found in classrooms in developing countries". The PRS was successful in the initial provision of books to the schools, ensuring that they actually reached the schools without unnecessary delays. However, what has been neglected is how these books can be replaced if lost or damaged. The British Council has to make replacement copies available at minimal costs to encourage the actual use of the readers, as fear of the lack of replacements is inhibiting their use. Admittedly, this will not only involve the routine processes of importing the books, but will also involve renegotiating its agreement with the Ethiopian government to allow cost-recovery sales of books.

A second point that has to be revised is the selection of titles. Apparently, the actual preferences of the students have not yet been adequately studied. What occurred in the original evaluative workshop now appears to have been more a reflection of what the teachers thought was appropriate. Hill (1997:62) estimates that only 1% of international readers currently in print are set in Africa. This is not necessarily to say that readers set in Africa are more appropriate. However, moving from the known to the unknown is a basic principle in teaching methodology. Oliveira (1996:88) explains, "Relevant reading materials about places and people with whom children can identify help make children interested and enthusiastic about reading". In fact, when the PRS commenced there was only one Ethiopian supplementary reader in English, which had gone out of print. Currently, there are over thirty, a large number of which the British Council itself has produced under the ESSE

project. However, readers produced for one region are not currently being distributed to other regions and there is no synchronising between the ESSE and the PRS. More attention must be paid to the attractiveness of the ESSE readers because readers are invariably chosen by children more for their length and their appearance than any other factor (Hill, 1997:65). In fact, one of the librarians said that the students picked up, then put down the ESSE readers on finding that they did not have coloured illustrations. The attractiveness could be improved by using better quality paper and using coloured illustrations. Although improving the appearance would raise costs, Hill (1997:66) warns that the transient joy of the accountants in saving a few pounds may lead to certain misery for the learner who throws an unattractive reader away in despair. In the final analysis, however, the selection of what are appropriate readers must be based on the actual borrowing/reading patterns of the students themselves. Such observations of borrowing/reading patterns have been carried out at the secondary level for the Bulk Loan Scheme run by the British Council and should be replicated for the PRS. The different regions might possibly come up with preferences for different titles, which should be considered in providing them with additional readers.

6.4.2. Access

Access has proven to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks of the PRS. The difficulty caused owing to the lack of replacements has been discussed above. The lack of library size and space was also pertinent. However, the Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund (ESRDF) has over the past few years been involved in constructing new classrooms and a library for primary schools nation-wide. One of the schools observed already had a new block of building constructed by the ESRDF, another was constructing a

new building with the assistance of Plan International, and a third clearing a site for construction with funds from the ESRDF. The British Council is in an ideal position to ensure that these libraries have a minimal stock of supplementary readers that are accessible to the students. Workshops could be held for librarians, schools administrators and teachers to convince them of the necessity that all students, especially those in the first cycle, must be allowed free access to the libraries.

Visits to the libraries of private schools might be one method of overcoming the initial resistance to innovation that is a common phenomenon. Almost all the government schools in Addis Ababa have a private school within walking distance. Therefore, arranging such visits should not incur significant costs.

6.4.3. Staffing

The Bulk Loan Scheme (BLS), which began prior to the PRS, was a success without the British Council having to pay much attention to training either teachers or librarians. The reasons for this were that it took place at the secondary level. Here students are more mature and self-directing, and the books provided were directly related to the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination, which all students have to sit and succeed in, if they are going to have any sort of an academic future. Irrespective of the differences, it was assumed that the PRS would also be a success by simply providing supplementary readers, as had been done with the BLS. However, this was a wrong assumption because of several factors, including the fact that librarians are not trained at the primary level, supplementary readers

are not related to any examinations, and primary teachers especially are under-paid and tend to be demotivated.

In addition to the provision of books, the PRS must include the components of training teachers and librarians. Elley (1996:53) states that teachers, who have been introduced to the potential value of good stories during in-service programmes, allow time for silent reading and encourage students to read often. On the other hand, Read (1996:99) discovered that "A high proportion of both trained and untrained teachers have no experience using supplementary reading materials and trade books in the classroom". Therefore, the British Council should collaborate with teacher training institutions and colleges and introduce a module on how to use supplementary readers.

Even before teacher-training programmes are modified, it is possible to give short workshops for English teachers. English Teachers Network (ELTNET) could be a valuable group to conduct such training, provided that they are themselves trained on how to use supplementary readers. Tentative steps are being taken by the ELTNET, supported by the British Council, to produce exercises for existing Ethiopian readers in English. However, care should be taken because:

> Whether these [comprehension questions] assist the process of reading or enhance comprehension and appreciation is doubtful. … Such questions are really controlling devices that turn reading books into a chore, largely included in deference to teachers who want to test whether reading has been done. (Hill, 1997:64)

In the long run, however, the recommendation that Greaney (1996:30) forwards for developing countries is also applicable to Ethiopia. He states:

> The present general substandard level of teaching can be improved by
> attracting better students for teacher training, enhancing salaries, providing
> relevant preservice and inservice teacher training to meet the expressed
> needs of the teachers, and regularly monitoring and evaluating teaching
> performance in classrooms.

Regarding the training of librarians, the British Council is already giving short-term training

to librarians. Regrettably, this training is not linked with the PRS and when one of the

librarians from the pilot schools applied to attend a course, she was turned down owing to a

lack of funds. Unless the librarians are actively involved in the PRS and assist students to

chose appropriate books, then the scheme cannot be successful. It ought to be relatively

simple to allow librarians from schools involved in the PRS to attend summer courses with

minimal disruption to their work.

Fortunately, the government appears to have taken a renewed interested in building the

capacity building of staff and has run a three-week course for all teachers and librarians

nation-wide in July 2002. Such opportunities could be used by the British Council to follow

on with short courses, with minimal expense, because transport and other costs will already

by covered by the government. Greaney (1996:29) has some words of comfort from other

developing countries stating:

> As national economies develop, governments are better able to divert
> resources to health services, teachers salaries and training, school libraries,
> and textbooks and supplementary reading material, and to restrict child labor
> practices, all of which increase the likelihood that children will learn to read.

6.4.4. Promotion

There has to be active promoting of all supplementary readers to raise the awareness of

students, parents, teachers and librarians of the existence and usefulness of supplementary

readers. Training the teachers and librarians will be a step in this direction, while they themselves could produce posters and the like to promote the readers. The British Council could also have various activities to promote the supplementary readers.

It is interesting to note that the Oxford University Press has had a launching in Addis Ababs of the five Ethiopian readers it has produced and bright colourful posters were on display. Such occasions do a lot to raise awareness. The Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA) celebrates the international literacy day annually. As CRDA is an umbrella NGO with over 300 members, collaborating with them would not only introduce the supplementary readers to a wider audience, but could possibly come up with sponsors from the NGO sector to finance book donations and training.

In collaboration with Ethiopian Television, stories from various readers could be read for children during children programmes, further increasing the awareness of students and their parents. Modern bookstores are now experimenting with 'reading mornings'. Even though these tend to cater for the better off, the British Council could monitor these events and run similar events in government schools involved in the PRS.

6.4.5. Parental Participation

Parental participation will definitely pose challenges to the PRS. Nevertheless, the government curriculum is already suggesting ways in which teachers could use parents to get involved in their children's education. Teachers are advised to encourage students to gather oral literature from their parents and write them up in class. Although this would take

place in the mother tongue, it would be a start to involving parents. An interesting development in 2002 was the publication of the first bi-lingual collection of Amharic and English children's stories by a group calling itself "Writers for Ethiopian Children". If this group lives up to its promises of producing more bi-lingual readers, then these could serve as the ideal inter-face in the sharing of stories between parents and students.

The increasing role of parents in running government schools under the new education policy can also be exploited to lure parents into the whole concept of extensive reading. Although it is unlikely that Ethiopia will have the successful reading schemes with family reading groups in the foreseeable future, simply having parents encouraging their children to read can do much to ameliorate the present situation.

6.4.6. Reading with Friends

Anderson (1996:62) says that an average Grade 5 American student reads one million words per year, while avid readers may read as much as five times this amount. The observations made while visiting the schools indicate that Ethiopian students in government schools hardly read at all outside the classroom, except to do their homework. Consequently, the British Council could attempt to build positive peer pressure to influence the students to read.

Two of the schools have what they call "reading clubs"; however, the doubtful duties of the few members are body-searching other students leaving the library and helping the librarians shelve the books. On the contrary, the HIV/AIDs club members are actively

involved in disseminating information and the environmental club members arrange outings to plant trees in collaboration with organisations like the Ethiopian Heritage Trust. The relative vitality of the last two groups appears to stem from the support and attention they get from various NGOs.

The British Council could seek ways to support the reading clubs and set them up in schools where they do not exist. In the original evaluative workshop conducted in 1997, many of the teachers had good ideas like having discussions about the stories, transforming them into plays, and making colourful posters to advertise them. Other ideas could include giving supplementary readers as awards to outstanding students, having a "star chart" on which the titles of the readers are written and the students put a star against those they have read. Collecting stories from their communities and writing them down could also prove a valuable activity at the higher grades, preserving the disappearing oral traditions as a bi-product.

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) has discussed the pivotal role of peer pressure and if it could be made to bear on the students to regard extensive reading as an exciting thing to do, then the students just might get into the habit of reading. Once the habit is formed, providing a sufficient amount and variety of readers will be the challenge. Therefore, the British Council should investigate ways of how to encourage the students to read with their friends.

6.4.7. Others

The British Council is actively involved in several projects in the Education sector and has built itself a good reputation across the country. However, it should take measures to ensure that the various projects do not go their separate ways with little linkage and co-ordination with each other. Harmonising and synchronising the projects could easily create a synergy and have a greater impact than any one of the projects could have individually. Some preliminary steps that could be taken to further strengthen the PRS follow.

To begin with the ELTNET, English teachers have set up a nation-wide network and have even managed to publish a newsletter. If this newsletter is published regularly, then it could devote a column to extensive reading. As mention earlier, ELTNET could provide a cadre of professionals who could conduct training for many of the teachers in primary schools. This is a valuable core group that could easily be guided and assisted to act as the backbone of training for ELT.

Secondly, the ESSE project is only using one British author and one Ethiopian illustrator. A lot could be done to build the capacity of the local publishing capacity by training authors, illustrators, designers and the like. Durand and Deehy (1996:167) remind us that "there is a symbiotic relationship between donor and recipients, and together they must strive toward the development of a mutually supportive rapport". Walter (1996:144) advocates the use of local authors, while Durand and Deehy (1996:169) see the role of book donations as being one of complementing the local publishing industry and fulfilling the urgent gaps in book

supply. The whole issue of book distribution and marketing is another area, where the British Council might consider developing.

Thirdly, the "Women to Women" gender project initially started by training a group of ten women to write stories for children, but then transformed into a magazine. Women have been encouraged to produce a creative story in various issues. A collection of these stories could easily be compiled into a supplementary reader to be included in the PRS list.

Fourthly, the British Council has been supporting under-graduate and post-graduate programmes in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University for decades. However, no serious attempts have been made to encourage researchers to research and evaluate projects run by the British Council. A small grant along with a list of possible areas the British Council would like to have researched could provide an annual flow of research that could provide an invaluable objective source of feedback on British Council activities.

Finally, there are numerous projects for which British Council staff have to go on field trips. The library staff, in particular, often go to schools to ensure the BLS is functioning. If all staff could find space in their schedules to drop into schools involved in the PRS, this would encourage the schools to come up with varied innovative practices to show for the next visit. This is especially important, as many of the primary teachers feel neglected and disempowered.

To conclude, the British Council must not see the PRS as a completed project and let inertia settle in. Instead, it should constantly review the project and ensure that the funds that have gone into the project are having the influence that they were intended to have. The PRS should not be shelved now that the donors have got a report on how their funds have been spent, but it should be built upon and expanded into a vibrant sustainable project.

6.5 **General Societal Implications**

The World Bank (1999:42) is urging:

> Education Network staff need to work with clients to seize the opportunities
> this initiative presents for education, and to monitor HIPCs' progress closely
> to ensure that benefits from the initiative are indeed going to the poorest, in
> terms of improved access to quality basic education services.

It has been argued that "Most African countries have during the last two decades failed to produce a competent elite capable enough of negotiating with donors," (Tekeste Negash, 1996), so the designing of a truly Ethiopian PRSP requires the widest participation possible. The pressure and influence of external donors to pressurise Ethiopia into including items on their agenda is great. As a participant in the team that formulated the ESDP commented, "The World Bank's role is always going to be pivotal in an experience like this: they have the most money, the most intellectual resources and the most influence," (Martin et al 2000:38).

Nevertheless, community participation is a must for ensuring that quality education is given. Parents and the community are seen as providing an indispensable element in the education process, they are the ones to ensure that children come to school healthy, fed

and ready to learn. They usually provide financial or material support to the school in one form or another. If given the chance they can effectively participate in school governance and even by assisting in the instruction. At the primary level especially, the parents can be considered as the indirect or even direct beneficiaries of the school. Therefore, although they cannot be forced to participate, everything possible must be done to encourage them to take an active role in educating their children.

In the original ESDP greater emphasis had been placed on access to education rather than quality. However, since that time, even the World Bank (1999:25) has realised the defects in such an approach and is talking about a changing focus from constructing and equipping buildings to curriculum reform, technological innovation, language of instruction, teacher labour reform and management decentralisation. There is a renewed call stating that access is only the beginning and that quality is the key to a successful education system.

Perhaps it would be fitting to finish this thesis with two quotations. One from the World Bank (1999:6) on the goal of Education says:

> The long-term goal for education should be nothing less than to ensure that all people everywhere have the opportunity to (1) complete a primary and lower secondary education of at least adequate quality, (2) acquire essential skills to survive and thrive in a globalizing economy, (3) benefit from the contributions that education makes to social development, and (4) enjoy the richness of human experience that education makes possible.

The other is from Greaney (1996:32), who after studying extensive reading in developing

countries concluded by saying:

Persistent, focused, informed programs; courageous leadership; good
management of limited resources; and informed enthusiastic teaching are required
if we are to achieve the long-term goal of helping children in developing countries
learn to read. When this goal is realized, these children will have access to new
sources of knowledge, insights and pleasure that can help illuminate and change
the quality of their lives.