

1. Chapter One: General Background

Chapter One will lay the background of education in Ethiopia and the foundations for the whole thesis. It begins by giving a general overview of Ethiopia and its historical background and language situation. Then it will describe the Ethiopian education system and language policy, relating this to the medium of instruction at primary level and the role of English in the system. Finally, it will discuss the current Education Sector Development Program. If context-sensitive research and evaluation is to be conducted, the specific conditions of individual countries have to be taken into consideration, as blanket decisions taken globally cannot cater for the needs and realities of local conditions. Therefore, this chapter is intended to provide the backdrop for fully appreciating the context in which the research was conducted.

1.1 Ethiopia's General Situation

Ethiopia, which is found in the Horn of Africa, is considered to be one of the least developed countries based on its economic development and the living standard of its people. It has an area of about one million square kilometres with a population of approximately 61.7 million, of which 85.3% live, in rural areas (CRDA, 2001:3).

Ethiopia is a Federal Democratic Republic composed of eleven National Regional States; Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Benishangul–Gumuz, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region, Gambella, Harari, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The last three are city states. These regional states are further divided into zones and woredas (districts).

Ethiopia has been described in the following manner:

Ethiopia is a country unique among the countries of the world in many respects. It has its own distinctive art, music, and poetic forms; its own calendar, writing system, and numeration system, a climate unexpectedly temperate for a country in the tropical zone, a history unlike that of any other African nation... (Bender, Bowen, Cooper and Ferguson, 1976:1).

Nevertheless, Ethiopia shares many similarities with most African nations and has almost identical concerns in many spheres of life. She too has the richness of culture, palaeontological and archaeological sites, and a rich complex of mineral deposits, flora and fauna in an unspoiled natural environment, which have recently been identified as common characteristics of African countries (OAU: 2001: 3).

The major causes of social problems in Ethiopia are attributed to war and recurrent drought and famine, which in turn have a direct impact on the growth of the economy and disintegration of families. The alarming rate of population growth in the country and the increase in the unproductive age group of the population aggravate both the economic and social problems. The structure of the Ethiopian economy is dominated by agriculture with over 51.2% contribution to the GNP (Befekadu and Berhanu, 1999/2000). As the agricultural sector is fully dependent on rainfall, the economy can easily be affected in times of drought and famine in some parts of the country. Other sectors expected to contribute to the growth of the economy are not developed enough to be relied on. The development of the industrial sector is vital if the overall economy is to improve and the standard of living of the population is to change for the better (Befekadu and Berhanu, 1999/2000).

Regarding her financial position, Ethiopia comes under the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) category. She is currently suffering under a debt of approximately nine billion US dollars. This would amount to 50% of her Gross Domestic Product and up to 20% of her foreign exchange revenue being consumed in servicing debts. Ethiopia has one of the lowest human development indicators and has a GNP per capita of 115 US \$ in comparison to the Sub-Saharan African average of 685\$ and Seychelles 6,238 (World Bank, 2001b:33).

Regarding education (World Bank, 2001b:320-325), she has a high illiteracy rate which appears to be gradually reducing in that the percentage of the population 15 years and older has decreased from 76% in 1985 to 64% in 1998. However, even this compares poorly to the general African figure of 41% and cannot be compared to countries like Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea, whose figures stand at 8% and 9%, respectively. Her primary school gross enrolment ratio is one of the lowest, even from Africa and was at 33% from 1994 to 1997 and her primary net enrolment was at 32% from 1994 to 1999. Only 51% of the cohort of students who enrol in Grade One manage to reach Grade Five. Ethiopia is said to have had 109,487 primary teachers working from 1994 to 1998, which is a significant increase from the 33,322 primary teachers working in 1980. This huge body of primary teachers give her a slightly more favourable standing in Africa with 47 students per teacher from 1994 –1998, in comparison to countries like Gabon and Mali which had 56 and 59 students per teacher. Nevertheless, Ethiopia is one of the seven countries in the world that has a gross enrolment ratio of less than 50% (World Bank, 1999:55).

1.2 Ethiopia's Linguistic Situation and Language Policy

The general problem of communication in Africa, which is faced because of linguistic diversity, exists in Ethiopia, too. Ethiopia has seventy-five identified tribes (Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities, 1985: 25), and over eighty different languages with four of the five Afro-Asiatic languages spoken in the country. According to Ferguson (1972:12), Ethiopia has five major languages (Amharic, English, Tigrinya, Galia/Ormignya and Somali), thirteen minor languages (Afar, Anyuak, Beja, Chaha Gurage, Derasa, Gumuz, Hadiya, Janjero, Kefa, Kembeata, Sidamo, Tigre and Wellamo/Welaiyta) and three special languages (Geez, Italian and Arabic). However, he does not cover the remaining languages probably due to the lack of sufficient data at that time. To date, no exhaustive study of the Ethiopian languages has been made, yet the remaining languages, which are also minor languages, are getting to be more widely known and a few are thought to have as few as 250 speakers. Moreover, with more languages being introduced now as media of instruction and languages of local administration, the profile of languages is changing rapidly.

Language is a major factor in any education system. After colonialism, in many countries, modern education has been adopted without sufficient preparation for its foundation. The medium of instruction added an additional difficulty to the African students grappling with a foreign curriculum and other school materials designed for a foreign reality. In Ethiopia, Amharic has enjoyed the position of national language for centuries. Therefore, those individuals who had a good mastery of it, especially the Amhara people, had an advantage over others in schools, at courts and in administration. For most of the population, Amharic has been at least a second language, which they have had to master. Therefore, the Amharas

have developed a dominating position in society. Corson (1990:22) elaborates, "... de facto inequalities are translated into de jure ones and the value of cultural capital is reinforced yet again." Obviously, individuals who mastered the language could rapidly progress in society, but as a social group it was the Amharas who were at an advantage.

Because of the factor of spatial multilingualism, the simple solution of using local languages is not proving to be an easy solution to liberate social groups in all regions. To begin with, minority groups have to learn the regional language for primary education, English for secondary and tertiary education, and Amharic for national affairs because, "Amharic... is the only Ethiopian language whose function as a lingua franca is national in scope" (Ferguson, 1972:115). So minority groups, rather than being liberated, simply have another additional language to add to their repertoire. Next, quite a few of the local languages are primarily spoken languages. As a result, only a few people are literate in these languages. Finally, whatever the feelings of the people are towards the Amharas, Amharic remains the most prestigious national language.

Moving on to Ethiopia's language policy, Fawcett (1970:53) states that " a language policy is by its nature a continuing thing, and some measure of supplementation or even revision is inevitable." Such continuation is clearly visible in Ethiopia's governments' policies, especially so with the coming to power of a new government.

During the reign of Emperor Haile-Sellassie (1930 - 1974), there was a major concern of colonialism/decolonialism across the whole of Africa. The introduction of Amharic to unify

Ethiopia was started by Emperor Tewodros II (1855 - 1868). However, it was disrupted by the Italian occupation. The Italian colonialists introduced the use of vernaculars as media of instruction and local administration with the ultimate aim of preventing national communication and unification. Tekeste Negash (1990:103) has put in an appendix to his book an article that dates as far back as 1934. In this article, a foreign consultant proposes the use of an Ethiopian language as the medium of instruction and the need to build up its lexicon to cover modern terminology and concepts. Although Ethiopia was never truly colonised, the government was concerned about linguistic decolonisation and creating a national and international image of a strong unified nation. Hence, the government's language policy was "consistent with the aim of promoting Amharic as the national language of Ethiopia" (Bender, Bowen, Cooper and Ferguson, 1976:190). A command of Amharic was a prerequisite for any foreigner seeking Ethiopian nationality, and most other native languages were not actively supported. The period between 1960 and 1974 is often cited as the golden years of better and stable economic growth in terms of growth in real GDP, gross domestic saving and investment.

With the coming to power of the Dergue in 1974, or in the reign of Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam, the economy suffered. Declining per capita income, serious internal and external macroeconomic imbalances, and widening budget deficit characterise the period between 1974 and 1991. However, a salutary bow was made in the direction of some more native languages. Documents that stressed the equality, development and respectability of all native languages were published. As a step forward from the previous regime, fifteen languages were used in the national literacy campaign. This supplementation of the

language policy reflected the change of focus from concern with individual nationhood to recognition of the multilingual and multiethnic nature of the people of Ethiopia. However, Amharic remained as the sole native language in formal education and state administration.

In 1991, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Front seized power with Ato Melese Zenawi as its leader. During the last ten years, growth in real GDP has rebounded to an average level of about 5.6% per annum and generally the country seems to have economic stability. The present government's language policy, which is yet to appear in print, is still further supplementing the previous policies. The government sought to empower more of the Ethiopian people by introducing five national languages for regional administration and as many local languages for media of instruction as circumstances would allow. In fact, the right of all nationalities to attend primary education in their mother tongue is stated in the educational policy of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994: 10-11):

Cognisant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages. ... The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area. ... Students can chose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations.

A territorial principle was adopted, probably based on the assumption that only such a principle could ensure the survival of minority languages. Hence, children of all ethnic groups have to learn in the language of the territory in which they dwell. This territorial principle actually contradicts the rights of the child to learn in his mother tongue, as due to the spatial multilingualism that exists, the student's mother tongue is not necessarily that language of the territory in which they live. Although there is mention of "one foreign

language” (TGE,1994:11) in principle, in practice, only English is taught in the primary schools at present.

After several years, the initial exuberant response to several media of instruction is fast fading. Regional governments are taking a second realistic look at things and pondering whether teaching students in the local language is limiting their mobility on the job market and restricting them to educational institutions within one region only. The Afar region and some ethnic groups in the Southern Nation and Nationalities People's Region are retaining Amharic as the medium of primary education and only introducing their local languages as school subjects.

Alexander (1996:6) comments upon the fact that language policies in Africa tend to come up with systematically depressing or disastrous results. This probably emanates from the practice of governments being too willing to absorb and apply 'obvious' theories and the inability of the intellectuals to adapt such theories to the practical realities of a certain country and to the felt needs of the people in that region. The World Bank (1999:43) stresses “the importance of taking account of local values and culture ...”.

For instance, the view of multicultural policies and absolute pluralism as a panacea to all experiences of racist violence, so easily embraced in developed countries and theoretically attractive, is not going down so well in developing countries. Limage (1994:99) notes:

With so many countries in a state of political and social transition and others engaged in civil wars, language diversity is more hesitantly perceived as a source of cultural enrichment and human rights.

Similarly, in Ethiopia, the social mobility and job opportunities of the next generation will be determined by the type of education and the languages of education in which children are educated today. Consequently, the practical realisation of the present language policy demands scrutiny. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1994:10-11) has stated that all nationalities have the right to attend primary education in their mother tongue, and at least twenty-two languages are being used for primary education today (Gizaw,2001:iii). Amharic will retain its position as the official language of the state. This recognition of vernaculars in both theory and practice is related to the state's recognition of ethnic groups and polities along ethnic lines.

Because all the Ethiopian languages cannot possibly be used as media of instruction, it is probable that in the future, changes in the language policy will be related to the preservation and development of the minority languages that fail to survive the competition. Even in the much richer Republic of South Africa, Alexander (1996:38) calls for active support for an eleven-language policy to prevent such a policy from becoming “mere lip service to a noble ideal.” He then suggests the blending of languages to reduce the number, which has been attempted and failed in the South of Ethiopia owing to the dialects being strong symbols of group identity. In theory, all languages have access to development. However, in practice, quite a lot of the minority languages are left to struggle for survival.

It is unlikely that these minority languages will receive any serious attention regarding language planning at present. Theoretically, they will be encouraged to develop, but

practically, the government will have its hands full trying to develop the selected languages. Consequently, the development or decline of these minority languages will most likely be left in the hands of individuals and non-governmental organisations.

Though speculation is precarious at best in predicting the future of languages, the minority languages with few speakers might die out and dialect clusters might merge to form one language. As language is closely related to identity, the future of these languages could coincide with their speakers. Since the Gurages are probably economically relatively better off in the society, their language cluster could merge and eventually develop into a written language and be a symbol of their separate identity. Other languages might disappear as their speakers assimilate with larger tribes. Still others might be preserved through the activity of anthropologists, linguists and other concerned speakers of the language. Only a few are likely to develop and create a need for further status planning in the distant future.

To sum up, Ethiopia's language policy has been changing over the years and will probably continue to do so in the years to come.

1.3 Medium of Instruction

The recent introduction of the right to have one's mother tongue as the medium of instruction is having many unforeseen consequences on the education system. The unassailable position of Amharic has had the effect of making some teachers look down upon the local language being used as a medium of instruction (Fisseha Mekonnen: 1994:58). Such negative attitudes can be dangerous because:

Teacher attitudes towards a particular group, coupled with other forms of discrimination may raise or depress academic achievement in ways that can modify many of the linguistic advantages or disadvantages that children may possess. (Corson, 1990: 162)

As a result, it is doubtful whether the raising in status of languages has had the desired effect. Such status raising has not really increased the opportunities of the population as a whole to be more competitive owing to a lack of teaching materials and trained teachers in some of the languages. Since UNESCO declared that every child has the right to be educated in one's mother tongue in 1951, it has been generally accepted that a child who learns in his/her mother tongue and then moves on to other major languages will exhibit good academic achievement. This is because the mother tongue is the natural vehicle for the learner's thoughts and skills easily acquired in the mother tongue and are assumed to be transferred and facilitate second language acquisition. Now, however, this assumption is being questioned. Kroon and Vallen (1995:) feel that there is no conclusive evidence that first language instruction either leads to better results or inhibits second language acquisition, whereas Street (1994:35) actually feels that local literacy may interfere with second language literacy. Alexandre (1972:87) states that local vernaculars may only prove effective in particularly favourable cases. In fact, this is an issue that demands serious and intensive research in the African society, not only because it questions traditionally accepted concepts, but because the stages of development of various African languages vary tremendously.

A crucial factor in students' mastery of a language is its availability in written and spoken forms in the society. Thus, the students' ability to use elaborate language skills requires an acquisitionally rich environment, so urban-rural differences appear. It has been previously

pointed out (Ambatchew, 1994:8), that several of the new media of instruction lacked adequate written material to enhance literacy skill development outside the classroom, and large numbers of students relapse into illiteracy (TGE, 1994:2). Unfortunately, it is reported that local publishers are not keen to publish in languages other than Amharic owing to its being unprofitable (Hoben, 1994:103). Admittedly, Ethiopia lacks the resources of making 'active bilingualism' a legal right as in the case of Sweden. Even attempting to advance a policy of 'active bilingualism' using students' mother tongue is a far-off dream. Nevertheless, using Amharic in a bilingual scheme could be feasible, owing to the existence of prepared materials, trained teachers and an active knowledge of the language by a huge portion of the population.

Alexandre (1972:72) stresses that "it is quite impossible ... to use all local languages in education or administration, if only because of economic or other material consideration". However, now that Ethiopia has already adopted status planning, serious thought must be given to the production of materials and the training of materials writers.

The government (TGE,1994:3) has promised that material production will be enhanced, but at present, single texts are being translated from Amharic into the other languages. This will lead to several constraints. To begin with, "every translation constitutes a break in transmission and a loss of effectiveness" (Alexandre, 1972:87). Next, the decreased cost of mass production will be reduced to one ninth of the previous cost, if not more. However, the production of textbooks in different languages undermines the advantages of mass production. Consequently, costs rise and the books become very expensive. Thirdly, an

adequate supply of books both within the school and within the community is essential for students to attain and retain literacy. Admittedly, Amharic did not have an abundance of books when it was first introduced as a medium of instruction, but the production of books soon increased. Finally, the coinage of new terms to express concepts in the original language must be lucid, otherwise obscure texts will be reproduced in the regional languages.

As for materials writers, they will have to be bi-cultural in order to avoid misrepresentations in the ideas of texts. Finally, the shortage of trained writers well-versed in child psychology and experts in the subject areas previously reported (Habte-Mariam Marcos, 1970:16), still exists. Therefore, each region will have to train a panel of material writers rather than translators.

Perhaps the warning of introducing local languages in an attempt to be politically correct made some decades back by Habte-Mariam Marcos (1970:17) on the introduction of Amharic as the medium of instruction has implications for the present. He cautioned:

Great care should be taken so that in our effort to make Amharic the language of instruction in Ethiopian schools, our ultimate aim, which is the achievement of a well-balanced and sound education will not be undermined.

Gizaw (2001:39) also recently warned that instead of encouraging learning the current policy might be having the opposite and diverse negative affects. He warns:

The policy doesn't encourage ideas that transcend or go beyond immediate ethnic feelings. In some regions youngsters who belong to different ethnic groups are forced to learn in the regional language. They feel marginalised and discriminated against. This in turn has prompted displacement and migration of a lot of people to the urban centres where they think they can go to mainstream schools and learn in the working language, Amharic/English. This also has its own adverse consequences.

Therefore the whole issue of the medium of instruction is still controversial, though the government encourages using the mother tongue. Serious investigations of the current policy and practice must be conducted and several amendments must be incorporated to ensure that the policy is bringing about the desired benefits.

1.4 A Historical Overview of English in Ethiopia

Many African countries have ambivalent feelings towards the English language, as they were introduced to it through the colonial expansion of Britain and it carries with it negative connotations of the ‘white oppressor’. However, many people now realise that English has become one of Africa’s languages.

Fortunately, the introduction of English to Ethiopia was not a direct but an indirect legacy of Africa’s colonial history. Different colonisers used different styles of modernising the education system of the colonised, which usually involved the imposition of their language. However, it should also be kept in mind that most Africans were allowed to be educated up to a certain level, which the colonisers felt appropriate to their needs. In countries like Ethiopia a deliberate effort was made to exterminate local intellectuals. After the liberation of occupied Ethiopian territories from Italy in 1940, the Ethiopian government voluntarily adopted English as the medium of instruction. So English in Ethiopia is not perceived to be connected with the ‘white oppressor’ but rather it is seen as a means of gaining access to material success, and a way of communicating with the international community, because Italian was the language of the coloniser. When Western education was introduced to Ethiopia in the early nineteenth century, French was the medium of instruction. English, however, soon took over as both the English and the

Americans grew active in Ethiopia. American, British, Canadian and Indian teachers resulted in English spreading among the students.

During the reign of Emperor Haile-Selassie, English was seen as the link of the country to the international community. The post-independence Africanisation trend led to the Ethiopianisation of staff. After UNESCO reported that indigenous languages of instruction facilitate understanding, Amharic took on the role of medium of instruction in elementary schools. English has till today remained the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary level.

Under Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam, the aim of education was seen as the creation of the well-rounded communist man and English was seen as a weapon of intensifying the struggle against international imperialism. More emphasis was given to political indoctrination rather than learning and the standards of both English and education fell drastically. English was used as a scapegoat for these falling standards. Amharic, therefore, became the de facto language of instruction with teachers giving clarifications and at times whole lectures in Amharic at both secondary and tertiary levels, while the examinations remained in English. As a result of this situation, the government stated that Amharic would officially replace English as the medium of instruction at all levels.

With the present government, however, English is seen as a key language to serve Ethiopia as a medium of international communication. The low standard of the students' English persists as a problem. Specific reference is made to the low standard of English

in the new educational policy (TGE, 1994:11). However, even in the past, when the students' command of English was considered to be fairly good, the average university student is said to have had the proficiency of a grade 7-8 American student (Balsvik, 1985:13). The role of English as a medium of instruction is being strengthened. The recent introduction of English as a subject starting from Grade One and the allocation of greater English contact hours at tertiary level indicate the present government's concern and commitment to improve the quality of English. Moreover, the increased sensitisation of the public over Amharic being the language of one ethnic group further minimises the likelihood that Amharic will replace English as the medium of instruction, as proposed by the previous government.

1.4.1 Ethiopia's 'Dual Circle' English

The use of English in Ethiopia is quite complex. It is used partially in commerce i.e. in banks and aviation, but not much elsewhere. It is used frequently for entertainment and mass media, but only rarely for interpersonal communication. It is used as the medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels, yet students are quite weak in English. It has hardly any cultural significance, yet a handful of literary artists express themselves in English. So how can the use of English in Ethiopia be classified?

Berns (1995:4) describes the difficulties in actually applying Kachru's concentric circle model in Europe (See Appendix 1). There is no difficulty with the 'inner circle' countries; where English is a primary norm-providing language. However, there is an over-lapping between the 'outer circle', where English is used with an extended functional

range and is norm-developing, and the 'expanding circle', where English is a norm-dependent international language. Berns (1995:9) proposes that the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany be considered as 'dual circle' countries as they use English with an extended functional range and are still norm-dependent. Ethiopia, too, should be considered as belonging to the 'dual circle' group along with other countries in which the use of English is complex, such as Jamaica and South Africa.

1.4.2 The Lack of an Ethiopian English Variety

Although Ethiopia has been using English as long as Nigeria and Ghana, and English has long been the medium of instruction, there is nothing that can really be called “Ethiopian English” or an Ethiopian variety. What exists, if anything, is simply performance variety that is largely brought about through mother tongue interference. Hence, an Ethiopian speaking English can be identified if he gave equal stress to all syllables, did not use standard intonation patterns and had difficulty pronouncing “th” words. Regarding lexis, Ethiopian speakers sometimes use words transliterated directly from their mother tongue, so might for example confuse ‘tall’ and ‘long’, if there is only one word for both these in their mother tongue. Grammatically too, some constructions might be awry. However, all these features tend to be regarded as “defects” rather than norms and speakers strive to use UK or US English models.

This absence of variety might be explained socio-linguistically. As explained earlier in this chapter, Ethiopia was not colonised, Ethiopians have no negative memories associated with English and as a result do not see it as a mode of neo-colonisation. Moreover, as Amharic is

the lingua franca of the uneducated masses of Ethiopia, they do not really have the chance of creating their own variety of English, though they show signs of integrative motivation (Ambatchew, 1995:44). On the other hand, the educated Ethiopians, who do communicate in English at times, show signs of instrumental motivation (Abiye, 1995:24), and as a result are happy to use UK or US English as a tool without adopting it and producing a variety of their own.

Thus, at present, Ethiopia lacks her own variety of English and seems content with the use of US or UK varieties to handle those matters which require the use of an international language.

1.4.3 English and Employment

Although Amharic, Oromiffa, Tigrinya and other Ethiopian languages are used in most government offices, according to the region, English is seen as essential for bettering oneself. All international organisations, most non-governmental organisations and some of the well-paying government offices such as Ethiopian Airlines, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Insurance Corporation, require a good mastery of English.

The researcher conducted a quick survey of the correlation with self-perceived fluency in English and grade level of the Ethiopian staff in an international organisation in Ethiopia. Grade 1 consists of members in the senior management, while Grade 5 consists of workers like guards and cleaners. The other three grades range in between the two

including junior management, librarians and assistants. The results starkly portrayed the correlation between grade level (and therefore salary) and fluency in English as follows:

Table 1: Correlation between occupational grade level and English fluency.

Grade	Fluency in English
1	100%
2	75%
3	33%
4	0%
5	0%

The perception that greater fluency in English guarantees better employment opportunities has, in turn, led to an increase in demand for English language courses. Although this is only a quick survey of one organisation, employees in general see English as the key to professional development and personal betterment.

Predictions have been made by language forecasters that the international demand of English will rapidly increase over the next three decades (Graddol,1997:14). Similar trends can be observed nationally. Many students want to do their post-graduate studies in the West. English language schools are appearing all over Ethiopia, and English teachers have numerous opportunities for moonlighting. Admittedly, the value of the currency does not make the salaries viable on an international level, but the shortage of well-qualified teachers and trainers is already pushing prices up. Therefore this has economic advantages for the Ethiopian English teachers, as they are making money and are not as yet threatened by an influx of native-speaker English teachers. Admittedly,

some native speakers, who are already living in Ethiopia with their spouses, sometimes get to pick up some of the well paying jobs.

Regarding publishing, there is a great lack of materials in English and the opening up of the book trade and the imminent adoption of a national textbook policy already has international publishers looking for opportunities for market penetration. Nevertheless, whether or not the Ethiopian ELT industry is strong enough to sufficiently support the educational system and make it an internationally viable one is another matter completely. On the whole, however, the future of English in Ethiopia appears secure.

1.5 Background to the Ethiopian Socio-Economic Situation

Greaney (1996:10-11) states:

Health, education, and literacy are closely interrelated. To become literate a person must survive the critical early years and be healthy enough to benefit from formal and informal opportunities to learn. However, mere survival is a problem in many developing countries.

The International Global Targets of halving poverty by the year 2015 have now been accepted by the WB, IMF and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Suspicions of corrupted leaders not thinking about the welfare of their countries also brought about new analytical dimensions of poverty, including issues such as the poor having access to education, health and other basic social services, instead of simply looking at measures like the dollar-a-day as indicators of poverty.

In 1999, the World Bank and IMF drew up a new anti-poverty frame that would ensure debt-relief and concessional loans and provide a general umbrella frame under which all other sector programmes are to come. The new features of the whole Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) approach are its being the overarching organising framework of all donor-recipient relationships. PRSPs are perceived as being fundamentally different from Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in that they focus on poverty reduction and are drawn up by in-country partnership based processes. They are comprehensive and result-oriented and, though planned in 3-year cycles, they are long term in that they cover 20-year periods. The core element of PRSP being authored in-country give civil societies the opportunity to have their voices heard. However, the WB and IMF still retain the pivotal role of endorsing the final national PRSP, thereby creating a catch-22 situation where they advocate national authorship, yet keep their hands on the reins. Consequently questions could be raised whether PRSPs aren't simply SAPs that had undergone cosmetic surgery.

Nevertheless, the intention is for governments to work with all sections of society, including academics, churches, NGOs and others in producing a PRSP. However, the World Bank and IMF set down as a precondition to debt-relief that Highly Indebted Poor Countries drew up their own PRSP. Seeing that most countries could not draw up credible papers in such a short time, they settled for Interim PRSPs, which would not be as exacting as the final PRSP. In a continued effort to boost her economic growth and reduce her infamous position as one of the poorest of the Least Developed Countries status, Ethiopia quickly drew up her IPRSP and is to embark on drawing up her own

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. June 2002 has been set as the deadline for the submission of Ethiopia's PRSP. The figure being proposed for debt relief to Ethiopia is around 900 million US dollars over a twenty-year period. However, a recent mapping exercise of Central and Eastern Africa countries states (UNDP, 2002:8) Ethiopia is unlikely to achieve the goals of reducing poverty and hunger, having universal primary enrolment, and halving maternal and infant mortality rates by 2015.

1.5.1 The General Health Situation

It is obvious that good health is a pre-requisite to a productive workforce. Improving the health of a workforce contributes to poverty alleviation through reducing absenteeism due to illness, enabling workers to work effectively and prolonging the life of the citizens. Similarly in Education, school staff have to be healthy to do their jobs efficiently. Ethiopia, with 50% of the population under the age of 15, has a formidable task of ensuring that her children grow up into healthy productive citizens. Simply ensuring that over 14 million children below the age of 5 are inoculated requires adequate supplies of vaccines, the necessary infrastructure, trained personnel and an awareness and willingness from the local communities. Major donors like WHO, UNICEF, USA, Japan, Canada, Rotary International and others have backed her in her efforts to improve the health sector.

Unfortunately, Ethiopia is not only lagging behind, but is also hindering the rest of the world in the eradication of polio. Alongside other African countries like Nigeria, the

Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, Ethiopia has euphemistically been labelled as a 'Country with Special Situations'.

Unfortunately only about 45% of the Ethiopian population has access to health facilities. The main issues in the health sector in Ethiopia are several. To begin with there is a low and inadequate coverage of basic health services. Next, the quality of the services is very low because of a lack of drugs, poorly trained staff, and poor personnel management and supervision. Thirdly, there is internal inefficiency in the use of resources in terms of concentration of available resources in urban areas and skewed resources in urban areas and skewed allocations towards curative care.

Accordingly, the present government of Ethiopia started working on a public-enterprise reform of the social welfare services delivery. Under the health sector, the need for decentralisation of the health services, which has been highly centralised, has been given attention on the National Health Policy adopted in September 1993. In parallel to the ESDP a Health Sector Development Program was also developed. The programme duration is also 20 years (1997-2016) with four consecutive phases of five years. The first phase of the five years program (July 1997 –June 2002) had just been completed and the second phase is underway.

The total expected cost of the first phase is about US \$750 million. Out of this, IDA is to provide US \$100 million and other donors about US \$215 million. The Ethiopian government committed itself to finance about 55% of the total cost. In order to undertake

the HSDP, the Ministry of Finance passes the funds from both central government and donors to the central Ministry of Health and to the regional offices of the Ministry of Finance. The central leaders of the sector program is the Office of the Prime Minister, creating a leadership gap in the Ministry of Health. The government has adopted basic strategies to implement the HSDP. These strategies include decentralising operational responsibilities, ensuring the accessibility of health facilities in underserved areas, using primary health care and community-based delivery of health services approach, and increasing supply and logistics systems for essential drugs and improve the skills of health service providers.

Nevertheless, at present, Ethiopia has very high maternal and infant mortality rates, and as many as 60% of Ethiopian children are thought to be stunted due to malnourishment. What effect all of this has on the school going children's learning abilities and achievements is as yet an under-researched area. However in developing countries in Asia, " it is being realised that policies and actions to combat malnutrition must occur through 'holistic,' or integrated, inter-sectoral methods". Therefore, " the integration of primary health care and in-school nutrition education with basic primary education are technical and social necessities" (Lynch, 1994:69).

Greaney (1996:11) reviews several studies and comments:

In impoverished countries, the capacity of children to learn is reduced by hunger, chronic malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, parasitic infections, and vision and hearing impairments ... Inadequately fed children also have poor attentions spans and little energy for learning to read and write.

Unfortunately, most research and even national planning tends to compartmentalise and scrutinise individual sectors and subjects, often ignoring the larger picture. It was only on 8 September 2000 that all 189 Member States of the United Nations realised that unless all aspects of development were tackled in an integrated manner, than advances in one field could be reversed by difficulties in another. Consequently, they adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which embodied goals aimed at improving the livelihoods of humanity in the new century. These ambitions were later modified into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have incorporated the International Development Targets (IDTs) and other aims for socio-economic development. The MDGs consist of 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators. MDGs outline some of the most important objectives of human development. They assist in setting priorities around some of the most pressing issues of human development. Moreover, they help to focus national and international priority-setting by limiting the number of goals and targets, keeping them stable over time, and offer an opportunity to communicate clearly to a broad audience. Each goal is associated with specific targets and each target measured with particular indicators, allowing countries to assess progress in each goal.

Regarding education the goal is to achieve universal primary education by 2015, with the target of ensuring that all boys and girls all over the world will be able to complete a course of primary schooling. The indicators include the net enrolment at primary level, the proportion of students who reach Grade Five and the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds. Indirectly, the Grade Eight students being studied in this thesis are part of the third indicator, which relates to literacy rates.

1.5.2 The General HIV/AIDS Situation

Although HIV/AIDS is a part of health in general, it is given individual attention due to its taking on a pivotal role in health. The Christian Relief and Development Agency (CRDA) (2001:v) recently reported that HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the challenges of socio-economic development globally. At least about 10.4 million children world-wide have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. It has been estimated that of all the cases of HIV/AIDS recorded globally, 25.3 million were living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa at the end of the year 2000. Of this estimated amount, 17 million people have already died, which is put as over three times the number of people who have died globally. HIV/AIDS is said to be Africa's Number One Enemy and is causing havoc by killing the most productive section of society. Uganda is the only country in Sub-Saharan as of 2000, to have turned this major epidemic around. The statistics of newly infected persons for the Sub-Saharan African is 3.8 million. The World Bank alone has approved the sum of 500,000,000 US \$ to help fight AIDS in Africa. Ten times more people in Africa have been killed by HIV/AIDS than in wars on the continent. When the epidemic first started in the 80s it was thought to be only a health problem, but by the beginning of the 21st century, most people have come to realise that HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue but rather a full-blown socio-economic development catastrophe.

In Ethiopia, 3 million of the population are living with HIV/AIDS and 280,000 are thought to have died from it. Two cases were identified in Addis Ababa in 1984. Since then, Statistics in Ethiopia show a rapid rise in the 80s to a gradual stabilising, which reflected similar trends in other African countries. Ethiopia is second in terms of people

living with HIV/AIDS and first in the number of children living with AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. Men are more exposed to the virus than women until the age of 45, after which the prevalence is higher in women. It is predicted that 50% of all hospital beds will be occupied by HIV/AIDS related cases.

In relation to Education, it is feared that HIV/AIDS will seriously impact on the education system through drastically increasing the rate of absenteeism of teachers, school administrators and students, in addition to causing their deaths. Obviously more and more children will be coming to schools orphaned by HIV/AIDS and this will directly affect their learning abilities. Unfortunately, however, not much research has yet been done in this area.

1.6 Background of the Ethiopian Educational System

Before the turn of this century, education in Ethiopia followed a traditional pattern. The majority of the people were illiterate and learnt about life from their family and society through direct observation and imitation as well as through oral traditions. They obtained their vocational skills from actually doing the jobs with craftsmen. Most of them were farmers, so obtaining vocational skills simply meant learning how to farm with their fathers on a plot of land. The few who became literate by attending formal education at Church and Mosque schools generally remained in religious circles; so literacy was restricted to the clergy and to the nobility whom they served.

Modern education began to emerge in the first quarter of this century. In fact, modern education was actually Western education transplanted to Ethiopian soil by government envoys and missionaries. Consequently, most of the teaching staff were expatriates. At first, people were negative about this new education. Gradually, with a lot of effort on the part of the rulers, it was received warmly. Education and the educated were highly esteemed as the saying 'Rather an educated man kills me, than an uneducated one rears me,' shows. Despite the fact that educating one's children was soon regarded as a merit, the poor could not afford to send their children to school, as there was no one to do the herding, ploughing and housework. As a result, education became available mostly for the rich. After the transplanting of secular Western education in Ethiopia, the relevance of Ethiopian education in the development of the country became dubious. Emperor Menelik evidently saw Western education as the path to modernising his kingdom, especially as he viewed Ethiopia's disadvantage in warfare to be directly related to the fact that Ethiopia could not manufacture modern armaments. However, the course of education development gave less emphasis to the wealth of technical and vocational education that produces the driving labour force of economic growth and development. On one hand, this neglect of technical and vocational skills might have been due to the influence of the traditional Ethiopian education system, which produced highly erudite clergy, who looked down upon any sort of manual work. On the other hand, it could have been owing to the focus of Western education at that time on more academic subjects.

The start of the Italian invasion in 1936 disrupted the spread of education. The existing 22 schools were closed and for the next five years education was restricted to the Italians and

the few 'trustworthy' Ethiopians who worked for them. The few educated Ethiopians were targeted for elimination, as the Italians perceived them as a threat.

After the Italians left in 1941, modern education began to spread. The closed schools were reopened with help from the British, who provided directors, teachers and teaching materials, and vocational education was introduced. Teacher education and commercial education were soon begun. This rapid spread of education naturally led to a shortage of teachers, funds and management personnel. These shortages were met by calling for expatriate staff especially from India and the USA and the introduction of educational taxes. The need for management led to the creation of educational boards, and then the Ministry of Education was formed in 1944. A conscious decision to give a few individuals a “good” education rather than give a lot of individuals basic education was made, for highly trained Ethiopian intellectuals were needed to help the Emperor rule. Such an elitist type of educational view has even been echoed by an educationists more recently (Tekeste, 1990:11) as he feels that the crises of modern Ethiopian education is trying to spread out meagre resources over too large a population, resulting in many people learning precious little. However, it soon became clear to all that Ethiopia would soon have its dream of an Ethiopian white-collared working force fulfilled, but would still not be able to keep apace of the rapid economic developments being experienced in America, Europe and Japan. The ever increasing number of students and the demand for education put a gradual but increasing pressure on the educational system and led to popular dissatisfaction.

This dissatisfaction is probably one of the numerous causes for the attempted coup d'etat in 1960. Although the coup failed, it did have the effect of making the government take a closer look at the educational system and make some progressive changes, the most noticeable change probably was the introduction of Amharic as a medium of instruction in elementary schools. A less visible, but just as important process, was the comparison of the education system with that of newly independent African states. The results of this comparison were shocking for the Ethiopian officials. Even though most states complained about the condition of their educational systems at the conference of African states on the development of education in Africa in 1961, Ethiopia found that she was far behind her neighbours according to conventional educational measures. It was here that Ethiopia made the mistake of trying to “keep up with the Joneses” instead of studying the relevance and quality of the existing educational system. The emphasis on the quantity of education as indicated by the illiteracy rates led to the rapid increase of schools and higher institutions of learning.

By 1971, it was realised that quantity alone could not be an adequate measure of a country's educational system. The long overdue study of the relevance and quality of education was undertaken by teams of experts under the title of “Educational Sector Review”. The team was composed of Ethiopian and expatriate educational experts, who came up with a rigorous educational policy aimed at increasing the relevance and efficiency of the system through a thorough overhaul and restructuring. However, this study was too late, for in 1974 the discontent of the people had reached such a high level that it led to a revolution heralding the beginning of a socialist education system.

For the next seventeen years haphazard socialist experimentation took place on the Ethiopian educational scene. Tekeste (1990:20) states the Workers Party of Ethiopia was ruling the country, so the fundamental aim of education was cultivating Marxist-Leninist ideology in the young generation so that they could move the Revolution forward. Most private schools were nationalised and many of the intelligentsia fled the country or were killed. Teshome Wagaw (1988:255) says, "... 75 percent of university teachers were highly qualified Ethiopians and some colleges were entirely staffed by Ethiopian faculties, after 1974, many of these leading administrators and faculty left the country and now hold positions all over the world." Education was made directly and unequivocally subservient to political ends. "Exposing the inherent exploitative and antisocial nature of world imperialism..." (English Panel, 1982:9) was, for example, one of the goals of English language teaching. The previous system of six years of primary, two years of junior-secondary and four years of senior-secondary school still continued. Alongside this, however, some experiments in polytechnic education were tried out, but not carried through. During this period Swedish aid was used to cover not only the building of elementary schools, but also non-formal education centres such as Awraja (District) Pedagogical Centres and Appropriate Technological Centres.

Such unplanned and haphazard experimentation did, however, come up with some strong points. The national literacy campaign initiated in 1979 had impressively high rates of success and was awarded two international awards. Community-funding of school buildings and the use of national languages in literacy campaigns spread. The success of this experimentation cannot be objectively measured because of a lack of "a single piece of

scientifically credible recent data" (Timberlake,1985:17). Hough (1987:159) notes ironically: "All official documents record progress since the revolution of 1974".

As official documentation does not appease the public's discontent, the need for massive reforms in the educational system became obvious. Consequently in 1983, the government called for a review of the entire education sector to look into the reasons of the weaknesses in content and quality of education in Ethiopia. Unlike the Educational Sector Review conducted by the previous government, this one was carried out entirely by Ethiopian experts. Around sixty Ethiopian experts from the Ministry of Education and Addis Ababa University were divided into four teams and asked to carry out workshops in identifying the reasons for decline in educational standards and ways forward. The whole project was named the 'Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia, (ERGESE) and was overseen by prominent people like the Minister of Education, the Commissioner for Higher Education, the Commissioner for Science and Technology, the President of Addis Ababa University and inevitably, a representative from the Ideological Department of the Workers Party of Ethiopia (Tekeste, 1990:18-22).

The findings of ERGESE were considered so threatening to the government that access to them was denied to the public at large. Tekeste (1990:18) explains, "These documents are, however, classified as secret and, therefore, have been inaccessible to the public. Permission to study the documents is granted on an individual basis and with the personal authorisation of the Minister of Education." This might be because public reaction to the 'Education Sector Review' was seen as one of the major causes for the downfall of the previous regime.

The findings in themselves, however, simply indicated what a shambles the education system was in. Regarding subjects, ERGESE stated that almost all the subjects were poorly presented, lacking clarity, coherence and consistency. As for the students, they were found not to understand the main objectives of education (i.e. preparation for work) and lacking in adequate conducive conditions to learn, as 20% of the students were found to be disabled and 37% living away from their families. The teachers too were found to dislike their profession with up to 50% stating that they would rather be engaged in other professions.

It took until 1986 for the government to be able to come up with an ‘official report’ which it felt could be presented to international donors. A few of the recommendations, like the setting up of guidance and counselling services for the students, were also implemented. However, ironically history repeated itself and not too long after this study was conducted, the government was overthrown.

In 1991, the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) defeated and overthrew the socialist government. The socialist goals and aims of the government were also quick to go, leaving the educational scene open for new changes and reforms. The new Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) identified some of the major problems of the country as having been top-down policies, approaches to development being influenced too much by expatriates, and unrealistic objectives set on assessment of the better off regions (Prime Minister’s Office, 1994:8). Soon after, the TGE published a policy on education. The Education and Training Policy stated that primary education would consist of eight years and secondary education of two compulsory and two optional years, with the government

financing the first phase of education for ten years (TGE, 1994:7). The new system is beginning to be implemented all over the country.

Sloss (1981: 145) declares, "There is no education that is, or indeed can or ought to be, divorced from the ideology and the political ideas of the society." Nevertheless, it is hoped that the new changes will be more in line with making education directly relevant to the needs of the people rather than making education a political football.

1.7 General Structure of the Ethiopian Educational System

Teshome Wagaw (1988:253) claims that education in Ethiopia begins with three years of pre-school education. However, as only a negligible number of children actually attend the few kindergartens that do exist, it is difficult to include this phase in the general structure of the educational system. Admittedly, many children learn basic literacy skills in church and mosque schools as well as in kindergartens in urban areas. However, as pre-school education is largely conducted on an informal basis, it is very difficult to categorise the various activities.

For the majority of Ethiopian students, education begins at primary school, which consists of eight years of education divided into two cycles of four years each. One of the local languages is the medium of instruction in primary school, though English is introduced as a subject starting from Grade One and it is a compulsory subject in the National Examination that is administered at the end of the eight years in primary school. Primary education is basically under the control of the various Regional Educational

Bureaux (REB). The minimum learning competencies and a rough guide of the skills to be learnt are set out nationally by the Institute of Curriculum Research and Development which comes under the Ministry of Education (MoE). Then it is the responsibility of the REBs to adapt the syllabi to the needs and priorities of the realities in their region. The REBs are responsible for the development of textbooks at primary level and most of them have teacher training institutes to train their own teachers. Each region has several zones and the Zonal Education Bureau (ZEB) is responsible for the monitoring and evaluating of the educational activities of the schools within the zone. At a more grassroot level is the Woreda (district) Educational Office (WEO), which is supposed to have daily contact with the schools. After visiting over 50 primary schools in nine African countries Heneveld and Craig (1996:1-2) give their description for the average African primary school classroom:

Up to eighty small children will squeeze into poorly-lit rooms designed for no more than forty, and many children may not have chairs or desks. The teachers must attempt to provide instruction with only a chalkboard as an aid. Children may have notebooks, and a few, depending on the country and on local economic conditions, may have textbooks. The teaching process is dominated by the teacher whose delivery is usually desultory and boring. The teachers' salaries, training and work conditions dampen the enthusiasm of even the most dedicated among them. The overall effect in most schools is that of a ritual being played out in which participants understand and appreciate little of what is happening.

Although slightly long, it is hoped that this description will give an overall feeling of primary education in most schools around Ethiopia. In fact, this description would not raise the eyebrows of most Ethiopian primary teachers. Admittedly schools in urban areas like Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Nazareth are slightly better off as all children have chairs, though they might be squeezed four to a bench intended for two, or they tend to

have one textbook for three. Nevertheless, as the situation is worse in regions like Benishangul, Gambella and Afar, the above description is adequate for those not familiar with Africa.

Secondary education follows, in which a shift to English as a medium of instruction takes place. Secondary school consists of four years with a two-year cycle after which the students are streamed into Academic and Technical/Vocational fields. Then the students continue their studies for another two years after which some students can continue their higher education in universities, colleges and institutes, which offer a range of degrees, diplomas and certificates. Their acceptance into higher learning institutions is done according to their preferences and their results in the highly competitive Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE), which as few as 8% of the students manage to pass, (Hough, 1987:15). All higher institution courses are taught in English and the number of years of study varies, as in the case of a first degree in Pharmacy taking five years and a first degree in Geology taking four. Secondary education comes under the jurisdiction of the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) and it is responsible for the production of textbooks. The training of teachers for this level is done nationally at teacher training colleges and universities. Currently, attempts are being made to give a final examination at the end of the first two years of secondary education and having the education end at ten years. Students who succeed in this examination will continue for the remaining two years, which will be considered as pre-college preparation rather than as secondary education.

1.8 Learning and Disabilities

Poverty and ignorance stand as a serious obstacle in the process of raising children in the Ethiopian society. A vastly neglected area is that of educating children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Early detection of impairments and developing strategies to uphold the normal development of the child is a primary and extremely important step in addressing problems associated with learning difficulties in Ethiopia. The knowledge and ability to prevent or detect problems and intervene at an early age of the child is crucial. Failure to carry out this for any reason leads to multiple problems at different levels. Yet even the detection of observable disabilities takes a long time. A recent study (Fassikawit, 2000:22) showed that as many as 65% of disability cases were identified through observations of family members, relatives and friends, while only 32.5% of the total cases were identified with the help of medical assessment. The disabled children state that the support families get from the community appears either nil or poor. Many parents find it difficult to easily identify and detect disability with their children and find out the right place for soliciting assistance before the problem causes debilitating effects. The onset of hearing impairment with all the children in this study was reported as post natal. Even after detection, a lot is not often done. The study showed that over half of the parents tried traditional medicine as major strategies in seeking help for their children. As much as 5.3% of the families did not even try to do anything about the disability. Disabilities with most children (92.5%) as reported by the parents, were mainly post-natal. It appears that disabilities that become apparent through time but have prenatal basis were likely to be reported in the same category. Under such circumstances, it is extremely difficult for the parents to alter and improve the situations of their children.

Most parents, particularly those in developing countries, find it difficult to raise a child with a disability, especially if the family is in a low economic bracket. Parents with economic problems find it difficult to afford the medical, educational and other costs incurred by the child's disability. Lack of access to health and other professional services in the community as well as lack of a desirable social, emotional and physical climate are challenges to families that have children with disabilities. It appears that the challenges in connection to disabilities of children are more serious and complicated in the developing countries. As for educational services, not a single country in black Africa reaches more than 1% of its children with disabilities. In Ethiopia, the provision of special education for children with disabilities is not very encouraging.

The service delivery institutions in Addis Ababa, as in the rest of the country, are very poor. According to research (Fassikawit, 2000:8)

- ◆ 92 % of the children with disabilities were under the care of women.
- ◆ 90% of these women were poor.
- ◆ 75% of the women had either no education or had very low educational background
- ◆ 82 % of the women caregivers had an average family size of 7-12.
- ◆ 56% of the caregivers thought that their children with disabilities could be cured and treated in the health services and 75% of these parents gave up hope as they could not notice significant progress in the health situation of their children.

The economic factor was among serious challenges in the lives of children with disabilities and their families. First, lack of proper nutrition was reported as a common

problem in most of the families covered in the study. Second, the economic problems of the family also mean that there is no money to spend on medical examinations for the child with disability. This hinders early identification of disabilities with children. Third, the results further show that the economic factor was an obstacle in education and training of children with disabilities.

Only half of the disabled children (57.5 %) were attending school. All the hearing impaired children and about half of the children from the visual and physical impairment categories were in school. As only two children from the mentally retarded group were reported to attend school, it would appear that children with severe disabilities and mental retardation are the most neglected.

1.9 The Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program

The debate over the controversial topic of aid and its benefits as well as its disadvantages has raged continuously. Attempts to improve the socio-economic scenario of developing countries have been made over several decades. Donors have run various projects all over the developing world to improve educational standards. However, there has been growing discontent with the effectiveness and impact of the traditional method of trying to solve the numerous ills of the complex multidimensional problems in education. The relative smallness of projects were misperceived as the causes for their ineffectiveness and major donors like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) designed a series of economic reform programmes like Structural Adjustment Programmes whose adoption they set as a precondition to giving loans to developing countries.

These economic reforms were almost as ineffectual as the individual projects had been. In fact, in some cases they were seen as actually being harmful. Major short-comings of the structural adjustment programmes were that they were short-term fixes of symptoms rather than causes, which would require long-term solutions. Besides this, they were uniform prescriptions, irrespective of the individual country's unique characteristics. Finally, they disregarded crucial negative social impacts, increasing inequality due to things like unemployment. One of the suspected sources of these problems was a top down approach and a lack of national ownership of the projects. However, without openly accepting their share of the responsibility for these policy failures, major donors, including the World Bank and IMF, began thinking up new strategies for solving this old and persistent problem. Seeing a lack of participation and genuine country ownership, no recipient empowerment and a tackling of single issues rather than the whole problem as the main causes for the failure, a new approach of "sector wide programmes" has been introduced. This approach is "characterised by a government-led partnership with key external partners, based on a comprehensive sector policy and expenditure framework, and relying on government institutions and common procedures for implementation" (World Bank 2001a: v). Strategic industries like Health and Education have been targeted for such programmes and there are already a dozen operations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia has been actively engaged in these programmes and is already implementing an Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and a Health Sector Development Program (HSDP). Following is the general background of how Ethiopia embarked on an education sector programme.

To begin its path to democracy and a free market-oriented economy, the present government found it vital to revise almost all the infrastructure it inherited. The education system, as stated above, was in a dismal state because during the war many schools were destroyed or looted. In some zones such as Northern Shoa, estimates that over 85% of the primary schools required major maintenance work were made, as there was a lack of classrooms with as many as 100 students in a class, insufficient furniture, a lack of textbooks and limited water and sanitation facilities. In 1991, the Prime Minister's Office set up a central task force to study policy issues on Curriculum and Research, Teacher Training and Development, Educational Measurement and Evaluation, Language in Education, Educational Management and Finance, and Educational Materials. The Ministry of Education drew up the new Education and Training Policy in 1994. The self-declared aim of this policy was to provide direction to “the development of problem-solving capacity and culture in the content of education, curriculum structure and approach focussing on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practicum,” (TGE, 1994:2). This aim was supported by five general objectives and fifteen specific objectives alongside the strategy of revising several fundamental elements such as curriculum, education structure, measurement and evaluation tools, medium of instruction and financing. Special attention and priority were given to a change of curriculum and educational materials, teacher training and staff development, and the management of education as a whole. However, it was clear that this meagre document of fifteen pages would soon have to be strengthened by the weight of several documents if it was not to be blown away and forgotten.

In 1995, the MoE followed up on the Education and Training Policy with a massive document that gave a global view of the Ethiopian education arena over the next two decades called the Education Master Plan. This in turn was broken down into more manageable periods of five years each and named the Short-Term Education Plans. The first five-year plan would focus on improving the quality of primary education. However, probably due to the fact that all three of these documents were churned out over the period of a single year, their own standard and quality as well as the extent of detail gone into was far from easily manageable.

The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme called for a shift from a project approach to a programme approach and the submission of a more watertight proposal before releasing significant funds. Consequently, the Prime Minister's Office was forced to hand over the documents to a private consultant to come up with an Education Sector Investment program worthy of the consideration of these international organisations. This in itself raises a crucial question about programme approaches. Do governments simply produce a paper that they know WB and IMF will approve without including national concerns that clash with WB and IMF policies? In essence, do they conform to the old saying of 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'? Leaving this issue aside, the document was transformed into the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) after being commented upon and finalised in 1995 and then abridged and approved by the World Bank in 1996. As a result, the idea of implementing the ESDP in 1995/1996 had to be postponed for two years.

The basic aims of the ESDP are “increasing access, improving quality, increasing effectiveness, achieving equity and expanding finance at all levels of education within Ethiopia” (Oksanen and Takala, 2000 : 1). One of the areas of focus of the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program is on textbook provision with the aim of moving from a single title state publishing scene to a multiple title commercial publishing scene. The government aims for a textbook market to be developed which would include parental participation in financing, consumer subsidies and the participation of the private sector in publishing, printing and distributing, leading to a tenfold increase in the present textbook quantities. The ESDP focuses on and gives direction to efforts aimed at improving materials and avoids duplication. On the policy side, the government has had both a textbook policy and strategy drafted, though it is stalling on approving and introducing them. It is also in the process of drafting an Ethiopian copyright law, as well as encouraging regions to take the initiative on local adaptations. The government is forward looking and is willing to implement and experiment with new ideas. At present, it is introducing a distance education programme to up-grade thousands of primary teachers and has successfully introduced solar powered radios. The concept of an integrated curriculum in the first cycle primary rate without failing students, has also been introduced by the government.

A sum of 12,251 million Birr (approximately 1,441 million U.S\$) was estimated to be necessary for implementing the ESDP (MoE, 1998:4). Out of this, the Ethiopian government is to contribute 72.5%, while the remaining 27.5% is to be covered by the international donor community. The role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and

Donors is continually increasing. Although their contributions might be relatively small in terms of size, they tend to have critical policy-making influences. As a result, they have a vital role in determining the direction of educational development through the provision of technical assistance, advice and financial contributions. The fact that Ethiopia is dependent on aid to carry out the ESDP leads her to be dependent on the good will of donors to execute it. At times, their refusal to release funds can lead to unnecessary delays. “The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is just such a change in environment that caused financing agreements to unravel” (World Bank, 2001:38).

Joint annual review missions are held and the whole process is being closely monitored. Nevertheless, Martin, Oksanen and Takala (2000:2) point out that there is a need for independent people outside the whole preparation to carry out more objective evaluations and ensure that the ESDP is indeed meeting its set objectives. They fear that people already intensely involved in the ESDP may produce research that is either too subjective or too circumscribed.

1.10 English in the ESDP

English is seen as pivotal in the whole education system as it takes over and maintains the role of medium of instruction from secondary education onwards. Consequently, to ensure that a firm basis is given to the learning of English, due consideration has been given to it in the ESDP.

To begin with, English is now introduced as a subject starting from Grade One as opposed to Grade Three in the former system. Secondly, because of a shortage of capacity at regional level, the ICDR has been mandated to produce all teaching materials centrally. A student: textbook ratio of 1:1 has optimistically been set in sharp contrast with ratios of up to 1:10 that have been reported in some woredas. The introduction of supplementary readers is also being officially introduced. Finally, a concerted effort to develop the teachers' skills is being made with several workshops and in-service courses being given to teachers at primary level.

In an attempt to survey the progress of the ESDP to indicate possible directions for support to the Benishangul-Gumuz region, the situation of English was noted by a team of consultants. After the first year of implementation, one of the major achievements was that despite the fact that English is a very little used language in Benishangul-Gumuz, it is highly valued by the people for its use in education as well as in international communication. A pupil-book ratio of 1:1 is reported by teachers to have already been achieved in some schools. However, the remoteness of the region and the lack of adequate infrastructure such as roads, a constant power supply and the reliability of communications within and outside the region leave the possibility of the books finding their way into the schools unlikely. Teachers were sent for a workshop to Addis for ICDR to orient them to the new textbooks and were preparing to act as multipliers and familiarise other primary teachers with the textbooks. In addition, they are taking on board the project of Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English for the second cycle of primary education with the British Council, although this was not in their original plan.

Consequently, as other regions will also be considering the production and utilisation of supplementary readers, it is timely to conduct more academic research on the effects of the provision of supplementary readers already in schools on the reading abilities of the students that use them.

1.11. Basic Information on Region and Schools

Following is some basic information about the region and the schools in which the research was carried out. It is meant to give the reader a broad perspective of the setting and education in the region as a whole.

1.11.1 Educational Statistics of Region 14 / Addis Ababa City State

At present Ethiopia is following a federal system of administration and has divided the country into eleven semi-autonomous regions or states. From the eleven, three are city-states. Out of the eleven, Addis Ababa is the fifth most populous region with roughly 6 million inhabitants. Recent educational statistics published by the Ministry of Education may not be totally accurate and have some internal inconsistencies. Nevertheless, they can provide one with a general overview (MoE, 2000).

Addis Ababa has a total of 257 primary schools. The Pupil/Teacher ratio in these schools is 46/1, while the Pupil/Section ratio is 67/1. 72.2% of the primary teachers are certified, while over 90% of its entire teacher body is certified. This shows a better degree of certification at secondary school level than at primary. From the primary school teachers 68.3% of the males and 78% of the females are certified, indicating that uncertified males

are more common. Moreover, in contrast to many other countries, in Ethiopia there are more male teachers than females at all levels. This gap appears to be closing at primary level and is most noticeable at tertiary level.

Of the 267 primary schools, 66 are government schools and 201 are non-government (MOE, 2000:84). Although the non-government schools are not further diaggregated; most of these are ‘public schools’ run by parent-government committees that charge moderate fees. Some (approximately 25) are private schools owned by individuals, while a few (roughly 70) are international community schools. Church and mosque schools, in general, do not follow the official curriculum and are excluded from these statistics. 63 of the 66 government schools go up to Grade Eight while three do not. These 63 schools have a total Grade Eight student-body of 21199 made up of 9851 males and 11348 females. It is estimated that 1,748 of the males and 2,794 of the females are repeaters at this level, which indicates that more girls than boys fail. It is of interest to note that unlike most of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa has more girls than boys at primary level. Addis Ababa and Harari are the only regions in which females outnumber males and they are both city states in which the cultures of education and gender equality are valued. However, Addis Ababa is the only region with the perfect Gender Parity Index of 1. This means that the ratio of female to male enrolment is perfectly equal. Although, this does not mean that an equal number of females and males have participated in primary education, it compares the proportions of participation, (MOE, 2000:7). This issue has yet to be studied by gender experts, who have so far only shown interest in regions where the enrolment of

girls is disproportionate and the Gender Parity Index is as low as 0.5 in areas like Oromia and Somalia (MOE, 2000:8).

Addis Ababa has a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 91.4%, where the Gross Enrolment Ratio is calculated as the proportion of total enrolment in primary schools, irrespective of age, out of the corresponding school age population eligible for primary education in that region (MOE, 2000:8). This places Addis Ababa as having the third highest ratio in stark contrast to regions like Afar and Somalia with percentages of 9.1 and 8.3 respectively.

The Coefficient of Efficiency is calculated by comparing the ideal number of pupil years required by students to complete primary school with that of the actual average number of years. The maximum percentage is 100 indicating a highly efficient system. A lower percentage indicates an inefficient education system in which there is a high number of repeaters and dropout. The Coefficient of Efficiency of Ethiopia as a whole is 36.6 percent (MOE, 2000:16), which is very worrying. Data is not available for individual regions.

1.11.2 Background to Schools

Entoto Amba Elementary and Junior Secondary School was established over half a century ago, in 1949. It is situated on a huge expanse of land half way up the Mountain of Entoto, after which it was named. It has a student body of 2900. At Grade Eight level, it has eight sections or classes. Four of the classes attend the morning shift and the other four the afternoon shift. There are two male teachers who teach all eight classes at this

level. The average class size is around 80. However, due to a high rate of absenteeism, the number of students on a normal class day is around 60. There is a library with one librarian who works in the library on both shifts.

Kebena Elementary and Junior Secondary School was established in 1954 and named after the last Emperor's brother, 'Dejach Yilma Mekonen'. During the socialist revolution, it was renamed after the river that runs just outside its backyard. The school is relatively small for a government school and has only two sections at Grade Eight level and ten classrooms. The Grade Eight sections are spread out between the two shifts. The Grade Eight English classes are taught by one female teacher, who is also the head of the English Department. Class sizes are also relatively smaller perhaps due to the presence of several government and private schools in the same locality. Class sizes tend to be around sixty-five. Its student body is 1330.

Medhanealem [Holy Savior in Amharic] Elementary and Junior Secondary School is a governmental secular school, despite its name. It was established in 1957 along with the senior secondary school attached to it. But in 1971 the two separated and now co-exist side by side. It has a student-body of 2498 and four sections at Grade Eight level. All these sections attend the afternoon shift and have an average class size of 75. The English Department is composed of 3 teachers, two males and a female. The female heads the department.

Kokebe Tsibah [Morning Star in Tigringya] Elementary and Junior Secondary School was established in 1950 and named after the last Emperor 'Haile-Selassie I'. During the socialist revolution, it was renamed as Kokebe Tsibah. Like Medhaelem it has a senior secondary school attached to it. It has a student body of 4218 and ten sections at Grade Eight level. The English Department is headed by a female and she and another teacher cover the Grade Eight sections.