

The effect of primary English readers  
on reading skills in Ethiopia

(A study in African educational needs)

By

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**Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the young students of Ethiopia, who must learn to read effectively and succeed not only in their education, but also in improving our country and in making it a better place to live in, despite the odds.

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### **Abstract**

For years the quality of Ethiopian education has been lamented over and some have warned of the crises of running an inefficient educational system and its detrimental effects on nation building (Tekeste 1990:84). One of the factors in the students' inability to benefit from their lessons is their lack of reading skills. The Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) is calling for the introduction of supplementary readers to reinforce the learning of English at primary level. In response, many organisations such as The British Council, CODE, Emmanuel Home and PLAN International are providing primary schools with readers. A case in point is the Primary Readers Scheme of the British Council.

This thesis examines if there is any tangible effect on the students' reading skills by conducting a comparative study between two government schools that received a donation of primary readers and two schools that did not. To begin with a short review of the suitability of the readers selected by the teachers after an initial pilot scheme is made. Then 454 students were tested in this evaluation to check if there had been a significant improvement in the reading skills of the students in the school that received donations of supplementary readers.

It was found that there has been no significant increase in the students' reading abilities. This is not because there is a weakness in modern theories that preach the usefulness of supplementary readers but because government schools lack the capacity to utilise supplementary readers. Most of the librarians are not qualified, while the teachers, though

qualified, lack training in how to use supplementary readers and also tend to be demotivated. Moreover, the administration and running of most of the schools libraries do not allow first cycle students (Grade 1-4) to use the libraries and prohibit second cycle students (Grades 5-8) from borrowing books, thereby limiting the books' accessibility. It is also very likely that the country's socio-economic situation in general and the children's backgrounds do not encourage the habit of reading for pleasure. Consequently, the Education Sector Development Program will have to make some modifications to maximise the benefits of extensive reading in the future, such as training teachers and librarians as well as encouraging supplementary reading amongst the students.

The study concludes that though extensive reading schemes produce impressive results in experimental situations, care should be taken in actual implementation of such schemes in real life. Efforts must be made to ensure the actual delivery of appropriate supplementary readers selected by the students themselves to the schools. Moreover, other important and related aspects including good school administration of libraries, training of teachers, a sustainable supply of books and most of all project monitoring and evaluation should be given due consideration.

### Glossary of Keywords

- 1. Acquisitionally Poor Environment** = a surrounding that is not conducive to the learning of a language due to its being rarely used in both speech and print.
- 2. Componential Model** = A model that describes by identifying various components.
- 3. Cultural Appropriateness** = something that coincides with the norms, values and thinking patterns of a society or group of people.
- 4. Extensive Reading** = Fast reading that is necessarily done in large quantities with a focus on content to get pleasure or information rather than on language.
- 5. Minimal Linguistic Threshold** = a basic knowledge of a language necessary for transferring knowledge from the mother tongue to the target language.
- 6. Optimum Reading Age** = The time when a child is most receptive to learning reading skills.
- 7. Reading** = the process in which a student interacts with a written text and derives meaning, which can be exhibited in a manner appropriate to the demands of the teacher/researcher.
- 8. Readers** = Storybooks provided to students for additional reading outside the curricula to improve their reading skills.
- 9. Reading Level** = A range of vocabulary and proficiency skills a student can be categorised into.
- 10. Process Model** = A model that describes the interaction of components.

## **Introduction**

Africa's socio-economic realities place her in a unique position. As a result, programmes and projects that are successful in the world do not necessarily work in Africa. Cognisant of this fact, a World Bank report on education in Sub-Saharan countries reads: “ It is difficult to generalise about what will ensure high quality education because the factors determining effectiveness in education are so complexly interwoven and dependent on local context” (Heneveld and Craig: 1996:xii). The report explains that research and data about education are based on the realities of developed countries. “If that information is to be put usefully to work to design interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, it has to be informed by the experience of African educators, and the only providers of this experiential expertise are Africans themselves.” (Heneveld and Craig: 1996: 48).

Therefore, as Ethiopia is in the process of implementing an education sector programme, it is imperative that all projects and the entire programme is monitored and evaluated to ensure its effectiveness at the local level. Martin, Oksanen and Takala (2000:2) also reiterate the need for independent people to carry out more objective evaluations and ensure that the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) is indeed meeting its set objectives.

This thesis is based on the premise that independent researchers can contribute to the evaluation process, and attempts to measure the effectiveness of the provision of supplementary readers to primary schools with the intent of improving the students' reading skills in English.

Durand and Deehy (1996:163) state:

Conducted properly, evaluations provide valuable feedback to all involved in the book donation process, from the donating publishers to the donor agencies and the recipients. The evaluation results, both positive and negative, can be used to improve the overall process of the book donation and to meet the specific – and changing – needs in each country.

Although previous research in other countries, such as that done by Davis, (1995), Elley (1991), Hamp-Lyons (1985), Krashen (1993), Nation (1997), has proved unambiguously that the provision of readers has a direct and positive impact on the reading skills of students, this has not yet been proved in Ethiopia. Moreover, a lot of evaluative research tends to be conducted in well-controlled laboratory-like conditions. Although it would probably be fairly easy to take a group of Ethiopian students and run them through an extensive reading programme and show that their reading skills have improved, this would not give a good picture of the reality on the ground. Context-sensitivity can only be regulated and modified, if evaluative research is carried out on real life projects that have taken place with the interference of all the complexities of real life, rather than studying an artificial project tested in an artificially sterile environment. Critics of academic research tend to neglect work by saying it is like trying to measure the effects of a grain of salt on the taste of a stew. In order to accommodate such criticism, yet not drown in the cauldron of stew, a more inclusive review of general related factors has been attempted. It tends to sample a ladle of the stew, which hopefully will be representative of it.

The study sets out with two hypotheses. Hypothesis One is that the provision of supplementary readers to primary schools has produced a statistically significant

improvement in the reading skills of the students and the Null Hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between the reading skills of the students and the provision of the supplementary readers. In proving or disproving these hypotheses, it pays particular attention to what sort of utilisation capacity government owned primary schools in Addis Ababa have, and possible implications for the effective implementation of the Education Sector Development Program. It is considered as relevant because a recent study of twenty-six education projects came up with the finding that “the closer the factor was to the life of the school and to what touches the children directly, the less likely it was to be planned for explicitly in these projects assisted by the World Bank” (Heneveld and Craig: 1996: 40). The report ends up by recommending that for the future, greater focus should be given to what actually happens inside the school as well as a richer package of considerations of what makes education effective (Heneveld and Craig: 1996:53). This is important in that academic research often takes place in controlled situations where facilities are abundant and motivation is high. In real life school settings, however, things tend to be less than ideal and teaching takes place in an environment in which demotivation, shortages of facilities and other factors all impact on the teaching/learning process.

The writer of this thesis has had over a decade of experience working in in-service and pre-service teacher training. He was involved in several supplementary reading schemes and has experience in inspecting regions implementing the ESDP. Consequently, the request for further research for the expertise of African educators to do their share, has made the selection of this topic a foregone conclusion.

As the thesis is aimed at an international audience, who probably are not very familiar with the Ethiopian situation and context, the first chapter gives some background knowledge, which is a prerequisite to understanding the situation on the ground. Chapter One describes the background of education in Ethiopia and the foundations for the whole thesis. A general overview of Ethiopia and its historical background and language situation is given. This is followed by a description of the Ethiopian education system and language policy relating this to the media of instruction at primary level and the role of English in the system. Finally, the current Education Sector Development Program is discussed.

Chapter Two moves on to the issue under focus, which is reading in Grade Eight. It scrutinises reading at the second cycle of primary education. In the first part, a broad view of the role of reading in English in the system will be given. This is done by looking at learning materials in Ethiopia, including the reading passages used in the Grade Eight English Textbook. and the Grade Eight National English Examination of 2000. In addition, the reading syllabi drawn up by the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) is looked into. Issues such as what reading actually is and general approaches to viewing and teaching reading are covered here. Most significantly perhaps the Primary Reader Scheme, which provided the supplementary readers whose effects this study is trying to evaluate, is discussed in detail. A brief description of the readers provided by the scheme is given. This is followed by an analysis of the suitability of the readers selected by the teachers as favourites, after a one-year pilot testing of the scheme.

Chapter Three reviews the literature on reading and gives reviews of Ethiopian research on reading and international research on extensive reading. Moreover, it provides the rationale behind using children's literature and aspects to consider, while running extensive reading schemes for students.

Chapter Four gets down to the actual research design, subjects and techniques of evaluation. The aims and objectives of the study are explained. Moreover, the region in which the study is carried out and a description of the schools and students is provided. Then the methodology used and the selection of tests and questionnaires, as well as the method of analysing the data are all justified with references to current literature on the subject. The administrative procedure is discussed and the relevant levels of significance set. Finally, the delimitations of the study are explained.

Chapter Five contains the findings and analysis. The chapter states the findings and analyses them in the light of observations made during school visits and the general ESDP context. The students' results in the EPER placement test are examined and the general reading levels of the students commented upon. Then follows the statistical descriptions and inferential analysis. After this, the questionnaires and observations are discussed. As the study set out to find out about the capacity of government owned schools to utilise supplementary readers, as well as to uncover facts for the ESDP, implications from the tests, questionnaires and observations are discussed in relation to the findings.

The last chapter is Chapter Six, in which there is a general summary and recommendations from the study. The recommendations attempt to address both specific issues concerned

with running extensive reading schemes as well as broader issues of school administration. The appendices and references following this chapter, can also provide useful information for anyone interested in reading in the areas or getting more specific information on individual scores, results, the EPER test and the like.

## **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.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Fluency in English</b>
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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **2. Chapter Two: Reading in the Primary Cycle of Ethiopian Education**

Based on the foundations laid in Chapter One, this chapter intends to scrutinise reading at the primary level of the Ethiopian education system with special emphasis on the last year of the second cycle primary education. First the very concept of reading will be examined. A working definition of reading will be attempted. It will define the various skills involved in reading and the basic approaches and trends in reading theory over the years will be explored. Then a broad view of the role of reading in English in the system will be given. This will be followed by a look at learning materials in Ethiopia. After that a description and an explanation of the Primary Reader Scheme and attempts to evaluate it will be discussed. Next, an analysis of the reading syllabi drawn up by the ICDR along with the reading passages used in the Grade Eight English Textbook will be given. Finally the Grade Eight National English Examination of 2000 will be described.

### **2.1 What is Reading? Basic Definitions**

Reading is a notoriously difficult concept to define as it is an ‘omnibus’ skill involving lower and higher order skills and includes psychological, educational and sociological aspects. There is a lot of controversy over definitions of reading by scholars as each defines it according to the purpose of their study with a slant towards the language process or the thought process.

Some see it in general blocks. Spink (1989:44) sees it as a process involving the perception of the words, the comprehension of the text, a reaction to what is read and a fusion of old and new ideas. Taylor and Taylor (1983: 24-26) see reading as a continuum

with the four major signposts of letter and word recognition, sentence reading, story reading and reading for its own sake.

Greenall and Swan (1986:53) prefer to break it down into smaller skills such as extracting main ideas, reading for specific information, understanding text organisation, predicting, checking comprehension, inferring, dealing with unfamiliar words, linking words, understanding complex sentences, understanding writers' styles, evaluating the text and reacting to a text. Similarly, Clay (1972:76) also breaks it down into small but different skills involving directional control, left to right, recognition vocabulary, prediction, self correction, knowing probabilities of occurrence, auditory memory, search for cues in text, picture interpretation, fluent oral language, letter sound analysis, syllabification and clusters, little words in bigger words, visual analysis by analogy, syntactic and semantic context, inference and others.

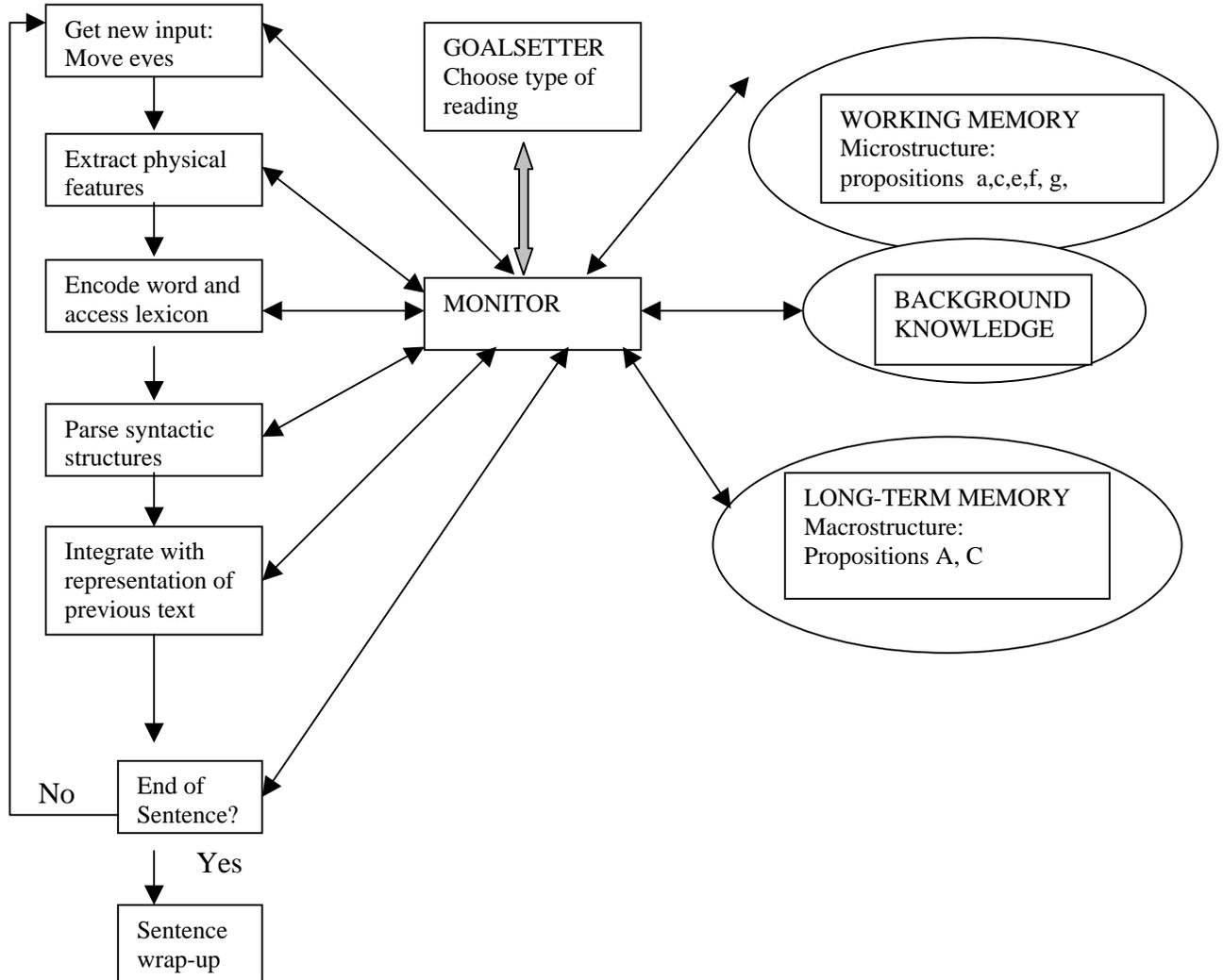
Two general categories into which all these definitions fall have been labelled as "Componential Models" and "Process Models" (Urquhart and Weir, 1998: 39). Componential models, as the name suggests, breaks up the construct of reading into its various components. The components can be as small as the description of a fixation, or the amount of seconds an eye pauses on a group of words, or as encompassing as the terms "skills" and "strategies", which themselves are made up of numerous components like skimming, scanning and others. Componential Models restrict themselves to descriptive behaviour and do not in any way attempt to speculate on how these components tend to correlate, be it in terms of importance, priority or centrality. Perhaps

the definition of reading from a componential point of view is defining it as an “omnibus” skill composed of many smaller skills is the best description. However, this description leaves us with the same question of what smaller skills are involved.

The second category for the descriptions is the “Process Model” definition, which courageously attempts to describe how the various components interact. These definitions will be discussed later on under the sub-title “General Approaches to Viewing and Teaching Reading”.

For now it will suffice to give an example, which Urquhart and Weir (1998:106) adapt from the Just and Carpenter model.

Figure 1: A Model of the Various Components of Reading



This model attempts to take the various components, such as getting in-put from the text and set it as a prerequisite to extracting physical features. Although it works at this level, it fails to show how a reader with prior expectations and another without expectations would approach the same text.

Obviously, all of the above classifications could prove useful, depending on the type of uses a researcher wants to put reading to. If one were to break down the various skills in reading, an endless list could be drawn up. At a mechanical level, the eyes briefly fix themselves on a group of words or a single word, then jerk on to another group after approximately a quarter of a second. It is assumed that one first has to perceive letters, normally with the eyes or with the fingers in the case of braille. Then one has to be able to identify the letters with a previously studied alphabet and associate the letters with phonemes or sounds of the language. Then one has to relate the letter combinations with words. However, at an early stage and even later on, a good reader would identify the whole word and might even correct miss-spelt words in his head. Developing a rich stock of vocabulary is obviously an invaluable asset in identifying words. Then the cluster of words must be associated with previously learnt structures in what may be called grammatically correct sentences. This whole sentence is then processed at a higher level, which is more mental than mechanical. The brain processes the visual information obtained from the eyes along with non-visual information retrieved from the brain. This involves deriving meaning from the combination of words, which the reader proceeds to do from previous knowledge, experience, expectations and clues derived from the text. This involves being familiar with the text layout, style, tone and mood. It involves mental skills like comparing and contrasting, evaluating, summarising and analysing. A good reader will have a range of reading skills and techniques including skimming, scanning, reading intensively and extensively and predicting what the text is about. Although the brain processes visual information at a maximum speed of 60 words per minute, the

amount of non-verbal information that can be processed is not limited. Therefore, readers tend to vary in their rate of processing the information rather than in their intake of visual information. Urquhart and Weir (1998:90) give a selection of typical taxonomies as follows:

1. Davies (1968):
  - Identifying word meanings.
  - Drawing inferences
  - Identifying writer's technique and recognising the mood of the passage.
  - Finding answers to questions
2. Lunzer et al. (1979):
  - Word meaning
  - Words in context.
  - Literal comprehension.
  - Drawing inferences from single strings.
  - Drawing inferences from multiple strings.
  - Interpretation of metaphor.
  - Finding salient or main ideas.
  - Forming judgements
3. Munby (1978)
  - Recognising the script of a language
  - Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
  - Understanding explicitly stated information.
  - Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
  - Understanding conceptual meaning.
  - Understanding the communicative value of sentences.
  - Understanding relations within the sentence.
  - Understanding relations between parts of texts through lexical cohesion devices.
  - Interpreting text by going outside it.
  - Recognising indicators in discourse.
  - Identifying the main point of information in discourse.
  - Distinguishing the main idea from detail.
  - Extracting salient points to summarise (the text, an idea)
  - Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
  - Basic reference skills.
  - Skimming.
  - Scanning to locate specifically required information.
  - Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

4. Grabe (1991:377)
  - Automatic recognition skills.
  - Vocabulary and structural knowledge.
  - Formal discourse structure knowledge.
  - Content/world background knowledge.
  - Synthesis and evaluation skills.
  - Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.

The question of what reading actually is would appear superfluous, had it not been for the fact that nobody has been able to define reading exhaustively to date. Urquhart and Weir (1998:13) declare:

We all know what reading is. And many of us have suffered, at some time or another, from the type of bore who stops any argument or discussion with ‘Ah, it depends on what you mean by ...’. So it is with some reluctance that we begin this part with an attempt to define reading, to say what we mean by the term. Our excuse is that people do use the term in different ways, and that while this may be permissible when everybody is conscious of the differences, on occasion it can cause real confusion and difficulty.

Without beleaguering the point it might be necessary at this stage to look quickly at what reading can be to various researchers and conclude with a working definition for this study.

Most researchers would agree that a written text would be the starting point for reading to take place and it would involve at least one person. From this basic premise a multitude of definitions could arise depending on the context, time and purpose for defining reading. Gerot (2000:205) rightly points out that myriad answers could be given to the simple question of what reading actually is.

In olden days, deacons or priests had to read out loud the sacred words from a holy book. The actual saying of words aloud, even if they were in a dead language, which the person did not understand, was generally accepted as reading. The comprehension of the meaning of the words was not considered essential except for the more enlightened leaders of the

religion. Modern researchers like Urquhart and Weir (1998:17) do not accept this as reading and prefer to refer to it as “barking at print.”

The interaction of reader and text leading to the creation of meaning tends to lie at the core of most definition nowadays. Admittedly, the amount of meaning in the text and the amount of meaning brought to the text by the reader is open to discussion and obviously differs from text to text, as can easily be appreciated in the differences between reading a manual of instructions and reading an artistic poem. Urquhart and Weir (1998:22) avoid this debate by simply defining reading as “*the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print*” and defend their definition by adding, “This may not be very neat but it suits our purposes.”

Gerot (2000:204) tends to give a more exhaustive definition by repeating and expanding on the definition she used in her MA thesis and ends up by saying:

The reading process inherently involves the interaction of a reader and a text. Here the reader is considered first and foremost to be a language user and the text is considered to be an instance of language in use. This implies that the reader, through her linguistic ability, is capable of ascribing meaning to and interpreting from a text. As a person reads a text, she responds not only to the meanings mapped onto the linguistic elements, but also takes into account the sociocultural context which is reconstituted through the language patterns. In so doing, she takes into account all she knows about what is going on, what part language is playing, and who are involved.

This definition tends to be one of the most exhaustive, as it includes background knowledge, reading skills and text. It could account for the variety of responses that various readers from different countries would demonstrate to a headline reading, “Osama bin

Laden: America’s Most Wanted Man,” in light of the September attacks on the World Trade Center.

Nevertheless, from an educational point of view, reading cannot be considered to have taken place, unless the student is able to demonstrate to the teacher that he has gained some sort of insight or meaning from having read a text. His response could be through doing a task, answering a question or in any form that the teacher demands and should usually be in accordance with the expectations of the teacher. Consequently, due to the necessity of monitoring and evaluating the students’ reading ability, “reading” cannot practically be defined in education without an accompanying response or verifiable indicator, which the teacher accepts as an adequate measure that reflects the students’ comprehension of the text.

For the purpose of this study reading can be defined as *the process in which a student interacts with a written text and derives meaning, which he is able to exhibit in a manner appropriate to the demands of the teacher/researcher.*

## **2.2 General Approaches to Teaching Reading**

Over the years, there has been different emphasis on the various aspects of reading and this in turn has determined the approach scholars have used to study reading. To describe reading, some researchers have attempted to describe the various factors that are involved, while others have tried to describe models and approaches that could contribute to our understanding. “Componential models” are of the former type that try to describe the skills

or components involved in reading, while “process models” attempt to go one step further and come up with postulations as to how these components interact.

Parker and Parker (1984:179) describe the general approaches to the teaching of reading in school.

The first approach they describe, reflects “the sequential mastery of a set of discrete phonic rules.” This approach aims at a step by step mastery of individual items of the language, with the ultimate aim of a comprehensive mastery of reading as a whole.

The second approach basically reflects a behaviouristic theory, whereby words, sentences and sounds are drilled into the reader by their repeated and artificial reoccurrence in a text. At times, these books are reinforced by the teacher pre-teaching words and structures with the use of flashcards and colour-coded workcards. The carefully sequenced stories drilled the students with what were considered as the basics of reading. Gerot is against the whole notion that regularly patterned words embedded in stories can contribute to the students’ language development. She (2000:207) complains, “...behaviouristic psychological views of reading ... more than twenty years on and despite current curriculum documents, remain in the folklore of teaching.”

The last approach discussed is the use of children’s literature as the basis of reading programmes. Williams (1984:203) points out that this area has not received the attention of research that it deserves especially in the field of English as a second or foreign

language. This approach sees reading for enjoyment as the basic instrument of increasing students' reading proficiency. It advocates less teacher control and greater independence for the students to do their own reading. Williams (1984:203) stresses that “An important mechanism for learning a language appears to be one of hypothesis forming and testing, or ‘creative construction’”. Consequently, it is vital that speakers of English as a second or foreign language have adequate input of the target language to form and test their own hypothesis. The basic approaches used in process models towards examining and describing reading can be described in terms of a bottom up, top down and interactive. Urquhart and Weir (1998:39) rightly point out:

The popular view of the development of process models, which turns up in many article introductions and innumerable PhDs, goes roughly as follows. First of all came the bottom-up approach, which was then replaced by the top-down model, which in turn was replaced by interactive models. In fact, the most frequently cited example of a bottom-up model, that of Gough, was published in 1972, whereas the corresponding most frequently cited example of a so-called top-down theory, that of Goodman, was first published in 1967.

Nevertheless, despite their valid distinction about the dates the theories were written and published, the approaches will be described in the traditional manner. This is because even though Goodman might have described reading as “ a psycholinguistic guessing game”, while Gough was still looking at texts, the traditional ways of teaching reading reflected the underlying rationales.

### 2.2.1 A Bottom Up Approach

As just mentioned, the traditional approach to reading reflected a bottom up approach. In ancient times, scripts were very scarce. Scribes and holy men wrote down on parchment

and papyrus, secret chants, prayers and recipes. In addition to this, the ignorance of people led them to believe that secret power and forces were stored in the words themselves. This attitude led people to believe in curses, spells and the like. One's name was thought to hold the key to one's essence and would not be told to many. The reader was seen as a medium through which the words in a text released themselves. So prayers had to be recited in 'original' languages such as Geez, Sanskrit or Classical Arabic. Literary texts were almost worshipped and memorised recitals of a text were encouraged.

The most prevalent traditional view on reading portrayed the task of reading as the extraction of a certain piece of information from a written text. Carrell (1988:1-2) explains:

... a rather passive, bottom-up, view of second language reading; that is, it was viewed primarily as a decoding process of reconstructing the author's intended meaning via recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up a meaning for a text from the smallest textual units at the "bottom"...

This view demonstrates quite well that the sort of reading used to follow instructions in the assembling of a machine. In such instructions there can be only one correct interpretation of the written words. Visual information tended to be seen as the sole factor that influences reading, so various readers were expected to come up with identical interpretations of a given text. The reader was simply seen as a passive decoder and hence the expression of a 'bottom up approach', in which the meaning was in the bottom (text) and the top (reader) decoded it. Any variations in interpretations were seen as defects in decoding rather than legitimate differences.

Although the capacity to follow an argument in a text is an important skill of reading, the shortcomings of such an approach were evident in the reading of narratives, particularly poetry. This is because poetry tends to use many loaded words. Consequently, the fact that different readers came up with different responses that they could equally justify and rationalise led to the need to reassess the assumptions about and the approach to reading. However, such a reassessment came about very gradually, and for a long time what a text meant was decided by ‘an authority’ on the subject. This was especially so in several fields of the social sciences, where respected economists, philosophers and historians usually had the final say. In literature classes, students were taught to study and reproduced ‘informed assessments’ of critics in literature classrooms. Maxwell and Meiser (1997:185) put it in a nutshell by saying, “Most of us have had the experience of thinking that we have understood a text only to be told that we were mistaken. What the story or poem really meant – the right meaning – was what an authority claimed.”

Day and Bamford (2000:1) state “Traditional approaches and classroom practices, with their focus on translating, answering comprehension questions, or practising skills such as finding main ideas, tend to ignore the larger context of student attitudes towards reading and their motivation to read.”

Urquhart and Weir (1998: 40-41) prefer to call this a “text-driven” approach. They explain that different researchers divided up the reading process into letter and word identification, followed by the assigning of meaning through syntactic and semantic rules. The fact that the whole process commences with the letters and words or the “text”

leads them to argue that “text-driven” is more appropriate than “bottom-up”, which might have unpleasant associations with pubs. Whatever, title might be chosen, such a linear sequential description of components and process failed to deal with the complex reality of reading.

Unfortunately, as so often happens in human history, one extreme gave way to its opposite extreme and a top down approach was briefly adopted. Urquhart and Weir (1998: 42-43) predictably prefer the term “reader-driven”.

### 2.2.2 A Top Down Approach

With this approach researchers became highly interested in what went on ‘behind the eyes’. Much attention was paid to schemata, cultural familiarity and individuality. The capacity of readers to process texts through various skills was scrutinised. Carrell (1988:2-3) defines a top-down approach by saying:

The reader reconstructs meaning from written language by using the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic systems of language, but he or she merely uses cues from these three levels of language to predict meaning, and, most important, confirms those predictions by relating them to his or her past experiences and knowledge of the language.

Interestingly, the Ethiopian traditional church seems to have encountered difficulties with their students’ short-term and long-term memory and developed a memory-enhancing drug from traditional plants and herbs.

Silberstein (1987:30) states “The reader is seen as an active, planning decision-making individual who co-ordinates a number of skills and strategies to facilitate comprehension

... The reader brings to the task a formidable array of information and ideas, attitudes and beliefs.” For instance, simply reading about a wedding ceremony will bring to the mind of different readers the food, drinks and costumes that they are familiar with in their own culture. Infidelity and polygamous acts by characters in stories will also be viewed in light of the cultural norms of the reader. So each reader will be interpreting from the text in his/her own particular way.

Urquhart and Weir (1998:42) say, “In practice the term is used to refer to approaches in which the expectations of the reader play a crucial, even dominant, role in the processing of the text.”

It was exactly these ideas that were actively investigated and discussed. However, the top down approach did not long stand up to the scrutiny of the researcher’s microscope.

Urquhart and Weir (1998:44) explain:

But perhaps the most damaging criticism concerns the claim of Goodman, Smith and other writers that good readers guess more, and use the context more than poorer readers. A great deal of work had shown, quite conclusively, that while **all** readers use context, good readers are less dependent on it than poor ones. In fact, it has been shown that what distinguishes good from poor readers, at least among young populations, is the ability of the members of the first group to decode rapidly and accurately. ... In spite of this, as had been said above, the assertion by some that good readers use a bottom-up approach is only proven for word recognition.

Fortunately, it soon became clear that it was meaningless to concentrate on the reader alone at the expense of the text. Consequently, people like Elliot (1990:62) began stressing that a reader actually negotiates the meaning of a text through his interaction

with it. So, for instance, on reading about a beautiful protagonist, an Ethiopian reader might think of a woman with honey-coloured skin, almond-shaped eyes and jet black hair, while a Swedish reader might think of a blue-eyed blonde with milk white skin. However, both would have to modify their first thoughts if later on they read the heroine is Japanese.

### 2.2.3 An Interactive Approach to Reading

Following the Top Down approach, a more balanced view has come about. Maxwell and Meiser (1997:184) state “Emphasis has shifted from the text to interactions between text and reader; that is, what the reader brings to the reading is as important as the words in the texts. Text provide many possibilities for interpretation.” A good example of this is the traditional Ethiopian church schools where senior students are taught the multiple interpretations of verses in the Bible. It has been stated that up to thirty-two different interpretations have been derived from a single verse in Amharic. This is not surprising as Widdowson (1984:158) says “literary writers say less than would be referentially acceptable, leaving us deliberately in the dark about their intended meanings and in general making a virtue of ambiguity”.

McCormic (1988:77) associates the interactive model of reading with the philosophy of phenomenology that does not focus solely on the Being (text) nor on the Consciousness (reader) but rather on the point of contact (reading process) or interaction between the two. Based on an interactive model of reading, the provision of supplementary readers should enable students to enhance both their reading skills as well as their schemata of the world

and thus bring about a higher level of reading proficiency in students through the provision of the opportunity of many more literacy events beyond those made available in the classroom. Williams (1984:203) states, “There is now a fair degree of evidence that what is taught does not necessarily equal what is learnt, and that teaching a form does not automatically assist the learning of the form.” Therefore the provision of supplementary readers should assist the students to acquire English in their own preferred order. Modern conceptions of reading have added social factors like an acquisitionally rich environment and the socio-economic standing for students as affecting reading skills.

As a result of this new approach to understanding reading, the way of how to teach reading has also had to be revised. The main theory about how reading ought to be taught revolves around what is called the ‘Reader Response Theory’. This theory maintains that if reading is the meaning derived from the interaction between reader and text and each reader is unique, then individual reading experiences are also unique and even repeated readings of a single text by the same reader cannot be identical. As a result, teachers should not be teaching students to memorise ‘canons of literature’ or to repeat the interpretations of literary authorities. Instead the teachers should be encouraging the students to respond to literary texts in an informed way, fully appreciating how their individual personality traits, moods, memories and experiences are affecting their enjoyment and understanding of the text. This gives a secondary role to the mountains of factual information about the social context in which the work was written, the biographical details of the author and the interpretations of others. Instead, it turns the spotlight on how the reader responds to the text. If the reader finds that reading about and

discussing the author, the setting and the interpretation and responses of others, enhances his response then he can study them. However, they remain simply props to the central action of his reading and appreciating a text.

Although emphasising the reading that takes place in literary texts, such a concept is still valid while reading for factual information. The readers' expectations, predictions, prior knowledge and thinking schemata, still make the reading of a text unique to the reader, though admittedly not as pronounced as in the reading of literary texts. Consequently, a reader reading a road map of a place he is familiar with, might visualise the places on the map unlike a reader not familiar to the place.

#### 2.2.4 An Interactive Compensatory Approach

Although interactive compensatory approaches do come under interactive approaches, they have a special place in the discussion of reading in L2. Second language readers differ from mother tongue readers due to the simple fact that they know another language and might even be literate in it before learning to read in the second language. Therefore, their reading could be affected by their previous abilities and knowledge. Urquhart and Weir (1998:45) elaborate:

The compensatory approach refers to the idea, intuitively appealing, that a weakness in one area of knowledge or skill, say in Orthographic Knowledge, can be compensated for by strength in another area, say Syntactical Knowledge. At the risk of labouring a point, we might claim that Goodman's account contains this notion, since he refers to weaknesses in the orthographic area being made up for by the 'strong syntax' or a real text, meaningful to the young reader. The notion of compensation has been alluded to in research in L2 reading, for example in Alderson and Urquhart (1985), where it was hypothesised that background knowledge might make up for inadequate language skills.

The interactive compensatory model holds special relevance in the Ethiopian situation as the students are already literate in Amharic. Therefore, they bring “literacy”, in that they presumably have fundamental concepts about the use of a text and how to go about reading it. They obviously lack orthographic knowledge as Amharic uses a different script. But they could have semantic skills, which could be transferred.

Moreover, interactive compensatory models adequately account for individual differences as each student has individual strengths and weaknesses, though they lack the generalisable factors that come with other models.

An interesting aspect that affects the interactive compensatory model, is what is commonly referred to as “threshold level”. This refers to some sort of minimal language ability that enables one to carry out any sort of meaningful reading. Therefore, Ethiopian students would come with their “literacy” and know about the mechanics of reading in Amharic, but they would also require a minimal grasp of English to start reading in it. “Threshold levels” vary according to the reading task and text, as a simple greeting card would require less English to understand than a long medical text. Nevertheless, it is assumed that there is a threshold level for various texts, which students need to have before they can carry out any meaningful reading.

### **2.3 The Role of Reading in English**

Because Ethiopia is a ‘dual circle’ user of English, students need to be proficient at reading English to succeed properly in education. Starting from secondary school, where

English becomes the medium of instruction, most reference books are written only in English. As a result, English is the language, which provides access to knowledge. Although problems in listening could be and are overcome by teachers through the use of Amharic or other local languages during classroom lectures, students are forced to rely on their own skills without assistance, when it comes to reading books. It has been pointed out (NOE, 2001a:5) that most educational assessment conducted by UNESCO in African countries include a focus on reading as it is known that good reading skills, are a key factor for learning in other areas.

Crystal (1997:24) makes a convincing case for the use of English by pointing out its unrivalled role as the global language for international relations, international news, travel, safety, education and communications. Obviously, Ethiopian students want to be in touch with the latest thinking and research, and developing proficient reading skills is their best way to do this. This is especially true in Ethiopia, where in remote places lacking electricity and modern facilities, only printed material is readily available for the students. Nevertheless, most Ethiopian students do not master reading adequately. Instead they end up with fascinating skills of memorisation and recall, whereby they memorise whole books and simply regurgitate the contents on demand. This lack of sufficient comprehension, evaluation and synthesis has repercussions for the whole educational system. A particular case that illustrates this was a second year teacher trainee who memorised a thirty-two page handout and reproduced it in a final examination including all the typographical mistakes in the original. The fact that this trainee went on to

graduate top of his batch and was awarded the gold medal is a clear indication that the whole system encourages such an approach to reading.

Study skill courses, which equip students with reading, note-taking and other skills to cope with their academic courses are a common feature of a lot of preparatory course for foreign students joining institutions of learning in England. Unfortunately, Ethiopian students are never consciously equipped with such skills.

Starting from Grade One, they are taught English as a language course and this continues until the end of their education, without any obvious preparations for the switch to English as a medium of instruction after the second cycle of primary education.

Starting from Grade Nine all textbooks (except Ethiopian language ones) and reference books found in the libraries are written only in English. Students are expected to cover a lot of content in the subject areas in English, but have not been trained adequately in reading skills. Reading is given equal coverage to all the other language skills, despite the fact that it is the fundamental skill that they require to be successful in their secondary education.

Ironically, reading in English has the most pivotal role in secondary education, yet students are not trained to read effectively. Instead of being encouraged to understand and generate new ideas from what they have understood, they are simply taught to repeat almost verbatim ideas from the text. Students therefore mostly develop amazing skills of

simply recall and lack other skills like synthesis and appreciation. Unfortunately, the inclusion of extensive reading passages in the English textbooks have only recently taken place. Previous textbooks had factual passages with comprehension questions that only demanded regurgitation of facts from the passage. The new extensive reading sections allow the students to read for pleasure, yet even these passages tend to be skipped by teachers anxious to cover the textbooks by the end of the semester. Teachers are more interested in drilling grammar and other skills that are usually tested in final examinations, than encouraging students to develop other skills that may prove more difficult to test in the standard multiple choice format of examinations.

#### **2.4 Textbooks and Learning Materials**

Ethiopia tends to be associated with images of famine in the mind of most people who know about it through the media. However, the concept of the existence of a book famine does not readily spring to the mind of most people. Being a part of the ancient Nile Civilisation, Ethiopia has its share of ancient engravings and invaluable manuscripts written on leather parchment. But it was only at the turn of this century that books as a public source of knowledge were introduced alongside with Western education during the reign of Emperor Menelik.

During the reign of Emperor Haile-Selassie (1930 - 1974), the opening of many public schools led to the familiarisation of the possession and use of textbooks and learning materials by students. In the early half of this century, textbook production in Ethiopia was almost non-existent. Consequently, teachers and students had to use materials

imported from the West. Obviously researchers have criticised most of these materials for being culturally unsuitable (Gebeyehu, Getachew and Tesfaye, 1992:5).

Beginning in the 1950s, the adoption of a national language as a medium of instruction lead to the need for the adaptation, translation and production of learning materials. All of this in turn necessitated the development of a book industry in Ethiopia.

In 1952, the Curriculum Department was set up under the Ministry of Education to write and publish textbooks. Within a decade, international publishers wanted to establish publishing houses in Ethiopia. By 1962 Oxford University Press had established its own publishing house in Addis Ababa.

By 1974, the socialist government was making definite marks on the book industry that can still be seen today. Hare and Stoye (1998:2) comment “many deficiencies of the previous system remain also in the present system”. The first move was to nationalise most foreign owned businesses, which lead to the closing down of OUP. It was transformed into the Ethiopian Book Centre. This lead to the departure of all international publishers to other more hospitable African countries. The second was to set up the Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency (EMPDA) which, in effect, monopolised all aspects of educational material production and distribution, stifling any possible national competition. The third was to set up a strict censorship authority, which screened and prevented many manuscripts from being published, thus hampering the development of local authors. The fourth and the last, was to set up a government

publishing house “Kuraz” that was “ primarily entrusted with the task of propagating socialist ideology to the Ethiopian people mainly through translated texts” (Ethiopian Educational Consultants /ETEC, 1997:23). Thus, this goal of using literature and learning materials as a means of indoctrinating people with socialist values led to a situation easily predictable retrospectively: a single title state-owned publishing system which was not commercially viable and had good translators but poor textbook writers. To be fair, all writers of the period had no alternative but to conform to the demands of the state.

Some of the brighter aspects of the Socialist era were the introduction of a nation-wide literacy programme as well as the production of learning materials for this programme in fifteen national languages. This campaign highlighted what could be achieved with community participation, as well as the possibilities of a rapid return to illiteracy in the absence of a literate environment, which provides opportunities for newly literate people to practise their skills. Although the educational system was dubious from a capitalistic viewpoint in that it was neither economically viable nor sustainable, the socialist government was able to provide free education at all levels and produce extremely cheap textbooks by using donated paper.

In 1991, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front seized control and once again set Ethiopia on a capitalistic path. Although encouraging moves have been made on the policy level, the situation of textbook production, provision and usage is far from perfect. Most people acknowledge that there is an acute shortage of learning materials at all levels.

To begin with production, regional education bureaux have the mandate for developing all textbooks at primary level. Unfortunately, however, almost all regions do not have the capacity to produce textbooks both in terms of producing the camera-ready-copy as well as the printing capacity. As a result, all regions except Region 14 (Addis Ababa) gave back the mandate of producing the English textbooks to the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR), which in turn had a British advisor do most of the writing. Region 14 basically did a similar thing by getting former staff of ICDR to write their textbooks. As for textbooks in the other subjects, basically one textbook was written centrally and then translated into the various languages. This, in effect, neutralises the benefits of localisation stated in the Education Sector Development Programme (1998:8) of changing the content and adapting it to the immediate environment of the students. However, it might have contributed to the Cultural Policy, which supports the development of local languages (MOIC, 1997:15). Textbooks tend to have too many pages as writers are paid per page and so they go for ‘the more the merrier’. Once camera-ready-copies are produced, they are printed in printing presses located in Addis Ababa. Once again this does not alleviate problems of transportation nor does it contribute to the enhancement of regional printing capacity.

Regarding distribution lines, books are supposed to go from regional education bureaux to zonal education departments, then to woreda (District) education offices and finally into schools. However, several studies have shown that there are many instances where remote schools receive their textbooks before urban schools do. The missing shipments

have usually found their way onto the black-market, as no textbooks are sold to retail bookstores. At times, books spend months in various stores owing to store-keepers not being well-trained and indifferent to their punctual arrival at schools. Moreover, at times, books have to cross and re-cross the same distances due to zonal educational departments being further away from the points of distribution than the woreda educational offices under them.

Distribution has been said to be poor as a result of the lack of commitment and incentive (Hare and Stoye, 1998a:8) leading to the lack of a sense of urgency in the state bureaucracy. This, in turn, leads to teachers finding themselves forced to use new textbooks, which have arrived in the middle of the semester. Only a few teachers are usually given short training on how to use the books, and though they are expected to act as multipliers and train the rest of the teachers, this rarely occurs. Obviously, this does nothing to lessen the resistance to change from an old familiar textbook to an unfamiliar new one, about which not much orientation has been given.

However, even once the textbooks are in the school, everything is still not smooth. Very often regional education bureaux have had to cut down on the quantity of copies owing to “unforeseen” increases in price. So far from the 1:1 textbook student ratio envisaged by the ESDP, the actual ratio of distribution might be 1:3 which could express itself in the much worse ratio of 1:5 in the classroom. This is because some students forget their textbooks at home, while others are afraid of losing their valuable and irreplaceable textbooks, and leave them at home for safekeeping. Occasionally, the extremely unlucky

student returns home to find his illiterate father has torn out a page from the textbook to roll his tobacco in, or his mother has torn out a page for wrapping up the sugar she is selling. Moreover, the government has yet to introduce “acceptable loss margins” and the “weeding of stock” into all its library systems. Acceptable loss margins allow for the fact that a few books naturally go missing if a library is being used by numerous people, while the weeding of stock necessitates the replacement of some books which are outdated by new ones. A library with adequate funds could allow for up to 25% of the books to be weeded per annum, aiming to rejuvenate its entire stock in a period of four years. At present, librarians at all levels are held directly responsible for any loss of books. Therefore, librarians tend to be reluctant to lend out books, and keep them under lock and key, leading to the inaccessibility of books in those few places where they do exist. They certainly cannot be blamed when one sees the number of mutilated books with pages and even whole chapters torn out. In addition to this, at times schools have a surplus of one textbook and a shortage of another, but cannot swap with other schools because of inflexible systems of control. On retirement or resignation, librarians are expected to hand over each and every book that they received, when they took over the library, even if it was thirty years ago. Although, the weeding of stock might appear unrealistic, there are currently books such as “College Physics” in primary school libraries that naturally have not been touched for decades. If the librarians could weed their stock, unnecessary books would not compete for space on the crammed shelves, making the appropriate books more visible and accessible. Unfortunately, huge stocks of new textbooks can be found on the black market, while some schools have not yet received them. Amongst other factors,

this could be a result of the poor socio-economic status of the country, which encourages people to resort to illegal methods to gain extra income.

Unfortunately, despite forward looking government policies, there still appears to remain a socialist mentality in some people. Due to this, it would appear that people would prefer a single publisher like Mega to take over from EMPDA rather than there being several publishers coming up with several textbooks. They appear to think that there is one best option when it comes to textbooks and that the government knows best as to which that option is. New books sold even at cost price are regarded as unacceptably expensive because the people were used to subsidised books on the market during the socialist era.

Several NGOs and donors have seen the difficulties of the task of moving to a free textbook market scene from a single state publishing system. Therefore, they have drawn up small projects of their own to facilitate the process. To begin with, CODE-Ethiopia, a Canadian NGO, has attempted to improve the situation by distributing books obtained from the International Book Bank as well as developing books locally and purchasing locally published reading materials at all levels. They have trained librarians and established reading-rooms with the aim of improving accessibility. Then, British Council-Ethiopia has run several projects aimed at the provision of books including: Support to English Language Teaching, the Bulk Loan Scheme, the Primary Reader Scheme, and Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English. These projects have aimed at producing and providing books. Some of the projects were aimed at capacity building and provided training and computers for desktop publishing. In addition to this, the British Council

distributes books donated by Book Aid International and runs the busiest British Council library in the world. Next, Irish Aid-Ethiopia has been involved in the production of a local primary reader, the purchase of locally published readers and their distribution to these schools. Similarly, GTZ, the German development organisation, has been involved in the production of several local books such as readers, books on school management, and subject-related books, as well as the purchase and distribution of locally available materials. Finally, the Swedish International Development Agency has been the major supplier of free paper to EMPDA over the last several years. However, it now only provides EMPDA support in the form of technical assistance with the aim of making it a commercially viable publishing house.

A major concern with the donation of books is that this artificial dosage of free books instead of resuscitating the market, might meet the existing demand, and thus hinder the development of the local market. NGOs work under certain conditions and lay down preconditions which hamper a free market. For instance, a donation from the EU may come with the precondition that books are bought from Europe and not Africa, thus producing unfair conditions, which work against a free market. A second concern is that with the withdrawal of the donor or NGO, the whole project collapses owing to the lack of sustainability. Unless a project is completely run locally and a demand is there on the market, the withdrawal of subsidies or technical assistance could easily lead to a project coming to a standstill. A third concern is that books donated are not relevant to the needs of a specific country and simply impose a foreign culture upon the students and may not be related to the existing curriculum. Moreover, it could create a dependency syndrome in

which schools expect to receive free books rather than raise funds to purchase them. The abuse and misuse of free books may also come about because of a lack of feeling of ownership. Teachers are not encouraged to write materials as books are imposed from above. Besides, in the race to get through the textbooks with excessive pages by the end of the semester, teachers do not usually produce supplementary materials, but remain textbook bound.

With regard to the private sector, it is encouraging to see an increasing number of locally produced books on the market. Basically, there are two major local publishers, Ethiopian Book Centre (EBC) and Mega, in the private sector and a few multinationals such as Macmillan, Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press. EBC is basically the remnants of the former Oxford University press of Ethiopia now owned by a former employee. This publisher tends to put a small but steady trickle of books on the market, but also acts as a distributor/retailer in two small bookshops of the company in Addis. Mega is basically the transformation of the government publishing house Kuraz that was sold off under the move towards privatisation in the 1990s. Mega tends to hire most writers on a part-time basis and has not been able to get away from the per page payment arrangement.

Oxford University Press is working in co-ordination with a local organisation called Orbit and seems willing to risk money on the supposition that the government will soon allow multiple titles by producing its own set of primary level English textbooks with accompanying supplementary readers. Similarly, Cambridge University Press is working

in co-ordination with the newly established Rainbow Printers. They have recently launched a series of readers in three Ethiopian languages, Amharic, Afaan Oromo and Tigrigna. An interesting aspect of these readers is that they are all printed abroad and the illustrations and books have already been published in other African languages. Consequently, rather than taking the risk of losing a big investment on producing new Ethiopia readers, they have only had to change the text of previously published readers through translation and adaptation. If these readers prove profitable, they can launch into a full-fledged operation of producing readers for Ethiopia.

Apart from publishers, the Ethiopian book industry has had the interesting feature of authors, printers and financiers getting together to produce books and share the profits or mourn over the losses. This section has recently put an ever-increasing number of books on the market. Although some are of reasonably good quality and could be useful supplementary readers, they have not yet been able to link these books with the government educational system.

To sum up, at present there are insufficient numbers of textbooks and supplementary reading materials in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, positive steps are being taken by all parties concerned to overcome this shortage.

## **2.5 The Primary Reader Scheme**

The Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program is calling for the introduction of supplementary readers to reinforce the learning of English at primary level (MOE,

1998a:37). As discussed above, this call is based on sound theoretical and practical justifications from other countries. This section will give a more in-depth view of the Primary Reader Scheme run by the British Council and the books that are being distributed in this scheme. It surprisingly challenges preconceived notions of what appropriate readers are by revealing that the choice of both teachers and students do not conveniently fit into theoretical categories for academicians and scholars.

### 2.5.1 Background History

A Primary Readers Scheme, set up with the ultimate aim of providing readers in English for all primary schools in Ethiopia, was started because of strong requests to the British Council from different primary schools for reading materials. The purpose of this project was to enable primary school students to develop the skill of English language reading and understanding, and to develop the habit of reading. A pilot project began in 1996 with the goal of improving the standard of English and education in basic education through the provision of 124 different readers to five schools in regions 14 and 4 for grades 5-8. The Primary Readers Scheme schools involved in the pilot scheme were Assela, Bishoftu, Denkaka, Entoto Amba and Medhanealem junior secondary schools. Each school was presented with the primary readers and after a year, a monitoring workshop was held. The schools were requested to assess the progress, development and impact of the scheme and to identify problems encountered and seek solutions. It was hoped that during this workshop the schools would share experiences as well as find ways and means to continue the project in the absence of aid.

Most of the participants confirmed that the readers are useful and relevant, and have encouraged the students to develop their reading skills. The directors of the five schools reported that the readers are kept in rooms meant for libraries in all schools except Denkaka where they are kept in boxes. The students read the books in the classroom, in the library and even under trees. Some of the students borrow the readers for use at home over weekends, while others formed reading and drama clubs with the assistance of teachers. The teachers had categorized the readers according to levels of difficulty and used some of the passages for class exams for grades 7 and 8. Moreover, the teachers also enjoyed reading the books in their own free time.

Some of the problems mentioned were the inadequacy of a single copy and the students' fear of losing the readers as they could not be replaced locally. They also stated that some of the stories were culturally inappropriate and that there was a lack of any Ethiopian readers.

#### 2.5.2 Ranking and Describing the Readers

It was stated at the workshop that the participants had to select titles they felt to be most relevant and to indicate how many copies would be appropriate. As there was a fixed number of books to be given, they had to balance the number of copies with the number of titles. So a school that wanted all 124 titles could only have one copy, but if they chose ten titles, they could have around 12 copies of each. A final list of the favourite titles with the average number of recommended copies would be compiled, so that future schools to be included in the scheme would get useful books only. To make the selection of the

readers, the participants recommended that they go back to their respective schools and identify the type of readers and number of copies and submit the result within fifteen days. Some of them admitted to not having exact data as to which titles were frequently read. (See Appendix 2 for titles selected by each school.) In retrospect, one would have to re-evaluate the workshop and consider whether the teachers and directors were being frank in their response, or were rather providing the donors with the answers they assumed the British Council would want to hear, with the hope of receiving further donations.

Ranking the readers had some fundamental difficulties in that the question arises if these readers were ranked according to observed behaviour and preferences of the students, or the preferences of the teachers and the directors who attended the workshop. Being less sceptical and accepting the ranking at face value, when we rank the readers according to the schools' most favoured titles, we find the following,

**Table2 : The Ranking of Readers by Schools**

<i>Aladdin and his Magic Lamp</i>	Chosen by All 5 Schools
<i>Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves</i>	Chosen by 4 Schools
<i>King Solomon's Mines</i>	Chosen by 4 Schools
<i>The Stranger</i>	Chosen by 3 Schools
<i>Tales from the Arabian Nights</i>	Chosen by 3 Schools
<i>Animal Friends</i>	Chosen by 2 Schools
<i>Things fall Apart</i>	Chosen by 2 Schools
<i>The Bird and the Bread</i>	Chosen by 2 Schools
<i>Alissa</i>	Chosen by 2 Schools
<i>The World Around Us</i>	Chosen by 2 Schools
<i>Thirty Nine Steps</i>	Chosen by 1 School
<i>Animal Farm</i>	Chosen by 1 School

It is interesting to take a closer look at those titles selected by the schools as being more appropriate to the tastes of the students and that have, since the evaluative workshop, been distributed in the Primary Readers Scheme. Each reader is first described with a more critical analysis following.

#### 2.5.2.1. Aladdin and his Magic Lamp

*Aladdin and his Magic Lamp* (Stempleski, 1989) is a reader at the Stage 1 of the Longman Structural Readers series that is classified into six stages. The tenses are limited to the present simple, while the text is supported with vivid colour illustrations. The story is told on twenty-one pages with two additional pages with questions. The book has a unique appearance as it is designed to have three or two columns per page, each column having a picture and text. As the book is written on A5 size paper and given a horizontal orientation, it gives the impression of being a comic book, except for the fact that the text is placed at the bottom of the pictures and not in speech bubbles.

This traditional Arab story has stood the test of time and is internationally popular. Although only the present simple tense is used, the exciting story overcomes this limitation. The depth of story provides substance, which can be enjoyed by different readers at different levels. Children initiation rights and myths are hinted at as the magician talks about the jewels and says, “ only a young boy can get them. There is a magic garden. A man can’t go there, but a boy can” (Stempleski, 1989:6). Entering and painfully emerging from the cavern has the womb motif, which could provide Freudians with plenty of rich materials for psychoanalysis. However, it is doubtful whether such

depth can be appreciated by young children. Consequently it is surprising that this book was chosen as the favourite by all five schools.

#### 2.5.2.2. Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* is the traditional tale retold by L.A. Hill (1972) for the Oxford Graded Readers Scheme. These readers are graded into four stages at the 500, 750, 1000 and 1,500 headword levels. Each stage is again divided into junior and senior categories to avoid the difficulty of readers of different ages but the same reading ability finding the content less appealing to them. So *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* is at the first stage of 500 headwords and is in the senior category, as the other categories have fewer headwords. The story is told on 27 pages full of many coloured illustrations that break up the text, making it easier to understand.

Although this story lacks plausibility at an adult level it is one of the most popular and famous children's stories. It is unlikely that 39 thieves will all die silently turn by turn as a young girl pours a pan of hot oil of their head. Moreover, a stone that opens and closes to a password seems more like modern day high-tech inventions than an ancient reality. However the theme of the weak good people defeating the strong and the evil has been and still is a popular theme in literature. The colourful illustrations make the book attractive and it is not surprising that four of the five schools chose this book as a favourite.

### 2.5.2.3. King Solomon's Mines

*King Solomon's Mines* is a reader of the Oxford Progressive Readers Series, which has many of the classic literary masterpieces simplified for learners of English. The Oxford Progressive Readers Series is divided into 5 grades having 1,400, 2,100, 3,100, 3,700 and 5,000 words respectively. *King Solomon's Mines* is Grade 4 and consequently has 3,700 words. It has relatively few black and brown illustrations in the 100-page story. New words are usually explained in the text and repeated several times to reinforce vocabulary acquisition.

This story is an intriguing choice. The English is comparatively difficult and quite likely above the comprehension level of many Ethiopian school children. Furthermore, the story is full of tradition stereotypes of smart white adventurers and cruel and ignorant blacks. The people of Kukuana are persuaded into believing that the whites and the Zulu have come from the stars and see the darkening of the eclipse as proof of their powers. Even after some time, “The Kukuanas got tired of his glass eye and ‘melting teeth’, but it seemed they would never get tired of looking at his ‘beautiful white legs’.” (Haggard, n.d. 98). Captain Good obligingly pulls up his trousers to the knee and the women murmur with delight at the sight of his white legs. Apparently, however, the story has been appreciated for the adventures involved rather than for its being plausible or realistic. It would appear that the exciting storyline has overcome any of its shortcomings. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that literary critics would consider a Victorian adventure story suitable for African students today, as they would argue that it is not

“politically correct” and touches upon many sensibilities. Despite this, the teachers and students liked it.

#### 2.5.2.4. The Stranger

*The Stranger* (Whitney, 1977) is a reader at the elementary level of the Heinemann Guided Readers. The Heinemann Guided Readers series has the five levels of starter, beginner, elementary, intermediate and upper. At the elementary level the vocabulary is set at around 1,000 basic words and most tenses are used. Simple adverbial and adjectival phrases are used and sentence clauses are kept at no greater than two. New words that can be derived from the context are introduced. The illustrations are in black and white and there is a lot of text in the 54 pages of the story.

This book is an interesting choice in that, although it has suspense and mystery, the end is not particularly satisfying as there is no explanation as to why Slatin deliberately burns to death in his shop. Moreover, the culture of injuring mannequins and voodoo, as a whole is non-existent in Ethiopia, where cursing and poisoning is more common. The context is also foreign to Ethiopia, as railway stations, film stars involved in sorcery, and going to other cities for romantic weekends are not very common. Nevertheless, the language level is suitable for students, who have had 4-8 years of learning English as a subject.

#### 2.5.2.5. Tales from the Arabian Nights

*Tales from the Arabian Nights* (Foulds 1992) is a reader of the Oxford Progressive Readers Series, like *King Solomon's Mines*. It is at Grade 1 and 1,400 words. The main

story is told on fifty-three pages with a further four pages devoted to questions and activities. It has a few colour illustrations dispersed throughout the book.

It is surprising that *Tales from the Arabian Nights* was not chosen by all five schools as it not only includes the most popular Aladdin but other stories as well. In fact, selecting this reader should have allowed the teachers to leave Aladdin and Ali Baba out of their lists and include other stories instead. The fact that there are quite a few sexist remarks about women being as fickle as leaves blowing in the wind and at times intolerably talkative does not seem to have disturbed the teachers. Moreover, there are a few negative depictions of Africa as being utter wilderness. The description of a beautiful woman as being, “..tall and dark, with red lips and hair like a black cloud around her lovely face,” (Foulds, 1992:51) must have been more familiar to the teachers than the Eurocentric blue-eyed blonde description.

#### 2.5.2.6. Animal Friends

*Animal Friends* (Mitchelhill 1993) is a Level 4 book at a reading series called New Reading 360 produced by a not so familiar publisher called Ginn and Company Limited. The New Reading 360 series is composed of six levels and has accompanying teachers' resource books, which were not distributed with the readers. The story is told on 32 pages with colour illustrations and a few lines of text on each page.

This story is very basic in terms of language and plot. Apart from the crocodile chasing the innocent men, nothing interesting really happens. The characters are interestingly all

Africans. Once again the colour illustrations are made to give life to the story, which might be useful in teaching environmental protection.

#### 2.5.2.7. Things Fall Apart

*Things Fall Apart* is the well-known book written by Chinua Achebe retold by John Davey (1972). Like *The Stranger*, it is a reader of the Heinemann Guided Readers but it is at the intermediate level. At this level the vocabulary is set at around 1,600 basic words and most tenses are used. Sentences are limited to a maximum of three clauses and attention is paid to pronoun reference. New words that can be derived from the context are introduced and difficult allusion and metaphor are avoided while cultural backgrounds are made explicit. The illustrations are in black and white and there is a lot of text in the 84 pages of the story.

*Things Fall Apart* is an interesting choice, as the questions of relevance and afrocentricity making a book more appealing to an African audience are challenged. The book has been chosen by only two of the schools, yet is considered in academic circles as a piece of African literature par excellence. To be fair, the story actually has many things that are alien to the Ethiopian culture. These include the killing of twins, the killing of adopted children, the taking of persons from another tribe as compensation for someone killed and sending children to local gods. The whole theme of adapting to changing times caused by colonialism was not experienced first hand in Ethiopia, as Ethiopia was not colonised. However, this book is mandatory reading on most literature courses at tertiary level. The teachers' own knowledge of the text could have influenced its popularity, as most

teachers are familiar with this story in African literature courses they take in teacher training colleges.

#### 2.5.2.8. The Bird and the Bread

*The Bird and The Bread* (Howe, 1983) is a Grade 2 book of the Start with English Readers, which is divided into six grades. Grade 2 basically uses only the simple present and present continuous tenses and elementary words. The story begins with these sentences “This is a bird and a tree. The bird is little. It is red. ... Look at the Bread” (Howe, 1983:1). The story is told on sixteen pages with another four pages composed of an alphabetical picture dictionary. The story is composed mainly of bird colourful illustrations with very few words, while the dictionary has ten prepositions and fifty-two words all illustrated by small colour illustrations.

The story is very simple along with the language. It gives the sense of being written to illustrate the structures and vocabulary rather than having any intrinsic value of its own. The characters and setting for the pictures are European with the typical British policeman in his uniform and helmet. Although similar stories exist in children’s nursery rhymes and memory games, this story appears rather dull for reading despite the attempt of the illustrations to liven it up. *The Bird and the Bread* is the most elementary story of all twelve stories chosen and it is a bit disturbing that this book is chosen as a favourite amongst students, who have had 4-8 years of learning English as a subject.

2.5.2.9. Alissa

*Alissa* (Moore, 1989) is a reader at the starter level of the Heinemann Guided Readers series that is classified into Starter, Beginner, Elementary, Intermediate and Upper. The vocabulary at this level is controlled to approximately 300 words and the tenses are limited to the present simple, present continuous and the future. The text is supported with vivid colour illustrations and it is assumed that a student with a very basic knowledge of English should be able to read and enjoy a story at this level.

It is not surprising that this book has been chosen. Hill (1997:68) mentions it by name amongst the Heinemann Guided Readers as an example of the possibility to create “an interesting story within very limited language”. However, what is a bit disturbing is that this book was written at the most basic of levels and it is chosen as a favourite amongst students, who should have more advanced English reading skills.

2.5.2.10. The World Around Us

*The World Around Us* (Howe, 1984) is a Grade 6 book of the Start with English Readers. This series is divided into six grades and apparently was first produced by an organisation called “Guided English Corporation”. It is not a typical reader in that it is not an abridged version of a piece of literature nor a story written for children. Instead it is more of a general knowledge activity book with interesting facts about various things. It has fifteen chapters of around one page each on various topics ranging from the earth to spiders. Each chapter is followed by some comprehension questions. The chapters are printed on 43 pages and are supported by diagrams and photographs of the topic under discussion.

A typical chapter is an expository text of the topic. For instance, the chapter about spiders has a coloured picture of a spider in the middle of its web and explains, “An insect is a very small animal with six legs and a body with three parts. A spider is not really an insect because it has four pairs of legs and its body only has two parts” (Howe, 1984:17).

Although this book is not a typical reader and lacks the suspense and excitement that readers are meant to raise, two schools selected it. This is probably because it fits into the pattern that most primary schoolteachers and students are familiar with. There is a text with facts that can be memorised and used to answer questions posed at the end. Perhaps this reader could serve as a useful bridge between the reading comprehension texts in the textbook and the stories that most extensive reading schemes use to get students reading.

#### 2.5.2.11. Thirty-Nine Steps

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* is a simplified version of the same story by John Buchan retold by Nick Bullard (1994) to suit the Oxford Bookworms Series. This series is divided into six levels categorised by the number of headwords. The headwords at each stage are 400, 700, 1000, 1400, 1800 and 2,500. Consequently as *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is at stage four, it has 1,400 headwords. The story is told on 72 pages and in addition to the comprehension questions that are found at the end of most of these series, Oxford Bookworms also has a glossary.

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* has been made into a famous Hitchcock film and it is not surprising that this book has been chosen as a favourite. Although it is set in Scotland and

the pictures portray typical British settings and characters, the sheer thrill of the story has definitely managed to overcome any culturally difficult concepts like descriptions of the tide, which could cause problems to students who have grown up in a landlocked country. However, it is perhaps such difficulties that made this book a favourite in only one of the schools.

#### 2.5.2.12. Animal Farm

George Orwell's (1945) *Animal Farm* has been produced in the Longman "Bridge Series" as a relatively short novel in comparison to most readers. The language and the story have been simplified. The story is told on 97 pages of text, which have no illustrations. It has a short introduction of five pages giving some background information about George Orwell's biography and about the social context in which *Animal Farm* was written. Moreover, apart from 20 comprehension questions, the book has an extensive glossary of 22 pages with around 800 words to support weaker readers.

*Animal Farm* is one of the most popular stories worldwide and has been reprinted almost twice a year since it was first printed in 1945. This version is its 87<sup>th</sup> impression printed in 1995. It used to be compulsory reading in Ethiopia in some teacher training colleges, until the socialist revolution, which banned it. Most of the teachers can definitely apply their experiences from the socialist period to enjoying it. The government's forcing people into doing work that, "... was strictly voluntary, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half," (Orwell, 1945:41) was a common feature of Ethiopia's socialist period. Moreover, the arbitrary changing of rules and regulations can clearly be reflect upon in the changing of a commandment to read,

“No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*” (Orwell, 1945:62). In fact, some of the political realities continue even in present day Ethiopia, and people could easily identify with the animals that see the rising of production statistics by 200% yet “they would sooner have had less figures and more food” (Orwell, 1945:63). However, it is unlikely that most Ethiopian children in Grade Eight will have achieved both the English reading skills and the maturity to read and fully appreciate this book, in spite of its having been simplified. This is probably why it has been chosen as a favourite by only one school.

### 2.5.3 Analysis of Selection

The facts of the findings are given above, but the interpretation and analysis of these facts can be subjective.

#### 2.5.3.1. Language Level Appropriateness

A very big variance in the level of language can be seen in the above choice of readers. Books like *Animal Friends* and *The Bird and the Bread* are more at a level of the barely literate, while *King Solomon’s Mines* and *Thirty-Nine Steps* are at quite an advanced level. Renandya and Jacobs (2002:297) actually encourage the use of simple materials in the first stages of any reading schemes. They say:

Unlike in intensive reading, where the material is typically above students’ linguistic level, in ER the material should be near or even below their current level. To use Second Language Acquisition (SLA) jargon, students should be reading texts at an i+1, i, or i-1 level, with “i” being their current proficiency level. The rule of thumb here is that to get students started in the program, it is better that they read easier texts than more challenging ones. For students who have minimal exposure to contextualized language and who lack confidence in their reading, even i-2 material may be appropriate...

This may appear reassuring with choices such as *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Alissa, Animal Friends* and *The Bird and the Bread* are more at an 'i-4' level. But this raises serious questions as to whether teachers are aware that some of their students can hardly read and have chosen the simplest readers available.

#### 2.5.3.2. Theoretical Interpretations

Simply by looking at the readers selected several different interpretations could be given, depending on the theoretical bent of the observer.

The first interpretation could be called a Pan-Africanist view in which a call for more African readers is made. Here, it is interesting to note that the teachers and school directors said that most of the books were not very culturally appropriate and wanted more books by African writers in general. This reflects the theories that researchers put forward such as:

In the Ethiopian situation probably the learners have not identified with or accepted the input and so their filters are blocked. One of the hypotheses of this thesis is that if the Ethiopian language learner is exposed to material within their schematic reality, as a beginning, there is a chance that the filter will be lowered and so encourage learner-response. ... Comprehensible input therefore seems to have an important role in language learning and so in the Ethiopian context probably African literary texts can play this role,(Abiye,1995:37) .

Yet when we come to the actual selection of titles *African Child* does not rank first on any list. *Things Fall Apart* does rank very well, but it is definitely not the unanimous favourite. This, in a way, raises questions about the assertion that the writings of one African country has close connections to the reality of its neighbours. Some of the points

that Ethiopians might find unfamiliar have been pointed out above. But Pan-Africanists have argued that there were hardly any African readers in the original list of titles, so the selection of *Things Fall Apart* is actually a 50% success rate of African literature. Others have complained that both readers are actually adult books simplified and therefore are not comparable to readers intended originally for children, so there is no ground for comparison. Still others say that stories such as *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Aladdin and his Magic Lamp* actually have their roots in the Middle East and Africa, ignoring their popularity world wide. The fact that they were chosen could reflect the preference of children (and adults) for fantasy. However, the fact that one of classic post-colonial pieces was not top of the list definitely opens the door to the question of whether there is such a thing as a common African culture throughout the continent. Moreover one might ask whether African literary pieces are being exalted more for their political correctness than for their being popular amongst the general public.

The second interpretation can be called a universalist view. Such a view would maintain that it is the books that have stood the test of time such as *Aladdin and his Magic Lamp*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *King Solomon's Mines* that were chosen almost unanimously. This indicates that stories that are interesting have universal appeal and transcend cultural limitations. Consequently, they claim that “cultural appropriateness” is more a reflection of adult bias than of the actual readers’ preference. Moreover, a lot of work is studied merely for the fact that they are written by Africans rather than because of any inherent literary value. So students will not enjoy these sorts of texts, if they are not appealing in themselves. Good readers, with literary merits from any

culture, will be readily appreciated and liked by readers all over the world. This view could explain why books with obviously prejudiced views to Africa, like *King Solomon's Mines*, were enjoyed and selected. However, advocates of such a view ignore masses of research that proves cultural and schematic familiarity renders texts more comprehensible to readers (e.g. Duff and Maley, 1990:7).

The third interpretation can be called a Pragmatic View. Here we need not disregard all appeals for African Literature, but instead we should refine our thinking and realise that Africa is so vast that what is common knowledge in a certain area might be completely unfamiliar in another. Therefore we have to reduce our sights to more specific regions or areas. Achebe (1975:45) talks about African literature being a group of associated units rather than a single unit in itself. So perhaps we should zoom in on the “Ethiopian Unit” and examine if such texts are more in tune with students preferences. If we are aiming at encouraging motivation by making our students identify with the text, then we have to ensure that the themes and characters do indeed reflect the students’ reality. It is not wise to ignore completely the research showing the usefulness of schematic familiarity. Yet at the same time, one should not unquestioningly accept some intangible concept of pan-African unity, which is created by intellectuals in ivory towers and divorced from the felt needs and realities of the students’ milieux.

No reader should be dismissed simply because it comes from a “foreign” culture, as good literature deals with universal human values, emotions and conflicts that transcend cultures and so will have universal appeal. Nevertheless, an average reader, which comes

from a familiar setting, is easier for the student to understand. Consequently, Ethiopian readers should be exposed not to general African stories, but more specifically to Ethiopian stories, in which they find subject matter that is familiar. So the promising start of Ethiopian writing for children must be encouraged.

Nevertheless, the selection of appropriate titles is not an easy task. Read (1996:105) states:

Selection of titles is often undertaken by those who have no professional training in reading development or in children's literature. Frequently selection is more concerned with national, pedagogic, or religious values than with the identification of materials of inherent interest to the children.

As a result of the pilot study of the Primary Reader Scheme, the British Council has divided the main project into two. The first one is a carry on from the past with a nation wide trial commenced in co-ordination with the Ministry of Education. This comprises ten copies of the twenty selected titles (200 readers) to fifty schools across Ethiopia. The second is a new project entitled Ethiopian Stories in Simplified English that aims at the creation of two local readers for each region. Unfortunately, neither of the projects has been fully implemented and cannot be evaluated yet.

Nevertheless, they are a move in the right direction. Oliveira (1996:87) says that the biggest obstacle to reading schemes is possibly the limited supply of books in developing countries and that students are often given unfamiliar foreign books, typically produced in developed countries. This is not surprising, when one looks at

what is available on the market. It has been estimated that as little as 1% of all supplementary readers in the world are set in Africa (Hill, 1997:62).

A direction for future research could be to more effectively and objectively note students' preferences and be directed by their actual choices rather than be lead by theoretical justifications based on dubious assertions.

## **2.6 Teaching Methodology in Ethiopia**

Unfortunately, some educationists take a narrow perspective of education and forget that it is not an independent entity existing in a vacuum, but it is part and parcel of society as a whole. Some changes in society have reactions in education. Postle (1988:172) maintains that most modern societies are in a process of changing paradigms. He says that there is a move from an old paradigm, which is authoritarian and has its basis in a domination-subordination relationship, to a new paradigm that stresses democratic relationships in which power is shared by everyone. Keeping in mind that Ethiopia has just come out of severely authoritarian governments, it is not surprising to find that this is reflected in the education system. As education is a product of society and in its turn shapes society, the paradigms discussed are clearly reflected in the methodology of teaching. Traditional methodologies reflecting the old paradigm have a generally transmissive character, whereas modern innovative methodologies follow a more interactive approach. As a result of their belonging to given socio-economic systems based on domination, the traditional teaching methods also reflected and were shaped by it. The teacher was the central figure who had all the knowledge and the power and the

students were obedient pawns who did what they were told to do. The simile between students and empty vessels waiting to be filled is one often mentioned. Postle explains (1988:163):

Dominance is covertly built into the social fabric through the educational system including higher education. Students are controlled and assessed according to the unilateral, authoritarian judgements of the staff. Given a predetermined syllabus, encouraged to learn in ways dictated by others and taught by people who make the final assessment, what do students do? They conform to the attitudes and preferences of those who decide their future.

Therefore, in the past, when single governments had complete control and civic societies could not do much to affect the course of their development, only the leaders were supposed to direct and others were supposed to follow submissively. Similarly, the teacher was seen as the leader who directed and the students as the people who followed submissively. Thus, transmissive methodologies, which encourage submissive behaviour, were apparent in most academic subjects. In the teaching of language, the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method and the lecture are the most prevalent methods. The grammar-translation method gives the teacher the role of the oracle that has all the answers and understands everything about the foreign language. Students are simply obliged to apply the rules to decode passages and texts.

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that the teaching of reading in Ethiopia follows this general pattern. The students are requested to stand up in class and read aloud while the teacher constantly interrupts, correcting pronunciation or explaining a word, thereby displaying omniscient knowledge. After the comprehension passage is read aloud, the teacher once again poses questions from the textbook usually to students he feels are not paying attention. He finally gives the correct answers, careful to show he already knew them without consulting the teachers' guide and then moves on to the next section of the textbook. The answers are usually whole sentences extracted in their entirety from the

reading passage. Herein lies the incentive for students to memorise and reproduce texts without much understanding.

Needless to say, these transmissive methods are not very effective. According to modern researchers, the average retention rate of a student from listening to lectures and reading aloud is 5% and 10% respectively, whereas the average retention rate for group discussion and practice is 50% and 75% respectively, although these figures may not be accurate and may even show strong bias, as each learner has different rates of retention and motivation varies. Still they do show a general picture of how ineffective transmissive teaching methodologies are. Moreover, the most important skills in reading, such as skimming, scanning, inferring meaning and the like, are actively stifled with such an approach. Intensive and extensive reading is neglected for the rote memorisation of grammatical rules without any application on how students can use them to get meaning from the text.

Discussing methodology, Williams (2000:127) comments:

In language education two restrictions are particularly evident. One is a kind of ‘stratal’ trap through which teachers of young children are obliged to spend large amounts of time on relations between phonology and graphology, as though this stratum were more basic for basic ideas about language than the stratum of meaning. The other restriction results from an unhinging of meaning and grammar in education, dating back at least to the beginnings of compulsory universal school.

Read (1996:99) states that at times, “teachers are entirely dependent on traditional textbook approaches and find free reading threatening because it could reveal their lack of subject knowledge”. He also explains that many trained and untrained teachers have no

experience using supplementary readers. However, Elley (1996:53) is much more reassuring, explaining that teachers introduced to the potential value of good stories are much more willing to adopt a literature-based approach once they see the benefits in terms of students' positive attitudes and higher achievements.

## **2.7 The Reading Syllabus**

The terms “syllabus” and “curriculum” have both been used to refer to the macro educational content aims as well as specific course aims, according to the definitions of the specific author. ICDR, however, appears to produce both macro and micro level contents in their syllabus, which runs contrary to the educational policy of regionalisation that allows for specific regions to modify the curriculum to their own needs and environment. For instance (ICDR, 1997:5), the curriculum states that students should be able to ask about and describe people. Instead of stopping here and allowing for course developers to decide what sort of people they would like to describe, it then goes into specific details and even gives adjectives such as “tall, short fat and thin”.

As this thesis is focussing on reading, which in the Ethiopian context is prescribed by the ICDR, a brief description of the first cycle language syllabus and the second cycle English syllabus follows.

### **2.7.1 First Cycle Language Syllabus**

The syllabus for the first cycle primary education (Grades 1- 4) is an integrated syllabus that sub-divides the subjects into the four general categories of Aesthetics and Physical

Education, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Languages (ICDR,1997). As a result, English is found under the general section of languages. The entire syllabus consists of 165 pages, but each Grade is numbered beginning from 1, so the pages relevant for one grade are numbered consecutively. The language syllabus does not take into account the fact that some of the students will be first language speakers of some of the languages, while others will not. Therefore students appear to be required to “read simple words” (ICDR,1997:26), but no mention is made as to whether this objective is expected to be achieved at the same time by both first and second language speakers of the national language. There will be both second and first language speakers of a given national language due to the existence of spatial multilingualism. So for some of the students in the class the medium of instruction will be their mother tongue, but for others it could be a second or even third language. It is the same syllabus for all students. The syllabus seems to have been written by authors with completely differing concepts of language education, consequently traditional methods like the distinction of phonemes are inter-mixed with a functional syllabus like the ‘exchanging of greetings’, without any apparent attempt at harmonisation or having a consistent language learning theory underlying it. It is said to have been prepared with the new idea of integration in mind. It suggests various themes that can be used across the subjects in the various grades including Members of the Family; Clean Hands; Dwelling Places; Schools; Playgrounds; Domestic Animals, Trees and Plants, Villages, Houses, Types of Food, Relatives and Neighbours. Reading aloud is taught here in contrast with reading silently and methods and techniques like chorus repetition do not lend themselves to a communicative approach. The use of oral literature can be integrated with the cultural

aspect in aesthetics, but the use of photographs, recordings, newspapers do not seem to take the actual situation of most Ethiopian primary schools into consideration. In rural schools basics like chairs and tables are not available. Only a few of the rural schools have recently got a solar panel to generate electricity for a single radio to benefit from radio programmes. Even government schools in Addis do not have access to newspapers, photographs and tape-recorders.

The general objectives of improving the four language skills as well as developing knowledge of linguistics and literature objectives are stated at the beginning of each grade. Although not necessarily related to English, some of the objectives that can be related to reading in general in Grade One include distinguishing the shapes of various letters and minimal pairs as they occur in words and phrases, and joining and reading the words and sentences. In Grade Two the students are expected to read given texts and respond to them in speech or writing. In Grade Three reading becomes more focussed on classroom learning, and students are expected to read aloud individually and in chorus, be able to skim passages and understand the gist as well as learn how to use a library. This objective appears particularly unrealistic as access to libraries is not very good. In Grade Four, the focus on reading for academic purposes is further emphasised. Here students are expected to learn to adjust reading skill to reading purpose. Reading with purpose and speed along with the ability to scan for information and distinguish themes and topic sentences are specifically stated for this level (ICDR 1997:18). The syllabus states that the students will gather and explain information from reference materials, newspapers and magazines. However, as discussed later on in this thesis, librarians complained that

these materials are not available in the libraries. In fact, most of the school libraries do not even allow students in the first cycle of education to even sit in the libraries. In addition, students are expected to be able to use directories and appendixes, and to make notes. The peak of the objectives to teaching the students to read appears to be the reading of poems. Once again, there is nothing tangible as to what sort of poems are expected to be read by which students in which language. There is no mention of literary prose or indications of possible texts.

Even though it is not quite clear from the syllabus as to which of these reading skills are to be acquired in the mother tongue and which in English, the fact that these reading skills are being acquired should lay a sound foundation for the pupils reading abilities. So it can be deduced for the first cycle syllabus that all students who have completed Grade Four should be reading fairly proficiently in at least one language and be able to cope with reading poems. Moreover, they should also have the basics of reading in English too.

#### 2.7.2 Second Cycle English Syllabus

The second cycle English syllabus stands alone in a separate booklet of 43 pages (ICDR,1998) . There appears to be a break with the language teaching objectives in the first cycle in that this syllabus focuses solely on developing the four language skills disregarding literature and linguistics. The major themes for the units are spelt out, bringing it closer to a course syllabus level. At Grade Five, the objectives include asking and giving personal details, identifying, comparing and describing animals, people and

objects, and talking about the family. At Grade six some of the major themes include Ethiopia's neighbouring countries, the peoples of Ethiopia, the weather and using social expressions. At Grade Seven the unit themes include telling stories, advising people and daily routines. Grade Eight includes talking about the future, describing processes and actions. It appears that the curriculum planners are using a cyclical model as many of the themes are repeated at all four grades. Although the integrated curriculum does not apply at the second cycle some of the unit themes appear to be deliberately selected to link up with other subjects.

There has been a major shift in methodology in the reading component of the second cycle syllabus. Most of the reading exercises call for individual silent reading. The major aim for Grade Five has been described as enabling students to read and understand short passages about a variety of topics. In some units definite mention is made that students have got to read "Extracts from other simplified books," (ICDR 1998:23). This statement supports the objectives of the ESDP to provide the students with supplementary readers. In other places, teachers are advised to use extracts from books, magazines and newspapers. However, the advice to use video-cassettes, audio-cassettes and slides does not seem related to the objective reality of Ethiopia. At Grade Six the major aim of enabling students to read texts on a variety of topics is repeated. Specific reference is made to skimming and scanning, intensive and extensive reading, and the need for pre-reading activities. It is suggested that the teachers use many reading passages with definite advice given to use supplementary readers and extracts from stories in Unit 13. The students are expected to discuss a story and compare it with other stories in Unit 24.

Grades Seven and Eight do not have specific introductions to their syllabus. However, from looking at the syllabus content, it can be deduced that reading is not neglected. Pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities are recommended. In some units teachers are told to select reading materials from authentic sources. Consequently, it would appear that due focus has been given to the teaching of reading at this level. However, there is obviously a major difference in the educational orientation of the people who wrote the syllabus for the first cycle and the second cycle. It would appear that the people who prepared the second cycle syllabus are much more aware of current teaching methodologies, while those who prepared the first cycle syllabus had not been up-dated. This mismatch between the teaching of reading between the two cycles, can have a negative impact on the students reading skills.

### **2.8 Reading in the Grade Eight Textbook**

All students involved in this study are using the Grade Eight English student book prepared by the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau (AACAEB, 1998). This book has the unassuming title of “English Student Book: Grade 8” clearly showing that it was produced for a single title textbook market. It was published in 1998 at Mega Printing Enterprise and has twenty units and 171 pages. The contents of these units closely resemble those suggested in the syllabus prepared by ICDR, but some of the themes have been sub-divided. The student book has no introduction.

Each unit has a traditional reading comprehension adapted from various sources including a book published in 1967 and several from Ethiopian Airline’s flight magazine.

For instance, Unit 10 has a passage on Ethiopian Birds, while Unit 11 and Unit 12 are about Ethiopian Airlines and Addis Ababa International Airport.

There is usually one or two pre-reading questions intended to raise the students' interest and expectations, but these do not seem to have been seriously thought over. For instance, in Unit 11 students are informed that the first and second jet flights of Ethiopian Airlines were from Bole International airport to Nairobi and Madrid (AACAEB, 1998:97). Then on Unit 12 the title of the reading comprehension is written in big bold letters as “Addis Ababa International Airport” and the first pre-reading question asks, “Where do you think is [sic] Bole International Airport?”

There are a variety of exercises in the post-reading questions including comprehension questions, true /false questions, reference questions, sentences with blanks, tables to be filled and the like. For instance, students have to decide whether it is true or false that Bole Airport started its operations in 1964 (AACAEB, 1998:107) and decide what the theme of Paragraph Four is from four supplied suggestions.

In general, the textbook is not very appealing. It is published entirely in black and white, and the text runs into the margins, giving it a cluttered appearance. The textbook would require a very good teacher to bring it to life.

## **2.9 Reading in the Grade Eight National English Examination**

The Grade Eight national examinations are held throughout Ethiopia and are given to all Ethiopian students on completing both cycles of primary education. They are meant to set some kind of uniform national standard to ensure students from all regions have attained the skills set out by the ICDR. These examinations are set centrally by the National Organisation for Examinations (NOE). The NOE was established under the present government as it was felt a separate organisation should do the evaluating rather than the organisations involved in the teaching. Its main aim is to improve the quality of examinations to ensure a comparability of standards between regions and schools (MOE,1998a:18). It has also set the aim of carrying out research to modernise the examination system, indirectly acknowledging the fact that the present examination system is lagging far behind the theories of evaluation and assessment.

It is clear that the Grade Eight National English Examination is lagging behind theories of evaluation and assessment as it only tests one of the four language skills taught. Listening, Speaking and Writing are all neglected, while grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and comprehension are all tested through reading. Although it is obvious that the students' acquisition of English cannot be measured through such an examination the vast number of students taking this examination and the need to correct and return results quickly is used as an excuse not to implement a more balanced examination.

The English examination usually has sixty questions and students are given sixty minutes to do them. All sixty questions are multiple choice with each question having

four possible answers for the students to choose from. Most of the questions follow a cloze text technique with a statement having one word missing. An illustration from the most recent examination is “Wro Alemitu and \_\_\_ husband are teachers,” (NOE, 2000:14). However some direct questions such as, “Which city is found in the Republic of Ireland?” (NOE, 2000:18) or “Which one of the following words is wrongly spelt?” (NOE, 2000:17) are also included. All of these are followed by a choice of four answers.

- The English examination is divided into various sections including usage, vocabulary, comprehension and the like. A closer observation of the reading skills tested in the examination held in 2000 gives us the following:

Word recognition is tested by the selection of words in a reading comprehension and then asking students to select a sentence, which means the same things. For instance, (NOE, 2000:25):

57. “tricks” (line 5) means \_\_\_\_\_.
1. lessons given to train animals
  2. news read on the radio
  3. skilful acts performed to make people happy
  4. sticks used by people to punish animals

Moreover, vocabulary from their English textbook is given in sentences and the students have to decide which of the given alternatives is the same as the underlined word (NOE, 2000:21).

Word selection is tested in sentences like “Zerihun does things \_\_\_\_\_” and the students have to choose amongst answers like “care”, “careless” and “carelessly” (NOE, 2000:15).

Appropriate letter clusters are tested by students being asked to pick out words that are misspelt. Therefore, words with letter clusters that are not English like “ksletrs” are recognised as wrong. These questions simply ask “Which one of the following words is wrongly spelt?” (NOE, 2000:17).

Sentence formation and structure is evaluated in several ways such as asking students to choose a sentence that is wrongly formed or asking the students which sentence could be an appropriate response to a given question. At times, a sentence is given and then four alternatives are provided and the students have to choose the alternative that has the same or nearly the same meaning as the original sentence, as in the following example:

32. Gemechu works in a restaurant and so does his brother.
1. Both Gemechu and his brother work in a restaurant.
  2. Either Gemechu or his brother works in a restaurant.
  3. Neither Gemechu nor his brother works in a restaurant.
  4. Gemechu works in his brother’s restaurant.
- (NOE, 2000:19)

Scanning for specific information is encouraged by the placing of information in a table and then asking the students to answer questions such as “Which city is found in the Republic of Ireland?” (NOE, 2000:18). The students then have to select amongst London, Dublin, Auckland and Toronto. It is assumed that the students will not have

much general knowledge about these cities and will quickly have to scan the table to find the answer.

Skimming for gist is assessed by the inclusion of a relatively long passage of thirty-two lines and the question “This passage is mainly about \_\_\_\_\_.” (NOE, 2000:22). Although, the students can read the passage intensively and obtain the answer, this question is obviously intended to encourage the students to skim the passage for the central idea.

Reordering sentences is tested by the following rearrangement question:

The following four sentences are about the famous Ethiopian Athlet [sic], Abebe Bikila. The sentences are not in their correct order. Read all the sentences carefully and decide on their most suitable order.

- A. He started running in 1956.
  - B. Abebe Bikila was born in 1932.
  - C. He won the race easily.
  - D. In 1960, he ran the Marathon race in the Olympic Games in Rome.
- (NOE, 2000:20)

The students have to decide which sentence should come first, second, third and fourth by encircling the letters. This question obviously wants to see if the students can read the sentences and put them in a generally acceptable chronological order of a paragraph.

Deducing, comparing and contrasting are also assessed to a lesser extent with questions such as “Which one of the animals is the most intelligent?” and others.

On the whole, the Grade Eight national examinations do test a wide range of skills in the reading of English. Admittedly, due to the fact that the whole examination is multiple choice and provides four alternative answers, it encourages the students to guess. Moreover, it is an examination on which students could easily copy from one another, because the answers are simply a row of letters that stand for the correct alternative.

On the whole, several reading skills are tested in the examination. However, even though several of the skills used in reading are tested, unfortunately, the results of this examination cannot be used as a means of measuring the students' reading proficiency for this study. This is because there appears to be serious doubts on the validity and reliability of these examinations. One of the activities of the NOE is to "investigate the predictive validity and reliability of the public examinations, (MOE, 1998a:57). The Ministry of Education clearly state:

The existing assessment system has contributed very little in facilitating the teaching-learning process and in improving the state and quality of education. Therefore it is important to change the prevailing situation and introduce a modern assessment system in order to serve pedagogical improvement (1998a:58).

### **2.10 Testing Reading**

To begin with what should be tested, it has been mentioned that reading is a skill composed of a multitude of sub-skills. Attempts at assessing as many of the sub-skills as possible have been made with the rationale of sampling as much as the students' sub-skills as possible to give a reflection of his reading skill. Such an approach is said to be based on the "Multidivisibility View" of reading that sees the various components as

individual independent aspects that have to be measured in their own right. However, such a view did not stand up to research. Urquhart and Weir (1998:125) explain:

In opposition to a multidivisibility view of reading, a substantial number of studies have found that it is not possible to differentiate between reading components, either through empirical demonstration of the separate functioning of such components when these are operationalised in language test items, or through the judgement of experts on what the focus of such test items actually is (see, e.g. Alderson, 1990a; Alderson and Lukmani, 1989; Carver, 1992; Rosenshine, 1980; Rost, 1993).

An opposing view to this is the “Unitary View”, which assumes that there is an underlying factor that affects all the components and measuring this gives one good indications of the students’ entire reading ability. Therefore, if one is able to devise a single reading test that can measure this underlying factor, then such a test could act as an accurate measure of all the other components. Although reassuring to the test-designer, in practice there tend to be two major groups upon which most other skills rest. One is the reader’s vocabulary stock and the second is his acquisition or mastery of the basic components of syntax, structure and other microlinguistic features that enable him to achieve the necessary threshold level to read a certain text. As a result, there is now some consensus that reading may not be multidivisible nor unitary but rather bi-divisible. Although measuring these two factors may not exhaustively measure or predict how good a reader may be at global and other types of reading, they can be considered as adequate for measuring fundamental reading skills. Research proves the importance of word recognition and vocabulary. Urquhart and Weir (1998:133) back up such an assertion:

It does seem improbable that students would be able to work out the main ideas of a text without some baseline competence in the microlinguistic skills, without understanding some of the relations within at least some sentences of that text.

Urquhart and Weir (1998:124) have repeated this elsewhere, saying that processing at the level of word recognition, lexical access, integration of textual information and resolution of ambiguity are important aspects of reading.

Some researchers like Grellet (1981:3) and Floyd (1984:90 – 91) divide reading into skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading. Urquhart and Weir (1998:123) provide us with a different matrix of reading types, based on previous work by Weir (1993) and Pugh (1978).

Global and Local reading are each sub-divided into expeditious or careful sub-components. The main skills and purposes of each are explained in the table below.

Table 3: **Matrix of reading types**

	<b>Global</b>	<b>Local</b>
<b>Expeditious</b>	A. Skimming quickly to establish discourse topic and main ideas. Search reading to locate quickly and understand information relevant to predetermined needs.	B. Scanning to locate specific information; symbol or group of symbols; names, dates, figures or words.
<b>Careful</b>	C. Reading carefully to establish accurate comprehension of the explicitly stated main ideas the author wishes to convey; propositional inferencing.	D. Understanding syntactic structure of sentence and clause. Understanding lexical and/or grammatical cohesion. Understanding lexis/ deducing meaning of lexical items from morphology and context.

Consequently, once the two factors of word recognition and lexical access had been selected as key areas to be measured, then features of a good reading test relevant for

Ethiopian students were thought over. Urquhart and Weir (1998:115-116) state that a good test would have to have as little reliance on cultural background as possible. This is to avoid the compensatory role students' background and cultural knowledge could have on their reading skills, allowing them to guess the meaning of the text from their cultural knowledge. It would not allow chance to be a factor in answering, as in multiple-choice questions. Therefore, it would also stay away from appreciation and other questions that are open-ended and could possibly have more than one answer. It would have a variety of passages to ensure reliability and validity, as well as minimising the advantages any one student may have on the contents of a passage. Finally, its main focus would be on comprehension on the local or microlinguistic level skills, as these are easily discriminated and can be measured with a relatively higher degree of confidence.

To conclude, Chapter Two has given a broad view of the role of reading in English in the Ethiopian education system by looking at learning materials in Ethiopia along with the reading passages used in the Grade Eight English Textbook and the Grade Eight National English Examination of 2000. In addition, the reading syllabi drawn up by the ICDR was described. The Primary Reader Scheme and the selection of readers after an initial pilot scheme were discussed. This raised thought-provoking issues as to cultural familiarity and relevance of titles to be included in any future extensive reading schemes in Ethiopia. Choices made by schools indicate that titles ought to be selected based on the observed preferences of students. A working definition of reading and general approaches to teaching it was also discussed. The chapter gives an overview of how reading is considered and tested at the end of the

second cycle of primary education in Ethiopia. Chapter Three follows with a review of related literature, including what has been said about extensive reading schemes.

### **3. Chapter Three: A Review of the Related Literature**

Reading is perhaps one of the most fascinating and, therefore, one of the well-researched areas in language teaching. Surprisingly, however, it still remains one of the least understood areas in that research has only touched upon the tip of the reading iceberg. Bachman (2000:x) reminds us, “Reading, through which we can access worlds of ideas and feelings, as well as the knowledge of the ages and visions of the future, is at once the most extensively researched and the most enigmatic of the so-called language skills.”

This chapter will give a brief review of Ethiopian and international research on reading. Most research in Ethiopia tends to be on English skills at secondary and tertiary levels owing to the fact that attention was disproportionately focussed on these levels. It is only recently that there has been a shift of interest to primary education. Nevertheless, a review will be made of those studies on reading skills. These studies usually go along similar lines: they are conducted as prerequisites to graduation at a post-graduate level. They are conducted on freshman students and measure the students’ reading ability, which shows the lack of some major skill, or else, they experiment with a new approach that usually proves better than the one used at the time in that particular institute. Cases in point are Tsegaye (1982) Hailemichael (1984), Molla (1987), Mendida (1988), Gebremedhin (1993), Taye (1999), and Gessesse (1999). An exception to this is the recent Ethiopian National Baseline Survey (NOE,2001), which is pertinent to this study and will be discussed in greater detail than the others.

Following this, a closer look at the theory and practice of children's literature will be taken. A discussion of factors influencing reading schemes internationally will be given. Then three studies of students involved in extensive reading in Japan, the Philippines and Yemen will be reviewed. Finally, the theoretical framework for extensive reading will be discussed.

### **3.1 A Review of Ethiopian Research on Reading**

#### **3.1.1 Journals**

It would be valuable from the outset of this part to keep in mind that the whole area of educational research in Ethiopia is very weak. There is a vicious circle in which researchers have been discouraged from doing research owing to the lack of local academic journals, which in turn could not flourish because of the lack of publishable articles. There was an attempt to break this cycle with the establishment of the Institute of Educational Research (IER) at the Addis Ababa University (AAU). Unfortunately, the IER journal was perceived to be elitist and tended to be restricted to within the University faculty rather than serve as a forum of education for scholars nation-wide.

The Ministry of Education introduced The Educational Journal in 1995 in an attempt to break the next vicious circle, whereby AAU lecturers wrote articles for their colleagues within the University, forming a closed society. This journal aimed at extracting educational research from the AAU ivory tower and provide a forum for all educationists.

On the language education side, although both the above mentioned journals accept articles on language research, the articles published tend to come from such a wide variety of fields that they do not prove valuable resource for the language teacher. In an attempt to fill this gap, the departments of English and Ethiopian Languages at Kotebe College of Teacher Education started publishing the Journal of Language Studies. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at AAU began the Journal of the Institute of Language Studies in 1996. Although both these journals were bravely labeled as ‘bi-annual’ and ‘quarterly’, they are floundering under a lack of funds in addition to a lack of staff time dedicated to their publications.

Surprisingly, only one of these four journals has published an article on reading and even that is a shorter version of Gebremedhin’s dissertation (1993). In light of this, it comes as no surprise that there are no books published on reading by Ethiopian scholars.

### 3.1.2. Theses

This dearth of research articles about reading in the Ethiopian situation is partially compensated for by the fact that English majors at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels are required to write dissertations as a prerequisite to graduate. Consequently, there are several theses written on reading. Most of these concentrate on the educational aspect of reading with hardly any on the social aspect and none on the psychological. Again because the research was done for theses and the majority of postgraduate students are themselves tertiary level instructors, the research focuses almost exclusively

on reading at the tertiary level. Following is a rapid review of some of those theses written on reading. They are discussed starting from the least recent.

One of the earliest studies still available is that of Tsegaye (1982). He set out to measure the reading ability of first year AAU students using cloze tests. He found the students' reading ability was very poor.

Hailemichael (1984) tried to improve the reading skills of AAU freshman students by comparing the effectiveness of what he called 'traditional' versus 'communicative' approaches to reading. His communicative approach was basically more interactive and he found it to be beneficial to the students.

Molla (1987) assessed the reading skills of AAU students and stated that their comprehension skills were relatively good. Nevertheless, their speed of reading was painfully slow and this in turn affected how many books they could read.

In contrast to Molla, Mendida (1988) aimed at investigating why Bahir Dar Teachers' College trainees reading ability was poor. He looked into specific skills and discovered that not only did the students lack knowledge about English grammar and vocabulary, but they were also weak in using higher comprehension skills. This is probably significant in that it implies that the students lack major reading skills not only in English but also in their mother tongue and any other languages they might use.

Like Hailemichael, Gebremedhin (1993) tried to focus on assisting university students to acquire reading skills for English for Academic Purposes to help them cope with their studies. He used an 'individualised reading approach' in which he tried to let students read at their own pace and do exercises individually without worrying where their classmates were. He maintained that his approach assisted the students in reading. However, his experiment took place in classes of around 30 students while class sizes in schools could be triple that size.

Taye (1999) investigated the social background knowledge, academic background knowledge and language proficiency and their role in reading proficiency. He used t-tests and stepwise regression analysis on the results of the tests carried out on freshman students at AAU. He concluded that academic background directly affected results, whereby students from the arts stream scored better at social science courses than those from the science stream. Moreover, he pointed out that the differences in the amount of extra-textual and intra-textual background knowledge affected reading only up to a certain level after which the effect diminished. Reading comprehension was directly affected by language proficiency, and language proficiency had a stronger effect than background knowledge on reading comprehension.

Gessesse (1999) wanted to experiment if a process approach to the teaching of reading for first year students at a teacher training college could bring about any marked improvement in their reading abilities. He set out to determine the effects of this approach with two experiments and two control groups. Having analyzed pre and post

test measures using ANOVA, as well as observing classes and collecting data with questionnaires and open-ended reports, he noted certain changes. He concluded that the experiment groups both showed a perceived effect in improving their reading ability as well as positively evaluating the approach in their the reports. However, their attitude towards reading showed no significant change in comparison to that of the control group.

On the whole, these research theses all go along similar lines. They are carried out on first year students. This is probably owing to the ease of setting up experiment and control groups simultaneously, while the researchers also teach their regular classes. Then they measure the students' reading ability, which they inevitably find to lack some major skill or component, or else they experiment with a 'new' approach, which proves more efficacious than the one used at that particular time and institute.

Probably as a consequence of the fact that these studies are conducted as requirements for graduation, the studies are shelved and no further attempts to implement the new approach or to eradicate the deficiencies at primary and secondary levels are made. Instead the tertiary level instructors smugly lay the blame of 'appalling language habits' squarely on the shoulders of secondary level teachers who readily pass on the baton of blame to the primary teachers. They in turn point accusing fingers at the 'uneducable' students.

### 3.1.3 The Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment of Grade Eight Students' Achievement

Although Ethiopia has a fairly well-established educational system, it was in the embarrassing situation of not having had any baseline surveys done on a national or regional level. The National Organisation for Examinations (NOE) rectified this situation by conducting the Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment (ENBA) on Grades Four and Eight. ENBA started in 1999 and ended in 2000. The findings were published as The Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment on Grade Eight Students' Achievement Summary Report (NOE,2001a) and The Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment on Grade Eight Students' Achievement (NOE, 2001b) in April 2001. This historic survey is discussed separately in the literature review not only because it is the first review of its kind, but also because it is the sole existing piece of real research at the primary level so far.

ENBA was conducted to determine the level of students' achievements at the end of the second cycle of education by testing over 5000 Grade Eight students in ten regions of the country. The study focussed on four subjects including English. The major aims of the study were (NOE,2001a:2):

- To determine the achievement levels of grade 8 students in four key subjects (Maths, English, Chemistry and Biology)
- To make a survey of students' attitude (sic) towards their school environment,
- To lay down a baseline of information for monitoring students' achievement over time,
- To identify regional variability in terms of educational inputs and other factors which may have a relationship with students' achievement,
- To provide policy-makers with information and recommendations about the different levels of students' achievement across region, sex, age and location,
- To generate ideas for improving learning outcomes.

The team of researchers, which included three Ethiopians and two foreigners, set out with five basic research questions that were (NOE,2001a:2-3):

- To what extent have learning outcomes or objectives for the second cycle of primary school grades 5 to 8 in selected key subjects been attained across the regions and schools of Ethiopia?
- Does achievement differ significantly with respect to the students' gender, age, school, region and location?
- To what degree have the desired attitudes been developed in grade 8 students?
- How do schools and regions differ in terms of schools inputs?
- Which school factors contribute most to students' achievement?

The ENBA differs from the present study in that it is conducted in many regions, while the present study is only in one region and that it covers four subjects in contrast to one skill of one subject covered here. Both studies recognise that English is a key subject contributing to students' success or failure in their academic careers and see student achievement as the litmus test of whether or not learning has taken place.

Regarding methodology, a multi-stage stratified sampling method was used with the probability of inclusion proportional to the number of schools in a given region. The school was considered as the primary sampling unit and the students as the secondary sampling unit (NOE, 2001a:9). A minimum of 10 sample schools was taken from each region, with a maximum of 32 from the larger regions. At least 40 students from each school were included in the survey.

Instruments used for collecting information included an achievement test, information on the students' school-based test scores and a student questionnaire. The English achievement test was a multiple choice test with 40 items across a range of key topics taken

from the English curriculum. Although, the test was said to have acceptable test internal consistency with split-half correlations of 0.718, this might have been compromised by the very nature of multiple choice, which easily lends itself to cheating. The researchers tried to overcome this factor by running a Pearson Correlation with school based test scores. Nevertheless, the school tests were also multiple choice tests.

Methods of analysing the data were descriptive statistics, analyses of variance, Spearman's RHO correlations and multiple regression analysis. These methods are in accordance with the aims of the study as they enable comparison of many variables at the same time. Consequently, the researchers used them to check performance against factors like region, school location, gender and age.

The overall mean score for Ethiopia as a whole was disappointingly low at 39%, indicating that the level of English learnt all over the country is very low indeed. It should be kept in mind that this result was not obtained at an international standard but rather at a national level with the national curriculum and textbooks used as the springboard for designing the achievement test. At the regional level, Addis Ababa had the best mean score in English at 46%, which is still below the half way mark.

Interestingly, the Spearman's RHO Correlations of school-average Grade Eight combined achievement scores with school inputs and process showed that some factors in the school infrastructure had a significant association with the students achievement results. These factors included the brightness of classrooms, the school directors' narrow focus on school

matters, the average age of teachers and their use of radio for instruction, the amount of homework given and the availability of textbooks, teacher guides, pedagogical centres, laboratories and libraries (NOE, 2001a:18). The availability of libraries is related to the present study. Unfortunately, however, the effect of these factors was not correlated to achievement in individual subjects.

The study found that “Having a textbook, listening in school over the radio to supplementary instruction, and doing homework were the three instructional process variables most strongly associated with the achievement of grade 8 students” (NOE, 2001a:25). Moreover it stated:

Overall student interest in the subjects of English and Maths are lower than their interest in other subjects. In that student interest in a subject is associated with learning the subject, special attention should be devoted to strengthening the quality and attractiveness of the curriculum, learning materials, and teacher preparation in the subjects of English and Maths.

The researchers failed to note that both English and Maths are basically skills courses, requiring active use, whereas the other subjects lend themselves to the traditional rote memorisation method most familiar to the students. Therefore, if the students are using rote techniques for English and Maths, and not getting good results, their lack of interest could be due to their low results and not vice versa. Moreover, the other subjects could be understood by using reading skills geared to memorisation. However, English and Maths would require a different type of reading, which requires understanding. Consequently, ENBA actually lays the ground for this study in that it gives a glimpse of the poor mastery of English by Ethiopian students in government schools and it also hints at the possibility

that these students are not able to adjust their reading skills according to the purpose of their reading.

### **3.2 The Conceptual Framework for Extensive Reading**

The why and wherefore of extensive reading has a history of its own apart from reading, or more accurately branching off from the types of reading. Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:1) define extensive reading as the kind of reading that is done for information or pleasure and is necessarily done in large quantities. They stress that the immediate focus of the reader should be on the content rather than on language or language skills. Day and Bamford (2000:2) also give a list of characteristics of extensive reading which include the fact that reading is done as its own reward, dictionaries are only rarely used and the person involves in such kind of reading for a variety of personal, social or academic reasons. They state that the readers should have the freedom to stop reading whenever the materials no longer interest them and that their reading is usually fast.

Nation (1997:1) explains that encouraging such a type of reading among students could be very advantageous in that it allows for different learners with different reading proficiency levels, interests and schedules to select materials of their own taste and read in their own time at their own pace. Consequently, educationists and teachers have been interested in using extensive reading as a supplementary or complementary activity to teaching English and reading for a long time. The provision of deliberately graded

readers to facilitate language and reading acquisition has also been used for many decades.

Bell (2001:1) traces interest in graded readers as far back as the 1950s with the writings of Michael West. He states that a sustained interest in developing reading speed through extensive reading got momentum in the 1960s with the studies of Fry and the De Leeuws. Obviously, this study shows that the interest continues in the present millennium.

It is clear that reading takes place in a social context and is best promoted by interaction. Therefore many researchers and teachers have used extensive reading and designed reading schemes to assist their students to improve their reading and language. Litanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:1) give us a glimpse of the variety of the names of such schemes which include Book Flood, Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) and Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF). Others, like the Primary Reader Scheme (PRS), also exist worldwide. Litanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:1) list the advantages of such schemes as:

- Increased knowledge of the world.
- Enhanced language acquisition in such areas as grammar, vocabulary, and text structure.
- Improved reading and writing skills.
- Greater enjoyment of reading.
- Higher possibility of developing a reading habit.

Numerous educators have written articles on how they have used extensive reading successfully in their classrooms.

Nation (1997:1) wanted to make sure that such schemes not only improved reading fluency, but other language skills too. He says that the relationship between language proficiency and extensive reading is complex in that success in formal study could make reading more feasible. At the same time, success in reading could motivate students to do further study and more reading. Moreover, students who speak and listen to English outside the classroom also do more extensive reading.

He reviews some studies and says that it is clear that students gain in their vocabulary knowledge and have a greater than normal success rate in their academic examinations.

Nation (1997:7) concludes by stressing:

The research on extensive reading shows that there is a wide range of learning benefits from such activity. Experimental studies have shown that not only is there improvement in reading, but that there are improvements in a range of language uses and areas of language knowledge. Although studies have focussed on language improvement, it is clear that there are affective benefits as well. Success in reading and its associated skills, most notably writing, makes learners come to enjoy language learning and to value their study of English.

Other scholars like Heal (1998:1-3) give practical examples of how they have overcome the difficulty of teaching large unmanageable reading classes with unmotivated students. Heal explains how her students would not come to class and did not do their homework. So she used extensive reading along with peer-pressure and competition to motivate her students. She divided her class into groups and then gave them weekly quizzes. Eventually, there was a noticeable improvement in both the classroom atmosphere and the students' reading scores.

Day and Bamford (2000:1-7) discuss the pleasures and benefits of extensive reading schemes. Provided that interesting reading materials can be obtained they state that reluctant readers can be transformed into proficient ones. They say that the benefits are not only in reading skills, but in writing, listening, vocabulary and other areas as well. They say the students are weaned away from word-by-word reading through repeatedly meeting the same patterns of letters, words and word combinations, thereby developing automaticity and increasing their reading skills. They say that extensive reading provide the students in foreign language contexts with opportunities for increased exposure to English and many students also develop positive attitudes to the language.

Day and Bamford (2000:5-6) also discuss how teachers can use extensive reading. They suggest three options. The first is to integrate extensive reading into the curriculum as it helps students to read and pass their exams. They recommend having a separate extensive reading course. If this is not possible, they suggest adding on the extensive reading portion to an existing language course, as a non-credit activity, or through assigning a certain portion of the semester's grades to extensive reading. If both of these are not possible, then they suggest that the extensive reading scheme be added on as an extracurricular activity outside the regular curriculum. This third option could be especially viable in rural schools in Ethiopia, where teachers usually have half days free and are not involved in income generating activities.

### 3.3 A Review of International Extensive Reading Research

Fortunately, the dearth of research on reading in the Ethiopian context is more than compensated for by the abundance of reading research internationally. Urquhart and Weir (1998:19) scrutinise the number of articles with the word “reading” in their titles published between 1966 and 1996 and found in ERIC. They discovered that the least number published per year was 600 and the most well above 3000.

Alderson (2000:1) admits from the outset of his book:

The sheer volume of research on the topic belies any individual’s ability to process, much less synthesise, everything that is written. Similarly, the number of different theories of reading is simply overwhelming: what it is, how it is acquired and taught, how reading in a second language differs from reading in a first, how reading relates to other cognitive and perceptual abilities, how it interfaces with memory. All these aspects of reading are important, but will probably never be brought together into a coherent and comprehensive account of what it is we do when we read.

A review of international research on reading and reading schemes tend to unambivalently state that the provision of books to children results in improvements in their reading efficiency. For example, Parker and Parker (1984:184) strongly advocate the use of ‘book-based’ approaches to the teaching of reading and further back up their claims by references to Elley and Mangubhai, Spack and Carrell. Krashen (1993:84) also declares that extensive reading schemes are invaluable to the teaching of reading. He summarises studies comparing the achievements of studies who received traditional reading comprehension classes with those who also read extensively on their own and stated that 93% of the 41 comparisons showed that extensive reading benefited the students immensely. This obviously makes sense from a language acquisition point of view, because as Williams (1984:204) states, there is so much evidence of learners learning a language along the same

route that some researchers maintain that teaching cannot alter this order. She (1984:203) stresses, “what appears to be unquestioned in the literature is the crucial role of language input – input of language through listening and reading – for the learner to act on in order to activate and develop his/her own learning mechanisms...”.

Due to the massiveness and impossibility of reviewing all the research on extensive reading, a review of such reviews will be made of two leading experts in the field of reading, Urquhart and Alderson. Urquhart and Weir (1998: 219-221) begin their review of research on extensive reading by stating the surprising fact that there are almost no negative comments on the subjects. The only disadvantages they come up with are practical administrative ones like the cost and time of establishing and running such programmes efficiently, as well as the need for some curriculum time required for private reading. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile keeping in mind that practical administrative constraints can disrupt a whole reading scheme, as properly administering a scheme is the most relevant part of implementation. An invaluable book on practical administrative constraints is one entitled *Promoting Reading in Developing Countries*, which is a collection of various articles that adequately portray the various aspects and challenges of trying to run reading schemes in various countries around the world (Greaney, 1996).

Urquhart and Weir (1993: 219-221) state that researchers like Rodrigo (1995), Day et al. (1991), Pitts et al. (1989) and Krashen (1993) have all found that extensive reading contributes directly to both reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Some researchers like Hafiz and Tudor (1989:5) are said to attribute this development to the

tension-free environment in which extensive reading takes place leading to the relaxed intake of large quantities of comprehensible input.

Urquhart and Weir (1998:220) extend their review beyond English speaking countries and explain that the positive effects of extensive reading programmes have been reported upon in countries like Japan and Fiji by Robb and Susser (1989) and Elley and Mangubhai (1983) respectively.

Interestingly, they point out that extensive reading has been positively examined and recommended by numerous researchers, including Davis (1995), Elley (1991), Hamp-Lyons (1985), Krashen (1993), Nation (1997) and others. Despite this amount of overwhelming evidence, little sustained reading occurred in classrooms throughout Britain and as little as 15% of classroom time was devoted to reading. Discussions, questions and other factors associated with the testing of reading took up more time than the actual teaching of reading. Apparently, this is worse in the USA, where Alevermann and Moore (1991:974) report that reading strategies do not play a large part in the reading classroom.

The only mention of the possibility of extensive reading being anything but a resounding success is made by Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:1). They mention that poorer countries that lack adequate reading materials, low teacher salaries and in adequate preparation of teachers, have been found to have implementation difficulties. Perhaps this is of utmost importance to Africa, as many of the countries including Ethiopia come

under the ‘Least Developed Countries’ criteria. Therefore, reading schemes, which have worked in other regions of the world, cannot be replicated without looking at the specificity of the African context. A lack of reading materials, low teacher training and motivation, undernourished students and a lack of a reading culture are part and parcel of the African educational setting in general and Ethiopia, in particular.

In an attempt to be selective and get a flavour of how some studies on extensive reading were carried out, three studies will be reviewed in more depth. The first study is on the relationship between extensive reading and its contribution to the students’ reading speed and reading comprehension as researched by Timothy Bell (2001) on Yemeni students very recently. The second was a study by Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001) and examines if conducting extensive reading in remedial classes can be of any assistance to weaker students. The third, is a study mentioned earlier by Robb and Susser (1989) which scrutinises whether extensive reading might actually contribute more than a traditional skills building course in improving students’ English in a foreign language setting. All three studies have been selected on the basis that they cover different aspects of extensive reading and could contribute more to the understanding of the role extensive reading could have in Ethiopia.

### 3.3.1 Extensive Reading : Speed and Comprehension

Bell (2001:1) set out from the given premise that extensive reading contributes greatly to the reading speed of students and that advanced students could increase their reading speed up to 57% over a couple of years. However, he wanted to research the slightly

neglected area of whether these remarkable gains in reading speed were at the expense of reading comprehension. On the other hand, he speculated that perhaps the poor understanding of slow readers due to the fact that their memory is insufficient to retain the information in large chunks to enable process of the meaning could be overcome by this faster reading. Therefore, reading faster improves comprehension.

The research design he used was a quantitative one in which he had a control group and a test group. “The control group (n = 12) received an entirely different reading program which was intensive in character, being based on the reading of short passages and the completion of tasks designed to ‘milk’ the texts for grammar, lexis, and rhetorical patterns” (Bell, 2001: 2). The exercises included the types of traditional reading exercises like dictation, vocabulary, comprehension questions, cloze, gap-filling, multiple choice and true/false questions. The test group, on the other hand, consisted of 14 students and “received an extensive reading program consisting of class readers, a class library of books for students to borrow, and regular visits to the library providing access to a much larger collection of graded readers (up to 2000 titles)” (Bell, 2001:2).

Records of time spent on reading were closely monitored. Then both groups had to sit for a series of reading speed tests and reading comprehension tests, which though not sophisticated served their purpose. For example, in the reading speed tests, students had to mark where they had reached when the teacher banged on the desk. The statistical tool used to analyse these results was the ‘t’ test for correlated samples.

The results proved both his hypotheses that the learner in the extensive group would achieve significantly faster reading speeds and that the learner in the extensive group would achieve significantly higher scores on the tests of reading comprehension. So he concludes by stating that there are significant gains in using an extensive reading programme to improve students' reading rather than using traditional reading lessons, (Bell, 2001:7). He stresses this especially as the test group had scored less in their reading tests before the extensive programme and so the programme had actually reversed the scores.

The biggest limitations to this study, which Bell (2001:8) admits to himself, is the small number of students used in the experiment and the questionable reliability and validity of his reading comprehension and reading speed tests. Nevertheless, this study is useful to Ethiopia in that both Yemen and Ethiopia share similar features in geographical location and the use of English, and that the study was not set in an English speaking country and therefore reduces the chances of incidental learning outside the classroom.

### 3.3.2 A Study of Extensive Reading with Remedial Reading Students

This study is set in the Philippines. Like schools in Ethiopia the school in the study had around 2800 students and an average of 52 students per class. Their classes last for 40 minutes and the school operates on a shift system. 90% of the students are estimated to come from low-income families and reading materials are scarce in such environments, (Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya 2001:2).

Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:2) started out on their research because they felt:

While much good work in ER takes place, sustained, well-run programs are more often the exception than the rule. Effective ER programs seem especially scarce for lower achieving students, as many educationists express the view that such students lack the desire and skills to read extensively. Thus further research is needed to develop and test situation-appropriate ER with lower achieving students.

Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:3) used a Pre-test – Post-test control group quantitative design. They used two instruments, which were the Informal Reading Inventory and the Gray Standardised Oral Reading Test. The latter indicates the grade level, which the student is reading at. The students in the experimental group went through an extensive reading programme, which lasted for six months and involved 45% of silent reading time. The control group simply followed the regular English syllabus in their remedial English lessons.

They used the t-test to compare all the scores and set a familywise alpha level of .05. They had a degree of freedom of 20 and set the critical value at 2.676 to compensate for the fact that more than two values were being analysed (Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya 2001:4). They found that significant differences developed in the reading proficiency between the groups after the treatment. So they proved their first hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the pre-test reading proficiency scores and disproved their second hypothesis that the same would hold true after the six month extensive reading programme.

Lituanas, Jacobs and Renandya (2001:7) round off by saying:

In conclusion, students who are not currently skilled, enthusiastic readers face unnecessary and serious obstacles to realizing their potential contributions to themselves, their families and to society in general. In this information age, they will be shut off from the power gained through obtaining and providing information and from the splendor and inspiration of good fiction. Thus, educationists need to create and implement programs to help students who fall behind in reading. The accumulated wisdom embodied in the current study and the many which came before it strongly suggests that ER can play an important role in helping students gain in their level of reading skill, confidence and enjoyment. ER can help people discover the joy and power that reading brings.

### 3.3.3 Extensive Reading vs Skills Building in an EFL Context

Robb and Susser (1989) conducted their research in Japan on Japanese college freshman students. They state that while there is general agreement that reading is the most important skill in EFL situations, very little data-based research exists on extensive reading as an L2 pedagogic procedure (Robb and Susser, 1989:1).

They wanted to see if extensive reading alone could bring about an improvement in students' reading abilities and if language skills are better learned when specifically taught. So they set out with 125 Japanese students who had no significant differences in reading.

The experiment group had to do extensive reading during the year. They started reading at a fairly low level and were allowed to read at their own pace. They were engaged in silent reading and were allowed to proceed to a higher level after demonstrating that they had achieved acceptable reading comprehension at the existing level. They were not taught any skills overtly and were required to read a minimum of 500 pages at home

during the year. The teachers monitored their work by making them write short summaries of the stories they read.

The control group had to work through a reading skills textbook with 12 chapters and 2 reading sections in each chapter. Students read the passages individually and did the exercises in the book. For homework, they had to do an additional section of the test and were monitored by a two-item quiz at the beginning of each period (Robb and Susser 1989:4).

Robb and Susser (1989:3) used the Multiple Skills Series Midway Placement Tests before and after the treatment. They concluded that the students in the extensive reading programme could read faster, understand important facts and guess the meaning of new words from context better than the control group. Moreover, they were as good as the control group in getting the main idea and making inferences. Interestingly, the test group also showed a more marked improvement in their writing skills than the control group. Therefore, Robb and Susser (1989:7) strongly recommend extensive reading, as students enjoy it more and also learn more from such an approach.

They (Robb and Susser,1989:6) acknowledge that some of the weaknesses of the study could be contamination from other English courses and differences in study time between the groups and they decided to conduct a repetition of the experiment in the next academic year.

All three of the studies reviewed came up with findings that reiterated the benefits of extensive reading programmes on the reading skills of students who use English as a second or foreign language.

### **3.4 Using Children’s Literature**

#### **3.4.1 The Rationale behind Using Children’s Literature**

Most researchers agree that reading provides a unique opportunity to assist the psycho-social development of children. In pre-literate days or in societies with oral cultures, it was story-telling that had the role of assisting in the child’s development. Fordham, Holland and Millican (1995:94) say, “Most oral cultures record history and communicate events through story-telling, and teach moral and cultural values through riddles and proverbs.” However, with the increase of print, and the availability of books, reading took over the role of oral literature and added some new aspects of its own. Davis (1992:3) sees reading as giving children the opportunity to reshape their own lives and holds:

Reading, writing, growing-up, trying to re-understand the past you have come out of in search of the future you are going into - these seem part of the project for such people who want to try to make and re-make lives of their own.

Spink (1989:37) sees reading as being fundamental in shaping children’s lives in the first place. He argues:

...reading can assist with self-identity in terms of our sexual identity, our ethnic and cultural and geographical identity, and our religious and moral selves. Many of these matters are areas of conflict: conflict with parents, friends, school, or our inner selves.

Although researchers may emphasise different aspects, they all tend to agree that reading books enhances the child's psychological development. Some say that the reading process involves conscious attention and automatic activation and that extensive reading could significantly affect the automatic activation (Urquhart and Weir, 1998:38). How to go about the teaching of reading, however, is another matter entirely. Some researchers oppose the practice of teaching reading in schools through the use of phonics and reading comprehension questions because they feel such approaches bleed the texts dry and take away the enjoyment of reading for the students. Others see these as necessary steps in enabling students to read, in contrast to those who regard them as irrelevant obstacles to acquiring reading. People like Frank Smith (1985) have been arguing against a 'programmatically approach' to teaching reading for several decades. Smith in particular strongly argues that the only end to such exercises are their own instructional ones and their continued use lies in thoughtless tradition. As an alternative solution he states that all children should join what he calls 'the literacy club'. This is basically reading as a means of obtaining meaning and interacting with others who encourage and enjoy reading themselves. Although all scholars would probably not agree with the extremist view of eradicating formal reading lessons, most would agree that creating a non-threatening environment is advisable. Such an environment would be risk-free owing to the absence of tests, examinations and questions to answer. Students would read at their own rates on topics of their own choice simply for the pleasure of reading. One of the ways of creating such an environment is to have supplementary readers in school libraries. Therefore, the need to include supplementary reading materials has been advocated for a long time. Some countries like the UK boast a stock of over 1,621 readers

at present and this vast resource of language for learners has been used with increasing interest and theoretical awareness over the years. The basic need for such a resource is that individual students have individual and at times unique styles of learning. Obviously, in classes of over 80 students in the Ethiopian situation, a single teacher cannot accommodate all the individual traits of the students. Consequently, having a library with graded readers allows the students to study individually at their own preferred rate and in their own style. Maxwell and Meiser (1997:45) give us a general rule of thumb to calculate the span of reading levels in an average class. They advise that we divide the grade number in half. For instance, if we were working with grade 6, dividing it in half would result in 3. Then the resulting figure, in this example 3, is added on to the grade level to get the upper level. So 3 plus 6 would give us 9. Then the resulting figure, in this example 3, is subtracted from the grade number to get the lower level, which would be 3 in this example. Hence to get the individual reading levels of Grade Eight students, we divide 8 by 2 getting 4. Then we add 4 on to 8 and subtract 4 from 8, which would give us 4 and 12. Consequently, the individual reading levels of Grade Eight students would vary from 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

No single coursebook could accommodate for such a huge range of reading levels and would as a result slow down the good readers and prove too difficult for the weaker readers. The availability of supplementary readers would thus allow for students to read at their own rates and provide the perfect student centre task. Maxwell and Meiser (1997:230-231) list the following five points as the basic reasons for using children's and young adult literature:

- Students learn to make critical judgements about what they read.
- Students learn to support and explain their critical judgements.
- Students will gain an understanding of themselves and others.
- Students learn about a wider life.
- Students' enjoyment of reading will increase.

Reflecting on this, we can deduce that as students read more and more books they will prefer some over others and gradually learn to make critical judgements. As these judgements will vary from those of their friends, they will discuss their differences of opinion. In order to convince their friends, they will have to support and explain why they liked or disliked a certain character, event or story. This in turn will develop their thinking skills. Hopefully, while discussing the characters in the stories, they will be able to identify with some and get better insights into what people are like. This will assist them in getting better understanding of themselves and others. The more they read about characters from other places, the more they will learn about a wider life. Two great advantages are that the students will be learning all this vicariously and will not have to actually experience the hard blows of life. Moreover, in Africa, where the economic status is low, people cannot afford to travel. So books can provide them with glimpses of the wider world at almost no cost at all. Finally, and most important a virtuous circle of reading will begin to emerge where the students' successful reading will increase their enjoyment of reading and will in turn lead them to read more.

Admittedly, at elementary level the basic aim would be to enable students to develop good reading habits and discover that reading is a pleasurable lifelong activity. Consequently, rather than being bothered by literary analysis theories such as historical

criticism, social criticism and new criticism, students are usually allowed to carry out ‘subjective analysis’, which basically involves talking about their likes or dislikes of a certain story or poem. Therefore, the children will not see reading as a burdensome task, but rather as a recreational one.

#### 3.4.2 Optimum Reading Age

Most researchers tend to agree that once an optimum point for reading is past, it is very difficult to teach reading effectively. Chambers (1972:26) points out, “Studies of deprived children suggest that those who do not receive the necessary stimulus in early childhood may never be able to compensate.” This is particularly worrying in the Ethiopia context where over half the population is said to live below the poverty line of a dollar a day and 100,000 children are living on the streets. Moreover, Ethiopia has the highest growth of stunted growth of children in the world.

Chambers (1972:28) points out that from the day a child is born, the environment he grows up in contributes to his perception and attitude to reading. There is no sharp schism between a child’s infancy or early childhood and the time he enters school and starts learning formally to read. If the child is raised in an acquisitionally-rich environment, in which his parents and siblings are reading and there are colourful storybooks, he is definitely at an advantage to a less privileged child. Such a context contributes to the child’s emergent literacy. But even children from less privileged backgrounds can be assisted in their early school days.

Clay (1972: 165) stresses this point and says:

perceptual and cognitive functioning change markedly between five and seven years. It is my belief that, at this important time, we begin the production of our reading failures by allowing some children to build inefficient systems of functioning, which keep them crippled in this process throughout their school careers. As older readers they are difficult to help because they are habituated in their inefficiency. In the terms of the computer age, they have been poorly programmed.

Acknowledging the difficulties, Neville and Pugh (1982:88) give us a glimmer of hope when they state:

Unless, a breakthrough occurs, how can the slow starter (and often slow pupil) ever catch up? He has not the time to do so in school and, unless he has very understanding and concerned parents, it is doubtful whether the home will be able to help much. The school must, then, provide enough easy material in school or class libraries for leisure reading so that, if interest is aroused, it is not at once stifled by stories that are too difficult.

What are the implications of these statements for a country like Ethiopia, whose children have passed through many famines and civil wars and who in the best of time live in a society that has more oracy than literacy?

Since education aims at bring about change and has to deal with the realities of the classrooms, many schools feel it to be their responsibility to provide a conducive environment in which good readers can improve even more and weaker readers can catch up with their peers. However, if irreparable damage has taken place in early childhood, it is doubtful if there can be much progress at a later age. Nevertheless, reading schemes have been implemented in an attempt to help readers. Clay (1972:165) points out:

If the problem reader is young, any “lost” behaviour which he no longer tries to apply to his reading will not be buried too far below the surface and with encouragement (that is positive reinforcement) it can be recovered. The longer the narrow, specialised responding has been practised the harder it will be to build new learning into the old system. This is a good reason why reading failure should be detected early.

However, one ought to keep in mind that a lot of this research has been conducted in the West, where the major problem is that a child has not received adequate support from the family regarding reading. In the context of Africa, however, the child might be suffering from a deluge of problems. To begin with, his mother may not have had good post-natal and ante-natal care. Next, the child might have suffered physically during delivery. Once into this world, he might have suffered from malnutrition, which could cause learning difficulties. Most likely, his parents are illiterate due to the high illiteracy rate in the country. This would leave him without role models, not to mention an acquisitionally-poor learning environment. Consequently, although we might talk about the “Optimum Reading Age” for children in general, we ought to keep in mind that though it is desirable to introduce children to reading at the ages of 5 – 7 at the latest, this might not be feasible in continents such as Africa.

### 3.4.3 Reading Schemes

What it takes to have an effective reading scheme has often been discussed by teachers, practitioners and researchers. Parker and Parker (1984: 181 –182) propose a framework for reading development. They base their discussion on Brian Cambourne and reiterate seven key conditions for successful reading development. Thorpe (1988: 9-12) also gives a complete description of a successful reading scheme, except she gives six major components for a successful scheme provision, access, staffing, promotion, parental participation, and reading with friends. Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between these six components and the seven conditions discussed by Parker and Parker (1984: 181 –182).

#### 3.4.3.1 Provision

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) mentions the actual provision of supplementary readers as the first and the most obvious necessity for any reading scheme. Neville and Pugh (1982:98) point out that a large number of books at various levels of difficulty are necessary for a good scheme. The selection of the titles of the readers has to be as varied as possible, especially since reading is such a private cognitive process and each student has his/her own peculiar preferences and dislikes, so a greater of variety of books could meet the disparate tastes of readers. Harrison (1980:112) points out that the first years, when a child is beginning to gain independence in reading, is crucial because the task of matching a reader to a text is at its most delicate. This is evident in that the first taste of anything tends to leave a lasting impression in one's mind. Therefore, if the child find his/her first book too difficult or not to his/her liking then he/she may be put off from reading. On the other hand, if the child enjoys his/her first experience of reading, then he/she may become an addict for life.

Similarly, Parker and Parker (1984:181–182) refer to their first condition as “Immersion”. Here they are describing the existence of the language in the environment of the learner in the shape of books, newspapers and other materials, allowing him/her to have opportunities to read. Here again, a certain socio-economic pre-condition in which a publishing industry is well-established and infrastructure for the distribution of books is assumed to exist. As discussed in Chapter Two, a lot of these pre-conditions do not exist in Ethiopia.

#### 3.4.3.2 Access

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) calls her second major component “Access” and states that the mere existence of books is not very meaningful, unless the students are able to borrow them and read them whenever they like. Even if books are available in abundance in a school library, unless the students are able to use them, then they might as well not exist. Neville and Pugh (1982:98) warn that unless the reading material is freely accessible, a child might be deterred from reading by the slightest difficulty in actually getting a book. This warning cannot be over-emphasised, especially in developing countries where books are so hard to purchase that most books tend to be kept under lock and key, thus not keeping them only out of the way of the possible thief, but also out of the hands of the eager reader.

Parker and Parker (1984: 181 –182) set a condition they call “Responsibility”. As the word suggests, this is the condition whereby the learner is independent to select his/her own reading material. It is the process of ascertaining the learner’s right to choose the material, place and time to read. If encouraged, this condition helps the learner to develop a feeling of independence and a penchant to reading out of his own choice. In Ethiopia, the lack of a wide variety of reading materials, their prohibitive prices and the lack of libraries all work against the learners developing this characteristic.

#### 3.4.3.3 Staffing

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) uses the term “Staffing” to refer to both teachers and librarians. Unless active promotion of the materials takes place not much can be achieved.

According to Greenwood (1988:9) the failure of many class libraries can be attributed to the expectation of the teachers that students can develop reading and interpretative skills and a pleasure from reading within a vacuum, without encouragement or guidance.

Both teachers and librarians should play an active role in helping the students to choose the right books. If a student consistently selects inappropriate readers, it could put him off the reading process all together. Davies (1995:6) states that social, affective and cultural factors play a major role in influencing readers' selection of texts. He says their interaction with texts and their concepts of themselves as readers or non-readers is crucial to their reading successfully. These concepts can be determined according to comments made by the people around them, so teachers have to be sensitive when they correct students.

Greaney (1996:31) also points out that “teachers should be introduced to sound pedagogical approaches for teaching reading through long and short term inservice programs,” as teachers in developing countries may lack the fundamental teaching skills. Moreover, teachers should give students time in the classroom for silent reading and serve as reading models themselves. Teachers should also assist in the selection of readers for the students.

Nevertheless, it is not so easy to select readers. Bradman (1986:70) points out that a child might listen to tales of ghosts, and ghouls and monsters without batting an eyelid - only to have nightmares caused by a story about a child who gets harmlessly lost in the forest. The imagination of a child and an adult differ and it is at times difficult for an adult to

gauge the tastes of a child. The brighter side is that there are aspects of the readers that adults can reasonably assess. As Southgate and Roberts (1970:73) explain, a teacher choosing supplementary story books needs to bear in mind not only the vocabulary but also the subject matter and interest levels of the basic books which they are supposed to supplement. Therefore, objective factors like vocabulary and subject matter are much easier to judge.

Parker and Parker (1984: 181 –182) have a condition they call “Demonstration”. This is the existence of a reader in the environment of the learner, who can set an example by actually reading. This role model could be the child’s parents, teachers or peers. The learner has to understand that reading is a worthwhile activity to imitate. The role model basically demonstrates that reading is a real activity to do in the real world. In rural Ethiopia especially, the existence of such role models are few and far apart. Teachers tend to be the role models for the students as most of the rest of the society are not very literate. However, the lack of reading materials outside the capital city renders it very difficult for even those literate teachers to set good examples for the students. Unfortunately, many teachers are observed trying to get involved in income generating activities in their spare time and drinking alcohol, playing cards and chewing a local narcotic leaf for recreation. Good teachers and librarians are necessary for any reading scheme to be effective.

The condition of “Expectation” set by Parker and Parker (1984: 181-182) is closely related to “Demonstration” and it is the conscious or unconscious communication to the

child of what can be achieved through reading. If the role models portray that reading is an activity that can positively contribute to life, then the child is likely to pick up their attitude towards reading. On the other hand, if the child is told to sit in a corner and read quietly, while the adults are watching television, then he/she will pick up the expectation that reading is an arduous task not related to entertainment. As explained above, teachers and the society at large are not portraying a positive image of reading in general. To add to this dismal scheme, economic crisis tend to negatively affect the society's expectations to reading and learning in general. Over the last half-century the general positive expectations towards education have been changing into negative ones due to the fact that the educated are not perceived to be advancing economically. Old sayings and songs such as "Better an educated person kills you than an uneducated one" and " Young bride be proud you are marrying a teacher" have disappeared from the scene. Instead they are being replaced by new sayings such as "Owning a grocery is better than having a hundred degrees" and "If the worse comes to the worst, you can always marry a teacher!" More discouraging are sayings that actually dissuade students from reading and studying. For instance the saying, "Better to have good eyes for a day than study for a hundred," actually encourages the students to cheat on the day of the examination instead of studying for the whole semester.

#### 3.4.3.4. Promotion

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) uses the term "Promotion", which overlaps with some of the ideas of "demonstration" and "Expectation". Although good teachers and librarians are necessary for any reading scheme to be effective, the children have to get into the reading-rooms or

libraries before the parents and librarians can begin influencing them. To get the children into the reading-rooms and libraries, parents have to be aware of the existence of the reading schemes and encourage their children to go there, and students should be motivated to go there too. Therefore, parents should be informed through various means of the existence of the scheme and students should find the places to have an attractive atmosphere. To achieve both these ends, the schools should make a sustained effort to promote the reading scheme.

This component presupposes that parents are literate and would encourage their children to go to the library as much as possible. This is not so in most of Africa. Moreover, in rural areas, children are usually needed for domestic chores like fetching water or looking after the sheep.

#### 3.4.3.5. Parental Participation

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) stresses that a supportive home environment can have a decisive role on whether a child adopts the habit of reading and becomes an effective reader. One especially successful scheme had family reading groups in which whole families actually went to the reading room and spent evenings choosing, discussing and sharing books. Parental role models of how reading should be integrated into one's life are very important. A parent who makes a child sit in a corner with a book and sits on a couch and watches a video is sending clear messages of which is the more pleasurable activity. Whether programmes involving family reading groups would work in a developing

country where leisure time is scarce and adults and children are involved in income generating tasks in the evenings is doubtful.

Parker and Parker (1984: 181-182) discuss the need for “Approximation”, which is the process that allows the learner to gradually acquire greater proficiency in negotiating meaning with the text. The setting of numerous comprehension questions after the student reads a book or a text, does not allow for gradual approximation. In the normal process of reading, the student usually skips unfamiliar words and even whole passages may be vague. It is only through experience or maturation that the students’ reading strategies become refined. This is obviously enhanced if the home environment encourages the children to do as much reading as possible.

This is very important in Ethiopia, where the children might begin school after the optimum reading age has passed, and has then to make great advances in their reading skills, especially since the textbooks are demanding. Students whose parents are teachers have a distinct advantage over others. Unfortunately, most homes do not provide a supportive environment. On the contrary, many students have illiterate parents, who might even be uncomfortable if their children read too much in the house. Greaney (1996:13) describes the difficult home environment in many developing countries by saying:

Home factors that militate against the development of literacy in developing countries include illiterate parents and elders in the home, reticence about encouraging reading in the home, lack of appropriate reading material, inability of parents to purchase any form of reading materials, lack of space and light, number of household chores, child labour practices, and in some instance, communal lifestyles frown on solitary activities such as reading.

Another related condition discussed by Parker and Parker (1984: 181-182) is “Employment”. This refers to the continuous reading of books and texts rather than sporadic one-off attempts performed during the class period. A good reader does a lot of reading of his own free will. The recent “Harry Potter Mania”, which is sweeping Europe, is a good example of children feeling addicted to reading. Unfortunately, such a culture of reading takes many years to develop and is not so apparent in many African countries that still have an oral culture, where the word-of-mouth of the elders is given more respect and importance.

#### 3.4.3.6. Reading with Friends

Thorpe (1988: 9-12) explains that peer pressure tends to be an influencing factor throughout a person’s life. It tends to be especially strong during childhood and adolescence. Appearing “cool” according to peer standards tends to be a driving force, so if reading is considered to be an “in thing”, it will be much easier for students to enjoy reading. However, if reading is seen as a “girl thing”, then it will be difficult for any boy to do much reading in public, without being teased by friends. Therefore, schools should try to ensure that reading is regarded positively by the students at a school.

Parker and Parker (1984: 181-182) also set their last condition as that of “Feedback”. This does not refer to error correction, but rather a meaningful way in which the child interacts with others about materials he/she has read. It could be an adult asking him/her for an opinion or it could be the discussing of characters or events with peers. Such

feedback is necessary for the child's reading skills not to develop in a vacuum and lead to the reading process being an act of isolation. Granted, that reading can at times be an act of escapism. However, this is more of the advanced reader rather than for one just discovering the reading process and developing his/her skills. Perhaps this is the sole factor working in favour of the African child. As Africa tend to be an oral society, the child who can tell a new story from what he has read to his classmates, can receive a lot of feedback in the form of questions and comments.

#### 3.4.3.7. Others

Although the above points are quite an extensive list, each scheme is unique in itself and may have special factors that should be included to make it successful. Consequently, teachers ought to undertake research into their unique environments and constantly monitor the schemes to ensure that they are having the desired impacts.

To sum up, it is fairly obvious to everybody that a few hours spent on reading instruction is not going to provide students with adequate reading skills. Consequently, schemes in which students are actively and meaningfully involved in reading by their own free choice have to be developed. Setting up reading schemes, book clubs and the like have been done quite successfully in many developed countries. However, it is unlikely whether transplanting such schemes to African soils and expecting them to bear the same fruit is realistic. Such schemes in Africa must be closely monitored to ensure that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing; making African students members of 'the literacy club'.

Due care must be given to several aspects of the reading scheme. Especially in rural areas students might actually be living in conditions that are oblivious to the act of reading and need further support and encouragement to adopt it as a part of their life. In urban areas too, modern electronic media appear to be taking over the leisure time of students. In Europe videos and films might be competing with books for children's attention, but in Africa reading books has not been a major hobby. Therefore, the setting up of successful reading schemes are bound to demand innovative approaches for a unique setting.

#### **4. Chapter Four: Methodology**

This chapter describes in detail the aims and objectives of this study mentioned in the introduction. Moreover, it discusses the region in which the study is carried out and provides the necessary educational statistics of the region. It justifies the methodology used to conduct the research in order to make the statistical jargon clear. It goes into the selection of tests and questionnaires, as well as the methods of analysing the data. The administrative procedure is discussed and the relevant levels of significance will also be set here. Finally, it gives the delimitation of the study.

##### **4.1 Statement of the Problem**

The provision of textbooks and other teaching materials such as supplementary readers has been and still is a major obstacle in the teaching learning process in Africa. It is both the production of good textbooks and making them available to students that pose problems. In a seminar on the future of indigenous publishing held in Arusha Tanzania, one of the major recommendations reads:

The rehabilitation of education in Africa, which implies first and foremost the provision of books and the training of teachers, is the only viable strategy for development, as other countries, notably in Southeast Asia, have shown. Therefore, industries that are related to educational development, in particular book publishing and book distribution, as well as the development and stocking of libraries, deserve to be prioritised as strategic industries. As such they should be given all the resources necessary to enable them to play their important role in preparing Africa's children for a secure and dignified future. (Hamrell and Nordberg, 1997:93)

Researchers point out that, although huge resources of language for learners have been used with increasing interest and theoretical awareness, some readers are so bad that they could harm the interest of the students. Hill (1997:78) argues:

It will be clear from the above that, in my view at least, not all the 1,621 graded readers currently in print are equally good. While some approach the excellent, others are so poor as to damage the reputation of the medium and harm the interests of learners. It is essential, therefore, that teachers who are building up libraries or class sets of graded readers should read the books themselves and pay attention to the feedback they get from their students... .

It is obvious that if Ethiopian students are to be successful in their education, they will have to do much academic reading for which they need adequate reading skills. At present, there is said to be a "... growing realisation of the decline of quality of the Ethiopian education system" (Tekeste, 1996:60). The provision of supplementary readers is to be used as a means of improving reading skills in the ESDP. Therefore, it is imperative to monitor and evaluate whether or not the provision of readers will produce the required skills. Foreseeing any pitfalls that might arise due to national or local realities would enable educational planners to make the necessary adjustments ahead of time.

Therefore, to prevent a decline and hopefully improve the quality of education in Ethiopia, students will have to be able to read effectively. The provision of supplementary readers to schools was intended to improve the reading skills of the students. Nevertheless, no serious efforts are being made to check that the students are, in fact, improving in their reading abilities. Some non-government organisations are already investing considerable sums in the production and provision of supplementary readers. The provision of books is the sole aim of CODE Ethiopia. Similarly, new civil society groups, such as Writers for Ethiopian Children, are being set up in an attempt to produce

culturally appropriate reading material. Government is also bound to move along this path, as it is so committed in the ESDP.

#### **4.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This study will investigate if the provision of supplementary readers has brought about any significant improvement in the reading skills of students in government schools. Krashen in his comparative study (1993:84) strongly recommends extensive reading for students because, “they can continue to improve in their second language, without classes, without study and even without people to converse with.” If this holds true for Ethiopia, then increased efforts must be made to provide all schools with sets of supplementary readers. If not, then as one of the poorest countries in the world, Ethiopia will have to consider additional factors in education to those expounded by developed countries. Perhaps poor students spend their time out of school earning their living on the streets and do not have the time or place to sit down and study. Or perhaps the costs of replacing lost or damaged books prevent the students from actually using their books owing to fear of damaging or losing them. Because most books are comparatively expensive, the society might value oral traditions and oracy more than literacy.

Gessesse (1999:33) states:

In a country like Ethiopia where the literacy rate is very low, and where reading materials such as newspapers, books, magazines and the like are scarce; more generally in a country where there is hardly any culture of reading, the adverse impact of socio-cultural factors on the development of students’ reading ability is great.

This research will attempt to come up with three major findings:

- what the effect of the provision of readers has been on the reading skills of students in the past.
- what sort of utilisation capacity government owned primary schools in Addis Ababa have to use supplementary readers in English.
- implications for the effective utilisation of supplementary readers recommended in the Education Sector Development Program.

The hypothesis to be proved or disproved can be stated in the following manner:

Hypothesis One: The provision of supplementary readers to primary schools has produced a statistically significant improvement in the reading skills of the students.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the reading skills of the students and the provision of supplementary readers.

### **4.3 Research Methodology**

The mixed-methodology design takes a researcher away from the well-known and familiar landmarks in traditional research and consequently has raised many queries.

Creswell (1994:189) states:

Mixing methods from qualitative and quantitative traditions has contributed to discussions about their value, especially because they raise the question of the operative paradigm being used. Whether paradigms should be linked with methods had led to different schools of thinking. Mixing methods has also raised a methodological issue as to whether the other “design” components of a study should follow one paradigm approach or the other.

Nevertheless, the researcher has dared to use this unfamiliar research design because the experiential and cultural insights of the schools, teachers and students that an expatriate researcher cannot bring to such a study can only be exploited through a qualitative design. Yet, the subjectivity of getting too close to the subjects and being biased can only be minimised by a quantitative approach. Therefore, those sceptical of the mixed-methodology are requested to withhold judgement until the end of the thesis, where the merits and demerits of such a design could be justified or criticised. With this as a backdrop, the methods used are discussed.

#### 4.3.1. Instruments

The basic research instrument selected for collecting quantitative data was a standardised international reading test for general proficiency drawn up by the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) of the Institute of Applied Language Studies of the University of Edinburgh. This test is recommended as a standard measure of general proficiency in reading and is used as a placement test to decide the reading level of learners. The test is basically a cloze test where a series of twelve reading passages are arranged in order of increasing difficulty. Each passage has from ten to thirteen words deleted and the students have to read the passage and fill in the missing words. Discussing the cloze test, Urquhart and Weir (1998:157) state that the underlying process in such a task is largely bottom up and emphasises careful passive decoding and local comprehension at the microlinguistic level.

The total number of items is 141 and the duration of the test is 60 minutes. On the first page, clear instructions about the test are given. There is also an example of a passage

with five words missing and then the answers are given. A wrong answer is also explained in that the students are required to fill the blank spaces with only one word and the wrong answer is composed of two words, so although it makes sense it is wrong. The actual test is not included in the appendix for security reasons.

Both the reliability and validity of the test have been proven internationally. The only possible shortcoming could be that the test and its content may not fit into the schema of Ethiopian students, so it had to be validated in the Ethiopian setting. To ensure that this test did not have any incompatibility with the Ethiopian situation, a small pilot test was run with 12 Grade Eight students from the Sandford English Community School. The following results were scored by the students.

Table 4: Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Sandford School Students

Name	Sex	Score/141	Standard Score	Reading Level
1	M	104	59	A
2	F	95	50	B
3	F	95	50	B
4	F	92	47	B
5	M	84	40	C
6	M	83	39	C
7	F	83	39	C
8	M	80	37	C
9	M	74	32	D
10	M	73	32	D
11		60	25	D
12		63	26	D
<b>MEAN</b>		82.1666		
<b>MEDIAN</b>		83		
<b>MODE</b>		95		

Furthermore, because all the above students were in the same grade, the test was also administered to seven other students from various schools and grade levels selected by convenience sampling to ensure that the test distinguishes grade level. The students scored the following results;

**Table 5: Results of Students Involved in Test Reliability**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Score/141</b>	<b>Std Score</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>School</b>
A	F	124	84	R	10	Nazareth
B	F	101	55	A	10	Hope Ent.
C	M	39	14	F	8	Hope Ent.
D	F	102	56	A	7	Danddi Boru
E	F	25	8	G	3	Nazareth
F	F	100	54	B	11	Hiwot Berhan
G	M	93	48	B	8	Dandii Boru

As can be seen from these results, the EPER test is capable of drawing out the range of reading abilities of the students. The reading ability of the students ranged from reading unsimplified materials in the case of the grade 10 student down to reading simple sentences as in the case of the grade 3 student. The scale is capable of successfully distinguishing the reading levels of the various students. Consequently, the test was deemed as suitable to apply on Ethiopian students.

Qualitative data was gathered through questionnaires, observations and discussions. The questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was given to teachers and librarians in the target schools. Although respondent bias is said to have proven a major factor in previous studies such as ERGESE (Tekeste,1990:18-22), it was decided that this could be minimised by having

counter-checking questions and casual observation at the schools. It has twelve items designed to glean a certain piece of relevant information. The first two questions see if teachers and librarians consider the variety and quantity of readers in their respective schools adequate. The third asks their opinion about whether they think using supplementary readers assists the students in mastering English. Questions four and five ask them what percentage of their students use supplementary readers outside class and what percentage of them are good readers. Questions six to nine are designed to gather information about the library and ask about the convenience of opening hours, the existence of a conducive environment, and whether or not teachers and librarians assist the students in selecting appropriate titles. Question ten asks if the teachers incorporate supplementary readers into the regular classroom. Questions eleven and twelve see how familiar the teachers and librarians are with the supplementary readers by asking them to choose the top two and the bottom two in terms of their appropriateness for Grade Eight students.

The researcher sat in a few reading lessons to get a feel of each school. Informal visits were made to the four libraries and informal talks were held with the teachers. These were recorded by unstructured note-taking. Moreover, teachers and librarians and selected students were given some issues to discuss, to gather their general perception of the pros and cons of the teaching of reading in their schools. The students were given these questions in Amharic to make them feel at ease in a language they are familiar with (see Appendix 4).

#### 4.3.2 Administration Procedure

Two sections of approximately 60 students each were taken from Entoto Amba and Medhanealem junior secondary schools and considered as the ‘treated’ group as these schools were involved in the Primary Readers Scheme pilot project. As explained in Chapter Two, the Primary Reader Scheme involved two schools in Addis Ababa city state in the pilot project of 1996 to see if the provision of supplementary readers would benefit students. The students were made to sit the tests in May 2001 to ensure that they had benefited from as much of the instruction in Grade Eight as possible. The sections were selected at random in the case of Medhanealem, as all Grade Eight Sections were free in the morning and classes were available. In the case of Entoto Amba, however, no classes were available so the teachers agreed to give the test in the regular English period. As the English period lasts for 40 minutes and the test lasts for 60 minutes, 20 minutes were used from the students’ break-time. Therefore sections had to be chosen on their availability and the fact that their English periods fell before break-time.

From the sections at Entoto Amba, 8B and 8C were the sections chosen and given the test. On the day of the exam there was a total of 129 students in both sections. Two regular teachers invigilated the test.

As all four sections in Medhanealem had classes in the afternoon shift, two sections were selected at random and requested to come one morning to sit the test. As the students were taking the 8 grade national examination, they were more than willing to sit for the test as they saw it as an opportunity to be exposed to an English test which would further

prepare them for the exam. The construction of a new block of classes solved the problem of space and once again two regular teachers invigilated the test. However, on the day of actually administering the test at Medhanealem, the researcher was informed that volunteers had been taken from all sections of the school.

The ‘untreated’ group was taken from the other government schools, which are similar to Entoto Amba and Medhanealem junior secondary schools regarding ownership, textbooks and curriculum, students’ socio-economic background and even the availability or lack of an adjoining senior secondary school to minimise confounding factors. Both Entoto Amba and Kebena cater for students in grades 1-8, while Medhanealem and Kokebe Tsibah have an adjoining senior secondary school, where their students can continue up to grade 12.

Like Entoto Amba, two sections from Kokebe Tsibah were given their tests during regular classes. The sections were chosen because their English periods fell before break-time and could consequently borrow 20 minutes from the break. On the day of the exam there was a total of 125 students in both sections. The English Department Head teachers invigilated the test.

As at Medhanealem, the students from Kebena had to take the test outside their regular shift. However, because there were only ten classrooms, the students had to come in on a Saturday to take it. Since there were only two sections in Grade Eight, the question of

selection did not arise. The English Department Head invigilated the test. But only 78 students turned up on the day of the test.

After all the students had sat the EPER placement test and the scores were analysed, additional information was sought from selected teachers and students through interviews, classroom observations and focus group discussions.

#### 4.3.3 Scoring

The placement test comes with a complete test pack including notes for users, answer sheets, marking key and score guide. The answer sheets were marked by a research assistant using the key and were then double-checked by the researcher. The reading levels are divided into ten (see Scores Guide in Appendix 5 and letter of permission to use the EPER test in Appendix 6). The highest level consists of native-like reading proficiency where the reader can read any kind of unsimplified material. The next highest, called Level X, also consists of native-like proficiency but describes the ability to read unsimplified teenage fiction. The next seven levels are labelled from A to G consecutively. These refer to reading skills of non-natives, whereby A and B refer to very high reading skills, enabling the reader to read unsimplified teenage fiction all the way down to the first stages in a reader programme. Below G is what has been called level S in this study, and students at this level can only read starter and reading cards, as they have probably just been exposed to phonics or the alphabet. If one were to rate these reading levels with the grades in the Ethiopian Education system, then the following could probably be expected:

Table 6: **EPER Level Approximate Equivalency with Ethiopian Grades**

<b>EPER Level</b>	<b>Approximate Equivalency with Ethiopian Grades</b>
Level S / Starter Cards and Reading Cards	Kindergarten and Grade 1
Level G	Grade 2
Level F	Grades 3 & 4
Level E	Grades 5 & 6
Level D	Grades 7 & 8
Level C	Grade 9
Level B	Grade 10
Level A	Grades 11 & 12
Level X	Freshman
Level R	Second Year and above

As discussed in Chapter Three, grade eight students may have reading abilities that would normally range between grades 4 – 12 in their reading ability and could be expected to fall within the corresponding levels of A to F.

After the tests were marked, the results of both groups were scrutinised, using measures of central tendency, the EPER score guide and a non-directional t-test of differences. There was a slight difference in the overall number of students in the treated group and the ‘untreated’ group. This was disregarded, as Brown (1988:124) states that only a marked difference in sample sizes of 3:1 or more will affect the results.

#### 4.3.4 Analysis Tools

Regarding the descriptive statistics, measures of central tendency used were the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. For the inferential statistics Best and Kahn (1999:327) specifically mention the t-test and ANOVA as robust tests that are usually appropriate, even if a few assumptions of parametric test are violated. If there is a difference between the means of the treated and untreated group, its significance will be assessed using a t-test. Theoretically, the provision of the readers could have affected the students in two ways. They could have either provided motivation and opportunity for the students to read more and thus improve their reading skills, or their difficulty could have caused such a disagreeable experience that the students gave up on reading and their reading skills actually deteriorated. To accommodate for both these possible effects on the students' reading skills, the type of t-test used is a non-directional or two-tailed test of significance. This plots out the students' scores on a curve and has a 2.5% rejection area on either end of the curve to allow both for an improvement in or a deterioration of the students' reading skills. The t-test involves the calculation of the difference by comparing the actual differences in the means with the possible differences that could have occurred through unrelated factors. This is known as the ratio between the experimental variance and the error variance.

##### 4.3.4.1 Level of Significance

There were more than 120 students, so the degree of freedom was infinity. Therefore, if one were to apply the rigorous measure of 0.01 the critical values of student's distribution

(t) would be significant at 2.576. However, the less rigorous measure of 0.05 is usually applied in social sciences, in which case t would be significant at 1.960.

#### 4.3.4.2. Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaires were analysed in a more qualitative manner. The researcher held several discussions with the teachers and librarians and also made notes on his various visits to the school about general conditions. The feedback from the librarians and the teachers was noted. Then their responses in the questionnaires were triangulated both with the students' results and with observations and notes made by the researcher. The fact that the researcher speaks the same language and comes from the same culture as the subjects, as well as having spent a decade in teacher training which included supervision of teaching at this level, gives him useful insights that would not be available to external researchers.

### **4.4 Delimitations**

This study is limited to four of the sixty-three government schools that go up to Grade Eight. In fact, it covers 100% of the schools involved in the pilot project of the Primary Reader Scheme in Addis Ababa, as only Entoto Amba and Medhanealem were involved, while the remaining three schools were from Oromia region. Consequently, only two similar schools could be involved in the control group. Nevertheless, as there are many students in each school, the number of students involved in the study was high. The total number of students involved was 454 with 251 of these belonging to the treated group and

208 to the control group. Numerically, this was approximately 50% of all students in the schools involved in the Primary reader scheme.

In terms of reading, it focussed on the microlinguistic level of syntactic and lexical knowledge and proficiency. It basically ignored important aspects like background knowledge, inference skills and enjoyment derived from extensive reading, due to the unsatisfactory instruments for measuring and describing these aspects.

To conclude, Chapter Four has discussed the methodology and given an in-depth analysis of which methods have been chosen and why they have chosen. It also justifies the choice of the EPER test and has proved that it is both reliable and valid in the Ethiopian context. Chapter Five continues with the results of the study.

## **5. Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis**

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

### **5.1 Reading Levels**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5.2 Statistical Description of Results

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

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

MEAN	10.480159
MEDIAN	8
MODE	3
VARIANCE	85.035321
STANDARD DEVIATION	9.2214598

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

MEAN	15.10294118
MEDIAN	12
MODE	9
VARIANCE	109.6511678
STANDARD DEVIATION	10.47144535

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

#### 5.2.1 The Mean

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

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

### 5.2.2 The Median

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

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

### 5.2.3. The Mode

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

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

#### 5.2.4 The Variance

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

#### 5.2.5 The Standard Deviation

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

### **5.3 Inferential Analysis of the Results (t-tests)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **5.4 Staff Questionnaire and Observations**

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

##### **5.4.1 The Librarians**

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

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

#### 5.4.1.1 Bio-data

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

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

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

#### 5.4.1.2 Variety of Readers

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

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

#### 5.4.1.3 Quantity of Readers

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

#### 5.4.1.4 Reading Relevance to Language Mastery

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

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

#### 5.4.1.5 Reading for Pleasure

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

#### 5.4.1.6 English Reading Proficiency

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

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

#### 5.4.1.7 Librarian Assistance

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

#### 5.4.1.8 Teacher Assistance

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

#### 5.4.1.9 Supplementing the Textbook

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

#### 5.4.1.10 Appropriacy of Titles

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

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

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

#### 5.4.1.11 Library Opening Hours

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

#### 5.4.1.12 Relevant Materials

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

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

#### 5.4.1.13 Number of Tables and Chairs

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

#### 5.4.1.14 Size and Ambience

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

approximately 72m<sup>2</sup>, 64m<sup>2</sup>, 40m<sup>2</sup> and 12m<sup>2</sup>. Ironically again, the library with a floor space of 12m<sup>2</sup> was rated as “Good”. Once again the size is incomparable with the number of students the libraries are supposed to serve.

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

#### 5.4.1.15 Access to Books and Borrowing Facilities

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

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

#### 5.4.1.16 Promotion of Books

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

#### 5.4.1.17 Situation and Access to Library

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

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

#### 5.4.1.18 Other Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **5.4.2 The Teachers**

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

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

#### 5.4.2.1 Bio-data

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

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

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

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

#### 5.4.2.2 Variety of Readers

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

#### 5.4.2.3 Quantity of Readers

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

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

#### 5.4.2.4 Reading Relevance to Language Mastery

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

#### 5.4.2.5 Reading for Pleasure

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

#### 5.4.2.6 English Reading Proficiency

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

#### 5.4.2.7 Librarian Assistance

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

#### 5.4.2.8 Teacher Assistance

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

#### 5.4.2.9 Supplementing the Textbook

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

#### 5.4.2.10 Most and Least Appropriate Titles

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

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

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

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

#### 5.4.2.11 Opening Hours

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

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

#### 5.4.2.12 Relevant Materials

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

#### 5.4.2.13 Number of Tables and Chairs

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

#### 5.4.2.14 Size and Ambience

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

#### 5.4.2.15 Access to Books and Borrowing Facilities

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

#### 5.4.2.16 Promotion of Books

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

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

#### 5.4.2.17 Situation and Access to Library

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

#### 5.4.2.18 Other Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.1 A Systems Approach

Heneveld and Craig (1996: xvi) say:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.2 Empowering Teachers

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

...empowerment involves developing and liberating the potentials of every individual to be fully aware of the major issues at stake in one's own life and in the wider society and to mobilise individual potentials for service to the collective good of society. (1999:183)

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

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

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

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

### 5.5.3 Staff Development

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.4 A Meritology

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.5. Increasing Human Resource Capacity Through Volunteerism

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5.6 Dealing with Overcrowding

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **5.6 Implications for the ESDP**

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

### **5.6.1 Quality Assurance**

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

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

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

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

promotion and simply daydream instead of reading or doing research. Or there could simply be a need for the passage of time for people to be able to shake off the passive culture inherited from the socialist era and become active participants in the educational arena.

### 5.6.2 Cultural Conflict

At present, it would appear that many of the stakeholders in Ethiopian education are too passive. Such a culture of passivity is not restricted to Ethiopia, as can be seen from a review of the Romanian education system:

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

Such a description of the Romanian educational situation could just as easily have been written for Ethiopia. People are very discontented with the present approach to having multiple media of instruction and several other aspects of the ESDP, yet they have not developed the culture of participating in the decision-making process. To be fair, the MoE also has not yet developed the organisational habits of listening to the public, as was demonstrated in 2001 by the request of university students to have the military university guards replaced by civilian guards, which ended in civil disturbances. In July 2002, the MoE ran a three-week capacity building course, in which teachers nation-wide were

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

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

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

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

### 5.6.3 Decentralisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.6.4. Capacity Building

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

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

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

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

#### 5.6.5 Better Communications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **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.

Regarding 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 to 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 to 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 choose 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 interest 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 be 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 Ababa 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 HIPC's 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:

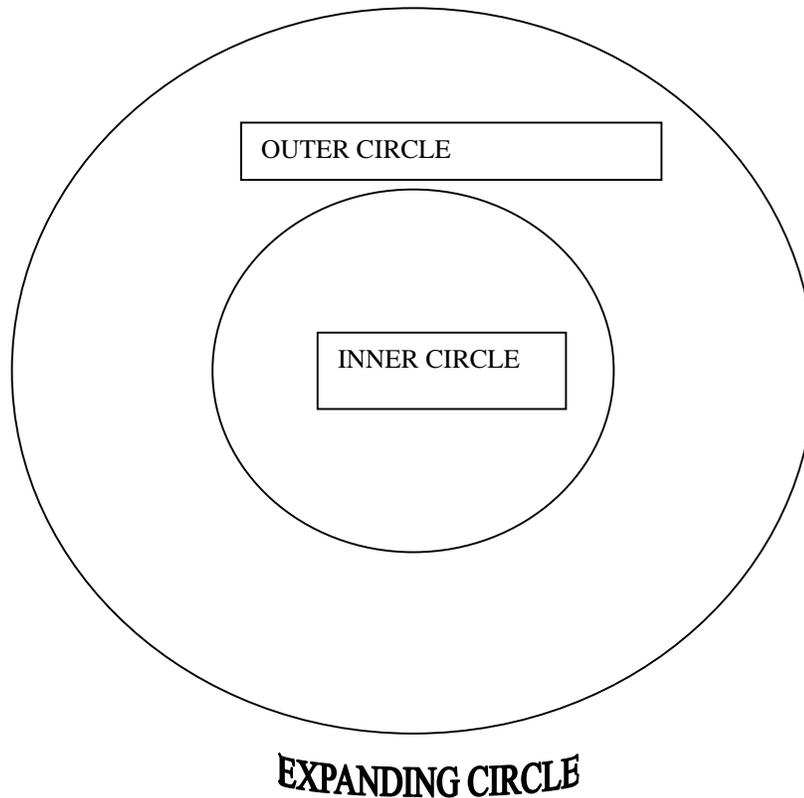
The long-term goal for education should be nothing less than to ensure that all people everywhere have the opportunity to (1) complete a primary and lower secondary education of at least adequate quality, (2) acquire essential skills to survive and thrive in a globalizing economy, (3) benefit from the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

**Appendix 1: Kachru's Concentric Circles of World Englishes (Kachru 1985)**

1. Inner Circle = English is a primary language and the country is norm-providing. E.g. Australia, United Kingdom and USA
2. Outer Circle = English is one of the two or more official languages and has an extended functional range of usage in the society, which tends to be norm-developing. E.g. India, Kenya and Zambia.
3. Expanding Circle = English is an international language only and is norm-dependant. E.g. China, Israel and USSR.



**Appendix 2: Titles Selected As Top Choices**

**Asella**

1. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*
2. *Aladdin and his Magic Lamp*
3. *The World Around Us*
4. *Animal Tales*
5. *Animal Friends*
6. *Dangerous Game*
7. *King Solomon's Mines*
8. *The Terrorists Attack*
9. *Exploring our World*
10. *Things Fall Apart*
11. *Island of the Volcanoes*
12. *Inspector Holt: The Bridge*
13. *Tales from the Arabian Nights*
14. *On the Road*
15. *The Bird and the Bread*
16. *Girl Against Jungle*

**Bishoftu**

1. *The Magic Garden*
2. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
3. *Professor Boffin's Umbrella*
4. *The Queen of Death*
5. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*
6. *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*
7. *The World Around Us*
8. *King Solomon's Mines*
9. *The Stranger*
10. *Tales from the Arabian Nights*

11. *Worth a Fortune*

12. *People and Things*

**Denkaka**

1. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*
2. *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*
3. *The Prisoners*
4. *At the Zoo*
5. *Animal Friends*
6. *Lost and Found*
7. *The Stranger*
8. *The Man in the Big Car*
9. *The Magic Barber*
10. *There was an Old Woman*
11. *Alissa*
12. *Rich Man - Poor Man*
13. *Going it Alone*
14. *Four Short Stories*
15. *Car Thieves*
16. *On the Road*
17. *The Bird and the Bread*
18. *The Fox and the Stork/The Bird and the Glass*
19. *The Boy and the Donkey*
20. *Four Clever People*

**Entoto Amba**

1. *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*
2. *Treasure Island*

3. *Thirty Nine Steps*

4. *Old Macdonald's Farm*

5 *King Solomon's Mines*

**Medhanealem**

1. *Shane Jack*

2. *Things Fall Apart*

3. *Seven Stories*

4. *Down the River*

5. *Meet Me In Istanbul*

6. *Inspector Holt*

7. *The Stranger*

8. *Alissa*

9. *On the Road*

10. *Adventure Story*

11. *Tales from Arabian Nights*

12. *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*

13. *The Adventure of Lila*

14. *Adventures of Sinbad*

15. *Treasure Island*

16. *David Copperfield*

17. *Silas Mariner*

18. *Kidnapped*

19. *Animal Farm*

20. *Dangerous Journey*

21. *King Solomon's Mines*

22. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*

23. *Girl against Jungle*

24. *Shane*

25. *In the Beginning*

26. *Chinese Necklace*

27. *Operation Mastermind*

28. *Old Mali and the Boy*

29. *Queen of Death*

30. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

**Appendix 3: Questionnaire on the Effect of Primary English Readers on Reading Skills in Ethiopia**

Dear Colleagues,

I am doing some research on the Effect of Primary English Readers on Reading Skills in Ethiopia and I would greatly appreciate your frank responses in filling out this questionnaire.

Thank you,

Michael

---

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Qualification \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience \_\_\_\_\_

1. How do you regard the variety of English supplementary readers in the school?  
a) Extremely varied                      b) Sufficiently varied                      c) Insufficiently varied  
d) Not varied                              e) Insufficient opportunity to observe
  
2. How do you regard the quantity of the existing supplementary readers in the school?  
a) Extremely sufficient                      b) Sufficient                      c) Insufficient  
d) Only single copies                      e) Insufficient opportunity to observe
  
3. To what extent do you feel supplementary reading contributes to the students mastery of English?  
a) Extremely                      b) A lot                      c) As much as other language activities  
d) Not much                      e) ) Insufficient opportunity to observe
  
4. What percentage of Grade Eight students read the readers for pleasure outside class?  
a) 0 – 35 %      b) 36 – 70%                      c) 71 – 100%      d) Insufficient opportunity to observe

5. What percentage of Grade Eight students are able to read well in English?  
a) 0 – 35 %    b) 36 – 70%                    c) 71 – 100%    d) Insufficient opportunity to observe
6. Do the librarians help the children in selecting appropriate readers?  
a) Always      b) Often      c) Sometimes  
d) Never      e) Insufficient opportunity to observe
7. Do the teachers help the children in selecting appropriate readers?  
a) Always      b) Often      c) Sometimes  
d) Never      e) Insufficient opportunity to observe
8. How often do English teachers use supplementary readers to supplement the textbook?  
a) 0 – 35 %    b) 36 – 70%                    c) 71 – 100%    d) Insufficient opportunity to observe
9. Which two titles do you regards as most appropriate for Grade Eight students?  
a) \_\_\_\_\_  
b) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which two titles do you regard as least appropriate for Grade Eight students?  
a) \_\_\_\_\_  
b) \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix 4: Discussion Questions on the Effect of  
Primary English Readers on Reading Skills in Ethiopia**

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, I am doing some research on the Effect of Primary English Readers on Reading Skills in Ethiopia. I would greatly appreciate your discussing the following issues in groups and giving me your responses in writing.

Thank you,

Michael

---

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the factors that hinder students from using the supplementary English readers in the library?
2. What sort of background encourages students to develop an interest in reading?
3. What sorts of factors discourage teachers from using Supplementary English readers?
4. How do students and their friends perceive supplementary reading?
5. What other issues facilitates or hinders the use of supplementary readers?

## **Appendix 5: EPER Notes for Users and Score Guide**

E.P.E.R. EDINBURGH PROJECT ON EXTENSIVE READING

### **PLACEMENT TEST A**

#### **Notes for Users**

##### **1. Range of levels**

Test A is one of 5 parallel tests which have been designed to measure a complete range of English language proficiency.

##### **2. Use of the test**

EPER offers these 5 tests primarily as Placement Tests within an extensive reading programme organised according to EPER reading levels. Scores are matched against the EPER levels and test performance indicates a student's entry level into the reading programme.

These tests should not be used to measure progress within a reading programme. This is because a test of general proficiency will not always reflect specific progress in reading skills.

These tests are strongly recommended, however, as tests of general proficiency. Different versions, administered at suitable intervals throughout a course, will give an accurate picture of the progress made by each student.

##### **3. Marking the test**

It is very important to accept only the answers on the Marking Key, (even if you can think of other correct answers), otherwise you will get an inaccurate reading of the students' levels, since the test validation applies only when this Marking Key is used. When marking, the easiest way is to place the Marking Key on top of the student's Answer Sheet. First, mark the left hand column of answers with the Marking Key to the right of that column, then mark the right hand column of answers with the Marking Key to the left of that column.

##### **4. Using the Scores Guide**

The Scores Guide at the back of this User's Guide indicates which EPER reading level is most suitable for a student.

##### **5. Using the Standard Scores**

With this Guide, you have received Test A. However, there are four other tests also available. The scores for each of the five different tests (A, B, C, D and E) are calculated on to a common scale. This is called the Standard Score and equivalent Standard Scores are given in the Scores Guide for each possible score on test A. This means that, should you wish to use two different tests (for example you might use Test A at the beginning of the year and Test B at the end of the year), you can make a direct comparison between the results simply by using the Standard Scores.

## **6. Confidentiality and Security**

This test is strictly confidential. Under no circumstances should students be told the answers to the questions. If the answers become known to students, then the test cannot be used again.

To ensure the security of the test, these steps should be taken:

- a) Keep the Question Papers and the Marking Keys under lock and key when they are not being used.
- b) Number all the Question Papers, Marking Keys and Answer Sheets and use these numbers when issuing papers to teachers and when checking them on return.
- c) Collect all the Question Papers from the students, making sure that the Same number are returned as were handed out
- d) Collect all the Answer Sheets from the students.
- e) Do NOT return the Answer Sheets to the students after they have been marked and do NOT discuss the answers with the students. When the marks have been safely recorded, BURN the Answer Sheets.

PLACEMENT TEST A  
SCORES GUIDE

Score on Test A	Standard Score
-----------------	----------------

137	100
136	99
135	98
134	97
133	95
132	94
131	92
130	91
129	90
128	89
127	88
126	86
125	85
124	84
123	82
122	81
121	80
120	78
119	77
118	76
117	74
116	73
115	72
114	70

Reading  
Unsimplified  
Materials

113	69
112	68
111	67
110	65

Adults  
Level X

Ages 12-15  
Unsimplified  
Teenage Fiction

109	64
108	63
107	62
106	61
105	60
104	59
103	57
102	56
101	55

Adults  
Level  
A

Ages 12-15  
Unsimplified  
Teenage Fiction

100	54
99	53
98	52
97	51
96	50
95	50
94	49
93	48
92	47
91	46
90	45

Adults  
Level  
B

Ages 12-15  
Unsimplified  
Teenage Fiction

Score on Test A	Standard Score
-----------------	----------------

89	44
88	43
87	43
86	42
85	41
84	40
83	39
82	39
81	38
80	37
79	37
78	36
77	35

Level C

76	34
75	34
74	33
73	32
72	32
71	31
70	31
69	30
68	29
67	29
66	28
65	28
64	27
63	26
62	26
61	25
60	25

Level D

59	24
58	24
57	23
56	23
55	22
54	22
53	21
52	20
51	20
50	19
49	19
48	18
47	18
46	18

Level E

Score on Test A	Standard Score
-----------------	----------------

45	17
44	17
43	16
42	16
41	15
40	15
39	14
38	14
37	13
36	13
35	13
34	12
33	12

Level F

32	11
31	11
30	10
29	10
28	10
27	9
26	9
25	8
24	8
23	8

Level G

22	7
21	7
20	6
19	6
18	6
17	6
16	5
15	5
14	5
13	4
12	4
11	4
10	3
9	3
8	3
7	2
6	2
5	2
4	1
3	1
2	1
1	0
0	0

Starter Cards  
and Reading  
Cards

**Appendix 6: EPER Letter of Permission to Use Placement Test**



INSTITUTE *for* APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

The University of Edinburgh  
21 Hill Place  
Edinburgh EH8 9DP  
Scotland

Telephone 031 650 6200  
Fax 031 667 5927

25 June, 2001

Michael Daniel Ambatchew  
Box 1969  
Addis Ababa  
ETHIOPIA

EPER PLACEMENT/PROGRESS TEST

This is to certify that Michael Ambatchew has permission to copy this test and use it to obtain data relating to his Ph.D study into the effect of extensive reading on students' reading skills.

David R Hill  
Project Director  
Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading



INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

DIRECTOR Mr E H Glendinning

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS Mr A P R Howatt

**Appendix 7: Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Treated Group**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Score/141</b>	<b>Standard Score</b>	<b>Reading Level</b>
Abdurazak Negash	M	6	2	S
Abeba Mezengia	F	5	2	S
Abebaw Tekle-Markos	M	14	5	S
Abebayhu Tafesse	M	4	1	S
Abebe Bejiga	M	9	3	S
Abebe Negash	M	5	2	S
Aberash Akalu	F	4	1	S
Abiot Asamenew	M	7	2	S
Abraham Admasu	M	8	3	S
Abraham Alemayehu	M	1	0	S
Abyiot Adane	M	5	2	S
Adane Wondimu	M	0	0	S
Adanech Bekele	F	2	1	S
Aklilu Teklu	M	8	3	S
Albem Demsa	M	6	2	S
Alem Mulushewa	M	9	3	S
Alemitu Asres	F	18	6	S
Alemnesh Moges	F	10	3	S
Alemtsehay Negussie	F	7	2	S
Amare Neka	M	11	4	S
Amredin Kemal	M	20	6	S
Antene Getachew	M	7	2	S
Anteneh Mekonen	M	20	6	S
Asanafe Molla	M	19	6	S
Asegedech Gattu	F	5	2	S
Asfaw Alemu	M	3	1	S
Askale Shewa	F	7	2	S
Asnake Beferdu	M	4	1	S
Asnaku Kebede	F	5	2	S
Asres Deme	M	5	2	S
Assefa Gasolo	M	5	2	S
Atsede Terefe	F	5	2	S
Ayelech Daba	F	14	5	S
Aynalem Ankala	F	11	4	S
Aynalem Debela	F	0	0	S
Azalech Eshetu	F	8	3	S
Banehalem Mitiku	F	3	1	S
Bate GebreMedhin	M	7	2	S
Bayush Mekuria	F	6	2	S
Bedelu Dessa	M	3	1	S
Behailu Zewde	M	2	1	S

Bekelech Kefelegn	F	11	4	S
Bereket Abebe	M	7	2	S
Bereket Tufis	M	2	1	S
Berhana Melo	F	10	3	S
Berihun Tesfaye	M	8	3	S
Bethelehem Belay	F	9	3	S
Bethelehem Berhanu	F	6	2	S
Bethelehem Getachew	F	5	2	S
Bethlehem Guta	F	31	11	G
Bethlehem Belayneh	F	59	24	E
Bethlehem Bogale	F	7	2	S
Bethlehem Degfu	F	17	6	S
Bezaneish Gblae	F	5	2	S
Biniyam Abera	M	22	7	S
Biniyam Negussie	M	36	13	F
Birtukan X	F	2	1	S
Bizu Kuma	M	14	5	S
Bizuayehu Habte	M	1	0	S
Bruktawit Anbessie	F	13	4	S
Dagmawit Alemayehu	F	11	4	S
Daniel Getachew	M	3	1	S
Daniel Haile	M	3	1	S
Daniel Jote	M	7	2	S
Daniel Mekonen	M	4	1	S
Daniel Sengo	M	6	2	S
Daremyelesh Lebarge	F	13	4	S
Dawit Debashu	M	8	3	S
Dawit Lemma	M	9	3	S
Dejene Gemechu	M	12	4	S
Derege Girma	M	3	1	S
Derege Kebede	M	7	2	S
Deressa Wodajo	M	39	14	F
Deribework Asrate	F	18	6	S
Efrem Amsalu	M	6	2	S
Elleni Fisseha	F	15	5	S
Elsa Almey	F	3	1	S
Elsabet Derege	F	5	2	S
Elsabet Shume	F	16	5	S
Emebet Wondimu	F	7	2	S
Endalkachew Tekle	M	9	3	S
Endalu Adadu	M	4	1	S
Endweich Werke	F	3	1	S
Ephrem Assefa	M	31	11	G
Eshetu Abebe	M	22	7	S
Eskale Ejigu	M	4	1	S
Eskedar Abraham	F	12	4	S

Etaferahu Birru	F	13	4	S
Etalem Abebe	F	5	2	S
Etemolye Menda	F	3	1	S
Eweal Getaneh	M	5	2	S
Eyob Sebsibe	M	28	10	G
Fanos Bogale	F	4	1	S
Fasika Endale	F	10	3	S
Fekadu Bedada	M	9	3	S
Fekadu Habte	M	5	2	S
Fekeret Demea	F	7	2	S
Felegush Siemeneh	F	6	2	S
Fikeremariam	F	8	3	S
Yitbarek				
Fikete Tegegne	F	9	3	S
Fikru Tesfaye	M	10	3	S
Frehiwot Tesfaye	F	7	2	S
Gemechis Bulti	M	16	5	S
Geremew Seraw	M	7	2	S
Getahun Tassew	M	1	0	S
Getinet Alemayehu	M	8	3	S
Getu Taye	M	5	2	S
Gezahegn Fekadu	M	17	6	S
Girma Tola	M	1	0	S
Gizenesh Girma	F	1	0	S
Habtamu Girmu	M	3	1	S
Hadas Welay	F	12	4	S
Haileyesus Tadesse	M	2	1	S
Haimanot Mideksa	F	9	3	S
Haimanot Sewaso	F	3	1	S
Hana Hailu	F	0	0	S
Hanna Mekonnen	F	25	8	G
Hanna Melese	F	7	2	S
Hanna Tefekefegne	F	18	6	S
Henok Hailu	M	12	4	S
Henok Mekonen	M	6	2	S
Henok WoldeMichael	M	7	2	S
Hewan Girma	F	1	0	S
Hirut Mammo	F	12	4	S
Hirut Tesfaye	F	7	2	S
Hiwot Ayalew	F	48	18	E
Hiwot Tadesse	F	23	8	G
Hiwot Tekle	F	10	3	S
Homa Mulisa	M	30	10	G
Jemanesh Melkasa	F	19	6	S
Jemila Siyar	F	2	1	S
Jerusalem Yitayew	F	9	3	S

Kasech Reta	F	13	4	S
Kassahun Mekonen	M	6	2	S
Kassahun Shewa	M	9	3	S
Kebede Gesges	M	7	2	S
Kedir Kassahun	M	28	10	G
Ketema Fekadu	M	9	3	S
Kidist Gemechu	F	3	1	S
Kidus Esayas	M	31	11	G
Lidya Amaha	F	14	5	S
Mahilet Tesfaye	F	3	1	S
Mahlet Yohannes	F	5	2	S
Marta Eshetu	F	3	1	S
Marta Gebre-Meskel	F	7	2	S
Marta Legesse	F	6	2	S
Marta Lulseged	F	3	1	S
Matewos Girma	M	14	5	S
Mehammed Adem	M	13	4	S
Mehiret Melkamu	F	11	4	S
Menbere Shiferaw	F	3	1	S
Mentesinot Wendimu	M	8	3	S
Menwar Ahmed	F	2	1	S
Merima Mohammed	F	8	3	S
Mesay Yetimgeta	M	18	6	S
Mesele Melaku	M	30	10	E
Meseret Hailemariam	F	5	2	S
Meseret Nigus	F	14	5	S
Meskerem Abebe	F	18	6	S
Meskerem Mitiku	F	3	1	S
Messeret Shiferaw	F	4	1	S
Micele Getachew	M	10	3	S
Michael Wolde	M	24	8	G
Mihirtab Zewdu	M	34	12	F
Million Demessie	M	2	1	S
Minweyelet Berhanu	M	3	1	S
Misrak Aklilu	F	8	3	S
Mohammed Seid	M	3	1	S
Muluken Manaye	M	6	2	S
Natnael Andarge	M	14	5	S
Nebiyu Fanta	M	31	11	G
Nuria Kassahun	F	5	2	S
Nuru Hussein	M	28	10	G
Ousman Nuru	M	17	6	S
Rahima Ibrahim	F	20	6	S
Robel Abera	M	23	8	G
Saba Shiferaw	F	2	1	S
Samson Aweke	M	0	0	S

Samuel Haile-Yesus	M	8	3	S
Seble Gemechu	F	6	2	S
Seble Taye	F	17	6	S
Seblewerk Amsalu	F	4	1	S
Seid Bedru	M	36	13	F
Selam Goshu	F	9	3	S
Selamawit Geresu	F	5	2	S
Selamawit Mossissa	F	22	7	S
Selamdengel Demsay	F	1	0	S
Selamnesh Sulu	F	4	1	S
Semera Muzmil	F	28	10	G
Semir Nesru	M	8	3	S
Semira Asfaw	F	7	2	S
Semira Shkur	F	8	3	S
Senait Hadgu	F	46	18	E
Senait Lutle	F	5	2	S
Serkalem Aweke	F	4	1	S
Shegitu Bulcha	F	0	0	S
Sinidu Abebe	F	18	6	S
Sintayehu Felege	M	14	5	S
Sintayehu Kebede	M	17	6	S
Sintayehu Tesfaye	M	6	2	S
Sirgut Yohannes	F	12	4	S
Sisay Debele	M	7	2	S
Sisay Sahle	M	17	6	S
Solomon Hailu	M	11	4	S
Tagel Mada	M	31	11	G
Tariku Benti	M	26	9	G
Tariku Kibret	M	8	3	S
Tedla Yeshitila	M	16	5	S
Tekalegn Tola	M	16	5	S
Tekalign Bezuneh	M	12	5	S
Temesgen Guade	M	22	7	S
Tesfa Kebede	M	10	3	S
Tewdady Abebe	M	0	0	S
Tewdros Getitnet	M	21	7	S
Tewdros Kassahun	M	10	3	S
Tewodros Shimelis	M	5	2	S
Tewodros	M	13	4	S
Wondimagenge				
Tigist Birru	F	4	4	S
Tigist Boke	F	11	4	S
Tigist Gashaw	F	11	4	S
Tigist Tesfaye	F	18	6	S
Tigist Tsegaw	F	1	0	S
Tilahun Damtew	M	11	4	S

Tsedale Bante	F	8	3	S
Tsedale Befekadu	F	3	1	S
Tsega Mulugeta	M	8	3	S
Tsige Bizuneh	F	6	2	S
Tsige GebreMedhin	F	4	1	S
Tsion Berga	F	15	5	S
Wakgira Lemma	M	5	1	S
Werknesh Teshome	F	4	1	S
Weyneshet Abebe	F	3	1	S
Weyneshet Ada	F	11	4	S
Weynishet Mulugeta	F	4	1	S
Woldu Mekonnen	M	1	0	S
Worku Agama	M	8	3	S
Yaltayework Deneke	F	11	4	S
Yenemelk Amare	M	19	6	S
Yenenesh Wakjira	F	3	1	S
Yergalem Mesfin	M	3	1	S
Yeshi Beyene	F	3	1	S
Yeterulek Aerga	F	3	2	S
Yigrem Zewdu	M	30	10	G
Yohannes Negussie	M	10	3	S
Yohannsha Takele	M	15	5	S
Yonas Bekele	M	6	2	S
Yosef GebreEgziabher	M	4	1	S
Zebiba Shikur	F	35	22	E
Zelalem Fenta	M	8	3	S
Zelalem Molla	M	13	4	S
Zemzem Mohammed	F	7	2	S
Zemzem Shefa	F	4	1	S
<b>MEAN</b>		<b>10.480159</b>		
<b>MEDIAN</b>		<b>8</b>		
<b>MODE</b>		<b>3</b>		
<b>VARIANCE</b>		<b>85.035321</b>		
<b>STANDARD DEVIATION</b>		<b>9.2214598</b>		

T-Tests 1.194E-06 1.12642E-05

**Appendix 8 : Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Untreated Students**

**Scores on the EPER Placement Test by Untreated Students**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Score/141</b>	<b>Standard Score</b>	<b>Reading Level</b>
Abeba Debebe	F	7	2	S
Abebaw Gizaw	M	9	3	S
Aberash Moges	F	14	5	S
Abey Getachew	M	10	3	S
Abi Gezahegn	M	6	2	S
Abraham Amha	M	24	8	G
Abraham Teferi	M	41	15	F
Adane Mammo	M	9	3	S
Adane Worku	M	13	4	S
Addis Agegnehu	M	11	4	S
Addisalem Assefa	F	16	5	S
AddisAlem Layke	F	12	4	S
Addisu Tena	F	25	8	G
Aedom Abera	F	16	5	S
Agardech Bashaw	F	7	2	S
Alem Asne	F	6	2	S
Alemayehu Amare	M	7	2	S
Alemtaye Tena	F	13	4	S
Alemu Mesfin	M	8	3	S
Almaz Getachew	F	8	3	S
Amaha Asmelash	M	15	5	S
Aman Muzeyen	M	36	13	F
Amsal Glana	F	6	2	S
Andualem Masresha	M	32	11	G
Ashanafi Getachew	M	12	4	S
Asresashe Teshome	F	13	4	S
Ayelech Tegegne	F	14	5	S
Azmera Takelezere	F	14	5	S
Bashehe Endale	M	16	5	S
Beiza Tesfaye	F	27	9	G
Belay Mulat	M	36	13	F
Belaynesh Ketema	F	21	7	S
Berhane Shewandagne	M	13	4	S
Berhanu Ayele	M	22	7	S
Beruk Fisseha	M	7	2	S
Besrat Mengistu	M	13	4	S
Bethlehem Kebede	F	21	7	S
Bethlehem Assefa	F	9	3	S
Bethlehem Fekadu	F	8	3	S

Bethlehem	F	16	5	S
GebreEgziabher				
Bethlehem Gidey	F	9	3	S
Bethlehem Teffera	F	9	3	S
Bethlehem X	F	16	5	S
Beza Legesse	F	9	3	S
Bezawit Seyoum	F	12	4	S
Biniyam Lakew	M	14	5	S
Biniyam Tekalign	M	12	4	S
Biniyam Tilahun	M	15	5	S
Biruk Tadesse	M	31	11	G
Bisevio Tefferi	F	45	17	F
Dagmawe Tsegaye	M	3	1	S
Dagmawi Teshome	M	31	11	G
Dagme Tebebu	M	20	6	S
Dagnachew Geremew	M	13	4	S
Daniel Tadesse	M	4	1	S
Daniel Tsegaye	M	6	2	S
Dejene Gemeda	M	10	3	S
Delil Hassen	M	12	4	S
Derege Hailu	M	26	9	G
Edget Beyene	M	26	9	G
Egegu Tizazu	M	5	2	S
Elsabet Debebe	F	15	5	S
Emebet X	F	2	1	S
Enane Muheye	F	2	1	S
Ermias Goshu	M	20	6	S
Esgnaye Tiruneh	F	7	2	S
Etagu GebreYohannes	F	18	6	S
Etenesh GebreMaraim	F	11	4	S
Eyerusalem Solomon	F	20	6	S
Fasika Ashebere	F	5	2	S
Faven Nigatu	F	16	5	S
Firehiwot Aregaw	F	7	2	S
Firehiwot Solomon	F	33	12	S
Fireweini Girum	F	7	2	S
Fisseha X	M	4	1	S
Fitsume X	F	4	1	S
Genet Ayele	F	9	3	S
Genet Bekele	F	9	3	S
Genet Hassun	F	38	14	F
Getachew	M	11	4	S
GebreMichael				
Girum Zegeye	M	3	1	S
Gizaw Berhanu	M	17	6	S
HaileMichael Gebru	M	40	15	F

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Hailu Mekonnen	M	15	5	S
Hailu Urgaecha	M	14	5	S
Haimanot Temesgen	F	2	1	S
Hana Negash	F	6	2	S
Hana Tafesse	F	9	3	S
Haregwein Aschenaki	F	9	3	S
Hashim Waba	M	12	4	S
Helen Kebera	F	10	3	S
Henok Belay	M	23	8	G
Henok Getachew	M	8	3	S
Hilina Terefe	F	10	3	S
Hiwot Tamene	F	18	6	S
Jemanesh Demissie	F	27	9	G
Kalikidan Solomon	F	22	7	S
Kebreab Endale	M	14	5	S
Khalid Amhedine	M	41	15	F
Kidane Alemu	M	11	4	S
Kidist Gudeta	F	17	6	S
KinefeMichael Tiruneh	M	29	10	G
Kinfe Asmamaw	M	19	6	S
KinfeMichael Tsegaye	M	26	9	G
KinfeMichael Yilma	M	27	9	G
Koinget X	F	24	8	G
Kokebe Kebede	F	9	3	S
Kumelachew Bogale	M	24	8	G
Lakech GebreMeskel	F	5	2	S
Ledate Zerihun	F	23	8	G
Legawork Yimer	F	12	4	S
Lehasab Damtew	M	15	5	S
Leyouwork Berhanu	F	19	6	S
Lina Tesfaye	F	5	2	S
Lishane Tadesse	F	3	1	S
Mahilet Workie	F	28	10	G
Mahlet Kebede	F	20	6	S
Mahlet Shiferaw	F	2	1	S
Mahlet Tekle	F	2	1	S
Mariamawit Taye	F	37	17	F
Marta Haile	F	9	3	S
Mekdes Sahle	F	0	0	S
Mekdes Tadesse	F	13	4	S
Mekdes Teshome	F	13	4	S
Melaku Nigussie	M	47	18	E
Melat Admassu	F	19	6	S
Meron Getachew	F	12	4	S
Meron Zerihun	F	35	13	F
Meskerem Jemaneh	F	7	2	S

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Meskerem Worku	F	7	2	S
Messeret Amaha	F	9	3	S
Mikial Ambatchew	M	14	5	S
Mikias Taye	M	43	16	F
Mila Tesfaye	M	9	3	S
Million Mergia	M	5	2	S
Muluken Tadesse	M	20	6	S
Muluwerk Yeshaw	F	18	6	S
Nebiyou Seyoum	M	22	7	S
Nebiyou Tafere	M	30	10	G
Nebiyu Merid	M	8	3	S
Negsti Tadesse	F	9	3	S
Nigist Addis	F	15	5	S
Rahel Wondimagen	F	14	5	S
Rebka Tegas	F	6	2	S
Robel Gidey	M	11	4	S
Roman Tegegn	F	2	1	S
Saba Mergia	F	16	5	S
Saba Solomon	F	6	2	S
Sadet Yemame	F	20	6	S
Samuel Tadesse	M	11	4	S
Seife Abebe	M	23	8	G
Selamawit Solomon	F	17	6	S
Selenay Bireuen	F	4	1	S
Seleshi Maloro	M	12	4	S
Seniesh X	F	2	1	S
Sennait Moges	F	15	5	S
Sennait Takele	F	8	3	S
Serawit Tiruneh	F	8	3	S
Shewangizaw Muleta	M	8	3	S
Shewarege Haile	F	3	1	S
Shimelis Tadesse	M	4	1	S
Siefu Kumele	M	8	3	S
Simret Abebe	F	14	5	S
Sintayehu Goshu	M	10	3	S
Sintayehu Nigusu	M	22	7	S
Sissay Berhanu	M	11	4	S
Surafel Zewdu	M	42	16	F
Tarik Eshetu	M	25	8	G
Tariku Amare	M	31	11	G
Tariku Balch	M	26	9	G
Taytu Workineh	F	34	12	F
Temesgen X	M	26	9	G
Tenaye Bekele	F	4	1	S
Tezeru Haile	F	22	7	S
Tibebu Tadese	M	12	4	S

Tigist Ababu	F	8	3	S
Tigist Getachew	F	18	6	S
Tigist Habte	F	2	1	S
Tigist Mammo	F	9	3	S
Tigist Mammo	F	11	4	S
Tirusew Bizuneh	M	15	5	S
Tizita Girma	F	5	2	S
Tsedale Tenkir	F	7	2	S
Tsefaye Girma	F	5	2	S
Tsion Habtu	F	36	13	F
Washiun Kebede	M	11	4	S
Wesenelesh Yemame	F	7	2	S
Weyneshet Lemma	F	10	3	S
Weynished Bekele	F	13	4	S
Wondwessen Mulat	M	11	4	S
Workineh Mammushet	M	4	1	S
Yared Wolde	M	32	11	G
Yednekachew	M	10	3	S
Solomon				
Yemisirach	F	15	5	S
TekleSelassie				
Yenesh Mekuria	F	8	3	S
Yergalem Alemu	M	6	2	S
Yeshak Kebede	M	20	6	S
Yeshi Degsew	F	17	6	S
Yonas Deres	M	17	6	S
Yonas Lulseged	M	3	1	S
Yoseph X	M	3	1	S
Zelalem X	M	59	24	E
Zelalem X	M	7	2	S
Zerihun Fekade	M	35	13	F
<b>MEAN</b>		<b>15.102941</b>		
<b>MEDIAN</b>		<b>12</b>		
<b>MODE</b>		<b>9</b>		
<b>VARIANCE</b>		<b>109.65117</b>		
<b>STANDARD</b>		<b>10.471445</b>		
<b>DEVIATION</b>				

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NB: Ethiopians do not use surnames. Therefore for publications within Ethiopia the usual style is that their name and their father's name is given. However, for works published abroad, their father's or grandfather's names are usually assumed to be surnames, so it is common to have the same person referred to differently due to this inversion of names.