

ETHIOPIA'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY REFORM AND THE TRENDS IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Education and training policy issued in 1994 deals with most of the important issues (problems) of the sector. However, it only hints about some and is vague about other issues. Primary and secondary education, curriculum, teachers, access to education, problems of quality and equity, national examinations, and vocational/technical training are dealt with. Non-formal education, languages of instruction, management of education, and the required resources for education are inadequately dealt with. Issues of national goals and values, the link between education and rural development, guidance of students, early childhood education, the links between education and employment (work), co-ordination at various administrative levels, and priority skills needed for national development are hardly touched upon.

Though there are some changes and improvements, such as in enrolments since the issuance of the policy, the rural areas and the peripheries like the south and east of the country are underserved, the participation rate of girls is low and the quality of education is still questionable. The disparity between regions, urban and rural areas, boys and girls seem to be getting wider rather than narrower, as claimed by the policy. In addition, the rate of educational wastage (dropouts, repetition) does not show trends of reduction. Furthermore, the quality of education does not indicate improvements as reflected by the existing low quality of teachers, large class sizes, amount of resources committed, lack of good and adequate teaching materials, hasty implementation of the usage of nationalities languages for instruction, and the large pool of unemployed high school graduates.

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INTRODUCTION

The Government of Ethiopia issued "Education and Training Policy" in April 1994. Various changes and developments are taking place in the education and related sectors. It is about six years since the issuance of the policy and the strategic plan. Though it might be too early to make a critical assessment of the impacts of the policy, the author believes that some observations can be made regarding some of the policy statements, implementation efforts and the general trends in human resource development. It is hoped that the paper will at least stimulate constructive discussions and lead to various in-depth studies and perhaps reconsideration of some issues.

The main purpose of this study is presenting a general analysis of the recent policy and implementation efforts, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the sector. Efforts are made to show the links between education and human resource development, which has major implications to the socio-economic development of the country. In addition to the general discussion of the situation, some options and suggestions are made regarding a few critical issues of national concern.

The method of study used is mainly a descriptive one using secondary data. The sources of the data are the Ministry of Education, the UN systems, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Central Statistics Authority, the Ministry of Economic Development and Cupertino, and relevant others. When contradictory data are observed, more credible and perhaps more reliable sources are used. The statistics used for analyses are percentage, mean, parity index, and raw scores. Where appropriate, qualitative approaches are also used.

The paper is divided into the following four chapters: Socio-economic situation of Ethiopia, education policy issues, the trends in human resource development (HRD) and major issues of concern and some conclusions.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia has a projected population of 63 million, of which 44% are below 15 years old and 84% reside in rural areas (CSA 1998). Life expectancy at birth is 50 years and the GNP per capita is only \$100 (World Bank 1998). The annual population growth rate is 3% and 86% of the labour force is engaged in agriculture. As could be observed from Table 1, Ethiopia is one of the lowest (almost at the bottom) in the world in most human development indicators. It is below the average of the low income or Sub-Saharan African Countries (i.e., some 44 African countries, excluding the Arab States in Africa).

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Table 1. Key Human Development Indicators*

Indicator	The World	Low Income (Least Developed)	High Income (Industrialised)	Sub-Saharan Africa	Ethiopia
Life expectancy at birth in years	67	63	78	53	50
Under 5 mortality rate per, 1000 births	87	168	7	170	175
GNP per capita \$	5130	490	25870	490	100
Adult illiteracy rate %	30	35	5	44	65
Urban population in % of total	46	29	76	32	16
Gross primary enrolment %	103	107	103	75	31
Gross secondary enrolment %	62	56	104	27	11
Tertiary enrolment %	14	6	57	1 ⁺	1.0
Annual population growth %	1.2	1.4	0.3	2.5	3.0
Public expenditure on education. (% of GNP)	5.2	3.6	5.5	5.3	4.7

*Source: World Bank (1998); and UNICEF (1999).

According to international poverty line estimates, 46% of the Ethiopian population gets below \$1 a day, and 89% gets below \$2 a day.

It was also estimated that only 35% of the adult population is literate and the gross primary education participation rate in 1996 was 31% for Ethiopia while it

was 56 and 75% respectively for sub Saharan Africa (World Bank 1998 - see Table 1).

Human development indicators which involve health and nutrition, income and productivity, education level, equity and empowerment (mainly measured by longevity, educational attainment, standard of living) show that "Ethiopia is at the lowest level of human development when compared to its neighbours and other developing countries" (UNDP 1998:1).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

Modern education formally started only about 100 years ago in Ethiopia. Since then, it has made some progress in terms of quantity, levels, and access and in HRD in general. There were (and are) several problems associated with the sector. Ten years ago (in 1989/90 academic year), there were 51 million people, 9,354 schools, 87,227 teachers, and 3.7 million students in Ethiopia (MoE 1989/90). The primary education participation rate was estimated as 35%. There were also 17,613 higher education and 4,200 teacher training students, 1,687 and 271 teachers in higher education and teacher training institutions respectively. Please note that the figures include Eritrea and Assab, which were regions of Ethiopia then. The primary education participation rate declined to about 20% in the early 1990's (PHRD Project Office 1996). The gross primary enrolment rate rose to 45.8% in the past few years (EMIS-MOE 1999).

The education sector had several problems for numerous years. The following were some of the major problems stressed in various education sector assessment reports (e.g. TGE 1994a & 1994b; Habtamu Wondimu 1994; USAID/Ethiopia 1993; MOE 1993).

1. Low education participation rate in general;
2. Disparity between regions was high; rural areas, particularly the peripheries of the country (such as the South, East and North East) and girls were underserved;
3. The quality of teachers in terms of training and motivation was low; in-service programs were small and weak;
4. The curricula at various levels were not relevant to the conditions of Ethiopia (were not work oriented, did not lead to problem solving or self-employment, etc);
5. The quality of education was low as reflected by the magnitude of the ratio of unqualified teachers, length of instruction time, availability of teaching materials and the rate of wastage (particularly educational wastage as expressed by dropout and repetition rates was too high);
6. The budget allocated to education was small and the large share of it was for salaries (over 80%) and recurrent expenditures;
7. The overwhelming majority of the students (graduates of primary, secondary, and tertiary levels) aspire for government jobs. The tendency to create their own jobs was not well developed;
8. The education sector lacks competent, well versed and visionary leadership; capacity for critical analysis, planning, and implementation is weak;
9. The participation of parents, teachers and the community at large in policy making and educational affairs is very much limited;

10. The predictive validity of the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) has been questioned. ESLCE has been serving both as the school leaving and higher education admission test;
 - 10.1 Decision making power is centralised;
 - 10.2 Local languages are not used for instruction;
 - 10.3 Textbooks, teaching materials and various school facilities were inadequate;
 - 10.4 Research culture was not well developed and the findings of the small output (i.e. reports, evaluations, publications) were not referred to in planning and decision making at various administrative levels;
 - 10.5 Civic/moral/political/sex education courses were not being offered to students at various levels.

Each of the major problems listed above requires serious considerations, debates and discussions, allocation of resources, participation of the stakeholders and follow up. The past experiences of Ethiopia and other developing countries, the present socio-economic circumstances of the country, availability of resources and the future aspirations of the country need to be the bases for the steps to take.

To deal with these and other problems, the Government issued the education and training policy and strategy in 1994. The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) was also developed in 1996 and the first five years ESDP Action Plan document came out in June 1999.

The main objectives of education and training policy are the following (TGD 1994a; MOE 1996):

1. To develop the physical and mental potential and problem solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all;
2. To bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the wellbeing of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline;
3. To bring up citizens who can take care of and utilise resources wisely, who are trained in various skills, by raising the private and social benefits of education;
4. To cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and social needs;
5. To provide education that promotes the culture of respect for work, positive work habits and a high regard for workmanship;
6. To bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society;
7. To promote relevant and appropriate secular education and training for all citizens, including the handicapped through formal and non-formal programs to meet the demand for skilled labour;

3. To recognise the rights of nations/nationalities to learn in their language, while at the same time providing a language for national and another for international communication;
4. To gear education towards reorienting society's attitude and value pertaining to the role and contribution of women in development.

The ESDP is more specific about the goals to achieve and the steps to take in the implementation of the policy and perhaps in solving the main problems of the sector.

The main goals and objectives of the five years (1997/98 - 2001/02) ESDP are the following (MOE 1998a: 2):

1. To improve overall educational attainment of the population while achieving greater social equality and to lay the foundations for achieving universal primary education by the year 2015;
2. To expand access to education with special emphasis on primary education in rural areas;
3. To improve equality by narrowing enrolment gaps for girls and boys and for rural and urban populations;
4. To improve efficiency by institutional development and capacity building;
5. To improve quality and relevance by providing books, materials, curriculum improvements and teacher training; and
6. To improve financing for education by increasing public spending and facilitating private sector investment.

There is no doubt that some efforts are being made by the Government, regions and relevant others to improve the situation in the education sector. It is to be noted that the participation rate has improved (e.g. primary enrolment jumped from about 29% in 1994/95 to 46% in 1998/99), the quality of the teaching force is improving (with increased number of inservice trainees and establishment of new teacher training colleges such as Abbiyi Addi; Jimma, etc.), the numbers of schools and higher education institutions have increased and higher education enrolment was 17,378 in 1995/96 and became 27,345 in 1998/99), the size of the Government budget allocated to education has improved from about a half billion in 1991 to over a billion Birr in 1999, etc. (MOE 1999, EMIS-MOE 1999). However, the question is, "How adequate are the sector analyses, the identification of the problems, the clarity of the policy statements, the strategies adopted and the implementation efforts in progress?" Some researchers (e.g., Tekeste Negash 1996; Seyoum Tefera 1996) have already commented on some of the deficiencies of the policy. Our focus will not be on most of the issues these researchers raised. Seyoum (1996) questioned, *inter alia*, the feasibility of languages of instruction, the wisdom of introducing cost sharing at 11th and 12th grades and at tertiary levels, the practicality of decentralised management of educational system, and the availability of funds for such an ambitious policy, strategy and plans. Tekeste (1996) also questioned the exclusive emphasis of the policy and strategies on the formal education subsector. He argues that investing in formal education, which is mainly an urban phenomenon and which does not contribute much to economic development is unjustifiable. According to him, non-formal education should get much better attention and resources if major socio-economic changes and development are to come to Ethiopia."

Before we look at the specifics of the Ethiopian situation, I would like to indicate some issues usually considered important in education policy statements. Looking at these issues will assist us in the comparison of Ethiopia's education and training policy with many developing countries' policies.

The following are the most important policy issues often addressed by developing countries (Psacharopoulos 1990; Venkateswaran 1997; Hallack 1990; Pigozzi & Cieutat 1988; Haddad & Demisky 1994; Government of Kenya 1976; Samoff & Assie-Lumumba 1996; United Republic of Tanzania 1993; Aggarwal 1996):

1. National goals and values - unity, social responsibility, development, ideology, heritage and democracy;
2. Education and national development - agriculture, crafts and manual work;
3. Curricula at various levels - relevance, diversity and content;
4. Equity and increasing coverage - ethnic groups, rural and girls education;
5. Teachers - improvement of quality and quantity, training and motivation;
6. Languages of instruction - local, national and international languages to use;
7. Improving links with employment - work, skills, job markets, self-employment;
8. Pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary levels education - quality, coverage, levels and reduction of wastage;
9. Special needs and vocational education - programs' content, responsibility, vocational training and employment/work and kinds of support;
10. Non-formal education - distance, adult, in-service training, continuing education and the link with formal education;

11. Meeting of human power requirements of the country - levels, number, kinds of skills and priorities;
12. Educational materials, equipment, and facilities - educational facilities, schools, textbooks, laboratories and libraries;
13. Resources needed for education and training - finance and other resources, source, amount and budget share;
14. Monitoring, evaluation and national examinations - supervision, information, standards and examinations;
15. Management of education - leadership, co-ordination, decentralisation, planning and decisions making authority;
16. Students' guidance - expected character and discipline and career guidance;
17. Non-government schools - curricula, requirements, government support and accreditation;
18. Research and development - priority areas, support and institutes;
19. Environmental education - conservation, ecology and natural resources;
20. Civic and family life education, etc.

As could be observed from the above lists and the policy documents, there are some differences between the issues (problems) addressed by many developing countries and Ethiopia. The Ethiopian education and training policy has not adequately dealt with the issues of national goals and values, the relationship between education and national (rural) development, the links between education and work (employment), students' guidance, and priority skills needed for

national development. Issues of languages of instruction, management of education at various administrative levels, and pre-school education are only touched upon. The education and training policy and strategy documents (TGE 1994a, 1994b) are small and each issue is not thoroughly discussed. Hence, some of the statements leave gaps for misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

A well known critique of the educational policies of developing countries states that often policy intentions are vague, are political statements and tend to neglect prerequisite factors such as finance (Psacharopoulos 1990). He indicates that the following statements are common and end up in failure (p.16 & 19):

- a. There will be free education for all;
- b. The quality of education should be improved;
- c. Educational reforms should seek to improve quality without sacrificing quantity.

There is no doubt that the Ethiopian education policy/decision makers have good intentions. Obviously, that is not enough. From the above specific objectives and general strategies, one cannot understand what specific skills are needed, how many, what kind of research, what share of the national budget, which languages (all the 80 or so languages in Ethiopia), which are "wereda" and school powers, who is responsible for the KG education, etc.

As Psacharopoulos (1990), Haddad and Demisky (1994), Hallack (1990) and others state, education policy statements should fulfil at least the following conditions (rough criteria):

1. They should be concrete, affordable, and feasible in terms of objectives, including a timetable, source of financing of its implementation, and institutions responsible.

2. The substance of a policy should be based on research - proved cause and effect relationships - not only good will or intention.
3. They should be based on and reflective of the overall socio-economic situation and heritage of the country/system.
4. They should be indicative of desired priority areas (levels, skills, and issues) in clear terms.
5. They should be reflective of the commitment of the government, political parties, teachers, employers, parents and the community at large as reflected by the amount of budget allocation, community participation, private investment, and high demand for better education and training.

The Ethiopian education policy and strategy statements of 1994 do not fulfil many of these criteria. ESDP and later elaborations and documents have attempted to fulfil some of these suggestions (e.g. MOE 1996, 1999; PHRD 1996).

Cummings and Dall- (1995) state that governments which have serious commitment to education allocate budget of 20% or more of the total government budget to education and out of this, (the education budget) primary education receives at least a quarter (25%). In the past several years, the budget for the education sector has increased in Ethiopia. The public expenditure on education as of GNP is only 4.7% in Ethiopia, while the average is 5.3% for Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 1998). The amount of expenditure on education as percentage of total public expenditure was 13.8% in 1995/96 and about the same in 1998/99 and is a long way from 20%. The ESDP is an ambitious program envisaging 50% primary participation rate by the year 2001/2, and UPE in 2015 (only 15 years from now). It also assumes that the Ethiopian economy will grow by 6% per year and the donor community will contribute 27% of the budget, and the sector will have the needed capacity to implement the program through out the

country (MOE 1999). Whether these are realistic assumptions and goals is a subject deserving serious considerations. Hallack (1990), a well-known UNESCO expert, states that "ultimately, a government's policy will be judged by its results" (p.96). We will return to trends (outcomes) issue later. Next, we will look at human resource development issue in broad terms.

SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Human resource development (HRD) includes the formal education at all levels, on the job training, adult education, in-service training, and self-development. It is the development and utilisation of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and the general potential of the human being. Formal education's contribution to HRD is immense and hence our focus is on the problems, policies, strategies, plans, and outputs of formal education in Ethiopia.

Hallack (1990) states that "education and human resource development policy become driving forces of development only if synchronised with and reinforced by general development policy and if both are supported by a favourable national and international environment" (p.51). He argues that "education and the development of human resources should receive special attention from governments aiming at promoting economic growth and human development" (P.44). Education and HRD are considered as human rights; both contribute to the improvement of health and nutrition of children and parents; are associated with increased life expectancy; contribute towards better productivity and economic growth; bring about reduced fertility and infant mortality rates; accelerate technological changes; promote socio-cultural changes; contribute towards democracy and equality; and improve the relationship between human beings and the environment (Hallack 1990; World Bank 1998; UNDP 1995; IBRD-World Bank 1999; Asheton, et al.. 1998).

Writing about education HRD of the "Four Tiger Economies" (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan), Asheton et al. (1998) indicate that education and training policies were linked with the formation of economic policies; public commitment of education was high; basic and technical education received priority; human power planning took place based on other countries' experiences and trend analysis of the respective country; the community (teachers, employers, parents, the ruling class) participation in education was high, and policies and institutions were adjusted as the need arose. Each of the fast developing countries used education as a critical tool for their national building, and the development of a literate, loyal and disciplined labour force. Both public and private sectors invested in HRD, in technical skills, in skills to solve problems, interpersonal and functional skills. Such a serious commitment to HRD, public participation, resources mobilisation and making well informed (research based) decisions are not prevalent practices among the key stakeholders of the education system in Ethiopia.

Several studies conducted in Ethiopia (e.g., Admit Zerihun 1998; Getahun Tafesse, 1998 and Netsanet Walelign, 1998) indicate that education is a major contributor to economic growth and higher productivity. Admit Zerihun (citing J. Tilak 1992:34) states that:

Education is believed to create a productive citizen inculcating important and useful knowledge into the minds of people there by speeding up economic development. Education transforms the raw human beings into productive human capital by instilling the skills required by both the traditional sector and the modern sector of the economy, and makes the individuals more productive not only in the market place but also in the household

Getahun Tafesse (1998), UNESCO (1998), Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) and several others also assert that educated labour force is a critical element for national development.

As indicated earlier in Table 1, the participation rate in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Ethiopia was lower than most developing countries. Table 2, Table 3, and Annex 1 provide information concerning the enrolments in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. There were over 5.7 million and 0.52 million students at primary and secondary levels respectively, and 125,483 teachers in 1998/99. The percentage of female students at primary level (grades 1-8) was 37.8%, and at senior secondary level (grades 9-12) it was 40.6%. The percentage of female teachers at primary level was 27.8%, while at secondary level it was only 8.6% (EMIS-MOE, 1999).

There were 3,374 students and 548 teachers in the 16 vocational- technical schools in Ethiopia. Only 993 students graduated (in 1998) from these VT schools specialising in automechanics, general mechanics, electricity, secretarial science, accounting, agriculture and other fields (EMIS-MOE 1999).

The enrolments in the teacher training institutes (one-year program) and teacher training junior colleges (two-year program) were 5,443 and 2,979 respectively in 1998/9 (EMIS-MOE 1999: 97 to 98).

It is to be noted (from Tables 2 and 3 ranks) that Addis Ababa, Harari, Gambella and Dire Dawa are relatively more advantaged regions, while Afar and Somali are the least advantaged regions in primary and secondary education enrolments. The gross primary enrolment for Afar and Somali are 7.1 and 8% respectively.

Table 2: Total and Primary School Age Population and Enrolment by Region, 1998/99*

	Region	Total population in million	School Age Population (ages 7-14)	Enrolment (Grades 1-8)	Gross Enrolment Rate (%)	Rank
1	Tigray	3.50	728,413	425,668	58.4	6
2	Afar	1.13	239,863	16,943	7.1	11
3	Amhara	15.41	3,151,676	1,274,646	40.4	9
4	Oromiya	21.05	4,442,269	1,997,695	45.0	8
5	Somali	3.23	774,563	61,837	8.0	10
6	Benish. Gumz	0.51	107,214	80,267	74.9	4
7	SNNP	11.75	2,466,841	1,401,489	56.8	7
8	Gambella	0.20	39,920	35,578	89.1	2
9	Harari	0.15	26,404	23,757	90.0	1
10	Addis Ababa	2.35	416,479	352,843	84.7	3
11	Dire Dawa	0.29	52,546	31,510	60.0	5
	Total	59.59	12,446,188	5,702,233	45.8	-

*Source: EMIS-MOE (1999:13)

Table 3: Secondary School Age Population and Enrolment by Region, 1998/99*

	Region	School Age Pop. (15-18)	Enrolment(G rades 9-12)	G.E.R. %	Rank
1	Tigray	305,700	26,744	8.7	5
2	Afar	109,158	1,818	1.7	10
3	Amhara	1,333,589	98,428	7.4	9
4	Oromiya	1,884,371	153,481	8.1	7
5	Somali	330,989	1,287	0.4	11
6	Beni. Gumz	45,064	3,432	7.6	8
7	SNNP	1,048,976	90,527	8.6	6
8	Gambella	19,051	2,837	14.9	4
9	Harari	14,125	6,080	43.0	2
10	Addis Ababa	271,668	130,700	48.1	1
11	Dire Dawa	27,780	6,394	23.0	3
	Total	5,390,471	521,728	9.7	-

*Source: EMIS-MOE (1999:14).

G.E.R. means Gross Enrollment Rate.

The total enrolment in higher education institutions in 1998/99 was 27,345, of which 4,277 (15.64%) were female (EMIS-MOE 1999). In the same academic year, about 6,000 students graduated from tertiary level education and only 14.10% were females. The number of academic staff was 2,228 and 6.10% of them were females. Out of the 5,161 supportive staff, 48.36% were females (Annex 1).

Various professional skills training institutions such as the Ethiopian Airlines Pilots and Technicians Training Centre, Bank and Insurance Institute, Mass Media Institute, Nursing Schools, Institute of Telecommunications and others also contribute towards HRD in Ethiopia. However, the size of each is small (total enrolment of all is below 2,000) and the training is focused to the institutional needs. Recently, private colleges such as Unity College, Alfa College of Distance Education, Awassa Adventist College and others have been accredited by the Ministry of Education. Particularly the efforts of Unity College, with an enrolment of over 5,000 and focussing in areas where skills are highly needed is a notable contribution towards HRD in the country.

Also, the contributions of extension programs of higher education institutions and night schools through out the country are significant and noteworthy. In 1998/99, there were 20,585 extension (evening) and 4,375 Kiremt tertiary level students throughout the country (EMIS-MOE 1999). The Kiremt students are mainly teachers participating in in-service diploma and degree programs. In-service programs are some of the ways used by the Ministry of Education to improve the qualification of teachers. The efforts in this regard are commendable.

Though the numbers of enrolments, graduates and teachers have increased in the past few years, the disparity between boys (males) and girls (females) has not narrowed. In fact, some disparities might have got wider. For instance, among the students who sat for the ESLCE in 1999 the regional parity index (ratio of examinees and population of each region) shows that some regions have larger share of candidates than earlier times and perhaps more higher education students

new admissions). 64% of the examinees were boys, while 36% were girls (NOE 1999a).

In a recent report, Tegegne (1998) indicates that the disparity between regions, urban and rural areas, boys and girls is increasing. He states that "as evidenced by yearly statistical reports, the gap (between boys and girls) is rather widening and not narrowing as expected" (p.118). He further states that "The disparity between urban and rural is highly marked. The intake and participation rates are high in urban areas than in rural areas. There are more qualified teachers in urban areas than rural areas" (p. 118). Hence, the trends of inequity between the regions, sexes, and urban/rural locations do not seem to have changed much from what Tekle Haimanot (1982), Ayalew (1989), Habtamu (1992) and others reported several years ago.

The need for child labour, high schooling costs, far distance to school, limitation of opportunities for the educated, education not leading to non-farm employment, confusing language policy and irrelevance of education to rural life are some of the reasons for the low participation rates (USAID/Ethiopia 1993; Habtamu 1999). The Ministry of Education's statistical reports (e.g., MOE 1999; EMIS-MOE 1999) and some studies (e.g., Habtamu 1999; Tegegne 1998) show that students' attrition rate is still very large at primary school level. Progression rate from grade 1 to 2 is between 50 to 60%. This would mean that nearly half of the children who enroll in grade 1 do not continue to grade 2. In the past several years a little over 12% of primary level students drop out of schools every year. A large number of students quit school to help their families on the farms and at home and due to lack of financial and material support to attend schools (Habtamu 1999).

In 1997/98 alone about half a million children repeated grades in the primary level despite the automatic promotion policy in grade 1 to 3. Educational wastage (mainly repetition and dropping out) are important indicators of the efficiency of

the education system. Large educational wastage means a large amount of human and economic resources wastage.

As also indicated earlier, many studies show that there is a reciprocal relationship between education and economic development (World Bank 1980; Asheton et al. 1998; Heaver & Hunt 1995; Getahun 1998). Particularly, the contribution of primary education is immense. Countries with higher levels of human resource development tend to experience more rapid rates of economic growth. Of course, economic development is not influenced only by education, but also by such factors as population growth rate, the investment level, the socio-economic environment, and availability of the necessary resources.

Not only is the number (ratio) of "educated labour force" small in Ethiopia but the competence of the existing human power in the modern sector of the economy is also questioned (Wanna 1998; MEDaC 1999). According to MEDaC (1999) out of the economically active population (aged 15-64, and was about 29 million in 1998/99) in Ethiopia, 86% are employed in agriculture, 2% are in industry, and 12% are in services. Agriculture, self-employment, and unpaid family labour are the major forms of employment accounting for 90% of the employed labour force in Ethiopia.

The distribution (proportion) of economically active population by occupation grouping is provided in Annex 2. It is to be noted that the ratio of professional and skilled labour force was and is very small. The overwhelming majority of Ethiopia's labour force is illiterate and unskilled (MEDaC 1999; CSA 1998). As could be observed from Annex 3, 70% of Ethiopia's population aged 10 years and above were illiterate in 1999 (CSA 1999). The same source also reports that 54% of the unemployed, but seeking employment were illiterate - a major indication of poor HRD. It is also noted (from Annex 3) that only 2.63% of the total (36 million) labour force has 12th grade or higher level education.

Current and reliable figures are not available concerning employment and unemployment. Estimates are that there are a little over half a million public employees and perhaps over a million job seekers. Based on 1994 data, MEDAC (1999) estimated that 2.9% of the economically active population is unemployed. This is a conservative estimate considering over 400,000 demobilised ex-soldiers, a large number of refugee returnees from abroad, a large number of dropouts and high school completers every year, the back log of officially registered job seekers (over 50,000 per year), and those affected by the structural adjustment program. Majority of the unemployed are young (aged 20-30) with some high school education (MOLSA 1999).

Human power demand of the country is not clearly known. To the author's knowledge, there is not a current study or a plan document that has some indicators of the need for skills. The efforts of the "Policy and Human Resources Development Project Office" (1996) are to be acknowledged, though the studies were made after the education policy decision. Linking policy decisions with research findings is a culture that needs to be developing in Ethiopia. Both the producers (mainly the education sector) and the employers (public and private) are not well aware of the skills needed. For instance, many employers including the public sector seem to ask for college diploma or degree graduates for various clerical and low skills jobs, which could easily be handled by VT schools' graduates. Earlier projections (Lakew and Mekonnen 1992; PMGSE 1984) indicate that there is a large demand for engineers, accountants, agriculturalists, managers, economists, medical professionals and qualified secondary school teachers. The Ministry of Education's (1998b) draft document on the demand and supply of teachers shows that there is a high demand for qualified teachers. It is reported that 71% (17,416) of the teachers working now in the second cycle of primary education (grades 5-8) are not qualified for the level, and 60% (7,407) of the teachers working in the secondary schools (grades 9 - 12) are not qualified for the level. These figures by themselves are indicators of the low quality of education. Also, the amount and quality of text books and teaching materials, the

large students-teachers ratios in most areas, and the short (duration of) instruction time are still below MOE's (let alone other developing countries) standards.

The National Organisation of Examinations (NOE) of the Ministry of Education made (in 1998/99) a preliminary assessment of the inputs and processes that affect educational achievement of grade 8 pupils in 4 regions (Amhara, Oromiya, SNNPR, and Benishangul-Gumuz). 74 schools, 74 directors, 27 teachers and 3,000 students participated in the study (NOE, 1999b). The students were tested in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics. It was found that the "Overall level of achievement for all subjects was low" (p.29). The average score for all the four subjects for all the regions was only 37%. Though the study is a preliminary one, it is a serious indication of the low quality of at least primary education in Ethiopia.

The efforts being made by the Ministry of Education to train more and better qualified teachers are worth noting. New teacher education colleges opened in the past few years are Abbiy Addi (in Tigray), Dilla (in SNNPR), and Jimma (in Oromiya). Awassa and Gondar TTI's were up graded to colleges and new TTI's such as Adwa, Bonga and Hossana were constructed and became operational (MOE, 1998b). But the problems and skill needs of other sectors are not well addressed. The issue of supply and demand of skilled human power is a vast and serious issue worth serious attention by the Government and relevant ministries including the Ministries of Education, Economic Development and Co-operation, Agriculture, Health, Labour and Social Affairs.

MAJOR ISSUES OF CONCERN AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

The Ethiopian Government made education sector analysis and issued the Education and Training Policy in 1994. The sector analysis and other studies showed that the education participation rate was low (only 22%), the curricula at all levels were deficient or irrelevant; the disparities between urban and rural

areas, boys and girls, the centre and the peripheries and the regions were wide; the resources (e.g., budget) allocated to the sector were inadequate, and in general the quality of education was low. These are mainly problems of quality, access, equity, and efficiency. The new policy intends to improve the participation rate, improve the quality of education, make the curricula relevant, narrow the gaps of disparity, and improve the quality of teachers and teaching materials.

Though the policy deals with many relevant issues of the sector, it does not adequately deal with other relevant issues such as national goals and values, languages of instruction, early childhood education, decentralisation of the management of the educational system, the link between education and work, and the link between education and national development. Due to resources limitations (finance, time and journal space), we will deal only with these major issues in some detail. It is also to be noted that in this paper vast areas such as higher education, national examinations, non-formal education, research, teaching materials, and vocational/technical education are not dealt with (except a few direct or indirect statements, here and there).

Concerning National Goals and Values

Ethiopia is a country with about 80 ethnic groups (nations, nationalities, and peoples). The ethnic groups which account for about 1% and above of the total population of Ethiopia are Oromo, Amhara, Tigraway, Gurage, Somale, Sidama, Wolaita, Afar, Hadiya, Gedeo, Keffa, Agew, Gamo and Kembata. These 14 ethnic groups account for 94.80% of the total population (CSA 1998). The first two (Oromo and Amhara) are the largest accounting for 62.28% of the total population.

In addition to linguistic diversities, religious and some cultural diversities and similarities exist in Ethiopia. These issues of similarities and differences should be objectively dealt with. The fundamental issue of national integration should be

one of the major goals of education. A major national study shows that the similarities in basic values and various socio-economic aspects are much greater than the differences among the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Habtamu, Hallahimi & Abbink 1997).

The Ethiopian heritage in general, the constitution (though came out in 1995), other socio-historical documents would be some of the sources to lay down national goals. With the respecting of individual and ethnic groups' rights and equal treatment in mind, national identity that encourages tolerance, fairness, mobility, skills (merits), common goals and aspirations would have to be clearly addressed. In the Ethiopian education and training policy document, concepts of democracy, equality, justice, liberty, truth and respect for human rights are mentioned, but not well integrated with the prevailing conditions and future aspirations of the country.

Habtamu Wondimu (1994, 1995), Getahun Tafesse (1998) and others have reported that the dominant culture of Ethiopia values helping each other, the family, authoritarianism, taking less risk, immediate gratification and fatalism. But the main characteristics of psychologically modern persons are dispositions to accept new ideas/methods, readiness to form and hold opinions over a broad range of issues, orientation towards the present and the future, trusting fellow human beings and institutions and respect for education and technology (Inkeles 1983). Strong and consistent relationships have been observed between individual (psychological) modernity, education and HRD. Hence, issues of culture and social values need to be considered in major policy documents such as education. Also, the demographic and the general economic situations (agricultural and backward economy, poverty situation, large young population, traditional values, etc.) do not seem to be critically analysed and reflected in the policy, strategy and plan documents. It should be clear that Ethiopia is a very poor country with a large, uneducated and unskilled labour force of diverse socio-cultural heritage. This needs to be clearly reflected.

Concerning Languages of Instruction

The usage and development of an ethnic group's language is a basic human right. Often the language (the mother tongue) is the identity of the group, makes learning easier for the child, is the medium for the transmission of culture and gives the sense of equality to the respective group (Edwards 1985; Habtamu et al. 1997). The education and training policy and the Ethiopian constitution (FDRE 1995) guarantee the usage of the vernacular language in primary schools and in the management of local activities. This is a bold and positive step on the part of the Government. However, there are (were) certain cautions to take and resource requirements to fulfil before implementation.

As indicated earlier, Ethiopia has about 80 ethnic groups and perhaps over 60 "different" languages. The sizes of the ethnic groups vary from about 17 million to less than a thousand. The available human power (teachers, translators, and experts) also differs from hundreds to none among the groups. There are 25 ethnic groups, which have a population over 100,000. Those with over 200,000 are 16. The figures about languages (as mother tongue) are also similar (CSA 1998). A language with about 22,000 speakers is being used today as a language of instruction in the primary schools of a region while several languages with over 100,000 speakers are not being used. These and related matters can not be left as "regional affairs". Hence, some guidelines, criteria and preparation (like training) would be needed to implement most of the nationalities' languages. Also, the speakers (parents) should be involved in the decisions (vernacular to use, up to what grade level, etc). It would also require the investment of additional resources by the relevant parties.

The author's informal discussions with the relevant persons (mainly teachers) and observations in selected localities of the south show that there are several problems with the implementation of the language policy. Lack of trained and qualified teachers and translators, the translations being poor (literal, mechanical), unavailability of additional books or references except the texts, overload of the

curriculum with language courses, and perhaps the limiting of the opportunities of the minorities (children) due to poor (lack of) competence in major languages are some of the problems noticed and raised. So far, 19 languages are being used as languages of instruction (MOE 1999). One would expect and wish that the children would have the languages' and other subjects' competence and skills to compete for the "country - wide "and international opportunities after the completion of secondary schools (or even primary education). Due to land and other resource limitations, labour mobility is inevitable for many ethnic groups members. In addition to subject matter competence, a good command of the relevant language would be an asset for the individual.

There is no doubt that the minority groups in the peripheries (mainly south), Afar and Somali are the disadvantaged groups in access to educational opportunities. The use of the vernacular does not seem to be improving the situation. Sober and critical (apolitical, if possible) studies have to be made, open discussions be conducted, well-organised preparations have to take place, and adequate resources have to be invested if parity and equity are expected.

Concerning Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education enhances school readiness, increases the efficacy of investments in primary schools and human capital formation, fosters beneficial social and responsible behaviour, reduces dropout and repetition rates of children in schools, and increases the performance of children in later (primary) schooling (Heaver and Hunt 1995; Young 1996; Habtamu 1996). Some studies also show that early childhood care and education programs are very beneficial to the disadvantaged groups such as girls, rural children and children from poor families. Children who have attended pre-schools for ages 4 to 6 are likely to progress more quickly and achieve better test results, and are less likely to drop out of primary schools.

Many psychologists, educationists and other experts agree that the basis for the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children are laid down during infancy and early childhood. Early childhood experiences promote the acquisition of language, expansion of cognitive abilities, better social skills, stable personality and better adjustment in life (UNESCO 1998; Habtamu 1996; Young 1996).

The new education and training policy only mentions about kindergarten education and care. It does not deal with the issue adequately. The participation rate of aged 4 to 6 in KGs in Ethiopia is only about 2%. MOE statistics (EMIS-MOE 1999) shows that there were 793 kindergartens, 2,487 teachers and 90,321 children in KGs in 1998/99. The overwhelming majority of the teachers (92.5%) were female and the number of boys and girls attending the KGs were almost equal. There were 678 Kindergartens and 70,255 children in 1994/95. The increment in five years is very small, considering the large number of children in that age group in Ethiopia.

Not only is the change in enrolment very small in the past few years, but there is also some confusion on who is responsible for KGs - the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Regional/Zonal Offices and the Woredas, or "the Community". Early childhood education and care programs deserve better attention from MOE, the Government, and the Community at large. Some researchers even warn us that "Failure to invest in (early childhood education and care) results in reduced school performance, a less productive labour force, and increased welfare and other social expenditures" (e.g., Heaver & Hunt 1995: 28).

Concerning the Decentralisation of the Management of the Educational System

In a study that "audited" the capacity of educational offices in the implementation of the policy of decentralisation in Ethiopia, Derebssa (1998: 66) states (citing others) that decentralisation is:

any change in the organisation of government which involves the transfer of power or functions from the national level to any sub-national levels, or from one sub-national level to another, lower one.... It is the transfer of legal, administrative and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to ... functional authorities, communities or non-governmental organisations.

The duties and responsibilities of the centre (MOE), regional councils (education bureaux), zonal offices and woreda education offices are worked out and listed, but not implemented.

The policy of decentralisation could be supported in principle. However, such decisions could only be properly implemented when adequate resources and qualified personnel are available at the lower levels. Furthermore, the existence of deliberative and democratic processes, the involvement of the stakeholders (in this case students, parents, teachers, and the community at large), and transparency and accountability are important for decentralisation to be truly operational. Derebssa's study that involved the Amhara, Oromiya and SNNP regions, which account for 80% of Ethiopia's population shows that decentralisation is not operational at zonal and woreda levels yet. Zones, Woredas and schools are not making most of the decisions, are not administering the resources and are not planning for the future. Derebssa stated that "power and responsibility is devolved from the Federal Ministry of Education to regions. However, the regional offices remain the centre of decentralisation" (p.76). He recommends giving priority to building human capacity at zonal and woreda

levels. This author concurs with the recommendation. Furthermore, this author in agreement with Winkler (1989) believes that the goals of the decentralisation, the levels of administration of resources, the levels of responsibility and authority have to be clearly stated and put into practice.

Concerning the Link between Education, Work and Development

UNICEF's 1999 report on the state of the child states that:

Going to school and coming out unprepared for life is a terrible waste... Learning for the 21st Century requires equipping children with a basic education in literacy and numeracy, as well as the more advanced, complex skills for living that can serve as the foundation for life (UNICEF 1999: 22).

A child lives in a community, a country and the world. He needs to learn to live with others, accommodate others' values and cultures, and to be socially responsible. He should learn to think objectively, to sift the truth from falsehood and fanaticism, to communicate clearly and to express his ideas peacefully. A child needs some knowledge and skills to be competent, innovative, productive, and appreciative of the respect for human rights. He/She gets most of these from schools and Ethiopia's schools should have the ability and capacity to provide them. Quite a number of teachers, parents, employers and community members at large are heard of complaining that schools are not providing the needed abilities, skills and attitudes to the students.

Education promotes the use of new technology, taking "calculated" risks, agricultural innovations, reduction in fertility rate, better health and nutrition, and various advantages. An Indian educator and known researcher, Aggarwal (1996) argues that education should be "treated as a crucial area of investment for national development and survival" (p. 404). USAID Director for Ethiopia, K.

Brown (1998) also indicated the need for heavy investment in education and building human capacity if economic developments are desired. He states that "Basic education, including the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills is especially critical to development. Investments in Universal Primary Education have been linked to economic growth, reduction of poverty, improved health, lower fertility and the enhanced status of women" (p. 11). He further states that "Data shows that societies with literacy rates less than 70 percent simply do not grow and flourish" (p11). This is a serious warning and reminder that Ethiopia, which has only about 35% literacy rate, is a long way from economic growth and development.

Though the products (e.g., the competence of the graduates) of the new curriculum are not assessed yet, casual observations show that the students are not equipped with some of the broad skills mentioned above. Ethiopia is a predominantly rural and agricultural country. The economic development strategy of the country is "Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation" (ADLI) that aims at improving the performance of the labour market within the context of market oriented economic system. The economic policy and strategy attempt to transform the backward economy with a close link between the agricultural and industrial sectors, reduce the role of the state in the economy, promote domestic manufacturers, encourage self sufficiency in food production, conserve natural resources, and mobilise external resources for development purposes.

The education system of the country would have to operate mainly within the above economic development aims, principles, strategies and plans. Education and training policy has to be linked with the economic policies and human power requirements. It is generally accepted that education highly contributes to human capital formation which in turn contributes to economic growth, which contributes to high development of education (seems a vicious circle!) (World Bank 1980; Ashton et al. 1998; IBRD-World Bank 1998; Verma, Kachan &

Landsbury 1995). MEDaC (1999) states that "The Ethiopian system of education has a long way to go so as to play a dynamic role in the process of economic development" (p.400). The mismatch between the qualification of the students and the demands of the economy (public, private and self-employment) continues. The overall orientation of education had been white-collar jobs, public employment, paper qualification syndrome, and urban life. The new policy states that the curricula will be based on societal needs, will be oriented towards work and self-employment. However, the actual contents of the new curricula need major studies, discussions and understandings.

The available figures, facts and observations clearly show that rural areas, the females, and the peripheries of the country are underserved. Youth unemployment is very large, and the investment on the sector is small. The UNDP's (1998) Human Development Report on Ethiopia correctly concludes that "Considering the magnitude of the problem and the overall challenges of this sector (the education sector), the effort up to now is not enough"(p.44).

Though several comments and options are provided throughout the paper, as a final conclusion, I would like to make the following general recommendations:

1. More comprehensive, systematic and multifaceted study of the education sector or some aspects of it such as languages of instruction, vocational-technical education, national goals and priority skills might be in order. The assessment should include the study of the overall socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and demographic situation of Ethiopia. The major stakeholders (parents, teachers, experts, decision makers, employers and the community at large) would have to participate in the studies, deliberations and decision making. In the mean time, policies concerning improving quality, quantity, equality, access and efficiency of education have to be fully implemented through out the country.

2. Attempts be made to link the education and training activities with the human power requirements of the country. This perhaps involves the close collaboration of MOE with MEDaC, MOLSA, and the Ministries of Industry, Trade, Agriculture and Health. Joint planning, deliberations and monitoring would be helpful.
3. Larger government expenditures, at least the average of developing countries (e.g., about 20%), the involvement of the private sector, NGOs and the community at large are required to bring about major changes in the education sector. To encourage the private sector investment in education and training, provision of land for free (for school construction), simplified and easier accreditation procedures, permits to import teaching materials and equipment duty free, and provision of clear and detailed guidelines for academic and administrative issues might be necessary.
4. Competent and visionary leadership should take the responsibility of decision making, planning, and implementation throughout the country (country, region, zone, woreda and school levels). Serious efforts have to be made to build capacities where there are weaknesses, such as at zone and woreda levels particularly in rural areas and the peripheries. Minimum academic qualification, relevance of field of study and experience need to be considered in the assignment of leaders at various levels. New appointees should have some training on issues relevant to the leadership position.
5. The participation of the community - i.e. parents, teachers, students and relevant others has to increase. School committees with members from parents, teachers and community leaders are established in many areas (schools). They need to be involved in academic, social, administrative and advocacy matters. The committees should not be limited to raising funds (resources), teacher evaluation and listening to

yearly activities reports as done by many in Addis Ababa and other regions. The culture of deliberation, responsibility and accountability has to develop at least in schools level. Efforts would have to be made to strengthen the existing ones and to form others where they do not exist.

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Annex 1

Enrolments and Academic and Support Staff of Higher Education Institutions in 1998/99*

No.	Name of Institution	Enrolment	Females	Acad. staff	Supp. Staff
1.	Addis Ababa University	10,448	1,475	750	1,688
2.	Addis Ababa College of Commerce	1,977	842	77	88
3.	Alemaya University of Agri.	2,185	168	162	590
4.	Ambo College of Agri.	471	108	42	189
5.	Arba Minch Water Technology Institute	829	38	69	208
6.	Awassa College of Agri.	768	117	95	259
7.	Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute	630	39	60	121
8.	Bahir Dar Teachers College	1,070	102	64	171
9.	Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences	1,215	187	87	183
10.	Ethiopian Civil Service College (AA)	1,602	161	116	126
11.	Gonder College of Medical Sciences	821	155	89	345
12.	Jimma College of Agri.	504	107	51	191
13.	Jimma Institute of Health Sciences	1,826	273	228	319
14.	Kotebe College of Teacher Edu.	590	274	93	196
15.	Mekelle Business college	621	110	38	93
16.	Mekelle University College	642	44	68	83
17.	Nazreth Technical College	807	44	110	197
18.	School of Med. Lab. Technology	101	23	3	DNA
19.	Wondogenet College of Forestry	238	10	26	114
	Total	27,345	4,277	2,228	5,161
	% Female		15.64	6.1	48.36

*Source: EMIS - MOE 1999.

"DNA" means data not available; "AA" means Addis Ababa.

Annex 2

Economically Active Population Aged 10 and Above by Major Occupational Groups, 1994

No.	Occupational Group	Male	Female*	Total	%
1	Legislators, officials, managers	43451	6984	50435	1.19
2	Professionals-scientists, engineers, teachers, etc.	37932	7572	45509	1.18
3	Technicians and associate professionals	166503	58207	224710	5.87
4	Clerks-typists, bookkeepers, tellers	61061	50768	111829	2.93
5	Service workers, shop and sales workers	369420	607954	977374	25.78
6	Agricultural and fishery workers (farmers, nomads, etc).	10649884	7570838	18220722	47.40
7	Crafts and related trade workers	285291	280222	565513	1.48
8	Plant and machine operators, assemblers, etc.	99016	10612	109628	0.28
9	Elementary occupations-Labourers, messengers, etc.	2880797	2482063	5362860	13.92
10	Not Stated	117906	96711	214617	0.55
	Total Size	14711261	11171936	25883197	
	Total %	56.84	43.16	-	

Source: CSA 1998:218).

*Only 13.85% of the legislators/ officials and 16.65% of the professionals were females.

Annex 3

Ethiopia's Population Aged 10 Years and Over by Literacy Status and Educational Attainment, 1999*

Educational Status	Size	Percentage
All Literate	10,756,847 (3,530,429F)	29.86 (9.80)
None Formal	1,366,932	3.79
Grade 1-6	6,366,627	17.67
Grade 7-8	1,297,920	3.60
Grade 9-11	778,686	2.16
Grade 12 completed	629,137	1.75
Beyond Grade 12	317,545	0.88
Not stated	21,118	0.06
All Illiterate	25,244,504	70.08
All persons	36,022,469	100

SA (1999 : 62)